

# **“Narrating Early Religions, Judaism and Christianity: the Scholars Speak”**

By Brent Waterbury

Smashwords copyright 2013

## **Intro**

"All truth passes through three stages: First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as self-evident." Schopenhauer, 19th century philosopher

"Honest criticism of religious faith is a moral and intellectual necessity."  
(“Letter to a Christian Nation”, Harris, ’06)

This ebook is a post-modern look of ancient religions, Judaism and Christianity and their origins from a scholar’s point of view. This is also an in-depth look at how these religions started and their evolution over time.

The subject of religious origins has always been a rather complex undertaking since billions of people clearly believe that God inspired their religion--while billions of others deny that. So to alleviate this confusion over the last 150 years or so historians were prompted by a term called contextualization--meaning scriptures only within their historical boundaries and no more. Well, this brought about a Pandora's Box of new revelation as to exactly *who* wrote scriptures out and their reasons for writing them in the first place. So starting in the mid 1700’s new interpretations of religions were published which deciphered man’s most esteemed institution. Later, a few of these contextualized books even became #1 best sellers:

"The ancient’s ways are almost *incomprehensible* to the unstudied modern."  
(“Theosophy: a modern revival of the ancient wisdom”, Kuhn, 1930)

“Scholars are often accused of being out of touch with the average person and writing only about things significant to themselves and their Ivy-league colleagues.”  
(“Searching for the Original Bible”, Price, pg. 19)

This ebook is also based on my own personal experiences in various church's over 10 years since I was once a devoutly religious Christian. Like St. Paul, I too wandered the 'spiritual deserts' trying to find answers to my questions. But after years of searching through the Bible I found the spiritual problems wasn't me per se (as I often thought) rather the Bible itself. Why? Because the Bible is good at *raising* questions but not so

good at providing answers:

"A majority of Americans (78%) say that the Bible is the 'word of God'... The U.S. is an intensely Christian nation today... Most people believe in the supernatural."

(Pew 2011), ("Transformation of the World", religion), ("Barna, "Beliefs: general religion's", May '07)

So later I set the Bible down for a decade or so thinking 'this is just another ancient religion and I'll never understand it' and let it go at that. But the problem was I admired the Old Testament with its overall philosophy and moral teachings. So I moved into historical research and scholarly area and ended up finding more answers than I dreamed of! But of course the answers I found aren't what most religious people want:

"Do you find the Bible... Confusing? Difficult to read? Hard to understand?"

(www.bible seminar.net)

Continuing:

"The Bible is misunderstood. Most Americans are *completely in the dark* about what scholars have been saying about the Bible for the past 200 years."

("Jesus, Interrupted", Ehrman, pg. 1)

Because religion can be mysterious and unknowable millions are turned off. In fact, over the last 50 years possibly hundreds of *millions* of people have left religion altogether (including Hinduism) without any negative effect on societies worldwide:

"The American public is disillusioned with traditional Christianity... Both doubt and belief are each on the rise... Rigid dogmas continue to confine many lives."

("Bad Religion", Douthat), ("Reason for God: belief in an Age of Skepticism", Keller, pg. 2-10), ("Life after Faith: a case for secular humanism", Preface, Kircher), see Barna, "New research how different generations view the Bible", '12

An atheist:

"Religious faith remains a perpetual source of human conflict. What is the worst in us--outright delusion--has been elevated beyond the reach of criticism."

("End of Faith", Harris)

"The mere mention of pagan origins, astro-theology and mythology always brings howls of protest and denial from the church."

("Book Your Church Doesn't Want You to Read", intro, Leedom, ed)

Then there are Christians that read their Bible and love its inspiration but know very little about its history. They don't know why the texts were originally written down, what prompted them and who separated what from what. And as you will read, the basic truths contained below are *not* new and nor have they been hidden from sight. The main problem is people today don't read and instead get most of their information from TV or the Internet from people who *also* don't have time to read! So reprocessed information become rather half-truths or worse yet--fiction masked as truth as in major news outlets today out to make a quick buck. This ebook can dramatically help:

"Most contemporary Christians are massively ignorant how the church got to where it is today." Dr. Snyder, Asbury Theological Seminary  
(from, "Pagan Christianity?", intro)

"Despite the fact that the Bible is the #1 Bestseller, biblical illiteracy abounds."

Barna, "New research: how different generations view the Bible", '12, sourced from, "Pagan Christianity: exploring the roots of our church practices", Viola/Barna, '12),

"Historians prefer to have lots of written sources, not just one or two. The more, obviously, the better." Religious historian Dr. Bart Ehrman  
(“Did Jesus Exist?”, intro)

Finally, this is written more for laypeople not scholars although there are sources for just about everything. Also the layout here is unique in that I've chosen the more interesting aspects of the subject matter but use the scholar's own quotes to make a point.. The reasons for this is that readers don't need to wade through tons and tons of dry scholarly material just to get at a few conclusions.

### **About the author?**

"The common goal of most biblical scholars is to figure out *how* the Bible works."

(*"Surpassing Wonder: the invention of the Bible and the Talmuds"*, Akenson, '98, pg. 7-11)

My own background in writing goes back roughly 20 years when I began writing scripts to market. Scripts are a self-discipline and are not as easy as many presume since an audience is always in mind. Thus the writer must try to come up with something novel and get to their point very quickly. Also having a great imagination helps!

Years later I finally found my religious roots once again and began the research that would years later turn into this book. And as one who's always been interested in how

religions evolve I also have a book on Islam out that digresses from the standard tradition that Mohammed wasn't the only one who wrote the Koran. I guess I'm a heretic at heart:

"There's no good reason to be hostile toward good scholarship. Ron Hendel, BAR

("Critical Biblical Scholarship--what's the use?", Bible Archeological Review, July/Aug.12)

Regardless, this is maybe the Bible's draw--the traditions and mystery like a mystery novel. If that's the case then the Bible won't disappoint. But if you're like me, where the mystery got in the way of clarity then read on...

## **Contents**

Early Religions 20,000- 800 BC

Ancient civilization of Sumero-Babylonian

Savior Religion Primer

Egypt 60,000-2300 BC

Indian religion 3000 BC

Ancient Devil

Babylonian and Syrian 2800 BC

Sin 3000 BC

Pagan hell

Sacrifice

Persia and Zoroasterianism

Mithaism 1st-4<sup>th</sup> c.

Ancient Greece

Plato and Platonism 400 BC

Ancient Greece

Cynic's 320 BC

Epicurean's 300 BC-100 AD

Stoic's 400 BC-300 AD

Buddah 200 BC

Roman Religions

Fall of Rome 200-500 AD

## **Old Testament**

Hebrew scriptures/ OT 300 BC

Genesis (the beginning)

Myths/Old Testament

Archeology  
Israelites (defenders of God)  
David/Solomon  
Hebrew sin  
Devil/ OT  
Hebrew Sacrifice  
OT Prophecy/Eschatology 700-200 BC  
Post Exile 580-200BC  
Apocalyptic dualism 200 BC  
Jewish Messiah 400 BC-200 AD  
Other Jewish Heroes  
Angels  
Hell/Judaism  
Jerusalem 250 BC  
Pharisees, Sadducees  
Essene's 200 BC-70 AD  
Dead Sea Scrolls 200 BC-10 AD  
Jewish War with Rome 66-132 AD  
Old Testament Criticism  
Coda 1948

## **New Testament**

New Testament overview  
New Testament history  
NT Archeology  
New Testament myth  
The Gospels--Mathew, Mark, Luke & John  
Acts of the Apostles 90-111 AD  
Messiahs  
Jesus in St. John  
Who else was Jesus of Nazareth?  
New Testament Gnosticism  
Was Jesus an angel?  
Was Jesus a gnostic?  
NT apocalyptic  
Was Jesus an Essene?  
Sacrifice/Crucifixion  
Christian sin  
Kingdom of God/kingdom of heaven

Jewish sect infighting 6-100 AD

Parables

Faith and Prayer

Miracles

Devil/NT

Was Jesus in the OT?

Didache

Resurrection/heaven

Hell/NT

Book of Revelation

Cult of Apostle Paul

Conclusion

## **Early Religions- 6000BC--800 BC**

“Indeed our creator is eternal. Indeed ageless he who formed us.”

Semitic Ugaritic text

“Religion is human experience interpreted by human imagination. The idea that religion contains a literal, not symbolic, expression of truth and life is simply an impossible idea... Matters of religion should *never* be matters of controversy. We seek rather to honor the piety and understand the poetry embodied in these fables.”

(“Reason in Religion”, “The Sense of Beauty”, Santayana, Sp., 1896, pg. 189)

"The concept of [ancient] religion is hazy. Some old problems have never been solved...Namely distinguishing between 'true' religions, 'superstitious' and 'philosophical' belief systems... Ancient myth is a deliberately chosen means of communicating knowledge. It is *we* who are at the disadvantage."

("Transformation of the World: 19th c., religion", Osterhammel, 2014), ("Serpent in the Sky: high wisdom of ancient Egypt", West, '93), see also "Golden Bough"

In these early chapters on ancient religions we should try to imagine yourself into the minds of the initiates and to see the world from their perspective. It was radically different from our more self-centered view today where truth is generally subjective and unknowable. While at that time truth was more a collective a tribal mantra.

Worldwide there have been 100's of early religions but the ones I'm concerned about now are Egyptian and Babylonian since these were the religions which later influenced Judaism and Christianity. Durkheim, one of the great founders of the sociology of

religion:

"There is no one religion that is not about both a cosmology and a speculation about the divine. All religions, even the crudest are in a sense spiritualistic." Emile Durkheim 1915 ("Reader in the Anthropology of Religion", Elementary Forms of Religious Life)

While the cruder religion's like animism would be elsewhere in the world with which was clay moldings of their gods:

"Animism in one or another of its many forms seems to have antedated civilization."

("History of Christianity" Letourrette, pg. 1+)

Thousands of years later Judaism would go to war over these polytheistic beliefs:

"The Mediterranean and neighboring world had been the scene of a vast number of pagan creeds and rituals. There were Temples *without end* dedicated to gods like Apollo or Dionysus among the Greeks, Hercules among the Romans, Mithra among the Persians, Adonis and Attis in Syria, Osiris and Isis and Horus in Egypt, Baal among the Babylonians. Societies, large or small, *united believers* with their respective deities and in the creeds which they confessed...They recognized in *some dim way* that it was only a type of the hidden meaning, *not a real deity*; a representation, and not an incarnation." ("Pagan & Christian Creeds", Solar Myths and Christian Festivals), ("Natural Genesis", Massey, Kamite typology #51) note-- Massey was a social anthropologist/Egyptologist who spent years in Egypt

In its time, ancient myth was considered true and worthy of being scripture. For tens of thousands of years early man felt that they were put on the earth to do the "gods bidding":

"To the ancients, the fear of death, wonder at the causes of unintelligible happenings, hope for divine aid, cooperated to generate religious belief... Long before old age could come, violence or some strange disease carried off the great majority of men. Thus early man didn't believe that death was ever natural."

("Our Oriental Heritage", Moral elements of civilization, Durant, 1930), ("History of **Science**", Williams, 1904)

For reasons unknown, ancients were fascinated with blood and not its guts.

"Animal sacrifice was a universal religious practice in the ancient world."

("Great Transformation: beginnings of our religious traditions", Armstrong, intro)

"It was a matter of general belief among savage peoples that blood was often considered a vital energy. By wetting his body with blood the neophyte believed he was transferring strength of a steer into his own limbs."

("Oriental Religion's in Roman Paganism", Cumont, pg. 63)

## **Ancient Civilization of Sumer 2600 BC**

"We can hear in all religions a groaning of the spirit, a struggle to conceive the inconceivable."

(Lectures of the Origin and Growth of Religion, as illustrated by the religions of India, Muller, 1880)

"The institutions, conventions, customs and laws that make up the complex structures of a society are the work of a 100 centuries and a *billion* minds. We are warranted in concluding that morals are relative."

("Decline/Fall of the Roman Empire", vol. 1)

Sumer (sometimes called Sumeria) was the site of earliest known civilizations while others debate east Africa as the earliest. At this time, this period was prehistoric and stories would be passed down orally from generation to generation:

"With the Babylonian's, the gods were represented by stone images at a very early date... The tendency of the human mind to attribute to a Deity a human form, the Babylonian's were no exception to the rule."

("Religion of Babylonia & Assyria", Pinches, 1890's, Chap. 1)

"In Sumer, their primary identity wasn't with 'Sumeria'. Instead they were citizens of Ur."

("History of the Ancient World", Bauer, pg. 135)

Their kings were believed to come from heaven and were considered eternal. Also in their ancient stories would be a 'great Flood':

see, "Religion of Babylonia & Assyria, Chapter 1

"The Sumerian King List, records eight kings with a total of 241,200 years from the time when kingship 'descended from the heaven' to the time when the Flood swept over the land and once more 'the kingship was lowered from heaven' after the Flood".

("Sumerian King List Spans for Over 241,000 Years Before a Great Flood", Holloway)

Murray was an outstanding scholar of the language and culture of Ancient Greece, perhaps the leading authority in the first half of the twentieth century:



“Mankind's entire life in an agriculture age depended on food. Each community had its 'divine protectors' and almost always a local Earth-Mother and a divine Son or Young King who brought vegetation through birth, death and resurrection. There was also a great Father. The Son was nearer, the son of a god and a mortal woman.”

(“Hellenism & the Modern World”, Murray)

More on Babylon later....

## **Egypt 10,000BC-2300 BC**

"Egypt, the fruitful parent of superstition..."

("Decline/Fall", conversion of the barbarians, Chap. 37)

And unto Marduk, they spoke: “Thy destiny O lord, is supreme among the gods, To destroy and to create, when thou dost command, it shall be fulfilled.

(4th tablet of creation)

As many know Egypt is one of the world's oldest civilizations with rulers and kings stretching back 36,000 years; while Egyptian religious texts have been found and dated to 3,000BC. And what is startling to historians was Egypt began their religions with a *blank slate*-- nothing was outsourced. Their grandiose Pyramids were built not to the gods but to their kings as tombs in their quest for Eternity. And its genius and technical feats still fascinates Egyptologist's today 4500 years later.

Egyptian religions were affiliated with literature, government and art--except morality since their gods were basically amoral. For thousands of years ancients believed the sun was the creator of men. While centuries later the Jews (Judeans) thought the sun was Yahweh Himself:

"Ancient religion was solar and lunar based... The moon was a god but the greatest god was the sun... Egyptians regarded the universe as a conscious act of creation by the one great supreme God. While the king as a Son of God dates before the Temple of Luxor."

(“Pagan Christ: recovering the lost light”, Harpur), ("Our Oriental Heritage", Egypt),  
("Travelers Key to Ancient Egypt", West)

see, "Pictorial Atlas of Ancient Civilization", Haywood, "Rise of the West", “Jesus: last of the Pharaoh’s, Ellis, ’98, "Mythology", Egypt "Ancient Egypt", '97 Silverman, ed., "Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt", Baines/Malek, 2000, "Adonis, Attis, Osiris", Frazier, 1907, "The Mothers", Briffault, 1927, “Book of the Dead”, Budge

These ancients believed in many gods but other and more aristocratic Egyptians wrote of a 'single god' theory of creation which later profoundly affected the theology of Judaism and Christianity. Egyptians were also the earliest peoples to believe in the *individual* spirit of man as well. This view was the opposite of later Judaism and Christianity where the spirit was presumed to be from another world:

"Ptah [solar god] created the physical world... Ptah was figured as a mummy. Monotheism is the *first* stage traceable in theology."

("Rise of the West: history of the human community", McNeill, 1963/1991), ("Religion of Ancient Egypt" nature of the gods, + the abstract gods, Petrie), see, "Natural Genesis", Kamite Typology

Dr. Massey was a renown Egyptologist who in the late 1800's often got virgin looks at these undisturbed ancient sites:

"The 'Fall in Heaven' was an Egyptian mythos previous to its being turned into a Hebrew history of man in the garden of earth."  
("Natural Genesis", Explanatory, Massey, 1883/2008)

Objects of animism were figures like vultures, cobra's and rhino's were worshiped or symbolized as sacred gods themselves. Below the speaker below personifies a crocodile who leads away the souls of men by stealth:

An anonymous Egyptian Lecturer--

*"I am* the crocodile whose soul comes from men; I am the crocodile leading away by stealth."

("Natural Genesis", Vol. 2, Massey, Page 635)



the crocodile-man (Sebek),

These Egyptians worshiped gods represented by the bull Osiris, ('rebirth of the dead for the *new life* with Osiris'), divine goats etc. which represented sexual creative power along with Isis, the Great Mother (Earth). The sun was also regarded as the creator of men.

"The fitting spiritual house for the Pharaoh, being a god, was the pyramids."

(" Rise of the West")

For their time Egyptians were very smart. *Everything living was symbolized as being either living or dead*--even their insects who we swat away. Hollywood movies could have used their imagination:

"The *Khu* or spirit cannot die... *Ka* is not the body but the activities of sense and perception. *Ba* is the soul apart from the body, figured as a human-headed bird."

("Ancient Egyptian Conception of the Soul", kheper.net), ("Religion of Ancient Egypt", Chap. 2)

**1370 BC**

"God is life. He giveth life to humanity and he breathed the breath of life into mans nostrils". Tomb of Seti 1  
("Egyptian Religion", Bridge)

"The concept of a divine intermediary between creator/creation came from Memphite [Memphis] theology. It preceded the Platonic/Greek notion of the demiurge god by

several hundred years and Christian theology by 1200 years."  
("American Discovery of Ancient Egypt", Thomas)

For centuries, the local gods got women pregnant:

"To pagans, the gods controlled the weather, a stream, fate or sex... In primitive religion there is a deep reverence for raw superstition."  
("Evolution of God", Wright, pg. 10)

And their devious priests manipulated their gods who 'disagreed' with them:

"Magicians claimed even the highest gods to do their bidding. And threatened them with *destruction* in case of disobedience!"  
("Golden Bough", magic/religion)

Like India's caste system, Egypt's worked well in controlling criminal intent. Even today overall crime in India is rare:

"Egypt had a sense of moral behavior."  
("Evolution of God", pg. 312-320)

Among the religious masses today the connection between Paganism and Christianity seems remote--yet little do they know! Here, baptism began as a pagan rite 1000's of years prior:

"In Egypt, in ancient Heliopolis ("City of the Sun") the Pharaoh, who was the living manifestation of god on earth, would enter one of his private temples 'the House of the Morning' at sunrise each day to be sprinkled with water. This act was a symbolic unification with the sun-god Ra, who was believed to be reborn at dawn."  
(*Ordo Templi Orientis Eire*, Orpheus/Orchard, '14)

The Egyptian 'I am' phrases were copied by both the Jews and Christians. These writings personified their gods as 'Supreme People' but with minds:

"There are many of these 'I am' declarations throughout ancient religious literature."  
("Gnostic Bible" pg. 39)

#### **Anonymous poem 3000-1000 BC**

I am the one who hath made heaven and who hath raised the mountains and created what is upon it. I am the one who hath made the water which became the Great Flood

[Mediterranean]. I am the one who made heaven in which I have placed the soul of the gods'.

(from, "Mythology of all Races", Egypt, 1946)

Their great god Osiris; who was considered Lord of the Underworld and Judge of the dead:

**2400 BC**

"Whether I live or die, I am Osiris. I am not destroyed!" Egyptian coffin texts

And Osiris' son Horus who would be born from Isis after Osiris' murder:

"I am Horus in glory. I am the Lord of Light." Egyptian Book of the Dead  
(ch. 78)

Since Egypt used a caste system I would imagine that 99% of the population must have felt victimized as they were unable to escape their upbringing:

see "Jesus: last of the Pharaohs", Ellis, "Rise of the West: history of the human community", McNeill, 1963/1991, "Pictorial Atlas of Ancient Civilizations", Haywood, "Our Oriental Heritage", Egypt

"A preoccupation with death haunts Egyptian mythology... The Egyptian story of life, death and resurrection relate to later Jesus: 'Osiris is Light. He came from the Light; He dwells in Light'".

("Illustrated Ency. of World Mythology", Cotterell/Storm), ("Ancient Mystic Rites", Leadbeater)

As written in their texts, Egyptian gods were 'lords of the spirit world'. This thought carried over to later religion's:

"It was held that as Osiris had triumphed over death and decay so would his followers... Osiris, the king of the Underworld, performs the final judgment of the Dead... When their souls were being weighed in the Great Scales in the Judgment Hall of Osiris... The cult of Osiris was triumphant everywhere and men preferred the hymns which dealt with his sufferings, death and resurrection."

("Ancient Egyptian Myths & Legend", Death and judgment Mackenzie, 1907), ("Book of the Dead", Chap. 3-7, Budge), see Egyptian *Coffin Texts* 4, *Book of Transversing Eternity*

In Egypt, their 'son of god' theory was eventually used in the later Gospel stories. This

proves that ancients kicked these ideas around for eons:

"In Egypt, the king was hailed as a Son of God... The moon was a god but the greatest god was the sun."

("Traveler's Key to Ancient Egypt"), ("Our Oriental Heritage", Egypt)

"Osiris is hailed as the son of God."

("Jesus Mysteries", son of god)

While Judaism probably stole this idea for their messiah in Isaiah:

### **1240 BC Hymn to Osiris**

"Osiris is called the 'king of kings, the giver of life from the beginning, the kingdom of eternity'". Egyptian Book of the Dead

("Ancient Egyptian Myths & Legend", Death and judgment Mackenzie, 1907) see also, "Jesus" McCannon) see, "Book of the Dead", Budge, chap. 6-8 note—Budge was an early Egyptologist.

As mentioned, like Hindu Brahmins, Egyptian's used a strict caste system. Loosely translated this meant that 'whatever strata of society you were born in there's no point in achievement because when you die, and are reborn and reincarnated, you'll come back and must live your wretched life all over again in the *exact same manner!*'

This strange religious mythology went on for 1000's of years in both societies and in India even up to the mid-1900's:

"Other Egyptians could enjoy an afterlife but only if they were wealthy enough to afford the necessary rituals."

("Discovering God", Temple religions, Stark)

Like later Jesus, who supposedly went down to Hades in the book of Hebrews, Osiris did likewise:

"Osiris didn't rise from the dead but was ruler of the underworld... Osiris had *absolute control of the destinies of the bodies and souls of men...* Savior religion's like Mithra, Osiris and Hermes all professed to deliver mankind from the body of this death."

("Did Jesus Exist?", mythicist inventions), ("Osiris and Egyptian Resurrection", Budge), ("Hellenism & the Modern World", Murray)

Coincidentally, centuries later St. Paul said the same referring to Jesus--proving that he was around the mystery religion's which was a strict no-no for traditional Jews. Another

fib from the NT? (Rom. 7)

"To the early Egyptians the sun was reborn near the end of December. These symbols profoundly affected Christian theology."

("Our Oriental Heritage", Egypt), see also, "Dawn of Civilization", Maspero, 1894, "Book of the Dead", Renouf, 1893-1902, "Gods of the Egyptians", Budge, 1904

Away in the manger?:

"Isis and Horus [her son] the Queen of heaven and the Holy Child, became the popular deities of the later age of Egypt."  
("Religion of Ancient Egypt", influence of Egypt)

As famously noted in their art, culture and politics, Egyptian women were *greatly esteemed*--not like in the Islam there now. Some were priestesses who officiated the shrines of both gods and goddesses and a few were even considered gods themselves! Thus going forward in time another 3,000 years no other country on *earth* had these non-sexist views like the early Egyptians--even up the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when women were able to finally vote:

"Isis, the Nile goddess, was promoted to 'savior of the human race'. She also inspired congregations... In antiquity, throughout the Mediterranean area, the earth was regarded as a goddess and worshiped as such."

("Phases in the Religion of Ancient Rome", Bailey, 1932), ("Cybele & Attis: the myth and the cult", Vermaseren), see "Rise of the West", pg. 19

Isis was considered the 'Mother of every pharaoh' and her symbols are the scorpion. She was regularly portrayed as the selfless, giving, mother ("Mother of the Gods"), wife, and protectress, who places other's interests ahead of her own:  
see Ancient History Encyclopedia/ Isis

"The Great Mother, [Isis] the generous goddess, was always especially worshiped by the women."  
("Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism", Cumont, pg. 57)

"Isis, the Nile goddess, was promoted to 'savior of the human race'. She also inspired congregations... Isis is 'the sole ruler of eternity and all gods call me the greatest of all the gods in heaven. Nothing happens apart from me!'"  
("Phases in the Religion of Ancient Rome", Bailey, 1932), (from, "Gods & the One God", Grant)

Some of Burrough's 19<sup>th</sup> c. theories on mythology regarding Jesus as a 'dying and rising god' have been dismissed as inaccurate; but the Egyptian Osiris story cannot be overlooked which the Greek historian Herodotus witnessed himself along with 10,000 others: see Herodotus *The Histories*

"Osiris has been interpreted as a sun-god who suffered a violent death (dismembered). His funeral rites were observed at his great festival in the provinces of Egypt which lasted 18 days... Horus is the good shepherd."

("Golden Bough", Official rites), ("Ancient Egypt", Gerald Massey, pg. 343+),

In the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC when Plato visited Egypt for 13 years he studied Egyptian religions. Later back in Greece he incorporated this into Platonism which partly is a theory of self-denial. This theory was used in the story of *Timeus* which captivated the Greek Hellenistic world for centuries:

"The sun [Osiris] may be said to 'die daily'.

("Golden Bough", osiris and the sun)

Joseph Campbell spent his entire life writing about mythology and today his books are still quite popular:

"The famous trinity in Egypt: Osiris, Isis and Horus is analogous to Christianity's Father, Holy Spirit (Mother) and Son... Some stimulus existed for early Christianity to associate Jesus with the 'dying and rising gods' of the Greeks."

("Hero with a Thousand Faces", Atonement with the Father", Campbell, 1949), ("Oldest God: archaic religion yesterday & today", Carmody)

In the resurrection of Osiris the Egyptians saw the pledge of a life everlasting for themselves beyond the grave... The funeral rites of Osiris were observed at his great festival in the 16 province's of Egypt. These rites lasted 16 days."

("Golden Bough", official rites) see, "Jesus: the Explosive Story" McCannan, "Secret History of the World", Booth, chap. 6

## **Sin 6000 BC**

Since there would be no police or even laws for 1000's of years morality would be more up to the gods themselves. Of this its people tried to copy:



“The repudiation of sins before the judgment of Osiris is the *earliest* mode of morals.”  
 (“Religion of Ancient Egypt”, ancient ethics)

A later image for the Gospel Apocalypse in Mt. 23? You decide:

“*I am* come to send fire upon the earth.’ The Ra/Horus/Osiris manifesto as the ‘burning one’ or ‘he who sends fire upon the rebels’”. (“Pagan Christ”)

Egyptians believed their gods of the state lived in the temple where only priests were allowed to enter. Coincidentally, this rite Jewish priests later picked up for their 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple area in Jerusalem which was called the “Holy of Holies”. At this Temple, God Himself would appear along with the Ark of the Covenant and the Ten Commandments. While the Jewish priests could only enter once a year:

"The duties of the priest were arduous and an exacting code had to be followed. The head was closely shaven and he wore the purest and whitest linen. Proceeding to the Holy of Holies, he stood face to face with the god [statue] and prostrated himself."

(“Ancient Egyptian Myths and Legends”, Priesthood: mysteries & temple religions, Mackenzie, 1907), see, “Religion of Ancient Egypt”, ritual & priesthood

As touched on, and even without scriptures, Egyptian priests believed in both good and evil, including a later Judgment. For example, the Egyptian “sheep/goat” analogy was used for the later gospels as separating evil from the good: (Mt. 25)  
see, “Evolution of God”, pg. 315-320)

"In the Great Hall of Justice those who have sided with Sut [the devil] are separated from the sheep and transformed into goats."

(“Pagan Christ: recovering the lost light”, Harpur), see also, "Our Oriental Heritage", Egypt

## 1200 BC

In the Egyptian "Book of the Dead" a wealthy and presumably wealthy pagan confesses to his God that he is not evil. And as you will read, and for reasons not fully explained, the emotion of guilt was endemic in the ancient world-view. However only where the notion of 'sin' was presented:

"Hail to Thee, Great God, Lord of Truth and Justice! I bring you truth as I have not committed iniquity against men, nor oppressed the poor. I have not starved any man. I am pure. I am pure." Egyptian Book of the Dead (chap. 125)

(from, "Dawn of Civilization: Egypt and Chaldera", Maspero, 1897) note-- Maspero was a French Egyptologist., see "Book of the Dead" Chap. 7

Later, and lacking originality of itself, nearly everything symbolic from Christian text was grabbed from other religions. For example, here is "Mother Mary" but taken from Egyptian texts:

"Isis was the Great Mother, the wife of Osiris. Egyptians worshiped her with special fondness and piety and raised up images to her as the Mother of God... 2. Mary's conception is like many other women impregnated by pagan gods, including Zeus... 3. In Roman times the mother Isis not only received the devotion of all of Egypt, but her worship spread rapidly abroad, like that of Mithra. After a change of name due to the growth of Christianity, she continued to receive the adoration of Europe down to the present day as the Madonna."

("Our Oriental Heritage", Egypt), 2. ("Triumph of Christianity", Stark) ,3. ("Religion of Ancient Egypt", [ch. 6](#))

Incredibly, Egyptian priests believed in being "born again" thousands of years before the Gospel of John. So it's easy to see that being "born again" was not a new Christian idea:

"Hail Osiris, thou art born twice!" Egyptian Book of the Dead  
(chap. 170)

"Among primitive people the idea of a 'New Birth' at initiation explains the prevalent pagan custom of subjecting the initiates to serious ordeals, often painful and even dangerous. If one is to be 'born again' obviously one must be ready to face death."

("Pagan and Christian Creeds"), see also, Doane's Bible Myths, "Our Oriental Heritage, vol. 1"

Finally, these pagan people knew that their statues weren't *really* the gods--only symbols of them. While later Judaism and Christianity could never get past this point calling paganism a 'great evil'--even to the point of persecution.

see, Origen, "Against Celcus", "Story of Civilization", Age of Faith, pg. 44-117, "City of God", Augustine

## **Savior Religion primer**

"The concept of a *divine intermediary* between creator/creation came from Memphite

[Memphis] theology. It preceded the Platonic/Greek notion of the *demiurge* god by several hundred years and Christian theology by 1200 years."  
("American Discovery of Ancient Egypt", Thomas)

In the past, I've had my own prejudices regarding other 'savior-religions'. Having unfortunately spent my rather gullible early 20's surrounded by 'devout Christian's' who kept pushing Jesus while condemning other religions made it nearly impossible to see any other point of view. But gradually over time, and once in public universities, I could finally validate other viewpoints outside of Christian circles.

Even though many are presumed to be mythological today as historians we're still left with the thoughts and attitudes of billions of people who lived and died prior. So from an ancients perspective would their savior's notice them and their deeds? What would they hope for? What scriptures did they have of any promises?

We're just getting started but a short primer from other savior religion's can help the reader understand how other religions started:

### **Egyptian:**

"Osiris was regarded as the principle cause of resurrection and was capable of giving life after death. He was called 'Eternity and Everlasting' and made both men and women born again."

("Ancient Egyptian Myths and Legends", Spence)

The goddess's of the Nile were saviors:

"Isis was the 'sole ruler of eternity and all call me the greatest of all the gods in heaven- nothing happens apart from me'".

(sourced from, "Gods and the One God", Grant, pg. 103)

### **Zoroasterian:**

"The dead shall rise, life shall return to the bodies. The whole world shall become free from corruption forever and ever". Zoroaster

(sourced from "From Tribe to Empire", Moret, 1926)

### **Greek:**

"Hercules was a great Traveler. He was known in many lands, and everywhere was invoked as Savior."

("Pagan & Christian Creeds", Solar Myths)

"The gap between the universal, omnipresent, all-knowing deity and the helpless human

was bridged by the concept of the god-man.”  
 (“Rise of the West”, pg. 161-200)

#### **Roman:**

"In the oath-bound secrecy of mystery religions planets have dominion over life... Candidates who passed the Mithraic initiation were called lions and marked an Egyptian cross on their foreheads... Mithra's sacrifice was for man; his death that man might have eternal life and resurrection ensured salvation."

("Passion of the Western Mind", Tarnas), ("Secret Teachings of all Ages", Hall, 1928/2003)

#### **Judaism:**

“Believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me, no god was formed, and after Me none will come. Yes I am the LORD and there is no Savior but Me.” Is. 43

#### **Christianity:**

“But now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” 2 Timothy 1:10

More on these later...

#### **Indian Religion 3000 BC**

“The myth emerges from the uncritical verbalization of hopes and fears.”  
 (“Man, the Myth-Maker”, Bain, Scientific Monthly #65, 1947)

"Ancients weaved together humanity's mystical imaginings about the origins of the cosmos—magical stories of creative gods and spirits and of people guided by the stars and inspired by angels."

(“Secret History of the World”, Garden of Eden, Booth)

Social anthropologists today might be amazed at how myths and rituals got around the world so easily without Facebook. The myth here is similar to the Jesus story:

"Krishna, the Indian god, also was born of a Virgin and in a Cave. His birth announced by a Star. The king sought to destroy him and for that purpose a massacre of infants was ordered... Everywhere he performed miracles, raising the dead, healing lepers and the deaf and the blind, and championing the poor and oppressed. He had a beloved disciple, Arjuna, (cf. John) before whom he was transfigured. His death is differently related-as being shot by an arrow, or crucified on a tree. He descended into hell; and rose again

from the dead, ascending into heaven in the sight of many people. He will return at the last day to be the judge of the quick and the dead.”

(Cox's Myths of the Aryan Nations, pg. 107), (Bhagavat Gita, ch. xi., sourced from, “Pagan and Christian creeds: their origin and meaning”, Carpenter)

Today people don't realize that 3,000 years ago most people were considered ‘half good/ half evil’ and could go either way totally powerless to the spirits. And surprisingly there would be no redemption from this odd view until 1000's of years later with the legalization of Christianity in the Roman Empire mid-4th century CE:

"Ancients had *no* concept of an interior life or self-consciousness. Their impulses happened at the bidding of other spiritual beings [ghosts, angels] that lived independent of them."

(“Secret History of the World”, Age of demi-gods & hero's)

Coinciding with this view, a sociologist's view into early religions:

"Primitive people assumed that all things are dualistic and everything possesses an 'inner phantom'...These people lack a proper awareness of their own mental functioning."

("Principles of Sociology", Spencer, 1890), (“Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bi-cameral Mind”, Jaynes, Phd)

Spencer called this a 'ghost theory', and as you will read I include this view in most religions worldwide to about the late Middle Ages.

## Ancient Devil



Assyrian/Babylonian demon *Pazuzu*, first millennium BC, Louvre Museum,

"[To ancients] demons were held responsible for *every form of evil* afflicting man."  
("Concise History of the Catholic Church")

"Ancients weaved together humanity's mystical imaginings about the origins of the cosmos. Mystical stories of creative gods, spirits and people guided by stars, inspired by angels."

("Secret History of the World", Booth, preface)

Depending on where one lived, to the ancients the world could be a dangerous place. In Africa and South American poisonous snakes, hippos, crocodiles, tigers, leopards, mosquito's were plagues. No matter how friendly man was to these creatures it didn't matter--they could attack and even kill. Even their moon and the sun went to darkness! How was that possible?

This phenomenon created suspicion among men that there was a 'bad spirit' that they couldn't see. The person they didn't like would be a 'bad person' under the 'devils spell'--as opposed to having some psychological character defect like now. Thus for 1000's of years a personal devil developed:

"Primitive Man did not begin with concepts of cause beyond the visible phenomena. He did not postulate a Devil that made the darkness. Darkness from the depth *was* the Devil. The darkness brought forth its brood of baleful beings, inimical to him."

("Natural Genesis", typology of the mythical serpent, Massey, vol. 1, pg. 319)

The people of Mesopotamia were very superstitious:

"Magic formulas for driving out demons constitute the largest category [of clay tablets] found in the library of Ashurbanipal... The civilization of Mesopotamia and Syria helped shape the Western concept of the Devil more than Egypt. These dark deities are gods of destruction, plague, war and death. It had enormous influence on Hebrew and Christian ideas."

("Our Oriental Heritage", Babylonia), ("The Devil: perceptions of evil from antiquity to primitive Christianity", Russell)

And as noted were the Egyptians:

"When the Draconian Cult was superseded by the Osirian in Egypt, the ancient Mother and her Son (the Seven) were cast out and re-clothed in the original imagery of Evil, as

the Viper Sut, and the Dragon Typhon. There was war in heaven. The myth of the cast-out Dragon is common to Egypt, Britain. and Babylon."  
("Natural Genesis", pg. 363)

Around 1000 BC when religion got going stronger the snake was personified as the Devil or Satan. The 'Devil'-- the god Nu (the abyss) or Ahrim "Lucifer" who wasn't evil at that time came from Egypt:

"In opposition to all that was good in ancient Egypt, the most preeminent of all the demons, evil gods, or evil powers was Apophis, 'the serpent of darkness' who was represented by a snake."  
("Ancient Egyptian Religion", Frankfort)

"To these demons all sorts of misfortune were given-a toothache, a headache, a fever, an outburst of anger, jealousy or incomprehensible disease. A disease was the manifestation of the person's malevolence. There could be no return to health until the demon was *exorcised*. The casting out of demons was the duty of the priests."  
("Religion of Babylonia & Assyria", Sacred books)

The Knighted Dr. Frazer studied mythology mainly in South America and Africa but there still are similarities:

"Primitive life was beset with a thousand dangers and seldom ended in natural decay; long before old age could come, violence or some strange disease carried off the *great majority* of men. Thus each man didn't believe death was ever natural; he attributed it to the operation of supernatural agencies... Their imagination of the world teemed with motley beings: fairies, goblins, ghosts and demons hover about him both waking and sleeping. They dog his footsteps, dazzle his senses, enter into him, harass, deceive and torment him in a thousand freakish ways. The mishaps that befall him, the losses he sustains, the pains he has to endure wearies him."

("History of Science", Williams/Williams), ("Golden Bough: a study in magic and religion", public expulsion of evils, Frazer, 1900/1960)

Continuing:

"To the early people in Babylon was a strong belief in ghosts that were related to the world of the dead. To ancients, ghosts and the spirits were one and the same and this was later carried over to the Hebrew religion... Primitive man had a genuine dread of spirits and his chief concern was to propitiate them, no matter how great might be the personal sacrifice involved."

("Religion of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia", the gods of Babylonia and Assyria, Sayce, 1900),  
("Egyptian Myth & Legend")

To the superstitious ancients, a sacrifice was the only way to please the gods, water the crops and get rid of the pesky devil from the area. Amazingly, a thousand years later Christianity carried on this *same idea* with Jesus as a 'sacrifice for pagans' since the then known world was only around the Mediterranean and India at that time:

"People made a sacrifice to Khonsu [moon deity] the Expeller of Demons...The *labartu* was a demon which attacks women and children... moon demons inhabited the dark side of the moon."

("Religion of Babylonia & Assyria", Sacred books), ("Secret History of the World", age of demi-gods), ("Ancient Egyptian Myths", the Great Gods)

While east in Persian Iran hideous monsters typified the Devil. Surprisingly, this style of writing would be *very* similar to the later Book of Revelation roughly 600 years later. This can pretty much prove that Revelation is also pagan in scope as well:

"Then Ohrmazd, in spite of His knowledge of creation, approached the Evil Spirit and offered peace and said: 'Evil Spirit! Aid my creatures and give praise so that you maybe immortal...' The Evil Spirit snarled: 'I shall not aid your creatures and I shall not give praise, but I shall destroy you and your creatures forever and ever! And I shall persuade all your creatures to hate you and love me!'"

("Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism", Tradition and Doctrine/lost *Avestan* texts)

Today, Iran is one of the world's oldest cultures thus it also has some of the world's oldest ideas. Unfortunately, the dogma of Islam has destroyed these lofty ideas and their once proud culture into a term that Muslims now call *jahiliyyah* or 'age of ignorance':

"The Principle of Evil has created darkness, suffering and sins of all kinds; he is often called Deception."

("Mythology of all Races", Iranian Mythology)

The renowned historian, Jeffrey Russell, famous for his studies of medieval history:

"This demonology had enormous influence on Hebrew and Christian ideas and helped shape the West's concept of the Devil. These dark deities are gods of destruction, plague,



war and death...Myth is complex and ambiguous..."

("The Devil: perceptions of evil from antiquity to primitive Christianity", Russell)

## **Sumer and Babylonia 5000-1600 BC**

"And unto Marduk they spoke: 'Thy destiny O lord is supreme among the gods, To destroy and to create, when thou dost command, it shall be fulfilled'. 4th tablet of creation

(sourced from, "Religion of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia")

"In the pre-modern world, religion permeated *all* aspects of life... Ancient magic was the very foundation of religion... Every culture has a set of stories that account for the world in which they find themselves."

("Fields of Blood: religion and history of violence", intro, Karen Armstrong), ("Golden Bough", Sympathetic magic), ("Islam: past, present & future", Hans Kung/Ger., '04/07, intro)

"The poets wrote legends of a creation, a primitive Paradise and a terrible flood that engulfed it because of the sin of an ancient king."  
("Our Oriental Heritage", Sumeria),

The history of ancient Sumer has been deduced from an accumulation of a tremendous amount of archaeological, historical and geological evidence. The Babylonians were intelligent and thoughtful people who had libraries for *thousands* of years. Its people were self-confident and believed without conceit that they were the 'center of the universe'. Even today Sumeria and its city Babylon are still called the 'Cradle of Civilization' for trade, religion and morality:

see, "History of Science" Greek science of the Hellenistic Period, Williams

"For over 3,000 yrs the Near Eastern civilizations were the most advanced in the world."  
("Pictorial Atlas of Ancient Civilizations", Haywood)

Like all ancient cultures, Sumerians thought the gods were like men so they molded clay figurines as copies:

"The gods were represented by stone images at a very early date. The tendency of the human mind to attribute the deity a human form, the Babylonians were no exception."

("Religion of Babylonia & Assyria")

Like all pagan religions, their gods weren't personal and each community had their own lesser gods. An official census in Babylon 900BC counted 65,000 gods--probably meaning 65,000 people:

see, "Babylonian Wisdom", Langdon, 1923, "Rise of the West", "Our Oriental Heritage", Babylonia, "History of Science", Babylonia/Assyria, Williams, MD, 1900

"Each person had a special protective deity... Their laws were a moral *ideal*, as to obey these laws was the will of the gods, who were considered the author of the laws."  
(“Sumerians: a history from beginning to end”, primer of impact on Sumeria, Freeman)

Most of what we know today about Babylonian/Assyrian religions, rites, myths, morals and politics come from the Ashurbanipal library which was discovered in 1850. Of this about 30,000 clay tablets and cylinder seals were found:

"Babylon remained the *universally recognized* cultural capital of the world, and invading tribes usually accepted Babylonian culture...I t is not exaggerated to say that in the eighteenth century [BC] foundations were laid for the Babylonian culture which was to last for almost *2000 years*."  
(“Babylonia”, Livius.org)

Historian Susan Wise Bauer comments:

"He [Nebchannezer] had his own position as great king to establish and maintain and he set out to do this as Mesopotamian kings had done for two thousand years: he started to build."  
(“History of the Ancient World”, pg. 447)

The earliest Babylonia religions were crude since they were based on animism:

"To the Babylonian's life lay in motion--the stars, the sun, a falling rock, animals and mankind... The conception of *zi*, or spirit, possessed life. Everything which moved has life and the motionless did not...There was a strong belief in ghosts that were related to the world of the dead. This was later carried over to the Hebrew religion... 2, From the earliest times man has been engaged in a search for general rules to *overturn* the order of natural phenomena to his own advantage. In the search he has scraped together general truths, some good some bad..."

(“Religion of Babylonia & Assyria: especially in its relations to Israel”, The gods of Babylonia & Assyria, Rogers, 1908), ("Golden Bough", Study in magic and religion) see also, “The Secret History of the World”



Ur-Nammu (seated, print from cylinder seal)

Law-wise, the Babylonians were the earliest cultures to lay a ground work of laws or codes for their mass of people to live by. The *Ur-Nammu* Code (2000 BC), *Hammurabi Code* (1700 BC) are just two of many found which were discovered around 1900AD.

Today, more progressive historians claim that a "Moses" stole these ideas and put them in the Torah 1200 years later as morality for the Jews "new" religion: ("Religion of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia"), see also "Our Oriental Heritage", Babylonia

A rabbi:

"Mesopotamian jurisprudence reached its zenith in the 17th or 18th century BC with the Hammurabi code... The genius of Hammurabi (1754BC) extended order & justice over the realm by a code of laws including the 'eye for an eye' (revenge) concept, divorce, adultery, theft and slaves."

(Torah & Commentary, "Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Law", Sarnam), ("The gods of Babylonia and Assyria")

These codes included the later Noah's ark flood story and most of Moses moral laws from the Torah. Or the story of *Gilgamesh* where their religious text falls short of salvation:

see the entire collection at *Das Babylonische Nimrod-Epos*

"The *Epic of Gilgamesh* protests against the injustice of the gods in refusing men the gift of eternal life."

("Rise of the West", pg. 60)

Many of the Babylonian gods came from Egypt but Adonis and Mitra were more local:

“Each great city had its supreme god... 2. The worship of Adonis was practiced by the Semites peoples of Babylonia and Syria. The Greeks borrowed it in 700 BC...

3. Mitra is an old god. Kinsmen in Persia worshiped him as a power that maintains the laws of righteousness, and by his watchmen keeps mankind under his observation and with his terrible weapons crushes evil powers.”

(“Religion of Ancient Egypt”, chap. 1), 2. (“Golden Bough”, myth of Adonis), 3. (“Hindu Gods & Hero's: studies in the history of religion's of India”, Barnett, Vedic Age)

The Babylonian primary god was Marduk. While centuries later under Judaism Marduk changed names and was called *Yahweh* or the great “I am”:

see, “History of God”, pg. 13

"Marduk has sovereignty over the whole world... Marduk defeated evil gods... president of the council of gods."

see, *Epic of Creation* 27, from "Book of Genesis: a bio", Hendel, "Fields of Blood: religion and the history of violence", farmers/herdsmen, Armstrong, “History of God”, Armstrong, pg. 13, “Babylonia”, Livius.org)

“The first man had been created from the substance of a god: he therefore *shared* the divine nature. There was no gulf between human beings and the gods... they derived from the same divine substance. The pagan vision was holistic. This vision was common in the ancient world.”

(“History of God”, pg. 13)

Babylonian's also felt that since men sometimes fight the gods must fight as well. This 'dualistic mythology' later morphed into the Zoroasterian cult and later still with the Jewish cult of Essenes around 100 BC. Notice the similarities with OT Yahweh:

"And unto Marduk they spoke: 'Thy destiny O lord, is supreme among the gods, To destroy and to create, when thou dost command, it shall be fulfilled". *Epic of Creation*, 4

Sounding a lot like Psalms, where I suspect it was written, King Nebuchadrezzar of Babylon addressing his god Marduk-

“I am what thy hands have made.

“Tis thou who art my creator,

According to thy mercy, Lord,

Turn into loving-kindness thy dread power,  
And give as thou thinkest best".

(Cambridge Ancient History, 1924, sourced from, "Our Oriental Heritage", Babylonia)

Continuing:

"Blood I will mass and cause bones to be and 'man' shall be his name". Marduk  
(sourced from, "World of Myth", Leeming)

And here's our famous Gospel 'I am' verse again; but now east in Babylon but 1000's of years earlier:

### **Praise poem of Ur-Nammu 2200 BC**

"*I am* the good shepherd whose sheep multiply greatly." Praise poem of Ur-Nammu  
(sourced from, "History of the Ancient World", Bauer)

Mentioned under Egypt, the 6th c. Catholic Church's "Holy Mother" apparently hitchhiked back in time a few thousand years to pagan Babylon:

"Ishtar was the goddess of war as well as love, of prostitutes as well as mothers; her worshiper's addressed her as 'The Virgin', 'The Holy Virgin' and 'The Virgin Mother.'" ("Our Oriental Heritage", Babylonia)

Babylonian religions also protested against the 'injustice of the gods'. One such poem is called the "Righteous Sufferer", which like a Job or Jesus, described how a blamelessly pious man suffers affliction at the hands of the gods. And like the ending in Job the author concludes that the ways of the gods are unfathomable:

"The author of the *Righteous Sufferer* clearly felt the gods should deal justly with men." ("Rise of the West", pg. 60) , English translation see, "Babylonian Wisdom", Langdon, pg. 35+

Sounding a lot like Psalms, a poem of early humility to their god Ishtar:

"I, thy servant, full of sighs, call upon thee [Ishtar].  
The fervent prayer of him who has sinned do thou accept.  
If thou lookest upon a man that man liveth."

(sourced from, "Religion of Babylonia and Assyria")

Another reason social anthropologists say ancients were religious was because they didn't live very long! Medicine and doctors would be out of the question until the late 1800's and so if an ancient lived to their 40th birthday they were considered lucky.

See, "Justinian's Flea: the first great plague and the end of Roman Empire", Rosen, "A World only lit by Fire", Manchester

Finally, back in college I studied psychology and in class we all agreed that Freud was wrong about a lot of things. But here he is spot on:

"The Bible is a *total* plagiarism of Sumerian and Egyptian mythologies."

Sigmund Freud

(sourced from, "The Pagan Christ: recovering the lost light", Harpur, '04)

## **Sin/ 3000 BC**

"In the pre-modern world, religion permeated all aspects of life."

("Fields of Blood: religion and the history of violence", farmers and herdsmen, Armstrong)

"The ancients were no different than us. There was just more of the world that they *could not explain* using *rational explanations*."

("Ancient Guide to Modern Life"), see also, "Our Oriental Heritage" Egypt, "Secret History of the World"

If you think that Judaism or Christianity came up with the concept of 'sin' you'd be dead wrong. Rather it began in Babylon and to a lesser extent Egypt. And while progressives today might find the concept rather silly, useless and trivial, to ancient's 'sin' was a very, very grave matter and not to be overlooked. One reason was they believed they were separated from the gods or God--and what stood in the way would be the devil:

"The religious literature of the Babylonians and Assyrians was the hymns to the gods. Many were composed in honor of Nanna Sin, the moon god [female]...Sin was a god of the moon... Moon demons inhabit the 'dark side of the moon.'"

("Religion of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia", principle gods of the Babylonians), ("Our Oriental Heritage", Sumeria), ("Secret History", Age of gods and hero's)

"Ur [Mesopotamia] remained the center for the worship of the moon god Nanna Sin... Khonsu was either a Moon God [Sin], a God of Healing or a 'bloodthirsty deity' given to killing and eating *other* gods."

("Myths from Mesopotamia", Dalley), ("Complete Gods & Goddesses", Wilkinson), see also "History of the Ancient World"

While in other regions, 'Sin' could be reversed and be a good god:

"Marduk placed Sin in charge of marking time where with his light the evil beings could be watched."

(from, Encyclopedia of Ancient Deities, Coulter/Turner)

Elsewhere in the world, 'sin' wasn't always under a religious banner. Even children in South America or Africa could be 'living in sin'--although it was more under a term of rebellion:

"The essence of sin is one's separation from the whole (the tribe or the god) of which one is a part. It is seen that the children inherit this tendency. They are no longer mere animals, easily herded; it seems that they are 'born in sin'-or at least in ignorance and neglect of their tribal life and calling. The only cure is that they must be born again. They must deliberately be adopted into the tribe."

("Pagan and Christian Creeds"), see also, Golden Bough, "Creative Mythology"

Other times sin would be meshed in with guilt over something done wrong as this old Babylonian text attests:

"Lord, my sins are many, great are my misdeeds! I groan! Reject not thy servant!"

("Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria", Jastrow, 1915, sourced from "Story of Civilization: ancient world", Campbell)

Continuing:

"Like a sickness, sin was the possession by a demon that might destroy it. Everywhere these hostile demons lurked and might be persuaded, by the right incantation, to leave its victim and enter an animal--a bird, pig or most frequently a lamb."

("Civilization of Babylonia and Assyria")

To drive out diseases, tribes would use 'white' magic while 'black' magic would be a curse onto *other* peoples or tribes. For example, later in the New Testament Paul throws

a curse at people he didn't like and in the Gospels Jesus sent a bunch of demons into a herd of pigs who drowned themselves! (Mt. 8) Talk about superstition!

As noted, for 1000's of years these myths circulated in the region as fact not to be overlooked:

see, "The Religion of Babylonian & Assyria", The gods of Babylonia & Assyria, Rogers, 1908

"All of these myths tell of a struggle *against* the powers of darkness. They were associated with moral ideas in a cosmic struggle with monstrous beings. Thus easily leading to dualism."

("Mythology of all Races", Wars of Gods and Demons)

And you will later read, that this "dualism" became key New Testament theology:

"These chants of 'purging' by the priests were later picked up by other Ancients like Abraham (1000-1200 BC) and brought to Canaan where they were incorporated into both Judaism and Christianity's theology." ("Mythology of all Races", Wars of Gods and Demons)

## **Hell**

"Religion consists of 3 elements: a theoretical, a practical and a belief in higher powers. They are believed to direct and control the course of nature, human life with an attempt to please them."

("Golden Bough", Magic & Religion)

"The Horrowing of Hell is a story that turns up in many guises throughout history. In it, a brave person descends voluntarily to brave the dangers of the underworld... Technically it is called the 'descent motif'".

("History of Hell", Turner, pg. 6)

Around 1200 B.C. the concept of bad people dying and their souls in the Netherworld began in either Egypt, Mesopotamia or Babylon. And while a strong belief in ghosts was related to the world of the dead very little is known about the pagan after-world:

"Hades and Persephone rule the dead."

("Greek Myths", Westerfields)

As I'll get to shortly, Zoroasterism was quite detailed about hell:

"Violated oaths were punished severely and in hell by an endless shower of arrows, axes and stones!"

("Age of Faith", Persians) see also, Yasna 65



## Sacrifice

In the ancient world, the sacrifice was as near as your "Tide". More importantly, there would be both good and bad gods so to appease, thus the idea of the sacrifice:

"In Latin the word 'sacrifice' means 'to make holy or sacred'. Throughout the ancient world humans connected with their gods through a sacrifice either by the priests or themselves for the community."

("Sacrifice", On Understanding Sacrifice, Westermarck)

"The consciousness then of Sin (or of alienation from the life of the whole) and of restoration or redemption through Sacrifice, seems to have symbolized itself in ancient rituals. These barbarities did sear and burn themselves into ignorant minds with the sense of the need of sacrifice."

("Pagan and Christian Creeds")

Tribal sacrifice began in prehistory and was a worldwide rite. It mostly was about a victim who would take in all of the communities sins. This required a priest or shayman (incense, processions, oil) to please the gods and get rid of that pesky Devil.

For the later Jews, their rabbis finally got wise and quit around the 2nd century, while Christians stopped it around the late 4th c. when Emperor's outlawed sacrifices in lieu of Christ's overall redemption:

see, "Pagans & Christians", Pagan cults, Fox, "Discovering God", temple religions, "Our Oriental Heritage", Babylonia, 'Sacrifice in the OT: Problems of Method & Approach', Rogerson

"Substitution is clearly an important symbol in the sacrifice of a scapegoat in which evil is eliminated from a community by conferring guilt on to a victim."

("Origin & Development of Moral Ideas", Westermarck, 1906)

Presumably pain and blood went together for the good of the tribe:

"Blood played a significant role in all of the ancient temple religions... The rebirth process has a social aspect as the dying god is often a 'scapegoat' who dies for the good of society and who takes on the 'shortcomings or sins'. The stories of Jesus, Attis, Osiris and Dionysis are all similar."

("Discovering God", Temple religions), ("World of Myth", Leeming), see also "Our Oriental Heritage", moral elements

The sacrifice was worldwide and unfortunately young children would be put to the flame gods:

"Human sacrifices were offered to gods to *avert their wrath*... The idea of sacrifice was integral to ancient polytheism: *do ut des*, 'I give, so that you [the gods] may give'."

("Golden Bough", incarnate human gods), ("Religions of the Ancient World: a guide", Price, sacrifice, offerings and motives)

"In the sacrifices to the Mexican god Tlaloc, children were selected who had two whorls in their hair. These were held to be the most agreeable offering to the gods."

("Natural Genesis, typeology of the 2 truths, vol. 1 Massey, pg. 144)

Today as marketers in business realize, "necessity is the mother of invention":

"To the Babylonians, religion meant correct ritual rather than the good life. To do one's duty to the god's one had to offer a proper sacrifice to the temples. To participate in long and solemn processions with the image of Marduk and perform the sacred drama of his death and resurrection; to offer up the virginity of their daughters [to the fire] in the great festival of Ishtar. These were the essential works of the devout Babylonian soul."  
("Sumerians", Wooley, 1928, sourced from "Our Oriental Heritage", Sumeria)

"A frequent sacrifice on Babylonian altars was the lamb; [Lamb of later Isaiah/Jesus]  
"The lamb as a substitute for humanity; the lamb he gives for his life". Anonymous poem  
sourced from, "The Sumerians")

If things went from bad to worse, if the rains didn't show up, the crops wilted or invasions came then priests would even murder young children on their altar as blood sacrifices to Marduk or other gods to avert their gods wrath:

"In a crisis of great danger an ancient custom was that the ruler of a city or nation should give his beloved son to die for the people as a ransom offered to the avenging demons... Children were offered [to the flames]." Philo of Byblus  
("Golden Bough", sacrifice of the king's son)

These weird superstitions went on worldwide to about the 1500's, and even the OT (300 BC?) records child sacrifice but now as a warning:  
see, "Surpassing Wonder", pg. 60

"The Lord said to Moses, 'Any man of Israel who gives any of his children to Molech [fire god] shall be put to death; the people shall stone him with stones!' (Levit. 20)

"Historians say that there never was a civilization richer in superstitions than the Babylonians..."  
("Our Oriental Heritage", Babylonia)

## **Persia and Zoroastrianism**

"One mind, one voice, one action." Yasna  
(19)

"Much of the Christian view of the apocalypse is related to Persian Zoroasterism 'Day of Judgment', when the forces of light confronts those of Darkness and the dead arise to be judged."  
("World of Myth")

I'm sure most aren't familiar with the theories of Zoroaster (Zarathrustra) which was an early salvation mystery and the world's first monotheism. The earliest quotes from the religion was found in the large collection of "Avesta" housed today in Turkey. And due to the age of its thought it's clear that there were many Zoroastrian priests dating back to roughly 4,000 BC. Unfortunately I must spend a lot of ink on this 'constellation religion' since it influenced both Judaism and Christianity's later doctrines a great deal:  
See, "Age of Faith", Persia, "Jesus", McCannon,

"Zoroaster was thus the first to teach the doctrines of an individual judgment, Heaven and Hell, the future resurrection of the body, the general Last Judgment, and life everlasting for the reunited soul and body. These doctrines were to become familiar articles of faith to much of mankind, through borrowings by Judaism, Christianity and Islam."  
("Zoroastrians", Boyce, pg. 29)

"There were many Zoroaster's as he is mentioned in the Indian *Rig Veda* (5,000 BC) and is described-like Jesus as a renegade teacher."

("Jesus Christ, Sun of God: ancient cosmology and early Christian symbolism", Fideler, '61) see also, "Secret History of the World, Age of demi-gods

**1200BC**

“Zoroastrian Iran was defeated by the expansion of Islam, but for over 1,000 years Zoroastrianism was the official religion of three major world empires, making it the most powerful world religion of the time.”

(John R. Hinnels, ed. *Penguin Dictionary of Religions*, 2nd ed.)

“The *Avesta* was a moral code to help distinguish right from wrong. Like the Hebrew 10 Commandments, Mesopotamian Code of Hammurabi and Egyptian Law of Ma'at, these books clearly spelled out rules against lying, cheating, murdering, stealing and provided guidelines the masses could use in their everyday lives.”

(“Jesus” McCannon) , see also Encyclopedia Iranica "Avesta"

As one of mankind's earliest 'savior religions' its adherents would be delivered mostly after death in an apocalyptic showdown with either Lord Mazda or the Devil. And unlike other polytheisms of the time, the religious unit for Zoroaster was the individual--not a collective state religion like Judaism or the Egyptian cults. In Zoroastrianism, human beings weren't pawns in a cosmic war but had free will to be what they wanted:

see, “Rise of the West”

"To Zoroaster, each human can choose between good/evil.”

("Discovering God")

The *Avesta* speaks of Zoroaster:

'Zoroaster had a virgin birth from a ray of divine reason.' *Avesta* #51

Like many ancient saviors, Zoroaster saw himself as a founder of a new religion which lasted 1000 years:

see, "Dawn of Civilization" Maspero/McClure, “Our Oriental Heritage”, Persia, “Rise of the West: history of the human community”, McNeil, 1963/71

"Mazda 'Lord Wisdom', thou art the First also the Last--that thou art father of Good thought...And the Lord to judge the actions of life." *Yasna* 31

(sourced from "Rise of the West"), see also "Fields of Blood", farmers & herdsmen

Astoundingly, the few Hebrew priests inside Babylonia copied their monotheistic ideas from Zoroastrian theories:

"Judaism was profoundly influenced by Zoroastrian religion... Isaiah was influenced by Zoroastrianism."

("And Man Created God: a history of the world at the time of Jesus", O'Grady), ("Invention of the Land of Israel", Sand, pg. 76-8), see Isaiah 45

"Zoroastrian teachings were studied by the [later] Essenes and who exerted a great influence on the Jews in Babylon. Zoroaster was the state religion in the Sassanean Empire... ("Magi: quest for a secret mysterious tradition", Gilbert),

"Persian Zoroastrianism provided the elements--angels, millions of demons, the Prince of Darkness, hell, the Last Judgment and resurrection--which in turn later passed on into Christianity."

(Interpreters, "Greco-Roman Background of the NT", Stanley)

To the Zoroaster's, the universe was a cosmic struggle between good and evil (dualism), the doctrine of 2 creators or even possibly 2 creations. Zoroaster also spoke of salvation and a Last Judgment:

"Zoroaster concluded there must be a malevolent deity, Angra, the 'Hostile Spirit' equal in power to the Wise Lord but his polar opposite. The good must fight back... Zoroaster's apocalyptic thinking was unique and unprecedented."  
("Fields of Blood", farmers & herdsmen") *Yasna* 30

see, "Mythology of all Races", Iranian Mythology, Carnoy, 1917, "Zoroastrianism: Iranian Roots of Christianity?" Bryan Rennie, Department of Religion, History, Philosophy, and Classics, Westminster College, "And Man Created God", "Story of Civilization", Hellenistic Revival, "Early Zoroastrianism", Moulton, "From Stone Age to Christianity", Albright, Encyclopedia Britannica, "Avesta"

"Armageddon, the dualistic worldview, was carried over into Christianity by St. Paul... In Zoroastrianism, Ahriman [Devil] and Mazda "Lord Wisdom" [God] weren't really enemies--they were *twin brothers* who had created the world together. While Mazda created life, Ahriman created death."

("Custodians of the Truth", Wallace-Murphy/Hopkins), ("[Jesus](#)" [McCannon](#)), ("Story of Civilization", Hellenistic Revival, vol. 3), see also, "Fields of Blood", "Revelation", Pagels

Continuing:

"The link with Babylon and Zoroaster with its emphasis on one supreme God wasn't a

pure monotheism but a struggle between the Supreme Being and the forces of evil appearing as rival celestial beings [dualism]. The Jews borrowed this idea...  
("Road from Babylon: story of the sephadi and oriental Jews", Raphael)

An old scripture of a Zoroaster recounting:

"Truly, there are two primal Spirits, twins renowned to be in conflict. In thought and word, in act they are two: the better and the bad... And when these two Spirits first came together they created life and not-life, and how at the end Worst Existence shall be for the wicked, but the House of Best Purpose shall for the just man. Of these two Spirits the Wicked One chose achieving the worst things. The Most Holy Spirit, who is clad in the hardest stone, chose right, and so do those who shall satisfy Ahuramazda continually with rightful acts." (Yasna 30)

As mentioned, more fanatical sects like the Essenes got their devil idea from Zoroaster and which Christians enthusiastically grabbed as written in the gospel stories:

"The god of the OT was with the Zoroastrian devil, Angra."  
("Reformation: a history", the word behind words)

There would be a swift Judgment:

"The dualistic battles between good and evil, light/dark, characteristic of Zoroastrianism and later Gnostic texts were found in the Jewish *alternative* scripture."  
("Story of the Jews", Classical Jews, Schama)

see early Jewish alternative scriptures like *Thanksgiving Hymms*, 1 Enoch, *Genesis Apocayphon*, *the War Scroll*.

The Zoroasterians were ritual fire-worshippers. What prompted these Zoroaster's would be a mystery but my guess would be early tribal attacks by another enemy. A later Christian version of Zoroaster:

"...the fire isn't quenched for everyone will be salted with fire." Mark 9

"And don't fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell!" Mt. 10

Zoroaster, Matthew 23/24? I'll let you decide:

"The Last Judgment will be pronounced, the Kingdom of Mazda will return and all the forces of evil will be destroyed. Then all good souls will begin a new life in a world without evil."

("Life in Ancient Egypt", Erman, 1894), (*Diodorus*, I, lxx)

I'm sure that the Book of Revelation stole the Zoroastrian centuries-old Zoroastrian style of writing:

"In shaping the sky and the heavenly bodies Mazda produced the constellations. The stars are a warlike army destined for battle against the evil spirits." *Yasna* 30

("Mythology of all Races", Myths of Creation, sourced from, "Fields of Blood")

Even Gibbon's from the 1700's was aware of these Zoroaster's:

"The theory of Zoroastrianism was darkly comprehended by foreigner's [Jews/Christians]."

("Decline/Fall", state of Persia)

### **Mithraism 1st-4th century**

"The Mysteries didn't offer religious dogma to simply be believed, but a myth [rite] to be entered into."

("Jesus Mysteries", Sacred Spectacle at Eleusis", Freke/Gandy)

"Each of the great cults of the Mediterranean region had 'mysteries' which were ceremonies of purification, sacrifice, initiation, revelation and regeneration. This centered about the death/resurrection of the god."

("Caesar & Christ", Hellenistic revival)

Another early Greek/Roman religion very similar to later Christianity was Mithraism which came out of Persia around 500 BC. Mithraism was a religion that offered salvation based on faith and compassion. In the 5th century BC, the Greek historian Herodotus mentioned the 'Persian Mitra'. In Persia, its god was called Mithra and in Rome, Mithras. The difference between them was Mithraism didn't have scriptures or physical texts to lean on like later Christianity-- so all later inferences were from outside sources:

see, "Did Jesus Exist?", 2 key data), (*Herodotus* Bk. 1, ch. 131) , "Oriental Religion's in Roman

Paganism", pgs. 153+

"For almost 500 years Mithraism was on *equal terms* with Christianity for converts. Up until the 4th c. there were only 3 contenders of Rome's Imperial religion: Christianity, Isis and Mithraism. It was Emperor Constantine who eventually made the choice."

("Mithras: mystery & initiation Rediscovered", Cooper), see also "Golden Bough", oriental religions, "Roman Cult of Mithras", Clauss, "*Cybele and Attis, the Myth and the Cult*", Vermaseren

"What gave Mithraism its strongest appeal was its doctrine of immortality. The resurrection of the body and that the faithful would reach heaven. Mithra was a friend and *champion* of the poor... Like Jesus, Mithra is marked as the 'first born son of God.'... Mithra was very popular with soldiers."

("Life in Ancient Rome", Religion, Cowell, pg.191), ("Jesus: Explosive Story", McCannon), ("Concise History of the Catholic Church", pg.26, see also, "Complete Roman Army", Goldsworthy

Although Greece had 1000's of gods, Mithras was a powerful "floating deity" observing each believer. Like later Catholics, adherents called each "brother" and priests were called "father". As dualists (a god of heaven another god of evil/hell) Mithraist's were inclined to both asceticism and impurity. Again, notice the similarities to later Christianity:

see, "Birth of Classical Europe", Roman Empire

"Mithraic baptism wiped out moral faults...2. The cult practiced baptism and had a sacramental meal... 3. Ancients were very close to the mystery religions. The sacrament of bread and wine came from Mithras: 'He who will not eat of my body and drink of my blood, so that he will be made one with me and I with him'... 4. Those initiated in the mysteries of Mithra and Isis would be 'born again'".

("Oriental Religion's in Roman Paganism", pg. 124), 2. ("History of Christianity" Latourette, pg. 20) 3. ("Mystery Religions of the Ancient World", Goodwin), 4. ("Revelation: visions, prophecy and politics", Pagels, from Justin's *Apology*, 150 AD)

For reasons not fully explained, early religions stole ideas from each other without guilt. Substituting this for that and hoping one might work out better than the other:

"Paul was influenced by Mithraism which was popular throughout the Roman world in 1st century as the *most powerful faith* in the Empire... It was believed that *participation* in the cult transformed a person. The *imitation of a gods deeds was a way to ascend to a gods status*. Identification with a divinity symbolized that one had achieved salvation...



The [later] honor of Rome's Imperial religion was Christianity, Isis and Mithra. It was Emperor Constantine who eventually made the choice.”

(“Radical Jew: Paul and the politics of identity”, Boyarin), (“Roman Cult of Mithras: the god and his mysteries”, Clauss (Ger.)  
see, "Mesopotamia"

Even in Rome today there are tours of Mithraic temples::

"The chapels were underground caves to symbolize the burial from which God would rescue the faithful... Those initiated in the mysteries of Mithra and Isis would be 'born again'... These were ceremonies of purification, sacrifice, initiation, revelation and regeneration centering on the death and resurrection of the god.”

("Life in Ancient Rome", religion), (from, "Revelation: visions, prophecy and politics", Pagels),  
("Story of Civilization: Caesar and Christ, Durant, pg. 524) also paraphrased from Justin's "Apology", 150 AD

As mentioned, Mithra came from Persia which at the time was then under Zoroastrianism. As mentioned, one of Zoroaster's more outlandish precepts was his theory in which 'good and bad gods' would battle each other in heaven.

Franz Cumont was a Belgian archaeologist and historian who in the 1800's and early 1900's spent many years in Mesopotamia studying the mystery religions:

“Both Judaism and Christianity have *allied* the mystery of Mithra... Mithra was the god who assisted the faithful in their struggle against the malignity of the demons... The Mithra worship had Persian dualism for its fundamental dogma. The world is a scene between good and evil. Life is a combat; soldiers under the command of Mithra must ceaselessly oppose the infernal powers.”

("Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism", Cumont, pg. 125, 153)

Even the later Book of Revelation (250?) later copied Mithraist ideas:

“Candidates who passed through the Mithraist initiations were called 'lions' and marked with an Egyptian cross on their foreheads. Throughout the mystery ritual, the birth of Mithra as the Sun God are repeated, as his sacrifice for man, his death that man might have eternal life, and that his resurrection ensured salvation.”  
("Secret Teachings of all Ages", Hall, 1928/2003)

Continuing:

"Mithraists believed in the immortality of the soul. But sinners after death were dragged off to hell while the 'Just' passed through the 7 spheres of the planets, leaving at each planet a part of their lower nature until, as pure spirits, they stood before God."

("Birth of Classical Europe", Roman Empire)

Mithra was a 'guys only' religion--which I'm sure the women of the time just laughed off and wouldn't protest like the left now:

"Mithras was a masculine warrior-cult that excluded women... Mithra was worshiped almost exclusively by men, whom he subjected to a rigid moral discipline."

("Birth of Classical Europe", Roman Empire), ("Oriental Religion's in Roman Paganism", pg. 40)  
see also "Rome"

Mithraism or later Christianity? You decide:

"Mithra was a 'son of God'. Mithra was called savior and mediator and sometimes figured as a lamb. He was buried in a tomb and rose again... Savior-religions like Mithra, Osiris, Hermes all professed to deliver mankind from 'the body of this death'. Each community had its divine protectors; almost always a local Earth Mother with a divine Son who brought vegetation through birth, death and resurrection. There was also a great Father, but he was further off in the sky. The Son was nearer, the son of a god and a mortal women."

("Zoroaster: life and work of the Fronrunner in Persia", Run-Shin), ("Hellenism and the Modern World", Murray) ("Pagan and Christian Creeds")

More similarities:

"The initiation of a god's deed was a way to ascend to a god's status... Mithra was born from a rock and was called 'the Rock'. The story of Peter as the rock was due to their approximation to the Mithraic idea of the 'G-d from the Rock'... The 'keys to the kingdom' also came from Mithraism... Mithras required adherents to repent and be baptized."

("Roman Cult of Mithras"), ("Paganism in Our Christianity, Arthur Weigall, 1928), ("Mithras contribution to Christianity", Lyons ,Tyndalearchive.com), ("Kingdom & Community: social world of early Christianity", Gager), see also "Mithras: mysteries & initiation Rediscovered"

Like many of these ancient cults Mithraism died out over a lack of scriptures and a

concrete hierarchy like Christianity:

"In the 4th c. later Christian Fathers were *shocked* to find many parallels between their own religion and Mithraism."

("Caesar and Christ", Hellenistic Revival), see also "Golden Bough", oriental religions, "Jesus: the Explosive Story of the Lost 30 Yrs".--Jesus among the Essenes, McCannon

## **Ancient Greece**

"Philosophy begins in wonder! ..The un-examined life is not worth living." Socrates (425 BC)

"... The great goddess Artemis is magnificent, she whom all Asia and the world worship." Acts 19

As well known, the Greeks loved their mythical heroes. Their stories were wonderfully imaginative, blatantly cartoonish and their myths and legends bonded both the Greek and Roman cultures for over 700 years. More importantly, their 'Hellenist' influence around the region as a proven cultural fact swayed the later NT to a great deal.

Typical philosophic questions of the time:

"Are the forces which govern the world conscious and personal or unconscious and impersonal?"  
("Golden Bough")

For their time, Greeks were plain geniuses. They invented the world's first democracy (a system of voting among people), had no accepted doctrine of heaven, little concept of a devil/ hell (Hades) or the afterlife, and were very sharp armchair philosophers:

"Ancient Paganism was never an organized religion *per se* but rather a conglomeration of many different religions arising from many cultures and ethnicities... For everyone to get along no one ethnic religion could be seen as greater than another, no god or goddess was above another. Everyone's religious beliefs had to be respected."

(essay, "On the Conversions of Pagans to Christianity", Catholic blog of Shane Schaetzel)

## **500 BC**

Heraclitus was an important precursor to the Platonic movement which lasted almost 1000 years:

"Though the body is an animal; through the intellect it is a god." Heraclitus

"A man's character is his fate." Heraclitus

"Both Greek and Egyptian religions display strong Babylonian [Zoroastrian] influences. Greeks and Greek Jews were both influenced by Babylonian religions... Neither the Greeks nor the Romans *separated* religion from secular life."  
(“Discovering God”), (“Fields of Blood”, Jesus not of this world)

### 322 BC

Relaxing in Egypt after years of conquests Alexander the Great called himself the “son of Zeus”:

“The supreme ruler over the other gods is often identified with the sky-god Zeus, the Latin Jupiter, and his title of “king” or “Father”... The notion of souls ascending after death into an upper realm comes into Greek thought only gradually, and again the first intimations of it are in the 5 c. BC. The destination of the souls is ‘ether’ the region of the planets and the stars above the air that surrounds the earth.”

(“Between Pagan & Christian”, essay by C. Jones, Academia.edu, pg. 38-42 )

Unlike the countless out of shape and overweight Americans today ancient Greeks were big on holistic and spiritual health. In the cities, statues of Olympic gods were displayed in the nude which symbolized power. Likewise, to show off their bodies Olympians even competed in the nude. Imagine that in today's prudish 21<sup>st</sup> c. world? see, "Mysteries of the Middle Ages", great confluence, “Christianity: 1<sup>st</sup> 3K”, Greece/Rome

As pagan religion's became popular more temples were built and even both sexes would attend. Some of these temples were paid by the State:

“Pagan temples were served by an exclusive priesthood, many recruited from the elite. There was no congregational life because there were no congregations... no written works.”

(“Triumph of Christianity: how the Jesus movement became the worlds largest religion”, Stark, pgs. 8-30) + (“Religions of Rome”, Beard/North/Price, 1998)

"The Mediterranean and neighboring world had been the scene of a vast number of pagan creeds and rituals. There were Temples without end dedicated to gods like Apollo

and Dionysus among the Greeks, Hercules among the Romans, Mithra among the Persians, Adonnis and Attis in Syria and so forth."

("Pagan & Christian Creeds: their origin and meaning", pg. 8)

Most people don't realize that in the Old World there were two versions of 'saved':

"The Greek word for 'saved' meant restoring a person to health and wholeness."

("Other Bible and ancient scriptures", Barnstone)

So along with their health-nut craze went a spiritual phase with the notion of people having two-halves or schisms--a body and a soul. No one had ever thought of that before:

"The Platonic body/soul is standard in antiquity."

("Paul & Jesus", rethinking resurrection)

To some degree, most feared the wrath of the gods:

"No wisdom but in submission to the gods." Sophocles

"There is no way to escape the mind of Zeus."

("Classical Gods and Heroes", Hendricks, pg. 25), see, "Zeus", Dowden, pg. 75

"In Greek tradition, the gods were immortal which gave immortality to people. Humans were 'mortal gods'. It was believed that participation in the cult transformed a person."

("Roman Cult of Mithras: the god and his mysteries, Clauss/Gordon)

"The Orphic congregations solemnly partook of the blood of a bull, which was by a mystery blood of Dionysus himself, slain in sacrifice for the purification of man."

*Theocritus*, Greek poet

(*Idylls*, xxvi), ("Lang's Myth, Ritual and Religion", vol. ii)

The Greek gods would be 'interchangeable' since they borrowed savior-gods from other distant countries like Syria and Persia. And from the description below it's not hard to see where the later Gospel writers got their inspiration-- proving that older religion's shamelessly stole from each other:

"The worship of Attis became very widespread and much honored... He was a young shepherd, beloved by Cybele (or Demeter) the Mother of the gods. He was born of a Virgin—Nana. He died...bled to death at the foot of a pine tree. The sacrifice of his

blood renewed the fertility of the earth, and of his death and resurrection was fastened to a tree.”

(“Pagan & Christian Creeds”, Solar Myths)

Their gods also had sons. For instance, in the “Secret Sermon in the Mount” Hermes speaks to His Son Tat --which was most likely picked up in the gospels 500 years later. Since many Christian ideas were stolen from earlier religion’s can mean there is no “Father God” except in Christian mythology:

**500-600 BC**

Hermes (Trismegistus) the Son of Zeus--

"Come unto Me, even as children to their mother' s bosom.

Thou I, and I am Thou.

Tat: Thou tellest me a Riddle, Father, and dost not speak as a Father to his Son.

Hermes: Son, things of this kind are not taught but by God.”

(“Secret Sermon in the Mount”, 7th Book, "Pagan & Christian Creeds", pg. 168)

Just like a few of us in the 1980's, Greeks were into living and partying--opposite of the Egyptian's and their morbid obsession with death and dying. So there would be swing parties but religious.

The Greek geographer Strabo (64 BC – 24AD) reminiscing of Corinth:

“And the temple of Aphrodite was so rich that it owned more than 1000 temple slaves, courtesans, whom both men and women had dedicated to the goddess.”

(*Geographica* –Book 8, Chapter 6)

While Isaiah himself around 300BC may have been influenced by Greek Hellenism. The theme was later believed to be Jesus in prophecy.

"Cybele and Isis were mother-goddesses acquainted with grief... The worship of Adonis

was practiced by the Semitic peoples of Babylon and Syria. The Greeks borrowed it 700BC.”

("Caesar & Christ", Hellenistic revival), ("Golden Bough", myth of Adonis)

## **200 BC**

Some other rites from the mystery Temples:

"I am a child of earth and the starry heaven  
but my race is of heaven (alone)." Orphic Tablets

(from "Pagan & Christian Creeds", pg. 167)

In the later book of Ephesians (90+) Jesus descended to Hades to pick up souls but the Greeks beat them to it: (Ephesians 4)

"Dionysus was born again. He descended into Hades to bring up his mother from the dead... The Minotaur demanded human sacrifice."

("Golden Bough", Dionysus) + ("Greek Myths: storied of the Greek Gods and hero's vividly retold", Waterfield's) , ("Essential Visual History of World Mythology", Nat'l Geo)

"People found great hope in the practices of this religion. Like the Thracians, the Phrygian's began very early to believe in the immortality of the soul. Just as Attis died and came to life again every year, [a reference to Spring] these believers were to be born to new life after their death:

Another sacred hymn to Attis:

"Take courage, oh mystics  
because the god is saved;  
and for you also will come  
salvation from your trials."

("Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism", pg. 57)

In the later copycat Gospels, Jesus would be the “vine” while his disciples were the branches. However this is not an inference that Jesus was another pagan, dying/rising

god despite the similarities:

### **1500 BC**

"Bacchus [Dionysus], the son of Zeus, was a 'god of the vine'... Athena: the goddess of wisdom... Apollo: the god of prophecy."

("Influences of the Sexes on Vegetation"), ("Essential Visual History of World Mythology")

"Adonis [the Lord] is risen!" and his ascension into heaven was celebrated."

("Adonis, Attis and Osiris", Frazer, 1907)

### **Socrates/Plato/Aristotle 400BC**

"Plato had to part with the gods and ask: 'What is good?' Thus the new problem of values was born."

("God in Search of Man: the Philosophy of Judaism", Heschel, 1955/1983)

"In Plato's philosophy reality is dualistic. The earth is a flawed copy of the next life."

("Book of Genesis: a biography", Hendel), see "The Matter of the Gods: Religion & the Roman Empire", Ando, , Plato, *Timeous* 29, "Christianity: 1<sup>st</sup> 3K" Greece/Rome

Among the elite Roman ruling classes of the time (not commoners) Plato (427 BC), his opposite Socrates and later Aristotle were widely considered the height of learning. As pretty smart philosophers they were the first to question men's emotions ('What is happiness or well-being and how does a man achieve it?') rather than question the gods-- somewhat downgrading them. Plato believed that only a few had the intelligence and discernment to reach an understanding of the 'other world' where *all* truth resided:

"'Blessedness' means one engaged in cosmic meditation, a step towards enlightenment. A popular tradition in Platonism is that meditation on the heavens leads to the vision of God."

(essay, "Gnosticism as Platonism: With Special Reference to Marsanes", Harvard Theological Review, Vol. 77, #1, Jan. 1984, pg. 71)

While Plato's student Aristotle believed that suffering caused men to become more spiritually 'awoken' thus in tune with the gods. But what they believed was still just a theory since little could be proven empirically for another 2100 years:

see, "Jesus: the explosive story"



"I call upon God and beg him to be our savior and bring us to the haven of probability".  
Plato, *Timaeus*

"When the soul tries to investigate anything with the help of the body it is obviously led astray. With the body out of the way the soul gets a clear view of the facts...  
[At death] we gain direct knowledge of all that is pure--that is, presumably truth."  
Plato *Phaedo*

Both Plato and Aristotle confirmed that they derived their knowledge from polytheistic Egypt which Plato visited for 13 years. Centuries later (200's) Middle Platonists felt these philosophers descended from the gods and put their own pagan spin on his theories:

To Plato, "God willed into existence an incorruptible world... Later Middle Platonists followed suit and viewed creation as an act of divine will."

(essay, "Irenaeus, the Will of God, and Anti-Valentinian Polemics: A Closer Look at Against the Heresies 1.12.1" Geoffrey Smith, pg. 115, sourced from "Beyond the Gnostic Gospel's: studies)

Plato had two theories: the first principle was the 'Realm of the Forms' from *Republic* which objects in this world are a poor example of the Next world. In other words, our bodies are secondary to the Next life. Centuries later, and with the Greek thought rampant, Apostle Paul picked up Plato's philosophy into his own:

"The outer man is wasting away, while the inner-self is being renewed day by day."  
2 Corinthians 4

"That matter was evil was a common Gnostic/Neo-Platonist position... Paul was deeply influenced by Neo-Platonism."

("History of Hell" Turner), ("A World lit only by fire" the Medieval Mind", Manchester)

Like Plato, Socrates tried to free himself from the "pleasures of the flesh" and to purify the mind from the 'distorting influences of pleasure and pain'. And since death and illness were so common they guessed (actually badly guessed!) that the body/flesh was *no good but that the soul or spirit was transcendental*. This theology the Jews fortunately ignored, but later Hellenized Christians embraced with both arms and used it

in most of their NT production:

See, "Proto-Trinity: development of the doctrine of the Trinity in the 1st/2nd centuries", Gaston, pg. 40, "Marcus Aurelius", pg. 108

"From Justin [1<sup>st</sup> c.] to Augustine, Platonism repeatedly played a crucial role in not only the conversion to, but the *expression* of Christian thinking."

(essay, "From Cybele to Christ: Christianity in the transformation of late Roman religious culture." Pettipiece pg. 52, Academia.edu) note--Pettipiece received his doctorate in Religious Studies from Université Laval in 2006

Plato's second theory is from *Timeus* which was a 2-part running dialog of question and answer. In this there would be two gods of creation—one good and one bad. Also, one god was higher than the other. This would be later called Hermeticism which at the time was used in the mystery rites of Mithra, Isis and the later Gnostics:

see, "History of Christianity", Latourette, pg. 20

"To Plato, the irrational [people, the earth] was associated with matter or errant cause... 2. Flesh and blood bodies *bothered* the Platonic dualist... 3. Plato rejects the 5 senses altogether. The immaterial world is where truth alone lies... 4. The Platonic body/soul schism is *standard in antiquity*."

("Passion of the Western Mind", Tarnas), ("Birth of Christianity", Crossan), ("New History of Early Christianity", Freeman), ("Paul & Jesus", rethinking resurrection) see, "Early Christian World vol. 1 & 2, Hellenistic Platonism

### *Timeaus*

"The Timeas is Plato's creation story. According to that story, a divine story a craftsmen or *demiurge* imposed order and beauty upon a preexisting chaos to fashion our world in the likeness of an eternal model."

"Timeaus", intro

"In Platonic doctrine, the general and universal are everything while the individual is nothing... The thirst for salvation was grounded in a sense that earthly existence itself was impure, which is a negative evaluation of man."

("Evolution of God", pg. 321), ("Civilization of the Middle Ages", Cantor)

"The Greek-sponsored philosophy of 'scorn of the flesh' articulated by Plato, will have *indelible marks* on Christian attitudes... In Greece there were Platonic assumptions

about the unreality of life.”

("Mystery's of the Middle Ages: beginning of the Modern World, Alexandria city of reason, Cahill),  
("History of Christianity: 1<sup>st</sup> 3K", Alternative Identities)

Back in the 1960's the Beatles were part of our culture and everything seemed to evolve the Fab Four. Girls screamed their heads off and rabid fans would use their sometimes nonsensical lyrics in everyday speech. Well 2200 years ago Greeks quoted Plato:

“The identity of the Demiurge [Framer] and its relation to the Form of the Good are just two things that are left *unexplained*... It is the 2<sup>nd</sup> god that creates the world. The relations between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Gods are not clear.”

(“Proto-Trinity: development of the doctrine of the Trinity in the 1st/2nd centuries”, Gaston, pgs. 41-7)  
see, "Philosophy Book: big ideas simply explained", Iraenus *Against Heresies* Chap. 5

"Plato was just speculating. They were a myth, 'a likely story'".

("Why I am not a Muslim", Warraq), see also, Plato: the collected dialogues, Cairns, '89

A dualistic Jewish take on Plato:

"Plato invented the concept called the *demiurge* [from *Timaeus*] with the 'lower/higher god' theory. The lower god was somewhat evil (the earth, animals, mankind) while the higher gods were the *true gods* and worthy of attention... The lower god did the work of constructing the world... and was to blame for the existence of evil.”

("Book of Genesis"), ("Discovering God", Rise of Christianity)

To the practical Greeks, the *demiurge* concept was inconsequential, but to later apocalyptic-minded Jews it would help destroy their small territory in 70-73 AD.

Continuing:

"To Plato it was the *demiurge* [lower god] not God, who actually did the work of constructing the world. The *demiurge* was to blame for the existence of evil...

The highest God ruled all the planetary deities and could suspend the laws of fate and liberate the devout from the web of determinism."

("Discovering God", Rise of Christianity), ("Passion of the Western Mind" Tarnas, pgs. 84, 106)

Plato also wrote the 'unreality of life' where “Ideas” (of God) and the cosmos were more real than the world. While Plato's earlier teacher Socrates felt the opposite--the body is ‘good’ and that spiritual reality is *not* available to those who use their five senses. Today most feel that Plato’s view is against common sense.

see, "Christian Ethics" Wogaman), "Christianity: the 1st 3K", MacCulloch, "Ancient Guide to Modern Life"

Plato also believed the notion of a soul. These concepts the Jews shunned however:

“Platonism contributed to Christianity its model of the soul.”  
("Swerve: how the world became modern", The teeth of time, Greenblatt)

### **Middle Platonism 90BC-3rd Century**

“From the divine Intellect comes a World Soul.”  
("Passion of the Western Mind", pg. 85)

Centuries later a 'middle period' school developed with philosophers like Porphyry, Plutarch and Philo of Alexandria who reinterpreted Plato thru more metaphysical speculations.. They also absorbed the highly moralistic Stoic philosophy. However, they weren't as radically-minded as the early gnostics as their multiple god theories:

see, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy/Middle Platonism

‘Middle school Platonist’s attacked the early gnostics for their misinterpretations of *Timaeus*, their radical ‘dualism’ theories and the doctrine of the evil or foolish Creator.’

(paraphrased from an essay, “Gnosticism as Platonism: With Special Reference to Marsanes”, Harvard Theological Review, Vol. 77, #1, Jan. 1984, pg. 68-70)

Later monks like Paul, and the Catholic monks from the 4th-16th centuries, stayed with the Middle school period where God had his ‘henchmen’--good and bad spirits and demons—to do his dirty work. Also, the Middle school kept believing Plato’s theory that all matter is evil.

Finally they defended free-will and the immorality of the soul:

“For Porphyry, as for Plotinus, what matters most in life is to free one's soul from the calamities of the body and the sensible world in general.”  
(Stanford Ency of Philosophy)

### **Neo-Platonism 3rd-5th century**

“He [initiate] does not converse with a statue or image but with Godhead himself... A

simplification and surrender of self.” Plotinus

Neo-Platonism was the last of the three schools of Plato which was highlighted by Plotinus that ditched the old schools in favor of more personal gods. These gods would run back and forth between heaven and earth to enlighten the recipient with inside knowledge. Even St. Augustine was a Neo-Platonist:

“Plotinus understood that the true self or soul is a child of ‘God’, the ‘Father’ or the ‘One’”...

(Early Christian World Vol. 1 and 2, Esler, ed., 2002, from *Enneads* 2.9.16), see “Philostratus & Eunapius: lives of the Sophists”, *Eunapius*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Century, pg. 323

What’s important to understand is these Greek philosophies stayed away from almost all religions, thus they had no religious dogma to trip them up:

“Neo-Platonists developed an asceticism that tried to sharpen spiritual perception by *starving* the senses by which the soul had been degraded from heaven into man.”

(“*Caesar & Christ*”, pg. 607, *paraphrased*)

### **Cynic's (320BC)**

"The Cynic life was 'a shortcut to virtue.'"

("The Cynic Philosophy: Diogenes to Julian")

"Cynic's were scornful of the gods in their history... They were sarcastic and skeptical about God."

(“Kingdom & Community”), (“Intro to the NT”, Brown)

Polar opposite the Platonist's, the Cynics believed that behavior (morals) were more important than abstract thought. Behavior could *change* people! Today most psychologists and psychiatrists like “Dr. Phil”/ “Dr. Laura” come from the Greek school of Cynics and Stoics.

see, "Intro to the NT"

### **Epicurean's (300 BC-100AD)**

“Fear is the first mother of the gods. Fear, above all, of death.” Lucretius

"The greater the power of divinity the closer was a person to the gods themselves."

(“Gospel According to Paul”, Griffith-Jones)

Like Socrates, this Greek philosophy believed that ‘feelings with the 5 senses are

trustworthy and not abstractions'. In other words, Epicureans weren't that religious and may have been the world's first agnostics:

“Greek philosophy became a replacement for religions.”  
 (“Rise of the West”, pgs. 161-220)

A poem by Lucretius:

\*The universe was *not* created for or about humans.

\*The soul dies.

\*There is no afterlife.

\*The world is made of minute particles [atoms].

\*All organized religions are superstitious delusions. Divine intervention isn't possible..

\*Religions are invariably cruel.

\*No angels, demons or ghosts.

("On the Nature of Things", 50 BC)

The Epicurean's ("atomists") also ingeniously believed that the cosmos was a collection of 'unseen particles' (atoms)--which wasn't later proven until the 1800's! Talk about a Greek revelation! Even the anonymous NT Letter to the Hebrews (90-110AD) later picks up this Greek idea that 'the things that are made aren't made of what they appear' about 300 years later.

### **Stoic's (400 BC-300 AD)**

“Ignorance, the root and stem of every evil.... I'm trying to think, don't confuse me with facts!” Plato

“We are so much at the mercy of chance that Chance herself, by whom God is proved uncertain, takes the place of God.” Pliny the Elder, 1<sup>st</sup> c.

(*Natural History* 2.5.22)

Stoic philosophy was the opposite of the Epicureans yet was still about spirituality:

"Stoics could be saved by receiving some sort of Divine revelation from the true God."  
("Intro to the NT")

The Greek Stoics were liberals who championed human rights at least 1400 years before England's 'Common Law' in the 1300's:

"All men are brothers born with equal rights."  
("Life in Ancient Rome", Cowell, pg. 108)

To Stoics, people were responsible for their own actions which they could examine and control through self-discipline. The irrational was evil and lying would be frowned upon. They also used the 'god within the self' and Logos principle. This concept began with Heraclitus (400 BC) and was later famously used in Revelation 500 years later but who instead referred it to Jesus:  
see, works by Epictetus

"The Word (logos) from Gospel of John is Stoic... Logos is the reason that pervades the universe."  
("The Faith: history of Christianity"), ("Intro to the NT", Brown)

"Stoic's were pantheistic ('god is everything and in everything') much like Hindus. They believed that evil is a human aberration and no one can or could predict who is evil and who isn't... Stoics believed that the mind of God is in each of us."

("On Pagans, Jews and Christianity". Momigliano) ("Marcus Aurelius", McLynn, '08)

Most astronomers/physicists today have strong Stoic influences:

"God designs everything. The world is made by reason. Evil is a *human aberration*. The divine, the natural world and people are all linked. Goodness--not power or strength--is real. The Cosmos [gods] determine ones fate."

("Marcus Aurelius", McLynn)

Like Plato, they were into self-control:

"Stoics believed in the 'conquest of the emotions and self' [Platonism]... Stoics were suspicious of the emotions; mans aim was to detach himself from passions rather than enjoy them."  
("Intro to the NT"), ("And Man Created God", chap. 2)

By the 1900's, and without any proof or empirical testing, biologist's found out how surprisingly accurate Stoic philosophy was:

"The harmony of universe was the *rationality of its natural laws*."  
(from "Marcus Aurelius")

Its great men were esteemed:

"When Demetrius restored democracy in Athens, the Greeks gave both him and his father a divine honor under the title Savior Gods. Altars were set up to the Saviors and the people came with hymns, dances and bowed to them."  
("Golden Bough")

But the Greek intelligentsia couldn't find a lowbrow religion enough for the masses-- that would be later Christianity:

"Couldn't the Greek philosopher's devise a suitable religion? They tried and tried but their systems were too intellectual, too much based on reason. How could the masses understand them?"  
("Hellenism and the Modern World")

Finally, Stoic's used an ethic higher than anyone worldwide up to the Abolitionist movement in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century:

'You have as many enemies as you have slaves'. Seneca 60 AD  
("Life in Ancient Rome", Cowell, 1961)

## **Buddha 200 BC**

Like ourselves, the ancients knew how to travel, explore, share and borrow. This was later attributed to Jesus:

"Those who do evil will reap evil results." Buddha

## **Roman Religions**

"Philosophy shows us which things are evil and which are not." Seneca, Roman philosopher



(Letters 90)

"Fear is the first mother of the gods. Fear, above all, of death." Lucretius, Roman philosopher

"The pagan world was *not* animated by a guilt and desire for forgiveness."  
(“Rome”, Gabucci)

In the time of Jesus' the Mediterranean area was under Roman control although the dominant culture and philosophy was Greek. This “Eternal City” lasted almost 1200 years and its genius over time projected law, military, organization, administration, engineering, literacy and the arts. Roman Emperors were also acclaimed for their rather liberal thought rather than the power- hungry madmen often portrayed. For example, Marcus Aurelius (140-180AD) was widely considered a saint:

see, "Intro to the NT", Raymond Brown, 1997, "The Classical World", Fox, '01, “Europe: a History” ancient Rome, "Marcus Aurelius", “Caesar and Christ: Hannibal against Rome”, “Decline/Fall”, progress of the Christian religion

"The Roman's were the most powerful and enlightened nation on the globe... Roman's were *more* religious than Greeks, Persians and Egyptians.”  
(“Decline/Fall”, conversion of the barbarians), (“Triumph of Christianity”, pg. 9)

“The Roman state is the civilized world of their time. It begins when Rome was small ... and ends with the final toleration of the Christians.”  
(“Sword & the Cross”, Grant, pg. 9)

Their conquests around the Mediterranean Rome many felt paranoia, and even the Imperial court itself sat on knives edge. For example, in a recent documentary English historian Mary Beard said, “politicians could be flavor of the month one day-- and dead the next.” In fact, over 50 of its Caesar's would be murdered or forced to commit suicide. Not a great stat:

“Most Emperors suspected that nearly everyone was plotting against them and rightfully so. Many emperors were murdered by the Praetorians charged with protecting them.”  
(“Triumph of Christianity”, Stark, pg. 12+)

Today, and as spiritual as they were, it's probably hard to believe that Rome would be at war with other nations and tribes for over *900 years* starting with Carthage in North Africa (264 BC) and ending in the East with the Persian wars 7<sup>th</sup> c..

A sociologist:

"Roman religion was extracted from the Greek and Italian cultures. Stone idols were everywhere and rituals to the god were before everything... Roman mythology was primarily adapted from Greek gods and given new names."

("Discovering God", Stark) ("Roman myths, heroes and legends", Pickels, pg. 8)

Historian Bart Ehrman:

"Roman religions were all polytheistic, accepting the existence of many gods and promoting their worship. Because of the *open nature of polytheism*, there was *virtually no such thing as 'conversion.'*... As odd as this seems, pagans were *not* required to believe truths about the gods. Paganism was instead about performing the proper, traditional cultic act... There were no propositional statements about a god that a participant in a cultic act had to affirm. There really were no doctrines. As a result, there was no such thing as "orthodoxy" (right beliefs) or "heresy" (false beliefs)."

("Triumph of Christianity", Ehrman, pg. 75+)

At its height, the Empire carried roughly 15-20 million people which at the time was 20% of the then known world. Rome itself had over a million—most living in squalor. Derided by Jews as the "Great Babylon of the West" it wasn't a great time to live by our standpoints today. They lived mostly by wax candlelight, as few could afford longer lasting mineral spirit lamps. School was for rich boys only and girls not allowed. There were no books to read because there was no paper, so the papyrus scroll would need to be passed around:

See, "Christian Worship: origin and evolution", pg. 5

"The mass of the people lived in poverty... Productivity was poor... It was a Third World economy... Its main source of income was tributes on the conquered... Romans rested on slaves.."

("Marcus Aurelius: a Life", McLynn, pg. 3+)

"For most ancients, life was lived very near the edge. Simply surviving, let alone thriving, was an enormous struggle... If one lived to 40 they were considered fortunate."

("Triumph of Christianity", Ehrman, pg. 80), ("Justinian's Flea: the first great plague and the end of Roman Empire", Rosen)

For centuries, hygiene was also a problem since sewage was just dumped in the river

and their populace 'cleaned' themselves with urine! Even pee would be sold in bottles at the local market. Gag! Single houses were rare and apartments were just tiny cubicles. According to one historian, "there was only one house for 26 blocks of apartments."

Both the sick and the healthy bathed in the public baths and pandemics could last *years* instead of weeks or months. For example, the Justinian Plague (165-180 AD):  
See, "Daily Life in Ancient Rome" Carcopino 1940, pg. 23

"As you kiss your son goodnight, whisper to yourself that he may be dead in the morning." Epictetus

Eyewitness John of Ephesus described the process--although the figures are highly exaggerated:

"[Theodore] made very large pits, inside each of which 70,000 corpses were laid down. He thus appointed men there, who brought down corpses, sorted them and piled them up. They pressed them in rows on top of each other, in the same way as someone presses hay in a loft... Men and women were trodden down, and in the little space between them the young and infants were pressed down, trodden with the feet and trampled down like spoilt grapes."

"No one knew how to treat the stricken. Nor did most people try."

("Triumph of Christianity", pg. 39)

see, "Intro to the NT", Brown, "Rats, Lice & History", Zinsser, 1935, "A World only Lit by Fire",

"Plagues and Peoples", McNeill

As a semi-Greek city, Rome would have imported the occasional Greek Tragedy while the larger Colosseum drew in big raucous crowds with the gladiatorial fights and chariot races. Sometimes even the Emperors themselves would watch, although rarely. And contrary to legend, only rarely did these captured-in-war slaves "fight to the death" like on TV since a dead slave couldn't be sold in Roman auctions:

("Life in Ancient Rome", Cowell, 1972, pg. 107) [see](#). Interpreter's Guide, "Greek-Roman Background of the NT"). "Christian Worship: origin and evolution", pg. 4

"Slaves in Rome had legitimate rights and abusing or killing a slave was a punishable

crime... Death – particularly by lions – was not an inevitable punishment and not restricted to Christians.”

(“Intro to the NT”, Brown, ch. 4), (“Mythbusting Ancient Rome--throwing Christian's to the lions”, Shushma Malik, PhD Classics/ C. Davenport, Dr. of Ancient History, Oxford, Nov. 21, 2016)

## 15 AD

While its often said that religion can put the fear of god into people so Rome’s barbarian neighbors to the north would be also greatly feared. This would be over legions of Roman troops marching across their land over centuries carrying swords, bows & arrows. Those who resisted would be terrorized, entire villages burnt down and the younger women carted off to be sold as slaves. But here, a Germanic tribe gets their revenge.

A Roman Historian:

"There is nothing in which they [barbarians] take more pride than in killing any man whatever: as glorious spoils of the slain they tear off their heads, then strip off their skins and hang them upon their war-horses as trappings. No temple or sacred place is to be seen in their country, not even a hut thatched with straw can be discerned anywhere. But after the manner of barbarians a naked sword is fixed in the ground they reverently worship it as their god of war, the presiding deity of those lands over which they range... They do not know the meaning of slavery, since all are born of noble blood, and moreover they choose as chiefs those men who are conspicuous for long experience as warriors."

("Roman History of Ammianus Marcellinus", pg. 395)

-----

The Roman religion mixed with Greek philosophy which became their center of spirituality. Roman cults believed in heaven and hell where the ‘good’ would find justice and go to a different spiritual plane while the ‘wicked’ after death would go to the Greek god Hades. Through the pagan rite of water baptism Romans could "wash away their impurities of the soul". Even acts of self-denial (Platonism) were sometimes required:

(“Oriental Religion’s in Roman Paganism”, Cumont, 1956, from, “Triumph of Christianity)

“The Mediterranean and neighboring world had been the scene of a vast number of

pagan creeds and rituals. There were Temples *without end* dedicated to the gods... These deities were all born on or near Christmas day, born of a Virgin Mother, lived in a Cave or Underground chamber, led a life of Toil for mankind. They were called by the names of Lightbringer, Healer, Mediator, Savior, Deliverer, were vanquished by the Powers of Darkness, descended into Hell or the Underworld, they rose again from the dead and became pioneers of mankind to the heavenly world.”  
("Pagan & Christian Creeds")

Their Caesar's were treated as gods:

"Great is Caesar: God must be with him!"

An atheist would be unheard of since gods 'controlled their destiny.' The gods controlled whether they caught a cold or whether barbarian's in the north would be defeated. We must presume inter-personal relationships would be of the gods also.  
For example:  
see "Triumph of Christianity", Ehrman, pg. 86+

"Want to spend the night, dearest?? The gods have allowed it!"

The Romans loved their silly gods so much that even 'sex-in-the-temple' was sometimes a ritualistic passage. Some Romans, like us in the 1960's, were very loose people:

"Women were persuaded that it was an honor and a privilege to be 'fertilized' by a priest or someone else connected to the rites. Children resulting from such unions were called, 'Children of God'... Other girls volunteered themselves to men-worshipers in the Temple as a sacred rite."  
("Pagan & Christian Creeds", pg. 124) see, "Religious Toleration in Republican Rome." North, pgs 85–103.

Rome had 100's of cults. but they wouldn't be considered evil by Jewish or Christian standards now. The Romans were tolerant of each others gods. One could go to a temple and pay respects to their Isis, Jupiter or Mithra and no one would care since temples were generic. Also, door-to-door donations were sometimes asked and valuables as 'gifts to the gods' would be laid inside:  
see, Romans 2

"All pagan religion's insisted very strongly on the kind of morality which we shall call civic duty to one's neighbor."

("Pagan & Christian Creeds: their origin and meaning", pg. 136)

"Romans often feared the gods, admired some, envied them all but didn't love them--or they them. The traditional gods of Rome were 'gods of the state, not the individual'... Ancient gods were just like people--prone to anger, jealousy, envy, hate, etc. The gods were both moral and immoral and set bad examples."  
("Triumph of Christianity", pg. 10), ("Discovering God", Rome)

"Neither the Greeks nor the Roman's had ever separated religion from secular life... 2. Every public act began with a religious ceremony...3. Religion wasn't regarded as a public duty but rather a *personal obligation*... 4. Romans would be very tolerant of other gods."

("Fields of Blood: Armstrong, Jesus: not of this world?"), 2. (Durant, Life of Greece),3. ("Oriental Religion's in Roman Paganism", pg. 14), 4. ("And Man Created God", p. 116)

see, "Continuity and Change in Roman Religion", Liebeschuetz, "Essays on the history of religion", Wach, "Essays on the history of religion", Pettrazoni, "Pagan & Christian Rome", Lanciani, 1897, "Peoples History of the World", Zinn

The Roman deities were exulted gods who crowds gave parades for:

"Ancient authors describe the impression produced on the masses by those magnificent processions in which Cybele passed along her car, preceded by musicians playing melodies, by priests wearing gorgeous costumes covered with amulets, and the members of the fraternities, all barefoot and wearing their insignia."  
("Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism", pg. 57)

There would be church services for these pagan gods but no scriptures read since they didn't have any:

"Isis inspired congregations. Her followers set themselves apart and gathered regularly."  
("Triumph of Christianity", pg. 12)

The 'mystery' religions of Isis and Mithra were popular with both sexes:

"Each of the great cults of the Mediterranean region had 'mysteries' which were usually ceremonies of purification, sacrifice, initiation, revelation and regeneration, centering about the death and resurrection of the god... The widespread popularity of this cult, which was given imperial recognition by Marcus Aurelius, is corroborated by a number of gems, coins and inscriptions discovered from this period... Cybele and Isis were

mother-goddesses acquainted with grief. The new faiths [mystery's] entered more deeply into the heart; they appealed more colorfully to the imagination.”

(“Caesar and Christ”, Hellenistic Revival, Durant), (“Early Christian World, Vol. 1 & 2”, Mysteries of Glycon), (“Story of Civilization”, Hellenistic Revival), see “Jesus: the Explosive Story”, pgs. 6-10

This might have been Gay Hollywood 2,000 years ago:

"Cybele's priests excelled at ecstatic frenzies. Not only did they castrate themselves during initiation, they cross-dressed, wore make-up, frizzed their hair, drenched themselves in perfume and acted like women."

("Triumph of Christianity", pg. 13)

see, “Story of Civilization: Caesar and Christ”, Greek Conquest, Rome and Judea

These Roman faiths all stressed celebration, joy, ecstasy with music played including singing and dancing. Sound familiar on church Sunday’s? But upper-class Rome wasn't always impressed with lower-classed paganism which had limits of common decency:

## **58 BC**

"The Roman Senate outlawed Isis's altars and her statues torn down calling them 'disgusting and pointless superstitions'".

("Phases in the Religion of Ancient Rome", Bailey, 1932), see also "Gods and the One God"

And contrary to the myth of immoral Rome Emperor Domitian (60's) punished his own senators for homosexuality. For a short time adultery was also criminalized.

("Rome"), see, "Inheritance of Rome: illuminating the Dark Ages 400-1000", Wickham, "Religions of Rome", Beard, North & Price, 1998, "Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism", Mystery schools

## **360 AD**

Even people as powerful as Roman Emperors with millions of subjects directly under them fell under the spell of books and pagan religion's:

“On his deathbed, Emperor Julian was arguing with several philosophers on the nature of the soul.”

(“Decline/Fall of the Roman Empire”, ch. 23)

Finally, the weakness of these pagan religions were they were mainly traditions and weren't placed into a canon form like either Judaism or Christianity:

"It is remarkable that the traditional Roman religions had no scriptures... There were no doctrines and no traditional practices for the pagan priests to build upon."  
("Triumph of Christianity", pg. 11, 40) see, Beard, North, and Price 1998, 1:284

## **Genesis (The Beginning)**

"The stories of Genesis are part of the larger matrix of ancient Near Eastern myth and epic."  
("Book of Genesis")

"The Great Flood of Genesis may have been the Sumerian/Babylonian version where their king builds an ark [where the gods will destroy mankind]. The Genesis account is 1000's of years later."  
("History of the Ancient World", the poem of Atrahasis, Bauer)

As most realize, the beginning of Genesis is not the beginning of life, man, relationships, love or sex. And outside of a lone rabbi in the Gobi desert, or an Ultra-Orthodox on the Wailing Wall, there probably isn't a Jew alive who believes in the Genesis story of Creation. It has been proven scientifically invalid as well:

"The solar system has barely changed for billions of years now..."  
("Illustrated Atlas of the Universe", Garlick)

"God does not play dice with the Universe!" Albert Einstein 1926

As some know, Genesis is not the earliest written book in the OT either. Some say it was written after the "Exile" around 380 BC. But its theme of a singular God--as opposed to many gods—and creating Man from dust would be a first. And while the questions of biology and evolution wouldn't be raised for another 2500 years or so, the riddle of evolution hasn't been exactly solved yet either:

"Evolution is unproved and *unprovable*. We believe it [evolution] because the only alternative is special creation and that is unthinkable." Early 20<sup>th</sup> c. evolutionist, author unknown

"Theories of the evolution of human culture must differ substantially from the theories of biological evolution... Surprisingly, Darwin stole the phrase 'survival of the fittest' from the English sociologist Spencer in 1851, who applied it to culture."  
("Discovering God", pg. 8+)

So roughly 2300 years later our importance of Genesis would be the Creation story and that man didn't evolve from primates. But if that's too high on the mental



hierarchical scale for lefties there is another school of thought called “theistic evolution”-- in which “God” got Mankind going about 30,000 years ago: see, “Rise of the West”, McNeil, pg. 5

“The widespread acceptance of the Big Bang cosmology has given new life to the question of what caused the Big Bang to occur—thus giving room to the idea that the universe might have been created.”  
(Intro to Plato’s “Timeaus”, Zeyl)

“Science and religion agree that in the beginning the cosmos moved from a state of nothingness to the existence of matter. But science has very little to say about this mysterious transition, all of it highly speculative. Scientists are even divided on whether matter was created all at once or whether it continues to be created... Genesis 1:26 is usually translated as ‘in the beginning God made heaven and earth’, but in fact any biblical scholar will admit that the word ‘*Elohim*’ is plural. So the passage properly reads, ‘In the beginning the gods made heaven and earth.’

(“Secret History of the World”, Garden of Eden, Booth)

Over Hiroshima in 1945 the atomic bomb’s heat of million degrees incinerated the city in a blinding flash. Thousands of people were vaporized in a split second. But according to NASA, the parallels to our sun are the same in that 1.8 million atomic bombs go off every *second*. That would have to be a God causing that:

“These biblical images, myths and metaphors of a national God evolved over time into Judaism. These delightful tales of the Creation, the Temptation and the Flood were drawn from a storehouse of Persian legend as old as 3,000 BC... The legend of Paradise appears in almost all folklore—Egypt, India, Tibet, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, Polynesia, Mexico, etc... Even more universal was the story of the Flood.”  
 (“Our Oriental Heritage”, vol. 1, ch. 6, Durant)

A Judaic view of Genesis:

The tales found in ancient near East writings [Babylon/Sumerian/Semitic] were thoroughly *reworked* to yield a new religious message of ethical monotheism... In the first 11 chapters of Genesis there is *no hint* of Judaism...In the biblical view man's basic problem is moral failure [Adam]. He needs the power of God to step in."

("Understanding the Hebrew Bible", Rabin) , (“Anti-Judaism: the western tradition”, Nirenberg), (“Interpreter's Guide”, Unity between the Testaments, Filson), see also “Oriental Heritage”, Judea, "Jewish Literacy", Telushkin

Or an even wilder account of the Genesis' story:

"The Genesis account of the Beginning is not dealing with a scale of time we would recognize today... It was about Saturn's [devouring god] tyranny over Mother Earth. The Sun god arrived to rescue Mother Earth from Saturn. 'Let there be light and there was light'".

("Secret History of the World", Garden of Eden)

As I will get to shortly, the OT books weren't written in any chronological order. This is another reason why many people are truly puzzled over its narrative and usually give up in frustration:

"The Book of Genesis is largely an adoption of Sumero Babylonian myths... Genesis was written well after the events it describes... The Genesis myth may have been written 400 years *after* Psalms."

("Transformation of Myth through Time", Campbell, pg. 63), ("History of the Ancient World", Bauer, pg. 134) ("[Revelations: visions, prophecy and politics in the book of Revelation](#)", Pagels

Finally, other scholars suggest that whoever wrote 1 Enoch/ "*Book of Watchers*" with their origins of evil also had a hand in writing Genesis.

See, "Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4", Milik, ed. , 1976

## **Archaeology**

"Archaeological finds call into question the historicity of the biblical narrative... Israelite architecture doesn't confirm the Moses story. There is no trace of destruction in Joshua, no signs of foreign invasion, no Egyptian artifacts."

(Torah & Commentary, "Biblical archaeology", Levine) , ("Great Transformation: beginnings of our religious traditions", Armstrong, pg. 39)

see also, "Early Israel", Leiden, "Invention of the Land of Israel", pgs. 100-121, 1 Samuel 5, Joshua 10, Ezekiel

"The God of Hebrew Scripture is a God of myth. He is both elusive and concrete... These images for God were taken from pre-Israelite cultures--'our father', 'our king', 'royalty', 'greatness'. Pagan gods were dressed with gold and royal raiment. These biblical images evolved into what we call Judaism."

("Radical Judaism: rethinking God & tradition", Green, pg. 55-60)

## Babylonian inscription 2000 BC

"Yaum-ilu--Jah is God."

(sourced from "Religion of Babylonia & Assyria", chap. VI)

Although Moses (an Egyptian name and not a Jew) is credited for the 'First Five' books of Law, it's generally accepted by modern historians they were compiled after the exile in Jerusalem by four anonymous writers over a period of 400 years (600 BC-200 BC). They are called, "J" (Yahwist), "E" (Elohist), "P" (Priestly), "D" (Deuteronomy) and were educated priests:

see, "Who Wrote the NT", Mack, pg. 36

"Archaeology is today our most important tool for reconstructing the evolution of ancient Israel society."

("David & Solomon: in search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of Western Tradition" Finklestein/Silberman, pg. 21)

see, Torah and Commentary, "Modern methods of Bible Study", Scolnic, "Book of Genesis: **a bio**", Interpreter's Commentary, "Genesis", "Searching for the Original Bible", Price, New Oxford Bible Commentary, "Hebrew Scriptures", 1962, "Our Oriental Heritage", Judea, "Everybody's **Talmud**", Cohen, 500-600 AD, "Pictorial Atlas of Ancient Civilizations", Haywood, "Christianity: the 1st 3K", "Who really wrote the Bible?" Rav-Noy/ Weinreich, "Who wrote the Bible?", Friedman, Interpreter's, "Commentary on Genesis" Marks, "Radical Judaism", "The Bible: a history", Armstrong

The most prominent recent thrust of archaeological study today was by the "minimalists" Copenhagen School who felt that only a *small amount* of historical info was available through past scriptures. While another book that put a wrench in the gears of Israel's propaganda machine was "Invention of the Jewish People". This book countered the popular notion of a large populace in circa 1000 BC. Very surprisingly, it was also on Israel's bestseller list. While in another study by one of the world's foremost authorities on biblical archaeology, Professor Thompson mentioned that the first 10 books of the Old Testament are almost certainly fiction and were written between 500 and 1,500 years *after* the events they purport to describe!

So it's no wonder why Israel is of the most *reviled* nations on earth by using unsubstantiated religious myth to keep its small nation politically alive:

see, "Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives", Thompson

"Most or all of the Hebrew bible was produced in the Greek period [300 BC] or later. The books may have been written in Hellenistic times, but the collection was in the Roman period... 2. It's highly unlikely that the historiographical core of the Bible was written *prior* to the destruction of the kingdom of Judea in 580's BC. Archaeological findings show no more than a large village... 3. Most were written post-Exile as they

expressed the shock of the Event. This includes the Pentateuch and Joshua... 4. The Hebrew Bible is heavily edited.”

("Did Moses Speak Attic?: Jewish Historiography and Scripture in the Hellenistic Period", Grabbe, ed., pg. 22), 2. ("Invention of the Land of Israel", Sand, pg. 76), 3. ("Book of Genesis: a bio"), 4. ("What did the Biblical Writers Know", 'getting at the history behind the history', Dever)

see, "David & Solomon", Thompson, "Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology & the Myth of Israel", Thompson

However, there are still a few 'safe places' to dig in Israel like Tel Dan (850 BC) which surprisingly mentioned a "King of Israel" and the "House of David", meaning a dynasty. But these artifacts weren't written in Hebrew but in the older language of Aramaic. I thought the Israelites were supposed to be Hebrews?:

See, *Tel Dan Excava*, Hebrew Union College

"The word Hebrew [*Ibrani*, Arab] was indeed in existence but it *predated* the Isrealite's and did not refer to anything remotely Jewish."

("History of the Quranic Text", Muhammed Al-A-Zami, UK Islamic Academy, Academia.edu

see, "*Early Judaism: religious worlds in the 1<sup>st</sup> Judaic Millennium*", Jaffe, "*Mesopotamia*", Delaporte, 1925, *Torah Commentary*, "*Biblical archaeology*", *Biblical Archaeological Review*, Shanks, July/Aug. 1996, "*The Great Transformation: the Beginnings of our Religious Traditions*", Armstrong

And of course the hypocritical Christians get in the way by claiming Israel's epic past through archaeology--but deny almost all of the Torah's scripture itself! WTF? Even their magazine the Biblical Archaeological Review has a noted bias tilted in favor of the Bible and especially Christianity:

"*BAR* does indeed present the latest discoveries; but that is precisely the key problem. The latest discovery may, or may not, be authentic or authenticated. As a magazine devoted to the promulgation of archaeological information, perhaps it should abstain from bias... it clearly has an ax to grind."

("Biblical Archaeological Review: Friend or Foe?" Jim West, Quartz Hill School of Theology, September 2005)

Starting around the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE this Jewish, or Judeaic way of living, was written on 30 ft. long parchment scrolls and copper which were later canonized around the 2<sup>nd</sup> BCE-1st CE as it was from the Lord Himself. Unfortunately, this older Paleo-Hebrew language used block letters without vowels so much has been mistranslated:

"Hebrew is classified as a Semitic language. Hebrew just one of the many Semitic languages such as Canaanite, Aramaic, Phoenician, Akkadian [in the region]."

("Short History of the Hebrew Language", Benner, Ancient Hebrew Research Center), see Biblical Hebrew/ Wikipedia

"The consonantal text which is preserved in the [later] medieval manuscripts goes back to about AD 100."

("Text of the OT", Wurthwein)

So was Jerusalem a great city in 1000 BC? To most archaeologists, logistically speaking, impossible. Accurate dating is an issue because tribes moved around quite a bit, and as the norm in agricultural societies there would need to be rivers or lakes nearby. But around Jerusalem there are none except east at the Jordan river. To reach the river there are Judean mountains (3000 ft) one must cross. While to the north 60 miles away is the sea of Galilee which is also a good 3 day walk:  
see, "Israelites in History & Tradition", Lemche

"Every story or memory not directly relevant to the Jewish elite of the 4<sup>th</sup> through 1<sup>st</sup> centuries (BCE) was silenced, forgotten and erased. Thus the memory of the Samaritan community at Mt. Gerizim was totally left in silence...It is not about some stray inscriptions in Hebrew, it is about what people believe in or are told to believe in as their story."

(essay, "Writing Israel out of the History of Palestine", Lemche, Oct. 2012)

In the 5<sup>th</sup> c. BC tribes moved around a lot:

"Archaeologists have difficulty of associating pots with people."

("Philistines in Transition: history from 1000-730 BC", Ehrlich pg. 10)

If there was a great city of Jerusalem in 1000 BCE historians don't have a record of it:

"Hebrews were not great builders, nor very apt in the arts and crafts. As a result, they had to *rely* on the Canaanites in this field, and others as well... Until the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, Israel's religion wasn't very different from other local peoples."

(Dictionary of the Bible, pg. 21), ("Great Transformation", pg. 41)

'Before 200 BC, there is almost *no* archaeological evidence of inscriptions in Hebrew.'  
... 2. The conquest of Palestine and Exodus from Egypt are non-historical, or historicized fiction at best. The proof has come from secular archaeology... 3. The Hebrew Bible is

not reliable history. There is also 'propaganda' which is not in dispute. The First Five are pre-history, later edited and probably distilled from long oral traditions... The 'Israel' of biblical literature is a concept that has no discernible setting during this time... 4. On a clay tablet 2000BC is the name 'Jahweh is god.' So that the divine name *Jahweh* is *not* a peculiar possession of the Hebrews... 5. We are not dealing here with verifiable accounts but rather its theological interpretations of earlier historical events."

(Prof. Israel Finkelstein of the Department of Archaeology and Ancient Near Eastern Civilizations at Tel Aviv University, NY Times, "New Evidence When Bible was Written", NY Times, 4/11/16), 2. ("In Search of Ancient Israel", Phillip Davies, pg. 22, pg 70), 3. ("What did the Biblical Writers know & when did they know it? What archaeology can tell us about the reality of ancient Israel", current school of revisionists+ history behind the history, Dever), 4. ("Religion of Ancient Egypt and Babylonia") 5. ("Radical **Judaism**") see, "In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel", Day, ed. /essay, "Current Revisionism & the Literature of the OT", 2005, Nicholson, pg. 7, "Early History of the Israelite People from the written & archaeological sources", Thompson, '92, "Israelites in History & Tradition" Lemche

In the OT, the god Baal is mentioned as Israelite's 'enemy of the people' and Semitic tribes also worshiped Ashtoreth (Astarte/Ishtar), the goddess of war and sexual love. These tribes practiced kinky shrine prostitution 1000's of years before "Playboy" magazine. And as guessed at by now, the majority of the Israelites were idol-worshippers not monotheists:

see, Judges 2 & 10, 1 Kings 11, 2 Kings 23, Joshua 9

"In Ashtoreth's worship services, male worshipers (committed sodomy) with priests and priestesses of the goddess. Between male/ male worshipers and male/ female worshipers was viewed as an offering to the goddess."  
(*Interpreter's Dictionary of The Bible*, Volume 3, Abingdon, 1990, pages 933-934)

The god Ptah came from Egypt:

"The identification of Ptah with Canaanite 'El, the inscription *adds* to the evidence that in south Canaan and in the Sinai the cult of 'El was widespread."

("Canaanite Myth & Hebrew Epic", Cross, essay's in the religion of Israel", 1971, pg. 20)

Yet in Israeli classrooms today their scriptures are taught as *true history*. This is just old school nationalism to beat down the Palestinians...

Finally, with Hebrew scriptures supposedly "thousands of years" old one would expect

to see more ancient drafts around--but there are none since rabbis destroyed earlier editions to 'update' them for their community. Thus we find the earliest dated Hebrew Bible is the *Leningrad Codex* from the Middle Ages. (1003 AD).  
(“Intro to the Leningrad Codex”, 1998)

## Hebrew Scriptures/Old Testament 200BC?

“The righteous [Jews] shall live by their faith.” Habakkuk 2

"The inventor of the first nine [Gen.-Kings] probably never saw Jerusalem the land of Promise... The great writer-editor of Genesis-Kings has an *unmistakable agenda*... It is a unified invention and he *didn't* think of himself as writing scripture. It is a text that, unlike those of classical Greece and Rome, was never lost and never separated from the cultural conscience of the West."

("Surpassing Wonder: the invention of the Bible & the Talmuds", pg. 28, 60+) see, “Surpassing Wonder”, Ahenson, pg. 47-57

“Religion starts with the perception that something is wrong.”  
(“History of God”, pg. 23)

Considering the overall amount of attention Jews have gotten over time, both negative and positive, their actual footprint time-wise in history has been comparatively small. For instance, as a distinct culture with a place to call ‘home’ the Greeks and the Persians have been with us for 3000+ years. The Italians about 2500 years, North African Berbers about 2000 years. And the Jews as a ‘distinct people’? Just 500 years, if that.

So why all this importance and attention on the Jews like they are somehow part of our culture? This is quite baffling. Therefore I must conclude that their so-called “Holy Land” is over rated:

"The Jews weren't just an ethnic grouping but a social grouping. Population by nomads, semi-nomads and the dispossessed who were trying to settle down and build new lives."  
(“Christianity the first 3K”, MacCullah), see “Rise of the West” pgs. 20-4

“The central thought of Judaism is the living God... The Bible [OT] is primarily a book of questions.”

(“God in Search of Man: philosophy of Judaism”, ‘self understanding’, Herschel), (“Understanding the Hebrew Bible”, Rabin, Preface)

So regarding the prior section on archaeology might beg a question: ‘What were these early monotheistic writers after? Who did they want to control?’ The priests were obviously aghast at the polytheistic rites they witnessed, and they lied about the heathens

idols 'being gods' when they knew they were just symbolic. More likely, these priests were just the early monotheistic Puritans:

"It was necessary to become a Jew to worship the god of the Jewish people... 2. The Torah refers to a Jewish way of life... 3. The Jew had a religion that distanced him from the heathen. It was not only a creed but a mode of living. His life was to be controlled by the Torah—the Mosaic code."

("Christian Worship: its origin and evolution", Duchesne, (Fr.), 1904, pg. 4), 2. ("Who Wrote the NT?", pg. 82), 3. ("God in Search of **Man**"), see also, "Early Judaism", "And Man Created God", "Rise of the West"

The 'First Five' books of the OT (Torah) were believed to be written down by Moses; but many historians say he didn't exist so that leaves us a much earlier source:

"Yahweh [YHVH/*Elohim*] didn't say 'obey Me' but rather 'obey My laws' as a tolerant, inclusive polytheism was up against an *intolerant*, exclusive monotheism. God was concerned with keeping his tribe distinct."

("And Man Created God: history of the world at the time of Jesus", O'Grady

If you've ever read "Jesus: the Explosive Story" many of Tricia's accusations aren't provable. But her grasp of ancient mystery religions is absolutely flawless:

"The Ten Commandments were written from Egyptian Law of Maat, which predates them by several *thousand* years."

("Jesus: Explosive Story", McCannon, pg. 261)

The Isrealite story of 'escaping from Pharoah' would be another Jewish story from earlier tradition:

"Canaan was *part* of Egypt's domain... To the historian, the OT is contradictory, unreliable and repetitive... 2. How the Judahist religion developed in the late-Persian and Greek period's is *largely a mystery*."

("Invention of the Land of Israel", Sand, pg. 93), ("*Surpassing Wonder*", pg. 83)

Another problem with Hebrew scriptures is the lack of overall time-line since its oldest book Job is in the middle.

Karen Armstrong author of "God: a History":



"The Deuteronomist's literally had to *rewrite* the history of Israel. Their [post-history] massive edit would become the Hebrew Bible including the importing of earlier law codes... How much of the Biblical account is true, we do not know, because there is almost no independent confirmation."

("Fields of Blood", Hebrew dilemma), "*Ammon: kingdom*", Jona Lendering, *Livius.org*, see, Dever, Professor of Near Eastern Archeology and Anthropology, University of Arizona, "History of God", Armstrong, pgs 14+

"Jewish monotheism didn't come into prominence until *after* the Exile in monotheist Babylon in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. That means that all these [monotheistic] stories were back-dated centuries later."

("Jews in the Time of Jesus", Wylan, pg. 20)

But as some know already, for centuries the Jewish pact with their Lord would be a troubled one:

"Jews did not have a theory about God. God *did* things, but it wasn't clear *why* he existed or what his purpose and ambition was. He appeared eccentric. Sometimes motiveless. Thus his relationship with God was purely a legalistic one."

("History of Christianity", rise/rescue of the Jesus sect)

Unlike today's literalistic Christians who would be horrified most Jews realize that their stories have been made up but they honestly *don't care* since as use their *Gemara* commentary to reinterpret these early myths to day to day living.

A Jewish view:

"The scriptures [OT] implicitly tell us to be critical of the scriptures, and the Talmud's tell us to argue, and to think critically about the issues they raise... Midrash revels in the ambiguities of the text."

("Surpassing Wonder", pg. 8), (essay, "*Torah Study: making the Bible meaningful*", from "*Etz Hiam Study Companion*", Blumenthal/Liss, ed., pg. 12-14) See, medieval writings of Maimonides *Mishna*, "*Modern Conservative Judaism: evolving thought & practice*", Dorff, pg. 92

## **Myths/ Old Testament**

"Jerusalem shall not be uprooted or overthrown any more for ever." Jer. 31

"You shall not go after the other gods about you lest the anger of the Lord be kindled

and he destroys you off the face of the earth!" Deuteronomy 6

"The Bible must be read in its historical context—from its beginnings in myth and folklore to later interpretations... The OT abounds in poetry and metaphor; the Jews who composed it didn't take their own figures literally. Later, the European more literal and *less imaginative* mistook these poems.... The myth of a Chosen People."

(*"History of the Bible: story of the worlds most influential book"*, Barton, liner), (*"Story of Philosophy"*, Durant, 1926, pg. 373), (*"History of God"*, pg. 17)

Today there are many camps and endless views of the Bible but most scholars have concluded that the OT is mostly made up of myth literature. Incredibly, and not visible to the layman, its writers wrote in hindsight on events that may or may not have occurred--yet were dramatized for effect. In other words, very early propaganda.

A Jewish view of these myths:

"Modern critical study rejects the idea of 'divine authorship'. The biblical texts must be *understood in their original, historical and cultural contexts*. When a [OT] text is deconstructed *we are no longer sure what it is trying to say*...2. Abraham and Moses are legends...3. Abraham is not the 'father of the Jewish Nation' but rather its worldview and his commitment to monotheism."

(Torah and Commentary, "Modern Methods of Bible Study", Scolnic), 2. ("Invention of the Land of Israel", pg. 78), 3. ("God Who Hates Lies: confronting & rethinking Jewish Tradition", Hartman),

Or an opposite Evangelical view who see the Bible in totality and as an entire work. This is what gets them in trouble:

"The reason the Bible *has* authority is because it *is* the Word of God. When scripture speaks, God speaks. The entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation *is* the Word of God... 3. Some classify the Bible as myth literature but most of it is [true] history...The Bible does not teach myth that is false or erroneous; whether it is God, human nature, ethics, the natural world or history."

("In Defense of the Bible", Cowan/Wilder, intro ), 2. (essay, "Can we understand the Bible?" from "In Defense of the Bible", Melick, Phd), 3. (essay, "Meaning of Inerrancy", Geisler, from "What did the Biblical Writers Know and When did they Know it?")

Another Jewish view of their myths:

"The Hebrew OT is a scribal invention compiling memories and oral chronicles joined by true history, myth and legend, prayers, rituals of the past into legendary Israelite figures...Myths routinely reflect the anxieties of a particular culture."

*(Torah and Commentary, "Ancient Near Eastern Mythology", Wexler)*

"Myths were usually considered sacred and absolutely true-- a notion that is completely at *odds* with the modern concept... 2. Myths don't spring up from virgin ground. They are borrowed from older sources then molded and remade into new myths... 3. People not only believed in myth they lived by it. That is they revered and were guided by the central images of their myths."

("Don't Know Much... about Mythology", Davis, pg. 26), 2. ("Don't Know Much About World Myths", Davis/ Ruzzier, '05), 3. ("*Global Myths: exploring primitive, pagan, sacred and scientific mythologies*", Eliot, pg. 21)

As an example, the Book of Deutoronomy mentions Israel's enemy the Philistines (1100-800 BCE) over 250 times, yet that tribe preceded the Israelite's by roughly 300 yrs:

"Many books are *fictive history* and triumph had to replace sad reality. How the Judaic developed in the late Persian and Greek periods is largely a mystery."  
*("Surpassing Wonder", pg. 89)*

Continuing:

"The Exodus never happened... In the struggle for monotheism *all means were legitimate*... In no [OT] text or archaeological findings do we find the term 'land of Israel'. Most of the books in the NT use 'Land of Judea'... The land of Canaan never served as a homeland for the children of Israel. All who lived on it could have been regarded as orphans... No trace has been found of that legendary kingdom whose wealth is described in the Bible matching the cities of Babylon or Persia... These 'nations' are *tribes*--not literal nations."

("Invention of the Land of Israel", Intro, pgs. 85-121, *myth territory*), see, "*History of God*", Deut.7 on these seven pagan tribes, Mark 1, Acts 26 on Judea, "Radical Judaism", chap. 2

Continuing:

"Sumero-Babylonian myth pass onto the Bible... Bruno [1570 AD] held that the OT tales teach neither science, history nor metaphysics but morality of a kind which he placed on the level with Greek mythology."

(*"Occidental Mythology"*, Joseph Campbell), (*"Creative Mythology"*, Campbell, Chap. 3)  
see, *"Invention of the Jewish People"*, pg. 152

But some Christian's are furious calling these allegations absurd claiming the story of the Israelites are factual:

"Their treatment of the Exodus is among the most factually ignorant and misleading that this writer has ever read." UK evangelical biblical scholar Ken Kitchen  
("On the Reliability of the OT", pg. 464+)

"Some 'minimalists' would like to *erase from history* the United Monarchy of ancient Israel."

(essay, "Histories and non-histories of Ancient Israel: question of the United Monarchy", from "In Search of the Pre-Exilic Israel", Dr. Dever, pg. 65)

## **12 Tribes of Israel?**

According to most history books today the Northern Kingdom of Israel was invaded by their neighbor the aggressive Assyrians, who at the time ruled all of what is now Turkey. Ten Tribes were taken captive around 740 BC and just two remained. An apologetic view:

"Ten Tribes were taken because they violated the Torah covenant. In time, they lost their identity as the House of Israel and became assimilated into all the pagan [idol-worshipping] tribes of the world."

("Historical Research of the 10 Tribes Scattered into the Nations", Part 1 (of 13), Prof. (Dr.) Liebenberg, Academia.edu) see, Book of Kings and Chronicles

But is it right that for 13 long sections the OT was used as documented proof for this Professor's viewpoint?

So if people today knew where and how the Hebrew bible came from they might more easily reconcile its tribal principles which have been endlessly criticized worldwide as barbaric. But this is how tribal people thought in 300 BC--some occasional violence but very sexist! Just what guys like! For example:

"Your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you." Gen. 3

Fortunately, most Jews today are highly-moralistic, non-observant and hate it when other religions tell them how to live and what to believe...

## **Mass Return from Exile?**

"Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, carried into exile to Babylon the rest of the people in the city." Jeremiah 39

Over the years I've always been bothered by story of the Jews being exiled off to Babylon. In my more brainless earlier days of my 20's I'd watch TV movies on the Exile with Jews carrying their belongings on their backs in the hot sun. Afterwards was still left with a bad taste: 'What did the Babylonian's want with these people in the first place? Jerusalem to Babylonia is 900 miles away!

The record of just one incident was with a chronicle of Nebuchadnezzar on ancient stone:

**597 BC--**

"Akkad besieged the city of Judah and on the second day of the month of Addaru he seized the city and captured the king." Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles

"Jeremiah was a source or chronicles to the Egyptian/Judean/Babylonian confrontations... The Book of Jeremiah grew over a long period of time." ("History of the Ancient World") (Book of Jeremiah, Wiki), see New Oxford Bible/ Jeremiah intro, see, Ezra 2/ Nehemiah 7

But still there's no archaeological evidence of any 1st Temple. While others have said the site was a pagan shrine for the Jebusite's:

"The citation of these so-called archival materials [1st Kings] is not evidence for the existence of the structure [1<sup>st</sup> Temple]."

("Palace and Temple: Study of Archeological and Verbal Icons", McCormick, pg. 32)

**587 BC**

"Judah has gone into exile because of affliction... because the Lord has made her suffer." Lamentations 1

Fortunately, most know the story of Nebuchadnezzar 2, the King of Babylon who sent his cohorts to surround Jerusalem in 587 BC, and supposedly destroying the Jews First Temple ("Solomon"). At the time, Jeremiah was the social prophet in Judah but king Zedekiah had imprisoned him because of his negative prophecies over the region. Whether or not this was true we don't know; but apparently there were children being sacrificed and the prophet was very pissed:

"They built the high places [hills] of Ba'al to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech [fire god], though I did not command them that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin." Jeremiah 32

Jeremiah was threatening the king but of course, the writings were all past tense:

"I am giving this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it."  
Jeremiah 32

Historians acknowledge that some of its people taken as slaves--but the idea of emptying Jerusalem and marching 42,000 people in a mass deportation 900 miles back to Babylon is not in the books:

"Babylonian kings certainly celebrated over the many peoples they defeated. But as far as we know, the Israelites played *no special role* in how the Babylonians thought of themselves."

("Anti-Judaism: Western Tradition", intro)

"From 604 BCE to 538 BCE—there is a complete *gap* in evidence suggesting an occupation."

(Stern, "The Babylonian Gap", Biblical Archaeology Review, November–December 2000)

"The destiny of those '10 lost tribes' has never been established... There is *no* evidence outside the Bible for this [exile] state of affairs."

("Road from Babylon", Raphael), ("Searching for 'Ancient Israel'", Davies, pg. 41)

## **538 BC**

According to Ezra's account, 1000's of Exiles left Babylon and hiked back to Jerusalem. Because they were such a Chosen people, they carried 1000's of bowls and plates of gold and silver:

see Ezra 1 & 2

“According to the Biblical book of Ezra, Cyrus allowed the Jews, who were exiled to Babylon, to return home... But there are serious chronological problems and the archaeological evidence suggests that the return of the Jews took place much later.”

(“Cyrus the Great”, Lendering, Livius.org)

see, "Judah & the Judeans in the Persian Period", 2006, notes by Bob Becking, pg. 4

"The Bible's account of its own origins (e.g. the Moses/Ezra traditions) is part of its own myth. It is intriguing that the biblical writers misdirect and conceal the scaffolding used to produce their stories. The Bible did not come from heaven but rather from the contested practices, debates and issues of the past."

("Did Moses Speak Attic?", pg. 22)

"Critical scholars label the book of Ezra as a biased narrative about the past, as pure propaganda or as ideological history."

("Judah & the Judeans in the Persian Period", 2006, notes by Bob Becking, pg. 6)

A Yale historian:

“The Exiles didn't return with the Torah in their hand...”

(“Surpassing Wonder: invention of the Bible & the Talmuds”, Akenson, pg. 64-83)

As mentioned, the people of Jerusalem were still idol-worshippers and not strict monotheists like they were supposed to be:

"Clay figurines of deities were still being used in homes everywhere in the land as household gods... The Israelites were simply Canaanites who developed into a distinct culture."

("Bible Unearthed", pg. 241+, pg. 118)

Outside of the OT, there is no secular recollection of an Exile:

“Israel was an illiterate, peasant society without an educational system and with limited means of communication. A copy or two of the Torah might have been a *fetish* but not an ideology [of a tribe].”

(“Invention of the Land of Israel”, pg. 124) see, “Ancient Israel: New History of Israelite Society”, Lemche, “Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology & the Myth of Israel”, Thompson

Continuing:

"If the mass return from Exile was a historical fact then one might expect traces of it in official documents from Mesopotamia or Persia."

("Judah & the Judeans in the Persian Period", 2006, notes by Bob Becking, pg. 9)

While the later Book of Daniel (180 BC) didn't mention any former Babylonians returning from Exile either:

"The period between Ezra in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC and the revolt of the Maccabees [Jerusalem civil war between factions] in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC was kind of a *dark age* in the history of the Jews. Info about that obscure period is very sparse...so the Judaeans population must have been quite small."

("Invention of the Land of Israel.", pg. 150)

### **Israelites ("defenders of God")**

"So shall you purge the evil [polytheism] from the midst of you! Your eye shall not pity. You shall destroy the Hittites and the Canaanites!" Deut. 19, 20

"I am the Lord your God, you know no God but me, and besides me there is no other savior." Hosea 13

"From Genesis, the Bible begins to take on a nationalist look, obscuring God to take on a patriotic personalization... [Perceived] disaster was their ultimate weapon to caution the believers to adhere to one god... The Jewish creed was one of *anti-assimilation*. Their God was concerned with the preservation of the tribe and keeping it distinct."

("Invention of the Land of Israel" pg. 82-5), ("And Man Created God", p. 114) , see also, "Canaanite Myth & Hebrew Epic", Cross, chapter 5

The last sections have been how the Hebrew's put their scriptures together --but this section is more about how the Israelite adopted to their pagan surroundings so there is some overlap.

----

The Israelites original god was called Yahweh, *YHVH* a fertility god that helped the early farmers grow crops and cause rain. These wandering Semitic tribes became the Lord's "Chosen" people, His "own possession" and "strangers and travelers with the Lord" who they were supposed to imitate. According to their scriptures, the Israelite's



imagined Yahweh to be a 'fighting god' on their side-- no different than having a 1987 Mike Tyson standing in your corner, gloves ready:

“Israel's revolutionary idea was that Yahweh wasn't simply their patronal god but could control the gods of other tribes!”  
 (“Great Transformation”, pg. 99)

The Judaeans tried to keep their monotheism separate from the idol-worshippers of Baal around them:

see, Exodus 26, 28, 34, Hosea 2-9

"Yahweh was originally a pagan cult and a god of desert and of war. His role as the national 'war god' kept his worship alive for there was frequent need to call upon his aid in battles... However, it will take *centuries* to transform him into the gentle and loving father of Hillel and Christ."

("Studies in Divine Kingship in the Ancient Near East"), ("OT and Modern Study" Rowley, 1951), see also "Gifts of the Jews", "Our Oriental Heritage", Judea

The Israelites tried to live by their morality. For example, if even an *ox* was hungry don't keep cruelly pushing it to plow:

"You shall not muzzle an ox if it's plowing for you". Deut. 25

The UK scholar below feels that Israel along with the Canaanites/Amorites/Hittites were not distinct--opposite of the biblical record:

“There is no definitive ‘land of Canaan’ that can be used with any precision by a historian of Palestine.”

(“In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel”, Davies, pg. 53) **move!**

The Israelites lived among the Hittites, Amorites and other pagan tribes as was written and contrary to the accounts in Joshua, the Israelites were not “crusaders” or warriors with an army of iron:

"Judah remained little more than a sparsely populated rural region until the 8th century BCE.. 2. Yahweh had begun life with a decidedly ethnic bias *in favor* of the Israelites... 3. Yahweh and his Christian reinvention couldn't tolerate other gods... 4. The Jews had their own sharp, 2-edged division of humans--themselves and everyone else... 5. *Jews survived by developing a protective shell against an alien and hostile world.* Jews did *not* eat, intermarry, fraternize or worship with the non-Jew...6. The Jewish religion was

never designed for conquest...”

("Bible Unearthed", pg. 142), 2."Religion of Babylonia & Assyria", Cosmologies), 3.“Evolution of God”, pg. 298, 4.“And Man Created God”, Paul & Jesus 5. "Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism", Spong) 6."Decline/Fall", progress of the Christian religion, chap. 15

As some historians realize, their 'Joshua mentality' would later help destroy this small territory by the Roman soldiers in 67-70 AD:

"Both Greeks and Jews thought they had a *privileged place* in the world's history... One's first impression is that the Jews were much more vindictive and vitriolic than pagans.”

("Christianity: the 1st 3K"), ("Reflections of the Psalms", CS Lewis, 1958),, see also, "From Gods to God: how the Bible debunked, suppressed and changed ancient myths and legends", Shenin/Zakovitch

## **David/Solomon/Joshua**

“Yahweh stands up in the divine assembly;  
Among the gods he dispenses justice.” Ps. 82

"The Hebrew Bible didn't achieve its present contents prior to the Hellenistic period [300 BC]... Books of the Bible were written, edited and reworked from 500-200 BC. The term 'Land of Israel' was unknown in Hellenistic Jewish literature [300 BC]."

("Invention of the Jewish People", pg. 93-121, myth territory)

To many Jews today, especially those in Israel, the stories of David and Solomon practically *define* their religion. But to the dismay of many (including head-in-the-sand Christians) a few archaeologist's trash these sacred cows as well! Hilarious!

As touched on, the academic and eccentric “minimalists”/“revisionsists” starting in the 1990’s say that David or Solomon were not real people. Instead just elaborate mythical figures designed to separate their small Judaic tribe from their heathen enemies that surrounded them. Most of the quotes below are from this minimalist school who feel that only a *small amount* of provable history is available from scripture itself--the rest has either been added or edited in at a later date:  
see, “Did Jesus Exist?”, 2 key data

"There are *no* direct references in contemporary sources to either the Exodus or the conquest of Canaan or the story of David. There is not a *shred of evidence* for the

existence of a 'united kingdom of Israel' in 1000 BC, including David, Solomon and Joshua... 2. There was no army. Abraham, Moses and David *never existed*. David's kingdom was just a tribal federation held together by his personality. 3. Outside of the Bible story, there's absolutely no evidence of any battles. No evidence for this wholesale destruction. The Hebrew Bible is only literature, not history... 4. It is out of the question that Saul, David, and Solomon, as described as kings in the Bible, could have existed. I think the biblical accounts are wonderful stories, invented at the time when Jerusalem was part of the Persian Empire in the 5th Century BC... 5. David and Solomon are fictions.”

(“Radical Judaism”, pgs. 58-70), 2. (“Invention of the Jewish People”. pg. 82), 3. (“Jerusalem: a bio”, pg. 28, pg. 82), 4. (“Early History of the Israelite People”, Thompson), 5. (“David & Solomon”, Finkelstein/Silberman, pg. 21)

Also, excavations have found no trace of a settled population around Judea and Jerusalem during the 10th century BC either when the Kingdom of David and Solomon were in their heyday. Jerusalem did not become a large and politically influential city until about 300 BC when Alexander came rumbling through.

See, “Short History of the Jews”, Brenner, “Messiah Myth: near Eastern roots of Jesus and David”, Thompson, '05, “Bible Unearthed”, Finkelstein, Biblical Archeological Review, “Is the Bible Hooey?”, June '02, “Fields of Blood”, Hebrew dilemma, “Israelites in History & Tradition”, Lempche, “The Emergence of Early Israel in Historical Perspective” R. Coote/ K. Whitlam, “The Mythic Past: biblical archaeology and the myth of Israel, Thompson

However the other side believes these ‘minimalists’ are not looking at the entire picture. They don't look at the 'history behind the history'. There was an Israel 10th c. BC. What the prophets were writing about is true but a lot smaller scale. Regardless, Levy believes this "Israel" may have just a few thousand people anyway and not the 100's of thousands as written in the Bible:

"All archaeologists recognized a small-scale state in central Palestine 950 BC... We now have direct Bronze and Iron Age parallels for every single feature of the Solomonic temple as described in the OT."

(Archeological Society in the Holy Land, “Great Transformation”, Levy),

Or how about a recent headline on Fox News trumpeting:

“Ancient Biblical era temple discovered in Israel!”

“The ruins of a Cananite temple dating back to the 1200 B.C. has been located in a

settlement called Lachish. The settlement is mentioned in the [OT] Bible... The city was “delivered into Israel’s hands” according to the Book of Joshua.” (Joshua 10)  
(“Ancient Biblical era Temple discovered in Israel”, Fox News, Feb. 17, 2020)

The problem with this Fox News story was that the people of Lachish were already idol-worshippers since no Hebrew script was found:

see “Canaanite Myth & Hebrew Epic”, Cross, 1973, Essays on Israel, 1971

“The oldest inscriptions identifiable as Biblical Hebrew have long been limited to the 8th century BCE.”

(“Biblical Hebrew”, Wikipedia) see also, the Paleo-Hebrew alphabet, Hebrew alphabet, Samaritan Hebrew, Canaanite and Amorite languages

The dating of Joshua is around 300 BC, so the writers used a process called 'back-dating'. This has also been used in the NT Gospels as well.

see also, “Pagan Christ”, Torah and Commentary, "Fields of Blood", Armstrong, Hebrew dilemma, "Invention of the Land of Israel", "The Mythic Past, biblical archeology and the myth of Israel", Thompson,, "Early History of the Israelite People from the written and archeological sources", Thompson, "The Israelites in History and Tradition", Lemche

## **Hebrew Sacrifice 600BC**

“And the Lord to Moses, 'Now this is what you shall do to the bulls to consecrate Aaron that they might serve me as priests... You shall take the blood of the bull and pour it at the base of the altar.'” (Exodus 29)

"*All religions in 600 BC were about the sacrifice. The gods decided and one's fate was written in the stars and couldn't be changed... 2. Human sacrifice was common in the pagan world. It was cruel but had a logic and rationale. The first child was often believed to be the offspring of a god, who had impregnated the mother in an act of *droit de seigneur*... 3. The story of the Jews was essentially a confession of guilt and a resolution to atone for it.*"

("Gifts of the Jews: how a tribe of desert nomads changed the way everyone thinks and feels", Cahill, Book 2 of 7), 2.("History of God", Armstrong, pg. 16 pdf). ("Early Judaism")

Mentioned earlier, the sacrifice was another pillar of their ancient foundations: No sacrifice--no religion. From Egypt > Babylon > Judaism > Christianity little had changed. For example, there are 5 chapters in Exodus devoted just to the right *kind* of sacrifice! (25-30) Their reasons for this would be that not only God had to be appeased

but also some devil or evil spirit would stay away too:

"In Latin, the word sacrifice means 'to make holy or sacred'... Substitution is clearly an important symbol in the sacrifice of a scapegoat [goats, sheep, birds] in which evil is eliminated from a community by symbolically conferring guilt on to a sacrificial victim."

("Sacrifice: on Understanding Sacrifice"), ("Origin and Development of Moral Ideas", Westermarck, 1906), see also, Torah and Commentary, "Sacrifices", Tucker

As noted, the Israelites had different types of sacrifice to Yahweh: 'burnt' offerings, peace offerings, sin offerings and guilt offerings. If a farmer couldn't afford to lose a goat then the cheaper substitute might be a bird and use that blood on the altar instead. Later on even Jesus criticized this cheap sacrifice idea by chasing bird sellers out to make a quick buck from outside the Temple area calling them "a den of thieves":  
see, "Surpassing Wonder", pg. 60, Mt. 21

"The sacrifice is a 2-party bargain in which the Chosen People kill something valuable and in turn their god blesses them--or at least doesn't *punish* them... 'Burnt sacrifices' are children."

("Surpassing Wonder", pgs. 44, 60)

The Jewish encyclopedia:

"The Festal Burnt Offerings, celebrated at the new moon, the Passover, Pentecost, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. On these occasions the number of *victims was increased*.... Voluntary burnt offerings might also be made. Some of them are recorded which involved the immolation of a large number of victims."

(Jewish Encyclopedia, 1906/ burnt offerings), See, Numbers 7, 28, 29, 1 Kings 8

The world's most important historian from one of his 11 volumes:

"The threat and consequence of sin first began by offering human victims, then animals. Later on spiritual donations were required instead... Blood played a significant role with sacrifices in all the ancient temple religion's."

("Our Oriental Heritage", Judea), ("Discovering God", temple religion's)

What is important to realize that this Judaic sacrifice was *not* a form of salvation like the Christians cobbled together in the 4th c. This was just another way to get rid of both the devil and evil from their community--and hopefully another nod from Yahweh:

“Sacrifice, particularly human sacrifice, is a barbaric concept born in another time and place.”

(“Misquoting Jesus”, pg. 90)

see, "Religion of Babylon/Assyria", "Our Oriental Heritage", Judea

## **Devil/OT**

And the Lord said to Satan [the angel], "Behold, all that he has is in your power." So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord. Job 1

“You are the evil eye! The incantation is not mine, it is the incantation of Ea, lord of incantations. You are cursed by Anum... the Underworld.” Assyrian Chant

(Old Assyrian Incantation against the Evil Eye, *Altorientalische Forschungen* , 2008)

The Jews conception of Yahweh was primarily negative but yet hopeful. They tried to ‘humanize’ Him but were limited by their intellect and the natural world at the time. But surrounded by polytheism there was little they do:

"Their religion stood as a spiritual policeman over every phase of the moral code. It harassed him at every turn."

(“Age of Faith”, Medieval Jews)

“A salient trait of the personality of Yahweh is the severe surveillance he maintains on all human actions, on all human words, on all human thoughts...Yahweh is not only a power but also a will, not only a person but a live personality...a hostile and jealous god, not without something of the demonic.”

(essay, “Supreme Being: Phenomenological Structure and Historical Development”, Pettrazzoni, from “*History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*”,

Unlike the Persians with Zoroaster very little about the devil as written in the OT. This is probably because they lived in Canaan where there weren't as many superstitions as Babylonia—although there were a few:

“Satan, the adversary or God's servant, became linked with Lucifer ("fire-bearer") the fallen angel... This cosmic view began with Iranian mythology [Zoroastrianism] later crossing over to the views of both Genesis and Job.”

("History of Hell"), (“Mythology of all Races”, Iranian Mythology) see, Job 1, 2

"The Jews have a Devil or Devouring demon *Ketef*, the terror of the Chamber."  
("Natural Genesis", typology of the mythical serpent, pg. 344)

As famously written in Job, Satan was supposedly an angel among the "sons of God"--but not yet the demonic personification of Christianity's later Devil experience:  
see, New Oxford Bible commentary on Job

"The Jews viewed illness as a manifestation of divine judgment or of demonic activity... To the ancients everything that happened to them was meant to happen. *Everything spoke to him. Everything was a punishment*, a reward, a warning or a premonition."  
("Zealot", pg. 106), ("Secret History of the World", Short Walk)

Later on this spiritual theory would evolve into a dualistic theme where both God and the Devil would end up battling each other in heaven. I go into this theme in a later section.

see, Book of Revelation, "Mere Christianity" on dualism, pg. 33

Secondly, and certainly not to their credit, ancients knew little about the natural and material world. If a tribe in the hills was invaded by barbarian hordes it would be the devil doing it so start another sacrifice. The Inca's, Mayan's and Aztek's were also famous for this as chants from that era attest:  
see "Book of the Gods and Rites", Duran

"To simple people, disease seemed to be possession of the body by an alien power or spirit... Sickness was demons."  
("Our Oriental Heritage", mental elements), ("From Jesus to Christianity", White, '04)

### **Book of Enoch 300 BC**

"From the Essene community's view it was clear that Satan could have human allies on earth."

("Early Judaism: religious worlds of the 1st Judaic Millennium", Symbolic vocabularies and cosmic structures, Jaffee)

Enoch 1 never made it into the Hebrew's canon for many reasons too long to mention here (there are three Enoch's) but one of its more interesting themes is its take on the devil. In one of its more famous sections, *Book of Watchers*, the devil sends his angels down to earth to have sex with women. It is argued that all the writers of the NT were familiar with it and were influenced by it in thought and diction:

“And the Lord said to Michael [angel]:  
‘Go, inform Semyaza, who have associated  
with the women to corrupt themselves with them  
in all their uncleanness.’” 1 Enoch

(10.11)

“There are two important novelties introduced by the *Book of Watchers* into the history of Jewish thought and religion. The first of these is the idea that evil is *not* of human origin.”

(“History of the Second Temple Period, Sachi, pg. 175)

Not so surprisingly, a few of Enoch’s ideas and phrases parallels Genesis:

“The *Book of Watchers* ‘rich tale of evil originating in the world through the descent of two hundred bad angels who intermarry with human women’, and teach them magic and father the giants. ‘Most important for the development of the Satan myth, these angels have a leader called Semihazah and Asael.’”

(“Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic Literature: Prophecy, Babylon, and 1 Enoch”, Robinson, pg. 44, quotes by McGinn, “Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil”, pg. 25)

According to others, these devil themes came from contact with Mesopotamia and were brought back to Qumran:

The “leader of the fallen angels, later called the Devil,” is clearly the cause of sin in 1 En. 10.8.”

(“The Contribution,” Boccaccini, pg. 40) see, “Enoch and the Growth”, VanderKam, pgs. 6- 19

Unfortunately this Ripley's 'Believe it or Not' line of thinking continued worldwide to as late as the 1500's:

"...demon's dog his footsteps, dazzle his senses, enter into him, harass, deceive and torment him in 1000's of freakish ways. The mishaps that befall him, the losses, pains he endures to the anger of the spirits. Their constant presence wearies him; he longs to be rid of them altogether. Collectively they think if they can only shake off these tormentors, they will make a fresh start in life. The tales of Eden will come true again."  
("Golden Bough", public expulsion of evils)



500 AD

“The whole world is full of evil spirits and harmful demons.” said one Rabbi (*Sanhedrin* 44), (Talmud under, “Folk Lore”)

## Hell OT

“Those [idolaters'] who go down the pit cannot hope.” Isaiah 38

“Throughout the Hebrew Bible, most especially in the Psalms, sheol (Greek: hades; Vulgate: infernum) can designate a world-annihilating trauma in *this* life.”

(“Deconstruction of Hell: A History of the *Resignatio ad Infernum* Tradition”, Clark, PhD Thesis, West Syracuse University, 2013, pg. 49)

If one reads the OT what might be startling is its rare view of heaven or hell. Most likely their reasons were in the back of the minds was their picture of Moses—and Moses never wrote about heaven or hell. Of course, the later radical sects like the Essene's wrote about hell and judgment quite often, but that was mainly their finger-pointing at other's. More about the Essene's later.

see, “Formation of Hell: Death and Retribution in the Ancient and Early Christian Worlds” Bernstein, “The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses”, Leiden

## Psalm 6:5

“For there is no mention of You [Yahweh] in death;  
In Sheol who will give You thanks?”

Geographically, Canaan bordered Egypt and in 400-200 BC Egypt was the intelligent and superstitious power that influenced that region. The Canaanites would be influenced by Egypt—not the other way around. But as mentioned, Egyptians were always prepared to die but never theorized the kind of *place* they would be spending! Likewise, neither did the Jews, thus their lack of scripture.

Many scholars have theorized that both Psalms/Proverbs were written in Mesopotamia and I would agree. In them is *sheol*--the dark place of the dead but for

the wicked only. Jews were *exempt*. In *sheol* there would be no judgment but only a place for idolaters who were presumably wicked "lost", sinful and thus irredeemable:

"The wicked will return to Sheol,  
Even all the nations who forget God."

Psalm 9:17

## **OT Prophecy/ Eschatology --580-200 BC**

"I am the Lord, and there is no other Savior but me." Is. 43

"Lies these prophets utter in my name, the Lord said to me. I did not send them. Lying visions, foolish divination, dreams of their own imagination!" Jer. 14

"Apocalyptic influence began with the Iranians which the Essene's used."  
("Imagining Religion", Smith, 1975, sourced from "Birth of Christianity")

In my own runs in's with people OT prophecies have always been misunderstood and exaggerated. Even Sunday morning preachers who run out of ideas to interest their congregations will often turn to the more outlandish ideas of the Bible just to give them something esoteric to mull over. Well believe me these OT "prophets" were certainly unique and fooled me for many, many years:

"The modern meaning of 'prophecy' may mislead; in Greek it means 'the gift of interpreting the will of the gods.' The prophets primary job was to talk about the present--not the future... Prophets (*navi*) meant 'spokesman for God.'"

("Christianity: the 1st 3K"), ("Jewish Literacy", Rabbi Telushkin)

Some historians say these Prophets were persecuted; while others say not. In Rabin's excerpt below is a more apologetic guide to these Prophets:

"Historical pressures gave rise to a new kind of prophecy who could offer an explanation for Israel's suffering and the role of God in human affairs... This later came to be regarded as *central* to its national heritage."

("Understanding the Hebrew Bible: readers guide", Rabin, pg. 161), see "Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot", pg. 116

"Jeremiah was a source or chronicles to the Egyptian/Judean/Babylonian

confrontations... all were molded by their Babylonian experience.”  
("History of the Ancient World", Bauer), ("Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic", pg. 15)

To Jews today, (and as social victims) their Prophets practically *define* their religion. But by far the most historically important of these are the ones in which Israel would become a “nation” once again. Of these both Christians and Jews are excited that their scriptures have now been “fulfilled.” Yippy!

Except that Israel was never a “nation” to begin with in our terminology now. In their lingo, nation just meant a tribe:

“What motivated them to write such bizarre and fantastic stories about the future end of history and battles between the forces of good and the forces of evil?  
... Yet there is still disagreement over terminology and origins.”  
("Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic Literature", Robinson, MA thesis, intro)

“One typically finds in apocalypses counter-divine forces such as demons, beasts, or disloyal angelic princes exercising injustice against Israel... Demons persist as a threat to the children of Abraham, but a threat that is *easily prevented and defeated with Torah study*... For 1 Enoch, the demons continue to be an undiminished source of evil until the final judgment, which certainly has not happened yet.

(essay, “Angels & Demons in the Book of Jubilees and Contemporary Apocalypses”, Hanneken, PhD, pg. 16+)

Recent excavations in Mesopotamia have found about 6500 artifacts but no one knows who wrote them. Some say priests with an agenda while others say commoners:

“Babylonian culture influenced the Israelites with the tradition of divination. ‘The sheer mass of *omen texts* that have been unearthed at various sites in Mesopotamia indicates that divination was a prominent aspect in of that region.’”

(“Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic Literature: Prophecy, Babylon, and 1 Enoch” Robinson, inside quote from VanderKam, “Enoch and the Growth, pg.52), see, “Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic”, Russell, pg. 20

To be considered a ‘savior religion’ the god would have to deliver its adherents from some catastrophe on earth or in heaven. But as mentioned, sin to the Jew was unheard of since obeying Moses Law presumably delivered them from any Judgment day.

But to the Jewish prophets like Isaiah/Jeremiah they mistakenly felt that Israel was somehow "lost in sin" and if she "repented", or turned back from rampant polytheism, the Lord would change Israel's future. So as sanctimonious screenwriting priests they wrote:

"You have played the harlot with many lovers [pagan deities]; and would you return to me?? says the Lord. Jeremiah 3

"King Nebuchadnezzar II drew on these resources to strengthen and enlarge his armed forces as well as engage in building projects. He absorbed *all* of the former regions of the Assyrian Empire and crushed whatever resistance was offered. In 598/597 BCE he marched on the Kingdom of Judah in Canaan and destroyed its capital city of Jerusalem sending the elite citizens of the city back to Babylon."  
(Ancient History Encyclopedia/ Nebuchadnezzar)

But did that happen?

The historical backdrop to these prophecies may have been political disruption or religious change. Somewhere between 587- 591 BC Jerusalem was overtaken by armies from Babylon a second time:

"And many nations [tribes] will pass by this city and ask, 'Why has the Lord dealt thus with this great city?' And they will answer, 'Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord and worshiped other gods.'" Jeremiah 22

For roughly 300 years these social Prophets yelled out monotheistic obscenities to any and all who would listen. And just like TV writers in today's fiction little of it would be true! In fact, the more outrageous the better:

"Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to me; all of them. I the Lord have poured out my wrath upon you. You [Israel] have despised holy things, and profaned my sabbaths. One commits abomination [pagan rites] with his neighbors wife... you have forgotten me, says the Lord God. Ezekiel 22

What motivated the Prophets to write such bizarre and fantastic stories about the future end of history and battles between the forces of good and the forces of evil?:

"The origins of Jewish apocalyptic literature are complex and much discussed. The Apocalypse is a hybrid genre combining narrative and vision and drawing elements from the sacred traditions of the Jewish people as well as from the Mesopotamian, Persian, and Greco-Roman worlds. Its precursors include Israelite and Judean prophecy as well as Babylonian oracular writings, dream visions, and other practices of divination."

("Jewish Apocalyptic Literature as Resistance Literature", Anthea Portier-Young, Duke University Divinity School, Academia.edu, see, "Myth as Revelation", Miller, School of Theology/Religious Studies, Catholic U., Univ. of Pretoria, *Laval theologique et philosophique*, 70, 3, Oct. '14: pg. 539-561

But these prophecies weren't historically accurate. For instance, Ezekiel claimed that the coastal city of Tyre fell:

"Thus says the Lord God to Tyre: Will not the coast lands shake at the sound of your fall, when the wounded groan, when slaughter is made in the midst of you?" Ezek. 26

According to historians the old city of Tyre was seized and surrounded by armies but its people escaped to a nearby island just a 1000 ft. away. Only their envoy was killed: see, Ancient History Encyclopedia/ Tyre

"King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon made his army labor hard against Tyre... yet neither he nor his army got anything."

("Desiring Divinity: Self-deification in Early Jewish and Christian Myth-making", Litwa, pg. 14)

For 1000's of years, even among Christians, the apocalyptic prophecies of the Major Prophets were taken as reality and something to watch out for! But only recently do historians believe these prophecies were misguided: see, "Imagining Religion", Smith

"Issues of war and peace play major roles in the biblical narrative... The earliest apocalypses embodied discursive resistance to imperial domination and hegemony, offering an *alternative mythology*, cosmology, language, and vision. Writers in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BCE drew upon diverse traditions and forms to create new literature of resistance."

(Torah & Commentary, essay, "War & Peace", Graetz, pg. 212), ("Jewish Apocalyptic Literature as Resistance Literature", Anthea Porter-Young, scholarly paper from Academia. Edu, 2016)

A Jewish view:

"The Major Prophets were written after 1st Exile which required them to write new prophetic works to guide and instruct the Jewish community... Eschatologies are imaginative visions of an ideal or perfected world that *contrasts sharply* with the current state of affairs."

(essay, "Earliest Bible" from Who Wrote the Bible? Freedman), (Torah/commentary, "Eschatology", Gillman),

Wright's highly-esteemed book regarding the three monotheism's:

"Now it was the Israelite turn to feel vengeful. Except their 'vengeance' would have to play out on a theological plane... 2. [Apocalyptic writing] is retribution theology... 3. Wrong conduct or heretical belief stirred God to anger."

("Evolution of God", pg. 177), 2. ("Jews in Exile", Albertz, pg. 196) , 3. ("Jesus Wars", pg. 26) see, Jeremiah 52, 1 Kings, "Short History of the Jews", Brenner,

As mentioned, the Major and Minor prophets in the OT were 'social prophets'-- not fortunetellers or prognosticators like many Christians want to believe today. In fact, in Moses Law fortunetellers were outlawed so prophets like Jeremiah would be technically "banished from God's presence". (Levit. 20)

While other prophets were paid as Ezekiel was a house prophet east in Babylon: see, Habakkuk, 2 Thessalonians

"These writers make heavy use of symbol and fantasy. The higher powers of the universe must *intervene* to put an end to the failure of humanity... These apocalypses come from times of national or community tribulation and are *not actual history* but for later comfort."

("World of Myth"), ("Our Oriental Heritage", Judea), See also, New Oxford Bible Commentary

"Zechariah 1-8 contains similar features to those seen in Ezekiel, for example, visionary experiences with colorful imagery and fantastic symbolic figures, which may reflect the influence of Babylonian mythology."

("Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic Literature: Prophecy, Babylon, and 1 Enoch", Robinson, pg. 28, quote from "Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic", Russell, 1964, pg. 90)

So what were these prophets actually thinking? So to better understand here's modern-day version of Jeremiah's outlook:

"For behold, days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will [hopefully] restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says the Lord, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it!" Jeremiah 30

Finally, the "exiles" didn't have it so bad after all:

"To all the exiles from Jerusalem to Babylon: build houses and live in them; plant

gardens and eat their produce.” Jeremiah 29

"The interpreter must be able to reconstruct these historical situations..."

(Interpreters Guide, "Historical Study of the Bible", McCasland, 1971), see also New Oxford Bible commentary, "The great Transformation", history behind the history, Levy, The Archeological Society in the Holy Land"

## **Apocalyptic Dualism-300 BC?**

"Be not exceedingly angry, O Lord." Isaiah 64

"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things! Is. 45

"In the Hebrew apocalyptic view, God for mysterious reasons had conceded control of this world over to powerful cosmic [demonic] forces that opposed him, his purposes and his people."

("Did Jesus Exist?")

see, "Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature", Himmelfarb

Unfortunately for our dumbed-down masses of TV watchers today few know anything about apocalyptic dualism-- and even *worse* neither do the churches! God forbid that preachers should teach *real* history to their congregations! That would be blasphemy!

Apocalyptic dualism was a rather late Jewish intellectual movement which tried to explain the suffering of "God's people". It was really more a philosophy than a concrete school of thought which was 'the Lord was battling the Devil in heaven'. This was prompted by stories from Zoroaster, Babylon mythologies and to a lesser extent Job. But just as important is these theories were far different than Greek 'Platonic dualism' which was rather flesh vs. spirit. Confused yet?:

Ehrman:

"Jewish apocalypticism itself came from failed prophecy... Jewish Prophet's claimed they suffered because they were being punished by God and if they would return God would stop the punishment and allow them to prosper. [Isa., Jer.] So some thinkers moved away from the prophets and picked up Job where suffering came from the Devil which developed into a dualistic view--there was a God *and* the Devil!... Evil was in control of

this world.” 2. God has relinquished control to the forces of evil. Quite soon, God would reassert himself and bring this world back to himself, destroying the forces of evil.”

(“Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot”, Ehrman, pgs. 116-9), (“Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium”, Ehrman, pg. 121 ), see also "Discovering God", Stark, "God's Problem: how the Bible fails to answer why we suffer", Ehrman

While apocalyptic dualism should seem ridiculous to us now very religious Jews took this thought very, very seriously. Still worse, this twisted theme became pervasive throughout the New Testament as their scriptures:

A modern Jewish take:

"The work of the mystics is the underpinning of almost *all* Orthodox Jewish thought... Dualism afforded an explanation of their sufferings... Apocalyptic is a cosmic struggle... The corrupt world is under the rule of darkness and evil powers. The perfect world to come will be under the rule of God.”

("Essential Judaism: guide", Jewish mysticism, [Robinson](#)), (“Oriental Religion in Roman Paganism” Cumont, 1911), (“Middle East: brief history of the last 2,000 yrs.”, Lewis, pg. 28), (“Genesis: a bio”, pg. 81)

Although most early Jews didn't believe in an afterlife to those who did apocalyptic dualism must have seemed comforting:

“Historical pressures gave rise to a new kind of prophecy who could offer an explanation for Israel's suffering and the role of God in human affairs. This later came to be regarded as central to its national heritage.”  
("Understanding the Hebrew [Bible](#)")

To more radically-minded Jews like the Zealot's and Essene's these prophecies sounded future tense--especially with the Roman troops running around. So starting in 100 BC or so more Jews listened to their rabbis: 'It says it right here in Isaiah! Look! The Lord will help us!' However, their “injustice” were only Pagan tribes:  
see, “Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic”, Russell, pg. 89

"The Lord will destroy injustice from the face of the earth."  
(Enoch 1, Jewish Bible)

An English philosopher:



"Apocalyptic theology is revenge psychology in that the evil are punished while the virtuous will be in bliss."

("History of Western Philosophy")

While the rather conservative Pharisees had no time for this new development the later radical Essene sects like Jesus' and Paul's embraced this stuff with open arms! This theology created a built-in monster that many Jews had no answer for:

see, "*Damascus Document*", DSS

"[To the mystics] what is going on here on earth is *also* going on in heaven--the bitter struggle between good and evil... The warring heathen neighbors [Canaanites, Persian's, Romans] were under 'Satan's spell'. Now there were two Gods to watch out for--Yahweh and the Devil!.. The doctrine of Two Principles is both monstrous and supremely unreasonable. But if it is true, God is *not* alone with a Creator; for the author of evil also exists without an origin."

("Christianity: the 1st 3K") or ("Book of Genesis"), (Interpreter's "Apocalyptic Literature"), (Textual Sources for the study of Zoroastrianism, "Faith in modern time: the 19th/20th centuries", Boyce, ed. 1984), see "Encyclopedia of Prophecy", Armageddon, Ashe

As usual, modern rabbi's are sharp and have their older religious theories down pat:

"Monotheism in a moralizing context can never escape its own dualistic [good/evil] shadow with its God unwilling to vanquish the forces of chaos or darkness. 'Which garment shall I wear today?' God asks himself. 'Will it be the white of forgiveness or the blood-red of vengeance?' The hall of mirrors may be approached from either end..."

("Radical Judaism", Chap. 2, Green)

## Hebrew Sin

Sin-- (Hebrew, *chashak*)--as withholding light, a curse [from the devil], darkness.

"Hebrew 'sin' meant not in accord with the Torah. A disregard for Moses' Laws."

("Who Wrote the NT?", fragments from the Christ cult, Mack), see, Lev. 19, "Early Judaism"

"The most sinister spin-off from the Garden of Eden story is the strange doctrine of original sin. This is centered on the puzzling assertion that all humans are riddled with sin and guilt."

("Christian Mystics")

As an illustration, we realize people don't get along very well. We disagree and even argue a lot--even with spouses and close relatives. So maybe the ancients felt the same: 'There's something *wrong* with people that we can't quite put a finger on. They're unpredictable and bad people!' Thus perhaps their early idea of sin: see, "Question & Answers: Intellectual Foundations of Judaism", Neuser, '05

"He who despises his neighbor is a sinner." Prov. 14

And although the term is placed everywhere in the OT, 99% of Jews today don't believe in "original sin" and neither can it be reinterpreted like the later Christian religion tried to do as salvation of some sort.

A rabbi:

"That every child born is damned for Adam's sin is alien to Jewish thought..." ("Jewish Literacy", Bible, Telushkin, pg. 63)

Surprising to most people--especially do-gooder Christians who hilariously try to "save them"--Jews don't need salvation of any sort! The reason is their salvation is covered by their 613 Laws of Moses. Morality was and is their salvation and not any kind of grace from Jesus or anyone else:

"Jews as a whole were saved."  
("Age of Faith", Talmud)

A modern view of the bizarre concept of sin:

'Job is a good man. I will *torture* him to see if he stays good!' ("God: the most unpleasant character in all fiction", Barker, pg. 191)

An ancient Hebrews relationship to sin:

\*A person's sin was as great as how bad they were as a person. The worse the person was the greater their sin.

\*Sin was a reference for 'bad behavior' or thumbing your nose at Mosaic Law with a lack of piety.

To Jews, only Gentiles or pagans outside their Law were called sinners. While Jews called themselves "righteous" or "sons of god" because they followed the Law! It really was that simple! Only made more complicated over the centuries by Christian's and

Muslim's who didn't understand their meaning but who still madly condemned. A great pity.

see, 1st Sam. 24, "Intro to the NT"

## **Jewish Messiah 400 BC-2nd c.**

"Truth never dies but lives a wretched life." Yiddish proverb

To the early Jews, the messiah was a concept of an anointed 'Davidic prince' who would come to restore Israel. But at that time nobody knew *what* kind of restoration was to take place! Would it be political independence? The end of the Greek-cultural heathen influence? The end of the Romans like the Zealot's wanted? The concept was vague but still served to unite the Jews--which we can view by reading 'inside-out' from the later Gospel stories:

(Livius.org)

"Judaism presents no well-crafted doctrine of the [Jesus] Messiah... There were a lot of Jewish messiahs but Roman troops usually killed them before they got too popular."

("1st Century Judaism in Crisis", Neusner), ("Zealot")

At the time and surrounded by a polytheistic Greek culture some fantasizing Jews felt they had misinterpreted their Prophets. So they began to look deeper within their scriptures for some other kind of supernatural 'cosmic redeemer' or 'messiah' that might get them out of trouble with pagan Hellenism or the soldiers:

"I will raise up for David a Branch and he shall reign as king and shall execute justice in the land." (Jeremiah 23)

This type of hopeful thinking was prevalent, and even later believers like Paul grossly misinterpreted Isaiah's messiah:

"There is no single, prophetic narrative concerning the messiah in Hebrew scripture's... Clues to the 'hidden meaning' of Jesus as messiah were fragmentary. *There is no single story line in Jewish scriptures that can decode Jesus...* The triumphant Cyrus of Persia was God's chosen agent: his messiah ('anointed one'). The 1st phase of man's restoration would be the Jews return back to Jerusalem... To Isaiah, *Cyrus* was the 'shepherd of God.'"

("Zealot", you know where I am from), ("Who Wrote the NT?", claiming Israel's epic), ("Road from Babylon"), ("Jewish Literacy"), see also, "Did Jesus Exist?", 2 key data, Is. 44, 45)

So by the 1<sup>st</sup> c. when 'meek little Jesus' didn't show up as a conquering King Jews have looked elsewhere--and have pretty much given up the search!

Today, most feel the early Prophets misinterpreted this savior who never did nor ever will exist for them again as a small country. Thus the end of a sad story down a long lonely road...

See, "Who Wrote the NT", "Did Jesus Exist", New Oxford Bible Commentary, any book by Ehrman, book of Daniel, 1 Enoch

## **Other Jewish heroes**

"In Jerusalem the truth is often less important than the myth... Jerusalem is the Holy City, yet it has always been a den of superstition and bigotry."  
(“Jerusalem: a bio”, Montefiore, preface)

As mentioned, in the pagan world mythical heroes and gods were a major part of their society to look up to. To pagans, a god would be unimaginable. Yet millions at the time fantasized about it and the Jewish writers were not much different.

So convinced by their hero's the Jewish writers substituted monotheistic stories for polytheism. For example, Job, Samson, Joshua, David, Moses, Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Jonah are all Jewish heroes. While in our time it might be "Rocky", "Spider Man", "X-Men" or "Dominic Torreto". Same difference:

"Typically the hero of the myth achieves a world-historical cosmic triumph. Popular tales represent the heroic action as physical while the higher religions show the deed to be moral. It is this point of view that the hero is a symbol which is hidden within all of us."

("Hero with a 1000 Faces", hero & the God, Campbell, 1949)

## **Angels**

In America today more people believe in angels than God. I would say that's rather backwards, but that's because the term "religion" or "God" can be unpopular, contradictory and divisive.

So as norm for the time, the concept of angels began in the Babylonian period and it meant "messenger". In both Testaments angels are mentioned over 200 times and they

relay messages within a dream (Gen. 31), give interpretations (Zechariah) and verbal instructions: (Num. 22)

"After the angel appeared to Monoah, 'We shall surely die, for we have seen God'. And his wife disagreed saying in effect, 'If the Lord had meant to kill us he wouldn't shown up in the first place, you idiot!' (Judges 13)

And as Protector in one of my favorite stories:

"Didn't we cast three men bound in the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." "But I see *four* men unbound and one is like a son of the gods!"  
Daniel 3

Some Christians believe that passage was a Christophany--a vision of Christ appearing in the form of an angel. Entirely possible! Just as important this famous OT passage would later became a basis for the gospel Transfiguration story.

But to scholars now our problem with angels is obvious: Why were they only revealed to ancients and not to us with our worldwide media? Even the desert-rat Mohammed was supposedly was taught first hand by an angel that no one witnessed! Oh well...

see, ESV Bible commentary, "Daniel"

## **Hell-Judaism**

"In Hebrew *sheol* the dead were cut off from all relations with Yahweh, the God of the living. Later, *sheol* became a place of punishment as the doctrines of rewards and punishments developed."  
("Christian Myth & Ritual", James)

"The Jewish worldview assumed that death was the end: when the body died you died. Period. What was important to the Jews was life, not death. Live according to the laws of God and you will live well."  
("Mysteries of the Middle Ages", Great Confluence)

Jews viewed hell ("the Pit") as an "accursed valley" but there were other differences of opinion as the Sadducee sect didn't believe life after death. Thus no hell after all...

As mentioned, the Jewish concept of hell would be taken from older Babylonian religions and carved into their leather/copper scrolls with knives and small hammers starting around 200 BC.:

"Thou have put me in the depths of the Pit, in the regions dark and deep." (Ps. 88)

Sad now, but to the Hebrews *all* idolaters, pagans and Samaritan's were already "lost in sin", irredeemable and not worth mentioning in their company! Even the Gospels echoed that theme since race was a way of life--and literally separated the 'haves from the have not's':

see, Psalms/Proverbs, Mt. 21-23

"Those [idolaters'] who go down the pit cannot hope..."

(Is. 38)

### **Jerusalem 167 BC-20BC**

"You may not appoint a pagan for he is not your brother." Deut. 17:?

"One's first impression is that the Jews were much more vindictive and vitriolic than pagans.

("Reflections of the Psalms", CS Lewis, 1958)

"Socially, most displaced Jews found it degrading to live around Greeks and embrace Greek culture."

("Triumph of Christianity", Stark, pg. 27), see "Jesus: Lord or Legend?", pg.34

In 168 BC, when the Syrian King Antiochus IV was in Egypt with his army mopping up Egyptians he was halted with a threat by the Roman Senate to continue. But at the same time back in Jerusalem more fanatical Jews were engaging in a civil war against their High priest who was appointed by their Greek rulers. This infuriated Antiochus so he returned to Jerusalem, slaughtered 1000's of observant Jews and placed a statue of Zeus in their temple. He also banned the sabbath, their Law and the sacrifices. Those caught doing Jewish rites would be crucified to a tree the imported Persian way:

See "Intro to the NT", Brown, ch. 4

A presumed eyewitness:

"At the time appointed, he [Antiochus] shall return and come into the south... Forces from him shall appear and profane the temple [Zeus]. And they shall set up the abomination that makes desolate." Daniel 11

A chronicle:

“...he [Antiochus] thought that Judea was in revolt. Raging like a wild animal, he set out from Egypt and took Jerusalem by storm. He ordered his soldiers to cut down without mercy those whom they met and to slay those who took refuge in their houses. There was a massacre of young and old, a killing of women and children, a slaughter of virgins and infants. In the space of three days, eighty thousand were lost, forty thousand meeting a violent death, and the same number being sold into slavery.”

2<sup>nd</sup> Maccabees 5

Fortunately for the Hellenistic Jews Antiochus wasn't at war so they were free to toss their strict monotheism with its ridiculous sacrifices with animals and birds:

See, “Jerusalem: a bio”, pg. 67

“To most Jews, much of the Law was archaic and irrelevant; the rest [prophets] was open to violent disagreement... To the Greeks, both the Jewish myths and Laws were silly and ridiculous to be coded on copper scrolls.”

(“History of Christianity” Crossan), (“Who Wrote the NT?”),

“Under the Greek genius the Age of 'personal religion' opened up... [Hellenized] Jews were more interested in Greek culture more than the other way around...”

(“History of Christianity”), see, “Jesus: Lord or Legend?”, pg. 31)

### **Invasion by Rome 63 BC**

“The struggle for power between kings and priests, priests and rabbis was an important political dimension in Jewish development.”

(essay, “Jewish Humanism”, Sherwin Wine, from “Book Your Church Doesn't Want You To Read”)

“No doubt many Romans did resent that Jews dismissed the gods as illusions and their temples as blasphemous.”

(“Triumph of Christianity”, pg. 13)

A century or so later when Roman soldiers marched through the Levant region Herod the 1<sup>st</sup> was a dependent client-king of Rome. And although not a Jew himself he was nice enough to rebuild the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple for the Jewish people, including the coastal town of Caesarea plus scores of synagogues:

see “Intro to the NT”, Brown, ch. 4

“Herod claimed to be a Jew, but many Jews did not accept him as such.”  
(“Triumph of Christianity”, pg. 15)

So under this new Hasmonean dynasty priests could become in effect kings with their own theocracy! Awed by this new gratitude, the Jewish community bestowed Herod the honor of a new title-- “King of the Jews”. The name stuck:

see, “History of Christianity” Johnson, rise/rescue of the Jesus sect

“Herod rebuilt the Temple with unprecedented magnificence, making it one of the largest sacred complex’s in the ancient world.”  
(“Christianity: the 1<sup>st</sup> 3K”, Israel) see, “Triumph of Christianity”, pg. 15

“Jews were *excused* from the civilian national obligation of worshiping the national deities and being involved in pagan religious activities... priests would have no sovereign but God.”  
(“Jesus: Lord or Legend?”, pg. 34), (“Story of Civilization: Caesar & Christ”, pg. 530),  
see, “Christian Worship: its origin & evolution”, pg. 4

But the Jews were still never considered a special class-- rather an annoyance:

“There was no doubt a Jewish colony in Rome, but it had no privileged position. More than once—under Tiberius in a.d. 19, and under Claudius in a.d. 54—it was broken up, and its members driven out of Italy.”  
(“Christian Worship: its origin & evolution”, pg. 4)

## **6 BC Beginning of the Zealot's**

"Jews are loyal to each other but not with the rest of the world which they confront with hatred reserved for enemies". Tacitus

“For many Jews, nationalism and piety were inseparable. They reasoned that because the Jews are God’s chosen people, they’re not subject to ‘foreign’ rule, including Jews crowned as king by outsiders such as the Romans. A pious Jew will violently resist all such iniquities.

Although these sentiments were prominent throughout the history of ancient Jews, they became far more intense and organized in reaction against Herod. It was at this time that pious Jewish rebels were called Zealots — [a fourth sect] which held that only God should rule Israel.”



(“Triumph of Christianity”, pg. 17), see, “Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era”, Baumgarten, “Jesus: Lord or Legend?”, pg. 34

But Herod’s own personal life was violent since on the side he liked to kill his wives and drown his sons. In addition, he hated the new right-wing religious extremists like Judas of Galilee and his group the Zealot’s:

see Luke 6

“Late in his reign he [Herod] became very alarmed at the rapidly growing outbreak of messianic hopes and prophecies, and anyone he suspected of being the Messiah he had put to death. When he became suspicious that his current wife was involved with a group expecting the Messiah, he had her killed too.”

(“Triumph of Christianity”, pg. 15)

But on a higher-note elsewhere, Jewish priests met in Alexandria, Egypt and compiled their Hebrew scripture's into Hellenist Greek:

“The *Septuagint* was the Bible of the early Christian church which originated as a Jewish religious movement”

(“Gnostic Bible”, pg. 17)

But through religious power struggles and in-fighting the Rome still had to settle quarrels between these two polarized groups and themselves:

see, “Zealot”, pg. 12

“Paying taxes to the [Roman] emperor was a blasphemous act because God was the one and only lord of Israel... The Jews resigned themselves to the existence of large pagan cities in their country, but as long as the Jews paid their taxes the Romans did not really care about their beliefs.”

(“Judea”, Livius.org),

Even in the Gospel stories it was obvious that more devout Jews gave off a lot of prejudice to Romans soldiers, Hellenist Greeks and half-breed Samaritans:

see, “Hellenism in the Modern World”, Murray

“Jews actually discouraged converts as pagans would need to be circumcised and obey strict laws... The Jews had their own sharp, two-fold division of humans—themselves and *everyone else*... Greek Jews discriminated against more traditional [Hebrew speaking] Jews... Jerusalem had become a *theocracy*. Harsh rules regulated every detail of life, for there was no distance between politics and religion.”

("Mission & Conversion: proselytizing in the religious history of Rome", Goodman),  
("Paul & Jesus", Tabor), ("Misplaced Jesus: interpreting Jesus in a Judaic context", Evans),  
("Jerusalem: a bio", pg. 63)

And the more devout Jews themselves cursed at the mixed-race Samaritan's who weren't considered Jews even though they lived on the land for centuries:

"For the Jews have no dealings with Samaritan's." John 4

"The formal Jews considered the inhabitants of Samaria racially *impure*. The Samaritan's will not have cared. To them Jerusalem was a peasant town and the 'kingdom of Judah' was not to be taken seriously. They lived in a far more cosmopolitan [Greek] world where polytheism was a matter of civilized behavior."

("Samaria", Jona Lendering, Livius.org), see, lie with a beast, " Misplaced Jesus: Interpreting Jesus in a Judaic Context." Evans, pg. 2. in "Triumph of Christianity", chapter 2

And although not having any real power outside of Judah Rome welcomed them:

## 50 BC

"Julius Caesar was known to be a friend of the Jews; he allowed them to settle anywhere in the Roman Empire."

(Jewish Virtual Library, "Rome")

"Jews were anxious to spread their religion and Israel would be 'the light of the Gentiles'. Although Judaism had limits as a 'world religion'--that being its tribal and racial origins-- converts could *never* be full Jews."

("History of Christianity", Johnson)

## Pharisees/Sadducees

"The Pharisees were more spiritual than the Sadducees."

(Encyclopedia of Religion, "Sadducees", Rivkin)

"Almost all groups agree in holding other groups to be inferior to themselves."

("Decline/Fall of the Roman **Empire**")

The sect of the Pharisees and Sadducees were priests of a high-order and importance to the Jewish community. The Sadducees ruled the Temple with its Mosaic Laws while Pharisees were the administrators. Both held political power.

The third sect are the Essenes and who will be the *numero uno* importance in our later understanding of Jesus' and St. Paul's writings. These three sects throw a huge light on the validity--or better yet invalidity- on the later Gospel story itself:

see, "Did Jesus Exist?", finding the Jesus of history, "Surpassing Wonder", pg. 195, "Christianity: first 3K" Israel, "Triumph of Christianity", pg. 17

"[In viewing the Dead Sea Scroll's] the Pharisees and Sadducees are a bewildering spectrum of Judaic cults, sects, sub-sects, political and religious organizations which seemed to be *militarily at odds* with one another... The Sadducees theology was quite worldly... It rejected 'fate', immortality of soul and that God's rewards are in this life. Also they ruled the Temple [with the sacrifices]."

("Dead Sea Scrolls Deception", Preface, Baigent/Leigh), ("Discovering God"), ("Did Jesus Exist", finding the Jesus of history), see also, "Surpassing Wonder", pg. 195

The Greeks influenced the Pharisee's more than the Sadducees. The Pharisee sect was called "separatists" by the Sadducees since they relaxed the Laws and traditions somewhat. However, they were *not* enemies:

See "Story of Civilization: Caesar & Christi", pg. 536, Mark 7

"The Pharisee's created traditions and time honored customs, 'the tradition of the elders'. To the Sadducees, only Moses was observed. They denied the existence of spirits, angels, the soul, the afterlife and the resurrection."  
("Pagan Christianity?", pg. 18, pdf)

A Jewish view:

"Sadducee's were the *strict* adherents of the Torah while the Pharisees were willing to modify and relax it in accord with their liberal, democratic and progressive principles... The Pharisees presented themselves as teachers and guides *uncorrupted* by the Sadducee institutional power... Although the Gospel writers portray the Pharisee's as hypocritical in fact they were trying to create more equality than their rivals the Essene's or Sadducee's."

("Heavenly Torah: as refracted through the generations", Herschel, foreword by Susan Herschel, Professor Jewish Studies, Dartmouth), ("Story of the Jews", Classical Jews), ("And Man Created God") see also, "Story of the Jews", "History of Christianity", "Surpassing Wonder", pg. 195

"Jewish sects like the Sadducee's would hold the point of corruption at anything *beyond* the Torah and would therefore *reject the writings of the major prophets* as well the

sacred writings, whereas the Pharisees would accept all of these documents as being authoritative.”

(“Faith & Practice in Early Christianity”, Tom Roberts, PhD, Academia.edu)

## 10 BC?

“The term Talmud may refer to either the Gemara alone or the Mishnah and Gemara together.” (“Babylonian Talmud”, Wiki)

At this time the famous rabbis Hillel, (110BC-10AD?) viewing at the Torah before him, realized that these were in fact very ancient stories and that it would be difficult to translate in their modern culture. So he wisely devised a commentary called the *Mishnah* that combined both Jewish Law and Oral Law. But as par, the very strict Sadducees disagreed feeling that the Law was unchangeable:

“Hillel allowed the freedom of interpretation of the Oral Law adaptable to varying circumstances. The purpose was to make the Torah a practical guide forever. The Torah could never grow antiquated.”

(“Our God & Your God is One”, Kadah’s, pg. 85-8)

“The [ancient] Hebrew text contained no punctuation, no commas, quotation marks, upper/lower case, no division between sentences, not even vowels.”

(“Understanding the Hebrew Bible”, Preface)

The Gospel Jesus was quite wrong in his human judgments as a contemporary explains:

"The Pharisee's were highly respected." Josephus

("Antiquities of the Jews", 1st c.)

This meant the later Gospel accounts of the ‘evil Pharisee’s’ was just another fictive story in the Bible:

"In the Gospels, the Pharisees are cast as enemies of the Jesus movement but a full generation later. Almost nothing said by Christians about these particular Jews is true.”

(“Constantine's Sword”, Destroy this Temple")

As mentioned, all three sects would be extremely racist and intolerant of other people. For example, a new pagan convert to Judaism could take two or three *generations* to become a Jew--not two or three hours like in other religions.

see, Hebrew Bible, *Gutnick* ed.

Rabbi Hillel, Jerusalem 1<sup>st</sup> century--

"If a heathen is prepared to accept the Torah [all 613 rules] except for one law, we must *not* receive him." (*Bekhorot 30*)

see, "Everyman's Talmud: major teachings of the Rabbinic Sages", Cohen, 1940

## **250-600AD**

Quite a bit later after the sects disbanded the Jews once again combined their complete Gemara commentary into *Midrash* which included a large section under "*Folk-Lore*". I'm sure they felt guilty about believing that stuff:

"The Sadducees didn't believe in the soul. But what was important to the Jews was life, not death."

("Mystery's of the **Middle Ages**"), see "Surpassing Wonder", pg. 195, "Question & Answers: Intellectual Foundations of Judaism", Neuser, "Everyman's Talmud",

## **Essene's (200 BC-70AD)**

"A Voice calls out: Prepare in the desert the way of Yahweh, make straight in the wilderness a road for our God." Is. 40

"For the Essenes, to get God's blessing being Jewish was *no longer enough*."  
("Origin of Satan", social history, Pagels)

"Qumran are Essene."  
("Surpassing Wonder", pg. 206)

I would say that to 99% of the readers out there the Essene's are unknown, but in Canaan 2000 years ago there wouldn't be any who weren't aware about them including Roman troops.

At the time, Essenes thought of themselves as 'community's of resistance and rebellion' and as the "Sons of Truth" or "sons of Light" later mentioned in the Gospels. They interpreted (quite falsely) through their prophets and Genesis that that the apocalyptic End of the world was near. This claim has also been gathered in *most* NT doctrine as well:

"The most extreme of the Jewish sects was that of the Essene's who numbered about 4K... 2. The Essenes were a well known sect and were regarded as Judaic hermits and mystics and body condemners. They studied the prophets so they can foresee the future... 3. The two major Jewish philosophies were alternately known as 'Persian Judaism' and 'Egyptian Judaism'. Persian was apocalyptic and convinced that the world is going to end. That God is going to punish all unbelievers with fire and brimstone. While Egyptian Judaism was less judgmental."

("Caesar and Christ", Rome and Judea, pg. 537), 2. ("Dead Sea Scrolls Today", Vander Kam),

3. ("Jesus" Jesus & the Essenes, McCannon)

see "God's Lunatic's: lost souls, false prophets, martyred saints and other victims of man's eternal search for the Divine", Largo, "Dead Sea Scrolls: a bio", intro, Collins

Quite arrogantly, Essenes believed that *all other sects were corrupt*. Opposite the Pharisee's theologically, Essenes believed in resurrection, judgment and condemnation of the wicked to torment. They also didn't believe in the rite of sacrifice. Instead they baptized--which to the other Jews was a pagan rite:

"Essene's abandoned Jerusalem and denounced the Temple worship as polluted."

("Adam, Eve & the Serpent", pg. 17)

If one looks carefully, the Essene sect had a hand in writing *many* of the later Gospel images. Even Apostle "the Apostate" Paul I'm positive associated with the Qumran people due to their closeness of ideologies. Thus the Essenes became enemies with both the Pharisees/Sadducee sects-- although they weren't written about anywhere in the dishonest Bible per se:

see, "Did Jesus Exist", finding the Jesus of history, Josephus "Jewish War" Vol. 1, Book 2, "Zealot", pg. 84

"Essenes believed that their community was the true and righteous Israel They considered as enemies all who did not join them... 2. Those on the outside of the Qumran community are described as —all who despise God —a congregation of treacherous men... They also believed in a cosmic dualism and apocalyptic war between those who were in their community with those outside of their community that would culminate at the end of the world... 3. The Essene documents [DSS's] written during this period are filled with the fiercest denunciation of the Jewish priests [Pharisees] who raided their communes and decimated their members... 4. The Essenes offer the *closest parallel* to Mark's account of Jesus followers...5. Jesus was an Essene."

(essay, "Astrology in the Dead Sea Scrolls", Snow, from "Book Your Church Doesn't Want You to Read"), 2. ("Contemporary Challenges to the Gospel: Incipient Gnosticism & Johannine Teaching on the Resurrection", Woods, pg. 111-4) 3. (Book of Enoch, with various other statements found in *Testament of the 12 Patriarchs*, sourced from "Whatever Happened to the DSS?", Larson), 4. ("Origin of Satan: how Christian's demonized Jews, Pagans & Heretics", Pagels), 5. ("Jesus & the Essenes", Cannon)  
see, Jewish *Habakkuk Commentary* 50BC

Just like later Catholic monks in the 500's, this offshoot group formed monasteries, remained unmarried and lived in caves around what is now Syria. They also cast off worldly possessions, were extremely puritanical, and after a three year initiation walked around in *white robes* for over 200 years:

See, "Birth of Christianity", communities of resistance, Josephus "War of the Jews", vol. 1, bk. 2, chap. 8, "Surpassing Wonder", pg. 206, "Story of Civilization: Caesar & Christ", pg. 537

"The Essenes expected the new Garden of Eden to appear in the barren place where they lived."  
("Interpreter's Guide", Dead Sea Scrolls, Blair, 1970)

"The shining robes indicate his [Adams] exalted status in the Garden before his transgression and expulsion."  
("Book of Genesis: a bio", pg. 74)

The only 1<sup>st</sup> c. contemporary:

"Essenes condemned 'pleasure as evil". Josephus 80 AD  
("Jewish War") see, "Jews in the Roman World", Grant, pg. 64

"Essenes seemed far removed from rabbinic Judaism and in some respects *resembled early Christianity* especially monasticism... 2.They were known locally as healers... 3.. The Essenes had three main rituals: baptism, communion, and Sun-gazing. The sun was one of their most sacred symbols. They called themselves the 'Sons of Light.'... 4. The Qumran community's ritual of washing in a ritual bath for the washing away of sins became the Christian baptism."

("Dead Sea Scrolls: a bio"), 2.("DSS: Qumran in Perspective", Vermes), 3. ("Whatever happened to the DSS?", Larson, Journal of Historical Review, vol. 3 #2), 4. (essay, "Astrology in the Dead Sea Scroll's", Snow, from "Book Your Church Doesn't Want You to Read")

Coincidentally, both Paul and Jesus used the term "sons of light":

"Essene's were grotesque and theologically intolerant. Their ideas are marked by a narrow exclusiveness. The individual is nothing the community is all. Jerusalem and its wicked priests are the enemies and so are all the Pagans. After the apocalypse, the bad Jews will all be dead. That is the plan for human history. Planned by God... A man might enter an Essene community a pious, conformist Jew and emerge a Zealot... Palestine was thus soaked in a political-religious apocalypticism. 2. Essene Community Rule was compulsively obsessed."

("History of Christianity", Rise/rescue of the Jesus Sect, Johnston), ("Story of the Jews", Shama, Classical Jews)

Josephus again:

'To the Essene's, fate [God's will] governs all things and nothing can change that.'

Josephus

(paraphrased from, "Antiquities, bk. 13)

Today even Christians condemn 'pleasure as somehow evil' or at least guilt-worthy. This puritanical view comes down to us from the Essene cult:

"These dissidents invoked Satan to characterize their Jewish opponents... Only the Essene's and [early] Christians escalated conflict with their opponents to the level of cosmic war. [Like Jesus] they denounced both the Pharisee's/Sadducees as apostates. If Satan never existed in Jewish tradition the Essenes would have invented him."

("Origin of Satan: how Christian's demonized Jews, Pagans and Heretics", social history of Satan, Pagels)

Essene's also believed in dualism which later found their way into Paul's letters of 'hell and damnation':

"Essenes were influenced by Zoroastrianism... They expected the new Garden of Eden to appear in the barren place where they lived... Essene's completely divorced themselves from society."

("Discovering God", rebirth of monotheism), ("Interpreter's Guide to the Bible", "Dead Sea Scrolls", Blair), ("Zealot", pg. 37)

see also, "Magi: quest for a secret mystical tradition", Gilbert

"Both John the Baptist and the Essenes rejected the Temple authorities. They viewed the body as base and corrupt [Platonism]. 2. Like Jesus, others traveled about calling people



to 'repentance'. They would be the remnant saved on the final day of reckoning, the battle between the 'sons of light and the sons of darkness'".

("Zealot", Aslan, pg. 84), 2. ("Revelations: visions, prophecy and politics in the Book of Revelation", Pagels, 2013), , see Philo of Alexandria, "On the Contemplative Life", #25, Jewish War Book 2:8, Jewish Antiquity 13:11

Continuing:

"The Essenes repudiated conventional Judaism in favor of a form of Gnosticism and were the most esteemed healers in the Holy Land at the time. They also claimed they could raise the dead. The word Essene comes from the Greek '*essenoi*' meaning something secret or mystic."

("Unknown Life of Jesus: correcting the church myth", Silbelrud)

As mentioned, both the Pharisees and Sadducees *despised* the Essene monks as heretics outside their Law but wasn't written in the rather dishonest Gospel stories—fearful of pointing the finger back at them. This shows that the Gospel's were just exceedingly narrow sectarian stories:

"Many of them said, 'He [Jesus] has a demon. He is mad. Why listen to him???' John 10

"Essene's rejected the Temple authority [Sadducees]. 'Repent' in Essene language meant 'don't follow Temple authority'". ("[Zealot](#)")

And like the fanatics in the Gospels, the Essene's were apocalyptic. Eisenman even says they were 'violently apocalyptic' and very close to the Zealots in ideology and overthrow:

see, "Dead Sea Scroll's Uncovered", Eisenman

"Zoroastrian teachings were studied by the Essene's... Apocalyptic influence began with the Iranians which the Essene's used."

("Magi: quest for a secret mystical tradition", Gilbert, ("Imagining Religion", Smith, 1975, sourced from "Birth of Christianity"),

Finally, to be unmarried in that era would be like admitting leprosy--unless of course you were an Essene.

Another contemporary:

"Essenes renounced love entirely." Pliny the Elder, 1st c.  
("Natural History")

see also, "Adam/Eve and the Serpent", Pagels, "Genesis: a bio", "Book of Genesis",  
"The Meaning of the DSS's: their significance for understanding the Bible, Judaism, Jesus &  
Christianity", Vanderkam/Flint, Josephus "Jewish War, 2", "Jesus: the explosive story", "Jesus & the  
Essenes", "Zealot", Aslan, Encyclopedia of Religion, "Sadducees", Rivkin, Dead Sea Scrolls,

## **Dead Sea Scrolls/ Pseudepigrapha 200 BC-135 AD**

"What you sow is what you reap." Essene Gospel of Peace

"The Dead Sea Scroll's may be thought of as 'Essene.'"  
("Dead Sea Scroll Deception", Essenes)

Many people have heard of the DSS's and don't know exactly what they're about so  
coincidentally out shopping the other day sat a thick magazine at the checkout entitled  
"Dead Sea Scrolls". I gasped, 'Wow, the Scroll's are getting mainstream?!' Well maybe  
that's because the Scrolls are the *oldest* religious texts ever discovered! And since  
historians realize the Bible is grossly inaccurate time-wise scholars were amazed at the  
new evidences:

"These documents generated great interest immediately on their discovery. There is no  
doubt that this additional information has overturned many paradigms in the study of  
Judaism and ancient Christianity. Pauline studies have also been affected, since Paul's  
letters occupy a *crucial position* since they represent the earliest writings from the new  
movement that will become Christianity."

(Overlapping Ages at Qumran, "Dead Sea Scrolls & Pauline Literature", Academia.edu, 2014)

The consensus today is the Scrolls were written over 100's of years but by different  
Essene sects. Most were written in Hebrew, some Aramaic and were discovered in a  
cave in northern Israel by an Arab tending sheep. Later these were smuggled out of  
Egypt and advertised in a small newspaper in England. And as famously noted, an  
antiquities dealer saw the ad and were bought for \$125, 000-- although they would be  
considered *priceless* in today's antiquities market.

Some say that the Scrolls are the greatest treasures of antiquity ever found, but after  
being in clay jars for 2000+ yrs they were hardly intact and had to be painstakingly  
pieced together:

see "Dead Sea Scrolls in English", Vermes

"With the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls some scholars feel the Qumran community had a *direct influence* on Luke's later story. What distinguished them from the Pharisees/ Sadducees was they were mystical students of other types of wisdom including Egyptian and Zoroastrianism [duality of Gods]."

("Unknown Life of Jesus: correcting the Church Myth", Silbelrud)

These *pseudepigrapha* are actually Jewish alternative text which were not included in the Jewish Bible. For example, *1<sup>st</sup> Enoch*, the *Book of Watchers*: a third century BCE text on the Last Judgment, the *Book of Similitudes* (1<sup>st</sup> CE) also dealing with the Last Judgment, the *Epistle of Enoch* (2<sup>nd</sup> c. BCE) regarding woes to sinners, and the *Book of Giants* were written by this group:

"This complex work [Epistle of Enoch] was extremely influential and is very important... The Enochic literature was very popular: there are many fragments among the Scrolls of the Dead Sea."

("1<sup>st</sup> Enoch", Jona Lendering, Livius.org)

But to us now, what's really weirder is how or *why* later Gospel writers would include these as *Jesus quotes*! This would prove that the Essene's, along with the later gospel writers, were literally hanging out together:

"He answered and said to me: 'This is the son of man who has righteousness, with whom dwells righteousness, and who reveals all the treasures of that which is hidden, because the Lord of the spirits has chosen him, and whose lot has the pre-eminence before the Lord of the spirits in uprightness for ever. This son of man whom you have seen shall raise up the kings and the mighty from their seats and the strong from their thrones, and shall loosen the reins of the strong and break the teeth of the sinners.'

1<sup>st</sup> Enoch

As mentioned, among ancient Jews there was a lot of hate to displace:

"The members of the Qumran sect hated the Pharisees... The Dead Sea Scrolls bear a *striking resemblance* the Christian gospels."

("Messianic Motif's", Livius.org—articles on ancient history), ("Europe: a history", Ancient Rome)

What a coincidence!

## **Jewish War with Rome (66-132 AD)**

"The line from Jew to Gentile was *not* open to negotiation."  
("Birth of Classical Europe")

"[To Jews] all things are profane that we hold sacred." Roman historian Tacitus

Over the years most Christian's that I've talked to know very little about the 1<sup>st</sup> Jewish War; and for some dumb reason their conservative, non-historically minded churches haven't told them about it either! But if they knew that the 70AD war would be the *real* reason why the Gospels were written--well that might be a different story! Where do we begin?:

"The surviving Jews kept fiercely alive their hope of a Messiah who would rebuild the Temple and restore them in triumph to Jerusalem."  
("Story of Civilization", Rome and Judea)

"From the very beginning, monotheism was an ill-fitting shoe. It could never adequately explain the defeats and humiliations that pious Jews experienced."

(essay, "Jewish Humanism", Wine, from "Book Your Church doesn't want you to read")

The Roman rule of Palestine began around 63BC and continued off and on for hundreds of years until the last bar Kokhba revolt in 132-135AD. Rome would be deeply ambivalent about this Palestine for many reasons. One, the Jews strict monotheism. The other was Jerusalem's great distance away. Finally, the land was desert:

"Judaea was a third-class province, which meant that it was unimportant in terms of revenue." ("Judea", Livius.org)

So between 6 BC-67AD the Jewish Zealots, reading into their apocalyptic Prophets, united the more politically-motivated and called for Roman's to 'get off our land' which gradually ignited into civil war:

See, Interpreters Commentary, "Book of Genesis", Marks, 1971, "Birth of Classical Europe", "And Man Created God", "Who Wrote the NT"

"Judaea was the reminder of the base on which Roman power ultimately rested: that of an armed force--and if necessary public terror."  
("Early Christian World vol. 1 & 2", Armies, Emperors & Bureaucrats, Harries)

A rabbi reacts:

"In the 1st c. between 50,000-100,000 Jews were crucified by the Roman's."

("Jewish Literacy" Telushkin

While another modern historian removes a 'zero' and puts that number closer to 5000-10,000 which is probably more realistic. But the eyewitness Josephus wrote that afterwards, '1500 Jewish captives were killed by wild beasts in the arena, burned alive or forced to fight to the death as gladiators for the entertainment of the public.' Now that I believe.

See, *Invention of the Jewish People*", pg. 131, Josephus, *Jewish War* 7.3.1

Afterwards General Titus personally congratulated each soldier while others around them applauded! More on this story on the Christian side...

### **Masada**

I'm sure a few of you have heard about the Masada story or have seen TV movies on it. According to Josephus, in 37 BC Herod the 1st built a large fortress on the plateau as a refuge for himself in the event of a revolt. Later, in the 70's, with Jerusalem surrounded by Roman troops, the Zealot's split to this mountain fort, overcame a Roman garrison and supposedly holed up for years.

In 73AD, Roman general Silva laid a siege to the fort, including with battering rams and overcame the militants. Of course, Josephus being Jewish himself, sided with the agitators and claimed that 100's jumped off the 1000 ft. cliffs rather than submit to Rome! However, excavations below the site has proven other-wise...

See, *"Making History: Josephus And Historical Method"*, Brill, Rodgers, ed..  
pg. 397.

Years later in 133 AD, the Roman army placed the city off limits to Jews until roughly 325AD when it was finally ok for Christian's to enter in.

see, "Age of Faith", Medieval Jews, "Early Christian World, vol. 1 & 2", the New Jerusalem, Academia.edu

### **Old Testament criticism**

'Whoever abides seven days without a dream is called evil'. *Berachoth*

(from the Mishna Commentary)

"That man caused his own suffering through an 'original sin' is a perversion of the truth. That 'original sin' was God's-- the creation of matter and the source of evil. But God

doesn't suffer for his sins; he lets man do it.”  
("Deceptions & Myths of the Bible")

A critical modern Jewish view of ancient Hebrew scriptures:

"To ancients, religion wasn't a matter of faith but rather a matter of fact... Primitive peoples were naive in their interpretation of reality... It is no longer possible to believe that the Bible [OT] was inspired by God. Any reader might wonder at the patchwork nature, their conflicting norms and judgments, outright contradictions and errors."

("Encounter with the Divine in Mesopotamia and Israel", Saggs),  
("Gifts of the Jews", from then till now), see also "Jesus, Interrupted", pg. 10-20

Even worse:

"Orthodox practice came *crashing down* when I realized Judaism had been rooted in fantasy and denial of reality.”  
("Radical Judaism: rethinking God & tradition")

An earlier 3rd c. secular Roman writer felt the same:

"The Jews are ashamed of these ancient [OT] stories and they take refuge in allegory. But they are incapable of being explained this way. They are just very stupid fables.”  
Celsus

(quoted by Origen: against Celsus, 4:48-50)

Ok, granted that's a lot of criticism; but early on I mentioned that I admired the OT more than the New. The reasons being that the OT centers more around 'personal morality' and a philosophical view of God--rather than just a lame belief system like later Christianity designed for itself by the 4<sup>th</sup> c.:

"Judaism already has the universal theology that Christianity is seeking. There is one God—creator, sustainer and redeemer—who asks all persons [Jewish] that they live a life of spiritual attunement and moral sensibility. As to Christianity, what's good in it is already found in Judaism.”  
("Opening the Covenant", Kogan)

Anyway, the books of Psalms and Proverbs (although most likely written in Babylon) always led me to believe that God is a moral personal Person and not some unknown Blob hovering in the Universe. Follow God and you're following a Moral Person. But *most* people unfortunately side with the view that we are “accidents” of some sort.

Just a 'speck of dust in the universe' as they say. The ancients never felt that way:

"He that conceals his transgressions will not prosper." Prov. 28

While around 500 AD from the *Mishna* commentary:

"It is forbidden to deceive a fellow creature, even a Gentile."

(*Chullin* 94)

## 1948/Coda

After WW2, and with the horrific truth of a Jewish genocide in eastern Europe becoming clearer and clearer, the "Zionist's" received a portion of Palestine calling it their "holy land".

Naming itself Israel once again the "Chosen" people claimed 'sacred ancestry' or "Biblical right of their homelands" in their Hebrew scriptures to finally return again. A land to finally call their own.

But this U.N. Charter was fiercely debated by both the Arab nations and Palestine who felt *they* were the rightful owners and who had lived on the land since the post-Mohammed invasions in 690 AD. But for the Palestinians there had never had been a statehood or nation (like Lebanon for example) so their claim fell on deaf ears.

So unfortunately today with Palestinian's shoved into the tiny Gaza strip like rats in a cage and hemmed in by Israeli military on all sides the Palestinian's have sought the Left out for their grievances but have been ignored. Instead, Palestinians have become used as political fodder and as an anti-Zionist tool for Wahhabi Saudi's and other right-wing Islamist's. I bring this up because the world has watched this merry-go-round of mass religious murder since 1949 and it looks like this will continue on for centuries longer. All this over scriptures:

see, "Making David into Goliath", pg. 27+

"The three Abrahamic religions have over 3 billion adherents but they worship a different god... Monotheists are allergic to peaceful coexistence."

("Evolution of God", pg. 101)

"The modern, Western-Protestant world demands that Judaism change."

("How Christians invented 'Judaism' according to top Talmud Scholar", Perisco, Haaretz, 6/27/19)

My point here is it worth Israel to hold onto their small piece of "Holy land" when the Romans kicked them out 1900 years ago? Or when Jewish historians say that the Jews lived in Canaan for 500 years in total while the Canaanites, Romans and Arabs have

lived there for 1500 years? Or who or what gave Israel priority over other races? Their connections to America? Their military?:

“The 'curse' of the Jews is well known. But if we turn the phrase inside-out we ask why were they cursed? Was it because they obeyed the Torah? Or just a peculiar lifestyle? And why would a peculiar lifestyle *bother so many people*?”

(“Jerusalem: a bio”, intro)

In the 1800's the U.S. government also exiled 10's of thousands of our Native Indians off their lands sending them into Canada on death-marches leaving millions and millions of square miles open to the settlers. But have the Natives demanded their old land back like the Jews? Not even close.

A Zionist:

"As a religious Jew, I believe that our relationship to God is the purpose of the Jewish existence... I also believe that 'people-hood' is more crucial to Judaism than faith. How else can we make sense of the Jewish atheist?" Yossi Klein Halevi

("Jewish story under assault", LA Times, 4/22/16)

Or Zionist detractors:

“The Jews are the strangest people in world history, because whether to be or not to be they chose the radical falsification of all nature, all naturalness, all reality, of the whole inner world as well as the outer. They defined themselves sharply against all the conditions under which a people had hitherto been able to live, been allowed to live; out of themselves they created a counter-concept to natural conditions: they turned religion, cult, morality, history, psychology, one after the other, into an incurable contradiction to their natural values.” Nietzsche

(“Anti-Christ”, 1895)

“Israel has become one of the most reviled countries in the world.”

(“Making David into Goliath: how the world turned against Israel”, Maravchik, preface)

A brilliant British journalist who spent 30 years in the Middle East and feels the Holy Land has gone down hill from their biblical roots:

'Modern Israel has turned into a racist nation'.



("Great War for Civilization: conquest of the Middle East", girl, child & love, Fisk, pg. 365+), see,  
"Out of the Frame: the struggle for academic freedom in Israel", Pappe

And an entrance to the NT:

"Hebrew Scriptures represent comparable but conflicting responses to Christianity... A Christian understanding of the world grew out of this ancient religion."  
("Unauthorized Version")

("Sacrifice", Bourdillon, Ed. 1980, intro)

A Jewish interpretation of Christianity and who seems very upset:

"Christianity is a malignant religion. It condemned the world to be the 'kingdom of evil'"  
("Three Faces of Monotheism", Frankl)

More importantly for the Christian theologian:

"The early Christians made the connection the *wrong way* around: the NT did not fulfill the Old... The terms 'OT' and 'NT' are a Christian arrogance. They imply that the Christian dispensation was superseded and replaced the 'Old'."  
("Unauthorized Version")("Surpassing Wonder", pg. 12)

Well, let's see...

## **New Testament Overview**

"Is the study of God possible?...Do any religions offer any truths about God?"  
Sociologist Rodney Stark  
("Classic Christianity", Oden), ("Discovering God: origins of the great religions", Stark)

"For all the lip service still paid to the Bible, it remains largely a *mystery* to lay people."  
("What did the Biblical Writers Know...", Dever, Bible as history)

As we know, the NT is admired by millions and over the past 20 centuries its mystique has intrigued people from all walks of life to gaze into the life of 1st c. Jerusalem and its importance. And while the NT does create a view that billions of people have *somehow* identified with the Bible can be more baffling than not:

"The Bible is misunderstood. Most American's are completely in the dark about what

scholars have been saying the last 200 years.”

(*“Jesus, Interrupted”*, Ehrman, pg. 10)

For example, in the Bible studies I used to participate in I was just as confused as everyone else—including the teacher! “Wow, this must be of God!” we naively thought:

“That the message is hidden or difficult to discern belongs to the Bible’s fascination. The ‘Word of God’ as a sacred text is contained in the Bible they say, because it’s written in a language that’s *difficult* to understand. So it must be read with care in order to extract its messages.”

(“Who Wrote the NT?”, Mack, pg. 296)

My own personal history with Christianity and the Bible stretches out a decade as I was once a “devout” Christian. But after years of studying, going in and out of church’s and trying to maintain a Christian lifestyle I finally gave up realizing that it was generally too false as a lifestyle.

At the time, this was the 20<sup>th</sup> c. and I was (and still am) too progressive as a person to look back in time 20 centuries to find that sort of validation...

Up to the early 1900’s the Bible was universally considered the “Word of God”. The reasons for that was fields of archaeology, linguistics, anthropology, phenomenology of religion were speculative and unable to prove outside the Bible’s text. Darwin’s theories would be scoffed at and not taken seriously so millions just presumed the Bible’s claims for itself and didn’t argue:

“Christian fundamentalism idolizes the Bible—yet largely misunderstands it.”

(*“History of the Bible”*, pg. 3), see, *“Jesus, Interrupted”*, *historical assault on faith*

Author Selena O’Grady’s on the bright side:

“Religion is still important in people’s lives because it does something that nothing else does quite as well.”

(quote from “Best Books on the Role of Religion”, online)

Yet to the millions that go to church’s on Sunday’s they’re not interested in how much of the NT is true or not or even if its concepts are still valid—they like what it says. It fits into their personal lifestyle:

“Millions want the ‘spiritual challenge’ of living in Christ.”

(*“Mere Christianity”*, CS Lewis, pg. 57-65)

But as a flawed document, since that time interest in the Bible has steadily waned for

several reasons:

- 1). The stories, ethics and concepts are 2,000 years old and no longer applicable.
- 2). The NT writers regarded Jesus as their own personal Superman--but outside of the NT there's been no proof of that view.

So in reading the NT I still get the strong impression its writer's were shady and even *evil* people who covered up obvious social truths, encouraged ethnic bias and used lies to control others. To me, just because a books old doesn't automatically classify it as a sacred text. Disagree if you want but it's all there in the NT depending on what verses one wants to look at:

“Most people don't know how we got the Bible or how it works.”  
(*“Who Wrote the NT?”*, pg. 4)

Today when I ask Christians how they got their Bible with both Testaments some have told me that “the early Jews just gave them their Old Testament for the early Christians to use.” Or else they think that Christianity came “straight out of Judaism”. While other scholars explain that the religions are completely dissimilar:

(*“Discovering God”*)), (*“Battle for God”*), see also, *“History of the Ancient World”*, Bauer

“The NT contradicts the OT... Christianity is an offshoot of Judaism yet it's strange that the religions don't mix--either theologically or socially... The combination of the OT with the NT gives rise to absurdities.”

(*“Battle for God”*, Karen Armstrong), (*Interpreters Commentary*, *“The Unity between the Testaments”*, Filson, 1971), (*“Agnostic Reader”*, Joshi, ed., '07)

So let's see for ourselves...

### **Conglomeration of Many Religions**

“The NT was a gradual process that took centuries to complete.”  
(*“Gnostic Bible”*, pg. 17)

“Christianity didn't destroy paganism--it adopted it.”  
(*“Story of Civilization: Caesar & Christ”*, pg. 595)

Previously we read how past religions (notably Judaism) borrowed or stole ideas from others and inserted these ideas as their 'own' scriptures. Well, Christianity wasn't any

different-- only worse. As you will read, it stole at least a hundred different ideas and symbols from many different religions and in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. buried them in its canon as its own 'original religion' which we read today. And with so many internet history buffs around today this is another reason why Christianity has so many enemies—its inherent dishonesty:

“The Christian Church has managed to persuade the general public of its own divine uniqueness to such a degree that few people realize that it has sprung from the root of Paganism.”

(*“Pagan & Christian Creeds: their origin and meaning”*, Carpenter, Intro)

Dr. Martin Luther King in Grad school:

“The [pagan] mystery religions paved the way for the presentation of Christianity to the world of that time. They *prepared the people mentally and emotionally* to understand the *type* of religion which Christianity represented.”

(essay, “Influence of the Mystery Religions”, MLK, 1950)

Despite the Christian claims to the contrary, the NT took very little theological knowledge from the OT, preferring the pagan religions:

“The NT began by those who knew nothing of Jewish literature.”

(“History of Western Philosophy”, Bertrand Russell, 1945)

A 19<sup>th</sup> c. philosopher critical of Christianity’s 4<sup>th</sup> c. doctrine:

“In order to master barbarians, Christianity was in need of barbaric ideas and values: the contempt of the intellect and of culture.” Frederic Nietzsche 1895

(essay, *“The Anti-Christ: a criticism of Christianity”*)

And its Pagan roots which show up in the Letter's:

“People of the first and second century did not need to be persuaded that there were gods, omens, miraculous births, and returns from the jaws of death. The stories of gods and heroes routinely used the motif because it was core to the idea that a god was immortal.”

(essay, “Controversy, Mythicism, and the Historical Jesus”, (Dr.) R. Joseph Hoffmann, Academia.edu)

“Christianity is Platonism for the masses.” Nietzsche

(*“Beyond Good & Evil”*)

Finally, a former Catholic bishop and excellent scholar who's lectured at Harvard's Divinity School:

"Religion is not a search for truth; it is a search for security."

*"Sins of Scripture", Spong,, pg. 220),*

## **NT History**

"The NT is the story of a *fiercely fought* cultural conquest to about 380 AD."

*("Who Wrote the NT?", creating the Christian Bible, Mack, pg. 277+)*

"The formation of the NT as the Christian Bible was a gradual process that took centuries to complete."

*("Gnostic Bible", Barnstone/ ed, pg. 17)*

"From a strictly historical point of view there is no single 'real Christianity.'"

*("Adam, Eve & the Serpent", Pagels, pg. 131, pdf)*

Unlike the OT --which could care less about "believability"-- the NT was put together from 100's of various "gospels" and apocryphal letters. And except for Paul's letters, the majority of the NT is *semi-historical* rather than eyewitness accounts. The reason being its stories were written decades or even centuries after the events took place:  
see, "Who Wrote the NT?", pg. 6

"Christianity grew out of a nexus of Jewish and Hellenistic cultures."

*("Entangled Christianities", Anthony, pg. 13, pdf)*

"The quest for historical reconstruction has been a prime motivation since the 19<sup>th</sup> c.. The results have been mixed... as the NT is both too partial and too prejudiced for a full historical record of Christian beginnings."

*("NT: Very Short Intro", Johnson, pg. 5)*

No doubt, Christianity took a great name for itself. It means 'Christ-like' and even utopian. But did it supersede Judaism like it promised? Well, yes and no. But looking back in history Jesus wasn't the Christ (at least from the Jews standpoint). In fact, countless historians say Apostle Paul is its true Founder and I would agree. Therefore, even its namesake isn't even accurate:

"The inventors of the New Testament in the post-70 years were very similar in their approach to the author-editor of Genesis-Kings unity: they included older historical

order and re-arranged them to form what we now call a scripture."  
(*"Surpassing Wonder"*, pg. 409)

Outside of Paul's letters, (50's+) everything else in the NT would be written by unknowns in far-flung locales:

"The NT claims to be a record of something that did happen but which there is no historical evidence... Christianity began as a marginal branch of Judaism whose Founder left no written works... Without the Bible the Christian myth would evaporate."

(*"Introduction to the NT?"* Brown), (*"Christianity: the first 3K"*, MacCollock), (*"Who Wrote the NT?"*, pg. 276) see, "Bible without Theology: theological tradition alternatives", Davies

If one reads closely (which most people don't) the NT or "New Covenant" was written more as a one-sided argument from early Christians who pointed to Jesus as their new Christians messiah (Greek/Hebrew "anointed one" / "king" / "savior"). The Christ who was supposed to free Jews from under Roman rule. While in the earlier Pauline arguments new believers would be presumably freed from sin or saved in the gathering apocalypse.

See, Acts of the Apostles, Pauline Letters

The ground-breaking and meticulous scholar Dr. Bart Ehrman:

"The Bible is filled with a multitude of voices and these voices are often at odds with one another, contradicting one another in major issues involving such as what God is like... Of the 27 Books found in the NT just *seven* go back to their original authors. Most are later forgeries... The claims of inspiration in the NT have no legitimacy."

(*"Did Jesus Exist?"* intro), (*"Jesus Interrupted"* Ehrman, PhD, pg. 112), (*"Misquoting Jesus"*, Ehrman, pg. 112), (*"History of the Quranic Text"*, *Are the Gospels Inspired?* Kallamullah.com), see also *"A Short History of the NT"*, *"Did Jesus Exist?"*

While apologists view that differently and really don't care *who* wrote it-- they just believe what it says:

"The NT authors were guided by the Spirit of Truth... God inspired the Bible for our understanding!... The Biblical worldview is about *transcendence*."

(essay, *"Is the NT historically reliable?"*, Barnett, from *"In Defense of the Bible"*), (essay, *"Can we understand the Bible?"*, Melick), (essay, *"Is the story of Jesus borrowed from pagan myths?"*, Sharp, from *"In Defense of the Bible"*, pg. 198)

"The Bible's central message involves God, sin and alienation from God and self, redemption and the purity developed by the Holy Spirit."

(essay, *"Can we understand the Bible?"*, Melick, Phd, from *"In Defense of the Bible"*)

The backdrop to the NT was mainly Jewish in and around Palestine. A few Roman soldiers were around but the region wasn't occupied like imagined in the Gospel accounts. The Samaritan's lived just east of Jerusalem and since they were Semitic were able to blend in as both spoke Aramaic.

see, "Historical Figure of Jesus", Judea at the time of Jesus

The term Christian-- as a separate group distinct from the Jews--was not a self-chosen designation but bestowed by hostile opponents around 110 AD. Technically this meant that neither Jesus nor Paul would be considered Christians. The Roman administrator Pliny the Younger also mentions this term and the first non-Christian outside the Bible to do so.

Below are quotes from historians mainly from the prior Jesus Seminar. These NT scholars from the 1990's were after a different meaning of scriptures rather than the glossy meaning most read. They knew its pages had a huge bias (mainly against the Jews and other sects) which slanted its scriptures original historical meaning:

"The NT is in fact the primary source document for 1st c. Palestine. Not the faith claims. Just the historical context... Jews wrote the NT as sequel inspired by the failure of the Old... The bulk of the NT is anti-Jewish writing, including Paul."

(*"Is Jesus the only Savior?"*, Edwards), (*"Deceptions & Myths of the Bible"*, Graham), (*"Triumph of Christianity"*)

So to study the NT's history religious scholars both Jewish and Christian, social anthropologists, archeologists, linguists and historians have deconstructed the NT and have come up with some very startling conclusions.

Dr. Dever is a Christian archeologist but also counters a literal translation of the Bible:

"Deconstructon is texts that have no intrinsic 'meaning'."

(*"What Did the Biblical Writers Know & When did they know it?" Bible as History*, Dever)

Another Christian 'minimalist' who feels the NT's "facts" are in fact true lies:

"Higher criticism rejects a literal translation of the Bible, and in general denies its historical basis."

(“Searching for the Original Bible”, Price, pg. 20), see “

By now the reader should have come to some conclusions that Christianity, while 1000's of years old, is not an original religion. Rather it rather a composite of other religion's piled on in the 4<sup>th</sup> c.. This was mostly to keep the Pagans of the time happy.

A Jewish view of the NT:

"Christianity bears *some* semblance to Judaism yet on closer inspection differs radically... 2. We cannot use the synoptic writings as corroborative testimony to a single event, as they were regarded 'once upon a time' in Tatian's [180] day... 3. The terms 'OT and NT' are a Christian arrogance. They imply that the Christian dispensation supersedes and indeed replaced the Old... Almost no Jewish scholar believes Jesus intended to start a new religion."

(*"Jewish-Christian Debate: God, Kingdom, Messiah"*, Neusner/Chilton, 1941/1998), 2. (essay, "Controversy, Mythicism and the Historical Jesus", (Dr.) R. Joseph Hoffmann, Academia.edu), 3. (*"Surpassing Wonder"*, pg. 12), (*"Jewish Literacy"*)

### **Politically Engaged?**

As I'll get to, in its first few centuries the NT had early hopes of a political religion which was mainly against its older sister Judaism. In other words, whatever the Jews said or did Christians simply refuted them and just said the opposite. For example, the constant arguing back and forth in the Gospels, Acts and the Letters. This should be an obvious clue:

“Religion then was thoroughly political as well as spiritual... On its journey into becoming the official religion of the Roman Empire in the 4<sup>th</sup> c., Christianity was politically engaged. Power struggles erupted as groups fought for supremacy over their rivals.”

(*"How Jesus Became Christian"*, Prolog)

Bishop Spong:

“Religious writers say to me that there can be no Christianity apart from the authority of the scriptures. The assumptions made by the [ancient] biblical writers, warped as they are by both lack of knowledge and by tribal prejudices, are incorrect... The traditional claim that the Bible is the 'Word of God' is problematic at best and absurd at worst.”  
(*"Sins of Scripture"*, Spong, pg. 18-24)

It's interesting to read that the 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> c. early Christians were thoroughly confused



as to what doctrinal approach they could take with the rabbis:

“It was argued [from Christians] that Israel 'habitually misunderstood all its prophets, Jesus included.' At the same time, Christianity had to *continue* representing the Jewish past as its own.”

(“*Sociology of Religious Knowledge in the Roman Empire to A.D. 284*”, Roberts, pg. 247)

While others may find that a 'political Christianity' ridiculous and simplistic people in politics today still do the same and astoundingly without apology. Take Trump for example! Millions will say anything to get him out of office! So on a sociological level I feel that 2000 years ago is unfortunately no different...

see, “*Christianity: the 1st 3K*”, *Crucified messiah*

## **NT archeology**

"The original Bible [1<sup>st</sup> c.] no longer exists."

(“*Original Bible*”, Price, pg. 29)

"The history of NT studies is dotted by the failed attempts of Conservative Christian's to counter critical scholarship."

(“*Who Wrote the NT?*”, pg.9)

The earliest books in the NT are the seven letters of Paul which were written about 25 years after Jesus died. While the last book (Revelation) was finished between 90-200AD+. The earliest NT *fragment* is the John Rylands Papyrus (135AD) which was found in Egypt. The Muratorian fragment (170 AD) is the earliest known list of NT books (22 of 27). Although recently, one scholar feels that date is too early and signs that date to the later 4<sup>th</sup> c. While a new Markian fragment has been found in Egypt which has been dated 150-250 AD.

see, “*The Muratorian Fragment and the Origins of the New Testament Canon*” in “The Canon Debate”, 2002, Hahneman, pp.405–41, “Despite Disappointing Some, New Mark Manuscript is Earliest Yet.” Christianity Today, Hixson, May 30, 2018, “Intro to the NT”, Brow, Chap. 3

In 180 CE, Irenæus of Lyons listed the four “canonical” gospels, while the earliest edition of the 4 gospels (Gr.) in one continuous narrative is Tatian’s *Diatessaion* (“Book of the four” (170-250AD). There is also the *Bodmer Papyrus* (225AD) which contains about half of John plus Luke. These were anonymous with no names attached. In the 3rd century partial Old Latin versions of Scripture appeared in Egypt around 250 AD:

See, “*The Acts of Jesus: what did Jesus really do?*”, Funk/Jesus Seminar , “*The Gospels Second*

*Century Writings*”, Remsburg, “*Historical Figure of Jesus*”, E.P. Sanders, “*Original Bible*”, ancient versions, “*The Bible in Translation*”, Metzger, “*Text of the NT*”, Metzger

“The NT was assembled over time, copied and recopied and passed down through the centuries by Christians... They were ‘assembled’ by a Catholic committee by 367 AD. The Church had many texts and letters to choose from, including apocrypha texts, but choose the 27 as being written by Apostles or tied to the Gospel's in some way.”  
(“From Jesus to Christianity”, White, pg. 2), (“NT:Very Short Intro”, Johnson)

“85% of 2<sup>nd</sup> c. texts have gone *missing* and that only represents a *small fraction* of what there once was.”  
(“*Christianity: first 3 K*”, *MacCullah*), see “*Searching for the Original Bible*”, pg. 29

Since Christian scriptures weren’t compiled to at least 180-200AD the Jewish *Tanakh* was also called ‘scripture’ by early Christians including Paul. While one historian says that most of the NT was written in the 2nd century rather than the 1<sup>st</sup>:

“With two exceptions, the gospels are not mentioned by name before 190AD as mentioned by Irenaeus. Papias’ account of Mathew, writing as late as 150 AD, knew of no authoritarian translation of Mathew in Hebrew... By 150-190 AD there was still no NT.”  
(“Canonical and Uncanonical Gospel's”, pg. 70-3) , (“From Jesus to Christianity”, White)

see, “Historical Evidence of Jesus”, Wells, pg. 12, “*Searching for the Original Bible*”, “*Christianity: 1st 3K*”, boundaries, also any book by Ehrman, “*Who Wrote the NT?*”

In the 3rd century parts of the NT began to circulate in Syria in what was called the “Old Syriac Version”. Two have survived—one written in the 4th century, the other in the 5<sup>th</sup>.

“The earliest substantial manuscripts of the New Testament come from the 3rd century. Any Christian text written *earlier* than A.D. 200 is a rare and remarkable find.”

(article, “Despite Disappointing Some, New Mark Manuscript is Earliest Yet.” Christianity Today, Hixson, May 30, 2018)

Later in 383AD, St. Jerome translated the Latin Vulgate which the early Catholic Church used for 1200 years up to the Reformation. Since alphabets were very crude the texts still used the uncial or block letter’s—no cap’s or spaces between words:

see, “*Bible in Translation*”, ancient versions, Metzger, “*Christianity: the 1st 3K*”, Boundaries defined, “*Pagan Christ*”, “*Knowing Scripture*”, Sproul, “*The Bible in Translation*”, ancient versions, Metzger;

*"Forged: writing in the name of God", "Searching for the Original Bible",*

"In the 2nd/3rd/4th centuries, centrist Christian's carefully selected and arranged anonymous and pseudonymous writings. In the centrist Christian imagination the four gospels merged into one gospel story and the letters of Paul and other apostles were read as 'witnesses'. The problem was this charter is neither an authentic account of Christian beginnings. Historians of religion's would call this myth."  
("Who Wrote the NT?", pg. 7+)

"The Christian Bible is not the same as the Hebrew Bible."  
("Who Wrote the NT?", pg. 4)

By the mid-4th century the 27 books of the New Testament were assembled and edited by a committee of bishops with 100's of different texts/books/letters to choose from. This included *apocrypha*, but chose the 27 because they were supposedly written by Apostles or tied to the 4 Gospels ("good tidings") in some way--even though half of Paul's Letters are *pseudepigrapha*:

see, "Short History of the NT", "Birth of Christianity", "From Jesus to Christianity", *Ency. of Catholicism*, "Coming Out Christian in the Roman World", pg. 23, "Forged: writing in the name of God", Ehrman

"In the 4th century when both the OT was combined with the NT the Church finally had its story straight. This new Bible could now claim antiquity [from the OT] and a firm foundation for this new mythic religion."  
("Who Wrote the NT", pg. 1-16)

Most of the gnostic and the apocalyptic materials were tossed. What bishops wanted were 'centrist' opinions and the earliest gospel's written that could be viewed as authentic.

A Grad student from Berkeley Theological Union from his interesting book:

"Many books were widely read and even accepted as authoritative in the 1st/2nd c. only to be discarded or marginalized by later generations... It would be another 200 years before the authorized list would be sanctioned."

(essay, "Quest for the Historical Jesus in the 21<sup>st</sup> c./Entangled Christianities", Anthony, chap. 1 pg. 4+), see also, "Lost Christianities", Ehrman, pg. 136-145

Finally, since both Yahweh and Jesus are missing in finite history a Jewish viewpoint:

"Christianity might be seen as the 'mystery cult of Yahweh'..."

(*"And Man Created God"*), see also *"Radical Judaism"*

## NT Myth

"NT scholars try to 'demythologize' by peeling off ancient thought forms in order to reveal its essential meaning."

(*Interpreter's Guide, "Theological Study of the Bible"*, Wright, 1971)

"Christianity and pagan texts are similar. But in myth, chaos always existed. Men could manipulate the gods and nature. There is none of that in Christianity."

(essay, *"Is the story of Jesus borrowed from pagan myths?"*, Sharp, from *"In Defense of the Bible"*, pg. 192-8)

The history of religions from its beginnings have been the work of linguists, historians, anthropologists, sociologists, ethnologists, and philosophers. But any criticism by these professionals of their sacred text tends to scorch the Christian ear to no end as I've heard this countless times from the pulpit. Christians accuse professionals as being 'atheists with an avowed agenda out to destroy God.' But the apologists are merely trying to deflect arguments—that the Christian canon was put together by a vote from bishops from a myriad of texts in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. and what ever they decided was considered final. What's simpler than that?

Today a modern illustration of myth or fiction might be the world-wide popularity of "Star Wars". As voyeurs movie audiences see themselves inside space rockets, landing on other planets and going against Storm troopers. These films have cut across different continents and even into Communist China.

So if we went into the future 2000 years and looked back at "Star Wars" would we believe it to be fact or myth? This is the issue with the NT today—is it true, historicized-fiction or total fiction?:

"Is the NT myth or history and myth?"

(quoted by Bultmann, from *"Interpreters Guide, "Bible & Preaching"*, Buttrick)

Naturally in Christian circles both scholars and preachers do not like these modern biblical critics with their uppity higher criticism. Christian apologetic believe this higher criticism stresses human rather than divine authority. In other words, 'God did not write nor inspire the Bible' which would take away their religion:

see, *"Higher criticism: what has it shown?"*, Quartes

"We are obligated to believe what the Bible teaches what it prescribes with the *priviso* it

has been properly interpreted.”

(*"In Defense of the Bible"*, intro, edited Cowan/Wilder, PhD, '13)

“The Bible's authority for Christians lies in the fact that they have a special relationship with it that can never be altered, like the relationship of the parent-child.”

(“Christianity: 1<sup>st</sup> 3K”, MacCoulough, intro)

Josh McDowell:

"The Christian faith is grounded in history... The NT is about transcendence.”

(essay, *"New Evidence"*, from, *"In Defense of the Bible"*, Cowen, ed., pg. 120)

"The NT authors were guided by the Spirit of Truth...The NT writers were decent, moral men... The Bible speaks with one voice; it doesn't contradict itself... The Bible is Cristocentric."

(essay, *"Is the NT historically reliable?"*, Barnett, from *"In Defense of the Bible"*), (essay, *"Higher criticism: what has it shown?"*, Quarles, PhD), (essay, *"What does it mean to say the Bible is true?"*, Blount, essay from *"In Defense of the Bible"*), (*"New Evidence that Demands a Verdict"*, McDowell, pg. 6)

### **sensus plenior**

Many Christians subscribe to the devout theories above but Evangelical's can claim that the Bible has a dualistic, hidden meaning called *sensus plenior*. (“fuller meaning”). Catholics also use this approach. But the problem with *sensus* is it opens up a new angle that few can ever get to the bottom of the text unless they were literally reading the mind of God. Worse, is most preachers know so little about the history of the text anyway that their arguments becomes circular—and who usually end up referencing one scripture from another while failing to get outside resources to hedge up their viewpoint. This is what I had to deal with from Bible teachers when I was ‘churched’—general ignorance of scripture:

see “Who Wrote the NT?”, pg. 5

“There remains a deeper sense of the text itself which is not seen by the author, but was intended by God. This is our *sensus plenior*.”

(Brown, Doctoral Thesis, 1955, pg. 92)

Critics of the NT are hardly new. Even back in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. Origen wrote that it was dumb to take scripture literally—but people ignored that. Much later in the mid- 1700’ s German historian Reimarus, smelling a rat, wrote a work called, *“On The Intention of*

*Jesus and His Disciples*” and people ignored that for another 150 years as well. Finally by the French Revolution the People had had enough:

“Reimarus said that they were humanly created materials that narrated false stories. Reimarus argued that the canonical Gospels relied on historical distortions and fantasies... The claims of Reimarus would lead him to look outside the NT for information about the historical Jesus.”

(“Contemporary Challenges to the Gospel: Incipient Gnosticism and Johannine Teaching on the Resurrection”, Woods, M.A. Thesis. South African Theological Seminary)

“Before then, scholars more or less accepted the literary portrayals of our Gospels as historically accurate, without recognizing the problems that they pose as historical sources.”

(“Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot”, pg. 147)

In the early 1900’s German professor Rudolf Bultmann, “completely re-evaluated the writings of the New Testament. He showed a relationship between the NT writers and the Incipient Gnostic writers. “

(“Contemporary Challenges to the Gospel: Incipient Gnosticism and Johannine Teaching on the Resurrection”, pg. 3)

Without a historical confirmation Christian, or mythic belief, can be vulnerable:

“Some maintain that the inspiration of scripture's is a pious theological belief that has no validity.”

(“Intro to the NT”, Brown, Chap. 2 ‘How to read the NT’)

“Christianity was not a new and unique revelation but actually a Jewish adoption of the pagan mystery religions... For 2000 years the West has been dominated by the idea that Christianity is sacred while Paganism is primitive and the work of the Devil.”

(“Jesus Mysteries”, Freke/Gandy”, intro)

Below is a chart of writers and philosophers who lived during the time, or within a century after the time, that Jesus lived. Outside of Josephus in 90 AD, there are no mentions. This is what started the mythical Jesus route in the mid-1700’s:

Josephus	Juvenal	Lucanus
Philo-Judæus	Martial	Epictetus

Seneca	Persius	Hermogones Silius Italicus
Pliny Elder	Plutarch	Statius
Arrian	Pliny Younger	Ptolemy
Petronius	Tacitus	Appian
Dion Pruseus	Justus of Tiberius	Phlegon
Paterculus	Apollonius	Phædrus
Suetonius	Quintilian	Valerius Maximus
Pausanias	Dio Chrysostom	Lysias
Florus Lucius	Columella	Pomponius Mela
Lucian	Valerius Flaccus	Appion of Alexandria
Quintius Curtius	Damis	Theon of Smyrna
Aulus Gellius	Favorinus	

"Modern critics of the NT believe that unless something in scripture can be verified by non-biblical sources it must be rejected as mythical [didn't happen]... 2. The NT is the Christian myth in pictures. Without the Bible the myth would evaporate... The Bible is a book to be consulted but not to be explained."

*("The Bible", Armstrong), ("Who Wrote the NT", creating the Christian Bible + prolog)*

"Our usual Christian way is to take the mythological metaphors of the Christian Credo literally... Christianity grew out of an utterly false soil. With every extension of Christianity over the larger and ruder masses it absorbed the teaching and rites of *all* subterranean cults of the Romans."

*("Creative Mythology", Campbell, pdf) , (Frederic Nietzsche "The Anti-Christ" essay)*

It's fair to say these mythological concepts were later integrated in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. by the early Father's:

*see, Pagan & Christian Creeds, intro*

"Judaism and Christianity owe more of their origins to Egyptian roots. There is irrefutable proof that nothing in Christianity was in reality a new continuation to the world of religion's."

*("Golden Bough", Burroughs, 1890-1915)*

An important take of Joseph Campbell on mythology:

"Mythology is not invented rationally; mythology cannot be rationally understood..."

Theological interpreter's render it ridiculous. Literature criticism reduces it to metaphor."

(*"Primitive Mythology: masks of God"*, Campbell, pg. 42)

And what should seem ridiculous to us now is that Plato and the later biblical writers like "Apostle" Paul explained the natural world as a bad and not a good place:

"Christianity cannot shake off its pagan parents.. The entire body of Christian doctrine is simply revamped and mutilated Egyptianism...2. The gods were very powerful and both the Greeks/Roman's believed the gods had a huge influence over life... 3.The Christian myths were first related of Horus or Osiris, who was the embodiment of divine goodness... 4. Most Christian practices were borrowed from pagan culture."

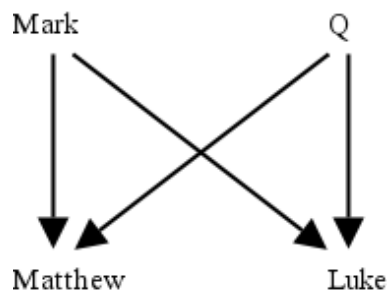
(*"Lost Light"*, Kuhn, 1940, pg. 58), 2.(*"Mythology"*, Wilkinson/Phillips, pg. 34), 3.(*"Natural Genesis"*, Massey), 4.(*"Pagan Christianity"*, Viola/Barna, pg. 20) see also, *"Essential Visual History of World Mythology"*, National Geo annual

Finally, the great historian Will Durant from one of his 11 volumes:

"Christianity was the last great creation of the ancient pagan world. "

(*"Caesar and Christ"*, Apostles, pg. 595),) see, *"Unauthorized Version: truth & fiction in the Bible"*, Fox, pg. 139

## Gospels 70-120AD



"Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism all agreed that the goal of all human life is salvation through a savior God who was both a person and a deity. Thus the 'gap' between the deity and the helpless human was bridged; while the older concept of keeping a relationship with the supernatural powers wasn't abandoned. All three promised adherents eternal life in a blissful after-world."

(*"Rise of the West: history of the human community"*, McNeil)



“If Jesus was such an important figure—or even if he wasn’t so important—wouldn’t there be a reference to him in some of our many surviving sources from the first century? We have the writings of [Roman/Greek] historians, politicians, philosophers, religion scholars, poets, and scientists; we have inscriptions placed on buildings and personal letters written by average people. In none of these non-Christian writings of the first century is Jesus ever mentioned, not even once!”

(“*Did Jesus Exist?*”, intro), see, “*Adam, Eve & the Serpent*”, Pagels, “*Anti-Judaism: the Western Tradition*”, Nirenberg, Chap. 2

When I was in Christian circles the Gospel's were pulled out and Jesus said this or Jesus said that and Christians should obey. But never *once* in 10 years of listening to preachers did I hear anything like, ‘this verse originated in...’ or ‘the history behind the text is...’. To me, that was odd and very shallow and I wanted more than they were giving me.

Yet to most Christian teachers, writer's and preachers “scholarship” means little more than cross-referencing one Bible verse with another. And even that approach must be tread lightly since many verses in the NT contradict. So these teachers must walk on egg-shells or else their points can collapse very easily. I’m afraid this is not scholarship but preaching. Scholarship means an objective or outside viewpoint—not inside, apologetic and superficial. That to me is more interesting.

I’ve covered that Jesus in the Gospels can’t be independently verified from outside sources so there are three basic factions to choose from:

- 1). Jesus was a real person.
- 2). Jesus was a real person but later fictionalized.
- 3). Jesus was a mythical personality later compiled to look like a real person.

These three schools of thought are mutually exclusive and the historians below share their thoughts:

“Gospels were most likely written in Syria or Asia minor.... Accurate dating is simply *impossible*. The *terminus ad quem* must be around 100 AD... The physical evidence of the four Gospels is around 170-190 AD.”

(“*History of the Bible*”, pg. 200), (“*The Riddle of the NT*”, Hoskyns/Davey, 1963, pg. 196), (“*Acts of Jesus: what did Jesus really do?*”, Funk and the Jesus Seminar), see “*Intro to the NT*”, Brown, Chap. 1

Question: Why were the Gospel's written 40-100 yrs later when the disciples had Jesus right next to them?

Answer: The disciples were not next to Him.

Most scholars are unanimous that the Gospel's were written 40 years or more after Jesus died, and roughly 100 miles from where Jesus lived—a 10 days journey in those days. None were written by their putative authors and all were drawing on second- or third- or even fourth-hand accounts. I'm afraid this can make a historical Jesus look not so historical:

"Some scholars dismiss the Gospels as little more than a Christian fantasy that tell us nothing reliable... 2. The Gospels are very inaccurate stories of what transpired. We know more about the Jesus of [factual] history than Paul did 2,000 years later... 3. The gospels are anonymous. They were titled in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> c... 4. His image has been pieced together *not* from the 4 canonized Gospels but from other ancient writings such as 'Q', 'Gospel of Thomas' and 'Gospel of Peter.'"

(*"Jewish Christianity Reconsidered"*, Jerusalem Church, Hill, pg. 45), 2. (*"History of Christianity: first 3K"*), 3. (*"Intro to the NT"*, *Brown*), 4. (*"Searching for the Original Bible: who wrote it and why?"*, Dr. Price)

Continuing:

"Proving Jesus as a historical figure using primary sources is *impossible*. Assuming that he did walk the earth and was a central figure in the God-head, it seems the Christian's *would have preserved all information* regarding him. Like sports figure or international movie star, all tit-bits relating would have been collected, preserved, perused and treasured. The reality was quite to the contrary."

(*"History of the Quranic Text"*, *the Historical Christ in Christian Circles*, Kalamullah.com),

see, *"Criticism of the Gospel, History of John"* Bauer, 1840, *"Criticism of the Gospels"* Bauer, 2 vols., 1850, 1852, *"Origin of Christianity from Graeco-Roman Civilization"* Bauer, 1877, *"Christianity & Mythology"*, Robertson, 1900, *"The Christ Myth"*, Drews, 1909, *"Incredible Shrinking Son of Man: How Reliable Is the Gospel Tradition?"*, Price, *"Did Jesus Exist?"*, Wells, 1975

Similar to the OT's approach, the rather quickly-written Gospels would be written by handing down the stories and traditions. So beginning with Mark any view these writers wanted-from 'Jesus as a plumber' to the 'son of God' could have been used:

"Jesus didn't come as the Founder of a new religion. Christianity was founded 300 years later in his *memory*."

(*"From Jesus to Christianity: how four generations of visionaries & storytellers created the NT"*).

White)

“Jesus was remarkably unorganized with others. There is no evidence of their forming 'Jesus groups' when the Lord was alive... The gospels are not, nor were they ever meant to be historical documentation of Jesus' life. They are testimonies of faith written many years after the events they describe.”

(“Intro to the NT”, Brown), (“Zealot”, intro, Aslan)

### **Did Jews write the Gospel's?**

In this sub-section it's assumed by most Christians (and even some historians) that Jews wrote out the Gospel's. But if they did they were pretty bad Jews! In the parable below, the Gospel of Luke infers that the Samaritans are better people than the Jewish priests—presumably meaning pro-Samaritan. A bit later in Acts, I explore that the Gospel writer's were post-Temple Christians and not Jews either since very few Jews converted:

“A man was going to Jericho and he fell among robbers, leaving him half-dead. Now chance a priest walked by and ignored him. So likewise a Levite [a devout Jew]. But a *Samaritan*, as he journeyed saw him and had compassion. Brought him to an inn and took care of him.” Luke 10

“The three Abrahamic religions have over 3 billion adherents but they worship not the same god but a different god... Jesus believed you should love God, but there's no mention of God loving you... The recruits were *unshackled* by Jewish Law.”

(“Evolution of God”, pg. 101, 258, 273)

What Dr. Wright is saying is at the time (70-100 AD) the Gospel's were radical documents and that if adherents believed in Jesus that was their new salvation plan instead of Jewish Law (John 3:16-18). Jewish converts wouldn't need to answer to the 613 Laws anymore. While the minor details of baptism, circumcision and dietary laws would be covered under Paul's earlier letter's.

So historians say that the non-conformist gospel writers wanted to pull Judaism a certain direction, possibly away from the Sadducee stranglehold but had no intention of starting a new literal religion out of it. But since Jewish rabbis *despise* the NT, think it's both inaccurate, pagan and have no use for it whatsoever. Therefore, Jews wouldn't have written a document that goes against their own religion:

See, “*Who Wrote the NT*”, pg. 186

"The Gospel writers did *not* know Judaism itself."  
(*"Fabrication of the Christ Myth"*, Leidner)

While another scholar feels that the gospels were put together from both pagan images with later 2nd c. apocryphal material. And since they were being edited up to the 4th c. we would have no way of knowing that for sure:

"Most of what appears in the canonical Gospels is Christian mythology not Jewish history... The Gospels are old manuscripts of the dramatized rituals of the incarnation and resurrection of the sun-god Osiris and Horus. These were later ignorantly adopted by the Christian movement and transferred into the area of history. The compilers of the NT missed the point that the *whole thing* was meant as allegory."  
(*"Jesus, Buddha, Krishna & Tzu: the parallel sayings"*, Hooper, intro), (*"Pagan Christ: recovering the lost light"* Harpur)

Or as inferred, the gospel writers could have been Samaritans who lived around the sea of Galilee. They were called "Galileans" as mentioned in the NT:

"The Samaritans were viewed by many Jewish people as half-breeds and religious deviants. Originally, the region that was now Samaria was part of the Northern Ten Tribes of Israel, but after these northern tribes were conquered in 722 BC, the region was resettled by Assyrians. The Israelites that remained in the region intermarried with the Assyrians.

The Samaritans were the descendants of these Israelite-Assyrian marriages, and over time, had also *lost many* of the Israelite beliefs and customs. For example, they only accepted the first five books of Hebrew Scriptures, but nothing else. They did *not* travel to Jerusalem to worship, but instead, built a rival temple on Mt. Gerazim (John 4:20).

Thus, the Jewish people disdained the Samaritans, and believed that they were *no better than Gentiles*, fit only for the destruction and judgment of God."

Christian book author, Jeremy Meyer

(essay, *"Baptizing Outcast Samaritans"*, Meyer)

Finally, a Jewish historian:

"[After the 1st c.] Jesus was later transformed into the central object of a cult that became the foundation of Christianity. A mystic messenger of an alien religion..."  
(*"Three Faces of Monotheism"*, Frankl)

**Was Jesus an Advertisement?**

“Is the basic portrait of Jesus a faithful reflection of the Jesus of history? Or is it a fabrication spun out by early Christian's?”

(“Jesus: Lord or Legend?”, pg. 12)

According to Crossan, formally of the “Jesus Seminar”, the era between 33AD-70 are surprisingly the “lost years” the “empty years”. There would be no mentions of Jesus in history other than Paul’s few letters. So in a real sense the Jesus Movement people like Mark had 40 years to gather material on their Lord.

But over the next few centuries 100’s of these apocryphal “gospel's” would be written by others claiming authenticity. Who would decide their outcome?

(“Birth of Christianity”, Crossan, intro)

The term “gospel” (“good news”) was a later 1<sup>st</sup> c. term early Christians used Christ's for expected return. And over the next 300 years this new Covenant would be directed more towards non-pious Jews, pagans, slaves and barbarians around Palestine and Asia Minor.

More originality from Dr. Ehrman:

“Modern scholars are famous—or rather infamous—for making claims about Jesus that contradict what most Christian's believe. The Gospels are *not* literal records of the ministry of Jesus. The Gospel writers were *not* the original followers of Jesus or even followers of the original 12 disciples. They were not Jesus' companions. They were not even from the same country... The Gospels are not eyewitness accounts. The life of Jesus was relevant only as it furthered Christian dogma.”

(“Did Jesus Exist?”, *Who wrote the Bible + Evidence for Jesus outside the gospels*) , (“Jesus before the Gospels”, Ehrman, pg. 65), see also, “How Jesus became Christian”, “Evolution of God”, pg. 249, “Jesus, Interrupted: revealing the hidden contradictions”, ‘who wrote the Bible?’, Ehrman

A Christian author with her #1 Best Seller:

"We know very little about Jesus... 2. Hard evidence about the 'historical Jesus' is scanty... 3. The Gospels are not literal records of the ministry of Jesus. Decades of developing and adapting the Jesus tradition had intervened... 4. There is almost no trace of the man who would permanently alter the course of human history.”

(“History of God”, pg. 79), 2. (“Evolution of God”, pg. 249), 3. (“Intro to the NT”, Brown, ch. 5), 4. (“Zealot: life & Times of Jesus of Nazareth”, Aslan, intro)

Most Christians don’t like Dr. Ehrman’s views because it usually goes against their literalistic views. But he does know his history:

“We do not have *any* writings from Jesus. I should point out that we have nothing in writing from over 99.99% of people who lived in antiquity... I need to stress that we do not have a single reference to Jesus by anyone-- pagan, Jew, or Christian--who was a contemporary eyewitness, who recorded things he said and did... None of the Gospel writers ever identifies himself by name or narrates any of his stories about Jesus in the first person. The Gospels are *all* written anonymously, and the authors describe the disciples, including the disciples Matthew and John, in the third person, talking about what “they” did (not what “I” or “we” did)... 2. The evangelists write gospel. Not true history, biography or journalism... 3. The Gospels are a form of ancient biography and are very short.”

(“Did Jesus Exist?”, intro), 2. (“Excavating Jesus” Crossan), 3. (Reverend Dr. Richard Burridge, Dean of King's College London, Sept. 17, 2009 from “Facts/Details: Gospels) see, “Jesus, Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible and Why We Don't Know About Them” Ehrman, chap. 4, *see also* “Who Wrote the NT”, “How Jesus became Christian”

Regardless, scholars and historians still love digging into them just like a Sunday morning puzzle—even the Bart Ehrman’s. Later, around 180-200 AD the gospels, written on papyrus, started appearing in circulation.

"The problem with the gospels is they report a *garbled mix of contradictory stories* that have to be critically analyzed and sorted out... The Gospel's are *secondary evidence*... 2. The gospels are very peculiar types of literature. They're not biographies. They are a kind of a *religious advertisement*. What they do is proclaim Jesus of Nazareth as a spokesperson for the evangelist's position... 3. The Gospels are our *latest* witnesses, ranging in date from 80-120 or even later.”

(“Paul and Jesus”, Tabor, pg. 49, 237 pdf), 2. (Paula Fredericksen, Boston University) 3.(“Dead Sea Scrolls Deception, Acts of the Apostles), see, “”NT: Very Short Intro”, Johnson, pg. 8

A Christian author and pastor who feels that the Gospels were put together from 2nd c. *gnostic* texts. The book of John bears this out:

"Jesus' image has been pieced together not from the Gospels but from 'Q' [prior Mt.], Gospel of Thomas and Gospel of Peter."  
(“Searching for the Original Bible”, Price)

"The Gospels are not in any literal sense holy. They are not accurate and are not to be confused with reality. They are canvases painted by 1st century Jewish mystics and not intended to be read as history. They are *midrashic* writings, not literal biography...

Like Paul before them, the Gospel writers were victims of the limits of language and of God.”

("Why Christianity Must Change or Die", Spong)

An interesting take from a famous English philosopher:

"The Gospels were taken from the Book of Enoch [160 BC], from Hasidic Messiah, Maccabean 'New Jerusalem', resurrection, Hell and demonology."

("History of Western Philosophy", Bertrand Russell)

### **Can a historical Jesus be found?**

“The historical Jesus is a scholarly construct based on reading *beneath* the Gospel surface... The Jesus Seminar’ people have stated a goal of liberating Jesus from the church's proclamation of him.”

("Intro to the NT", Brown, ch. 6)

“[Early critics said] that Jesus was the contrivance of a small clutch of believers... Gospel traditions about Jesus and patristic appeals to them do not *prove* his existence.”

(essay, “Controversy, Mythicism, and the Historical Jesus”, R. Joseph Hoffmann, 2012, Academia.edu)

Early in the 1990’s there was new scholarship from the Jesus Seminar and other ‘revisionists’ who chiseled away at our 2-D Gospel Jesus. On one side the now disbanded Seminar people thought Jesus was a mythical creation made up by 1<sup>st</sup> c. fanatic’s who wanted this Christ figure to “save them” either politically from the Roman’s or from Judaism’s 613 Laws itself. While more ‘centrist’ historians like Aslan (“Zealot”) didn’t go that far and who felt Jesus was more a political guy who wanted overthrow. So regarding our historical Jesus there’s only one authentic reference and that is Flavius Josephus’s accounts around 93 AD—and who only mentions "the *brother* of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James.” Apparently the real Christ wasn’t worth mentioning any further:

*see, Antiquities bk. 20*

“The Gospel's were not meant to be a historical or biography of Jesus. They were written to convert unbelievers to faith in the Messiah... they were not concerned with historical accuracy... We know that the gospels, whatever they are, were not *designed to convince people that Jesus existed*. They were written (eventually) to recall key moments in a brief public life—narrative snapshots based on reminiscences, sayings, and hearsay [author emph.].”

("Concise History of the Catholic Church", Bokenkotter, pg. 8), (essay "Controversy, Mythicism, and the Historical Jesus", R. Joseph Hoffmann, Academia.edu)

Professor Burton Mack of the "Jesus Seminar":

"All of the gospels are anonymous and circled anonymously for decades only being later attributed to important figures... None of the writers saw nor personally heard Jesus speak-including Paul."

("Who Wrote the NT?", pgs.152-161, 225, 238), ("Bible: a biography", Armstrong)

Another guy from the Jesus Seminar:

"Purely metaphorical narratives...They are not based on the memory of particular events, but are symbolic narratives created for their metaphorical meaning. As such, they are not meant as historical reports."

(*"Jesus: uncovering the life"*, Borg, pg. 57)

An Irish historian from the Jesus Seminar and an old-school popular preacher from the 1940's:

"Some scholars dismiss the Gospel's as little more than a Christian fantasy that tells us nothing reliable... The Gospels in stance after stance goes completely counter to our modern life."

(*"Power of Parable: how fiction by Jesus became fiction about Jesus"*, Crossan), (*"Bible and Preaching"*, George Buttrick), see, *"Jewish Christianity Reconsidered"*, Jerusalem church, Hill, '07

## **100-300**

Mentioned earlier, in the first 300 years there were literally 100's of different gospels to read so our four Gospel's would have a very troubled ride up to Constantine. This was mainly from the gnostic sects who hated the more orthodox. This is another reason why so little is known during the first few centuries of the religion-- few thought it was earth-shaking or important enough to record say, like the Caesar's:

"Semi-enlightened Gnostic Jews 'created' the Christ of the Gospel but they didn't intend their Christ to be taken literally. They were presenting an *ideal*. They didn't take into account the ignorant Gentile literalist's who were to follow them."

(*"Deceptions and Myths of the Bible"*, Graham)

## **Mark 70-80AD**



"In Mark's Gospel, Jesus is the strong 'Son of God' able to deliver them from the powers of evil [Rome] around them that hold them in bondage. Mark was instrumental in making this actual person come to life."

*("Did Jesus Exist?", gospels of Jesus)*

"The gospel of Mark is written in the Pauline spirit, for pagans... Mark is heavily Pauline in its theological content" Jewish Encyclopedia

*("Gospel's"/Paul and Jesus, 1906 ed.), (Tabor, pg. 49, pdf)*

*see, "Historicity of Jesus", Wells, "A Textual Commentary on the Greek NT", Metzger, Society of Biblical Literature, "Evocatio Deorum and the Date of Mark" Kloppenborg, pg. 458+, "NT: a historical intro to early Christian writings", Ehrman, "The Faith", "History of Christianity" "Who Wrote the NT", teachings/ gospels of Jesus*

Mark, the 1st and shortest Gospel was written in Greek after the Roman destruction of Jerusalem (Jesus spoke Aramaic a language of the lower-classes). Like the others, Mark was writing in second-person as a non-disciple and I think from an Essene sect:

"Typically, historical fiction books are written at least 30–50 years *after* the event or time period has taken place. While some of it may be remembered from a lived experience, a lot of a historical fiction novel's conception comes from research."  
(*"50 of the Best Historical Fiction Books"*, VanRy, Book Riot, Jan. 23, 2019)

What should be important to us regarding this puzzle is that the anonymous gospel wouldn't be in circulation until a century later:

"The title, 'Gospel According to Mark' was attached by the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c."  
(*"Intro to the NT"*, ch. 5)

"How much ingenuity was required to construct a full gospel narrative about Jesus? The answer depends on the historicity of the narrative: largely fiction or largely fact?"  
(*"Intro to the NT"*, Brown, chap. 6)

Whether Mark was or was not fiction still begs the question—what prompted this sect to write about their Messiah who had been gone 40-50 years? What were they expecting? A miracle? Worse, Mark had no template to go on since in the earlier *Septuagint* never made bio's of their hero's like David or Joshua. Yet all historians believe it was the post-70 AD Jewish chaos that began this new politicized religion.

A former member of the Jesus Seminar Burton Mack has never shied away from

controversy. He is one of the more provocative scholars of the New Testament and early Christianity in recent memory:

"To Mark, God destroyed the 2nd Temple because the Jews had destroyed the Christ. The destruction of the Temple marked the end of an era."

(*"Who Wrote the NT", creating the Christian Bible*, pg. 284), see also *"A Myth of Innocence: Mark & Christian Origins"*, Mack

Reza Aslan's #1 Bestseller "Zealot":

"Mark had a collection of oral and a few written traditions that had been passed around by Jesus' earliest followers... His gospel is written in a coarse, elementary Greek that betrays the authors limited education... The 1<sup>st</sup> c. Jews who wrote about Jesus had already made up their mind who he was. They were constructing a theological argument."

("Zealot", intro, pg. 132-4), see, "Peter, Paul & Mary Magdalene", Ehrman, pg. 7

Just like the 1980's Depeche Mode song I too always wanted a "Personal Jesus". One that would spiritually care for me. And having been around Christians for 10 years made me think a lot about the NT and its overall validity. But decades later (and after a lot of researching) I came to the conclusion that Mark was writing *what it would be like* for their sect to have a personal messiah since at that time gods were literally everywhere:

"Mark's story is best understood as a combination of traditions with the Christ myth. The story is set in the past and is filled with people who are no longer present. We might call it a myth of origin for the Markan community... All were writing evangelism or theology rather than history and the possibilities for misunderstanding are infinite."

(*"Who Wrote the NT?"*, pg. 152), (*"History of Christianity", rise/rescue of the Jesus Sect*, Johnson)

"The Jesus story is a perennial myth... Jesus surrounds himself with 12 disciples. This was symbolic of the 12 Tribes of Israel."

("Jesus Mysteries", recovering mystical Christianity + godman & his disciples)

Again, Mark wasn't a follower of Jesus but I suspect who was with the Essene's at the Dead Sea. To clarify this further in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter we have John who is "a baptizer." But the only Jews who baptized were Essenes--the strict enemies of Pharisee's and Sadducces:

"Mark displays a profound lack of familiarity with Palestinian geography. If he had actually lived in Palestine he would not have made the blunders to be found in his

gospel.”

(essay, “Did Jesus Exist?”, P. Zinder, American Atheists mag, summer 1998)

But scholars know that Mark was anti-Temple, and for sectarian reasons didn’t want the Jews to have any political or religious sway any longer. Thus the anti-Pharisee tilt:

“The Markan audience realizes that the temple, like the fruitless fig tree [metaphor] is condemned to destruction for failing its purpose to be a house of prayer for all peoples. They must adopt Jesus’ attitude towards the temple as a ‘den of robbers.’”

(“Narrative Strategy & Pragmatics of the Temple Theme in Mark”, Heil, pg. 428)

Tabor even says that Paul's earlier letters (50's) influenced the later 1st gospel of Mark! I’m afraid this is why *some* of Paul's letters match up to the later Gospels:

"Mark is *heavily Pauline* in its theology... 2. Mark's Gospel coined the term 'son of God' for Jesus but that isn’t correct because Jesus called himself the 'son of Man.'"

(*"Paul & Jesus", intro*) + (*"Did Jesus Exist?"*), 2. (*"Laying Down the Sword: why we can't ignore the Bible's violent verses"*, Jenkins), see also, *1 Enoch*, *Daniel 7*, *Interpreter's*, *"Historical Study of the Bible"*, *"Zealot"*, *true god*

**Question: Did Mark’s first gospel get his info from reliable sources?**

“Each Christian writer didn’t start with a clean slate. They respected traditions... Mark was not an inventor but a redactor of traditions.”

(“Historical Evidence for Jesus”, Wells, pg. 11+)

“The gospel story of Judas’ betrayal is certainly fiction.”

(“Historical Evidence for Jesus”, Wells, pg. 26)

As read, the Markian speeches of Jesus ran more like a Greek theatrical play:

“Great attention in this gospel is given to the teacher/disciple cycle which follows the plot of a Platonic rhetorical play. This is the role where Mark leads the student or the reader into the drama based on his oral enactment where he is asking them to take part in the oral drama.”

(essay, *“Faith & Practice in Early Christianity”*, Tom Roberts PhD Divinity, Academia.edu)

Finally, in the last chapter of Mark (v. 9-20) is not in earlier Latin versions with Jesus appearing to Mary Magdelene, the Disciples and then going off the heaven. Very

strange...

See, *"Who Wrote the NT", gospels of Jesus, "Searching for the Original Bible", "Closing of the Western Mind", "The Unauthorized Version", "How Jesus became Christian", New Oxford commentary on "Mark"*

## **Matthew 90?**

"Truly I say unto you that not even in Israel have I found such faith." Mt. 8

"Matthew's community was a [Jewish] fringe group who argued over the future direction of Judaism.... It represented a dissident Jewish document. It's a valuable window into their beliefs."

(*"How Jesus became Christian", Demonizing Jewish leadership*)

In the past, I always liked the book of Matthew. I felt it was 'very spiritual' and one that gave an accurate picture of Jesus. Of course, the Jesus I was reading about would be *their* prior picture of him, not reality and nor would it be historically accurate! Years later after that revelation I felt raped:

"Writing a gospel was a communal process as stories were told, polished, changed and rearranged many times in the course of several generations."

(*"Who Wrote the NT?", pg. 153*)

Decades later, I came to the conclusion that the gospel writers were anti-Temple/anti-Jewish which they were passing around to all who would listen. But they wouldn't succeed with this exceedingly narrow view for another 200 years:

"Aiming to convert Jews [?] Matthew is trying to prove that many OT prophecies were fulfilled in Christ [as messiah]."

(*Story of Civilization, "Caesar and Christ", Jesus, Durant*)

"Beware of the teachings of the Pharisee and Sadducees." Mt. 16

As obviously influenced by the Essene sect Jesus would be cursed at by priests:

"In Matthew, the Jews accuse Jesus of being the real Devil, maybe worse than a Samaritan--not least from promising immortality to those who would follow him."

(*"Story of the Jews: finding the words 1000BC-1492AD", Schama*)

## **Luke**

Luke/Acts was written by anonymous person named "Luke" as late as the 3rd century:

“There is no evidence that Luke's gospel was known in the 2nd c.... Luke focused on winning pagan converts.”  
 (“History of the Bible”, pg. 200), (“Evolution of God”, pg. 312)

“The gospel of Luke is confessedly a compilation from older sources. It contains genuine legends about the birth of John the Baptist and of Jesus as they were current in Essene circles.” Jewish Encyclopedia  
 (“Gospel's, 1906 ed)

Early in my Christian walk Luke would be #2 behind Mathew. Of course back then I was like many Christians who were trying to get to the bottom of Jesus and ‘His Will’ for my life:

“To Luke, the notion of verifiable history would be a foreign concept. They were less interested in what actually happened than in what it meant... Early Christians relied of oral transmission for their information about Jesus... Luke is writing decades after the events he narrates, and no one at the time was taking notes.”

(“Zealot”, pg. 30+), (“Jesus: Lord or Legend?": Wrestling with the Jesus Dilemma", Boyd/Eddy),  
 (“How Jesus Became God”, Ehrman)

While an earlier historian says the opposite:

"Luke is a historian of first rank... It is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness.”  
 British archeologist William Ramsey  
 (“Bearing of Recent Discoveries of the Trustworthiness of the NT", 1915)

## **John**

"Your word [Septuagint] is truth." Jn. 17

John, the 'Magical Mystery Tour' of the four and not part of the other three was written from 90-125AD. John's gospel also reads much differently than the others. To me, John is more spiritually-minded and more about the after-world than the typified Jewish worldview:

"John is a presentation of Christ from a theological point of view as the Logos. It contradicts the synoptic gospels in a hundred details.” Encyclopedia Britannica  
 see also “Story of Civilization: Caesar & Christ”, pg. 556

"The gospel of John is the work of a Christian of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. who construes a history of Jesus on the basis of a belief in his supernatural existence. To John, Jesus is no longer the expected Messiah of the Jews, but a cosmic being." Jewish Encyclopedia ("Gospel's, 1906 ed.)

I'm pretty sure whoever wrote John had the *Dead Sea Scrolls* either in front of them or were edited in later on:

"John's Gospel is historically the most valuable... Its images were borrowed from OT Jewish mysticism [DSS's]."

("Unauthorized Version: truth and fiction in the Bible", Fox, 1992), ("Three Faces of Monotheism: Judaism, Christianity & Islam, Frankl)

To John, Jesus would be the Greek "logos", or the Word that was in the beginning with God. Surprisingly, only in John's gospel does Jesus have any deity.

Ehrman as usual:

"John's gospel is [what scholars call] 'high Christology'. Jesus sounds like the narrator and the narrator sounds like Jesus...2. It's striking that the Synoptic gospels (M, M, L) don't declare that Jesus is God or indicate that Jesus ever called himself God... 3. In the Gospel of John, Gnostic mysticism is almost *entirely dominant*... 4. The theology of John is similar to the [Essene] Dead Sea Scrolls--e.g. the strong dualism of both God and the devil."

("How Jesus Became God"), 2. ("Did Jesus Exist", mythicist inventions), 3. (Interpreter's Guide, "DSS", Blair), 4. ("Book of Genesis")

Theologically speaking, what's important about John is Paul's letter's preceded it by about 70 years. Paul was inspired to write of a messiah/redeemer figure who would take all the believers away in a rapture of sorts.

See, 1 Thessalonians 5

John was obviously involved with the gnostic groups:

"As a revealer, he [Jesus] was preternal, might have come before, might appear again but never in a time-bound, material sense."

(essay, "Controversy, Mythicism, and the Historical Jesus" (Dr.) R. Joseph Hoffman, Academia.edu)

C.S. Lewis was a famous English historian of mythical literature who wrote an early

have of mine called “Mere Christianity”:

"I know what myths are like. The book of John is not one of them".  
("Christian Reflections", C.S. Lewis)

Although there is still a big problem with its narrative:

"The OT is a revelation from God yet this God never told His 'chosen' [Jews] that He had a son. Yet this son is the 'Word', the Logos, the creator of the world. Why would God keep this fact from Moses [only to split the two religions down the middle later]?"  
("Deceptions & Myths of the Bible")

The early gnostics were influenced by Greek Platonism which is a point I'll bring up later. And although mentioned little regarding his gnosticism in critical circles I think Ehrman knows as much as Pagels—the critical darling:

"Gnostics loved the Gospel of John... Gnostic religions urged people to escape from their bodies."  
("Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot", Ehrman, pgs. 58, 61)

Still, I feel the Gospels would make more sense to readers if they realized that these were pagans or Samaritan's who *dabbled* in Judaism. Thus they can comprehend their anti-Jewish tilt.

A modern rabbi:

"The non-Jewish writers were *antagonistic* to Jews. They maintained that Judaism had been superseded." ("Judaism: development & life")

"John's gospel [90+] was written to Christian churches now *separate* from Judaism and is *openly hostile* to the former faith... There is *no more* Jewish worldview."  
("From Jesus to Christianity", White)

Many readers don't realize that the schism between the liberal thinkers of the time (Pharisees) and the Sadducees was also portrayed as infighting. Their arguments were not meant as prophecy or future revelations as people generally like to believe today:

"The violence of the Bible came from the world the people lived in. The Gospels were composed as wartime literature."

("Jerusalem, Jerusalem: how the ancient city ignited our modern world", Carroll), see also, "From Jesus

to Christianity", "History of Christianity", Mt. 23, 24

Finally:

"Unless an interpreter knows this material many sayings of Jesus will remain unintelligible..."

(Interpreter's Guide, "Historical Study of the Bible")

see also, "The Unauthorized Version", "History of Christianity", "And Man Created God", "Aspect's of Rabbinic Theology", "Judaism: development & life", "The God Who Hates Lies" Hartman, "Concise History of the Catholic Church"

### **Who Were the Gospel's Speaking To?**

"Go nowhere among the Gentiles [pagans], and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go to the lost sheep [other sects] of the house of Israel... Behold I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves." Mt. 10

"The Jewish Messiah has been largely lost to our culture. Visit any church, and it is Paul, and Paul's vision of Jesus that are central."

(*"Paul & Jesus", Tabor, pg.18 ,pdf*)

see, *"Jesus Dynasty", Tabor, pgs 305-17, "Christianity: the 1st 3K, Crucified messiah", 'A Textual Commentary on the Greek NT'/'Dead Sea Scroll's Deception', Baigent/Leigh*

Today most Christians feel that the Gospel's were written *to* them personally but in its origin's that was not the case. Most historians say that Jesus' audience was disparate sects of Jews. So how and where did later Christians come to embrace the sayings of Jesus? How did we come to adopt a 1<sup>st</sup> c. fanatically Jewish world to the West? That answer is basically through the Pauline letter's and to a lesser degree the Acts of the Apostles:

"Paul forged a new Christ Movement. The common notion in church is that he was a faithful follower of Jesus. He *wasn't*. His Christ movement came to *cover up* the original teachings of Jesus. Paul's religion was *not* the religion of Jesus."

(*"How Jesus Became Christian", Wilson PhD, Prolog*)

Most realize the NT has two separate theologies: Jesus' and Apostle Paul's. In the late 1<sup>st</sup> c. post-Temple period the followers of Jesus wanted a split with devout Judaism but



were at a loss how this could be done without their God of Abraham watching:

“Christians responded that Judaism was the old, rejected covenant with God... Christianity came, not just as a new religion but as God's *replacement*.”

(“Jews in the Time of Jesus”, Wylan, pg. 11), (“Jesus, Interrupted”, Who invented Christianity?)

This ‘replacement theology’ is what early Christians were telling both Hellenistic Jews and Pagans. The “Galileans”, as they were later called, were trying to bend scriptures from more orthodox Jewish views and send that synthesized religion a different direction. It wasn’t difficult. And whoever accepted this message would be “brothers”:

“Those who wish to study the NT should become familiar with Pagan religions (and its philosophical) world. The *mindset of its audience* must be taken into account.”  
(“Intro to the NT”, ch. 5)

“Early Christian's didn't set out to organize a church that would endure for generations. Instead they lived with the belief that the End was near.”  
(“The 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel”, Spong, NT & Christian Community)

An M.A. in History from Berkeley who says that early Christianity was in fact many sects but all claiming kingship:

“Orthodoxy, in the early centuries of the church, was an evolving concept... The four gospels developed as liturgical elements of *distinct* Christian communities... Certainly, the text of each gospel can be seen as filling the needs of specific *Christianities* [authors emph.].”  
(“Entangled Christianities” Anthony, pg. 6+, pdf)

This is why the gung-ho Christ Movement wouldn’t start until after 70 AD+ since neither the Gospels nor Paul’s Letter would be in circulation about 90 AD or even later.

### **Acts of the Apostles 90-250? AD**

“This separatism [from Judaism] was the foundation of the church.”  
(“Christian Worship: its origins & evolution”, pg. 5)

“History is full of civilizations clashing.”  
(“Evolution of God”, intro)

"Sect—a group that has tension with the rest of society and feels that the rest of society

has gone wrong and only a few people—the members of the sect—see the correct road.”  
("From Jesus to Christianity")

Most Christians love Acts for the simple reason is they are intrigued about the origins of the early church. Well, little do they know that Acts is the wrong book to read simply because it was written possibly centuries after Jesus! Even worse is its one-way argument with fake apostle quotes and obvious anti-Pharisee/anti- Temple agendas: (Acts 15), see “Christianity: first 3K”, Acts, “Intro to the NT”, Brown

“Luke's purpose [Acts] was to show the progress of the Good News [Gospels] and to defend Christian's against the charge that they were destructive of Jewish institution's and a troublesome element in the Empire.” New Oxford Bible, intro on Acts

What should tip Christian off about the book of Acts is how much “Peter” speaks; yet in the Gospel's we get a mere six sentences. While in the second half the “Paul” character doesn’t read anything close to Corinthians or Romans (not the nicest character anyway).

Also in real life, Peter and Paul’s theologies were diametrically opposed. Quite oddly, the NT doesn’t seem to care:

“The first part is the fabricated tale of a fictional character while the second part is a rewrite of Paul *purged of his gnosticism* [author emph].”

(“St. Peter, Fabricated Apostle” Ken Humphries) note-- Humphries has over 8 million views on his site.

“The controversy regarding the admission of Pagans to the church within the anti-Petrine factions could either have been pro-Paul or pro-James.”

(“Peter in the gospel according to Mark”, Catholic Bible Quarterly, #40, 1978, pg. 558)

So since there isn’t any outside info regarding Acts what's important is in the 1<sup>st</sup> t c. there were just two Jesus groups: James/Peter’s Jesus movement which was *pro-Jewish* (later the Ebionites) and Paul’s apocalyptic-Christ movement which was *anti-Jewish*.

Of course that may be too generous because “Peter” is not a real person in history: see, “*The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity*”, Maccoby, pgs. 171-83

Pagels on the early church:

“I wanted to find the ‘real Christianity’ and I assumed that I could find it by going back to the earliest Christians. Later I saw that my search was hardly unique: most people who have sought out the origins of Christianity have really been looking for the ‘real Christianity,’ assuming that when the Christian movement was new, it

was also simpler and purer. What I found was the *opposite* of what I'd expected.”  
 (“Adam, Eve & the Serpent”, pg. 131, pdf)

“Acts presents us with a fictitious history of the early Christianity. The anti-Semitism is rooted within the NT... 2. Acts is heavily biased... 3. Some scholars call Acts 'the great cover-up'. The entire NT canon is largely a post-Paul, pro-Paul production... 4. Paul had *no idea* who Jesus was... 5. Acts contains historically unreliable information about the life and teachings of Paul.”

(“How Jesus Became Christian”, Prolog, Ehrman), 2. (“Dead Sea Scrolls Deception”, Acts of the Apostles), 3. (“How Jesus Became Christian”, the mythmaker, Wilson), 4. (“**Zealot**”, am I not an apostle?), 5. (“Jesus, Interrupted”, Ehrman)  
see, “Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism”, Interpreters Commentary, "Acts of the Apostles", Baird, “Peter, Paul & Mary Magdalene”, Ehrman, pg. 99

Since the historicity of Acts is debated and its time-line convoluted the earliest known dates for the term Christian in Acts is 111 AD with Ignatius who was in Antioch. This means that Acts would be written at least 80 years after the original followers of Jesus:

“Historians know almost *nothing* about the two decades following the death of Jesus... 2. The most remarkable thing about the Jesus movement is we know almost nothing about it... 3. In Acts, Luke gives just a very general picture, not much detail... 4. Most of the original 12 had *little recorded impact of the early Christian story*... 5. The Jerusalem experiment was apparently short-lived. What we are left with are *fragmentary clues*... 6. Paul's vision on the road to Damascus is the *foundation myth* of Christianity.”

(“Paul & Jesus”, Tabor), 2. (“Triumph of Christianity”, Stark, pg.22-25), 3.(“Birth of Christianity”, Crossan), 4.(“Christianity: first 3K”, MacCullock), 5. (“Who Wrote the NT?”, pg. 69), 6. (“Three Faces of Monotheism”, Frankl)

While in Acts, other Jews were apparently mad at Paul for starting churches with non-Jews--proving that not all of the NT is fiction:

"This is the man who is teaching people against the Law and the Temple; he has also brought pagans into the Temple and has defiled the Holy place. And the people [Jews] dragged Paul out of the Temple and beat him.” Acts 21

## 90 AD

“The Jewish communities were recognized; the later Christian communities were *not*.

Their existence was in contradiction to the Jewish Law and was wholly incompatible with the spirit of the Roman Empire.... In most cases, the apostle of Christ [Paul's sects] were excommunicated by the elders of the synagogues. They then found other groups with a distinctive spirit and doctrine. These were the beginnings of the faithful--the Church of Jesus Christ.”

(“Christian Worship: origins and evolution”, pg. 6+ )

As somewhat of a historian myself, the general rule is if history doesn't record it then it wasn't important enough in the first place! For example, the Roman's placed their inscriptions on stone to the further reaches of their Empire. So where were these “Apostles” in history?:

“Acts [125 C] was a work of absolute genius who *combined* various texts from Mark, Paul and others. What happened was a shift *away* from Jesus and towards the apostles... The NT letters were written to support this apostolic fiction and to insert the 'authority' of the apostles into the chain of tradition... By the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. Christian's were claiming that they were the legitimate heirs of Israel...Who could make the claim that a small group of ‘Jesus people’ represented Gods new “Plan A” for mankind?... To compound insult in Jewish eyes Christians believed that the Bible as a whole can only be understood as a prediction of the Christ.”

(“Who Wrote the NT”, inventing Apostolic Traditions, pg. 226-8, pg. 290), 2.(“Birth of Classical Europe”, Roman Empire)

“Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, was anxious to create an orthodoxy--a single Rule of Faith because the bishops had 'inherited the teaching directly from apostles'. This was a total fantasy.”

(“Fields of Blood”, Jesus not of this world?, Armstrong)

### **Pre-Temple and Post-Temple Period**

“For despisers of Christianity, the NT—above all the letter's of Paul—represented all the intellectually and spiritually repressive tendencies they disliked through the accident of Imperial appropriation... Because they were written by human's in the 1<sup>st</sup> c. Mediterranean world, the NT compositions are limited in their perceptions of the world.”

(“NT: Very Short Intro”, Johnson, pg. 1+)

So due to Acts dishonesty there are only two important periods of early Christianity--pre-Temple and post-Temple—nothing else really matters. Pre-Temple Christians would have the *Didache* (teaching) and the *Septuagint* to study while the Post-Temple

Christians the lid would come off and there would be an explosive of new writings to study including Paul's letters and the early gnostics.

Also in the post-Temple period Judaism would be cornered as an 'evil religion' to the horror and dismay of the Jewish populace who had tried to live moral but eccentric lives:

see, "History of Christianity: 1<sup>st</sup> 3K"

"Paul's statements about Jews and about Judaism are to many readers and scholars, erratic, contradictory, confusing, and inconsistent."

("Jews & Gentiles in the Early Jesus Movement", Bibliowicz, pg. 22)

"The Pauline letters are so *completely silent* concerning the events that were later recorded in the gospels as to suggest that these events were not known to Paul who could not have been ignorant of them if they had really occurred... These Letters also fail to mention any miracles Jesus is supposed to have worked, a particularly striking omission, since according to the gospels he worked so many."

("Historical Evidence for Jesus", Wells, pgs. 22+)

Another concern for the Jesus groups post-Temple period was their denial of being Jews or having *any* affiliation with a group that Roman soldiers had just annihilated around 70 AD. Their race was same (Semites) so they looked Jewish and they spoke the same language. What could have these early Christians said to hundreds of Roman soldiers pointing long spears and swords at them as not being remnants of the Zealots?

Unfortunately, this is another 'black hole' in time of which few historians know much about...

## 100 AD

"The (false) Acts and Gospel's written during this period can be interpreted for Christians to write the sort of books that upper classes would read. These works seem to follow the basic pattern of the Greek novel."

("Proto-Trinity: development of the doctrine of the Trinity in the 1st/2nd centuries", Gaston, Academia.edu, Master's Dissertation, 2007, pg. 39)

So after the 1<sup>st</sup> c. with Jesus gone, both the Galileans--the strict but authentic Jewish believers and the Pauline groups the "Nazarenes", or pagan followers of Jesus, would start up a new religion. Their calling card was 'Come join our group! You can be part of a new Jewish cult and you don't have to follow Moses or the Temple laws anymore! Just believe in Jesus and He'll set you free! You'll be saved when Jesus returns at anytime

now!' But not everybody was buying that line:

see, "History of Christianity: 1<sup>st</sup> 3K", New Directions: Paul of Tarsus, Boundaries Defined

"The Recruits were unshackled by Jewish Law... Early Christian belief thought that they were the chosen people of God, yet they were in fact the disheartened of the Roman Empire—slaves, women and the low rank. *Jesus nor his followers believed themselves as part of a new religion called Christianity.*"

("Evolution of God", pg. 273)

"The earliest followers of Jesus didn't consider themselves followers of a new religion. Their faith wasn't the denial of Judaism but rather that the messianic age finally arrived."

("Kingdom & Community: social work in the early Church", Gager, 1975)

Aslan and others on the early church:

"Jesus provided no specifics about the 'New World Order' he envisioned. No practical programs, no detailed agendas, no political recommendations...2. If the 12 apostles were put in charge by Jesus then why do they *completely disappear* from the history of the Church?... 3. Early church writings present only a partial picture. And when one attempts to reconstruct the rest of the picture one is forced with an almost total lack of sources."

("Zealot"),pg? 2.("Concise History of the Catholic Church"Bokenkotter), 3.("Story of Christianity", vol. 1, pg. 72-90)

As mentioned, Greeks and Greek Jews got along ok but the Pauline apocalyptic Christian's didn't seem to like anybody. Or they wanted others to drop their paganism and change their overall lifestyle:

see, Acts 18

"The worship of the Roman gods was a civic duty."

("Oriental Religions in Roman Paganism", pg. 47)

"The horrible bias of the NT led many Christian's to think that Paul was some 'great missionary to the Jews', when in fact they wanted *nothing to do with him*... Early Christian's were annoying to others. Like the Jews, Christianity didn't fit the Roman model."

("Rise of Christianity", **Frend**), ("Evolution of God", pg. 288)

However in all honesty, Acts did record these adverse social criticisms but in a round-about way:

A Greek Stoic philosopher--

"The Galilean's actions are not rational." Epictetus  
(excerpt from "The Sword & the Cross", Grant, 1955)

"Christianity seems a barbaric creed... Their religion had no coherent 'theology'."  
(“History of God”, pg. 92)

A Roman governor to Emperor Trajan regarding Christian's who felt they were  
“irrational and immoral:

(“Sword & the Cross”, pg. 63)

"A depraved and excessive superstition." Pliny the Younger  
(Epistle 10:96)

While the Eastern Roman's thought the Jews were just ‘ok’ early Christian's starting with Trajan (98-117 AD) openly thumbed noses at Roman customs. This continued for another 200 years up to about 303 AD. To the social Roman citizens this would be intolerable:

**Trajan 110AD**

"But if *others* should bring them to justice and convict them [Christians] of impiety and atheism they deserved punishment."

(Letter to Pliny from Trajan, Epistole, x. 67), see, "Decline/Fall", conduct towards Christian's, "Sword & the Cross", pg. 62-9

A 2<sup>nd</sup> century historian:

"You do not visit exhibitions; you have no concern in public displays; you reject the public banquets, and abhor the sacred contests; the meats previously tasted by, and the drinks made a libation of upon, the altars. Thus you stand in dread of the gods whom you deny." Minucius Felix

"The Christians could not follow the route taken by the Jews; although they had to lay claim to the Judaic tradition. They rejected the Mosaic Law yet had to show that they were *religio* nonetheless. Hence the challenge that the Christians were faced with--they were *not* Jews; nor were they Romans. But when it became clear that the world would not end so soon, their problem became obvious: they were 'a people' without *tradition*.

Such indeed was the criticism leveled against Christians by the pagans.”

(“Pagan Perspective on Early Christianity and Ancient Rome”, S.N. Balagangadhara/ Sarah Claerhout, Academia.edu)

### **130 AD Marcion**

“Marcion’s name reverberates through histories of the early church.”

(“Entangled Christianities”, pg. 12)

In the early 2<sup>nd</sup> c. Marcion of Sinope was an early gnostic front-runner but also a strict follower of Paul’s letters. I’ll get to gnosticism a bit later but in a nutshell the Book of Acts would be more a defense of early orthodox views:

“Acts was a response *to* the Marcionite challenge. Acts answers Marcionite contentions point by point... The conceiving of Acts as an anti-Marcionite text enables us to appreciate the contribution of its author. This author is not simply telling the story of the rise of Christianity; he is defining the Christian movement in *direct opposition* to that of the Marcionites.”

(essay, Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations “Anti-Judaism in Marcion and his opponents”, Tyson, Volume 1 (2005-2006): pp. 196-208), see also the magnificent essay, “Controversy, Mythicism, and the Historical Jesus” (Dr.) R. Joseph Hoffman, Academia.edu

Marcion was a Docetist and his ‘2-God theory’ would become the basis for gnosticism--which 3<sup>rd</sup> c. church elders tossed as ridiculous. Yet at one point his thinking was as popular as more orthodox views:

see, *The Antitheses*

“As is well known, Marcion and his followers developed the *first* Christian canon without the Hebrew Bible, but with ten letters of Paul and one gospel, which resembles Luke. It survived to the 8<sup>th</sup> CE... Marcion was also struck with the contrast between the teachings of Jesus and those of the Hebrew Scriptures and he wasn’t convinced that Jesus and Paul signified the same deity.”

(essay, Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations “Anti-Judaism in Marcion and his opponents”, Tyson, Volume 1 (2005-2006): pp. 196-208)

Still, Christianity at this time was a tiny sect. And with a new Creed entertained 100’s of different “gospels” from both apocryphal writers and Gnostic’s. There was no direction and no aim, so a few church Father’s had an another plan:

see, “History of Christianity: 1<sup>st</sup> 3K”, alternative identities,



“In his *Adversus Haereses* [Against Heresies ] Iranaeus bishop of Lyons said that the only way for Christianity to keep from disintegrating into 1000 sects was for them to humbly accept *one* doctrinal authority.”

(“Story of Civilization: Caesar & Christ”, pg. 612)

Early Christians added the scare tactics from Zoroaster.

Bart Ehrman:

“In the second century, accounts of the afterlife begin to appear in Christian texts, presented as tours of the blessed and of the damned... Critic Celsus pointed out that Christians succeeded in their proselytizing because they ‘invent a number of terrifying incentives. Above all, they have concocted an absolutely offensive doctrine of everlasting punishments and rewards, exceeding anything the philosophers...could have imagined.’”

(“Triumph of Christianity”, Ehrman, pg. 135+), Celsus, 70

Ramsey McMullen is a Yale historian going way back:

“What Christianity put forward was the fearful novelty of a God who would burn them alive in perpetuity for their very manner of life... We see these horrors used as the chief, perhaps the only, argument for conversion.”

(“Two Types of Conversion to Early Christianity,” McMullen, pgs. 181, 185)

Another problem for the early church that it was still more of an underground movement and no church’s on the landscape until the early 4<sup>th</sup> century.

see, Kingdom & Community, “Success”, “Origen: Against Celsus, 8:69

### **3<sup>rd</sup> century**

“The ‘go to and teach all nations’ phrase was added well *after* Mark was written.”

(“Evolution of God”, pg. 258)

At this time bishops were telling Pagans that they were an ‘umbrella religion’-- no need for any other cults under the sky:

“The large. amount of pagan converts left the Jesus sect with a problem. Nobody felt that people should be excluded but admitted on *what* terms?”

("History of God", Armstrong)

"In the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. it was a matter of critical importance to maintain the novel and superior character of the new religion."

("Lost Light: an interpretation of ancient scriptures", pg. 58)

But Christian's were still getting in trouble with local authorities over their secretive meeting places. Some of these were at night:

"Denunciations were to be acted on but Christians were *not* to be hounded by the authorities; if those denounced sacrifices they were to be let off."

("Early Christian World Vol. 1 & 2", Emperors and Law, Academia.edu)

While the Jews screamed bloody murder at them for tossing their Torah in the trash while claiming Jesus forgave the Pagans instead:

"Jews were abhorred as Jesus' sacrifice flied in the face of everything they had worked for in their spiritual development; namely a relationship between God and man that made human sacrifice unnecessary... Christianity made no sense to the circumcised Jew."

("Three Faces of Monotheism")

Continuing:

"... one dogmatic Jewish sect was carrying on a war against the others, a point which had no interest in the eyes of the Romans... As for the State, it was necessary to either recognize Christianity as a new legal religion or to condemn it... The faithful were doomed to have no respite for the next 200 years."

("Pagan & Christian Rome", Chap. 7, Christian Cemetery's),

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Century**

"The Catholic Church succeeded in turning Christianity from an abhorrent minor cult into the official religion of the Roman Empire. However, they were still struggling to incorporate vast numbers of people who still understood the world in a pagan, pantheistic and polytheistic concept... The Church also developed a doctrine which justified its use of force in order to compel obedience... 2. The Christian religion was a long and twisty path. An experiment."

("Dark Side of the Christian History", Ellerbe, pgs.14, 30, 40), 2. (Who Wrote the NT?, Mack, "teachings from the Jesus movement, pg. 45)

#### **7<sup>th</sup> Century**

Three hundred years later the ‘great experiment’ of Acts and Paul was still not that strong. A slight bit of persecution and Christians changed their religion like changing a hat:

“Christian Egypt fell an easy prey to Islam, and its separation became an accomplished fact.”

(“Christian Worship: origins & evolution”, pg. 25)

Finally:

“The dominance of the Catholic-Orthodox Party was achieved through a strategy of identifying Christianity with ‘true’ Christianity —what we would identify as a media strategy for brand creation.”

(essay, “Ecology of Writings and the Shaping of Early Christianity”, Horsfield, pg. 19, Academia.edu)

More on this topic later...

## **Holy Spirit as Triune God**

"Go therefore and teach all nations and baptize in the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you. (Mt. 28)

“That early Christian's engaged in myth-making may be difficult for modern Christian's to accept.”

(“Who Wrote the NT?”, Mack, pg. 13)

“How can monotheism be real if Jesus is divine??”

(“Evolution of God”)

The history of the Holy Spirit as a distinct "person" was proposed by Tertullian (c.160-c.225) but wasn't finalized until Council of Constantinople (381). Our main question here should be: what prompted bishops to place another God in their canon? What would be the reason, and who were they trying to please?

‘Minimalist’ scholars like Ehrman write books about the early Church's ‘corruption of scriptures’ which basically entail botched wording and mistranslated text. This makes Evangelicals scream bloody murder. For instance, a review:

“We have over 5000 Greek manuscripts alone-- more than any other document of antiquity. In many ways, Christianity is a victim of its own success. While the vast

number of manuscripts should be *positive historical evidence* and indicative of the NT's authenticity."

(Book review of "Misquoting Jesus", Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, Kruger, June 2006)

And:

"There is no polytheism in Christianity."

("In Defense of the Bible", essay's, pg. 198)

I'm afraid these people are wrong. There is polytheism in Christianity. The late 4<sup>th</sup> c. uncial (block) texts prove it. Also being around both Christian's and church's for over a decade one should have gotten *some* conclusions about the Holy Spirit as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Person in the Godhead--but honestly I can't recall even *one* sermon or Bible study on this topic! The reasons for this is Christians know little about it themselves because the Bible knows little about it.

In hindsight I feel they were trying to please the competition who were the other mysteries like Mithra:

"The Trinity—the belief that Jesus and God are the same and, with the Holy Spirit, as a single entity—is a fundamental yet deeply confusing tenet. So where does this clear declaration appear in early Greek manuscripts? Nowhere!"

(Newsweek "Bible: so misunderstood it's a sin")

"The Holy Spirit was barely mentioned in 325AD and not defined until 381AD at the Council of Constantinople."

("Christianity Reader", Gerhart/Vdok, ed., Early Forms of Christianity)

If one reads it's easy to notice how haphazardly "Holy Spirit" was inserted in the text anyway, as almost an afterthought. Like the editors weren't sure where to place it.

For instance, in the OT here are many occurrences of 'spirit' such as in the 'Lord's spirit'. But in ancient Hebrew there were no consonants or capitalization so sentences or phrases were literally run together. For example:

"O God, put a new and steadfast spirit within me." Ps. 51

## 155 AD

In 150 AD the Gospels weren't in public as yet so the Christian word for spirit would be grabbed from the Jews Greek Bible. Also, Paul's Letter's were in circulation but there is no mention of a Holy Trinity:

“To Justin, the Holy Spirit mainly figures as the Prophetic Spirit which inspired the prophets. Bizarrely, sometimes the Spirit is identified with the Logos. This is because Justin depended on Numenius. The Second God was divided into two, and was the lower aspect.”

(essay, “Ecology of Writing and the Shaping of Early Christianity” Peter Horsfield, Academia.edu, pg. 11)

Since papyrus was rare there was little orthodoxy in the 2<sup>nd</sup> c.. So the gnostic groups were relatively popular and who influenced the more orthodox bishops like Irenaeus to condemn them as heretics:

“The obvious explanation is that as Christianity became more popular in the early Pagan world popular motifs became *grafted in*.”

(“Jesus Mysteries”, ‘Pagan Mysteries’ pdf)

“It was through the conscious desire to present Christianity in *Platonic terms* that the concept of the trinity entered Christian thought. But there can be no doubt that this was not a reflection of the Biblical texts themselves.”

(“Pro-Trinity: development of the doctrine of the Trinity in the 1st/2nd centuries”, Gaston, Master's Thesis, Academia.edu, 2007)

But as a separate God, the Holy Spirit would become a play on words by the early Church fathers. There is documentation that pagans complained about how Christianity was 'taking away their gods' so the Father's simply *compromised* by combining certain passages of scriptures to please all! At the time no harm would be done and the matter easily fixed. Also the Church could eliminate their other competing group of the time--the Jewish communities with their strict monotheism:

“The Great Mother was passionately revered in Italy for 600 years.”

(“Mystery religions: study in the religious background of early Christianity”, Angus, Phd, pg. 5)

“The ancient mystic deities were transformed into the doctrinal figures that constituted the Christian pantheon.”

(“Passion of the Western Mind”, pg. 111)

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Century**

“By 200 a.d. the situation had changed. Christianity had become an institution headed by a three-rank hierarchy of bishops, priests, and deacons, who understood themselves to be the guardians of the only ‘true faith.’”

(“Gnostic Gospel's”, intro)

Mentioned later under the gnostics, the early church editors borrowed multiple pagan deities from earlier Egyptian, Iranian and Babylonian religions. Culturally this time-period was the Mysteries heyday:  
see “Mystery Religions”, Angus, pg. 6

“It is obvious that Christian writers would have special reasons for accentuating the aspects of rival religions [cults] that most closely paralleled their own.”

(Robert Price on Review of “Drudgery Divine”, Institute for Higher Critical Studies, JHC 3/1, Spring, 1996, pgs.137-145)

“Also characteristic of Sethian [gnostic] doctrine is the teaching concerning a divine trinity of Father, Mother & Child.”

(“Sethian Gnosticism & the Platonic Tradition”, pgs. 4, 14)

### **325 AD Council of Nicea**

“The doctrine of the Trinity was needed to protect the Nicene formula against the charge to distinguish between the Father and the Son. Although the doctrine seemed to make problematical the unity of God.”

(Encyclopedia Britannica/dogma of Christ in the ancient councils)

From a verse by Luke prompted the bishops to add “Holy Spirit” to their Creed as a separate God. Christianity was now a polytheistic religion-- despite the church Father's claims to the contrary:

“Those sects that emphasized the separation of the three persons in the Trinity were guilty of ‘tritheism’ which was next door to polytheism.”

(“Between Pagan & Christian”, essay by C. Jones, *Academia.edu*, pg. 46)

More detail on the Holy Spirit will be covered later under the section on Councils but out of 300 bishops present the Trinity still wasn’t clarified so the matter was dropped. The Holy Spirit would need to wait another 60 years...

Gibbon’s:

“The Trinitarian controversy was revived... Catholics were fearful of acknowledging the existence of *Three* Gods. The Catholic church imitated the profane model [paganism] which they were important to destroy... The fiction resulted from intellectuals with centrist inclinations and institutional tendencies. It didn't happen

overnight.”

(“Decline/Fall of the Roman Empire”, civil wars + destruction of paganism), (“Who Wrote the NT?”, inventing the Christian **myth**)

“By the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. the Catholic-Orthodox Party version of Christianity was politically enforced by the Emperor as the only true version of Christianity.”

(essay, “Ecology of Writing and the Shaping of Early Christianity” Peter Horsfield, Academia.edu, pg. 11)

“Bishops debated theological points in the incense-filled back rooms of the councils, but their decisions had a deadly impact in the streets and villages where ordinary laypeople were convinced that the essential core of Christian belief was at stake... The potential for violence and persecution existed at a far earlier stage of Christian development than what many believe.”

(“Jesus Wars”, violent faith, Jenkins)

### 350 AD Sinai Bible



As its namesake, the Sinai Bible codex is one of four handwritten Bibles in Greek (not complete) that was recovered on the Sinai peninsula in the mid 1800's. All were written on parchment and their style is *scriptura continua*-- meaning no spaces, capital letters, punctuation marks in block style. A codex means sheets and not a scroll and these were read from right to left while other times left to right depending on who transcribed it originally. But what's important about this Bible is it was used as a basis for the later Latin Vulgate which St. Jerome translated in 382 AD (see below). Since its discovery, the *Codex Sinaiticus* has proven to be very useful.

## 362 AD

The Eastern Roman Emperor Julian “the Apostate” (since he embraced Paganism) tried to stop the growing influence of the Christian church with a book called “Against the Galileans”. In it he was smart enough to realize the Holy Spirit was also a fake:

“You cannot square the prologue of John [Logos] with monotheism.” Julian

“The '3 Gods in 1' made the Romans laugh. Christianity seemed to be aiming for a *total monopoly* of the religious market.”

(“Spread of Christianity in the first 4 centuries”, Leiden)

Since the peasants couldn’t read Latin the Church played Christians like a fiddle by hoarding their own Latin Vulgate translation for 1000 years. In fact, any translation outside of Latin could be a death sentence:

"Christianity adapted to political pressures of the moment. Careful research has demonstrated how its doctrine *shifted* to respond to the needs or aspirations of potential [pagan] converts.”

("Life after Faith: case for secular humanism", doubt delineated, religion refined, Kitcher)

Gibbon’s again:

“The Trinity is condemned by the universal silence of the orthodox fathers. The text invaded Latin Bibles which were corrected in a dark period of 1000 years, which the pious fraud multiplied.”

(“Decline/Fall of the Roman Empire”, 1770)

## Latin Vulgate 382 AD

“Whither should I go from thy Spirit? Or whither should I flee from thy presence?”

Ps. 139

In the late 4<sup>th</sup> c. the brilliant scholar St. Jerome was commissioned by the Pope to translate the old Latin Roman bible into the newer Latin of the time. In NT translations he had some help but he did the Jewish Bible himself. Later, in 392 AD, he also translated the book of psalms (Latin Psalters) from Hebrew into Latin.

But regarding the Holy Spirit here in lies the problem—he capitalized when he



shouldn't have. Worse, he even capitalized the OT (see above).

### 1380 AD

In the late 1300's/early 1500's English linguist's Wycliffe and Tyndale possibly capitalized 'spirit' in both testaments, and a full century before the King James version in 1611. Some translations were initially hand-written but later finalized with the Holy Spirit being as a separate God:

“In the Wycliffe Bible [1<sup>st</sup> version] “God”, “Jesus”, “Christ” and the “Holy Ghost” are always capitalized. While the “Father”, the “Son”, the “Spirit”, “Lord”, and “Saviour” are only *sometimes* capitalized. For consistency's sake all have been capitalized in [later version] Wycliffe's New Testament.”

(ibilio.org/Wycliffe/NT)

But the Catholic Church wasn't too happy with peasants reading Tyndale's translation in English in addition to his critical letters to the King. So getting wind of their plots to arrest him, Tyndale fled England.

Later, Emperor Charles V had his government agents chase him down into Belgium where he was imprisoned for a year in a castle awaiting trial. In (date) he was convicted of heresy (incorrect beliefs) against the Church. Outside, Wycliffe was tied to a stake and was first strangled to death. Afterwards his corpse was burned.

Later in 1401, Archbishop Arundel still denounced Wycliffe as a heretic, fuming:

"The pearl of the Gospel is scattered abroad and trodden underfoot by swine." Arundel further wrote in his report to papal claimant John XXIII in 1421, "This pestilent and wretched John Wyclif, of cursed memory, that son of the old serpent... endeavoured by every means to attack the faith and sacred doctrine of Holy Church, devising—to fill up the measure of his malice—the expedient of a new translation into the mother tongue."

(Quoted in "Poetics of Translation", Barnstone, p. 201, from "Gnostic Bible")

Still full of vengeance, Catholic monks returned to his grave:

“Wycliffe lay safely in the earth until 1424 when his bones were dug up, burned, and thrown into the River Swift”

(“Gnostic Bible”, pg. 25)

In the next century, Tyndale translated the NT into English. He too was imprisoned:

“Tyndale's translation of scripture into the everyday English was to expose the faithful to a *forbidden* text... For his crime, on October 6, 1536, William Tyndale was taken to the stake, strangled by the hangman, and burned.”

(“Gnostic Bible”, pg. 26)

## Persecution

“Have no fear [of the Roman's] nor be troubled. Do not return evil for evil or reviling for reviling. If you suffer for doing what is right you will be blessed.”

1 Peter 3

When I was in Christian circles the subject of the early persecutions came up more times than I wanted. Usually the Fox's “Book of Martyr's” was pulled out, quoted and I was thinking, ‘what the hell are they doing this for? There's no persecution now and there hasn't been for 1700 yrs!’. The pastor's point was that Christians are still being “condemned by the world” and to prove it they'd show me verses from the NT and tell me, ‘See? It's right here!’

Well, their point was usually so ridiculous and out-of-step that I ignored it for decades. But in light of writing a book about religion I feel it's worth a scholarly effort since Christians worldwide still believe they are persecuted over their faith in Jesus. However, in the past, that wasn't the case for the most part:

“Those few [Christians] who did maintain the faith, who were imprisoned, publicly tried and executed – those few were held up as models for other Christians to follow. It was their stories that were told and retold as examples for believers to follow in preparing themselves for the trials that might come. But when the violence came, it did not necessarily bring Christians together in greater harmony, but could tear churches apart and incite divisions that lasted for decades if not centuries.”

(essay, “Rethinking the Diversity of Ancient Christianity: Responding to Suffering and Persecution” Karen King, pg. 64+, from “Beyond the Gnostic Gospel's”)

## 55 AD+

“If there was a way to make yourself more *marginal* in the 1<sup>st</sup> c. become a Christian. Even to the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> c. would people give much thought to preachers like Paul.”

(“Life in Year One”, Korb)

“It didn't take long for Christian's to start annoying people...”  
(“Evolution of God”, Wright)

At this time, and contrary to Christian tradition, Roman's *never* sought out Christians. For one, there was no church's for them to openly congregate at for another century, so those locales were out. But it wasn't until Christians totally ignored Rome's local gods did the eyebrows raise where someone might tell a local governor or some other authority figure. This is one reason why the Nazarene groups like Paul's were called atheists since they didn't acknowledge their gods:

see, Frend, “Martyrdom and Persecution” pg. 537

“Christians themselves were widely considered strange. They were also known to revere, as the savior of the world, a lowly day laborer who had been crucified for crimes against the state.”

(“Triumph of Christianity: How a Forbidden”, Ehrman, pg. 94 pdf)

“It took some time for the Romans to distinguish between Christians and the other quarreling members of Judaism... The Roman authorities were tolerant of other religions so long as their religion had a *tradition* behind it with some allegiance to their gods. Even Judaism, with their awkward insistence that all other religions were false, were accepted because of its long pedigree. Christianity had no such traditions.”  
(“History of Christianity: 1<sup>st</sup> 3K”, Prince, Ally or Enemy?)

A faculty member of Classics at Univ. of Chapel Hill, NC:

“In normal circumstances this was done by an accuser, someone who brought a particular person before the official and charged him or her with being a Christian.”

(essay, “Persecution of Christians and Ideas of the Community in the Roman Empire”, Rives, Academia.edu, pg. 201+)

**100**

“With regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.” Acts 28

“The Romans were rather *good* at keeping order throughout the Mediterranean world.”  
(“Who Wrote the NT?”, pg. 25)

In this century, the early Nazarene/pagan groups like Paul's along with the more Jewish-oriented Galilean groups, usually ended up arguing with more devout Jews in synagogues. They spoke more about ‘when Jesus was going to return to earth’ or his

divinity rather than come to blows. Since there were no gospels around for another 100 years or so we can presume that Paul's Letters or some other apocalyptic writings from unknowns were causing this social dissent by a few bad actors. The Roman's were not too happy:

“Christianity looked like the enemy of social cohesion and cultural adoption. For 250 years [longer] the obstinate and incomprehensible intolerance of Christian's made them appear not only foolish but treasonable... 2. Christians tried to reject Roman social norms *as much as possible*...3. Romans thought that the idea of an executed man as the 'revealer of God' was ridiculous... Their fanaticism, pretensions to a superior level of morality, the perception of their cult as a recent invention imported from the east, their tendency to aggressive speech.”

(“Reason for God: belief in an Age of Skepticism”, Keller, pg. 37), 2.(“Kingdom & Community: social work”, Gager), 3. (“Did Jesus Exist?”, pg. 158-170), 4.(essay, “Persecutions of Christians & Ideas in the Roman Empire”, Rives, pg. 210+)

Also, there is documentation that Romans got tired of listening to Christians quoting Paul saying, 'the wrath of God will be upon you! Rome will be destroyed!' as they had heard this before with Jewish Zealots in Jerusalem:

“Christians were accused of superstition which for most Roman ancients was on the other end of the spectrum from atheism. Superstition involved excessive fear of the gods and what they might do, leading to extreme attempts to avert their anger.”  
(“Triumph of Christianity”, Ehrman, pg. 86)

For example, Pliny the Younger was a judge and governor of a Roman province who on occasion had people accused of being Christians taken up in front of him. At that time “devout” Christians were little more than subversives so Pliny would casually ask them three times if they were Christians. If they denied Christ they were let go without punishment. If they insisted, they were then taken away either to be beheaded or if a non-citizen were sent to beasts in the arena instead. That is on record:

“Becoming a Christian in the first century was an act of deviance...The number of martyrs was never very large, and the persecutions that took place broke out intermittently and never focused on all Christians everywhere.”

(“Rise of Christianity”, Stark, pg. 6, pg. 174), see “Triumph of Christianity”, pg.46+

Now if I were an early Christian with friends or family would I voluntary go to an arena to be mauled by a starving bear or lion just to show others how brave I was—especially without *any* legit scriptures to back up my belief system? I couldn't make a

small sacrifice to the Roman gods to save my life? Who were these Christians being dogmatic too? Paul or Jesus? To most normal people at the time these choices would be a no-brainer:

“A depraved and excessive superstition.” Pliny the Younger in letter to Emperor Trajan

“Emperor Domitian called on the 'atheists', that is, the Christian's to give up their faith or their life.” Suetonius

(*Domitian*, chap. 92, retrieved by “Pagan & Christian Rome”)

Amazingly, the Book of Acts even *agrees* with Rome's quotes above but instead lies and doesn't give an honest answer *why* early Christian's would be beaten by the local crowds! Instead tells a fictional story about their hero Paul in prison where an angel gets him out! As mentioned, (and unlike the OT) the NT has a high degree of bias: see, “Who Wrote the NT?”, pg. 225, “History of Christianity: 1<sup>st</sup> 3K”, Prince: ally or enemy?

“These men are Jews [Galileans/Nazarenes] and they are disturbing our city! They advocate customs that is not lawful [monotheism?] for us Romans to accept or practice! And the crowds joined in attacking them.” Acts 16

Roman culture wasn't validating the views of Nazarene's anytime soon:

“Isis and Osiris the divine power, the Great Mother festival, the Syrian goddess, Mithras the Persian God. The claims of early Christian's may have sounded familiar...”  
(“From Jesus to Christianity”, [White](#))

“The pagans contended that the resurrection of Christ was a spurious imitation of the resurrection of Attis--since the general rule that the original is older than its copy.”  
(“Golden Bough”, pg. 370-80)

## **150-200**

“Christians thought the [Roman] gods were demons who had deceived virtually everyone in the known world.”  
(“Triumph of Christianity”, Ehrman, pg. 94)

"The Pauline groups lived in an imaginary world...."  
(“Who Wrote the NT”, Paul and his gospel, pg. 106-137)

Most Christians sort of know the story of Justin Martyr who was beheaded for failing

to bow down to Roman gods. But as mentioned, Rome was tolerant of other people beliefs just as long as one gave a nod to *their* gods.

But a failure to do so was not an automatic lynching by any stretch. One had to keep swatting at a bee in order to make it mad it attack—and that’s exactly what Justin did. Only those he warned were some of the most powerful people in the then known world-- eastern Rome’s Emperors Marcus Aurelius and Commodus:

"...be on your guard, lest the demons whom we have been attacking deceive you, and distract you from reading and understanding what we say, Justin told the rulers of the world, "for these demons strive to keep you as their slaves!" Justin (Justin, 1 Apology 14)

Emperor Aurelius thought these Christians were “stupid”. From her book, Elaine Pagels comments:

“Some Roman officials, dumbfounded by this Christian defiance, agreed with Marcus Aurelius's private assessment: what motivates the Christians is not courage but a perverse desire for notoriety. Other officials burst out angrily, as if suspecting that they were being manipulated by suicidal fanatics: "If you want to die, go *kill yourselves, and do not bother us!*"

(Justin, 2 Apology 4) (“Adam, Eve & the Serpent”, pg. 50, pdf)

Continuing:

“Only a handful of proud philosophers and senators were willing to risk their lives to defy Imperial power. But the boldest Christians not only defied pagan society to the death but also set out to create in its place a new social order — what Tertullian called ‘the Christian society’ — based upon a new religious ideology and a new vision of human nature.”

(“Adam, Eve & the Serpent”, pg. 54, pdf)

Another early church lunatic was *Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus* (“Tertullian”) who headed the African church in Alexanderia Egypt. He encouraged dying-- if it was for a good cause:

“He [Tertullian] argues that God does desire martyrdom; dying for God is a good thing because it combats the evils of idolatry.”

(essay, "Rethinking the Diversity of Ancient Christianity: Responding to Suffering and Persecution", Karen King, pg. 65, from "Beyond the Gnostic Gospel's", Academia.edu)

One apologetic claim of Tertullian was that Christian's were so accepted in Roman society that they "were present in every level of Rome, including the palace and the Senate." Not so, because if that were true then why would they have been persecuted as part of Roman society? Also, one would need to be filthy rich at that time to be in the Senate, which Christians clearly were not. Worse, the strict Platonic doctrine the Christians followed hated their body and the earth and rejected the world in favor of the next. Even Paul said "don't be conformed to this world" which is clearly Platonic and monkish reasoning. (Romans 12)

(Tertullian, Apology 37.4), ( "Triumph of Christianity", pg. 34), 1 John 2 ,

At this time Christian gnostics were in full swing and pulling the ear of anyone who'd listen. But they were more like hippy-like than martyrs like the Paul's and Tertullian's:

"Wright makes an interesting remark on this subject when he writes: 'Which Roman emperor would persecute *anyone* for reading the *Gospel of Thomas*?'"

("Contemporary Challenges to the Gospel's: incipient gnosticism and Johannine Teaching on the Resurrection", Woods, pg. 9) see, Wright 2006: pg. 550

Mentioned earlier under Roman religion, the plagues that dominated Rome for 15 years were blamed on the Christian community mainly for one reason—they didn't go to the local temples and worship. This brought a large amount of social suspicion:

"Emperor [Aurelius] came to agree with those who advocated that the plague was sent by the gods because they had been affronted and neglected. It was a very bad time to belong to a group notorious for refusing to sacrifice to the gods..."

In 177, mob attacks on Christians broke out and a number were beaten and then dragged before the magistrate. Since some of the accused were Roman citizens, and exempt from being killed by animals in the arena, local officials wrote to Marcus Aurelius for guidance. He responded that those who persisted in their Christianity were to be executed—the Roman citizens should be beheaded, the rest delivered to the wild beasts in the arena,"

("Triumph of Christianity", pg. 76) see, 4<sup>th</sup> c. historian Eusebius, *Church History*, 5.1

The 'martyrdom mentality' continues:

“By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. many Christian's considered Paul as the most *important* figure in the religion after Jesus.”

(“Forged: writing in the name of God”, Ehrman), see “St. Paul the Apostle”, Sanders, Encyclopedia Britannica

As is well known, in 170 AD church father Origen of Alexandria, Egypt refuted an obscure Greek philosopher named Celcus who said that the early Christian's were traitors to the Empire by refusing to be called into the army. As we know today depending on *which* war a peaceful demonstration can be a good idea, but at this time the Empires northern borders were being overrun by Goth barbarians. So by refusing, Christians were considered traitors:

see, Romans or Corinthians, “Early Christian World” vol. 1 & 2, Mysteries of Demeter, Martin, “Decline/Fall of the Roman Empire”, conduct towards the Christian's

“Celcus was alarmed by the spread of Christianity, by its scornful hostility to paganism and military service and the state of Rome.”

(“Story of Civilization”, pg. 607)

A rare eyewitness:

“Christians weave together erroneous opinions drawn from ancient sources, and trumpet them aloud, and sound them before men, as the priests of Cybele clash their cymbals in the ears of those who are being initiated in their mysteries... The cult of Christian's is a sacred society, who members hide together in corners for fear of being brought to trial and punished... [Thru Paul's letters] *Christian's want to destroy legitimate authority* and return the world to chaos and the barbarians—even to bring down the empire and the empire with it.” Celcus

(As quoted by Origen, Bk. 3)

## 200

Christians of the time thought they were living in the “last days” as the scripture attests. Amazingly, millions of Christians worldwide still believe this nonsense:

“Understand that in the last days will come times of stress. Men [Roman's] will be inhuman, unholy, slanderers, holding a form of religion but denying it. Avoid such



people! These men oppose [our sects] truth these men of corrupt mind!" 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3

Dr. Smith was a historian of religion from the University of Chicago who studied its anthropological aspects:

"Salvation through acts of rebellion and transcendence is the key concept in utopian religions."

("Drudgery Divine", Smith, pg. 130) see, "Imagining Religion", Smith

See, "*Persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire*", Wikipedia, "*Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman*", McDonald, pg. 119

**249+ AD**

"Share in the suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2

About this time, the Gospel's would be in circulation with their mixed messages of love, intolerance, hate and doom. Yet many Christians and pagans still thought Jesus was just another 'god in the sky' who couldn't be followed anywhere! Only men can follow other men--thus Paul was a man they could at least follow and obey in the sight of God. So they followed:

"Christians were to be removed like a cancer from the body politic."  
("Triumph of Christianity", Ehrman, pg. 23)

But now it would only get worse for Christian's who fanatically embraced the Pauline scriptures whose Platonic idea that death was far greater than living. They were unaware that a dangerous religious cult was dawning for them--and that they too would be tortured and killed by the 1000's all over these few scriptures and traditions:

"The 'days of terror' returned and continued fiercer every under the rules of Decius, Gallus and Valerianus. The last persecution of Diocletian was the longest and most cruel of all. *For in ten years not a day of mercy* shone over them [303-312]. They cut out the right eyes of the confessors, cut their tendons and then sent them to the mines, lame, half-blind, half-starved and flogged nearly to death... [According to eyewitness Eusebius] supposedly 10,000 Christian's were put to death after the dedication of Diocletian's Baths."

("Pagan & Christian Rome", Christian Cemeteries) see, "Intro to the NT", Brown, "Early Christianity and Society: Seven Studies" Grant, pg. 308

Like in Acts, the NT writers wrote about these persecutions as a positive experience:

“We boast of you in the church's of God for your faith in all your persecutions and afflictions which you are suffering!” 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians 1

Or Revelations very clever symbolic version:

“And the beast [Roman soldiers] was given authority for 42 months. It was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them.” Rev. 13

see, New Oxford commentary on Rev. 13,

In closing, a recent essay on persecution pretty much summed up the early Christian mentality although very apologetically:

“Christians didn’t worship the same way as their neighbors, and didn’t participate in the larger community of the empire, but instead formed a separate community of their own.”

(“Persecution of Christians & Ideas”, pg. 215)

“For centuries Christian martyrs were revered for their faith and courage. Then along came social scientists to reassure us that normal people never would have done such things, that the martyrs were mentally ill and their apparent feats of courage were rooted in masochism —the love of pain.”

(“Triumph of Christianity”, pg. 49)

So was Jesus becoming popular everywhere over these persecutions like I always heard? Not really. Sociologist Stark estimates Christians at just 2 % of the population, and from a social fear wouldn't put a Cross on grave stones for 200 years:

“My estimates that there was a very small Christian population in the first two centuries.”

(“Rise of Christianity”, Stark, pg. 4), see “Triumph of Christianity”, pg. 51-55, “Pagans and Christians”, Fox, pg. 317, “Cities of God: the real story of how Christianity became an urban movement”, Stark, “Discovering God” *Rome*, “Forged: writing in the name of God”, Ehrman

In closing, as I write the our entire nation and even countries overseas are protesting the murder of George Floyd, a black man who was killed out in the open by several cops in blue. Thousands are marching with signs in the belief that Blacks are a persecuted minority. But arguably Jews have been persecuted as much as Blacks. And of course there’s still Christian persecution in the Middle East and North Africa where church’s are getting blown up and people shot to death just for being in a different religion.

However, Christians are still a small minority in these countries. I guess that's the key word here—minority.

### **Councils 325-381--Putting the Bible Together**

"Resplendent in purple and gold, Constantine made a ceremonial entrance at the opening of the council, but *respectfully seated the bishops ahead of himself*."

("Building of Christendom", Carroll, pg. 11)

"Most of the Gospels from early Christianity have been irretrievably lost...The [2nd] century had seen a proliferation of Gospels forged in the names of Jesus' disciples."

("Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot", Ehrman, preface, pg. 1)

In the 4<sup>th</sup> c. there were two major eastern Universal church Councils that unified their NT. The first was the *First Council of Nicea* (325) and the second was the *First Council of Constantinople* (381). There would eventually be seven more.

After Constantine had made Christianity the official religion the 1<sup>st</sup> Council invited 1800 bishops from both Eastern and Western Rome to their conference in Constantinople, now in Iznik, Turkey. The main issues were over Jesus and his relation to the Father and the Holy Spirit. It was a risky business since the word 'spirit' at that time wasn't capitalized thus wasn't a separate God. But if the Father's capped 'spirit' then the Spirit *might* have had something to do with Jesus. In other words, there could be two hypothetical Gods to blame if Jesus divination was in question.

So by deducing prior scriptures, the bishops found (invented?) the term *begotten* which meant "fathered". Thus, Jesus had a beginning yet was still considered Divine. This 'play on words' consensus would be voted on:

"While the books themselves are understood to be inspired mere men chose what books should be part of the canon." ("Knowing Scripture", Sproul

The complete list of NT canon was taken from a short list by church scholars Eusebius and Jerome but unlike other doctrines and disputes wouldn't be put to vote. Constantine also knew about this list prior, but since he wasn't yet unbaptized, and not technically Christian, he stepped aside:

"Distinguished by their apostolic authenticity... Eusebius must have made a list of the writings under consideration for inclusion in the Christian Bible. Along with Jerome the lists became the Christian Bible."

("Who Wrote the NT?", pg. 288), for list see, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3, 25

At the same time, the Fathers also founded their *Nicean Creed* which was church dogma written out explaining who the Son was in relation to the Father and the Holy Ghost. Over the next 1300 years this *Creed* was effective in brain-washing subjects into the Church's past history and traditions. This was not without precedent however, since more devout Jews in synagogues recited Hebrew scriptures and *Mishna* over and over *ad nauseum* —and still do.

About 60 years later, the bishops convened again at the *Council of Constantinople*. This would clarify older precedents from the *1<sup>st</sup> Council* but did finalize the doctrine of the Trinity.

## **Messiah's**

“The messiah meant, 'rightful ruler.'”

(“Jews in the Time of Jesus”, pg. 24)

A Roman contemporary regarding the Zealots:

“...These men agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty and say that God is to be their only Ruler and Lord.”

Flavius Josephus, (Jewish War 2.433)

The Messiah meant "the great Deliverer of Israel" or the "Anointed One" charged with carrying out God's will. (Ps. 2, 89, 110, Zech. 9) And over history here have been many messiahs and not just one who's main goal was to deliver them politically from oppression. This superhuman figure would be 'more than human but less than divine' and of course a few became later legends:  
see, “Zealot”, pg. 19

Judas b. Ezekias, 6 AD

Simon, 6

Athronges, 6

Judas the Galilean, 6

Jesus of Nazareth, 30–32

The Samaritan, 36

Theudus, 45

Menachem b. Judas, 66

Simon b. Giora, 68–70

Shimon b. Cocheba, 132–35

(sourced from "Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs: popular movements in the time of Jesus", Horsely), (Josephus, Jewish Antiquities 18, 20), (Acts 5)

Many Christians romanticize the NT but its early historical reality was far different. First off, 1st century Palestine was far worse than the Third World today. There was little rain, no education, no economy, rampant superstition and people lived by candlelight. Even the Roman troops wanted little to do with the place except stop by once or twice a year to collect their taxes! So who wouldn't have wanted a messiah to possibly deliver them?

("Life in Year One"), see, Josephus, "War of the Jews"

A Roman eyewitness:

"A 1st c. visitor to Jerusalem saw 'extensive evidence of poverty'. Pliny (Cambridge Ancient Hist., vol. 9)

I mentioned that Mathew's portrayal of Jesus would be their hopeful political messiah:

"Some thought he would be a great military leader who would overthrow the foreign oppressors and make Israel a great nation again, as it had been under the rule of King David... The messiah was to be great and powerful, not weak and helpless. He was to rule God's enemies, not be squashed by them... No Jew of the ancient world thought the messiah was supposed to be God... 2. Jesus maintained messianic ambitions... To call yourself the messiah in Roman occupation was tantamount to declaring war on Rome... There were a lot of messiahs but Roman soldiers usually killed them before they got too popular."

("Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot", pg. 19, 158), ("Zealot", pgs. 19, 106, 125-126, 154)

As mentioned, the Gospels were then speculating since outside the New Testament no contemporary references to Jesus are known. The NT writers did not know who Jesus *really* was:

"Jesus doesn't fit the profile of the Davidic messiah. That messiah was a warrior prince."

("Specter and the Star: The Messiah of the Dead Sea Scrolls", Collins), ("[History of Ancient Israel](#), Soggin.), see also any book by Ehrman

"In the Judaism of Jesus' day there were no hard definitions of 'Messiah', 'Son of Man' or 'Son of God'. The evidence is he rejected both the 'Messiah/Son of God' titles."

("Historical Figure of Jesus", Jesus' view of his role, Sanders), see "Zealot" [pg.](#)

To clear up any confusion among Christians today Jesus never appeared in the OT as himself:

"Clues to the 'hidden meaning' of Jesus as messiah are fragmentary... *There is no single story line in Jewish literature that can decode Jesus.*"

("Who Wrote the NT", claiming Israel's epic) [mack](#), see, "Zealot", pg. 32, "Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot", pg. 159

Ehrman again:

"According to the Jews, the messiah wasn't supposed to be killed and no Jew thought the messiah would be God! It simply wasn't their view! That later became a Christian view without support in ancient Jewish thinking."

("Did Jesus Exist?", two key data)

The 1960's historical movie "Spartacus" was about a slave revolt. Well the Roman army never forgot either--even a century later (the movie itself garnered 4 Academy's and was the largest moneymaker in Universal's history to that time):

"Early Jewish messiahs attracted primarily a peasant following all centered on a leader claiming the right to rule Israel as king. These movements were actively suppressed by Roman troops. The messiah's either died fighting or were executed as political criminals... Jesus thought that God was about to bring in his kingdom and that he, Jesus, was God's last emissary."

("Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs: popular movements in the time of Jesus, Horsely"), ("Historical Figure of Jesus", Jesus view of his role) see also "History of Ancient Israel", Soggin

Which is what happened in the Gospel stories:

"[To Rome] long before 73AD the term 'Galilean' was equal with 'rebel'. Josephus speaks of the people of Galilee as 'inured to war from their infancy'... While Jesus the peacemaker who 'loved his enemies' and 'turned the other cheek' was a later fabrication." ("Zealot"), Mt. 10 [aslan](#)

After the 2nd Temple's destruction (70-73AD) the evangelists changed a human figure into a god believing it was OT prophecy. But the later 4th c. Church didn't want a political warrior against Rome as their role model thus Jesus the 'peaceful and the loving'.

A rabbi's view:

"The evangelists later transformed a rabbi into a supernatural figure. The Jesus-cult arose in Israel at a time when Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses and Joshua still passed for gods. All the ideas of all cults [new religions] were embodied in him... As long as the Jesus movement remained in the orbit of Judaism, Jesus was simply viewed as a prophet, perhaps even as messiah. Later when the gospel was preached to pagans, Jesus needed to be 'upgraded' to a savior figure like in Greek/Roman mythology."  
("Three Faces of Monotheism"), ("Is Jesus the Only Savior?", Edwards)

So in the mid-1st century, Paul, along with the later writers of the 4 Gospels, reinterpreted the OT Septuagint looking for this Messiah-- "the Lord's anointed". But Jesus himself never said that he was the 'Savior of the world' anywhere in the NT but rather referred to himself more as a teacher and Judge for the continuing Jewish epic. So this Davidic "king" from Ezekiel/Jeremiah/Isaiah who was to liberate the people of God from their oppressors did *not* and so to the Jews he became a 'false messiah'--at least according to their prophecies.

Karen Armstrong:

"No Jew since the return from Babylon imagined that Yahweh actually had a son--like the abominable deities of the pagans... The term 'Son of God' can be an inadequate term because it's a very pagan concept as pagan gods propagated 'sons on earth'. To avoid confusion the term 'only begotten' was later added [4th c.]. Jews had difficulty with this term because of its pagan connotations."  
("History of God"), ("History of Christian Thought", Tillich, 1972) see, "Jesus, Interrupted: revealing the hidden contradiction's in the Bible and why we don't know about them", Ehrman, "Zealot"

Today, I'm sure the Jews themselves would know a lot more about their messiah than ++the simplistic views of a 4th century Gentile religion.

Another rabbi:

"Myths routinely reflect the anxieties of a particular culture... A basic function of myth is to overcome the contradiction's between hope and reality."

(Torah and Commentary, "Ancient Near Eastern Mythology", Wexler), (Kingdom and Community, essay, "End of Time & Rise of Christianity")

An eyewitness:

"Jesus is not the Messiah for the Jews or else they would have accepted him". Celcus  
180AD

See also, "Battle for God", "Closing of the Western Mind", "Constantine's Sword", Interpreter's Commentary, "Kingdom of God in the OT", "Specter and the Star: The Messiah of the Dead Sea Scrolls", "History of Ancient Israel, Soggins"

## **Jesus in St. John**

"He who comes from above is above all others." John 3

"Religion is man searching for God. Christianity is God searching for man." Former pastor Warren Campbell, Kaweah Church, Calif.

My own personal experience with the Jesus in John has been based over time. Decades even. In reading John one comes away with someone who is supremely confident of who he is and where he came from which is Eternity--both past and present.

Also, it's a completely different person than the Jesus in M,M & Luke who never pointed to his divinity. The book of John is also gnostic in origin and easily could have been written as late as 150 AD:

"The language, if not the spirit of Gnosticism, entered into the NT especially in the writings of Paul and the Gospel of John."

("Christian Mystics", King), see any book by Pagels or Ehrman

To many Christians today gnosticism may seem like irrelevant goblety-gook but 2nd c. early Christians used this way of thinking as their theology! So here's an example of 2nd c. gnostic thought:

*"I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall never thirst... I have come down from heaven not to do my own will but God's will; every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."* Jn. 6

The scripture above is plainly 2nd c. gnostic because legalistic Jews were never



required to "believe" anything outside of their moral laws--only idol-worshippers. Another worse case scenario would be Yahweh who never had anything *close* to a Son--which would have been polytheism! So who really is this Jesus guy?:

"As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to who he chooses." John 5

But if Jesus was *thee* son of God why would He want to mix himself up with the fictional blockheads written out in the Gospels 40+ years after the fact? If he's truly God why not start His own religion thus eliminating the confusion? Supposedly, God is "not the God of confusion" so how could or would a later 4th c. pagan-mixed religion represent God?? So due to the NT's incompleteness most Christians must look the other way and really don't have an answer...

### **Who else was Jesus of Nazareth?**

"Won't you look down upon me Jesus, you've got to help me make a stand..."  
"Fire & Rain", James Taylor

"Jesus was a highly nationalistic Jew. Most statements attributed to Jesus conform to his Jewish teachings."  
("Jewish Literacy")

Earlier I covered Messiah's, later I'll cover apocalyptic quotes, but here Jesus was widely considered a savior, one who would "save the people from their sins." Except Jews weren't allowed since they didn't believe they were sinners. Thus the messiahship would belong primarily to Pagans:

see, "The Historical Evidence of Jesus", Wells

"Secular history of the time *barely noticed* a Jesus. Josephus (75AD+) mentions him once... 2. In extant Jewish literature, there is not a *single authentic reference* to the founder of Christianity... 3. Almost no Jewish scholar believes that Jesus intended to start a new religion... 4. Nothing preached by Jesus or the early apostles implied that Jesus belonged in the God-category. Early Christians seem comfortable with the idea that Jesus was neither God nor man."

("Triumph of Christianity" Stark), 2. ("Pagan Christ"), 3. ("Jewish Literacy":Pontius Pilate),4. ("Proto-Trinity: Development of the Trinity", Gaston, pg. 67)

Others say Jesus was a teacher, prophet, a 'good man', a martyr, "King of the Jews"

(Herod 1st, 40 BC), or savior or the Word /‘Logos’ from the Greel Stoics. To others, Jesus was the Lord who showed up unannounced from a dirt-poor lower class Jewish village of Nazareth to "save the world" yet in the same breath condemn it for not believing. (John 3:17) And as usual, the NT offers the believer more questions than answers: see, "Zealot", pg. 28

"If you [Jews not Christians] continue in my word you are truly my disciples... For salvation is of the Jews." (John 4, 8)

"When a rich man asks Jesus how to have eternal life, Jesus says, "keep the commandments." This is a view that early Christian's rejected [Acts/Letters] and argued against that idea. If they were wrong and Jesus was right what would be the purpose of Christ and his death?"

("Did Jesus Exist?", [Ehrman](#))

For eons all ancients, knowing nothing of science or nature, worshiped the sun as a deity. Their sun was a spiritual being which they believed radiated on all men. To them the sun revolved around the earth. In Greece, this sun deity was called Helios the Sun god (Roman *Sol*). While early Jews thought the sun was Yahweh Himself! The Egyptians also worshiped the sun, but as everyone knows Jesus had brothers and sisters--no Greek god had that:

"There was a Jesus in history but he was not the founder of Christianity--a religion rooted in the mythical Christ [deliverer] figure." ("Did Jesus Exist?", conclusion)

Was Jesus a follower of the Essene movement?:

"The Qumran community's ritual of washing in a ritual bath for the washing away of sins became the Christian baptism... Jesus was referred to as Jesus the Nazarene (*ha-Brit*); in other words, there are many reasons to believe that Jesus was simply an observant Essene Jew of his time."

(essay, "Astrology in the Dead Sea Scroll's", Snow, from "Book Your Church doesn't Want You to Read") note—Snow earned his M.A. at the School of Theology, Claremont, California.

Another problem can be the gospel narrative itself. For instance, if Jesus was truly God or a savior how could there have been *any* disbelief from the locals and religious leaders in Jerusalem? Unthinkable! That never would have happened in one of the most religious eras on earth:

“We can't be sure Jesus embraced the cause of the downtrodden.... Jesus never died for the sins of the world... 2. The earliest evidence for Nazareth as a town is a sign from a synagogue in the 3rd/4th *century*. It was a desert town with around 300 people... 3. The true Jesus of history may have been little more than a marginal Jewish peasant from the backwoods of Galilee...”

(“Evolution of God”, pg. 263), 2. (“Excavating Jesus: understanding Jesus in his world”, Crossan/Reed 3. (“A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus”, Meirs) also, “Did Jesus Exist?”, non-Christian sources, “Zealot”, 4th philosophy, “Who Wrote the NT”, “Bandits, prophets & Messiah's: popular movements in the time of Jesus”

Ehrman again:

"Jesus was first a Christian Jew not a 21st century Christian American. His world was different than ours--his concerns weren't ours and most striking of all his beliefs [Near Eastern religion] were not ours.”

Continuing:

“Jesus was not a Christian...He didn't start a program or template for a new religion... With other's Jesus was remarkably unorganized. There is no evidence of him forming 'Jesus groups' while the Lord was alive... Jesus isn't the founder of Christianity but the final and dominant figure in the mystical apocalyptic ending of the Jews--God's Last Judgment of all souls.”

(“Did Jesus Exist”, conclusion), (“Zealot”, may your kingdom **come**), (“Who Wrote the NT?”), (“Intro to the NT”), see also, Mt. 5, “From Jesus to Christianity”, “Constantine's Sword”, “The Bible”, Armstrong

The violent 1st c. political group the Zealot's may have infiltrated the Essene sect:

"Jesus seems to have included the Zealots among his followers. They were a political and para-military movement, not a sect... 2. Jesus had no political attachment's nor ambitions...His early followers were commoners.”

(“Dead Sea Scrolls Deception”, preface), 2. (“Christ Among the Partisans”, Wills)

Was Jesus the Logos or the Word in John?:

"The Greek logos refer not to Christ but a generic 'rational order of the universe', a 'force' which earlier Greek philosophers apply the name god... 2. The supernatural story of Jesus is not the history of a miraculous Messiah but a carefully crafted spiritual

allegory designed to guide initiates on a journey of mystical discovery... 3. The ancients placed at the myths center an *ideal person who would symbolize* humanity itself in its dual nature of both human and divine.”

(“Christ Among the Partisans” Wills), 2. (“The Jesus Mysteries: was the original Jesus a pagan God?”, Freke/Gandy), 3. (“Pagan **Christ**”)

Other miscalculation's of Jesus was that he came to call Israel to "repentance" (Mt. 10, 15) only later calling Gentiles (Mt. 9, 22). While another Jesus may have been a racist nor a lover of people since he called half-breed Jewish/Samaritans “dogs”-- Jewish slang for the ‘lowest of the low’: (Mt. 7, 15, 16, 22, 23)

"To call a Jew a Samaritan was a grievous insult... To marry a Samaritan was to lie with a beast.”

("Misplaced Jesus: interpreting Jesus in a Judaic context", Evans)

Also Jesus' famous 'kingdom of God' speeches weren't all peace loving since they are apocalyptic about later destruction (Lk. 22, Mt. 23, 24). In other words, the later evangelists probably tried to paint him like a political candidate trying to please everyone on all sides but not standing for anything concrete:

“...Christianity eventually concentrated these universal concepts [myth] into a single person.”

(“Pagan **Christ**”)

A quite different meaning of "follow me":

"The gospel account of 'follow me' came from 1 Maccabees who had freed some Jews from foreign rule (167 BC)... Evil didn't start with Adam/Eve and nor did it end with Christ."

(“Jewish Literacy”), (“Lord or Legend?: wrestling with the Jesus Dilemma”, Boyd/Eddy)

A former Pope:

"Christianity is not a new philosophy or new morality. We are only Christians if we encounter Christ [spiritually]." Pope Benedict ("St. Paul", Benedict, '09)

Finally:

"The doctrine of the Savior is world-wide and world-old and that Christianity merely appropriated the same and gave it a special color... The original Jesus of true history has

been lost to us. We only know a Jesus invented by the later Church [4th c.]...”

(“Pagan & Christian Creeds”, pg.), (“Searching for the Original Bible”, Price

## Plato or Paul?

“While we were still weak Christ died for the ungodly!” Romans 5

“There was an uncanny popularity and religious authority of Plato in the late [Greek] Hellenistic age.”

(“Sethian Gnosticism & Platonic Tradition”, Turner, 2006, pg. 21)

Between the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC-2nd c. AD Plato’s works ruled the modern world. Plato was the social hero and anybody who thought themselves as intelligent knew the *Dialogues*, the 13 *Epistles* (letters) or *Republic* and who could even quote them in casual conversions. Also, everything back then was about the gods and their hero’s. Were they personal or impersonal? Is life as we know it now the opposite in the Next world? Who is your favorite god?

So starting about the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. the 13 Pauline letter’s were out and were being read side-by-side against Plato (which 13 letter’s were read are speculation since the Church didn’t decide this until **367 AD**). So bishops found another 6 or 7 Pauline fakes (for instance the circular and anonymous Ephesians) and put them in a Pauline “canon” if you will:

see, “Churches the Apostles Left Behind”, Brown, pg. 47, “NT: *Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, Ehrman, . pgs 381–84

“So you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God!” Ephesians. 2

“Christianity presented in the NT is a form that was unacceptable even incomprehensible to people of education, such as most aristocrats ... One of the concerns of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century apologists was the translation of Christianity into a language that could be understood and accepted by the upper classes. There is a distinct *shift* in the type of literature being produced by Christians.”

(“*Social Structure Of The Early Christian Communities*” D.J. Kyrtatos, pg. 99)

“Christianity is now being seen as a kind of religio-cultural mutation over the first hundred years of the Christian Era.”

(essay, “Astrology in the Dead Sea Scrolls”, Snow, from “Book Your Church Doesn’t Want You to

Read”)

These Plato vs. Paul readings would be a not-so-friendly competition between two greats--who was more spiritual? Who would have more influence around the region? Who could be more *outrageous*?? This would explain why 2nd/3rd c. Christian apologists presented Christianity in more Platonic terms. Thus, the ridiculous race would be on:

“The 13 Pauline letter's were designed to mimic the Thrasyllan edition of the works of Plato. The motivation for mimicking lain in the fact that Plato and the Platonist philosophical groups presented the *greatest challenge to Christian belief* in the marketplace of the time.”

(essay, “Toward a Theory Concerning the Formation of the NT Canon”, Johnston, Seminary of St. John, Academia.edu)

No one knew the end of these competitions but Paul would become more famous (or infamous) than Plato. Yet, centuries later in 400 AD Augustine—another Pauline worshipper-- did like the Neo-Platonic philosophy:

“It is evident that none come nearer to us than the Platonist’s” “City of God”  
(Bk. 8, ch. 5)

## **New Testament–Gnosticism**

"The case of the ignorance of a person, when he comes to have knowledge, his ignorance vanishes and the darkness vanishes when light appears..." Gospel of Truth, 140 AD

“Platonism entered early and deeply into Christian tradition.”  
(“Rise of the West”, pg. 161-200)

To about 99% of Christians gnosticism (Gr. 'seekers after knowledge') will probably be an unfamiliar term but starting in the late 1st c. up to the 6<sup>th</sup> c. this was a new style of Greek thought that was used in some of the NT.

Incredibly, more progressive religious scholars today believe it was Christianity's *first* spiritual foundation—and personally I would agree! Also, these gnostic's were not a ‘school of thought’ but just a new way of thinking in a spiritual realm. Thus we might think of them as the worlds first hippies:

“Gnosticism is first of all a *pre-Christian* movement influenced by Zoroastrianism...

2. The Gnostics were the first Christians... 3. Essene's are the earliest gnostic Christians... 4. It was an attempt 'to transform Christianity into a theosophy'.... 5. The Gnostic's are Platonist's run wild.”

(“Kyrios Christos”, Bousset, 1913/1970, pg. 245 ). 2. (“Jesus Mysteries: was the original Jesus a pagan god?”) , 3.(“Jesus: the Explosive Story”, ‘mystical Essenes’, 4. (Von Harnack, “History of Dogma” Ger. sourced from “Sethian Gnosticism & the Platonic Tradition”, pg. 14), 5. “Early Gentile Christianity and Its Hellenistic Background”, Nock, intro see, “Decline/Fall”, chap. 15, “Gnostic Bible”, Barnstone/Meyer, pg. 2

### Short history

I mentioned earlier that the Dead Sea Scroll's were found in caves by the Dead Sea, but around the same time gnostic writings or Gnostic Gospel's were also found buried in cliffs in the small town of Nag Hammadi, Egypt. These were 13 leather-bound papyrus books inside a large clay jar, all in Coptic and some emblazed with the Egyptian cross. The word gnostic means ‘knowledge’ or ‘knowers’.

As far as why these codices on papyrus were buried most historians (or at least those sympathetic) agree that it was 2nd/3<sup>rd</sup> c. persecution from more orthodox thinkers like Origen, Irenaeus and Tertullian and their spiritual watch dogs who hated what they saw as a heresy that led their flock astray:

see, “Misreading Judas: how biblical scholars missed the biggest story of all time”, Wahler, pg. 31, “Gnostic Gospel's”, Pagels, “Gnostic Bible”, pg. 9

“Gnosticism is an incredibly complex set of religion's with different sects [branches] having different mythologies... 2. They believed that matter was evil [Platonism]. They rejected the OT and Judaism... 3. Gnostics insisted that we feel alienated from this world because we are alienated from it. This is not our home. We have come to be entrapped here, and we need to learn how to escape... 4. Gnostic Christians *castigated the orthodox* for making the mistake of reading the Scriptures — and especially Genesis — literally, and thereby missing its ‘deeper meaning.’”

(“Jesus Before the Gospels”, Ehrman, pg. 40), 2. (“Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot”, pg. 99) 3. (“Original Bible”, Price), 4. (“Adam, Eve & the /Serpent”, pgs.8, 63, pdf)

“The content of gnostic revelations is for the most part mythology... It's basic message is triumph over one's limitations.”

(“Sethian Gnosticism & the Platonic Tradition”, pg. 2+), see “Gnostic Religion: Message of the Alien God & the Beginnings of Christianity”, Jonas

By the turn of the 1<sup>st</sup> c. century these ‘secret knowledge’ groups were synthesizing from apocalyptic Judaism, Platonism, Esseneism, Zoroastrianism and Paul’s letter’s as speculation, allegory and spiritual mysticism. Thus we get the famous 2<sup>nd</sup> c. *Gospel of Thomas*, *Gospel of Judas*, *Apocalypse of Peter* and 100’s of other apocryphal works which some are familiar with now:  
see “Gnostic Bible”, pg. 6

“Paul conceptualized only a heavenly redeemer figure in Christ Jesus, not the human Jesus.”  
 (“Misreading Judas”, pg. 34)

For example:

“...So that we may not be condemned along with the world.” “Apostle” Paul  
(1 Corinthians 11)

### **What do the gnostic texts tell us about the origins of Christianity?**

“Certain manifestations of Christian life that the church’s renounce as ‘heresies’ originally hadn’t been such at all, just other forms of the new religion.” Walter Bauer 1934  
(“Orthodoxy & Heresy in Early Christianity”, intro)

Historians realize that the Great Church wasn’t finalized until the early 4<sup>th</sup> c. but virtually unknown to the outside world for 20 centuries there were two opposing sects who raged against each other—the ‘knowledge’ sects and the more orthodox bishops like Origen and Irenaus:

“Gnostic’s were a religious competitor to Christianity and active participant in Platonic discourse of the first 4 centuries.”  
(“Sethian Gnosticism & the Platonic Tradition”, (Dr.) John Turner, Academia.edu, preface)

Although it wasn’t called as such, the ‘knowledge’ groups had infiltrated nearly all of Rome, Greece and Asia Minor with their wild teachings of distorted Platonism where believers would get ‘apartments in heaven with many rooms’.

But the small Orthodox schools in the 2<sup>nd</sup>/ 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries investigated them and found them non-Christian since gnostics felt they were already ‘saved’ and didn’t need salvation—thus no need for Jesus:  
see *Theodotus* 2<sup>nd</sup> c, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 3, Romans 11,



“Orthodox Jews and Christians insist that there’s a chasm separates humanity from its Creator. But some of the gnostics contradict this: the self and the divine are identical.” (“Adam, Eve & the Serpent”, Intro, Pagels), see “Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot”, pgs. 57+

"Early Christians were influenced by a Greek-oriental way of thinking that later developed into Gnosticism. This was a speculative philosophy which taught revelation and redemption. *They wanted to leave the evil created world* and be absorbed into the godhead. This teaching dazzled the half-educated.” (Interpreter's Guide, "NT and Christian Community")

## 2<sup>nd</sup> century

“Gnostic Christian's revered Paul and used his writings to support their point of view.” (“Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters”, Pagels)

For centuries these ‘knowledge’ sects told everybody that they had a “secret knowledge” of the Story in the Garden and the devil. That was on two planes. Sin didn’t exist, they said. That was made up. But they liked the two-mother figures of Eve since she had a spiritual, and thus a ‘higher principle’ than Adam: see “Sethian Gnosticism & the Platonic Tradition”, pg. 49

“The Gnostic’s had the ‘high ground’. Their scripture was the Jewish scriptures, not the NT Gospels..... The Master's [Jesus] are beyond religion. They are above the 7 heavens, not restricted to literature that would try to mold them... The NT is disinformation, as used by the church... 2. Their literal view of the resurrection is ‘the faith of fools.’”

(“Misreading Jesus”, pg. 88+), (Origen *Commentary on 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians*, pg. 46)

see “Rethinking Gnosticism: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category”, Williams, “Gnostic Gospel's”, Intro

One of their earliest teachers was Marcion--a *Docetist* who felt Jesus wasn’t a person but rather a spiritual phantom from another world who had come to visit. To Marcion, the Gospel's writers were liars and dishonest people with an agenda (my sentiments as well). He felt a true God cannot be a physical person, thus the real Jesus could not have died on any Cross for any sins-- at least anybody would have seen. Thus the Cross was symbolic and the OT ‘Fall’ a ruse and totally inaccurate. A resurrection appearance: see, “Adam, Eve & the Serpent”, Pagels, Intro, “Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot”, pg. 108

“I have come to teach you

About what is

And what was  
And what will be  
In order for you to understand  
The invisible world  
And the world that is visible”

Apochrypha of John (120-160 CE)

“This God [upper Father] was superior to the Old Testament god and sent Jesus in the likeness of human flesh (i.e., as a phantasm) in order to save people from the harsh justice of the god of the Jews. This Jesus did by apparently dying on the cross.”  
 (“Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot”, pg. 115), see “Sethian Gnosticism & Christian Tradition”, pg. 48+

“Marcion was a rich shipowner turned evangelist who went to Rome in the middle of the second century in order to contribute his money and his teachings to the Roman church. Both were returned to him.

Marcion's theological dualism, with all its anti-Semitic implications, necessitated for him the creation of a new Bible, a new authoritative book for the god newly revealed in Christ... Marcion proved to be popular and influential as a leader of his church, but only for a time. Eventually he was rejected by many Christians.”  
 (“Gnostic Bible”, pg. 18), see “Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot”, pg. 114+

“Marcion, who stressed the merciful and loving nature of God, was at odds with the orthodox. Not all Christians accepted a singular supremacy. It followed that gnostics would *reject* hierarchical order...where blind faith was more important than understanding with its strict adherence to singular church.”

(“Dark Side of Christian History”, Ellerbe, pg. 6+), see “Entangled Christianities”, pgs. 12+,  
Marcion *The Antitheses*

To these ‘knowledge’ or ‘insight’ groups Jesus was more of a spiritual teacher. In several books in defense of the gnostics Pagels adds, “what defines true faith?” But to the orthodox bishops that didn’t matter--salvation needed to be ‘quantified as in box’ in order for their Pagans to understand. That’s why the Gnostic gospels were later disregarded, because they proposed problematic ideas...  
 (“Adam, Eve & the Serpent”, Pagels”, intro)

## 180 AD

By the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. the early church had no choice but to dissect the gnostics who felt they

were space cadets who mocked their church with cynical titles like *Gospel of Judas* and *Gospel of Truth*:

see, “History of Christianity: 1<sup>st</sup> 3K, alternative identities

“Urge all those with whom you are connected to avoid such an abyss of madness and of blasphemy against Christ.” Bishop Irenaeus  
(*Against Heresies, Praefatio*)

“Gnostic Christians who projected such ‘bizarre inventions’ onto Genesis ignored matters of practical morality — or so Bishop Irenaeus charged: ‘Each has discovered a god of his own!’”  
(“*Adam, Eve & the Serpent*”, *Pagels*, pg. 67+)

Like we do everyday online, people 2000 years ago mocked the ‘other’:  
see, Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians

“Hundreds of rival teachers all claimed to teach the ‘true doctrine of Christ’ and denounced one another as frauds.”  
(“Gnostic Gospel's”, pg. 7)

“By A.D. 200, the situation had changed. Christianity had become an institution headed by a three-rank hierarchy of bishops, priests, and deacons, who understood themselves to be the guardians of the only ‘true faith.’”  
(“Gnostic Gospel's”, *Pagels*, intro)

Often a band's 1<sup>st</sup> lp is their best and most adventurous; while their later ones are toned down. The gnostic groups were the same way in that their earliest stuff was the wildest —just like Zeppelin:

“Gnostic origins was traced to Greek philosophy, astrology, mystery religion, magic, Zoroastrianism and the mysterious hierarchy of the invisible world. 2. Early Gnostics adored the Christ as the first and brightest emanation of the Deity, to rescue mankind from their errors... 3. Gnostics rejected this material world [Platonism] and consequently its creator [Yahweh] as evil... 4. In gnostic teaching ‘Father’ [Yahweh] is the good high god that is *unknowable*, detached from the world he didn't make... 5. The Gnostic's to the church was its greatest evil and greatest good. They might be described as *bankrupt philosophers* who re-floated their philosophy on Christian credit. Such men were philosophers *first*, Christians *second*... 6.. A philosophy of pessimism.”

“Gnostic Gospel's” *Pagels*, 2. (“Kyrios Christos: history of the belief in Christ”, Bousset, 1913/1970), 3. (“Early Christian World vol. 1 & 2”, Gnostic tradition, Academia.edu, 2002), 4. (“Searching for the

Original Bible", Price"), 5. ("Canonical and Uncanonical Gospel's, Barnes, Cambridge U., 1897, pg. 16), 6. ("Gnostic Religion", Jonas, 1963), see "Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot", pg. 65

About five years ago doing research on this book in the local Barnes & Noble even I had a 'gnostic moment.' This came to me as I was walking in an aisle and what was different was this thought seemed to have come from literally *outside* my consciousness! It was loud and not my thought:

**"I am a Mother..."**

'Wah, was that *God*?' I recall thinking. 'What does that mean?? God is a *mother*? God's supposed to be a father!'

Afterwards I let it slide. But now the incident might have some meaning in light of gnostic Christianity. But this is what 2<sup>nd</sup> c. gnosticism was about--freedom to think. Distortion and exaggeration are good, not bad. Reality is bad as it constricts one's mind. Just like the old 1960's Hippy creed--"Far out man!"

To the earliest Christian's post-Temple this "lower god" Yaweh, the ugly deformed child of Sophia, called Yaldabaoth/"fool"/"blind god", was in league with the Devil. They acknowledged this mythology among themselves and even capitulated as this Pauline scripture attests:  
see, "Sethian Gnosticism & Christian Tradition", pg. 73+

"If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe [devils] why do you live as if you still belonged to the world?" Colossians 2 (2<sup>nd</sup> c.)

"Gnosticism would be a cosmic struggle between matched forces of both good and evil."  
("History of Christianity: first 3K")

This is why many scholars believe that early Christianity did *not* come from the OT since their theologies don't match up. So gnosticism might be the "Lucy"-- the missing link--which the 4th c. Church later tossed as too weird and esoteric for their new masses. For example, notice the Platonic overtones:

"I entered into the midst of their prison which is the prison of the body."  
Apocryphon of John

"Gnostics reasoned that creation wasn't a happy one. That there is something wrong with the world; there is too much evil, pain and death, so there must be something wrong

with creation... Humans are imprisoned, asleep, fallen, ignorant... There are 2 Gods: a transcendent deity surrounded by all wisdom, angels and light and the [OT lower] creator Yahweh who is at best incompetent and at worst malevolent. But through the mean-spirited actions of the demiurge, the creator of the world, they have been confined within this world.”

("Gnostic Bible: Gnostic texts of mystical wisdom")

In the 50's/60's this was also Paul's plea—get ready for this savior figure to selfishly deliver their house “church's” out of the world:

“We groan inwardly as we await the adoption as sons!” Paul

(Romans 8)

Continuing:

“The role of the gnostic savior or revealer is to awaken people who are under the spell of the demiurge.”

("Gnostic Bible: Gnostic texts of mystical wisdom", Barnstone/Meyer, ed., pg. 2+), see also "Radical Judaism", "Original Bible", "A People's History of the World", "Bad Religion", any book by Pagels or Ehrman, “The Cathars”, [Costen](#)

As mentioned, Gnostic's were heavily influenced by Plato who said that salvation lied in turning away from the physical world and going both inward *and* upward! ‘Stare at the stars’ in other words. This is where we get the idiotic “not of this world” stickers on new cars today:

"Gnosticism was patterned after Plato's *Timeus* with the 'passions of the flesh'. Both the body and earth are hostile to God. Humans are afflicted with illusion; while 'enlightenment' is their salvation... Also there is a magical intervention in baptism.”

(Encyclopedia of Catholicism/ gnostics)

"That matter was evil was a common Gnostic/Neo-Platonist position... Plato's dualistic, sacral speech was inherited by Gnosticism.”

("History of Hell"), (“Sethian Gnosticism & the Platonic Tradition”, pg. 20)

As mentioned, the NT does have a few gnostic themes mixed in with more traditional fare:

"Paul was a gnostic missionary.”

("Jesus: myth or history?" Robertson, 1946)

## Keys:

- \*Gnostic knowledge was a way of salvation from the outside not inside.
- \*Gnostics rejected the OT or interpreted it allegorically.
- \*Like earlier Platonism, matter (earth) and the body was evil and looked at pessimistically.
- \*Like Zoroastrianism, gnosticism was 'dualistic' with both 'good and bad' gods. The cosmos was *not* created by God but was the work of a lower creator *demiurge* who made the world either against God's will or in ignorance of it.
- \*Humans are divided into 3 levels: those who possess full gnosis are admitted to full salvation; those with just faith attain a certain degree of salvation; while those who have endorsed the material world have no chance of salvation at all. For instance, Paul's letter's included groups of these so called 'lesser' people
- \*Gnosticism was a new religion of revolt, elitist and saw themselves as one out of a 100.
- \*Christ ushers in salvation because he proclaimed the 'good unknown god' who remained a Stranger until that time
- \*Gnostic's admired plays on words, often nonsensical and contradictory within the same sentence.

See Ephesians 1, 1 John 3

The self-problem with the new 'knowledge' groups was they were literally writing out their own mythologies since little of the NT was out yet. So in effect they were torturing themselves to see the heavens--exactly what Paul did.

A Jewish view of early Christianity and its dualism:

"[To Gnostics] the Biblical God Yahweh *is* not the true God but a malevolent, demonic creator of a corrupted world. 2. The lower world [earth] is now an evil prison, ruled by maligned and ignorant gods... 3. The demiurge is ignorant, tragic, megalomaniacal. In the *Secret Book of John* he is depicted as the ugly child of Sofia, snake-like in appearance... 4. This is Jewish gnosticism."

("Peter, Paul and Mary Magdelene" Ehrman 2. ("Book of Genesis", pg. 102), 3. ("Gnostic Bible: gnostic texts of mystical wisdom", pg. 4+), 4. ("Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition", Scholem), also compare Romans 4-8

Another bizarre take from the renown philosopher Bertrand Russell:

"Gnostics held that the sensible world was created by an inferior deity named *Ialdorbaoth* the rebellious son of Sophia [wisdom]. Jesus was sent to liberate man from the false teachings of Moses. Those who held this view combined it with Plato's philosophy."

("History of Western Philosophy") see also, "Book of Genesis: a bio", pg. 101

The "religious humanist" rabbi Green:

"Christians bowed to the myth of the incomplete conquest of chaos that underlies Creation [Platonism]. Opposing forces weren't destroyed--only set aside. Christians struggled mightily with these dualistic images."

("Radical Judaism", chap. 2, Green)

Over the centuries, the Post-Temple semi-Christians would be in competition with the orthodox for recruits:

"The gnostic Christians rejected Luke's theory. Some gnostics called the literal view of resurrection the 'faith of fools.' The resurrection, they insisted, was not a unique event in the past: instead, it symbolized how Christ's presence could be experienced in the present. What mattered was not literal seeing, but spiritual vision."

("Gnostic Gospel's", pg. 11)

## 140AD

"Marcion, like Paul, saw the Creator God [demiurge] of the Jews as a God of judgment and that Christ had died to satisfy the sadistic Creator God. Salvation comes by believing in Jesus' death/resurrection."

("Christianity: the 1st 3K") see any book by Ehrman or Pagels, Marcion, *Antithesis*, see essay, "Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations", 'Anti-Judaism in Marcion and his opponents', Tyson, Volume 1 (2005-2006) pp. 196-208

From a gnostic point of view the dualism continues:

"If the God of the Jews who created the material world said he was the true and only

God, he was a fool or a liar! Beyond *Him* must be a First Cause... Those capable of receiving this harmony are predestined. It is these people--the gnostics--that Jesus has come to save... The mortal flesh must be mortified because it is despicable.”  
(“Christianity: the 1st 3K”, Alternative identities)

As mentioned in the section on Acts, the post-Temple 2<sup>nd</sup> c. gnostics hated the *Septuagint* and its 613 strict laws. They wanted another religion and this would be a good time since there were no foundations as yet:

"Various Gnostic sects laid waste of the OT through skillful exegesis. The Genesis cosmology along with the Parables illustrated the Gnostic myth.”

(“Bible in Greek Christian Antiquity”, the Bible in the teaching of early Christian communities, Blowers, ed),

“According to the Gospel of Judas... it is the Gnostics who understand Jesus’ revelation; Judas and people like him are the ones who have it right... As leaders of these churches, the ‘priests’ are ‘ministers of error.’”  
(“Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot”, pg. 92)

## 180 AD

As mentioned, these doctrines splintered the more Orthodox and turned early Christianity into ‘Christianities’ --where conservative early church bishops like Irenaeus would rant at the heavens:

see “Drudgery Divine; comparison of early Christianities & religions of late antiquity”, Jonathan z. Smith

“The Gnostic conception of YHWH as an ignorant and evil deity is nothing less than blasphemy. This opinion is not Christian, but anti-Christian. The Gnostics drag people to an abyss of madness with their violation of the truth. At all costs, they must be stopped.”

(Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* (ed. Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, *Irénée de Lyon: Contre les hérésies*, Livre I, pgs. 18– 21) see, “Adam, Eve & the Serpent”, pg. 61+ for more of Irenaeus

As mentioned, St. Paul had early Gnostic leanings which he wrote about in his 6 Letters from Hell, later heavily edited and condensed. Like the gnostics, Paul was just another paranoid guy who imagined himself a victim caught in a cross-fire of two very different Gods or gods. Similar to the Essenes in outlook, this was an internal struggle between "light" vs. "dark":



“The dualism of the flesh/spirit was derived from a pervasive Platonism in Paul's culture. People were born from an inferior deity [Yahweh] so that the 'fall' of humans into the lower world was seen as a problem from one needed to be 'saved' from.”

(“Birth of Christianity”, prologue, Crossan), see, Rom. 7/8, “Paul & Jesus” Tabor

In their Letter's the early nutso apocalyptic Galilean/Nazarene groups like Paul's were after the higher "true" God of Israel. That the 'friendly Jesus' might appease the Hebrew “God of wrath...who *intercedes* for us”: Romans 1 & 8, see “Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot”, pg. 57+

"Gnosticism [early Christianity] was a religion of salvation from the demonic powers. Like Paul, they both claimed to have the Spirit. This was a problem both in and out of the early church: '*man must be saved from the powers of the OT demiurge the one who created the world*'. But not all men are to 'be saved' as the ones who follow the flesh are lost; while the spiritual ones; those who follow the soul are saved. The early Christian's struggled mightily with this dualistic image.”

("Paul & Jesus: How the Apostle Transformed Christianity", Tabor), see also, "Radical Judaism", Interpreters, "Letters of Paul", Gnostic Bible intro, any book by Pagels, “Decline/Fall of the Roman Empire”, chap. 15

But by the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. the early church would have little use for the gnostics and were written out of their will. But not completely-- since the Gospel of John is heavily gnostic:

“These forgotten Christians were persecuted out of existence by the Literalist Roman church.”

(“Jesus Mysteries”, ‘Gnostic's’)

“Gnosticism and Montanism had a marked effect on the church causing it to shut the doors on all sorts of possibilities for new Christian identities.”

(“History of Christianity: 1<sup>st</sup> 3K”, Alternative Identities)

Finally, gnosticism was known in the 1700's:  
see, "History of Christianity: first 3K"/gnosticism

"If this view of NT origins and development is true it would radically change our understanding of the content and meaning of Christianity itself. It would mean that no one could really know what Jesus said or did and the Bible could not be authoritative.”  
("Reason for God: belief in an age of skepticism", pg. 101)

see, "Christian Mystics" Ursula King, "Mere Christianity", CS Lewis, radio broadcasts 1940's, Interpreter's, "Letter of Paul to the Colossians", Furnish, Interpreter's, "Early History of the Church", Norwood, Interpreter's, "Unity between the Testaments", Filson, "Interpreting Christian History: challenge of the churches past", Cameron,, "Intro to the NT" Brown, "People's History of the World", 1st Peter 5, , "Birth of Christianity: what happened after Jesus' death", Crossan, 1999, "Historical Jesus", Interpreter's "Non-canonical Early Christian Writings", Mowry", 1st John 2,

## **Was Jesus a Gnostic?**

And Jesus said to Nicodemus, "You must be born from above." Many of his disciples, when they heard it said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" (Jn. 6)

"No one knows the Son except the Father and no one knows the Father except the Son."  
Mt. 11

"The Gospel of John used concepts which occur in Gnostic literature and that the Gospel was popular among Gnostics... John's gospel was used extensively by Gnostics."

("A Separate God: Christian Origins of Gnosticism", Petrement, (Fr.) '90), (Interpreter's guide, "Letters of Paul", Gilmour, 1971), see also "Pre-Christian Gnosticism", "Three Faces of Monotheism", Frankl, or any book by Pagels, Gnostic Bible intro

As noted, Jewish mysticism was very popular in the Hellenist Greek world. They believed through their scriptures that only God alone granted salvation and there was nothing mankind could do alone. And except for Zoroastrianism *all* ancient religions (including Islam) believed that mankind was separated from God but that their religion helped 'bridged the gap':

"The sentiment of alienation is strong in the Christian Gnostics: 'Love not the world nor the things that are in the world [Platonism]. They were the *alien elect* in their radical dualist explanation of human life as caused by a Fall."  
("Pagan & Christian Anxiety", Edited by Smith/Lounilos)

The 2<sup>nd</sup> c. gnostics played on opposite words-- which at the time may have been considered profound but today has lost its meaning:

"He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it...  
Many that are first will be last." Mt. 10, Mt. 19

In a very interesting book by an acquaintance Wahler dove-tails the similarities between St. John (edited 4<sup>th</sup> c.) and 2<sup>nd</sup> c. gnostic text (not edited). It should be obvious who took what from whom:

"I am he who was within me." (1<sup>st</sup> Apocalypse of James) "I am he." Jn. 13

"A multitude will arm themselves against you." (1<sup>st</sup> Apocalypse of James) "...a band of soldiers with weapons." Jn. 18

C.S. Lewis was an interesting English book author who wrote "Chronicles of Narnia" and others which were fantasies like the later Tolken "Lord of the Rings" series. He also taught literature at both Oxford and Cambridge. In the 1930's, he became a Christian, startling everybody. His later books on Christianity were more philosophical than theological, so we find that even professor's with PhD's are still at a loss explaining this 1st/ 2nd c. gnostic rational:

"Why is God landing in this enemy-occupied world in *disguise*?? A sort of 'secret society' to undermine the devil? Why is He not landing in force *invading* it?" ("Mere Christianity", CS Lewis, 1950's)

Finally, a 20<sup>th</sup> c. gnostic:

"If man didn't sin then he is not lost. And if he isn't lost then he doesn't need a savior. Thus Christ's salvation 'mission' was based on a misunderstanding of Genesis. In fact, the entire NT is based on a misinterpretation of the OT [Garden/Adam/Eve]." ("Deceptions and Myths of the Bible", Graham)

## **Was Jesus an angel?**

"And Jesus took with him 3 disciples up to the mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light." (Mt. 17)

"'This is my Son...' that Jesus is the One promised from the book of Enoch." ("Secret History of the World", gods who loved women)

As an illustration, when I was a kid one of my all time favorite Marvel comic books was the "Silver Surfer". I remember being blown away by its Greek-like imagination (compliments of Stan Lee!) and this Surfer was about a cosmic being who surfed the

galaxies looking for planets for his god-like master "Galactus" to devour. This Surfer guy was his Herald but who sympathized and protected planet Earth from his Master's destruction.

I must have read each book 20 times wearing out its pages. The point of this? Like the Surfer, I believe that Jesus was the Lord's Herald, sent to earth. Maybe not a true God but an elected herald since he didn't start a new religion himself. A possibility?

Aslan:

"The gospel's are about an Eternal being sitting at the right hand of God."  
("Zealot", who do you say I **am?**)

The early Jesus /Nazarene's sects called him 'the great angel' most likely after hearing about his transfiguration--one of my favorite NT stories! And if I were an ancient and I saw that happen I would think 'hey, that's definitely from Outer space!' and that's how the Jesus story was written out:

"Jesus has come to liberate a small elect and lead them out of bondage to a higher realm...The redeemer myth is undoubtedly Gnostic."  
("Bad Religion"), ("Christian Mystics")

But to our disadvantage, the later NT writers didn't personally know Jesus and wrote who they *thought* was him generations later, which later caused considerable havoc for the Early Church. For example in the 5<sup>th</sup> c. there were even violent *civil wars* where 100's would be killed between various new believers over Jesus' Divinity! All this over a book!:

see, "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire"

"The Bible is *anything but clear* on the relationship between Christ's human and divine natures."

("Jesus Wars: how 4 Patriarchs, 3 Queens and 2 Emperors decided what Christians would believe for the next 1500 years", Jenkins)

After the 1st c., the followers knew Jesus wasn't the Jews promised messiah as he died decades before and didn't lead the Jews out of bondage from Rome. But he might have risen from the dead so he was supernatural! Or maybe Jesus was an 'angel in disguise' as there are multiple accounts of this in the OT. But if Jesus was just in spirit (later Docetism) and an angel was up there on the Cross that meant there wasn't any sacrifice or "redemption". So Christian's for thousands of years were left trying to piece together a puzzle without an overall picture--which corroborates my intro that the NT can honestly confuse readers more than illuminate...

See, "Zealot", am I not an apostle?, "Who Wrote the NT", "Angels: a history"

## **New Testament Apocalyptic**

"The Son of man will send his angels and they will gather out all causes of sin and all evildoers and throw them in the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun." Mt. 13

"In our culture, divine judgment is one of Christianity's most offensive doctrines."  
(“Reason for God”, Church responsibility)

In its time, most of the NT was optimistically written out as with the idea of both God and Jesus returning back in unison together at any *moment!* And as mentioned, to early writers like Paul, Jesus was probably more an angel but on the side of the “wrathful” OT Yahweh. (Rom. 1)

So like the Jews and their relatively new scriptures (compiled 1st c. Jerusalem) early Christians wrote what they believed was going to happen, what they hoped would happen but never did. Unfortunately this can place much NT literature into the realm of mythology:

"Christianity is profoundly oriented toward a future, heavenly end. The final condition (*eschaton*) of creation that Jesus proclaimed and enacted as the kingdom of God."  
(“Vocation of Anglican Theology”, Eschatology, Christopher Beeley)

As usual, Ehrman's early books always nail it down pat:

"Christianity started out as an apocalyptic movement after the death of Jesus... What brought out Gospel apocalyptic verses [Mt. 23, 24] were the 4 major Jewish revolts against Rome- 4 BC, 66-74, 115-11 and 132-135... Christianity is the child of the apocalyptic.”

(“Did Jesus Exist?”), (“Excavating Jesus”), (“Theology of the OT”, Brueggmann, pg. 693)

Well at least we can give them credit for at least thinking and not watching TV all night like 100 million brain-dead American's:

"The Apocalypse [Revelation] is Jewish poetry.”  
(“Caesar and Christ”, Apostles), see also, “Book of Revelation” Pagels

Earlier I mentioned that the Platonism in Greek culture inferred that 'suffering was

good for people' and made them more 'spiritual'. Possibly so! Well the NT writers grabbed this line of thinking but placed the *Devil* as the one responsible for suffering since blaming Yaweh might lead to getting stuck down dead!

Here's an example of dualism but now in Christian apocalyptic view:

"In the apocalyptic view, God for mysterious reasons had *ceded control* of this world over to demonic forces that are opposed to him. That's why the people of God experience pain and misery. A later utopian kingdom would commence."

("Did Jesus Exist"), See, book of Romans, "Mere Christianity", pg. 33

"The 'Good News' wasn't about the 'good news' of Christianity—which to the pagan world and the Jews at the time was nothing but bad news and more competition--but the word for Christ's expected return."

("Christianity: the first 3000 years", MacCullah)

Coincidentally walking outside a local courthouse recently I spoke to a man and a woman sitting at a Jehovah's Witness booth with a sign reading "Why is there Suffering?" So I mentioned my background and wanted a pic of their sign but was refused when I told them their Devil is basically mythology. The lady didn't like that part and told me to "take a picture somewhere else":

see, "When Bad Things Happen to Good People", Dr. Schuller

"The Christian view of the apocalyptic is similar to the Persian Zoroaster's Day of Judgment in which the forces of light confront those of darkness and the dead arise to be judged... Apocalyptic writers made heavy use of symbol and fantasy... Apocalyptic books [Mt., John, Revelation] weren't written as puzzles for the curious or to afford glimpse of history far in the future. Rather they were written in times of crises and that God's people should stand firm."

("World of Myth"), ("Interpreter's, "The Apocalyptic Literature", Enslin)

As touched on, the initial Gospel Mark was probably written in Syria or Alexandria, Egypt during times of chaos, violence and war with Rome who the more radical Jews (Zealots) felt were trespassers on "God's Land". This developed a schism among other Jews regarding the pagan Roman army who were slighted as the "sons of darkness" (not demons):

"Since Christianity was an apocalyptic religion the other part rested on death/salvation through a resurrection. Thus the negative/positive side of the Hereafter was viewed with considerable interest."

("History of Hell")

Another confusing and misinterpreted book in the NT is Revelation (120?) which is another allegory about God's new "soldiers", Rome or even Paul's later followers who were been labeled Jewish heretics by Peter's followers. Its style is also Zoroasterian:

"The characteristic feature of Revelation is the free use of symbols and fantastic imagery. Grotesquely malformed beasts or people represent Israel and leaders. What he *wishes to express* he reports as having 'seen'."

(Interpreter's "Apocalyptic Literature"), see also "Excavating Jesus", "Short History of the Jews"

"The Book of Revelation didn't correspond to facts...The OT apocalyptic tradition would later produce fits in Christianity..."

("Unauthorized Version", pg. 350), ("The Faith", The 3rd race)

## **Was Jesus an Essene?**

### **200 BC-70AD**

"Let the dead [Pharisees, Sadducees] bury their dead." Lk. 9, Mt. 8

"[Through apocalyptic belief] cults sprang up all over Galilee/Judea with their belief that the 'kingdom of God' was at hand. The Essenes were dedicated to preparing that way."

("And Man Created God")

"The Essenes were authors and the real founders of Christianity."

("Diegesis, being a discovery of early Christianity", Taylor, 1834)

Mentioned earlier, and due to its constant arguing back and forth within the NT, early Christianity can seem close to a political movement which started with the offshoot Essene's.

The idea that Jesus was with this extremist group started in the mid-1800's with Renan's *Vie de Jesus*, Schure' ("The Great Initiate") and Moore ("The Brook Kerith"). The root name Essene means 'healers'-- meaning they thought they could heal supernaturally. Coincidentally, Paul also believed he could heal the sick by "laying on of hands"-- proving he was either influenced by the Essenes or was one himself:

("Dead Sea Scrolls Deception", Essenes)

"Unless one is born of water [baptismal] and the Spirit [God] one cannot enter the kingdom of God. John 3

Essene's were into baptizing for a symbolic new life but which horrified the Pharisees, Sadducees and the Scribes (lawyers):

"Jesus was an Essene... Jesus used the rite of baptism by water, a custom practiced by the Essenes."

("Jesus: Explosive Story", Jesus & the Essenes/ Mithras and the solar lords, McCannon)

"The phraseology, symbolism and conceptual imagery between Essene literature and the gospel of John are very close, though there are many resemblances between them and nearly all NT writers... Essenes placed themselves at the very *center* of the battle between good/evil."

Dr. William Albright, director for the school of Oriental Research Jerusalem.  
(Archeology of Palestine, #249), ("Origin of Satan")

A Gospel view of this apocalyptic Essene cult:

"And they took offense at him. But Jesus said, 'An [Essene] prophet is not without honor except in his own country!'" Mt. 13

The Essene sect didn't believe in either the Temple or the sacrifices of Moses:

"Destroy this Temple and in 3 days I will raise it up." John 2

As suggested, most of the Gospels roots are Essene based so by piecing together the Dead Sea Scrolls historians have found this sect basically lunatics; say as compared to the Romans. The 2nd c. Jewish Masada people of mass-suicide fame were an Essene sect.

So by the things Jesus said he was probably raised, trained or influenced by this desert sect. But whether he said those things, or the later gospel writers, will never be known:

"Jesus was a member of the Essene's."  
("Jewish Way to Life", Barack, 1975)

"The Essenes had three main rituals: baptism, communion, and Sun-gazing. The sun was one of their most sacred symbols. They called themselves 'Sons of Light.'"  
("Whatever happened to the DSS?" Larson, Journal of Historical Review, vol. 3 #2)

"The Essene founder was the Teacher of Justice [historically unknown] who scholars say has amazing likeness to our Lord. Christianity can be said to depend on it which it has



borrowed much in its portrayal of Christ. It is easy to see that the originality of Christianity is jeopardized by such a position and which also recalls the old [PhD] thesis by Renan that Christianity is but a derivative of Essenism.”

("Habaakkuk Scroll and a Controversy", Moriarty, S.J., Weston College)

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.”

Matt. 10

Back in the day, both the Pharisee's/Sadducees outlawed these new "prophets" and their prophecies. In other words, these two sects would be the *real* hero's in the fictionalized Gospels. Their reasons were:

- \*Essene's didn't believe in the Temple with the sacrifices, thus leaving out the Sadducees role.

- \*Essene's were puritanical. Couldn't look at a woman or even talk to one in public.

- \*Essene prophecies never came true.

In 1st c. Judea, the Essenes had enemies on all sides: not because they were correct but because they were *incorrect!* From this new standpoint Essene writings could open up the NT into a new realm:

“Beware of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” Mt. 16

"Jesus was greatly influenced by Essenes as prophets were banned by Levitical priests.,, ("Jesus: the explosive story"), see also “Caesar and Christ”, Jesus, (Zech. 13)

“John the Baptist was Jesus’ teacher... He was not militaristic and had broken away from the Essene’s.”

(“History of Christianity”, Johnson, Rise/Rescue of the Jesus Sect)

The world's most accomplished historian:

"Jews of all sects opposed him *except* the Essenes... Jesus words appear to draw heavily on mystical or 'Essene' thought.”

("Caesar & Christ", Jesus, pg. 568), ("Dead Sea Scrolls Deception", Essenes)

If you like cover-ups in true history read the Bible:

“Christianity as ‘progressive revelation’ turns out to be a hoax. The Essenes and Zealots

were never mentioned [in the gospel's] because they *were* the Christians, or their close associates.”

(article, “Dead Sea Scroll's & the Essene's”, Margulies, Biblical Polemics magazine, Israel, Issue 48, April 1992)

In her books, Pagels believes that the Essenes were also Mark's followers since they used images of a 'cosmic war to divide the universe':

"The Essenes were very much against the other mainstream Jewish groups such as the Pharisees. Jesus was also opposed to the Pharisees and the other groups whom he saw as people responsible to corrupt the Temple [sacrifices], religious ethics and the laws.”

("Was Jesus Raised and Trained as a Nazarene Essene?", [www.technoheart.com](http://www.technoheart.com))

A conservative Christian author:

"We are certain that John the Baptist was an Essene monk. John was recruiting for the apocalyptic movement and was Jesus' teacher.”

("History of Christianity", rise/rescue of the Jesus sect), see also, Josephus acct. of the Qumran manual of discipline, *Antiquities*

An early Roman historian:

'Essenes influenced both John the Baptist and Jesus.' Philo

("Philo, "On the Contemplative Life", 25), see, Josephus Jewish War II:8, Josephus *Antiquities*, 13:11, sourced from "Revelations", Pagels, also see Mt. 23

While Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz calls early Christianity a mix of:

"Essenism with foreign elements [Egyptian/Iranian].”

(sourced from "Jesus: the explosive story")

Earlier I mentioned that the Gospel writers left out this sect as not to draw attention to them negatively. Yet in the gospels Jesus offhandedly admits he was from this Essene sect. This should be telling:

"Who is my mother and who are my brothers?" And stretching out his hand towards

his [Essene] followers said, "Here are my mother and my brothers!" Mt. 12

Continuing:

"If the world hates you [my followers] it hated me first [as an Essene]! John 15

"Go to the lost sheep [Pharisees/Sadducees] of the house of Israel..." (Mt. 10)

Of course the devoutly religious Pharisees never would have hated God in a million years as accused by Jesus:

"An [Essene] prophet is not honored in his own city..." (Lk. 4)

In Judea, the only sect that baptized were the Essene's. That left other Jewish sects aghast as this was a ritual used by idol worshipers and condemned in the OT:

"Unless one is born of water [baptism] and the Spirit one cannot enter the kingdom of God... Many Christian rituals derive from Essene teaching." (Jn. 3)  
("Jesus: explosive story")

"Baptism was a central rite in the mysteries...going back to Osiris."  
("Jesus Mysteries", 'baptism')

Tabor and others feels that "Apocalypse" Apostle Paul was influenced by Essene dualism:

"Paul believed in an 'upper' and 'lower' Yahweh which was called the 'messenger Yahweh' and was common of Judaism in that time."  
("Great Angel: study of Israel's 2<sup>nd</sup> God", Baker), see "Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinical Reports about Christianity & Gnosticism", Segal, "Tabor's **book**"

Finally, in his very interesting book Aslan felt that the Jesus of true history was a Zealot. Yet Jesus wasn't politically minded and may have been more of a pacifist who didn't want to overthrow Rome like the Zealots. While other scholars believe that Zealots were Essenes as well. Confused?? If one reads the contradictory NT you should be:

"Essene writings throw light of John the Baptist, Jesus and the early Christians. No student can ignore these people and do his duty as an interpreter of the NT... Christianity was Essenism that somehow survived..."

("Historical Study of the Bible", Interpreter's), ("Life of Jesus", Renan, 1860)

## **Sacrifice/Crucifixion**

"Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it."

("Caesar and Christ", Apostles, Durant)

"Early followers of Jesus took the Crucifixion and martyrdom from the mythic Greek concept of a 'noble death'". ("Who Wrote the NT")

Historians say the act of crucifixion began in Persia around 400 BC and this act was usually done by conquering armies. Although a much easier way to kill someone would be by a plunge of a sword or spear, crucifixion was more of a 'show 'n tell' statement saying, 'this is what we'll do to you if you don't surrender':

"Crucifixion was a widespread and common form of execution. Its purpose was as a deterrent... the criminal was always left hanging long after he died. It was Roman punishment for the 'lowest of the low.'"

("Zealot", pg. 154+), See also, Celcus who commented on crucifixion.

In Moses Law, maybe 300 years before Jesus, the Canaanite's were told by their Babylonian priests how to purge the evil and the guilty. For instance, murderers, hookers, homo's, social rebels and even over-eaters would be cruelly stoned to death to purge evil from which would later become Israel. (Deut. 19, 21)

But in Jesus' case it would be the opposite: supposedly the sacrifice would purge the innocent Lamb from the unholy world and all new believers would be automatically saved in the eminent apocalypse! Of course, salvation wouldn't be for everybody--one would have to believe first:

"The Cross is actually God's contempt for humanity."

("Evolution of God", pg. 180-249)

To the uninitiated, the crucifixion, burial and rising of Jesus does have some parallel's to other myth's like Osiris and Mithra, and undoubtedly many authors have used this same theme for their own books. Worse for us today is there is no way of telling what would be in M, M, L, or John's vision at the time. So possibly there's another angle...

## **Passion as Greek Tragedy?**

Going back even further, Greek playwrights wrote tragedies or plays based on a tragic plot line. For centuries, these were immensely popular in theater and the later Romans too! Even Philo of Alexandria watching the tragedy of *Euripides* noted the 'enthusiasm of the audience'

See, Encyclopedia Britannica "Philo"

At the tragic plays center would be the Hero, main character or protagonist. But this character had a weakness or an arrogance which brought a catastrophe. The 'fate of the gods' would take over and the Hero would usually be poisoned or killed. The End! This process became known as the 'noble death'.

see, "Greek Myths", Westerfields

So like in our Gospel stories, Jesus would be a Hero but who would later become victim. The tiny Garden of Gethsemane was the final stage where the "evil Pharisee's" condemned an innocent man and sent him to the gallows. Thus the dramatic Pagan quotes like, "My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Psalms, Mt. 27), which I'm sure in drama would have caused gasps from this hypothetical audience! Maybe that's what the Gospel stories were intending:

"The scene does have an unmistakable air of theater to it."  
("Zealot", pg. 148)

So to scholars and the Gospel writers writing backwards in time has obviously caused suspicion-- yet without the Passion story I'm sure Christianity wouldn't have gotten off the ground:

A former Catholic nun:

"[From a modern point of view] we cannot be certain *why* Jesus was crucified... The Gospel Passion is unlikely. Roman's usually executed murderous rebels... The scene is absolutely nonsensical."

("The Bible", Armstrong), ("Jerusalem: a bio", pg. 110), ("Zealot", pg. 149)

"Are the Gospel accounts of the arrest, trial and execution of Jesus true to history? Many scholars today say no."  
("Concise History of the Catholic Church", pg. 14)

Some don't believe Jesus could have been crucified under Jewish laws anyway. This would mean Jesus was crucified by the Roman's instead.

see, "Zealot", pg. 157

A legalistic Jewish view:

"No one can be put to death except for idolatry, immorality and bloodshed."

*Sanhedrin* 358

"The *Sanhedrin* was the equivalent of the U.S. Supreme Court and had 71 members (no tie votes). There were Lesser Sanhedrin. In criminal cases, the leader would appoint a judge to probe the defendant's guilt or innocence. The examining judges then reported the results. It would take 37 or more judges to convict in a capital case."

("Jewish Literacy", 2nd Commonwealth)

"There is no passage in Scripture where it's written that the 'Son of man' will go the way of suffering and death... There is scant historical information about the death of Jesus."

("Interpreters Commentary, "Gospel According to Matthew", Kee), ("From Jesus to Christianity", White), see, "Zealot", pg. 177

Ehrman:

"Roman crucifixion was punishment for slaves, servants, peasants and bandits--not itinerant preachers... And why would the crowd demand crucifixion during the [Jewish] Passover which was a joyous and festive occasion? What has Jesus done against them? What were the pagans seeing that they found criminal?... The storytellers were apt to add details to stories that were vague."

("Excavating Jesus") ("How Jesus Became God", Ehrman, pg. 155)

I feel in another sense the historical Jesus might have been killed as a political Zealot:

"To be sure, Jesus was crucified as a suspected political subversive; not as a messianic pretender... The teachings and the stories about him contain nothing that could be used as a cause for being crucified by anyone."

("Who Wrote the NT?", Jesus Seminar)

"Mathew blames the Pharisees and priests with killing Jesus even though it is historically unlikely. These tensions say more of Mathews experience during the later 1st revolt [70 AD] than the true days of Jesus."

("From Jesus to Christianity")

While to Jews today, the Passion story *never* happened. And why they have no use for

Christians no matter what they say to them and what scriptures they bring up to justify their stance:

"The incompatibility of Jesus being both the sacrifice, along with his Father and the Temple itself is clear."

("Surpassing Wonder", pg. 242)

According to the OT, Jesus' crucifixion marked him as accursed from God anyway:

"If a man has committed a sin worthy of death, and he is put to death, you shall hang him on a tree. Anyone hung on a tree [crucified] is under God's curse."

(Deut. 21)

This was not a lynching either as 100's turned out to watch this bad example! And as Roman custom, crucified victims were left unburied and tossed on the ground to decay. So to the superstitious Jew the shame of non-burial was equally feared. Also was no way a family could retrieve the body as in the Gospel story:

see, "Crucifixion in the Ancient World and Folly of the Message of the Cross", Hengel, 1977, Ger., "Discovering God", rebirth of monotheism, "A Convenient Hatred: history of anti-Semitism", Goldstein, "Zealot", no king but Caesar, Josephus, "War of the Jews" (Book 2.9.2)

Ehrman:

"Jesus' family didn't have the means of burying anyone in Jerusalem; they weren't even from Jerusalem!"

("How Jesus Became God: exaltation of a Jewish preacher from Galilee", Ehrman)

These storytellers were unaware that they were creating something lasting 1000's of years; going way past harmless mythology:

see "Revolutionary Bio:", Crossan)

"A generation after Jesus died *all* traces of revolutionary quotes were removed from his life. The Romans had to be absolved of any responsibility. It was the *Jews* who killed the messiah. A message of absurdity... A serious objection raised against the Christ story is that it seems so fundamentally pagan. Although a sacrifice may have seemed plausible to early pagans, the story rings quite false now."

("Zealot", pg150+), ("Triumph of Christianity"pg. 30)

Finally, an old German philosopher:

"There was only one Christian and he died on the cross..." F. Nietzsche  
("Will to Power", pg. 39, 1890's)

## **Christian Sin**

Sin-- (Hebrew, *chashak*)--as withholding light, a curse [from the devil], darkness.

"Being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him... For by one man's disobedience shall many be made righteous." Romans 5

A popular church mantra today: "How can I get right with God?"

I would say that most Christians know little about their history of sin and its origins yet their own salvation hinges on this term. Why is that so? Because without sin what would be the point in Jesus dying on the Cross? Jesus supposedly 'died for the sins of the world'. (Jn. 3:16,17) This is the Christian view:

"The most sinister spin-off from the Garden of Eden story is the strange doctrine of original sin. This is centered on the puzzling assertion that all humans are riddled with sin and guilt." ("Christian **Mystics**")

When I was schooled in church what was odd to me was that pastor's imagined sin to be real, preached sermon's on it yet couldn't define the term outside of Adam and Eve which everybody knew to be not real! So there their sermon sat like a black hole never going anywhere and never defined as people sat there in dumb silence. Very sad and humiliating for them--considering their pastors knew so little about the history of the term itself.

## **50's-200AD**

"Repent of your sins and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away." Act 3

"If it wasn't for the Jewish law I would not have known sin." Paul  
(Romans 7)

"For millennia, Jews and Christians have attempted to explain the mystery of human suffering as moral judgment — the price of Adam and Eve's sin."



("Adam, Eve & the Serpent", pg. 112, pdf)

"Paul's new religion *wasn't* based on Christ's teachings but more of the OT Major Prophet's of Isaiah and Jeremiah with their fierce judgment of backsliding Israel [sin]. Only now Paul turns his guns on non-religious pagan new believers."

("Christian Ethics", [Wogaman](#))

As we know the Christians began their story of sin from the Garden but by the turn of the century completely divorced themselves from Moses Laws *except* the story in the Garden! How weird and how hypocritical! Yet it was Paul's idea to bring together disparate ideas of both Adam and Jesus and connect them into a salvation theory:

"What Adam's supernatural power once effected, Paul declares, only Christ's supernatural power can undo: 'For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.'" (I Corinthians 15:21-22)

("Adam, Eve & the Serpent", pg. 112, pdf)

### **Gnostic view of Sin**

This is where the idea of sin gets weirder, since gnostics didn't believe in its hold over people (later Christian's should have listened to them). Instead, they believed in a rather silly 'bait and switch' scenario where the Jews lower evil god, the demiurge was spiritually defeated by Jesus' on the cross. The concept of sin vanished after that! This is one reason why they picked up Paul's letter's:

"In Romans 8 Paul celebrates the pneumatic redemption. To those who are 'in Christ Jesus' he proclaims 'there is no condemnation' to *fear from the demiurge*."

("Gnostic Paul: Gnostic Exegesis of the Pauline Letters", Pagels, pg. 33)

### **200-325AD**

If one read the earlier section on Mithra another problem for the early Christians was how do you convince the Greek/Roman culture polytheist's of sin when the term wasn't in their vocabulary and seldom had been before except as an abstraction?:

"Neo-Platonists believed that the earth and their bodies were false... The dualism [or split] of flesh/spirit was derived from the pervasive Platonism in Paul's culture."

("Mysteries of the Middle Ages"), ("Birth of Christianity"), see "A World lit only by Fire"

### **381 AD**

“In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins.” Nicene Creed (381)

Although at this time the Gospels and the Pauline Letter’s were around the earlier version of the Nicene Creed (325) for the remission of sins wasn’t. This must have been confusing to both early Christians and Pagans since Jesus’ version of sin was Jewish and Paul’s was the Mysteries. How could these two be reconciled? To the early Church that would be easy—just draw up new contract on based on belief:

“The atonement for sin came in the 4<sup>th</sup> c.”.  
(“History of God”, pg. 87)

“Why did Catholic Christianity adopt Augustine's paradoxical — some would say preposterous — views? Some historians suggest that such beliefs validate the church's authority, for if the human condition is a disease, Catholic Christianity, acting as the Good Physician, offers the spiritual medication and the discipline that alone can cure it.”  
(“Adam, Eve & the Serpent”, pg. 126 pdf)

After this date, the Catholic Church would decide what was a sin and what was not regardless of what the Bible said up to the Reformation with Martin Luther:

“Is the Catholic who confesses his sins to a priest any better off than the non-Catholic who confesses directly to God? Yes.”  
(“Forgiveness of Sins”, Catholic Answers)

More on the Catholics later...

## **Baptism**

“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” Mt. 10

“John the Baptizer appeared in the wilderness [Dead Sea] preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” Mark 1

One of my very first childhood memories, maybe eight years old (we moved around a

lot) was standing by the altar dressed up with other kids who were about to get baptized at our suited-up and lilly-white church. Us kids looked at each other uncertain at this new situation as the congregation stared. I was nervous as hell and I remember thinking, 'What are they putting water on us for?? This is stupid!'

But to my eyeing parents, in order to be a Christian one must be baptized. Yet I didn't want any part of this nonsense...



But 2000 years ago to certain sects of the Jews and Pagans baptism meant a lot more than sprinkling H2O on a kids head and getting him wet. And in the prior section on Essene's you may have noticed they were the only sect from the three who baptized--since the Pharisees and Sadducees got their initiation by birth right. Paul's cult also baptized, which prompted many scholars to believe that his 'desert experience' was really east by the Dead Sea along with other more radical Jews:

#### 40-60's

"I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius." Paul  
(1 Corinthians 1)

"The fundamental doctrinal tenets of Christianity including the spiritual union with Christ through baptism, traces back to Paul."

("Paul & Jesus", pg. 20, pdf)

"What the disciples were preaching was a form of Jewish revivalism. It had strong apocalyptic overtones. But what was the message? In all essentials it was: repent [don't follow Temple authority] and get baptized... During the 60's the Jerusalem church lost its Christian significance as it became identified with the growing revolt against Rome. Zealot's roamed the country and religious terrorism increased in the towns. Law and order broke down. The final revolt and its [Roman] oppression lasted four years."

("History of Christianity", Rise/Rescue of the Jesus Sect) see, "Zealot" [pg.](#)

## 70-130 AD

None of the gospel's were written before the 70's so in 1<sup>st</sup> c. Palestine, baptism's symbolism was *more* radical than the Essene's. Their baptism had politics in mind that catered to over-throw like the Zealot's wanted, and who hung out at fort Masada in the desert (see map). For decades around Palestine this baptism was a silent call to militant action and even death. This is the milieu that Jesus the 'peaceful militant' lived in which was not written anywhere in the hidden and superficial Gospel stories:

'Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved [in the apocalypse] but whoever does not believe will be condemned [in the apocalypse]. – Mark 16

"The pattern is familiar: the word is preached, hearers become believers, they 'repent' and are baptized. Making disciples leads to baptizing them... All this is done with *urgency for they live at the edge of time* and are prepared to enter a new age."  
("Christian Worship", Becoming Christian, pdf, White)

"Some of these sects were Zealot's, prepared to rise with violence when the scriptures seemed to command it."

("History of Christianity", Rise/Rescue of the Jesus Sect)

Aslan:

"John's immense popularity among the masses [groups] was to offer a new source of salvation, one that had nothing to do with the [2<sup>nd</sup>] Temple and the detestable priesthood—baptism. To be sure, baptisms and water rituals were fairly common. Bands of 'baptizing groups' roamed Syria and Palestine... Essene's practiced baptism

welcoming new recruits.

John saw themselves and their followers as the true tribe of Israel. The Essene's eagerly awaited an *apocalyptic war* when the 'sons of Light' would battle the 'sons of Darkness' (Temple priests)."

("Zealot", pg. 83+)

This historical fiction was all played out in the Gospel's but mixed in and edited:

"Galilee was an area of mixed cults where Judaism was active with aggressive preaching. In Jerusalem it was associated with violence and militancy, so to describe Jesus as a 'Nazarene' or 'the Galilean' [inc. disciples] as his critics said, was to mark him as a trouble-maker. Pilate did not like trouble-makers, particularly Jewish one. He may have thought Jesus was a Zealot."

("History of Christianity", Rise/Rescue of the Jesus Sect, pdf)

"The authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls were Zealots and believed in the God-ordained destiny of the people of Israel. The Essenes [Zealots] believed that their community was the true and righteous Israel and did *not* recognize neutrality...The Qumran community's ritual of washing in a ritual bath for the washing away of sins became the Christian baptism.

[To observers] Christianity is now being seen as a kind of religio-cultural mutation over the first 100 years of the Christian Era... They [Essene's] called themselves the Keepers of the Covenant, *ha-Brit* (the community of the Nazarenes). Jesus was referred to as Jesus the Nazarene; in other words, there are now reasons to believe that Jesus was simply an observant Essene Jew."

(essay "Astrology in the Dead Sea Scrolls", Snow, from "Book Your Church Doesn't Want You to Read", pg. 64+)

### **130-200 AD**

In her book, Gnostic scholar Elaine Pagels writes about how sin came over the early church and how baptism would change that:

"Baptized Christians, Justin and Irenaeus agree, have recovered from the damage inflicted by sin. Baptism transforms converts from their former state as 'children of necessity and ignorance... to become children of choice and knowledge.'"

("Adam, Eve & the Serpent", pg. 104, pdf)

## 400 AD

While Augustine's later view of sin and baptism would become a vicious circle. An unrepentant man or pagan could not be fit for office since he his whole life is upside-down. They must be baptized into the Church in order to function:

“Augustine denied that human beings possess any capacity whatever for free will... If Christians cannot even be trusted to govern themselves, how are they to approach church government? Later in his life Augustine came to endorse, for the church as well as the state, the whole arsenal of secular government that Chrysostom had repudiated — commands, threats, coercion, penalties, and even physical force.:

(“Adam, Eve & the Serpent”, pg. 107, 104 pdf)

## Kingdom of God & kingdom of heaven

"The kingdom of God is within you." Lk. 17

“To Jesus, the sensible world is an illusion, the eternal world is real.”

("History of Western Philosophy")

The Gospels speak about four (4) kingdoms; but as usual are vague what they actually mean:

- (1) the kingdom on earth as Judaism itself.
- (2) A kingdom in the Next life.
- (3) Jerusalem herself.
- (4) The End of the Roman Empire in Palestine.

Some say Jesus spoke more about the “kingdom of God” on earth as another parable since most other Jewish sects knew or cared little about an Afterlife. But the term could also mean that 'we are our own saviors' and have no need for another since that kingdom is already here:

see, "History of the Jews", Graetz

"Jesus provided no specifics about the kingdom of God. That kingdom isn't a celestial kingdom existing on a cosmic plane... That kingdom never arrived.”

("Zealot", pgs. 126, 135, 144)

Since the Gospels are mainly apocalyptic literature they inferred that the messiah

would return to Jerusalem and save their land from the heathens roaming around.  
see, "Promises of the Land", Weinfield, pg. 221

Dr. Ehrman:

“The kingdom meant a Jewish political realm not heaven. Jesus' disciples were sent into villages and towns to rally support of this idea.”  
("Jesus before the Gospels", Ehrman,, pg. 54)

A sociologist--

"Jesus was remembered as a teacher who challenged people to think of themselves as 'citizens of the kingdom of God'. But that kingdom was vague rather than clear and unambiguous.”  
("Discovering God"), see also, "Who Wrote the NT"

Tabor:

"To the Jews the 'kingdom of heaven' was their *religion*--not another place they would go to when they die. That reign of God was here already.”  
("Paul & Jesus: how the disciple transformed Christianity", [Tabor](#))

Aslan:

"If anyone wishes to follow me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (Mark 8) This isn't a statement of self-denial [Platonism] as often interpreted. The cross is punishment for *sedition*... The kingdom of God is going to replace Caesar as ruler of the land... *It is a call to revolution, plain and simple!* The common depiction of Jesus as a peacemaker who 'loved his enemies' and "turned the other cheek" are complete fabrications....[The historical] Jesus was *not* a Christian. Israel was all that mattered... He assumed God would do that for him... Later asked by the Roman governor before being sent off to the cross for treason to Rome: "Are you king of the Jews? [a Zealot]?"

("Zealot"pgs. 120-6) see also, "The kingdom of God in the NT", Interpreters Commentary, Lampe

## **Jewish sect infighting 6-100AD**

"What brought out NT apocalyptic verses were the four major Jewish revolts.”  
("Excavating Jesus", [Crossan/Reed](#))

“Christianity was the by-product of the destruction of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Temple.”

("Surpassing Wonder", pg. 213)

A modern Jewish voice:

"All four Gospel's reflect the terror and anxiety of this traumatic period."

("The Other Talmud: unlocking the secrets of the Talmud of Israel for Judaism Today", Judith Z. Abrams PhD) see also, "The Bible", "Judaism: development & life", "Pagans & Christians", Fox

Unseen to the casual reader today the Post-Temple writers of the Gospels would for be battling other Jewish sects with an anti-Pharisee/anti-Moses Law agenda that wanted a political change:

"The writers problem:[M,M,L,J] how to have Temple religion without a Temple"  
("Surpassing Wonder", pg. 241)

"Where are You, God?" was a question deeply felt within the soul of the Jewish movement."

("God Who Hates Lies: confronting and rethinking Jewish tradition", Hartman)

As noted, the Sadducees ruled the Temple with its Mosaic Laws, Pharisees were the lower level administrators and the Zealots wanted political power over the Roman army. While other groups like the radical Nazarene sects (Paul's) refused to fight, broke with their fellow Jews and proclaimed that they were the "new Israel":

("Adam, Eve & the Serpent", **Pagels**) see, "Who Wrote the NT", gospels of Jesus the Christ

"The Gospel account of Jew hatred is incorrect as all were Jews but sectarian conflict and hatred among them."

(Interpreter's Guide,"Historical Study of the Bible", White)

Although not a Jewish sect, the Samaritans were from Galilee area and with a good probability wrote the fictionalized gospel stories out:

"Long before the Roman invasion the term 'Galilean' had become synonymous with 'rebel'. Josephus speaks of the people of Galilee as 'inured to war from their infancy.' The Galilean Jews would not submit to foreign rule."

("Zealot", pg. 91)

Starting about 6AD the Zealots ("sons of light") were the first ones to cave in this somewhat peaceful religion when the Roman army ("sons of darkness") returned with General Titus in 67 AD:



see, "Adam, Eve and the Serpent", [Pagels](#), '88, "Zealot", "Constantine's Sword" destroy this temple, "War of the Jews", "Life in Year One", "Excavating Jesus", "Invention of the Land of Israel", pg. 101

"The Roman army wasn't around for 4 years; 'surely the Romans would prefer to come to terms?' the Jews thought. 'Surely they would be forced to grant Judea her independence?'"

("Ancient Rome: Rise/Fall of an Empire", Baker)

But for years the Jews had their own hidden 'hitmen' called *sicarii*, who would stab Roman soldiers and their sympathizers in crowds as they walked by. Not cool:

"Roman taxes on Jews took a toll and when the army stole 1000 lbs. of silver from the Temple that stirred up nationalists and radicals who organized rebellion. [Later] to combat them, General Vespasian and Titus decided on a war of terror--to show no mercy and kill every Jew old enough to fight and enslave the rest.

At Gamala [and all across Judea] the Roman's repaid Jewish resistance by putting 1000's to the sword while crucifying 1000's more... Hundred's committed suicide by jumping off cliffs rather than die or be enslaved by Rome."

("Ancient Rome: rise/fall of an Empire"), ("Jewish Literacy", Pontius Pilate), see also "Birth of Classical Europe", "Illustrated History of Western Philosophy", "Age of Faith", Talmud

A Roman eyewitness:

"Jerusalem went from bad to worse as mob violence [Zealots] disrupted the city."

Josephus

("Jewish War", sourced from "From Jesus to Christianity")

To the Romans, the Jews were an intolerant and dogmatic people. Today, most still are:

"What puzzled Rome about the Jews was their unfathomable sense of superiority. How dare they consider their god to be the sole god in the universe? How dare they keep themselves separate from all other nations [tribes]. Who do these backward and superstitious tribesmen think they are??... The Roman's always *resented* that the Jews dismissed their gods as illusions and their pagan temples as blasphemous... Rome saw the uprising as a Jewish problem-- not a Judean problem. Religious assimilation was *impossible* for the Jewish people."

("Zealot", pg. 15), ("Triumph of Christianity"), ("Birth of Classical Europe: Troy to Augustine", Roman Empire, Price/Thonemann) see, Josephus *Wars of the Jews* 4:

## Jerusalem 70AD:

General Titus to rebels after they were defeated: "First we [army] gave you the land to occupy; then we upheld the laws of your fathers and allowed you complete control of your internal and external affairs; above all we allowed you to raise taxes for God--so you could prepare at our expense to make war on us! You bit the hand that fed you! You took generosity for weakness! After your defeat do you now invite me to a conference, you disgusting people?"

(Josephus, "Jewish War", bk. 9-11), see also, "Caesar & Christ", Rome and Judea

"The Jewish historian Josephus sided with the Romans and blamed a handful of rebel-bandits [Zealots] for the Temple's fall."

("And Man Created God"), see "The Bible" Armstrong, "Story of Civilization: Caesar & Christ: pg. 543

About this time the Nazarene anti-Jewish sects like Mark's accused the Pharisee's and Sadducees of villainous acts. Some believed that the destruction of Jerusalem was 'God's judgment on the Jews for killing their own Messiah' and wrote out their own reasons for it in the Gospels and elsewhere:

"Christianity was the by-product of the destruction of the 2nd Temple."

("Surpassing Wonder", pg. 213)

Karen Armstrong:

"The apocalypse of the ruined Temple seemed so compelling to the Galileans that they felt inspired to proclaim the messiah-ship of Jesus. Afterward they made a concerted effort to become the *authentic* Jewish Voice to the anger and dismay of the Jews... The Gospel account of Jew hatred is incorrect as all were Jews but sectarian conflict and hatred *among them*."

("The Bible: a bio"), (Interpreter's "Historical Study of the Bible"), see also, "Constantine's Sword", "From Jesus to Christianity"

Licking their wounds, the rabbi's wrote prayers for these new Christians out to degrade their religion:

"For the Apostates let there be no hope; and may the arrogant kingdom be swiftly

uprooted, in our days.

May the Nazarenes and the heretics perish quickly; may they be erased from the Book of Life; and not be inscribed with the righteous. Blessed are you, O Lord, who humble the arrogant." *berikot 28b*

Today this would be little different than the Sunni/Shiite schisms in the Middle East:

"Had the Roman army not been around warring with the Jews and destroying their 2nd Temple, the warlike and hostile Gospels, and thus the rest of the NT, or even Christianity itself, may *not* have been written at all."  
("Who Wrote the NT") **Mack**

Later on after another small Jewish revolt by Zealots in 107 AD--and once again crushed by Roman armies--Jerusalem itself sat vacant for the next 250 years. A cursed land despised by God...  
see, "Christianity: 1st 3K", "Jewish Literacy", "Middle East: brief history", pg. 31

## **The Father?**

"In Platonic philosophy it is the Second God that creates the world. The relationship between the First and Second Gods is not clear."  
("Proto-Trinity: pg. 47)

Most of what historians know about "the Father" comes not from Judaism or Christianity but rather the earlier Pagan religions. In the OT, there was one god/God named "*El*", or Yahweh, the Lord or the great "I am". While in later Christian literature references to "Father" depended on what Gospel you read.

For instance in Mark, Jesus told his small audience, "Have faith in God", meaning another God not himself. While after the crucifixion, a Roman soldier remarked, "truly this man was the son of God!" Meaning, someone who was part of God:

"Middle Platonism was extremely influential in the development of Christian doctrine, particularly the threefold conception of God... Christian writers continued to use Plato's *Letters* to demonstrate that there must be three principles."  
("Proto-Trinity", **pg. 55**,

In Mathew, there is gnostic language ambiguity with the Father where Jesus tells the crowds, "All things have been delivered to me by the Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son." (Mt. 11) Meaning, 'God

is unknowable and don't even bother trying to get to the bottom of that statement!

So what things did the Father deliver to Jesus? The Heavens? The stars? The earth? Gravity? Animals? People in general? Of this, there would be no answer...

Elsewhere in Mathew and Luke 9 during the Transfiguration several disciples are on top of a mountain when a cloud overshadows them and God out of the cloud tells them, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am pleased!" OK, but who is this God supposed of Israel and is that all He has to say?

Elsewhere in Mt., Jesus tells a group, "don't call anyone your father [meaning teacher or rabbi] for you have one Father who is in heaven... For you have one master, the Christ." (Mt. 23)

That statement is closer to a singular 'God in heaven' but Jesus also references himself as "the Christ" --yet did none of the promises the Christ was supposedly to do! WTF? So where does that leave the Father?

In Luke, Jesus tells his disciples "I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom." which they will, "judge the 12 Tribes of Israel" meaning all Jews. (Lk. 22). So in heaven, Jesus will stand guard judging while the Father watches, arms crossed and stone-faced.

Elsewhere in John, Jesus is the Greek Logos who was with God "in the beginning". Later Jesus reinforces that statement saying, "For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life..." Meaning that God and Jesus would be on equal terms technically-speaking.

Yet when later *pressed* on this matter by the Pharisees Jesus *sidesteps* the question altogether saying, "no one has seen the Father except the Son." 'OK, tell us about the Father then Jesus!' "Uhhh..." (Jn. 6)

This is another gnostic merry-go-round where an important question is deliberately given no answer. As said, the NT is more a book of questions than answers...

## **Parables**

"God inspired the Bible for our understanding!"

("Can we understand the Bible?", Melick)

Or Crossan's Post-Modern view:

"I call his parables mega-parables--so they may *not* understand."

("Power of Parable: how fiction by Jesus became fiction about Jesus", Crossan)

In sermons the Parables are the most often brought up. The simple reason for this is they are easily translated into Western tastes where preachers can espouse a theory into a 30 minute sermon:

"Jesus' parables are shown to be the traditional method of presentation by rabbis of the time..."

("Three Faces of Monotheism"), see also "Concise Hist. of the Catholic Church", Church triumphs over paganism), Gnostic Gospel, "early wisdom gospels"

Whoever put the Gospel's together didn't know their left hand from the right:

"He sets up impossible standards-- then forgives the worst of people."  
("Bad Religion", Douthat)

A rabbi:

"Jesus didn't make up the 'good Samaritan.' That came from rabbi Hillel 10AD...  
The self-contradictory image of the blind guide was commonplace in the ancient world".  
("Ethics of the Fathers", Hillel), ("Formation of Q", Kloppenborg)

"There is nothing hidden that will not be revealed." "Those who find life are few." "He who does what is true comes to the light." "He who drinks of the water I give him will never thirst." These are not logical and some are Gnostic in origin; meaning that they were invented only to be meditative and not to be taken literally:

'Hating one's family' is from Gospel of Thomas."  
("Birth of Christianity")

While Jesus as a Jew wouldn't have said that since in Moses law "haters of parents" were stoned to death. (Lev. 20)

see, "Essential Judaism: complete guide to beliefs, customs & rituals", Robinson, 2000, Jewish Encyclopedia, "Rise of the West"

And "Easier to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God" was borrowed from Plato. While salt at that time was a known preservative:  
See, Plato's Laws 743

"You [Jews] are the salt of the earth." Mt. 5

The Jews are the preservation of the earth?

While later 2nd c. Rome was not too impressed with Christian examples of true spiritually anyway:

"Had he not taught that selling everything and giving it to the poor thereby becoming a lout and a beggar and a burden on others was the height of Christian perfection?"

Porphyry

("Against the Christians") , (Mt. 19)

"The Christian tradition was not terribly creative. A saying is taken from here, another setting from there and a conclusion added..."

("The Historical Figure of Jesus", contention and opposition in Galilee)

## **Faith & prayer**

"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for. The evidence of things not seen...Without faith it is impossible to please him... he rewards those who seek him."

Hebrews 11

Walk into a Barnes & Noble section on religion and our jaws can drop. In front of us are at least 300 different authors in a myriad of titles. The largest of these are on faith since faith obviously sells.

Everyone has some kind of faith--even atheists! For instance, when we put the keys in the car we have 'faith' that it will start. Hopefully it does! Of course that's a mechanical contraption but the concepts are the same—a future tense situation, even within five seconds, hopefully going our way.

In the NT, the word faith appears about 350+ times and both testaments speak loudly about it. In one gospel example of faith Jesus tells his followers that a pagan Roman soldier "has more faith than all of Israel." (Mt. 8) While in the Letters more bad examples of faith are being preached since they're all expecting Christ to show up any second! see, Romans, Corinthians, Hebrews 2, 1 John 2: , 1 Timothy 2, Ephesians 5, etc. etc

However, from a single writers standpoint the Book of Revelation *might* be a good example of faith since he was aware of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. persecution around Asia Minor under Diocletian. Of course, Christian's then were dead wrong about Roman civil laws-- but this Christian writer felt otherwise!

As mentioned, Christian's of the time were rabble-rousers and didn't want any part of Roman customs or civil society of which was required. So for about a decade under

Diocletian Roman soldiers gleefully tortured them.

But what else could Roman's do since there were no courts or police at that time to change their way of thinking? Romans felt Christianity was just another superstition like Isis, and at that time every man was on their own:

See, Pagan & Christian Rome, Lanciani, Letters of Celsus

"I know your tribulation and your poverty... Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold the Devil [soldiers] is about to throw some of you into prison. Be faithful unto death." Rev. 2

Faith is key in both testaments, but the term can also be about 'opposing Gods' as well. As mentioned, the OT has a monotheistic Yahweh--the 'storm-trooper God' demanding this and that of his subjects, condemning the idol-worshippers; while in the NT we have Jesus the 'meek and mild God' who understands his subjects and who is backed by the "Father" who's off in the distance somewhere. So people must offer a different prayer to each God?? How does that work??

In the NT, faith can also depend on what *scriptures* you're reading. For example, *which* Jesus do they have faith in? The 'Jewish Jesus' who sides with the locals: ("for today salvation has come to this house for he is a son of Abraham"), the anti-Jewish Jesus ("beware of the leaven of the Pharisee's and Sadducees"), the Pauline Jesus ("be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom") or the 'Western Christian Jesus' ("and everyone who asks receives")? So how can we direct our prayers to a 'specific Jesus' who's supposed to listen to everybody? As skeptics realize, the Bible is more a book of religious questions than answers...

Fortunately over time mankind has learned a few things about faith over the last thousand years and knows what to expect and not to expect. For instance, I'm sure very few Christians pray about winning the "Powerball lotto" so they can pay off their new Ford pickup. So we 'down-size' and instead pray for a better job... that our boss will get fired...more \$\$... a new boyfriend... girlfriend, etc. There's also countless Christian books on "praying specific" so when you do get your prayer answered God gets the praise! Fair enough, right? But what if God doesn't answer or the answer isn't the one we're wanting? Then what? Are we a failure or is God failing us?? And as usual, there are few concrete answers in the Bible itself.

In my past experiences with Christianity I've rarely gotten prayers answered anyway. In fact, I don't even ask! God basically gives me what I need and not much else. Instead, the Lord gives me his Thoughts. Maybe a minute or two ahead of mine. And if my thinking is *way* off line then immediately. I'm not arrogant about this fact and only use it

day to day or sometimes not at all. It depends on how busy I am. But when it comes to writing I'm pretty open!

## **Miracles**

"It has always been the prime function of mythology to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit."

("Hero with a 1000 faces", myth/dream, Campbell), see also, "Golden Bough"

In John, Jesus said, "Unless I perform miracles you won't believe" and for a long time those are the reasons I believed! Like millions of Christians I too wanted God to do a 'miracle' in my life! And those were partly my selfish reasons for hanging around the religion so long!

Yet if those miracles were actually performed then all of mankind should have stood back in amazement and awe, never doubting who he said he was--least of all the Jews who were at least were looking for another messiah!

But as we know in the Gospel account that's not what happened. He was "rejected" and crucified. But who in their right mind in the 1st c. would reject a true god? Certainly not the very religious Romans or the Jews. This is the dishonesty in the Gospel stories:

"All of Jesus miracle stories were embellished with the passage of time. All people in the ancient Near East viewed magic and miracle as a standard facet of their world...The raising the dead are OT apocalyptic passages... Jesus did not and could not cure actual diseases."

("Zealot" pg. 104), ("Jesus: a revolutionary bio", Crossan)

see also, "History of the Synoptic Tradition", Bultmann, [Is. 35](#)

As mentioned, Essenes were known locally as healers. The raising of the dead are also in Essene/Qumran writings from the Dead Sea Scrolls which were written about the time of Jesus. For example:

see, "Zealot"

"God or possibly the Messiah will 'make the blind see, raise up the downtrodden. God will heal the sick, resurrect the dead.' 1st c. Dead Sea Scroll

(DSS 4Q521, sourced from, "How Jesus became Christian")

Of course demons were everywhere and a true social menace:



"At that time illness was a divine judgment against the person."

("Zealot", by the finger of God), see, "Creative Mythology: the masks of God", Campbell, 1968

So as an example of healing Jesus casts out the demon. (Mt. 7-12). Now while to us magic is something we watch in a Vegas show, later peasants in Europe tried to manipulate the gods/Gods with magic, potions, hexes, curses, witches, goblins, ghosts and the devil up till the late Middle Ages! Magic was just something everybody believed in.

See, "Age of Faith" 'Reformation', Europe "Middle Ages", "Christian Mystics", "A World Lit only by Fire", "The Barbarous Years: peopling of North America", the American's, Bailyn

## Devil/NT

"Your adversary, the Devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 5, 2<sup>nd</sup> century

"Persia and Syria helped shape the West's concept of the Devil. This demonology had enormous influence on both Hebrew and Christian ideas... There are no demons."

("The Devil: Perceptions of evil from antiquity to primitive Christianity"), ("The Historical Jesus", Crossan)

Most Christian's today firmly believe that the Devil is real: 'All one needs to do is read the front page or listen to the local news, right?' This is a reason why they are Christian's in the first place! For a decade I heard, 'Jesus defeated the Devil on the Cross! While those who are *not* Christian's are still under still the Devil's spell and open to the Devil's whims! I'm for Jesus! Praise God!' And everybody clapped.

The paragraph above is standard church theology. While granted people can do some crazy, twisted and criminal things, the idea of a 'bad angel' causing this type of behavior would be counter-productive to God Himself as supposedly a 'good person.' This is why I earlier spent so much ink on this 'dualism' crap:

"To the Church, demons were those rebellious spirits who had been downgraded from the rank of angels but still permitted to roam earth and torment the bodies and to seduce the minds of men."

("Decline/Fall of the Roman Empire", pg. 198)

While in the OT, the devil is not yet personified, the NT Devil seems to be everywhere. Paul believing the Genesis account mentioned that "the serpent deceived Eve through his cunning" (2nd Cor. 11). In Revelations (90-120AD) the Devil is a bad supernatural angel

from heaven tossed down to earth as a "serpent", "dragon", "Liar and Deceiver" and also as God's Antagonist. And I thought some Hollywood movies were imaginative (although not anymore):

"The Hebrew Bible shows little interest in devils/demons but grows exponentially in early Christian literature into a developed demonology. Pagan gods became his lieutenants."

( "History of Hell", Alice Turner), see also, Catholic Encyclopedia on the Devil

"In that era, demons were held responsible for *every form* of evil afflicting man. Jesus would become the 'demon chaser'."

("Concise History of the Catholic Church", the church triumphs over paganism)

A Jewish view of this dualism:

"In Christian mythology, God and the Devil work together from all eternity; or they are 'brothers' or the God creates the Devil. God has 2 faces--like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

("The Devil: Perceptions of Evil from antiquity to Primitive Christianity", Russell)

In Mark, Jesus mentioned that the devil could take possession of humans and make them mentally ill (Mark 9). While in Matthew the devil would come and 'take away the good seeds planted by the sower':

"In Biblical times demons were downgraded angels that seduced the minds of men... In primitive cultures the departure of the soul is not always voluntary. It may be extracted from the body against its will by ghosts, demons or sorcerers... In primitive cultures the departure of the soul is not always voluntary. It may be extracted from the body against its will by ghosts, demons or sorcerers."

("Decline/Fall of the Roman Empire"), ("Golden Bough", Absence and Recall of the Soul),

Unfortunately this Devil character would haunt Europe for centuries up to the Reformation where the Catholic church stopped being infallible:

**1500**

"Christians were already suffering the unending torments of hell, tortured and terrified by demons... Everyone knew and every child taught--that the air around them was infested with invisible, soulless spirits, most of them evil, dangerous, long-lived and hard to kill. The Church encouraged these superstitions and faith-healers and spread tales of satyrs, cyclops explaining that all were Satan's angels. The Prince of Darkness, it

taught, was as real as the Holy Trinity."

("Reformation: a history", old church, MacCulloch), ("A World lit Only by Fire")

see also, "Luther's House of Learning: German Reformation", Strauss, 1978

"For the vast majority of medieval Europeans, their 'religious' beliefs were a mix of pagan, Christian and superstitious fragments."

("Triumph of Christianity", Stark)

## **Was Jesus in the OT?**

"The profile of the redeemer is shaped throughout the OT. It is found in Jesus in the New."

("Can we understand the Bible?", Melick, from "In Defense of the Bible")

Or?

"Jesus in the OT is hindered by a fragmentary record."

("Concise History of the Catholic Church")

Today scholars are unanimous that the Gospels were pieced together over centuries from bits of theology and oral tradition but many also feel that the 'Jesus in OT prophecy' was used by later Christians as their hopeful messiah.

But as written the NT is at loss whether Jesus was their messiah because in John's Gospel Jesus supposedly wanted nothing to do with being the messiah—but Christian's gave him the mantle *anyway* just to piss of the Jews: (Jn. 6)

"All the OT was searched for correct language regarding Jesus to fulfill his Jewish mission-- whether prophet, priest or king and none were complete."

(Interpreter's "Theological Study of the Bible", Wright), see also "Who Wrote the NT", "Bible in Translation", "The Bible"

"'This is my Son...' that Jesus is the One promised by Book of Enoch."

("Secret History of the World", gods who loved women)

A 5th c. Catholic bishop:

"Many OT prophecies supposedly referring to Jesus alluded only to pre-Christian events." Nestorius

(sourced from "History of the Eastern Roman Empire", Bury, 1912), see also, "Age of Faith", Progress of Christianity

Also, many cynical scholars like Ehrman feel that early Bible writers could easily have inserted trivial OT verses such as 'the 30 shekels of silver', 'This is my Son', 'virgin birth' or the 'suffering servant', etc. to try and prove their case that Jesus was indeed the lost Messiah. But in 20/20 hindsight so far there's been no proof or any new revelation of that theory in 2000 yrs. So Christian's will still keep beating the dead horse and still keep hating the Jews:

"Christians have misinterpreted Isaiah 53 [suffering passages]. In their view, the messiah had to suffer but they're wrong. There he's called "servant of the Lord" not the messiah."

("Did Jesus Exist") , see, the Jewish Book of Enoch

"The 'Messiah' was crucial to [later] Christian writers. Whenever they found '*christos*'-- be it king, prophet or priest they interpreted it a reference to Jesus."

("Bible", Armstrong)

Like we ourselves, early Christian writers grabbed what was around them culturally:

"Throughout ancient religious literature there are many of these 'I am' utterances."

("Gnostic Bible", intro)

A Jewish view of the divinity of Jesus which leans on a more philosophical aspect::

"In the Judaic view, God is not human and a human being cannot be God."

("The Jewish Way to Life", Barack, 1975), see also, "Did Jesus Exist?"

Nowhere in the OT does it say that the messiah would suffer and rise again and there are also no messianic statements in Matthew, Mark, Luke or "Q":

"The messiah wasn't supposed to be killed..."

("Did Jesus Exist", 2 key data)

## **Resurrection**

"The resurrection of Jesus is the starting point of the Christian faith."

("Concise History")

"The influence of faith-based religion without death would be *unthinkable*. Clearly faith

is just a shadow cast by our hope for a better life beyond the grave... Without a belief in resurrection Christianity would collapse.”

(“End of Faith: religion, terror and the future of reason”, Reason in exile, Harris), ("Christian Beginnings")

Several years ago our dear old Mom passed away in a nursing home. Our family loved our Mom dearly as she kept the family together for years not really thinking of herself but rather us kids.

But one day my sister called me at work that fateful day telling me what had happened. The rest of the day I felt surprisingly little and went on. The next day the same. But a month later Mom's passing hit me like a *freight train*! I couldn't stop crying! All day and even the next few days, uncontrollably weeping for our dear 'ole mother! Psychologists call this catharsis by the way. I wished the incident never happened and miss Mom terribly. And years later still do!

Death is hard on everybody and often in death there's a Wake in church somewhere and the gospels are opened. Comparison's are somehow made between Jesus' dying and the deceased. Well outside of a 2000 year old book we really don't know *what* transpires and Christianity as a religion shouldn't feel responsible for people dying. After all, billions of people have died outside the confines of Christianity.

As mentioned, early Zoroastrianism (1000-500BC?) was the first religion to write down a belief in a resurrection for their masses, while Moses also said nothing about a resurrection. But centuries later the Gospels picked this theme up where "the angels of children look upon God". **Where?**

“Without a belief in resurrection Christianity would collapse.”  
("Christian Beginnings")

As we know without a resurrection there is no Christianity. And we've read that the writer's really didn't know which direction to go with their idealized religion other than *away* from Judaism which they didn't like one bit. While decades after Jesus in the '50's, Paul wrote about a vague 'mystery god' who would return any day for the “elect”-- meaning them!

Regardless, if Jesus did die and rose again what's wrong with that? What if he was resurrected just to show life after death and “sacrifice for sin” set aside? The Resurrection has been hope for billions of other religious people not just Christians! And I'm still positive about our poor 'ole Mother!

**Heaven**

"On the mountain Jesus was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as light." Mt. 17

"Christianity conquered Rome by conquering death with its promise of eternal life."  
("Radical Judaism")

I'm sure we all wished the NT would have spoken more about heaven. For example, just this week a huge tragedy for all of America when Kobe Bryant, one of the worlds greatest athletes *all time* mysteriously dies in helicopter crash along with his daughter.

The world was left wondering, 'How can this happen? Couldn't have God prevented this tragedy?' in block letters. 'Kobe had \$200 million in the bank yet dies like a worm! Where's the justice here??' Yet God in His infinite Wisdom offers us no answers about this tragic death and worse no clues! A great man has died, a family has lost a father and bitterness against religion or God can set in. 'Why does God keeping shooting Himself in the foot?' one might ask.

As I've written, nearly all ancients believed felt that their spirit flew off into another realm. And outside of mythology no one has gone to heaven and returned back to planet earth in one piece. Jesus *might* have done that but there's no historical proof the man *existed* --let alone died, went to heaven and came back.

Christianity never invented heaven--it just talked about it more than other religions! Jesus told his audience he came down from heaven yet surprisingly spoke little about the place. Now if I had just stepped down from heaven that would be *all* I would talk about!! That would be *real* hope--instead of arguing with the Pharisee's:

"To Jesus the sensible world is an illusion [Platonism]. The eternal world is real."  
("History of Western Philosophy")

"When they rise from the dead they are like angels in heaven." Mk. 12, Lk. 20

Oddly, the NT still falls woefully flat in describing heaven in any naturalistic way. For instance, in Luke the gnostic-influenced 'secret knowledge of the kingdom' was given to the disciples--which they later never speak of! (Lk. 7) When Lazarus was raised from the dead after four days later he speaks nothing of heaven and is just unbound and let go! Likewise the 12 yr. old girl:

"The image of paradise is rare in the NT... Truth is not religion's ultimate agenda--security is."  
("Zealot"), ("Eternal Life: beyond religion, theism, heaven and hell", Spong)

Coincidentally, 600 years later the Koran also speaks very vaguely about heaven. While the Zoroastrian-tinged book of Revelation does a great job of 'describing the indescribable' and it's not a gnostic text by any means. But some NT scholars think Revelation is more a metaphor about ancient Rome post-70 AD with the Temple's destruction and not about heaven at all:

"I saw one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe; and his hair were white as wool; his eyes were like a flame of fire; in his right hand he held 7 stars and his face was like the sun." Rev. 1

Elsewhere heaven has been called "paradise" (Lk. 23) or the "Father's house" (Jn. 14) while in John 5 some are "judged" while others are not. But Christianity isn't alone in talking about heaven as the *Avesta* (1000 BC?) mentions "Judgment and life everlasting" ...

see, "The Zoroastrians", Boyce

But what's still assuring is Heaven is spoken as life--"from death to life" (Jn. 5). Meaning people might have another and better life after they die and there "all spirits live to him". (Lk. 20) Meaning that people are powerless after they die and are basically at God's mercy who controls both the outside universe. And it's sure consoling to see that kids are considered great--and who doesn't love smiling kids? (Mt. 18)

### **Didache ('Didak') 50-70AD**

"Many of the sayings attributed to Jesus have been literally taken over from the Didache; others were Pharisaic teachings well known in the rabbinical schools."

Jewish Encyclopedia  
("Gospel's", 1906 ed.)

"The contradictory image of the 'blind leading the blind' was commonplace in the ancient world."

("Formation of 'Q'", Kloppenborg)

The *Didache* ("teachings") was used in the early Jewish/Christian community and preceded the written Gospels by up to 60 years. Also both Pre-Post Temple Christians combined the *Didache* with the Jewish *Tanak* (OT) for their scripture reading. These Jewish 'Common Sayings' were also found in the 2nd c. Gospel of Thomas:

“The ‘sayings’ attributed to Jesus may be divided, according to form and contents, into (1) Ethical Teachings, (2) Parables, (3) Apocalyptic (Messianic) Utterances, (4) Essene Polemics.” Jewish Encyclopedia (Gospel's, 1906 ed.)

So the common idea today of early Christians walking around with a complete Bible in their hands and referencing Jesus and Paul's Letter is a complete myth. In fact, the NT's canon wasn't completed until 367 AD:

see, “Birth of Christianity”, boundaries defined, "Paul & Jesus"

"'Love your neighbor' actually meant to try and love a fellow Hebrew."  
("Zealot", [may your kingdom come](#))

The 'Common Sayings Cluster' ('golden rule', 'love your enemies', 'give without returning', 'prodigal son', etc.) were not sayings by Jesus but were compiled by earlier rabbinic writing by rabbi Hillel (20 BC). Later on the Church Fathers, looking to broaden their religion, inserted them as if Jesus had spoken them:

“Don't pray like the hypocrites' was directed to *other* Jewish community members bad-mouthing each other.”  
("Birth of Christianity", controlling the itinerants)

I've always maintained that the Jews never liked dumb people. Thus their reproving of ones neighbor was a requirement. Maybe that's why so many now are doctors, lawyers, financiers and higher ups since they can take criticism and move on up:  
(Lev. 19)

“An ignoramus cannot be a saintly person.” Rabbi Hillel  
("Sayings of Our Fathers" from *Mishna*)

Other examples of *didache* verses attributed to Jesus are:

"Where 10 people assemble for worship the *Shechinah* (God) abides among them."  
*Sanhedrin* 39 or Mt. 18

Doing the Father's will:

"Be light as an eagle to do the will of your Father Who is in heaven." *Aboth*, Rabbi Natham (Mt. 5)



"Hate no man but correct some. Shun evil of every kind and everything resembling it"

*Didache* 1-3

("Birth of Christianity", Interpreting the commands)

"Don't judge your fellow [Jew] until you are in his place" or the 'imitation of God' principle from the *Mishna*.

While other famous quotes attributed to Jesus were actually from Plato, 400BC:

"It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven..." and "turn the other cheek".

(sourced from, "Ethics of the Fathers" Blackman), (sourced from, "Hillel: if not now, when?", Rabbi Telushkin), see also "Birth of Christianity", "Concise History of the Catholic Church"

## **Hell-NT**

"...he shall say unto them, Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Mt. 25

"Morality is the sum of the prejudices of the community..."

("Orpheus: a history of religions", Reinach, 1930, sourced from, "Our Oriental Heritage")

In the NT there are two terms for hell (*gehenna*, Gr.). One was local slang meaning a 'a garbage dump in Jerusalem' while the other was "outer darkness" where people were "cast into hell":

(Lk. 12). (Mt. 24)

"The Hebrew world had little sense of an afterlife but early Christianity drew heavily on hellish visions which pervaded the worldview of Jesus and the early church."

("Constantine's Sword", Laying down the Sword, Carroll)

But when I was in church, 'hell' wasn't a popular subject and neither was the topic of divine judgment. I was always surprised that it wasn't but of course I never believed the myth that "unbelievers" would be tossed into hell either.

But look at the people who *should* be there! My point being millions and millions of

Americans are simply bad people and could care less about others and their feelings. And just because they haven't overtly broken laws (or haven't gotten caught yet) that God shouldn't or wouldn't judge them for their crimes against common decency and humanity in general. It still makes me mad:

"Paul presented a Christian life as a struggle against the Devil and against dark spiritual forces."

("Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism"), see "Angels: a history", Ephesians 6 (not written by the original Paul)

Unfortunately most Christians today don't realize that 1st-4th c. writers were more out to *frighten* pagans into believing their new gospel than trying to make sense of it! And many Christians today still believe this horror movie scenario anyway. For instance, at a college recently I found a Christian tract emblazoned with, "The Burning Hell: 1000's of degrees hot and not a drop of water" and scribbled all over with Bible verses-eternal destiny for those billions and billions of non-Christians in the unbelieving world. OMFG...

see, "Age of Faith", Decline of the West, "Christianity: 1st 3K", Worldwide faith

### **Book of Revelation (90-290?)**

"The Book of Revelation cannot be adequately understood *except* against the historical background that occasioned its writing... Revelation had its origin in a time of crisis but it still remains valid and meaningful for Christians of all time." New American Bible see "(Interpreter's Guide", Historical Study of the Bible)

"Persian Zoroastrianism provided the elements--angels, millions of demons, the Prince of Darkness, hell, the Last Judgment and resurrection--which in turn later passed on into Christianity."

(Interpreters, "Greco-Roman Background of the NT", Stanley), see also "Our Oriental Heritage", Persia, "Fields of Blood" Armstrong

The most over-rated book in the Bible? Hands down the Book of Revelation! For 1700 years this book has brought head-scratching from nearly all its readers but only since the Victorian Era have we been told to read scriptures literally--causing us 1000 more problems than originality intended! For example:

"For us to ignore the book of Revelation is only at our own peril."

("History of the End of the World", How the Most Controversial Book in the Bible Changed the Course of Western Civilization, Kirsch, liner)

Or?

“The book of Revelation didn't correspond to facts.”  
 (“Unauthorized Version”, pg. 350)

### **Short history**

“Apocalypse means to reveal. One theme is the present evil age will give way to an age when God will reign over an earthly kingdom.”  
 (“From Jesus to Christianity”, White)

“The Book of Daniel...was the primary inspiration for much of the Book of Revelation, Apocalypse of John in the Christian NT.”

(“Origins of Jewish Apocalyptic Literature: Prophecy, Babylon & 1 Enoch”,  
 Sarah Robinson, MA Thesis)

As we know an anonymous early Christian named John wrote Revelation between the 1st and late 3rd c. around Ephesus, now in Turkey. And earlier I mentioned that the style of writing would be similar to the *Avesta* which was written around 600 BC.

For example, in Zoroastrian faith fire was a central symbol. They believed that fire represented 'God's light and wisdom':

“To you, O Fire, son of Ahura Mazda. With propitiation, for worship, adoration, propitiation, and praise.” *Yasna* intro, verse 2

But Revelation is really more about symbolism than actual events. For instance, the dragon, the Devil, would be God's mortal enemy, “Babylon” represented the hated Roman Empire, while the “false prophet” was presumably Diocletian who wanted Christians to offer sacrifices to their state gods!

To historians, this might explain why early Christians were called “atheists” by the Romans as they refused the local pagan temples and who also didn't go for Roman multiple deities either:

This might sound trivial but my own personal reasons for Revelation's late date would be the text itself:

1. There was no systematic persecution of Christians' until 280 AD with Roman Emperor Diocletian.

2. John's visions of a 'personal Jesus' would also have to be very late since there were very few Christians around even in the 2nd century. The author also claimed that Jesus is the “Beginning and the End” who was speaking to him regarding “back-sliden church's.” Well if there were few church's around what could be back-slidden?

The later Catholic (“Universal”) church also had problems with its text but was finally inserted into its canon with a vote in the late 4th c. So we might conclude that Revelation could be *semi-historical--i* since John wrote about events that did take place but still grossly exaggerated and cartoonish:

“The book of Revelation is often attested to as being the most dramatic book in the New Testament canon, and scholars have begun exploring the possibilities of interpreting Revelation from such a perspective. This thesis argues that viewing Revelation through the lens of Greco-Roman dramatic performance contextualise's the violent and lurid imagery of the text as *highly-stylised performance art* that heavily references contemporary Greco-Roman performance imagery... The over-the-top nature of imagery in Revelation mimics and satirizes the excesses of Roman society whilst pointing to Rome’s exploitative power. By reading the text in this way, readers are able to discern its message more clearly.”

(“Revelation as Drama: Reading and Interpreting Revelation through the lens of Greco-Roman Performance”, U-Wen Low, PhD dissertation , University of Divinity 2017)

Like the Gospels and the earlier Book of Daniel, Revelation would be a 'cry of help' among Christians where the good would be rewarded by God while the evil would be put to the flames. Jerusalem, now destroyed, would hopefully become a new 'Christian city' while the “unbelieving Jews” would be run out:

“I saw [wanted to see] the holy city, a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride.” Rev. 21

Oddly, these type of verses still keep Evangelical's awake at night:

“Then Death [physical death] and Hades [Devil] were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the 2nd death--the lake of fire.” Rev. 20

All in all, we can hope that Revelation was written more as a metaphor for the religious persecution circa 280+AD. And while the book today holds little relevance or insight for people in *other* areas in the Middle East, where Arab Christians *are* still being persecuted, blown up and killed by Muslims, the West doesn’t bat an eye! There's

something wrong with that picture...

## **Cult of Apostle Paul**

“Do not be mismatched with unbelievers.” 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6

“The dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.” 1 Thessalonians 4

"Paul rescued 'Christianity' from extinction. ”  
(“History of Christianity”, rise/rescue of the Jesus sect)

The great Apostle Paul as a cult figure? One of the great Cornerstone’s of the Catholic church a seedy character and nutcase? Well, I’m going out on a limb here but in my past experiences with former church's and the amount of time and energy placed into bringing up his Letter’s in Bible studies and sermons I would say yes:

“Critical examination of one’s belief system is the only recipe we know to prevent self-delusion or unthinking cultic fanaticism.”  
(“Jesus: Lord or Legend?”, pg. 11)

One reason Paul is considered faultless and above suspicion is his immense popularity-- he is the Founder of their faith. No Paul, no faith. And like Jesus, Paul is also considered an anti-hero of sorts. A social rebel who dogmatically fought with everyone around him-- yet ultimately made it into the NT canon:

“Paul believed he was living at the end of the age.”  
(“Paul & Jesus”, pg. 368, pdf)

But in hindsight over the past 2000 years I’m afraid nearly everything Paul said is blatant lie. Nothing he said has empirically come true as we know it. Thus his letter's are only letter's from a religious fanatic meant to be read by other religious fanatic's in hopes of becoming more spiritual. And I will show that Paul’s cult society only spiraled down from there.

### **A little history on personality cults**

Today, few doubt that cults, or more technically personality cults, do more harm than

good. For example, in the late 7<sup>th</sup> c. we have Mohammed who as a cult figure “guided” later militant leaders to invade the entire Middle East, North Africa, Spain and Persia. And as we know, Islam is not exactly Israel’s best friend. Later, in the 20<sup>th</sup> c. we had the grand personality cults of Hitler, Mao, Hirohito and Stalin who collectively murdered at least 50 million people. Hitler’s initial grand scheme was against anti-Jewish intellectuals. They were smarter than he was so he had them butchered *en mass*.

By 1947, thru purges, half of Europe and Japan laid in ruins and worse—nothing to show for except death and massive destruction on an industrial scale:

See, the Koran, “Why I am not a Muslim”, Ibn Warraq, “Islam: the cult that became a religion”, Waterbury, “Anti-Judaism: Western Tradition”, ‘thinking about Judaism’, Nirenberg

"All Christian's alive today are the heirs of the Church which Paul created... 2. Jesus was the source of his inspiration but it was St. Paul who founded Christianity as a coherent religion... 3. The Christian faith originates from one man—Saul of Tarsus. Paul is the founder who never used the word 'Christian'. His gospel cannot be called 'Judaism'... 4. Two thousand years later, Paul has utterly buried the Jesus of history."

"History of Christianity: first 3K", 2. (“Europe: a history”, Rome), 3. (“Paul & Jesus”, intro + torah of Christ, Tabor), 4. (“Zealot”, true god, pg. 215) see “Story of the Jews”, Menorah & the cross)

Continuing:

“Paul's letter's are a 1<sup>st</sup> c. social experiment... 2. Paul’s Universalist cult... 3. Jesus was not the church as it was deemed too Jewish. Paul *mythologized* it for pagans...4.. Paul was the true founder and maker of Christianity. The killing of Jews was the new religion’s central teaching... 5. Judaism has rejected virtually every element in Paul's reasoning."

(“Who wrote the NT?”, pg. 76) 2. (“And Man Created God”, O’Grady, pg. 112), 3. (“Diegesis: being a discovery of early Christianity” Taylor, 1829), 4. (“Story of the Jews”: finding the words 1000BC-1492”, ‘Menorah and the Cross’, Schama), 5. (“Jewish Literacy”, ‘Paul’)

So with millions upon millions of ignorant fans throughout history Paul’s letter’s are no different in that he swayed followers to act out anti-social whims for the Catholic church for roughly 16 centuries. The Church didn’t tell them to do it-- but directly and indirectly Paul did thru his anti-social letters from Hell:

“The religion’s that have dominated human history were founded on what *they* felt were undeniable facts.”

(“Preface to Morals”, God in the Modern World, Lippmann, 1929, pg. 21+)

"Apostle Paul does make extraordinary claims and modern scholars have every right to read them with a skeptical eye for propaganda and mythologizing."  
(“Bad Religion”, Douthat )

A few people today know the back-story of Catholic church history and their wicked past (some say present). So to make a long story short their early bishops and priests were Literalist's--they didn't follow *each others* creeds--they followed the Pauline letters and to a lesser extent the Gospels:

"In Paul's theology Jesus had already made them 'sons of God.'"  
("The Bible", Armstrong)

"Paul focused on the anonymous 'Christ figure'—not the prior Jesus of history."  
(“How Jesus became Christian”, Paul the radical)

For example, early on both Paul and Jesus declared believers “free from sin”; so whatever the Church felt like doing to protect *their* scriptures they would do it. The cart was inverted and Mankind would fall first—and in fact did:

“Why did the ancients tell myths of self-deification? As expected, there was an attempt to influence and control behavior.”  
(“Desiring Divinity: Litma, Preface)

"Toxic leaders mislead followers through *deliberate* untruths and misdiagnoses of issues and problems. They teach supporters, sometimes by threats and authoritarianism, to comply rather than question their judgments and actions. These type of leaders treat their own followers well, but persuade them to hate or destroy *others*."  
(“Allure of Toxic Leaders", Lipman-Bluman, ed.)

A former Catholic bishop and a philosopher:

“Paul wasn't even a good biblical scholar. He did not write the Word of God... In Paul embodied the opposite type to the ‘bringer of glad tidings’: he is the genius in hatred... Paul may have considered himself an apostle but it seems few others agreed.”  
(“Why Christianity must change or die”, Spong), (“Anti-Christ”, Nietzsche) , (“Zealot”, pg. 184)

Well since millions of Christian's worldwide still follow this guys doctrines, including the Catholic church, we can assume that over the ages a personality cult has been created:

“Cults are totalist groups (Lifton, 2014) that control their members minds and behavior in ways that seem voluntary... One way is to isolate victims from their past connections.

Another is to *destabilize* their identity and create a new, submissive identity... and immerse them in a *rigidly confining* group. They also demand purity where *guilt and shame are used as control devices*... Cults are characterized by close-mindedness. *They are not interested in a rational cognitive evaluation of the facts*... Anyone who oppresses their beliefs are motivated by a satanic force.”

(Psychology Today, “Is America Governed by a Cult?”, 2020), ( Kingdom of the Cults”, Martin, 1965/97, pg. 36+), see also “Theology of the OT” Brueggmann,, pg. 699+

In his Letters, Paul boasts and brags about "knowing Christ" then writes letters to other house-churches on how they can also know Christ if they're "followers of me, as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11). The problem with these statements is that they were roughly 25 years after Jesus died-- so clearly Paul was bullshitting these church's into following traditions a full generation prior. Still worse for the early church's was the Gospel's wouldn't be written out for another 25 years, so they wouldn't have scripture to read or study. What direction could they go? Paul wasn't writing the Word of God at least at that point:

“Paul presumably reinterpreted the traditions he received...for his viewpoint of Jesus.”

(Journal article, “Paul & the Historical Jesus Quest”, Taylor, Univ. of Pretoria, pg. 121, *Neotestamentica*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 2003)

As mentioned, cult leaders are famous for their paranoia. Everyone is out to get them. Stalin and Hitler are still great examples and any psychiatrist today would call them schizoid personalities and control freaks. They are afraid that people will leave the control of their immediate leadership and that they might be left standing alone without clothes:

“Do all things *without questioning* that you may be innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse [Greek/Roman/Jewish] generation!”  
Philippians 2

“The moral and cultural DNA of the Inquisition can be readily detected in Hitler and Stalin.”  
 (“Grand Inquisition Manual”, pg. 6)

So without further adeiu, lets fly back in time again 1700 years to the 4th c. where the Church fathers named a 1st c. firebrand named Saul--with just *six* (6) Platonic/Zoroastrian/ Essene- influenced Letters floating around the region--to head up



their new Church in memory of Jesus:

### 300AD

“Does not nature itself tell you that for a man to wear long hair is degrading?” Paul (1 Cor. 11)

“An unmarried, puritanical loner... 2. Paul abandoned his Judaism...3. Paul’s letters were fragments from the Christ cult... It was not a worshipping community with an orthodox creed... His letters only arguments for his positions on Jesus. If not for these letters to these congregations we might never have known this cult existed.”

(“Jerusalem: a bio.” pg. 123) ,2.(“Paul & Jesus”, pg. 16) 3. (“Who Wrote the NT?”, intro, fragments from the Christ cult, pg. 76, 105), see 1 Cor. 11

In the 4<sup>th</sup> c. the early Fathers knew Jesus didn’t start up a new religion, so they thought they might try their hand with *two* hierarchies instead of one—the Gospels *along* with Paul's letters of apocalyptic doom. Could Jesus' words along with Paul's theology mesh with their new pagan converts? They honestly didn't know! But thought, 'Hey, why not? Let's give it a shot and see what happens!'

As mentioned earlier in the section on Acts this Christ movement would become a 1<sup>st</sup> c. religious experiment of sorts:  
see, “Who Wrote the NT?”, pg. 76

“The rejection of the world [Platonism] along with the End of the world is the theology found in Paul... 2. For Paul the End of the world was eminent... 3. Paul’s letters to the early church, while accurate historically, frequently contradict what Christ supposedly said... 4. Soon after the first discoveries [Dead Sea Scrolls] *similarities* in Paul and Qumran drew researchers attention.”

1.(“What Paul Meant”, **Wills**) 2.(“Birth of Christianity”, Prolog, Crossan) 3.(“Bible in Translation”, Metzger) 4.(“Overlapping Ages in Qumran Literature”, Dead Sea Scrolls & Pauline Literature, Academia.edu, 2014), see “Peter, Paul & Mary Magdalene”, pg. 122

But in the early centuries (200-300AD) the Church would be suspicious about this “Paul” character also. They knew he was an outsider who had little legal authority in church's, the world didn't End as they knew it, he wasn't a true Apostle like a dubious -at-most Peter, plus he had never known Jesus personally. But on the *plus* side Paul believed in the Genesis concept of sin while endlessly condemning Judaism's take on salvation through its 613 moral laws. Also, his series of denunciations against both Jews and idolaters would become *ground zero* for this new Church. So let's head back further in

time again...

## 55AD

“Historians have often commented on the growth of intolerance in the church after it achieved official status within the empire, how it became ever more hostile toward heretics, pagans, and Jews. But it is especially in the years of the great councils, between 410 and 460, that the level of intolerance rises frighteningly... In the new Christian vision, the rejection of sexuality and material world led God to grant amazing supernatural power to his chosen followers.”

(“Jesus Wars: Four Patriarch’s”, Jenkins, chap. 1)

“The [early] Christian's were convicted not so much as arson as of a hatred of mankind.”  
(“Pagan & Christian Rome”, Chap. 7)

First off I’d like to say that this is not an exegesis on what Paul believed or didn’t believe or what he may or may not have known about Jesus. I don’t care about that as it’s irrelevant, and would only side-track the issue. This is only a historical view of the damage that was caused by Christians who naively believed that Paul was “sent by God”, who formed a personality cult, and who still believe his garbage today as many have told me over the years:

“Paul was quite familiar with the idea of a world Savior.”  
(“Civilization: new history of the Western Empire”, Hellenism, Osborne)

“The mysteries were widely practiced throughout the ancient world.”  
(“Jesus: the Explosive Story”, pg. 26)

In this book there is a reason I haven’t brought up Paul’s letter’s—he was a bullshitter par excellence. I’ve never liked people that lie to my face or are evasive and Paul was both. As some realize, Paul was a mystic but who was also familiar with Judaism. And despite what some other conservative scholars say Paul was not a ‘true Jew’ in any legalistic sense. If he was his brethren would have embraced his mystic and Platonic theology.

In the Letters, there are many references to the mystery rites, and below is Paul’s spin on these mysteries which people believed themselves to be ‘separated from the gods’ as mentioned in the prior sections on Mithra, Greeks and Romans. Supposedly the mysteries to “devout Jews” were of the devil and not to be touched—but not Paul:  
see, Romans 3

"We are now justified by his blood... We have now received our reconciliation." Rom. 5

Or Paul's spin on the Greek Platonism surrounding him. In fact, the later Gospels would be influenced *by* Paul's letters—not the other way around since the Letters preceded them. In effect making most of the NT Pauline in outlook:

"To set the mind on the flesh is death." Rom. 8

"Paul did fall deeply into Greek [pagan] thought and quite possibly was an initiate in the mysteries. It would be difficult other-wise to his constant use of the Mystery language... 2. Precious little in the Pauline letters emerges looking very rabbinic... 3. [In the Letters] Paul shunts God aside and establishes a worship of Jesus--a Jesus as an equivalent of Adonis or Attis or any one of the other dying and rising gods who populated the Middle East... 4. Paul's few and vague references to the historical Jesus has been a subject of discussion for some time. 5. Some scholars claim that Christianity belongs in the same category as the mystery religions, and in fact, is derived to a great extent from them... 6. Paul was a renegade. Had the mainstream development been confined to Jesus' message there would have been *no* Christianity at all."

("Pagan & Christian Creeds", pg. 175), 2. (Robert Price's review of "Drudgery Divine", Institute for Higher Critical Studies, JHC 3/1, Spring, 1996, pgs. 137-145) 3. ("Christianity: the first 3K", boundaries), 4. (Review of "Jesus Mysteries", Dodson, CNN.com, Sept. 21, 2000), 5. ("Concise History of the Catholic Church", pg. 27), 6. ("Dead Sea Scrolls Deception", Acts of the Apostles), see "Hellenistic Mystery Religion", Reitzenstein, 1910, Ger. pg. 26, "Triumph of Christianity", Ehrman, pg.68, "*Paul and His Interpreters*", Schweitzer, "*Paul and Hellenism*", Maccoby

Ok, Paul was a mystic. Big deal. And as mentioned, I was in church for a good ten years but Paul's early church wasn't like that. According to his Letters the sects were hostile, hateful, antisocial and anti-society—thus a poor example. So for a "peaceful" Church to place Paul at the Top of their hierarchy would be like promoting the local pyromaniac to a fire chief. He was that unqualified:

"When Paul died not a *single* Gospel had yet been written."  
("Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism", Spong)

Had he actually met the historical Jesus, Paul probably would have cursed at him like all the others:

"Paul never would have uttered the words Jesus was alleged to have said. He would have *choked* on them."  
("How Jesus became Christian", demonizing Jewish leadership, Wilson, PhD)

Yet Paul's obvious statements of paranoia would turn into the Church's *own* apocalyptic

nightmare for the next 1000 years--and which I'm sure they deeply regretted. Yet they never backtracked their dogma or agenda until they were forced to until the later Protestant Reformation in the 1500's. That should tell you that what the Catholic church's were up to was either morally wrong or just plain stupid-- as their critics have been united in saying the past 300 years. Don't build a church on St. Paul because it's a house of cards:

"We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

2 Corinthians 10:5

"For all [Jews] who rely on works of the law are under a curse..." (Gal. 3:10)

Since there were no gospels in public circulation till around 220 AD, Paul's letters, along with the gnostic apocryphal books, would give instructions about what to believe and how to act in one's daily life:

"Paul *couldn't answer his own metaphors*...2. His dualistic theories are dehumanizing... 3. To Paul, those that disagreed with him should be cursed... 4. Paul had plenty of enemies. Often these were in his own congregations... His ideas were often seen as dangerous."

("Who Wrote the **NT**?"), 2. ("Birth of Christianity", Crossan), 3. ("Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism"), 4. ("Peter, Paul & Mary Magdalene", pgs. 89+)

As an apocalyptic preacher, Paul embraced the Essene sect with its morbid doctrines of judgment, hell and with the world ending hopefully in a Bang. That was their wish:

"God would send a cosmic judge of the earth to destroy his enemies and set up his kingdom. And for Paul, that cosmic judge was Jesus... 2. The Evangelic faith was considered by pagans a Jewish sect not a new belief. Yet the pagans despised them both... 3. Many of Paul's Jewish contemporaries regarded his message as dangerous, false and heretical... 4. Paul wasn't a theologian but an evangelizing *preacher* like a Billy Graham... 5. Paul never quotes a *single teaching* from Jesus. Paul's knowledge of Jesus was only from tradition... The message of Paul, which created Christianity as we know it, wasn't the same as Jesus message. In fact, they were *contradictions* with little in common beyond the name of Jesus itself... 6. Everywhere we turn in the Letters Paul is opposing the views of one group or another... 7. Paul and his small band of followers assumed the world was going to end soon. So there wasn't much point in trying to improve it much... 8. Paul was strange in his inspiration, language and hopes. With him--

*back to his alien world--goes his good news."*

("Triumph of Christianity", Ehrman, pg. 66) 2. ("Pagan & Christian Rome" pg. 311), 3. ("Intro to the Study of Paul", Horrell), 4. ("Intro to the NT", Brown, Chap. 1), 5. ("Paul & Jesus", mystical union), 6. ("Peter, Paul & Mary Magdalene", Ehrman, pg. 164), 7. ("Christianity: first 3K" Boundaries Defined), 8. ("Gospel According to Paul", Griffith-Jones)

As mentioned in the section on Rome, pagans didn't bother to separate believers from unbelievers-- but Paul did. This was also a trap that Mohammed used in the 7<sup>th</sup> c. with great success—if you want to call that a success:

"To the corrupt and unbelieving [Jews/idolaters] nothing is pure; their very minds and consciences are corrupted. They profess to know God but they deny him by their deeds; they are detestable, disobedient [to my gospel], unfit for any good deed." Titus 1

The Jews were offended. Who are these people they must have thought:

"From the first century onward Christians put a vast amount of effort into *distancing* themselves from Jews, the very intensity of their efforts revealing how difficult this was. Christian attempts to distinguish themselves from (and claim superiority to) Jews started very early... Early Christian's *despised* whatever their fathers [Judaism] had believed as true or sacred."

("Christian Conversion in Late Antiquity", Cameron, Academia.edu, pg. 19), ("Decline/Fall", chap, 16)

A Jewish view of Paul's *modus operandi*:

"1<sup>st</sup> c. Jews took exception to the negative attitude held by Jesus' followers including Paul. Paul's 'olive tree' metaphor is flawed... Paul's letters are irresponsible and extremely ignorant... Jews would see Paul as a danger to their prayer houses. He had proved himself [mentally] unstable but not yet an apostate-- although still a dangerous man."

("Opening the Covenant: Jewish Theology of Christianity" Kogan), ("Radical Jew:", Boyarrin)  
("Gospel According to Paul" Griffith-Jones) see, Rom. 11, "Jewish Literacy"

Even today, 1700 years later, historians are still outraged:

"Christians high-jacked the OT... Christians had no right to claim the history of Israel as their own."

("Jewish Gospels: story of the Jewish Christ", Boyarrin), ("Who Wrote the NT?", Mack)

**100 AD**

“We *shall* be saved by him [Jesus] from the wrath of God.” Romans 5

The social and religious divide between Greeks, Jews, Roman's and the Galileans further widen:

“What could Paul say? The Christ myth had no guidance... Unlike early Christianity, paganism was essentially a tolerant faith.”

(“Who Wrote the NT?”, pg. 117), (“History of God”, [Armstrong](#))

At this time, Antioch was a new center of early Christian's and the site of their first church among pagans. Another new covert of Paul's:

“If any one expands Judaism to you do not listen to him.” Ignatius, bishop of Antioch (*Philadelphians* 6)

## 150-190 AD

“Claiming to be wise they [Jews/Romans] became fools.” Rom. 1

Paul's letter's were meant to turn things upside-down—and did:

“One wonders *what* Paul was preaching. His surviving writings are virtually empty what the earthly Jesus had taught... 2. [To Greeks/Romans] the cultured and sophisticated couldn't conceive that Christian's would know a truth that was somehow *hidden* from them. Their main objective was Christianity was a religion of barbarians.”

. (“Christianity the first 3,000 yrs.”, Crucified Messenger) 2.(“Story of Christianity: early church to the dawn of Reformation”, vol. 1, Gonzalez, pg. 30-72), See, “Anti-Judaism: the Western Tradition”, Nirenberg”

As we know, there's millions of stupid people everywhere. A 2<sup>nd</sup> c. early critic of this new religion:

"Christianity's aim is to convert only the uneducated and stupid". Celcus 160AD (from “Origen: *Against Celcus*”)

The Greek social philosopher Origen, (185-254)--one the Church's early Fathers—wisely said that without allegory the Bible made little sense. But to Christians of the time that didn't seem to matter:

“If you interpret it literally it is a very difficult, not to say impossible task to revere the Bible as a holy book.” Origen  
(sourced from "The Bible: a history", Armstrong)

Although small in numbers at this time the newly formed bureaucratic Church knew this 'Paul guy' had prior experience with idol-worshippers in house church's in Asia Minor, and who could be “adopted” into this new “family of God” like in the cult of Serapis thru a belief system:

“The battle for Paul’s name and ‘authority’ has been over-stressed... A propagandist driven by success and a man of many messages... The survival of Paul’s letters and theology is largely accidental... The need for additional letters in his name is simply *graphic confirmation* of his obscurity and incomprehensibility.”  
(essay, “Controversy, Mythicism, and the Historical Jesus”, (Dr.) R. Joseph Hoffmann, Academia.edu)

Also, the early Church theorized there would have to be some sort of control apparatus for without that how could they know who belonged or didn’t since initiates were into mystery cults of Isis and others? For example:

“Don't observe the superstition of the Jews... We have become a new race of men.”  
Anonymous Epistle to Diognetus  
(chap. 3, 6), see also “The 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel: tales of a Jewish Mystic”, Spong

And since Rome was a mortal enemy, Paul's Letter's against ‘all societies not Christian’ went underground and took off like a jet!

### **303 AD**

Rome finally calls a truce with the socially rebellious Pauline Christians:

“It has been our aim that the Christians, who had abandoned the religion of their forefathers, should return to right opinions.” Galerius in letter to Diocletian

### **Edit of Toleration 311 AD**

“We [Galerius/Constantine/Lincinius] were desirous of reclaiming into the reason of *deluded Christian's* who had renounced the religion of their fathers and had inverted extravagant laws and opinions according to their own fancy... We are disposed to

extend our wanted clemency.”

see, "Historical Figure of Jesus", Sanders, "Constantine's Sword", Carroll

### **313 AD Edit of Milan**

“What pagans sacrifice they offer to demons.” 1 Corinthians 10

“Christianity is Paul and Paul is Christianity... Conversion is an act of conformity.”  
 (“How Jesus became Christian”), (“Rise of Christianity: how an obscure marginal Jesus Movement became the Dominant Religion”, Stark, pg. 8)

A year after his miracle at Rome’s Milvian Bridge the sole Emperor issued the Edict of Milan – where it was now legal to practice early Christianity within the Roman Empire. And although to have known to murder relatives close to him--including his own wife Fausta--Constantine embraced Christianity rather than Mithra-- possibly with a flip of a Mithraic coin:

“Constantine sent circular letter exhorting all subjects to embrace the divine truth of Christianity.”

(“Decline/Fall of the Roman Empire”, Chap. 20, pg. 254)

“Constantine raised an eccentric cult to official religion... After Constantine’s conversion masses of people came to embrace the Christian faith... The Fathers were looking for a religion suited to the *lowest* common denominator.”

(“God Delusion”, Dawkins,, pg. 37), (“Triumph of Christianity”, Ehrman, pg. 15), (“Pagan Christianity? Pagan Christ, Viola/Barna)

### **Constantine 315 AD**

“Over their disobedience they [Jews] are enemies of God.” Romans 11

“Following his conversion to Christianity, Constantine never abandoned sun worship. He kept the sun on his coins... Historians continue to debate whether or not Constantine was a genuine Christian.”

(“Pagan Christianity: exploring roots of our church”,, pg. 53)

Still a Pagan at heart, and for reasons much too long to mention here, Constantine never liked the Jewish religion very much. But over the past 200 years the regions theological differences between Jews and the newer Christians had become so acute that both groups were brawling on the streets-- as this letter attests:



*Laws of Constantine the Great, October 18, 315: Concerning Jews, Heaven-Worshippers,\* And Samaritans*

*"We wish to make it known to the Jews and their elders and their patriarchs that if, after the enactment of this law, any one of them dares to attack with stones or some other manifestation of anger another who has fled their dangerous sect and attached himself to the worship of God [Christianity], he must speedily be given to the flames and burn~ together with all his accomplices.*

*Moreover, if any one of the population should join their abominable sect and attend their meetings, he will bear with them the deserved penalties."*

*\*Heaven-Worshippers were a sect closely allied to Judaism.*

(Jewish History Sourcebook: Jews and the Later Roman Law 315-531 CE/ Fordham University)

**321 AD**

“Constantine decreed that Sunday would be a day of rest—a legal holiday. It appears that Constantine's intention was to honor the god Mithras, the ‘Unconquered Sun.’”

(“Pagan Christianity”, pg. 54)

**Constantine 324 AD**

“And with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the [our] truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned.”

2 Thessalonians 2

“The Church skillfully contrived to plant the seed of the new faith on the old stock of paganism.”

(“Golden Bough”, gardens of Adonis)

**A Master Plan**

When Constantine became sole emperor in 324 AD his realm was still largely pagan. But Mithraism was tossed and thru legal decrees the roles would reverse where

Christian's were now the Top dog. This was new political power from the emperor himself bestowed to the Church. And as incredible as it is so swallow, the intolerance brought on by Paul's six Letters, along with the Gospels, would be their fit into a theocratic society that would spiral *downward* until Jewish families all over Europe were murdered by the millions with Hitler's "Final Solution".

see, "Anti-Judaism: the Western Tradition", Nirenberg, "Triumph of Christianity", Ehrman, pg. 17

### Nicea 325 AD

"Idol-worshippers will not inherit the Kingdom of God!" St. Paul (1 Cor. 6)

"As the Christian movement gained in numbers and influence during the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries and finally became not only legal but imperially patronized, the situation of Christian bishops changed radically. No longer targets of arrest, torture, and execution, now they received tax exemptions, donations in gold, great prestige."

("Adam, Eve & the Serpent", Pagels, pg. 84)

"Emperor Constantine made it clear that the privileges which he conferred on Christian's 'must benefit only adherents of the Catholic faith' – that is, adherents of the Nicæan creed. While 'heretics and schismatics' will be *alien* from these privileges and be subjugated to various compulsory public services."

("Formation of a Persecuting Society", Moore, pg.11), see, "Later Roman Empire", Jones, pgs. 954–5.

After centuries of hiding from the Romans, and through a stroke of luck, the newly christened Church came out fighting. From the Top down the Universal Church became by default the judge and jury of people souls. Believers themselves became, in a sense, the defendants needing to ask the Church to save them from both sin and hell. To further this macabre view, later Constantine's son (337-361) and Theodosius, (381-92) planned to either baptize pagan idolaters or exterminate them. In reality however, this didn't happen as there were still millions of Pagans and no police to enforce the edict:

Codex Theodosius--

"It is decreed that in all places and all cities the temples should be closed at once, and after a general warning, the opportunity of sinning be taken from the wicked. We decree also that we shall cease from making sacrifices. And if anyone has committed

such a crime, let him be stricken with the avenging sword. And we decree that the property of the one executed shall be claimed by the city, and that rulers of the provinces be punished in the same way if they neglect to punish such crimes."

Constantine and Constans Augusti

*XVI.X.4,*

"The Church's new acquired power enabled them to enforce conformity to their practices... They resolved to impose a theocracy by force."

("Dark Side of Christianity", Ellerbe, pgs. 7-13), ("Grand Inquisitor's Manual", Kirsch)  
see, "Decline/Fall of the Roman Empire", persecution of heresy, "Inheritance of Rome: illuminating the Dark Ages 400-1000" culture and belief in the Roman World, Wickam, "Who Wrote the NT?", creating the Christian Bible, "Evolution of God", pg. 298, "God against the Gods", Kirsch, pg. 200+

### **350AD**

"We were glad how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven who delivers us from the wrath to come!" Paul  
(1 Thessalonians 1st chap.)

"Paul wrestled with the problem *how* Jesus represented God... Did Paul found a Christianity that its Christ would have disowned?"

("History of Christianity: 1st 3K"), ("Gospel According to Paul: the creative genius who brought Jesus to the World", Griffith-Jones)

The old Christian obsessions with puritanical Platonic, Essene apocalyptic and even anti-marriage ideas took hold who had earlier favored the openness of Mithra and other mystery cults. Once baptized, the new Christians were told that they would be automatically saved in the Next world and that God knew them but hated their sin. But since Jesus made the sacrifice for all don't worry about condemnation. (John 3:16-8).  
see, "Birth of Christianity, Prologue",

An eccentric theosophist from the early 1900's:

"...the excessive intolerance displayed by the Christians with their amazing theory that none but *they* could be 'saved from hell' which they *themselves had invented* led them to try all means, even the most cruel and diabolical persecutions, to force people of other faiths to accept their particular views."

(W.C. Leadbeater, pg. 26 from, "Jesus: the Explosive Story")

“From early on in Christianity, self-deprivation of food, comfort, self-harm and avoidance of society [Platonism] were regarded as ways which humans could get closer to God.”

(“Inheritance of Rome”, pg. 50-76), see, “Adam, Eve & the Serpent”, pgs. 75-86

What appeared to incite Christian's at this stage would be their dogmatic belief in scriptures. This would be something pagans knew little about since they only used traditions and rituals. So off and on over the next century, criminal Christian's ganged up, burned, destroyed and looted everything Pagan including temples which they considered of the devil:

*“Cesset superstitio; sacrificiorum aboleatur insania”* (Let superstition cease; let the folly of sacrifices be abolished) Constantius 2

("Constantine the Great", Catholic Encyclopedia, 1911)

“In the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> c. the Church hounded anyone who bore witness to the old [Greek] truths and who burned 100's of thousands of books.”

(“Pagan Christ”), see also, “Pagan & Christian Creeds”, “Dark Side of Christian History”, *Theodosian Code* Book 16, Catholic Encyclopedia “Theodosius 1”, 1912

### **Emperor Julian "the Apostate" 362AD**

A new Emperor but a social critic of the Christian takeover. Julian felt the “fabrication of the Galileans” was against Greek and Jewish traditions. He was upset that the Christians following Paul had created something new but contemptible:

(*Against the Galileans*, 39a, 42e)

"I do assert absolutely that the god-fearing [Jews] must be preferred to them. For through the folly of the Galileans almost *everything* has been overturned.”...

(Julian's letter to Atarbius)

### **Emperor Jovian 363AD**

“Paul’s letter's loom so large that Christian's use him as the definition of the new religion.”

(“Who Wrote the NT?”, pg. 99)

The Royal Library of Antioch (founded in 221 BC) was over 500 years old but

because it was non-Christian and stocked with “unholy” pagan literature by Emperor Julian, it was burned to the ground.

(“Burning Libraries”, Vishnu Gupta, Journal of Indian Library Assoc., #54 (1), Jan-Mar, 2018)

### **Emperor Theodosius 381AD**

"But if we or an angel from heaven should preach to a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you let him be accursed!" Paul (Galatians 1)

“For the early Christians the Church had 'replaced the Jews as the heirs to Gods promises' and was to be, 'the new covenant partner with God'... 2. The apostolic myth would survive and a peculiar understanding of God would be rationalized... Christian's were claiming to be the legitimate heirs... 3. The Orthodox Church established *supremacy* over all others and stood in fervent opposition to various ideas ('heresies') which were in circulation.”

(“Jews among Pagans and Christians: In the Roman Empire”, ed. Judith Lieu, John North and Tessa Rajak, pgs 79-96, 1992), (“Who Wrote the NT?”, claiming Israel's epic, pg. 251+), 3. (“History of the Quaranic Text”, Early History of Christianity: a brief look, Kallamulah.com)

See, “What is an Agnostic?”, essay by Bertrand Russell, 1953, “Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity, vol. 1, “Karaites' Judaism & Historical Understanding”, Astren

The cult of St. Paul grows exponentially. After the Pagan Julian left the Christian Emperor Theodosius united believers once again-- but this time against Paganism. Christian's declared themselves as the 'New Israel. Death to Jews—long live Christian's'. Quite oddly, the Emperor agreed:

“The rest [pagans] whom we adjudge *demented and insane* shall sustain the infamy of heretical dogmas, their meeting places shall not receive the name of churches and they shall be smitten first by divine vengeance and secondly by the retribution of our own initiative.”

(*Theodosian Code* 16.2), see, Encyclopedia of the Roman Empire, 2019, pg. 329, “Decline/Fall of Roman Empire”, Ch. 28, Catholic Encyclopedia on Theodosius, 1912, “Evolution of God”, pg. 298

As mentioned, the new Church shared power with the Roman state who turned into spiritual Nazi's not much different than Iran today. Their inspiration was not the ‘peaceful Jesus’ but rather militant Pauline letter's.

Alan Krieder, PhD Harvard, Professor Emeritus of Church History:

“Public life, including public religious activity, would henceforth be purged of heresy and pagan religion. Public life would be Christian, orthodox Christian.”  
(“Patient Ferment of the Early Church”, 2016)

Over Paul’s Platonic puritan views there would be an increased subjugation of women, a kill-joy morality and a morbid view of sex. Catholic bishops enlisted monks who became morality police:

*"Empty your minds of secular knowledge."* – Bishop Chrysostom

*"The pitiful and miserable Jews .. Certainly it is the time for me to show that demons dwell in the synagogue, not only in the place itself but also in the souls of the Jews."*  
Chrysostom (Against the Jews, Homily I)

“His need was for power; in Paul, the priest wanted power once again — he could use only concepts, doctrines, symbols with which one tyrannizes masses and forms herds.”  
Nietzsche (“Anti-Christ”)

### **380 AD**

Bishop Ambrose Proceedings against the Heretics--

"The Christian Emperor [Theodosius] has ordained...and constituted the Bishops themselves as Judges."  
(St. Ambrose, Letters 8)

In the 1770’s, Gibbon's wrote an analysis that was critical of a religious church politically involved with state affairs:

“Rome submitted to the yolk of the gospels...”  
(“Decline/Fall of the Roman Empire”)

In the Eastern Roman Empire there would be new mix of religious traditions—Christians, Pagans and Jews. But this didn’t fare too well with Christian bishops who hated competition from other religions who they considered of the devil:

"Oriental religion’s [Roman/Greek] were the most *dangerous* and persistent adversaries of Christianity."

("Oriental Religion's in Roman Paganism", pg. 27), see, "Christianizing the Roman Empire: 100-400 AD", Ramsey MacMullen

Unfortunately, the reasons for these social upheavals aren't known precisely and would be too long to detail out but as noted ancients did have very short fuses. Back then scripture meant belief--and your belief could be very wrong. And if it was wrong it was damned and considered heresy and out of society you went.

### 385 AD

"Did he not break up and burn all the monstrous [Mithraic] images there by such worshippers as Raven, Bridegroom, Soldier, Lion, Perseus, Sun-runner and Father?"  
St. Jerome

("Select Letters of St. Jerome")

"I will therefore do battle with the whole army of enemies. In the front rank I will set up the apostle Paul, since he is the bravest of generals."

St. Jerome (*Adversus Jovinianum* 1,6)

St Ambrose of Milan (340-397) was another crazy of the original Fathers who loved to argue *ad nauseum* with pagans regarding the divinity of Christ. He was also accused of fostering the persecutions of Arians, Jews, and pagans:

"This the Apostle [Paul] took up in the same words, giving up this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit might be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ... The devil is then deceived so as to wound himself with his own bite."

St. Ambrose bishop of Milan

(Text Sermons ,Book 1, verses 63+)

Church hierarchy was organized from top to bottom. For centuries, mundane rules pitted people against people, believer against believer. People became anti-human and controlled by the Church. The 18<sup>th</sup> c. historian Gibbons reflecting on this bizarre new tyranny:

"The inflexible and intolerant zeal of the Christians... The actions of a monk, his words, and even his thoughts were determined by an inflexible rule or a capricious superior. The slightest offences were corrected by disgrace or confinement, extraordinary fasts,

or bloody flagellation; and disobedience, murmur, or delay were ranked in the catalogue of the most heinous sins. A blind submission to the commands of the abbot, however absurd, or even criminal they might seem, was the ruling principle."  
("Decline/Fall of the Roman Empire", Chap. 37)

"What had begun as a universal belief system built on myth and allegory was transferred by the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> c. into a *ritualistic institution* based on a literal interpretation built on myths and symbols."  
("Pagan Christ: recovering the lost light", Harpur)

### 393 AD

"Always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain."  
Paul (1 Cor. 15)

"What was written in Christianity was brought under the control of the bishops, backed by the political and military might of the Emperor in line with imperial unification. The Christian understandings that *differed* from the Catholic-Orthodox views were suppressed, and Christians adhering to alternative understandings were declared deviant (heretical) and exiled. Christian texts expressing alternative views were burned or doctored and those possessing them were condemned.

Non-Christian writings came in for this same treatment, that is destruction in great *bonfires* at the center of the town square. Copyists were discouraged from replacing them by the threat of having their hands cut off."

("Christianity & Paganism in the Fourth to Eighth Centuries", MacMullen, p.4)

Bishop Crysostom, a contemporary of Augustine's, was put on the defensive by the non-Christians:

"Pagans rightly ridicule the whole [Church] business: 'Do you see,' they say, 'how all matters among the Christians are full of vainglory? Strip them,' they say, 'of their numbers and they are nothing.'" Crysostom

("Homiliae in Epistolam ad Ephesios, 11,15-16)

The extreme narrowness of the puritan cult of Paul continues. In Greece, the Olympic games which had been going on for 1000 years were abruptly canceled:

"Emperor Theodosius I, who had converted to Christianity, decided to abolish all pagan



cults and centers."

(Olympic games of Antiquity, International Olympic Committee 2008)

### **St. Augustine 400 AD**

"[Pagans] are filled with all manner of wickedness, evil, malice, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, boastful, heartless, ruthless." Romans 1

"The greatest irony in history is the religion named for Christ has become the religion of Paul and the Roman Church."

("Who Wrote the NT" **chap?**)

"The Catholic Church adopted Augustine's idea that people are inherently evil, incapable of choice, thus in need of a strong authority."

("Dark Side of Christian History", pg. 40), see "Adam, Eve & the Serpent", pg. 90+, Augustine's *Confessions*

As we know, Paul believed in original sin and so did Church Father Augustine with his anti-naturalistic view of nature. But as anti-Semitic, and who thought Jesus was vivid in the OT, Augustine didn't understand why the Jews didn't accept him as their Messiah: see, "Adam, Eve & the Serpent", pg. 129

"When the Jews do not believe in our Scriptures, their own Scriptures are fulfilled in them, while they read them with darkened eyes."

("City of God Against the Pagans", pg. 891-892) see, "Reformation: a history", Old church, MacCullah"

As mentioned, in the NT Paul couldn't answer his own stupid questions or allegories. So these unanswered questions were left to later Emperor's or Church fathers to fill in the illogic for themselves:

"Augustine's primary spiritual task was to remove the stain of sexual desire. He thus became the great theologian of guilt and sin. He remained blind to the price that others had to pay for his righteousness."

("Born of a Woman" Bishop Spong, p. 216)

"It is evident that none come nearer to us than the Platonist's." – Augustine

(*De civitate dei*, 8.5)

To Augustine, the unsaved soul was just about a worthless person. Incredibly, the freedom to think was outlawed and at all costs would the Pagan need to be saved:

*"What is the worse killer of the soul than freedom to err."* – *St Augustine*

(source: "Church, State & Freedom", Pfeffer, pg. 15)

A writer reminisces about St. Augustine's theories which are the same as Paul's 350 years earlier. Thus proving the brainwashing:

Patristic scholar Henry Chadwick on Augustine:

"Mankind is a lump of perdition, incapable, without redeeming grace, of any act of pure good will and all the virtues of the good pagan [unbeliever] are vitiated by sin... If all humanity were consigned to hell that would be nothing but strict justice. Nevertheless, God's mercy is such that, inscrutably, He has chosen a fairly substantial *minority* of souls for salvation."

(Augustine", 1996, pg. 200-32)

Like the "Church Lady" said on SNL with a twisted smirk-- "Isn't that nice?":

"We, whom the crucified Christ has led to God, are the true spiritual race of Israel".

(*Dialogue with Timothy & Aquila*, 11.5)

"The Jewish religion survived... Paul's Christianity would take over other cults as the state-religion of the Empire."

("And Man Created God", O'Grady)

Unfortunately, in the Roman provinces the Jewish community was now hounded by the State and hemmed in by intolerant fanatic's who simply felt they were doing God's Will. Surprisingly, this medieval mentality carries over to even today as with a recent mass shooting in 2019 at a Pittsburgh synagogue:

"Under repressive Christianity, Jews became a pernicious, contemptible sect... Monks were accused by the bishops of being insubordinate or worse: thugs and fanatic's. They could be mustered by their leaders in the streets or at a council by the 100's."

("Invention of the Jewish People", pg. 177), ("Voting About God in the Early Church Councils", Ramsey McMullen, pg. 126)

“The Roman Church deliberately maligned all other paths to salvation. It plundered the ancient temples, adopted their rituals, stole, destroyed all vestiges of truth and murdered those who dared object. And it did these things in the name of the Prince of Peace.”

(“Jesus: the Explosive Story” ancient mystery religions, journey into the mysteries, McCannon)

An eyewitness:

“This same Paul, who often when he speaks seems to forget his own words... But he who said, "I am a Jew," and "I am a Roman," is neither thing, although he attaches himself to both. For he who plays the hypocrite and speaks of what he is not, lays the foundation of his deeds in guile... We conclude then that he is a liar and manifestly brought up in an atmosphere of lying. And it is beside the point for him to say: "I speak the truth in Christ, I lie not" (Rom. ix. 1) is rightly regarded as knavish and hollow.”

Macarius Magnes

(*Apocriticus* III: 31: excerpt from Porphyry “Against the Christians”)

#### **423-500 AD**

“Brethren, join in imitating me. For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.”

Phillipians 3

"May those who divide Christ be divided by the sword, cut into pieces and burned alive." 2nd Council of Ephesus

Incredibly, the looting, pillaging, book and temple burning by baptized Christians continued unabated all over Asia Minor and North Africa for 300 years. For example, all the books of the Neo-Platonist Porphyry were burned by the edicts of Emperor Valentinian III. These acts were no different than the Nazi book burning in 1938: see, “Philostratus & Eunapius: lives of the Sophists”, pg. 324

“By the 5<sup>th</sup> c. bishops and other Christian leaders could mobilize muscle to promote their causes. Bishops commanded the absolute loyalty of their faithful clergy. Monks served as private militias, holy head-breakers whom charismatic bishops could turn out to sack pagan temples, rough up or kill opponents. These were not rogue monks or clergy gone bad but faithful followers of the church... Looking at the conduct of some

church institutions in these years, it is tempting to draw half-joking parallels to modern *criminal or terrorist organizations*.”

(“Jesus Wars”, ch. 1), see “Christian Persecution of Pagans”/Wiki

“Emperor Theodosius 2 declares that religion of the Pagans is nothing more than ‘devil worship’ and those who practice it to be punished by imprisonment and torture.”

(“From Four Royal Persian Stars to Jesus and the Sun”, Eric Norland , pg. 156)

The Church itself was lucky--Paul’s condemnation of the flesh where ‘all truth comes in the Next life and little in this one’ jump-started their new illiteracy program. This continued for the next 1100 years all over Europe:

“Within the boundaries of Christian dogma... all learning was subservient to theology.”

(“Passion of the Western Mind”, pg. 113)

"Intellectual life vanished. Even Charles the Great (ruled 768-814) was illiterate... Missionaries found teaching pagans the lessons of Jesus an almost hopeless task..."

("A World lit only by Fire", Manchester)

Under Emperor Honorius I more persecution on the Greek-Jewish populace:

“A law was passed that made it illegal for Jews to build a synagogue... Synagogues were burned to the ground."

(“Faith & Fratricide: theological roots of anti-semitism”, Ruether), ("Formation of a Persecuting Society", pg. 26+), see, “Jesus Wars”, pg. 121

Over the next 1000 years, mass and forced baptism of the Jews (not Pagans) by the 10’s of thousands were endemic. The more devout Jews killed themselves rather than getting baptized which to them was a Pagan rite. Prior human rights and court trials under Roman Laws were superseded by Paul's Church.

see, “Decline/Fall of Roman Empire”, chap. 37, Moses 10 Commandments, "Formation of a Persecuting Society", pg. 30-2

Karen Armstrong:

“The wave of persecution was certainly inspired by a distorted Christian mythology.”

(“Fields of Blood”, pg. 223)

“[Christians believed] the notion that the death and resurrection of Christ created a new

human order into which could be transferred into people by baptism... [Pagans/Jews] and other such deviants who have *not* yet been baptized must apply with their families and house holds to the local church and 'be taught the true faith of Christians' (undergo catechism) or other-wise be stripped of all their possessions and left in poverty.”

(“Who Wrote the NT?”), (“Between Pagan & Christian”, essay by C. Jones, Academia. Edu)

In the space of 180 years, Paul's message had turned the then known modern world literally upside-down. Secular society disappeared only to be controlled by Paul's Church—or as Niezsche later put it, “the struggle against ecclesiastical oppression”: (Niezsche, “Beyond Good & Evil”)

“The violence was unforgivable and so were all the acts of persecution and forced conformity.”

(“Jesus Wars: ch. 1, Jenkins)

So to offset the rising theocracy, Pagans got mad and countered with protests and riots of their own. This would be similar to the sectarian religious riots in Baghdad 2003 which some might recall.

As a historian, Gibbon’s was highly critical of these new Christian principles:

“There were clashes between different religious groups in late antique urban contexts, which were already the scene of violent confrontations... religious violence, storming of synagogues, street disturbances... Where persecution occurred it was often at the local level, the action of ordained clergy or monks or of secular authorities... Monks or pious laymen were often more violent than the ordained clergy in such attacks.”

(“Decline/Fall”, ecclesiastical discord)

An eyewitness in Alexandria, Egypt:

“After the destruction of the Serapeum [library] says Eunapius, 'they brought the so-called monks into the holy places, human beings in appearance, but swinish in their way of life, for everyone in those days who wore a black robe had tyrannical power.'... After confessing under torture, they were compelled to undergo instruction in the faith.”

(from, “Christian Conversion in Late Antiquity”, Cameron, Academia.edu, pg. 21+) + (essay, “Between Pagan & Christian”, C. Jones, Academia.edu, pg. 29+), see “Mediterranean World in Late Antiquity, Cameron, Chapter 7”, “Coming out Christian in the Roman World: how the followers of

Jesus made a place in Caesar's Empire", Boin, "Jesus Wars"

## **529 AD**

"The factious man after the first and second correction avoid," wrote Paul, "knowing that he is perverted, sinful and condemned by our judgment" (Titus 3, 10–11)

When I was growing up Christianity was called the "religion of peace". But that all depended on what scriptures were pulled out:

"In the 6th c. pagans sacrificing to former gods were executed. Statues and temples destroyed. Books deemed anti-Christian were burned... Christian church's were acting like the most extreme Islamic mullahs today... Soldiers of Christ swung their swords freely."

("Darkening Age: the Christian Destruction of the Classical World", Nixely), ("Jesus Wars", pg. 30-2), ("A World lit only by Fire", Manchester)

see also, "Dark Side of Christianity", "History of the Church", Hughes, 1949, Cambridge History of Christianity, pg. 500-600, "Fields of Blood", "Decline/Fall of the Roman Empire", ch. 37

## **527-565**

"The less they understand, the more they admire..." Pope Gregory  
(sourced from "Pagan Christ")

"The Christian played a critical role in taking Europe into the Dark Ages...After Rome fell civilization declined for almost 1000 years... The Church had a devastating impact on society. Activity in the fields of medicine, technology, science, education and history all but collapsed. Europe entered the Dark Ages.... History was re-written to become a verification of Christian beliefs."

("Death of Classical Paganism", Smith),("And Man Created God"), ("Dark Side of Christian History", pg.41+)

Since in the 300's when Constantine came to power the Jews were considered 'half-human'--no different than Negroes in the mid-1800's:

"A Latin law of Justinian did not allow a Jew to bear witness in court against an orthodox Christian."

("Jewish History Sourcebook: Jews and the Later Roman Law 315-531 CE"/ Fordham University)

## **Persecution of the Jews in Spain, A.D. 612-712**

"Look out for the dogs, look out for the evil-workers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh [Jews]. Paul

(Phillipians 3)

"The successors of Clovis inflicted 100 lashes on the peasants who refused to destroy their idols; the crime of sacrificing to the demons was punished by the Anglo-Saxon laws with the heavier penalties of imprisonment and confiscation... 90,000

Jews were compelled to receive the sacrament of baptism; the fortunes of the obstinate infidels were confiscated, their bodies were tortured."

("Decline/Fall", chap. 37)

Paul's message of "love" (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13)--which he didn't write nor could have written in a decade of trying-- didn't fare too well for the Church. In the medieval times between 872-1303 at least 13 Popes would be murdered.

See, "Keeper of the Keys: history of Popes from St. Peter to John Paul 2nd", Sir Nicholas Cheetham, "History of the Popes", Pastor, 1898, "Lives of the Popes", McBrien

## **768-814 France**

Charlemagne, the King of the Franks and later Holy Roman Emperor, (800-814) battled against the Pagan forest peoples in northern France for decades. Under these Holy wars, he was adamant Pagans either convert or die. In one instance, according to his biographer, over 4500 Saxon's were beheaded for refusing to convert to Christianity. (*Viti Kalori Magni*, Einhard, 817AD)

## **1st Crusade 1090**

An anonymous chronicler:

"At Worms Germany, 800 [Jews] died, some by their own hands to avoid forced conversion. 'This one killed his brother, that one his parents, his wife and his children; the betrothed killed each other even as wives killed their children.' Others were killed by the crusaders...Those who accepted Christianity, however, escaped the slaughter."

("Formation of a Persecuting Society", pg. 28), see, "History of Christianity: first 3 K" Middle Ages

## **Inquisitions 1200-1830**

"Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing." Paul  
(1 Corinthians 4)

"Heresy [non-church belief] is treason against God'. Pope Innocent III  
(New Catholic Encyclopedia, pg. 522)

In 55 AD, Paul never believed for *one instant* that he would be writing scripture with all his biases intact--unfortunately later Christendom did. While one devout historian even called the Inquisitions a centuries-old "holocaust":  
see, "History of the Inquisition", Lea, vol.II , pg. 98-104)

"Diversity in religious belief had troubled Christianity since the 1<sup>st</sup> c... The official seal of the Inquisition was *misericordia et justitia* (mercy & justice). When they killed 1000's of innocent men, women and children they were acting in obedience to law and order. This was not considered a crime... and they were utterly convinced they were doing God's work... Victims were denounced as vile and wretched minions of Satan. This was a symptom of collective paranoia."

("Grand Inquisitors Manual: history of terror in the Name of God.", Kirsch, pgs. 3-11)

"The real problem is the teachings of the Bible are so muddled and contradictory that it was possible for Christian's to *happily torture unbelievers for 500 years*. Even Augustine, Aquinas, Luther and Calvin advocated it."  
(“End of Faith”, Sam Harris)

### **1215 4th Council of the Lateran**

"Many Christians think that Judas was the supreme betrayer of Jesus but others say Paul has a better claim to that title."  
(“What Paul Meant”, Intro: the bad news man, Wills)

The Inquisition was one way the Catholic church could get revenge on who they considered 'heretics', or those who felt they had no need of salvation. This was either the irreligious who were not baptized, or those who spent too much time holed up in pubs. Thus the Church felt that they would be 'helping these unbelievers' in their faith but under torture. Torture kept them from the fires of Pauline purgatory:



"To Catholics only a small minority of Christian's completely atoned on earth for their sins; the remainder of atonement would be exacted in purgatory."  
("Age of Faith", Roman Catholic church)

"Lateran IV laid down a machinery of persecution for Western Christendom."  
("Formation of a Persecuting Society", Moore, pg. 10)

In Portugal newly "converted" baptized Jews were called "New Christian's" by the locals. The quote below has been paraphrased by several eyewitness accounts:  
see, "History of Anti-Semitism vol.1", Poliakov

"Dominican friars promised absolution for sins committed over the previous 100 days to those who killed the 'heretics'. A crowd of more than 500 people gathered and killed all the New Christians they could find on the streets, burning their bodies by the Tagu or in Rossio. That Sunday, more than 500 people were violently sent to their deaths... On 20 April, more locals had joined the crowd, which carried on the massacre with even more violence. The New Christians, no longer found on the streets, were dragged from their houses and from churches and, along with their wives, sons and daughters, were burnt in the public squares alive or dead. Not even infants were spared, as the crowd ripped them to pieces or threw them against the walls. The crowd proceeded to loot the houses, stealing all the gold, silver and linens they could find. More than 1000 people were killed on the second day."

("Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi", 1998), see also, Lisbon Massacre, "A World Lit only by Fire", "Anti-Judaism: the Western Tradition", Nirenberg

### **1290 England**

"All Jews were given three months to leave and were beaten and robbed as they left."

("The Faith", Art thou become quite other than thyself, so cruel?)

### **Black Death Plague 1300's**

In 2020, the world has been reeling from the plague of Covid-19 which started in China. Well, the 1300's weren't much different with the Mongol's bringing their diseases westward through trade routes into lower Russia. From there it carried on ships thru the Mediterranean region and into Italy, lower France and finally up to Finland. But was the Catholic Church responsible for the Black Death? Not entirely:

"The Church's obsession with 'the flesh' [Platonism] even discouraged bathing as toilets and plumbing disappeared. Disease became commonplace as sanitation and hygiene

deteriorated. For 100's of years both cities, towns and villages were decimated by epidemics or “Black Death” which killed millions through all of Europe.”

(“Dark Side of Christian History”, pg. 42)

### **John Wycliffe 1300's**

The British translator of the OT/NT was no friend of the Catholic church, but he had few options since the Reformation was 200 years off:

“In the 1380 *Objections to Friars* he calls monks the pests of society, enemies of religion, and patrons and promoters of every crime.”

(“Life of John Wycliffe”, Murray, 1829)

In France, Jews were told to take a hike:

“French Jews were banished in 1394”

(“Why the Jews? Reason for anti-Semitism”, Prager/Telushkin)

### **Spanish Inquisition 1400's**

As well known, Spain held the worst of the ‘Pauline persecutions’ where 1000's of Jews were deported or exterminated. And since Jews lived separate from Christians they were easy to spot—thus their villages were easy targets for burning:

“[Inquisitions were] franchised by the Pope to punish Jewish converts to Christianity who were suspected of still believing their former faith... They were regarded as necessary for the missions worldwide.”

(“Grand Inquisition Manual”, Kirsch), (“History of the Inquisition of Spain”, Lea)

"Forced conversions, expulsions, massacres and executions still occurred in the Enlightenment while the Inquisition suppressed all ‘deviates’ --be they Protestants, heretical Catholic's, clandestine Jews or free-thinkers.”

(“18th c. Europe: tradition & progress, 1715-1789, Woloch/Brown), see “History of the Inquisition in Spain”, in 4 volumes, Henry Lea ,1906

### **Martin Luther 1500's**

"Luther was vehemently anti-Semitic.”

(“Jewish Literacy”, Telushkin)

“Now just behold these miserable, blind, and senseless people... their blindness and

arrogance are as solid as an iron mountain.” Martin Luther

Martin Luther was a German professor of theology who was the first to put the Catholic church in defensive mode when one of his thesis's stated that faith alone was salvation and that people couldn't 'work their way into heaven by selling penances'. But when push came to shove Luther felt that the Bible as "God's Word" transcended even human reason. This was also Paul's mantra but at a much lower level:

“Reason is a whore, the greatest enemy that faith has; it never comes to the aid of spiritual things, but more frequently than not struggles against the divine Word.”

(Luther's book, "Bondage of the will")

As mentioned, education at that time was only Catholic and the great majority of society completely illiterate--even the well-off:

"In the 1500's, just 3-4% of Germans could read."

("Reformation in the Cities: the appeal of Protestantism to 16<sup>th</sup> c. Germany", Ozment)

“Medieval times were called the 'Age of Faith' because in this era 'everyone believed what religious authorities told them to believe'. The Church infiltrated and controlled *everything* including education for 1400 years... The Holy See ordered the burning of all books that questioned the Pope's authority."

("Piety & Impiety in 13<sup>th</sup> c. Italy", Murray, 1972), ("A World lit only by **Fire**")

## **Reformation**

"Even doubt is heresy..."

("History of the Inquisition of Spain", Lea, pgs. 324-65)

The protesters ("Protestants") didn't believe the Pope had power to forgive sins:

“The Catholic struggle [Paul's Church] to hold the line against Protestantism brought *thirty years of misery to millions of Europeans*: opinions vary, but within the German lands one modern estimate is that 40% of the population met an early death through the fighting or the accompanying famine and disease, and even the most cautious reassessment of the evidence comes up with a figure of 15-20%.”

("History of Christianity: first 3K", Reformation)

Almost 1700 years later, Paul's mantra of the 'body being evil' still continues:  
see Romans 12, Titus 2, Philippians 4

"A Catholic sermon from 1700 advises, 'to treat ones body as a sworn enemy'".

("Sin & Fear: Emergence of the Western Guilt Culture, 13Th-18th Centuries", Delumeau)

## **1600's**

The extremely narrow views of the Catholic Church precluded anything that went against scripture—even though it was written 1300 years earlier:

"Galileo was charged with 'vehement suspicion of heresy.' He had to renounce 'with sincere heart and unfeigned faith' his belief that the sun, not Earth, was the center of the universe. That the Earth moved around the sun and not vice versa, as ecclesiastical teaching dictated."

("Two Views of the Universe: Galileo vs. the Pope", Newsweek, Sept. 9, 1998)

"In England, witches and heretics were commonly burned alive. Both Catholics and Protestants burned each other for 'treason.'"

("Barbarous Years: Peopling of North America 1600-1675, Bailyn, pgs. 60-85)

## **French Revolution Religious Backlash 1792-94**

"The radical revolutionaries and their supporters desired a cultural revolution that would rid the French state of *all* Christian influence."

("Politics, Culture & Class in the French Revolution", Hunt, pg. 87-119), see also, "History of Christianity: first 3K"

By the 1790's, French citizens had enough social infiltration of both St. Paul's writings and the Catholic corruption into their everyday life to last two lifetimes. Oddly, this situation would be similar to the earlier Christians persecutions of idol-worshippers and Jews back in the 4th and 5th centuries--only now the roles would be again reversed.

The moral outrage of the French against their own religious organizations started with a series of massacres, numerous public executions by the guillotine, including 'death on site' of both priests, clergy, friends and even acquaintances of the clergy:

"For a time, executions by guillotine were a popular form of entertainment that attracted great crowds of spectators, with vendors selling programs listing the names of the condemned. But during the Reign of Terror, the guillotine symbolized revolutionary

ideals.”

(Wikipedia/guillotine)

The French militant movement called themselves the "de-christianization movement" and who initiated "anti-christ days" in which crosses, paintings and statues of the Virgin Mary were destroyed. Anti-Church laws were passed, anti-clerical parades held and church's would be converted to 'temples of reason'. This would later be called the "Reign of Terror" and where eventually 20,000-40,000 people would be murdered over a 5 year time span:

see, Catholic Encyclopedia 1913, "Revolution", pg. 14

"Under threat of death, imprisonment, military conscription and loss of income about 20,000 priests were forced to leave service."

(Dechristianization of France during the French Revolution/ Wiki)

-----

## **Conclusion**

"The truths contained in religious doctrines are so distorted and disguised that the mass of humanity cannot recognize them." Sigmund Freud  
("Future of an Illusion", Freud, 1927)

In concluding, I think I've pretty much covered how world religions came to our world. I've shown that the earliest religions began with the unknown, myth, sacrifice and superstition--but of course eternal hope for the hereafter. But what choice did they have since what we consider critical thinking is barely 150 years old?:

“Nothing would be so beautiful as Christianity if it wasn't taken literally. For taken literally, nothing could be so absurd as some of the ancient dogmas.”

(“Reason in Religion”, Santayana, (Sp.), pg. 130, 137 & 172)

As mentioned, the Bible is a mix of many ideas-- pagan, Greek, Jewish, gnostic, Gospel and Pauline--only later grouped into chapters and verses to be read as scriptures. But it doesn't make sense to have these ideas from antiquity meant to be followed as all Truth for all eternity:

“Religions power to console doesn't make it true.”  
(“God Delusion”, pg. 352)

Karen Armstrong on literalism:

"Before the 16th c. Christians were always encouraged to read scripture allegorically... [By the 19th c.] fundamentalism now required a denial of glaring discrepancies in scripture itself. Closed to any alternative, and coherent only in its own terms, biblical inerrancy created a shuttered mind set born of great fear."

("Fields of Blood", Karen Armstrong, pg. 303) see also, "Shadows of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century: a reevaluation of Christianity", Kuhn, 1949, "Pagan Christ"

Over the past 2,000 years morality and spirituality have changed considerably but has religion changed with it? Not really. Also, were these religions designed to handle millions or even billions of adherents? Millions try to say yes while millions more say no. Which one is it?:

Which leads us to another question where might religions go from here, as church attendance dwindles while the leftist/ agnostic/ atheist agenda get the upper-hand in both Europe and the U.S., across all secular media and school districts as indisputable fact? I believe the atheistic agenda is more harmful than the comparatively harmless Bible-belt believers. For instance, with China releasing the Covid-19 virus and their hopes of killing a million people worldwide in a pandemic. That is atheism at its most grim!

Yet the odd thing about the Bible is it still doesn't answer our most pressing questions in life—why are we here and what place do we go when we die? Of that I guess we'll just have to all wait:

"If scripture is not the unerring word, what is it?"  
(“Unauthorized Version: truth and fiction in the Bible”, pg. 44-95)

