A Background TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

for College Students and Pastors

JONATHAN EDWARD TETTEH KUWORNU-ADJAOTTOR

Foreword by Prince Sorie Conteh

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to my 2009-2020 students of New Testament Studies in the Department of Religious Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi- Ghana; and to the late Very Rev. Dr. Samuel Victor Mpere who introduced me to the academic study of the New Testament at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon-Ghana in 1999.

Acknowledgements

A work of this nature demands that I acknowledge a lot of people. Special mention is made of the following under whom I studied the New Testament at the Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon - the late Very Rev Dr Samuel Victor Mpere and Very Rev Prof John David Kwamena Ekem. The Most Rev Prof Emmanuel Asante and Rt Rev Prof Joseph Obiri Yeboah Mante, were President and Academic Dean and later Director of Graduate Studies respectively when I studied at the Trinity Theological Seminary. I say a big thank you for your encouragement and mentoring that has brought me this far. A book of this nature needs an expert in the field to write the Foreword; and that is what my friend and colleague, Rev Prof Prince Sorie Conteh of the Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology Magburuka, Sierra Leone, has done. Prof Conteh, thank you.

Special gratitude goes also to my undergraduate and postgraduate New Testament students in the Department of Religious Studies, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi who encouraged me to write this book. I acknowledge also the special assistance by Naa Kai Amanor-Mfoafo, the Administrative Manager of Noyam Publishers who read the manuscript and made some useful suggestions; to Naa Ayorkor Sowatey-Adjei, Research Assistant at Noyam Publishers who proofread the manuscript and corrected the grammar. Last but not the least, I thank the Noyam Publishers design team for the book layout and cover design.

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Foreword

The Bible was not written in a vacuum. It is the Word of God written in the languages and cultures of the original recipients. It is therefore incumbent on us as contemporary recipients to understand the Bible in its original settings and contexts. The goal of Bible background studies is to introduce us to how people thought, communicated and lived in the ancient world during the Old Testament, New Testament, and Intertestamental periods. Our quest to understand the backgrounds of the Bible does not dilute the spiritual essence of the scriptures as some pastors, students, and Christians think. Contrary to such a misguided thought, background studies help us understand the marvelousness and workings of God through human cultures and history.

Knowing the cultural and historical background of the Bible provides an understanding of the deeper context, deduce the things that were culturally relevant in that time and not directly relevant now, as well as be able to break down the scripture in a way that is in-depth. The plethora of scholarly works in extant and the continuous production of works on the subject indicate its importance.

The New Testament contains cultural tradition as well as historical relevance that not only authenticates what we read but also gives the New Testament more authenticity than other historical texts. Background information about the cultural, political and social settings in the New Testament, if available in the Bible, is scanty. For example, in the New Testament, much by way of background is not written about the Pharisees, Sadducees, the Herodians and the cultural and social practices of the people.

The New Testament was preceded by the Old Testament and Intertestamental periods and thrived during the Greco-Roman period. Rev Prof Jonathan Edward Tetteh Kuwornu-Adjaottor as a New Testament and Biblical Studies scholar categorically discusses pertinent events in these three periods – Hebrew, Silent Years, Greek and Roman – that are crucial to the study. He takes into consideration the geographical, historical, cultural, political, religious, social, economic and educational settings of the New Testament. In the last four chapters, Prof Kuwornu-Adjaottor provides readers with the factors that led to the canonization of the New Testament, its transmission, modern translations, overview and the arrangements of its books. As a book crafted for students in mind, Kuwornu-Adjaottor provides examination questions at the end.

I am delighted to say that Rev Prof Jonathan Edward Tetteh Kuwornu-Adjaottor has now joined the list of New Testament Backgrounds scholars like Craig Evans, Stan Porter, Bruce Metzger, Ben Whitherinton III, Frederick Murphy, Lee Macdonald, Craig Keener, to name a few.

This book, A Background to the New Testament for College Students and Pastors, is well-written and simple to read. I recommend it as a New Testament resource textbook for teachers, college students, pastors and all those who are interested in Bible backgrounds studies for an in-depth understanding of the Bible.

Rev Prof Prince Sorie Conteh
Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology
Magburuka, Sierra Leone

Preface

The New Testament document did not drop from heaven! This statement sounds strange, and it sounds like a bomb thrown at devoted Bible readers. However, it is loaded with a lot of things that need to be understood by anyone who wants to get a good insight into the texts that constitute the New Testament. I came to this conclusion as a student and later a lecturer in New Testament Studies.

The New Testament has a plethora of backgrounds - historical, geographical, political, philosophical, economic, social, literary and many more. All these backgrounds constitute what is called the intertestamental period, the 400 silent years between the Old and New Testaments. These backgrounds are not stated directly in the document though; but a serious student the New Testament is able to see, them from an academic point of view. This raises the question of whether the New Testament is an academic document. The answer to this question is not a straight forward one depending on who is answering the question. But the truth is that any literary document such as the New Testament can be studied academically. Studying the background of the New Testament has some value. There are many references in the New Testament that can be located as historical events that occurred in the intertestamental period, and a student of the New Testament must know in order to be well informed when reading the New Testament. For example, one comes across religious groups like the Sanhedrin, Pharisees, Sadducees; political titles like Herod. Who were they and how did they emerge? The answer to this question is best answered when one does a background study of the New Testament.

The New Testament is the record of the works of God in history. Viewed from this perspective, one could say that the New Testament is a factual document; and background study of the New Testament authenticates its factuality. The more one studies the contexts in which the New Testament evolved, the more one gets a precise picture of its people and places. This does not however mean that the New Testament is guilty

until proven innocent in historical matters. The opposite rather pertains; the New Testament has proven itself as a historically reliable document. Another important reason for the study of the New Testament background it places events in a sharper focus; it helps students to appreciate the meaning of stories contained in the pages of the New Testament. When one reads stories about the Pharisees and Sadducees confrontations with Jesus in the gospels; and the reference of sorcery in the book of Acts; and magical books in Ephesians and philosophy in Colossians it sends one's mind back to events that happened in the intertestamental period.

Further, an understanding of the religions, customs, languages, geography and politics in the intertestamental period can help one understand certain difficult sayings and events in the New Testament. There are interpretation problems as one studies the New Testament; and these could be solved with knowledge of New Testament background.

There are gaps in our knowledge of the New Testament we read now and what really happened at the time the events took place. The study of New Testament background can help fill the gaps in our knowledge.

This ten-chapter book, A Background to the New Testament for College Students and Pastors, can be used as a resource textbook for Introduction to the New Testament at the college level. Bible school students, pastors and all those who are willing to learn may find useful.

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1

General Introdution

What is the New Testament? This is not a simple question to answer because a lot of things happened behind the scenes to produce what we call the New Testament. The New Testament has backgrounds which students of the discipline must understand in order to appreciate its content. *A Background to the New Testament for College Students* explains the 400 silent years between the Old and New Testaments, the dark period in the history of Israel.

Around 400 B. C., God ceased speaking to His people and the world through any portions of the written Word. God used these 400 silent years to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ. During these four centuries, historical, political, religious and cultural changes shaped what came to be known as the New Testament. Basically, the New Testament has three backgrounds – Hebrew, Greek and Roman.

Hebrew: The Hebrew background of the New Testament is primarily religious because the Hebrew people, the Jews, are the ones to whom the gospel message was first sent (Rom. 1:16). Matthew, the first book of the New Testament canon, is written for the immediate audience of the first-century Jews. There were three eras of Judaism during the 400 silent years. With the Babylonian exile in 586 B. C. the Jews entered a phase of being scattered around the world such that by the time of Christ, every large city of the Roman Empire had its large colony of Jews, and towns and villages together contained them by the thousands. When the church's first missionaries (Paul and others) moved to the "ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8), Jews were among the first people they contacted (Acts 13:5).

During the silent centuries, the greatest impressions made upon Judaism originated in the three great centres of Babylon, Alexandria and Jerusalem. Changes in Judaism that originated in Babylon were carried into Jerusalem during

the silent years, because there was a continuing programme of migration of Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem, which had began under Ezra and Nehemiah. The exile affected Jewish theology, tradition, worship, culture and education. Theologically, the exile had eliminated idolatry and had fostered a pure monotheism ("one God"). The exile introduced tradition into Judaism. The Law was amplified to include other writings, mainly Mishnah and Haggada, which were together known as the Talmud. Mishna was a book of man-made rules of living; Haggada was the theology and commentary of the rabbis. Rabbis formulated their own tradition. The Jews became more and more steeped in traditionalism during those years. Synagogues were established as local places of worship. By New Testament times, synagogues were located throughout the Mediterranean world. The apostle Paul usually sought out the synagogue when he arrived first in a city on his missionary journeys (see Acts 13:5). New professions of teachers and interpreters of the Law, called rabbis and scribes, originated here. During that time, scholarship was advanced, and culture developed.

During the silent years, a large number of Jews migrated to Egypt a few months after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B. C. When Alexander the Great founded Alexandria in 332 B. C., about half of the population of Alexandria were Jews. He favoured them very highly and assigned them a special section of the city. Alexandria became the capital of the Jewish Dispersion (Diaspora), and the events and movements of that city affected the life of Judaism for centuries to come. Since Alexandria was a Greek-speaking city, the Jewish population gave up its Palestinian Hebrew vernacular as it begun learning Greek. Eventually, the Jews were without Scripture in their new vernacular, so the need arose for the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament. Such a translation (later called the Septuagint) was soon made – the Pentateuch by 280 B. C., and the whole Old Testament by 180 B. C.

The Jews prospered and multiplied in Egypt during the silent years, such that by New Testament times there were almost one million Jews residing there. Egypt was not far from Judea and the contacts between Jews of both lands were very close. (Read Matthew 2:13-18, one of the first stories of the New Testament, which is about baby Jesus' parents' escape with Him to Egypt, to flee Herod).

Approximately 450 B. C. Ezra and Nehemiah had led about 50,000 Jews back to Judea from exile in Babylon. They remained in the land, rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and trying in small measure to preserve their religious heritage. But before long the people gave up their allegiance to God and, in their own vain pursuit of holiness, surrendered their faith for works. It was during this time that

two classes of the Jewish religion appeared: the Sadducees and the Pharisees. As rival religious sects, they became rival political parties by New Testament times. The Sadducees were the political party of the Jewish aristocratic priesthood. They were not popular with the common people. The Pharisees were the religious leaders of the Jews, often identified in the New Testament with the scribes. They were the most influential leaders and were very popular with the people. They were rigid legalists, and by Jesus' day their sect had degenerated into an empty religion (see Luke 11:37-54)

Greek: The Greek background is chiefly cultural, including such things as language and philosophy. It is important that the student of the New Testament is introduced early in the study of the discipline because many of the influences of Greek culture and philosophy paved the way for the proclamation of the gospel in New Testament times. For example, the need for a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek arose because Greek had become the vernacular of the Jews in Egypt. In fact, Greek was the then *lingua franca* of the world, as a result of the world conquests of Alexander the Great. The Old Testament version of the Hebrew Bible known as the Septuagint, was in Greek. When the New Testament canon was complete, the Septuagint Old Testament and the Greek New Testament formed a unity, the Greek Bible. By the New Testament times, *Koinē* Greek (common Greek) was the international language, an ideal channel of communication in the world-wide programme of the church. Christ, the apostles, and the early disciples of Palestine spoke Greek (as well as Aramaic); the Scriptures were in Greek; and the audiences of the preached gospel throughout the Roman Empire understood and spoke Greek.

Philosophy and mystery religion formed aspects of the Greek background of the New Testament. During the silent years, the mind of the Greek thinkers was reaching out to discover the secrets of life and the universe. In John 1:1 the Logos was a Greek philosophical thought; the reason behind the life and the universe as a whole. The Gospel of John was addressing a Gnosticism, a Greek philosophy which posits that one must have a special knowledge of the *Logos* before one could be saved. Some books of the New Testament, such as Ephesians and Colossians, were written partly with Greek philosophies in mind, and the appeal was for the readers to accept God's full revelation by His Son Jesus Christ (see Eph. 3:1-13; Col. 2:2-3, 8; Col. 2:4-23). Among the leading philosophers and religionists of the period were: (1) Plato (427-347 B. C.); his thinking was that this world is only a shadow of eternal realities. (2) Aristotle (384-322 B. C.); to him, reality resides in individual things themselves. (3) Zeno (c.300 B. C), the founder of the Stoics; he

proposed that the human person must live according to nature. (4) Epicurus (c. 300 B.C.), founder of the Epicureans; to him, the human being must pursue pleasure.

Roman: The Roman background of the New Testament is mainly political and social. It covered a period 63-4 B. C. In 63 B. C. the Roman general Pompey brought Palestine under Roman control. He organized the Decapolis league of ten cities southeast of the Sea of Galilee to balance the power of Judea. Antipater was appointed governor of Judea, and Herod the Great was king of Judea by Roman senatorial grant from 37 to 4 B. C.

For the most part there was little interference by Rome in the religious life of Palestine. The Jews paid taxes to Rome and were subject to the rulers appointed over them by Rome. When Jesus was born (5 B. C.) the political situation was generally stable, but opposition to the Messiah's coming was quickly demonstrated by King Herod's reaction and decrees (see Matt. 2:1-18).

Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea from A. D. 26-36/37. He was involved in the trial of Jesus in A. D. 33 when the Jewish leaders brought Jesus to him early Friday morning of the passion week, accusing him of setting himself up as king (Matt. 27:1-2, 11-14; Mark 15:1-5; Luke 23:1-5; John 18:28-38.

Indeed, the New Testament has backgrounds – Hebrew (Aramaic), Greek and Roman (John 19:19-21). The backgrounds are geographical, historical, political and religious. These backgrounds are expanded in the chapters of the book.

Chapter one is a general introduction; it gives bits and pieces from the book. Chapter two focuses on the geographical, historical and political contexts of the New Testament. Attention is given to the history of Palestine under Greek and Roman rules. Chapter three discusses the religious setting of the New Testament with emphasis on the religious practices in existence before the events were compiled into what became known as the New Testament: the Greco-Roman pantheon, mystery religions, worship of the occult and philosophies. Chapter four examines the Judaism setting of the New Testament. It discusses the origin, theology, places of worship, festivals, feasts, educational system, literature, sects and Jews in the diaspora. Chapter five discusses the social and economic worlds of the New Testament: Jewish society, pagan society, cultural attainments, moral standards. The economic worlds: agriculture, industry, finance, travel and transport. Chapter six examines the literary context in which the New Testament emerged: the Hebrew Scriptures, the Septuagint (LXX), The Old Testament Apocrypha, the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Greco-Roman Literature. Chapter seven focuses on the canon of the New Testament: factors that led to the New Testament canon, criteria used for the New Testament canon, adoption of the

canon. Chapter eight examines how the New Testament text was transmitted: the transmission of the New Testament text, sources of the text, modern translations. Chapter nine gives an overview of the New Testament: dating of the books in the New Testament, contents of the New Testament – Gospels and Acts, Pauline letters, other apostolic letters. Chapter ten discusses the arrangement of the New Testament books: the arrangement of the books, comments by some scholars.The last chapter ends with some possible examination questions.

2

The Geographical Setting and Intertestamental Period of the New Testament

Introduction

The New Testament was written over a fifty-year period of time (A. D. 45-95). This is very brief when compared with that of the Old Testament which was written over several centuries (c. 1400-400 B. C.). Before we get into much details, it must be stated here that the New Testament has three basic and important backgrounds which we must understand to prepare us to have a good grasp of the New Testament. First is the Old Testament background; second, the other is the geographical setting; and third, an understanding of the intertestamental period.

The Old Testament Background of the New Testament

Without the Old Testament there would be no New Testament. This is so because the unconditional promises and prophecies of the Old Testament find their fulfillment in the New Testament. For example, the four Gospels demonstrate clearly that the prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the coming Messiah are all fulfilled in Jesus, the Christ. The death of Jesus, for example, was prophetically described in Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. There is no doubt that the New Testament would have been very difficult to understand in several places without a knowledge of the Old. The greater the familiarity one has with the Old Testament the more equipped one would be in understanding and interpreting the New Testament.

The Geographical Setting of the New Testament

Most of the actions of the four Gospels took place in ancient Palestine. Much of the action of the Acts, and the setting of the Epistles took place in Asia Minor, t

In New Testament times, Asia Minor was divided into several Roman

provinces and client states: Asia, Bithynia and Pontus, Galatia, Cilicia and Cappadocia. Its geography also includes several nearby islands: Cyprus, Patmos, Rhodes, Samothrace, Cos, Assos, Chios and Cnidus. Throughout the region of Asia Minor, we find cities that, in one way or another, played an important role in the history of the New Testament, such as Tarsus, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Anthioch of Pisidia, Perga, Attalia, Hierapolis, Laodicea, Colossae, Philadelphia, Sardis, Smyrna, Ephesus, Pergamum, Troas. (Locate these cities and towns on a Map of the New Testament).

Some aspects of the geographical setting of the New Testament are related to the earthly ministry of Jesus. The cities and villages named in the Gospels were located mainly in the three provinces of JUDEA, SAMARIA, and GALILEE. Three surrounding areas were Perea, Decapolis, and Phoenicia. Locate the following cities and villages a Map of the New Testament: JUDEA - Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Bethany, Ephraim, Jericho, Emmaus. SAMARIA and GALILEE – Sychar, Samaria, Nain, Nazareth, Cana, Magdala, Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida (west of the Sea of Galilee) (Mark 6:45). OTHERS – Bethsaida (Julias (Luke 9:10), Gergesa, Caesarea Philippi, Tyre, Sidon, Bethabara (Bethany beyond the Jordan).

The Intertestamental Period Background of the New Testament

The book of Malachi brings the Old Testament to a close (400 B.C.). Between Malachi and Matthew are about 400 years when God did not give to the Hebrew people any further revelation. This period is sometimes called the Four Hundred Silent Years. Though silent in the sense that God was not communicating new revelations to Israel, He was still at work during this period fulfilling His prophetic Word from parts of Daniel 8, 11, and Zechariah 9. These prophecies and their fulfillments were: (1) in the realm of political powers controlling Palestine (six military governments ruled Palestine during the 400 years); (2) the persecution of the Jews by Gentile overlords; (3) and God's protection and preservation of Israel from physical extinction and spiritual corruption through paganism.

Many of the events cited in the New Testament, especially the Gospels and the book of Acts, happened during these 400 years between the Testaments. For instance, (1) the family of King Herod (Matt 2:1, 22); (2) the Jewish Sanhedrin – Jewish Supreme Court (Luke 22:66); (3) the religious sectarian groups such as the Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt 2:4; 3:7) along with their religious ideas, traditions and practices (Matt 25:1-2; 23; Acts 23:8). (4) Then there were four political and militaristic groups such as the Herodians (Matt 22:16) and the Zealots (one of Jesus' apostles had formerly been a Zealot – "Simon called the Zealot"

(Luke 6:15). (5) It is important to note also the Roman Empire took over Palestine during the Intertestamental times (63 B. C.) it was still in power throughout the New Testament era (Luke 2:1; 3:1; John 11:48).

The Intertestamental Period was in a sense a period of preparation for the coming of Jesus, the Christ. During the 400 years between the Testaments God was at work preparing for the time when His Son, Jesus Christ, would step out of eternity into time.

History and Government of Palestine under Greek Rule

Old Testament history closed with the Assyrian exile of the northern kingdoms of Israel, the subsequent Babylonian exile of the southern kingdom of Judah, and the return to Palestine of some of the exiles under Persian rule in the six and fifth centuries B. C. We have already mentioned some of the things that happened during the intertestamental period.

During this period Alexander the Great became master of the Middle East by inflicting successive defeats on the Persians at the Battles of Granicus (334 B. C.), Issus (333 B. C.), and Arbela (331 B. C.).

The Greek culture, called *Hellenism*, had been spreading through Greek trade and colonization, but Alexander's conquests provided far greater impetus than before. The Greek language became the *lingua franca,* or common trade and diplomatic language. By New Testament times Greek had established itself as the street language even in Rome, where the indigenous proletariat spoke Latin, but the great mass of slaves and freedmen spoke Greek. Alexander founded seventy cities and modeled them after the Greek style. He and his soldiers married Oriental women. Thus, the Greek and oriental cultures mixed.

When Alexander died in 323 B. C. at age of thirty-three, his leading generals divided the empire into four parts. Two of the parts are important for New Testament historical background – the Ptolomaic and the Seleucid. The Ptolomaic Empire centrered in Egypt. Alexandria was its capital. The rulers who succeeded each other in governing the empire are called the *Ptolomies*. Cleopatra who died in 30 B. C., was the last of the Ptolomaic dynasty. The Seleucid Empire centrered in Syria. Antioch was it capital. A number of its rulers were named *Seleucids*, several others *Antiochus.* Together they were called the *Seleucids.* When Pompey made Syria a Roman Province in 64 B. C., the Seleucid Empire came to an end.

Because Palestine was sandwiched between Egypt and Syria, it became a victim of rivalry between the Ptolomies and the Seleucids, both of whom wanted to collect revenues from its inhabitants and make it a buffer zone against attacks from

the other. At first the Ptolomies dominated Palestine for 122 years (320-198 B. C.). Generally, the fairly well during this period. Early tradition says that under Ptolomy Philadelphus (285-246 B. C.) seventy-two Jewish scholars began to translate the Hebrew Old Testament into a Greek version called the Septuagint.

Seleucid attempt to gain Palestine, both by invasion and by marriage alliance, repeatedly failed. But success finally came with the defeat of Egypt by Antiochus III (198 B. C.). Among the Jews two factions developed, "the house of Onias" (pro-Egyptian and "the house of Tobias" (pro-Syrian). Anthiocus IV or Epiphanes (175-163 B. C.) replaced the Jewish high priest Onias III with Onias' brother Jason, a Hellenizer who started transforming Jerusalem into a Greek city. A gymnasium and an adjoining racetrack were built. There to outrage of pious Jews, Jewish lads exercised in the Greek fashion – nude. Track races opened with invocations to pagan deities. Even Jewish priests attended these events. Such Hellenization also included attendance at Greek theaters, adoption of Greek dress, surgery to remove the marks of circumcision, and exchange of Hebrew for Greek names. Some Jews however opposed this paganization of their culture. They were called *Hasidim*, or *Hasideans*, "pious people."

Before launching an invasion of Egypt, Antiochus Epiphanes replaced Jason, his own appointee in the high priesthood, with Menelaus, another Hellenizing Jew, who had offered to collect for Anthiocus higher tributes from his subjects in Palestine. Menelaus may not have even belonged to a priestly family. Naturally, pious Jews resented the selling of their most sacred office of high priest to the highest bidder, especially when the money was to come from their own pockets.
Despite initial successes, Anthiocus' attempt to annex Egypt failed. Ambitious Rome did not want the Seleucid Empire to increase in strength. Outside Alexandria therefore, a Roman envoy drew a circle on the ground around Anthiocus and demanded that before setting out of the circle he should promise to live Egypt with is troops. Anthiocus had learned to respect Roman power during the twelve earlier years as a hostage in Rome; so he acquiesced.

Meanwhile, a false rumor reached the displaced high priest Jason that Anthiocus had been killed in Egypt. Jason immediately returned to Jerusalem from his Transjordan and with is supporters seized control of the city from Menelaus. The embittered Anthiocus, stung by his diplomatic defeat at the hands of the Romans, interpreted Jason's action as a revolt and sent soldiers to punish the rebels and put Menelaus back into the high priestly office. In so doing, they ransacked the temple and slaughtered many Jerusalemites. Anthiocus himself returned to Syria. Two years later, in 168 B. C., he sent Apollonius, his general, with an army of 22,000 to

collect tribute, outlaw Judaism, and enforce paganism as a means of consolidating his empire and replenishing his treasury. The soldiers plundered Jerusalem, tore down its houses and walls, and burned the city. Jewish men were killed, women and children enslaved. It became a capital offence to practice circumcision, observe the Sabbath, celebrate Jewish festivals, or possess scrolls of Old Testament books. Many such scrolls were destroyed. Pagan sacrifices became compulsory, as did processional marching in honor of Dionysus (or Bacchus), the Greek god of wine. An altar the Syrian high god, identified as Zeus, was erected in the temple. Animals abominable according to the Mosaic law were sacrificed on the altar, and "sacred prostitution" was practised in the temple precincts.

Another period in the history and government of Palestine under the Greeks was the Maccabean period. It was a period when the Maccabees revolted. In the village of Modein (or Modin), a royal agent of Anthiocus urged an elderly priest named Mattathias to set an example for the villages by offering a pagan sacrifice. Matthias refused. When another Jew stepped forward to comply, Mattathias killed him, killed the royal agent, demolished the altar, and fled to the mountains with his five sons and other sympathizers. This was the beginning of the Maccabean Revolt in 167 B. C. under the leadership of Mattathias' family. This family is called the *Hasmoneans,* after Hasmon, great-grandfather of Mattathias, or the *Maccabbees,* from the nickname "Maccabeus" ("the Hammer") given to Judas, one of Mattathias's sons.

Judas Macabeus led the rebels in highly successful guerilla warfare until they were able to defeat the Syrian in pitched battle. The Maccabean Revolt also triggered a civil war between pro Hellenistic and anti-Hellenistic Jews. The struggle continued even after the death of Anthiocus Epiphanes (163 B. C.). Ultimately, the Maccabees expelled the Syrian troops from their citadel in Jerusalem, regained religious freedom, rededicated the temple, and conquered Palestine.

After Judas Maccabeaus was killed in battle (160 B. C.), his brothers Jonathan and Simon succeeded him in leadership. By playing claimants to the Seleucid throne against each other, they were able to claim concessions for the Jews. Jonathan began to rebuild the damaged walls of Jerusalem and its other structures. He also assumed the high priestly office. Simon gained recognition of Judean independence from Demetrius II, a contestant for the Seleucid throne, and renewed a treaty with Rome originally made with Judas. Proclaimed as "the great high priest and commander and leader of the Jews," Simon officially united in himself religious, military, and political headship over the Jewish state.

The subsequent history of the Hasmonean dynasty (142-37 B. C.) tells

a sad tale of internal strife caused by ambition for power. The political aims and intrigues of the Hasmoneans alienated many of their former supporters, the religiously minded Hasidim, who split into the Pharisees and the Essenes. Some of the Essenes produced the dead Sea Scrolls from Qumran. The aristocratic and politically minded supporters of the Hasmonean priest-kings became the Sadducees. Finally, the Roman general Pompey subjugated Palestine (63 B. C.). During the New Testament period, then, Roman power dominated Palestine.

Another period in the history and government of Palestine under the Greeks was the Maccabean period. It was a period when the Maccabees revolted. In the village of Modein (or Modin), a royal agent of Anthiocus urged an elderly priest named Mattathias to set an example for the villages by offering a pagan sacrifice. Mattathias refused. When another Jew stepped forward to comply, Mattathias killed him, killed the royal agent, demolished the altar, and fled to the mountains with his five sons and other sympathizers. This was the beginning of the Maccabean Revolt in 167 B. C. under the leadership of Mattathias' family. This family is called the *Hasmoneans,* after Hasmon, great-grandfather of Mattathias, or the *Maccabbees,* from the nickname "Maccabeus" ("the Hammer") given to Judas, one of Mattathias's sons.

History and Government of Palestine under Roman Rule

The eighth century B.C. saw the founding of Rome, and the fifth century B.C. the organization of a republican form of government there. Two centuries of war with the North African rival city of Carthage ended in victory for Rome (146 B. C.). Conquests by Pompey in the eastern end of the Mediterranean Basin and by Julius Caesar in Gaul (roughly equivalent to modern France) extended Roman domination. After Julius Caesar's assassination in the Roman senate, Octavian, later known as Augustus, defeated the forces of his rival Antony and the Ptolemaic queen Cleopatra in a naval battle off the coast of Actium, Greece (31 B. C.), and became the first Roman emperor. Thus, Rome passed from a period of expansion to a period of peace, known as Pax Romana. The province of Judea broke the peace with major revolts that the Romans crushed in A. D. 70 and 135. Nevertheless, the prevailing unity and political stability of the Roman Empire facilitated the spread of Christianity when it emerged.

Augustus set up a provincial system of government designed to keep proconsuls from administering foreign territories for their own aggrandizement. There were two kinds of provinces – senatorial and imperial. Proconsuls answered to the Roman senate, which appointed them over senatorial provinces, usually for

terms of only one year. Alongside the proconsuls stood procurators, appointed by the emperor, usually over financial matters. Propraetors governed the imperial provinces. They were also appointed by the emperor; they answered to him and exercised their civil and military authority by means of standing armies.

Roman Emperors of the First Century

Touching the New Testament story at various points are the following Roman emperors of the first century:

1. **Augustus (27 B. C. – A.D. 14)**

Under his rule the Roman *imperium,* or power of the imperial state, was thoroughly established. The people, tired of war, longed for peace. Augustus became the *princeps,* or the first citizen of the land. He ruled wisely and well. Politically, the new principate was a compromise between the old republicanism and dictatorship that Julius Caesar had advocated. The Senate was retained as the theoretical ruling body. In 27 B. C. it conferred on Augustus the office of commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the empire. In 23 B. C. he was given the tribunitial power for life, which meant that he had control over the popular assemblies and was appointed the permanent representative of the people. He was given the prerogative of introducing the first topic of discussion in the Senate and the right to call its meeting. All of his rights were founded on a constitutional basis rather than on any arbitrary seizure of power.

During the reign of Augustus many reforms were effected. The Senate was purged of unworthy members. A large part of the army was demobilized, and the discharged veterans were settled in colonies or on land supplied by purchase. A regular professional army was created; it became a school for citizens. On retirement from the ranks the veterans were settled in colonies in the provinces, where they could make a good living and at the same time be community leaders to Rome.

Augustus also sought to improve the morale of the people. He revived the state religion and rebuilt many temples. The imperial cult, a worship of Rome as a state, was introduced to the provinces. In many places the emperor himself was worshipped as *Dominus et Deus* (Lord and God), although he did not demand such worship. To consolidate the empire at large, Augustus took a census of the population and of all property as a basis for recruiting the army and for taxation. Spain, Gaul, and the Alpine districts were subjugated. He strengthened the defense of the frontiers, though his armies suffered a crushing defeat at the hands

of the Germans in the Teutoberg forest. Augustus organized the police and fire departments of Rome and appointed a supervisor for the grain supply.

Augustus' boast was that he had found Rome brick and had left it marble. During the forty-one years of his administration he brought order out of chaos. He restored confidence in the government, replenished the treasury, introduced an efficient public works department, and promoted peace and prosperity.

2. Tiberius (A. D. 14 – 37)

At the death of Augustus his adopted son, Tiberius was chosen to succeed him. The *imperium* or power that Augustus had received under constitutional regulations and for a limited period was conferred on Tiberius for life. He was fifty-six years old at the time of his succession and had been engaged during most of his life in the service of the state, so that he was no novice in politics. Unfortunately, Augustus insisted that he divorced his wife whom he loved and he married Julia, Augustus' daughter, a woman of open profligate life. The bitterness of his experience soured his temper permanently. He was distant, haughty, suspicious, and quick-tempered. Although he was wise and impartial in his policies, he was never popular and was generally feared and disliked. During his reign the Roman armies suffered reverses in Germany, with the result that he withdrew the frontier to the Rhine. Domestic troubles clouded his later years. In A.D.26 he retired to Capri, leaving the government in the hands of the city prefect. The absence of Tiberius gave opportunity to Aelius Sejanus, the captain of the praetorian guard, to carry out a conspiracy to seize the principate. By A.D.31 he had almost perfected his plans when Tiberius discovered them. Sejanus was executed and the plot overthrown, but its effect on Tiberius was disastrous. He became even more suspicious and cruel, so that the merest whisper against a man would bring calamity down to him. When he died in A. D. 37, the Senate could once more breathe freely.

3. Caligula (A. D. 37 – 41)

Gaius Caligula, or "Little Boots," as he was affectionately called by the soldiery, was made Tiberius' successor by the Senate. At the outset of his career he was popular as Tiberius had been unpopular. He pardoned political prisoners, reduced taxes, gave public entertainments, and endeared himself generally to the populace. Before long, however, he began to show signs of mental weakness. He demanded to be worshipped as a god, which alienated the Jews from his realm. When Herod Agrippa visited Alexandria the citizens insulted him publicly by lampooning him and his followers, and then tried to compel the Jews to worship the image of the

Gaius. The Jews appealed to the emperor, who not only paid heed to them, but ordered his Syrian legate to erect his statue in the temple at Jerusalem. The legate was wise enough to delay action rather than to risk an armed rebellion, and the death of Caligula in A. D. 41 prevented the issue from coming to crisis. Some think that Mark's reference to the "abomination of desolation" (Mark 13:14) reflects the threatened erection of the emperor's statue in the temple at Jerusalem.

Caligula's reckless expenditure of the funds that Augustus and Tiberius had so carefully gathered quickly exhausted the public treasury. In order to replenish it he resorted to violent means: confiscation of property, compulsory legacies, and extortion of every kind. His tyranny finally became so unbearable that he was assassinated by a tribune of the imperial guards.

4. Claudius (A. D. 41 -54)

At the death of Caligula, the Senate debated the idea of restoring the republic, but the question was quickly decided for them when the paetorium guard selected Tiberius Claudius Germanicus as emperor. He had been living in comparative obscurity during the reigns of Tiberius and Caligula and had not taken part in the political activities of Rome. An illness, possibly some form of paralysis, had left him so weakened that his public appearance was almost ludicrous, for his shambling form and drooling mouth made him look idiotic. He was not, however, of inferior mentality, for he was a good scholar, and proved to be an abler ruler than his contemporaries expected.

The rapidly expanding empire needed a new type of government to make it efficient. Under Claudius Rome became a bureaucracy, governed by committees and secretaries. He extended the privilege of citizenship to provincials. His generals succeeded in gaining a foothold in Britain and conquered it as far as the Thames River. At this time Thrace, on the death of its prince, who had been an ally of Rome, was made a province.

Claudius made a determined attempt to restore the ancient Roman religion to its former prominence in society. He possessed a strong antipathy for foreign cults. Suetonius states that under Claudius the Jews were expelled from Rome because of some riots that had taken place "at the instigation of one Chrestus, and was referring to a disturbance among the Jews occasioned by the preaching of Jesus as the Christ, or whether Chrestus was the actual name of some insurgent. In any case, the order of expulsion is probably the one that caused the removal of Aquila and Priscilla from Rome (Acts 18:2).Through the influence of one of his freedmen, Pallas, Claudius was persuaded to take his nice, Agrippina, as his

fourth wife. She was determined to obtain the succession for Domitius, her son by a previous husband. Domitius was formally adopted by Claudius under the name Nero Claudius Caesar. In A. D. 53 Nero married Octavia, Claudius' daughter. A year later Claudius died, leaving to Nero the succession of the imperial throne.

5. Nero (A. D. 54 – 68)

The first five years of Nero's reign were peaceful and successful. With Afranius Burrus, the prefect of the Praetorian Guard, and L. Annaeus Seneca, the philosopher and writer, as his advisors, Nero managed his realm very well. Agrippina, however, sought to maintain an ascendancy over him which both he and his advisors resented. In A. D. 59 he had his mother murdered and took full charge of the government himself.

Nero was by temperament an artist rather than an executive. He was more eager to enter upon a stage career than to excel in political administration. His carelessness and extravagance emptied the public treasury, and he, like Caligula, resorted to oppression and violence in order to replenish it. By so doing he incurred the hatred of the Senate, whose members feared that at any time he might give orders for their death and for confiscation of their property.

In A. D. 64 a great fire broke out in Rome that destroyed a large part of the city. Nero was suspected of having deliberately set it in order to make room for his new Golden House, a splendid palace that he had built on the Esquiline hill. This massive complex, which housed the great palace, covered a total of 125 acres, including a colonnade with three rows of columns one-mile-long, dining rooms with ivory ceilings, walls covered with decorations of fantastic décor, and in the vestibule a colossus of Nero himself 120 feet in height. There were parks groves, and a lake, all (it was said) for the pleasure of one man. In order to divert the blame for himself, he accused the Christians of having caused the disaster. Their attitude of aloofness from the heathen and their talk of the ultimate destruction of the world by fire lent plausibility to the charge. Many of them were brought to trial and were tortured to death. Tradition says that Peter and Paul perished in his persecution, the first one conducted by the state.

There is little evidence to show how extensive this persecution was. Probably it did not affect any territory outside Rome and its immediate environs, although the provinces may have been threatened with it. (Cf. 1 Pet. 4:12-19). In the meantime, the excesses of Nero had rendered him increasingly unpopular. Several conspiracies against him failed and were suppressed by the execution and his enemies. Finally, a revolt of the troops and provincials in Gaul and Spain proved

successful. Nero fled from Rome and was killed by one of his own freedmen at his command in order to avoid capture.

6. Galba (A. D. 68)

The revolt of the legions had shown that the empire was really commanded by the army, since it could nominate and enthrone its candidate without reference to the Senate. Galba, Nero's successor, was not the unanimous choice of the legions. When he adopted as his successor Lucius Calpurnius Piso, Otho, who had once supported him in hope of being emperor himself, persuaded the praetorian guards to kill Galba and to make him emperor.

7. Otho (A. D. 69)

Otho's rule was short-lived. The Senate concurred in his appointment, but Vitellius, the legate of Germany, marched on Rome with his troops. Otho was killed in battle and Vitellius took his place.

8. Vitellius (A. D. 69)

Vitellius was recognized by the Senate, but he was unable to control the soldiery; he could not establish any stable government. The armies of the east intervened in the affairs of state and made its general, Vespasian, emperor. At that time Vespasian was engaged in the siege of Jerusalem. Leaving it in charge of his son Titus, he proceeded to Egypt, where he gained control of the country and cut off the food supply of Rome. His lieutenant, Mucianus, set out for Italy. Despite the spirited resistance of the troops of Vitellius, Vespasian's partisans captured and sacked Rome. Vitellius was killed, and Vespasian was proclaimed ruler.

9. Vespasian (A. D. 69 – 79)

Vespasian was a plain old soldier who was frugal in his habits and vigorous in his administration. He suppressed revolts among the Bataviae and among the Gauls, while Titus completed the reduction of Jerusalem. The city was completely destroyed, and the province was put under a military legate. He strengthened the frontiers by reducing dependent principalities to the status of provinces. The treasury was made solvent by strict economy and by the imposition of new taxes. He built the new famous Colosseum. He died in A. D. 79, leaving his office to Titus, whom he had made his coregent. He was the first of the Flavian dynasty, which included his son Titus and Domitian.

10. Titus (A. D. 79 -81)

The brevity of Titus' reign did not allow much time for the accomplishment of any remarkable deeds. Despite the handicap, however, he was one of the most popular emperors that Rome ever had. The magnificence of the public entertainments that he sponsored and his personal generosity disarmed the potential antagonism of the Senate, who feared that he would be a dictator like his father.

The catastrophic overthrow of Pompeii and Herculaneum, villages on the Bay of Naples, in the eruption of Vesuvius, occurred during his reign. Titus appointed a commission and did his utmost to rescue as many of the victims as possible. A few months later Rome suffered a severe fire that destroyed the new Capitol, the Pantheon, and Agrippa's Baths. Titus even sold some of his private furniture to contribute to the general need. He erected new buildings, including a large amphitheater.

11. Domitian (A. D. 81 – 96)

Titus died in A. D. 81, leaving no son, and the Senate conferred the imperial power on his younger brother Domitian. Domitian was a thorough autocrat. He tried to raise the moral level of Roman society by restraining the corruptions of the Roman stage and by checking public prostitution. The temples of the older gods were rebuilt, and foreign religions were suppressed, especially those which sought to make converts. He was thought to have instigated a persecution of Christians, though evidence for any extensive legislation or action against them in his reign is lacking. He demanded worship for himself and insisted on being hailed as *Dominus et Deus.* As an economist, he was a good manager. The business affairs of the empire were conducted efficiently by his subordinates.

12. Nerva (A. D. 96 – 98)

Nerva, Domitians's successor, was selected by the Senate. He was a man of advanced years and of mild demeanor and was probably regarded as a "safe" candidate by the senatorial order. His general administration was kindly and was relatively free from internal tensions. The army had resented Dominitian's assassination, for the Flavians were popular in military circles. Nerva, however, was astute enough to provide as his successor Trajan, who could hold the troops in subjection and of administering government with a strong hand.

13. Trajan (A. D. 98 – 117)

Nerva died in A. D. 98, and Trajan succeeded him. He was a Spaniard by birth, a

soldier by profession, energetic and aggressive in temperament. He annexed Dacia, north of the Danube, and began the enlargement of the eastern frontiers by the conquest of Armenia, Assyria, and Mesopotamia. A revolt of the Jews in the Near East was suppressed in A. D. 115; but new insurrection in Africa, Britain and on the Danubian border occasioned his recall to Rome. He died en route to the Capital in Cilicia in A. D. 117.

In this environment of imperial expansion Christianity grew from an obscure Jewish sect to a world religion. Jesus was born in the reign of Augustus (Luke 2:1); his public ministry and death occurred in the time of Tiberius (Luke 3:1); the great period of missionary expansion came in the reigns of Claudius (Acts 18:2) and Nero (Acts 25:1-12). According to tradition, the Apocalypse was written in the reign of Domitian, and its allusion to imperial power and governmental tyranny may have been reflections of conditions prevalent at that time.

The relative scarcity of allusions in the New Testament to contemporary events in the Roman world is not surprising. The national interest of the Gospels and of much of the Acts, which are the principal historical works, lies in Judaism rather than in Rome. Furthermore, the message of the New Testament to the inner lives of its readers rather than to their outward circumstances. The spiritual rather than the political, and the eternal rather than the temporal were stressed. Nevertheless, at numerous points the New Testament does connect with the political surroundings of the first century, and its historical importance must be interpreted in that connection.

The Romans Empire was a miscellany of independent cities, states, and territories – all of which were subject to the central government. Some of them had become part of the empire by voluntary alliance; others had been annexed by conquest. As Rome extended its sovereignty over these allied or subject peoples, its governmental machinery also grew into the Roman provincial system.

The word *provincia,* from which "province" is derived, meant originally the office of carrying on war, or a post of command. As applied to the authority of a general it was extended to the sphere of his authority, and hence to the territory that he conquered, which became his *provincial.* When Rome conquered new domains, they were organized into provinces that became part of the general imperial system. The Roman provinces that appear in the New Testament are Spain (Rom. 15:24), Gaul (2Tim.4:10), Illyricum (Rom. 15:19), Macedonia (Acts 16:9), Achaia (Rom. 15:26), Asia (Acts 20:4), Pontus (1Pet. 1:1), Bithynia (Acts 16:7), Galatia (Gal. 1:2), Cappadocia (1Pet. 1:1), Cilicia (Gal. 1:21; Acts 6:9), Syria (Gal. 1:21), Judea (Gal. 1:22), Cyprus (Acts 13:4), Pamphylia (Acts 13:13), and Lycia (Acts 27:5).

Some of these are mentioned more than once; and in the case of Illyricum, its later name Dalmatia, appears in the Pastoral Epistles (2Tim. 4:10). Paul usually employed provincial names in alluding to divisions in the empire, while Luke also used national divisions. Provinces often included more than one ethnic group, such as Lycaonians of Lystra and Derbe (Acts 14:6, 11), who were under the province of Galatia.

Governorship of the provinces was sought by public officials because they found it a fruitful source of income. So greedy were some of these rulers that the provinces were rapidly impoverished by heavy taxation. Others who were more public-spirited made wise use of the taxes by building roads and harbors, so that commence thrived and the general economic level of life improved. Rome regarded the provinces as her rightful field of exploitation. Until the time of Constantine, they were tributary to the central government and never were treated as equal states within a common federation.

As stated above Judea in Palestine (see Gal. 1:22) was a Roman province. The Romans allowed Palestine to have its own rulers. One was Herod the Great, who ruled the country from 37 – 4 B. C. His father Antipater, having risen to power and favor with the Romans, had thrust him into military and political career. The Roman senate approved the kingship of Herod, but he had to gain control of Palestine by force arms. Because of his Idumean (Edomite) ancestry, elder brother and rival of Jacob, also called Israel, an ancestor of the twelve sons from whom the twelve tribes of Israel descended and took their names). Scheming, jealous, and cruel, he killed two of his own wives and at least three of his own sons. According to Matthew, Herod had the infants in Bethlehem slaughtered shortly after Jesus' birth there. Augustus once said that it was better to be Herod's pig than his son (a wordplay, since the Greek words for pig, *hus,* and for son, *huios,* sound very much alike.

But Herod was also an efficient ruler and politician who managed to survive struggles for power in the higher echelons of Roman government. For example, he switched allegiance from Mark Antony and Ceopatra to Augustus and successfully convinced Augustus of his sincerity. Secret police, curfew, and high taxes, but also free grain during famine and free clothing in other calamities, characterized the administration of Herod. Among many building projects, his greatest contribution to the Jews was a beautification of the temple in Jerusalem. This became beautification did not represent his sharing of the Jewish faith (he did not share it), but an attempt to conciliate his subjects. The temple, decorated with white marble, gold, and jewels, became proverbial for its splendor: "Whoever has

not seen the temple of Herod has seen nothing beautiful." Herod the Great died of intestinal cancer and dropsy in 4. B. C. He had commanded a number of leading Jews to be slaughtered when he died, so that although there would be mourning *over* his death, at least there would be mourning *at* his death. But the order died with him.

Lacking their father's ability and ambition, the sons of Herod ruled separate parts of Palestine. Archelaus became ethnarch of Judea, Samaria, and Idumea; Herod Philip tetrarch of Iturea, Trachonitis, Gaulanitis, Auranitis, and Batanea; and Herod Antipas tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. John the Baptist rebuked Antipas for divorcing his wife to marry Herodias, the wife of his half-brother. When in retaliation Herodias induced her dancing daughter to demand the head of John the Baptist, Antipas yielded to the grisly request (Mark 6:17-29; Matt 14:3-12). Jesus called him "that fox" (Luke 13:32) and later stood trial before him (Luke 23:7-12). Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, executed James the Apostle and son of Zebedee and imprisoned Peter (Acts 12). Herod Agrippa II, great-grandson of Herod the Great, heard Paul's self-defense (Acts 25-26).

The misrule of Archelaus in Judea, Samaria, and Idumea let to his removal from office and banishment by Augustus (A. D. 6). According to Matthew 2:21-23, this same misrule had influenced Joseph to settle with Mary and Jesus in Nazareth of Galilee when he returned from Egypt. Except for brief periods, Roman governors ruled Archelaus' former territory. One of these governors, Pontius Pilate, sat in judgment on Jesus. The governors Felix and Festus heard Paul's case (Acts 23-26). And Florus' raiding the temple treasury ignited the Jewish revolt of A. D. 66-74, which reached a climax with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in A. D. 70. Mopping-up operations lasted till the capture of Masada, a fortress on the west side of the Dead Sea, where the last rebels and their families, numbering more than nine hundred, committed mass suicide just before the Romans entered. The Jews had suffered even greater loss of life at the destruction of Jerusalem. Both that destruction and the capture of Masala were preceded by long sieges. Apart from such events and in spite of the Herods and the Roman governors, however, Jewish priests and Jewish courts controlled most local matters of daily life.

Worship at the temple and its sacrificial system ceased with the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. As a substitutionary measure Jewish rabbi's established a school in the Mediterranean coastal town of Jamnia, (or Yavneh) to expound the Torah, the Old Testament law, more intensively. Unsettled conditions continued in Palestine until Emperor Hadrian erected a temple to the Roman god Jupiter where the Jewish temple had stood. He also prohibited the rite of circumcision. The Jews

revolted again, this time under the leadership of Bar Cochba, hailed by many of them as the Messiah (A. D. 132). The Romans crushed this uprising in A. D. 135, rebuilt Jerusalem as a Roman city, and banned Jews from entering the city. Thus the Jewish state ceased to exist until its revival in 1948.

Intertestamental Events Timeline

334-330 BC	Alexander the Great (356-323 BC) sweeps through Asia Minor and conquers the Persian Empire, including Egypt and Mesopotamia (see notes on Dan. 7:3; 7:6; 8:5; 8:8; 8:20-22; 11:3; cf. 1 Macc. 1:1-7), Alexander imposes the Greek language and culture on all the nation he conquers, marking the beginning of the Hellenistic Age (ranging approximately from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 to the establishment of Roman Imperial rule around 30 BC). As a result of Alexander's imposition of the Greek language on conquered kingdoms, the entire NT will later be written in Greek, and will be understandable throughout the ancient world.
333	Alexander the Great passes through Palestine (comprised of Judea and Galilee), extending the influence of Greek thought and culture throughout the region and also into the Judaism of the period.("Palestine" derives from a Latin name conquering Romans later gave to this province {c.63 BC} on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea, comprising parts of modern Israel, Jordan, and Egypt.)
323-281	In the absence of legitimate heirs, following Alexander the Great's death in 323 BC (cf. Macc. 1:5-9) four of his generals (called the Diadochoi, 'successors) divide the conquered territory of his empire into fourths (which then included most of the known world throughout Europe and Asia Minor, see notes on Dan. 7:6; 8:8, 8:20-22; 11:4): (1) Antipater (and later Cassander and then Antigonus I Monophthalmus) ruled in Greece and Macedon; (2) Lysimachus took control in Thrace and much of Asia Minor, (3) Seleucus I Nicator assumed power in Mesopotania and Persia; and (4) Ptolemy I Lagi Soter became sovereign of Egypt and Palestine.

310*	Zeno of Citium (c. 341-270 BC) founds Stoicism in Athens, a philosophy which prizes logic, reasons, and indifference toward pleasure and pain alike. Paul later encounters Stoics and Epicureans in Athens (see Acts 17:18).
307*	Epicurus (c. 341-270BC) founds the Garden, an egalitarian community based on friendship, in Athens (see Acts 17:18). The philosophical system of Epicureans stands somewhat opposite Stoicism in its pursuit of pleasure especially emphasizing the importance of friendship and the luxurious enjoyment of eating, drinking, and other comforts.
277	By 277 BC three Hellenistic kingdoms stabilized out of the four division of the Alexander the Great's kingdom: (1) the Antigonid dynasty in Macedonia (issuing from Alexander's general Antigonus I Monophthalmus, 382-301, and beginning with his son Demetrius I Poliorcetes in 294/293); (2) the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt 9issuing from the general Ptolemaic I Lagi Soter, 367-283); and (3) the Seleucid dynasty in Syria (issuing from the general Seleucus I Nicator, c. 358-281) the later which also ruled much of Asia Minor from 312 to 64 (see Dan. 11:4-35 and notes there). Though Judea will later become controlled by the Seleucids in 198 BC, it is initially under Ptolemaic (Egyptian) rule, with little disturbance.
198	The Seleucids gain control over Judea from the Ptolomiesm after the battle at Panium (see note on Dan. 11:6-13, 11;4-20). They are led in victory by their king, Antiochus III the Great (reigned 223-187 BC; see notes on Dan. 11:6-13, 11:4-20; and the "Seleucids" on p. 1226), the father of Antiochus IV Ephiphanes (reigned 175-164/163,; see notes on Dan. 8:9-14; 8:15-16, 9:24-27; 11:21-28; 11:29-35; 11:36-39; and "Antiochus IV Epiphanes" on p. 1220).
190	Antiochus III the Great and the Seleucids are defeated by the Romans at the Battle of Magnesia (fought on the plains of Lydia, in modern Turkey) and forced to pay an indemnity in 12 annual payments. The Seleucids continue to rule over Judea, however.

176	The teacher of Righteousness, the founder of the Qumran community (perhaps the Essenes) which produced many of the so-called Dead Sea Scroll, becomes active "The Dead Sea Scrolls" on pp. 1348-1350.
174	The Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (who reigned from 175 to 264/163 BC and was the son of Antiochus III the Great and brother of Seleucus IV Philophator) deposes the Zadokite high priest Onias III (2 Macc. 3:1-4:6), the son of Simon the Just (cf. Sir. 50:1-21). Onias III, who had functioned as the effective head of the Jewish people to that time, was replaced with his brother Jason (2 Macc. 4:7-22) Jason turned would be more supplanted by Menelaus (2 Macc. 4:23-26), who was eventually put to death about 162 BC following a 10-year reign (2 Macc. 13:1-8). ("Zadokite" refers to the descendants of Zadok, a high priest during king David's reign. Zadokites held a monopoly on the Jerusalem priesthood from the time of Solomon forward). Antiochus IV takes on the name "Epiphanes', meaning "{god} manifest" (cf. 1 Macc1:10), however his enemies would call him "Epiphanes", meaning "madman".
168/167	Antiochus IV Epiphanes, led into the sanctuary by the high priest Menelaus, loots and desecrates the temple in Jerusalem (1Macc 1:20-24, 1:37-64; 2 Macc. 5:11-26, 6:2-5, see also notes on Dan. 11:21-28; 11:29-35). On Kislev (Nov – Dec) 25, 167 BC (Macc. 1:59), an idol devoted to Zeus (Jupiter) was erected in the temple ("the abomination that make desolate", cf. Dan. 11:31, 12:1) and shortly afterwards sacrifices (likely swine) were offered up on the altar I the "Most Holy Place".
167/166	Mattathias, father of Judas and his brothers, leads the Maccabean revolt against Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes (cf. 1 Macc.2:1-48) and dies (1 Macc. 2:49-70).
164	Judas "Maccabeus", third son Mattathias and second leader of the revolt and later the Jewish government during 166/165-167/160 BC (Macc. 3:1-5:68; 6:18-54; 7:26-9:22; cf. 2 Maccabees 8; 10:14-38; 11:1-15; 12; 13:9-22; 14-15) purifies the temple – an event still remembered by Jews at Hanukkah (1 Macc. 4:36-61)

161*	The Zadokites priest Onias IV migrates to Egypt and founds a rival temple at Leontopolis.
152	Jonathan (assumed leadership during 160-143/142 BC, cf. 1 Maccabees 9-12), brother of Judas Maccabeus, fifth son of Matthias, and third of the revolt, accepts the high priesthood as a gift from Alexander Epiphanes (Balas) (1 Macc. 10;1-20), the son of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and pretender to the Seleucid throne. Three distinct sects within Judaism become active at this time, the Essenes (or perhaps Qumran community-the sect with which the Dead Sea Scroll are most clearly connected), the Pharisees, and the Sadducees (see 'Pharisees and Scribes" on p.1410 and Josephus on Jewish Sectarian Groups" on p. 1653).
142	Jewish independence is recognized by the Seleucid king Demetrius II Nicator 9d. 125 BC; cf. 1 Macc. 13:31-42), Simon, brother of Judas Maccabeus and second son of Mattathias, is named "high priest and commander and leader" of the Judeans (1 Macc. 13:42;cf. 14:35,41), effectively establishing the Hasmonean dynasty, Simon rules Antiquities 12.265}, great-grandfather of Mattathias)
135/134-104	John Hyrcanus I, son of Simon, rules following his father's murder (cf. 1 Macc. 16:11-24).
113	The Hasmonean king John Hyrcanus I destroy the Samaritan temple.
104-103	Judah Aristobulus I, oldest son of John Hyrcanus I, rules.
103-76	Alexander Janneaus, youngest son of John Hyrcanus I, rules.
88	The Seleucid king Demetrius III Eukairos (son of Antiochus VIII Grypus) is invited by the opponents of Alexander Janneaus to invade Palestine.
76-67	Salome Alexandra, wife of Alexander Jannaeus, rules.
73-71	Spartacus, a gladiator-slave leads an ultimately unsuccessful slave revolt (known as the Third Servile War) against the Roman Republic.

67	Civil war breaks out in Judea between supporters of Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, brothers. Hyrcanus II, older son Alexander Jannaeus, rule from 67 to 63 BC Aristobulus II, younger son of Alexander Jannaeus , rules from 63 to 40 BC Herod the Great would eventually marry into the Hasmonean Dynasty through his union with the granddaughter of Aristobulus II, Mariamme I.
64	Syria becomes a Roman province, effectively establishing Roman rule on Palestine and thus marking the definitive end of Jewish political independence.
47	The library of Alexander is burned. Once the largest library in the world, probably containing half a million scrolls or volumes, it suffers the loss of many primary sources of ancient Greek literary texts, as well as translations or adaptations of important works written in other languages. According to the Letter of Aristeas, the Greek translation of the OT called the Septuagint (lxx) was begun for the needs of this library. No works housed in this once great library survived antiquity.
44 (March 15)	Julius Caesar is murdered.
43-40	Parthian invasion and interregnum: Phasael, Herod's brother and tetrarch of Judea ("tetrarch" is a ruler of one of four divisions of a Roman country or province) is killed when the last Hasmonean, Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus II and nephew of Hyrcanus II, gains the support of the Parthians to the east and invades Judea.
40-37	Mattathias Antigonus, son of Aristobulus II, rules from Jerusalem.
40	The Roman Senate declares Herod the Great "King of the Jews," giving him vassal rulership over Palestine (comprised of the province Judea and Galilee) his rule does not truly begin until 37 BC , however, when he is able to recapture Jerusalem from Antigonus and Parthians to the eat and invades Judea.

37-4	Herod the Great rules from 37 to 4 BC and is the "legitimate" successor to the Hasmonean Dynasty through his marriage to Mariamme I, granddaughter of both Aristobulus II and Hyrcanus II (her parents were first cousins). Herod recaptures Jerusalem from Antigonus and the Parthians in 37 BC through the help of Roman forces, to whom he had fled for help three years earlier.
37-31	Herod the Great fortifies Masada, a mountaintop fortress in southeast Israel on the southwest shore of the Dead Sea, sea as a refuge in case of revolt. (Masada would be the site of the last stand of the Zealot Jewish community against the Romans during the revolt of AD 66-73. After a two-year siege, the Zealots chose to commit mass suicide rather than surrender to the Romans).
31	Octavian (later called Caesar Augustus) defeats Antony and Cleopatra in the Battle of Actium, effectively consolidating his de facto power as the sole ruler of the Roman Empire. His reign lasted until his death in AD 14, with Tiberius assuming power after him.
30	Egypt becomes a Roman province.
20/19	Herod the Great begins rebuilding the temple proper in Jerusalem.
5*	Jesus of Nazareth is born within the province of Judea in the town of Bethlehem during the final years of the reign of Herod the Great.
4	Herod the Great dies, and his kingdom is divided between his three surviving sons: (1) Herod Archelaus ("Herod the Ethnarch') become ethnarch of Judea, Samaria and Idumea (or Edom; ruled 4 BC-A 6; "ethnarch" refers to the ruler of a people under the Roman Empire; see 'Archelaus" on p. 1371); (2) Herod Antipas became tetrarch of Galilee and Perea (ruled 4 BC-AD 39; see "Herod Antipas and Herodias" on p. 1443); and (3) Herod Philip II became tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis (ruled 4 BC-AD 34; see note on Mark 6:17).

*denotes approximate date;/ signifies either/or

3

The Religious Setting of the New Testament

Introduction

Christianity did not begin its growth in a religious vacuum in which it found people blankly waiting for something to believe. On the contrary, the new faith in Christ had to fight its way against entrenched religious beliefs that had been in existence for centuries. Many had degenerated into feeble superstitions and meaningless rituals; others were relatively new and vigorous. In general, there were five distinct types.

The Greco-Roman Pantheon

The primitive religion of Rome in the early days of the republic was animism. Each small farmer worshiped the gods of his own farm and fire- side, which personified for him the forces with which he had to deal in living his daily life. Gods of the forest and field, gods of the sky and stream, gods of the sowing and of the harvest- all received his worship in their proper places and at their proper seasons. Some vestiges of local feasts and rites survive to this present among the peasants of Italy and Greece. It is possible that the festivities of the Roman Saturnalia that celebrated the turning of the year at the winter solstice are still echoed in the Christian observance of Christmas.

With the growth of the military state and the consequent contacts with Greek civilization came a fusion of deities under the dominating influence of the Greek pantheon. Jupiter, the god of the sky, was identified with the Greek Zeus; Juno, his wife, with Hera; Neptune, the god of the sea, with Poseidon; Pluto, the god of the underworld, with Hades; and so on. The entire list of Homeric deities was assimilated to their Roman counterparts. Under Augustus new temples were

erected and new priesthoods were founded. Many worshipers followed the old gods, whether Roman or Greek, and paid them homage.

The worship of the Greek pantheon, however, had begun to decline by the time of Christ. The gross immoralities and the petty squabbles of these deities, who were only magnified men and women, exposed them to the ridicule of the satirists and to the scorn of the philosophers. Plato, more than three centuries before Christ, had said that the tales of the gods should be excluded from the ideal state, since they would tend to corrupt youth by their evil example. The philosophic cults had no place for the gods in their scheme of things and openly made fun of them. Undoubtedly there were many devout worshippers of the gods, but their numbers were diminishing rather than increasing.

Another factor tended to destroy the older attitude of reverence toward the gods. Up to this time they had not been uniformly worshiped all cities, but each city or city-state had one of them as a patron. Worship was semi political; a man was a worshiper of Zeus or Hera or Artemis because he happened to live in a town over which that deity presided. When the city-states capitulated to the military might of Rome, the question would naturally be asked, "Why did not the local deity protect his people?" The vanquished peoples tended to abandon faith in gods who were either too weak or too fickle to aid them. The public observance of religious rites survived well beyond the first century. An outstanding example in the New Testament of such a cult is the worship of Artemis of Ephesus, the image that reputedly had fallen from heaven (Acts 19:27, 35). The fanatical devotion given to a local goddess is well illustrated by the shrieking mob who crowded the amphitheater and shouted aloud, "Great *is* Diana [Artemis] of the Ephesians" (19:34).

Emperor Worship

Although the worship of local deities persisted, the growing cosmopolitan consciousness in the empire prepared the way for a new type of religion, the worship of the state. For many years the Hellenistic kingdoms of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies had exalted their kings to the position of deity and had applied to them such titles as Lord *(Kyrios*), Savior *(Soter)*, or Manifest Deity*(Epiphanes).* The concentration of the executive functions of the Roman state in the person of one man had vested him with powers unprecedented in the history of the world. The fact that he was able to utilize those powers for the good of the empire created the feeling that there must be something divine in him.

The imperial cult was not established arbitrarily. It grew gradually out

of the increasing ascription of superhuman honors to the emperor and out of the desire to centralize the allegiance of the people in him. After his death Julius Caesar was called *Divus Julius.* From Augustus' time each of the emperors was deified at his death by vote of the Senate, although some of them did not take the honor very seriously. Caligula ordered that his statue should be set up in the temple at Jerusalem, but since he was generally considered to be insane, his action cannot be regarded as representative of the general imperial policy. Not until the time of Domitian at the close of the first century did a reigning emperor attempt to compel his subjects to worship him.

The refusal of all Christians to participate in such worship precipitated violent persecution, for the Christians consistently objected to worshiping a human being. The polytheistic Romans, who could always add one more god to their list of deities, looked on their refusal as a lack of proper recognition for the emperor and as a distinctly unpatriotic attitude. Between these two viewpoints there could be no reconciliation. The Christians' attitude on this question of the worship of the state, or of its head, is reflected in the Apocalypse, which reveals unmistakably the hostility between the claims of Christ and the claims of the emperor. There can be no doubt, however, that emperor worship had great value for the state. Its unified patriotism and worship and made the support of the state a religious duty. It was the totalitarianism of the first century.

The Mystery Religions

Neither the state religion nor emperor worship proved completely satisfying. Both were observed by ritual sacrifices; both were maintained collectively rather than individually; both sought protection by deity rather than fellowship with deity; and neither offered any personal solace or strength for times of stress and trouble. People were seeking a more personal faith that would bring them into immediate contact with deity, and they were ready for any sort of experience that would promise them that contact.

The mystery religions fulfilled that desire. They were mostly of Eastern origin, though the Eleusinian mysteries had been celebrated in Greece for a long time. The cult of Cybele, the Great Mother, came from Asia; that of Isis and Osiris or Serapis, from Egypt; Mithraism originated in Persia. While all of them differed from each other in origin and in detail, all were alike in certain broad characteristics. Each was centered about a god who had died and who was resuscitated. Each had a ritual of formulas and lustrations, of symbol and of secret dramatic representations of the experience of the god, by which the initiate was inducted into that experience,

and so was presumably rendered a candidate for immortality. The procedure of these initiations was somewhat like that of modern secret societies. Each religion maintained a brotherhood in which slave and master, rich and poor, high and low met on the same footing.

The mystery religions satisfied the desire for personal immortality and for social equality. They offered an outlet for emotion in religion as the state religion seldom did and they made religious experience emphatically personal. Nothing is said of them directly in the New Testament, but it is thought that Paul used their vocabulary on occasion, and that the "worship of angels" mentioned in Colossians (2:18-19) is a reflection of an attempted fusion of some eclectic philosophic cult with Christianity at Colosse.

The Worship of the Occult

Akin in many ways to the mystery religions was the occultism of the day, the superstitious observances and regard of the masses for the powers of the universe, which they could not understand out which they could vaguely feel. For them the entire world was inhabited by spirits and demons that could be invoked or commanded to do one's bidding if only one knew the correct rite or formula to use. Allusions in contemporary literature and fragments from the papyri bear witness to the widespread belief in magic that prevailed throughout the Roman domain. Jew and Gentile alike shared these superstitious beliefs; in fact, the Jews were often more interested in magic than were the Gentiles.

Reliance on magic began in early times. The Romans had practised augury or foretelling the future by the examination of the entrails of slaughtered animals or by observing the flight of birds since the founding of Rome. The Greeks were familiar with the oracle, where the gods were supposed to communicate their will to men through priests or priestesses whom they possessed. The Babylonian captivity brought many Jews into contact with the mystic lore of the East, and they became professional exorcists and necromancers. The conquests of Alexander established contacts with the Persians, from whom the mysticism of the East flowed back into the west. Under Tiberius the mania for horoscopes reached its peak, but magic was popular down through the succeeding centuries, as the papyri show.

Jewish interest in magic appears in the New Testament. The Pharisees cast out demons, and sorcerers are mentioned in Acts as rivals of preachers of the gospel (Acts 8:9-24; 13:6-11). Pagan magic was recognized as hostile to Christianity by the Ephesian Christians, who burned their books of spells in a bonfire that cost fifty thousand pieces of silver (Acts 19:19), an amount possibly

equivalent to 50,000 day's wages (if one assumes a reference to the Greek *drachma,* or the Roman *denarius,* a day's wage for a laborer). The biblical attitude toward occult worship, however, was invariably hostile. Although the reality of demonic forces was recognized, commerce with them was strictly forbidden both in the Old and New Testaments (Deut. 18:10-12, 20; Mic. 5:12; I Cor. 10:20-21).

Specimens of magical formulas that were used to control the spirits or to bring good luck appear in the papyri. One of these, an excerpt from the great Paris magical papyrus of the third century, will show the curious combination of pagan, Jewish, and Christian phraseology that was used as a charm for exorcising a demon:

> A notable spell for driving out demons. Invocation to be uttered over the head [of the possessed one]. Place before him branches of olive, and standing behind him say: Hail, spirit of Abraham; hail, spirit of Isaac; hail, spirit of Jacob. Jesus the Christ, the holy one, the spirit [here follow a series of apparently meaningless words] drive forth the demon from the man, until the unclean demon of Satan shall flee before thee. I adjure thee, O demon, whoever thou art, by the God *Sabarbarbathioth Sabarbarbathiuth Sabarbarbathoneth Sabarbarbaphai*.
>
> Come forth, O demon, whoever thou art, and depart from so and so at once, at once, now! Come forth, O demon, for I shall chain thee with adamantine chains not to be loosed, and I shall give you over to black chaos in utter destruction.

The foregoing formula illustrates both the respect of the pagan world for the power of the gospel of Christ and its misconception of that gospel. Had there been no real power in Christianity against the demonic influences of paganism, the names of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus would never have been used at all. This misconception lay in taking for granted that these terms made just one more magical charm to be used at convenience of the exorcist. The user of this formula was repeating the error of Simon Magus, who thought that the power of God could be bought with money. Such a mixture of faith and superstition was by no means uncommon among a people who were intensely religious in nature, but who had no access to regular teaching or to a written copy of the Scriptures.

Astrology was also popular in the empire during the first century. It had originated in Babylonia, where the clear night skies afforded full opportunity for unobstructed vision of the stars and of the planets. Because the Babylonian priests had regarded the planets as emblematic of their gods, they had kept a careful record

of their movements. The order of the universe impressed them and they sought to connect it with the course of human life. Through the conquests of Alexander, which made contacts between the eastern and western worlds, astrological lore became known to the Greeks. Through them and through the eastern soothsayers who went westward to seek their fortunes, astrology was introduced into the Roman Empire.

The theory of astrology assumed that the sovereign powers of the world that controlled the planets and human life worked simultaneously in both, and so often presaged the careers of men by the courses of the planets under which they were born. In order to find what the celestial bodies had to say, the path of the sun and the planets through the heavens was divided into the twelve signs of the zodiac, each of which was marked by a special constellation. By knowing the exact time of birth of a person, one could ascertain under which sign he was born, and one could calculate the positions of the various planets at that moment. From their positions, their potential influence on his career could be deter- mined, and his future could be predicted, or he could be warned what to expect and what to avoid. The tabulation of these data was called a, horoscope.

With the rise of the Copernican system of astronomy, which made the sun the center of the solar system rather than the earth, astrology waned in importance. In the time of Christ, however, it commanded considerable attention not only from the lower classes, but also from the aristocracy. Augustus employed it on occasion and Tiberius resorted to it regularly. Never did it penetrate Christianity, for the Christians repudiated it utterly.

The Philosophies

When religion degenerates into empty ritualism or ignorant superstition. Thoughtful people may abandon it altogether because they feel that it has no real satisfaction to offer them. They cannot, however, ignore the necessity of finding some rational answer to the problems the world poses for them. The mysteries of the universe call for explanation unless one is content to be such a dolt that he is never disturbed by them.

Philosophy is the attempt to correlate all existing knowledge about the universe into systematic form and to integrate human experience with it. Philosophies have been crude, or naïve, or subtle, or profound. Some of them have acknowledged the existence of a supreme power or a personal deity. Others have been frankly materialistic and have dismissed the concept of gods as either ridiculous or unnecessary. In any case, philosophy has never depended on a

revelation from God. It has always assumed the potential adequacy of humans to understand their world and decide their fate. The knowledge by which decisions are to be determined will be derived from individual or communal experience. The formulation of knowledge into a coherent system should be governed by the rules of logic that man has devised. Through the increasing scope of his observation and through the advancing perfection of his logic man should be able at last to attain full comprehension of the mysteries of which he is a part.

To achieve this end various systems of philosophy were created. Insofar as they reflect basic attitudes toward life, they persist to the present day, though perhaps not under their original titles. All of these: were founded on premises different from basic Christian principles. Although many of them possessed features that resembled those of Christianity, and although the vocabulary and even some usages of these competing faiths later were absorbed into the thought of the church, they can generally be regarded as opposing forces rather than as the material out of which Christianity was formed. An elementary understanding of them is essential to a clear comprehension of the intellectual and religious environment of the first century.

Platonism

Platonism derived its name from Plato, the great Athenian philosopher and founder of the Academy, who lived in the fourth century before Christ. He was a friend and pupil of Socrates. From his master he inherited an inquiring mind and a habit of thinking in abstract concepts. The world, he taught, consisted of an infinite number of things, each of which is an imperfect copy of a real idea. For instance, there are many kinds of chairs, but none of them could be the chair from which all other chairs are derived. The real chair, then, is not the one made of wood, but is the ideal chair of which the wooden one is a copy.

The real world, then, is the world of ideas of which the material world is only a shadow. These ideas are organized into a system, at the head of which is the idea of the Good. Plato never seemed to personalize the idea of the Good, nor did he identify it with the Demiurge, or Creator, who produced the material world. He did regard the ideas as having objective existence; in fact, they were the only real existence, of which the present world is a feeble and garbled reflection.

Such a concept of the world led inevitably to dualism. If the real world is the unseen realm of ideas, and if the changing cosmos in which man lives is only transitory, his quest will be to escape from the unreal to the real. Reflection, meditation, and even asceticism will open the way to deliverance. Knowledge is

salvation; sin is ignorance. By seeking the Highest Good, the End, the Supreme Idea, man may liberate himself from the enslaving material world and may rise to a comprehension of the real world.

Platonism was too abstract to gain the attention and thought of the common man. It is not mentioned directly in the New Testament as one of the philosophies that Christianity encountered. Its dualism, however, was reflected by Gnosticism, which may have taken its rise in the first century, and by Neo-Platonism which was sponsored by Plotinus in the third century.

Gnosticism

Gnosticism, as its name implies (derived from the Greek gnosis, 'knowledge'), was a system that promised salvation by knowledge. God, said the Gnostics, was too great and too holy to have created the material world with all its baseness and corruption. The Gnostics held that from the supreme Deity had proceeded a series of successive emanations, each one a little inferior to the one from which it sprang, until finally the last of these emanations, or "aeons," as they were called, created the world. Matter was thus equated with evil. If man wished to obtain salvation, he could do so by renouncing the material world and seeking the invisible world. Two contradictory ethical conclusions arose from the argument. The first was asceticism, which contended that since the body was material, it was *evil,* and should therefore be kept under strict control. Its appetites should be curbed, and its impulses should be disregarded and suppressed. The other conclusion was drawn from the assumption that the spirit was real, and the body was unreal. If the body were only temporary, its acts were inconsequential. Full gratification of its desires would thus have no effect on the ultimate salvation of the spirit, which alone would survive.

There is a possibility that this teaching promoted the heresy to which Paul alludes in Colossians, where he warns his readers to "take heed lest there shall be anyone that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). Apparently, this heresy denied the fullness of the Godhead in Christ and perhaps made him one of the lesser emanations or manifestations of God. Furthermore, the asceticism that certain forms of Gnosticism promoted may be echoed in the attitude of "Handle not, nor taste, nor touch" (2:21) that Paul so roundly condemned. Absolute identification of this error with Gnosticism is not possible, but there are similarities.

Neo Platonism

The principles of Plato were adopted by Plotinus (A.D. 204-269) of Lycopolis in Egypt, who taught philosophy in Rome for twenty-five years. Plotinus was indebted for his training to Ammonius Saccas of Alexandria, who had been a Christian but who had returned to heathenism. He was also strongly influenced by Persian ideas of dualism that he had encountered while serving in a Roman military expedition. Neo-Platonism was distinctly a religious philosophy based on the PIatonic dualism of the universal ideal and the thing, and on the Persian dualism of light and darkness. In Neo-Platonism the spirit was inevitably good, and the body was inherently evil. Salvation consisted in eliminating completely all bodily desires as one gradually retreated from the life dependent on sensation and moved toward the life of the spirit. Which would finally be achieved at death. Then the body's evil influence would cease, and the true spiritual life would blossom forth.

Neo-Platonism went beyond Platonism in teaching that the attainment of spiritual life would not be reached by intellectual effort but by a mystical absorption into the Infinite. Since no reasoning can compass God, only feeling can establish communication with him.

In the dualistic thinking of Gnosticism and Neo-Platonism a great gulf is fixed between reality and matter, not only in the metaphysical sense that the two are irreconcilable, but also in the ethical sense that the one is good and the other is evil. There is consequently no room in either for the Christian doctrine of the incarnation. Consistent Neo-Platonists would regard the union of God and man, deity and flesh, as simply unthinkable. The atonement would be unnecessary, since no act that took place in the material world could leave any effect on the real world of spirit. The resurrection of the body would be a hideous mistake, since it would only perpetuate the evil of material existence. Julian, "the Apostate," Christianity's last imperial opponent, was a Neo-Platonist.

Epicureanism

Epicureanism was named for Epicurus, the son of an Athenian, who studied at Athens and founded his own school about 306 B. C. His teaching was best represented in the works of his pupil Lucretius, the materialistic Roman philosopher and poet of the pre-Christian century. The world, he taught, began in a shower of atoms, some of which, by pure chance, moved a trifle obliquely and collided with others. These collisions produced other collisions, until the ensuing movement brought into being the present universe. The cosmology of Epicureanism is similar to that of modem materialistic evolution.

In such a world of chance there could be neither purpose nor design. There could not, therefore, be any final or absolute good. The highest possible good, Epicurus said, was pleasure, which he defined as the absence of pain. Contrary to the popular conception of Epicureanism, both then and now, it did not advocate sensuality, but rather it urged the choice of those enjoyments which would give the longest and fullest satisfaction to the individual. If abstinence from some indulgences would bring greater ultimate satisfaction than the indulgences themselves, abstinence was recommended. Epicureanism did not advocate dissipation, but it offered no check to selfishness.

Epicureanism was essentially antireligious. If the world originated with matter and chance, no creative power was necessary. If chance dominates the outcome of cosmic affairs, there is no room for a directive, purposeful Mind. The Epicureans, to be sure did speak of the gods, and did not categorically deny their existence; but the gods as they pictured them were confined to a distant haven of bliss where they enjoyed their own society and had no interest in the trivial of men. Epicureanism at best was deistic and in effect atheistic, for a god who is inaccessible or uninterested in human affairs might as well not exist at all.

As a philosophy Epicureanism was quite popular because it did not indulge in much abstract reasoning. It appealed to emotional consideration, for it supplied a philosophic justification for doing what most people do anyway; make pleasure the chief goal of life. It brushed aside all thought of sin or of accountability at a final judgment, because it predicated neither purpose nor terminus for the present world-process. There was no recognition of immortality, for a body composed only of atoms did not survive the present life. In consideration of the main tenets of Epicureanism, it is small wonder that the Athenians laughed at Paul's address at the Areopagus when he preached "Jesus and the resurrection" (Acts 17: 18, 32).

Stoicism

Coupled with Epicureanism in the foregoing New Testament passage was Stoicism. Stoicism was founded by Zeno (340-265 B.C.), a native of Cyprus and possibly of Semitic descent. Zeno did not recognize a personal God, but he taught that the universe is controlled by an Absolute Reason, or divine will immanent in it and pervading it thoroughly. The world process is thus governed not by chance but by a progressive purpose.

Conformity to reason, then, becomes the highest good. Personal feeling is immaterial or even harmful since it tends to unbalance the rational solution of human problems. Perfect self-control, unmoved by sentimental considerations,

was the goal of the Stoic. The resulting attitude has given the chief meaning to the modern use of the term.

Because the Stoics believed that nature was as it should be and that whatever came to pass was regulated by Providence, there was no room for altering the process or for staying its inexorable course. The universe was to be accepted, not to be changed. This fatalistic attitude inculcated self- restraint and consequently fostered a fairly high type of morality. It appealed to the rigid, legal Roman mind, and many of the better Roman statesmen, such as Cicero, adhered to its tenets.

The Stoic creed, however virtuous, was not Christianity. In it was no allowance for free will or for the real existence of evil. All apparent evils were for the Stoic only parts of a larger good. Such an attitude would exclude any idea of reform or of change in the existing order of things. The individual was obligated to act virtuously himself and conform to the highest reason he knew, but he was under no obligation to seek to change the common lot of men or to shield them from adversities,

No personal dealing with God was possible to the stoic. If nature dealt impartially with all people, it would not play favorites with any. Furthermore, the idea of personal relation with universal reason or with the cosmic process would seem about as incongruous as showing affection for the law of gravitation. God, according to the Stoic, took no personal interest in the affairs of men because he was not personal. The entire concept of the Christian gospel, in which God had countered evil by sending his Son into the world to die for sinners, would be utterly ridiculous to the Stoic. Although much of the Stoic ethic was commendable, and although in some points it resembled the highest standards of Christian ethics, the two systems were leagues apart in their presuppositions and their practice.

Two other systems deserve notice, although they were less popular and influential than those heretofore mentioned.

Cynicism

Cynicism, like Platonism, grew out of Socratic teaching. Since Socrates taught that the person with simple needs can usually survive under conditions that would frustrate completely one with elaborate wants, the Cynics contended that the height of virtue would be to have no wants at all. In order to be independent of all desire they sought to abolish desire. They abandoned all standards and conventions and became complete individualists. Often the Cynics were purposely scurrilous and indecent in language and behavior simply for the purpose of demonstrating that they were “different.” Socrates’ criticism of Antisthenes, the founder of the Cynic

sect, was probably the most penetrating analysis of the whole movement that has ever been given. "I can see your pride," he said, "through the holes in your cloak."

Scepticism

Pyrrho of Elis (365-295 B.C.) was the first of the Sceptics. Briefly, their argument was as follows: If knowledge rests on experience, there can be no final standard, since the experience of each person differs from that of all his fellows. Customs acceptable in one country are regarded as reprehensible in another. Impressions of the same objects will vary with the time and conditions where they are observed. All terms of judgment are relative: a weight that is light to one man may be heavy for the next man. Unless one final starting-point for reasoning can be found, no criterion of judgment is valid, and no such thing as truth can exist. The Sceptics, if they proceeded by their own logic, would be unable to make any statement whatsoever, since they could prove nothing by any acceptable premises, Scepticism would logically end in complete intellectual paralysis.

Cynicism and Scepticism arose from the abandonment of standards. The former dealt with ethics; the latter, with intellect. Christianity differed from both in its assertion that God is the ultimate standard for man. It insisted that man is necessarily dependent on God which fact set a limit to Cynic independence: and that God is the beginning of all thinking, so that his personal revelation serves as the regulating factor in the acquisition of knowledge by experience.

Evaluation of Philosophies

However popular these and other variant philosophies may have been, they were unsatisfactory because they were too abstract for the ordinary person to grasp in their entirety, and because they lacked finality. Their reasonings always ended in a peradventure. Plato expressed this failure exactly when he put into the mouth of Simias the following statement:

> For I dare say that you, Socrates, feel as I do, how very hard or almost impossible is the attainment of any certainty about questions such as these [immortality] in the present life. And yet I should deem him a coward who did not prove what is said about them to the uttermost, or whose heart failed before he had examined them on every side. For he should persevere until he has attained one of two things: either he should discover or learn the truth about them, or, if this is impossible, I would have him take the best and most irrefragable of human notions, and let this be the raft upon which he sails through life-not without risk, as I admit, if he cannot find

some word of God which will more surely and safely carry him.

Thus philosophy, according to its own acknowledgment, had not been successful in the quest of truth. Christianity has the answer: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

4

The Judaism Setting of the New Testament

Introduction

Among the religions of the Roman empire in the first century, Judaism held a unique place. It was national, having originated with the Jewish people, and yet it was not confined to them, for its proselytes were numbered by the hundreds. It was not the only cult that emphasized the worship of one God, but unlike the others it was exclusively monotheistic in the sense that its adherents were not allowed to worship or even to admit the existence of any other god or gods. Other religions had temples and sacrificial worship, but in no other faith did the temple with its imageless sanctuary play so great a part or hold the single allegiance of so large a company of people. Many of the philosophies had well-articulated ethical systems, but the ethics of Judaism were inherent its worship and were rigidly enforced on all its adherents. Most of the ethnic religions of the day were founded on tradition or on mystic intuition. Judaism was based on a revelation from God recounted in the sacred Scriptures of the law and the prophets which claimed to be the reproduction of the words of God himself as he spoke to his chosen servants.

Some understanding of Judaism is indispensable to the student of the New Testament, for Christianity is the child of Judaism. The books of the New Testament, with two examples, were written by Jews. The teachings of the New Testament concerning God, man, sin, salvation, law, grace, prayer, and many other subjects fundamental to the Christian life strike their roots back into Old Testament soil. Even the argument of the New Testament against legalism are drawn from statements in the Old Testament, and the next of the writings of the apostolic age is filled with Old Testament quotations. The Christians were first known as ‘the sect of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5, 14), which was regarded as a rivulet from the mainstream of Judaism. Jesus himself was a Jew born of a Jewish family (Matt. 1:

16) and was circumcised as all Jewish male infants were (Luke 2:21). He was taken to Jerusalem as a boy that he might participate in the Passover feast (2:41), and throughout his life he observed Jewish customs and moved in Jewish society. The present rift between Christianity and Judaism is not the result of a wide difference in historical and theological origins. It is rather the outcome of the repudiation of the Lord Jesus by the Jewish people, as John said: "He came unto his own [home], and they that were his own [people] received him not" (John 1: 11).

Origin

Judaism as it existed in the first century was largely the product of the exile. Prior to the captivity the people of Israel and Judah had given only spasmodic loyalty to the law. The worship of Jehovah had been their rightful and official faith, but it had frequently been "more honored in the breach than in the observance." In the ninth century B. C. the entire northern kingdom had been alienated to the worship of Baal under the influence of Jezebel, Ahab's Phoenician queen, and had been brought back to the worship of Jehovah only by the heroic ministry of Elijah. Similarly, the temple worship of the southern kingdom fell into neglect and disuse during the reigns of Manasseh and Amon in the eighth century, who sponsored the introduction of foreign deities. Under Josiah's vigorous administration, the temple was cleansed, the worship of Jehovah was restored, and the book of the law that was brought to light during the reconstruction of the temple was put back in its rightful place of authority (II Chron. 34: 1- 33). As long as the people lived in Palestine, surrounded by prosperous and powerful heathen neighbors and subjected to their influence, they were tempted to experiment with alien worship and to desert the God of their fathers. The prophets protested in vain against this tendency which had appeared during the wilderness wanderings of the people (Num. 25: 1- 3), and which had persisted even to the period of the captivity and exile (Ezek. 14:1-5; Jer. 7:16-20).

The captivity confronted the Jewish people with a demanding alternative. Either they must commit themselves utterly to the worship of Jehovah, the one true God, by which allegiance they would retain the genius and purpose of their national existence, or they would be absorbed both religiously and politically by the nations among whom they were driven into exile. If they were to choose the former alternative, they would have to pay closer attention to the requirements of the law, and they would have to devise some means of worship to take the place of the temple ritual that had ceased with the destruction of the central building and the 'subsequent dispersion of the priesthood. The book of the law could be carried

with them to their new resting place, but the cult of the temple, as far as they could see, was gone forever.

While the captives of the southern kingdom were in Babylonia in the sixth century B.C. the new Judaism began to take form. Idolatry was first banned. Whereas the worship of Baal and other Canaanite deities had been madly espoused prior to the capture of Jerusalem, the bitter discipline of the captivity schooled the survivors to look toward Jehovah. The whole spirit of the book of Daniel, in which all participation in heathen worship is scorned and in which Daniel and his friends avowed their will to worship Jehovah alone at any cost, is a witness to the salutary change in spiritual temper that came over the exiles.

With the enforced cessation of sacrifice, the study of the law, or Torah, began to take its place. In the kingdoms, the individual worshiper may have relied largely on participation in public worship as an expression of his faith. That expression may have been sincere, but it could hardly have been as vital as the personal study of God's precepts could become. In the reform of Josiah, the law was read to the people (II Chron. 34:29-30) as a special feature of a reforming movement, but in the exile there was an increasing tendency for each person to study the law for himself. The scribe, like Ezra, who studied and interpreted the law became as important a personage among the people as the priest had been while the first temple was standing (Ezra 7:1-6). In the days of Jesus, the scribes were potent figures in the religion of Judaism.

A new center of worship was established with the rise of the synagogue. The wide dispersion of the people in the captivity and their wanderings in the years that followed made some local form of gathering necessary. Even when the temple was reestablished, together with the sacrifices, many people could not attend its ceremonies. In order to hold them together around the study of the law, wherever ten men could be found to form a regular congregation, synagogues were created in the various communities where they lived. In these the people gathered for prayer and worship on the seventh day of the week. So firmly established was the synagogue as an institution that it continued even after the rebuilding of the temple, and in the first century in Jerusalem some synagogues carried on their activities concurrently with those of temple (Acts 6:9), Although no mention of the synagogue as such occurs in the Old Testament, there can be little doubt that it grew up in the years between the captivity and the advent of Christ, for in his lifetime, it was flourishing in Palestine.

The religious life that grew up around the synagogue was an adaptation of the older rites and observances of Judaism to the new conditions under which the

people had to live. Many of them had been moved from the pastoral and agricultural life of Palestine to the busy commercial activity of great cities. Feasts could not be observed with all the features that might be utilized in village worship. Problems and queries prompted by the new life called for new answers. New influences from the Gentile world surrounding them pressed in on them with great force. Some changes were inevitable, but in the main Judaism retained the essential principles of the older worship prescribed by the law and preached by the prophets.

Theology

Central to the whole faith of Judaism was its tenacious belief in the unity and transcendence of Jehovah. In contrast to the multiplicity of deities that the heathen world acknowledged, the Jew guarded jealously his short, sharp creed of Deuteronomy 6:4: "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." Jewish exclusivism in worship is amply attested by the attitude that the Gentiles took toward them. They were generally accused of atheism, not because they denied the existence of any god at all, but because they consistently refused to recognize the reality of any deity except their own. Among the rabbinic teachers, considerable emphasis was placed on the fatherhood of God. The introductory phrase of the Lord's Prayer," Our Father who art in heaven," was no novelty. Isaiah had addressed God with this title:

> *For thou art our Father, though Abraham knoweth us not, and Israel doth not acknowledge us: thou, 0 Jehovah, art our Father; our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name. (Isa. 63: 16).*

Rabbi Akiba taught that the Israelites were sons of God: "Beloved (of God) are the Israelites, in that they shall be called sons of God; still more beloved in that it is made known to them that they are called sons of God" (cf. Deut. 14: 1). This personal relation of God to Israel as expressed by the figure of fatherhood was emphasized chiefly by Palestinian teachers.

Philo, who belonged to the Hellenistic wing of Judaism, had a more philosophic conception of God. God is eternal, unchangeable, holy, free, and perfect. Because he is superior to all other beings, he is not definable by comparison with them, since definition would thus be equivalent to limitation.

This concept illustrates a trend toward depersonalizing God that is still extant in modern Judaism. God thus becomes an actual but a vague and shadowy being concerning whose character and attitudes no definite assertions can be made. Perhaps this uncertainty about the nature of God, which sprang originally from a hesitation to limit him, was the reason for the indefiniteness expressed in John 1:

18: "No man hath seen God at any time .... " At this point Christianity went beyond Judaism by presenting a God who was not only sole God and real, but who was also personal and knowable.

Man, according to Jewish theology, was the creation of God, endowed with the ability to choose between obedience and disobedience to God's revealed law, and by so doing to choose the consequences of life and of death (Deut.30:11-20). Man's chief end in life was to keep the commandments of God and to maintain all the forms that were prescribed for the people as a whole: namely, circumcision, the observance of the Sabbath, the various annual feasts, and worship in the synagogue. The law summarized the whole duty of man and established his relation to God.
Sin for the Jew consisted chiefly in a wrong relationship to the revealed law of God. The failure to obey one of its proscriptions, whether "weighty," such as the command "Thou shalt not kill," or "light," such as the prohibition of taking a bird from the nest with her fledglings or with the eggs (22:6-7), was regarded as a sin. This Jewish attitude is reflected in the New Testament in James 2: 10: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all." Judaism drew no distinction between the moral and ceremonial law, for both were inextricably connected with the life of the people. Severance from the elect people, which was the penalty for sin, was meted out to all offenders, not only on those who had committed some outrageous crime or who neglected some fundamental ordinance such as circumcision, but also on those who ate flesh with blood remaining in it (Lev.1 7:14).

In the period before the exile, rewards and punishments related to the fate of the nation. If the nation observed God's law and worshiped him alone, it prospered. If the nation lapsed into idolatry and into neglect of the law, it suffered political and economic reverses. Sin was thus evaluated and judged on a communal scale rather than individually. There was, of course, personal consciousness of sin, as Psalm 51 shows, but the social and national implications of the individual's conduct were more marked in Judaism than are in modern Protestant Christianity.
The uprooting of the nation in the captivity tended to destroy the connection of reward and punishment with ebb and how of national prosperity in the land. The captivity itself was a discipline that the nation must endure until such time as God should see fit to restore them, but in the interim the generations that should be born and die must face the issues *of* life and death for themselves. This was the problem that confronted Ezekiel. When he was told by the fatalists of his day that "the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," he replied that one's relation to God is not determined by the sins or by the virtues of

one's ancestors but by his own. *As I live, saith the* Lord *Jehovah, ye shall not have occasion any more to use this proverb* in *Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father,* so *also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth,* it *shall die* (Ezek. 18:3-4).

This reaffirmation of individual responsibility accords with the position of Judaism as it is reflected in the New Testament. The rich young ruler showed deep concern for his individual relation to God although he felt that he had kept completely all the precepts of the moral law (Matt. 19: 16-22). Communal responsibility was transferred from the people as inhabitants of a land to the people as the elect of God, whose manifestation of that election lay in their social solidarity rather than in their location.

The theology of punishment and of reward, when applied to the individual life, opened the question of immortality and the life hereafter. Little is given in the Old Testament concerning these subjects. Jacob and David both alluded to Sheol, a dim and shadowy region of the dead, where they might be reunited with their children who had suffered an untimely death (Gen. 37:35; II Sam. 12:23). Nowhere in the earlier records is there any direct statement concerning the resurrection of the body, although Jesus interpreted God's declaration to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God *of J*acob" (Exod. 3:6), to mean that he was not the God of the dead but of the living (Matt. 22:32). The suggestion of resurrection emerges first in the poetical books and later in the prophets. The sixteenth Psalm, attributed to David, says: *For thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; Neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life: In thy presence is fullness of joy; In thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore (Ps.16:10-11).*

Isaiah, in predicting the future judgments of God and the salvation of Israel, says*: Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise Awake and sing. ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth: shall cast forth the dead* (Isa. 26: 19). In Daniel a prediction of resurrection also occurs: *And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt* (Dan. 12:2).

The relative scarcity of references to the life hereafter or to a resurrection may seem strange when one contemplates the fact that Judaism was a part of the divine revelation to men. The revelation, however, carried with it an educative process that was closely connected with Israel's development in the land of Palestine. Their tenure of the land was conditioned on their behavior in this life, and their reward as a group was confined to this world, for common reward and common punishment would scarcely be meted out in another life where individual

destiny was the determining factor. The emphasis under law for the Jewish nation was on collective salvation here, rather than on individual salvation hereafter.

The apocryphal and apocalyptic writings are more explicit. The unknown author of the Wisdom of Solomon, who probably wrote at Alexandria in the middle of the second century B. C., says: "The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, and no torment shall touch them ... and although they are chastened for a little time, they shall receive great blessings, for God tested them and found them worthy of himself' (Wis. of Sol. 3:1,5). In Second Maccabees, a work drawn from the original of Jason of Cyrene, the concept of a resurrection emerged clearly. Judas Maccabeus, according to the account given in II Maccabees 12:42-44, had, by a surprise attack on Gorgias, governor of Idumea, retrieved the bodies of some Jews who had been killed in a previous skirmish with the Idumeans. When the bodies were removed for burial, under the coats of the dead were found things consecrated to idols. Judas, to expiate the sin that the deceased had committed, acted as follows: *And when he had made a gathering throughout the company to the sum of two thousand drachmas of silver, he sent it to Jerusalem to offer a sin- offering, doing therein very well and honestly in that he was mindful of the resurrection: for if he had not hoped that they that were slain should have risen again, if had been supery-1uous and vain to pray for the dead* (II Macc. 12:43-44).

Sheol was regarded as an intermediate state preceding the resurrection and the final rewards and punishments. In II Maccabees 6:2 3 Eleazara martyr, speaks of going to Hades; since he as a righteous man must be destined for the resurrection mentioned above, his stay in Hades would only be temporary. A day of judgment in which the wicked should be sent to well-deserved doom and in which the righteous would be vindicated also appears in the apocryphal writings. The just 'having been littled chastised … shall be greatly rewarded' (Wis. of Sol. 3:5), while the wicked 'have no hope, neither comfort in the day of trial" (3: 18). In II Esdras and in Enoch there are numerous allusions to a future day of doom, although the statements are not always coherent.

The Messianic expectation of the advent of a political deliverer for Israel was strong in the intertestamental period. In the Apocrypha, II Esdras is outstanding as a Messianic apocalypse. Oesterley thinks that it is the compilation of the work of several authors who wrote between A.D. 100 and 270. The book, even at this late date, may still be independent of Christian influence, since it is unmistakably Jewish and contains no allusion to the person of Christ. It bears some traces of being a translation from a Hebrew original. It predicts that the divine kingdom shall succeed the rule of Rome; that the Messiah shall rule by law; and that after

he has completed his work, he shall die, and the judgment will follow. The Psalms of Solomon, written in the first century before Christ, depicts the coming of a righteous ruler for Israel who shall be sinless and who shall rule over the Gentiles (Ps. of Sol. 17). In all this literature the Messiah is nowhere represented as suffering for men or as redeeming them by his personal sacrifice. The Messianic hope and the apocalyptic concept of it that is apparent in Daniel and that is treated at length in later books formed the background for the apostles' questioning of Jesus that evoked his well-known Olivet discourse (Matt. 24-25).

The Temple

The original temple of Solomon was destroyed when Jerusalem was sacked and burned by the troops of Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B. C. The second temple, built in the, restoration and mentioned by Haggai and Zechariah, prophets of that period, was begun about 537 B.C., and was completed after many delays in 516 B.C. (Ezra 6:13-15).

Little is known of the history of this temple. In 168 B.C. Antiochus Epiphanes plundered it and desecrated it by introducing into it an altar to Olympian Zeus on which he offered sacrifice. Three years later Judas Maccabeus cleansed and repaired it. It was standing in 63 8. C: when Pompey conquered Jerusalem, and was robbed of its treasures Crassus in 54 B. C. When Herod the Great took the city in 37 B. C. some of the Temple structures were burned, but the main building was probably not greatly damaged. Herod, however, in the eighteenth year of his reign (20-19 B.C) undertook the rebuilding of the temple. He collected the material before he began the actual process of demolition and reconstruction and proceeded slowly in order that the worship might be disturbed as little as possible. The work was done by the priests. The sanctuary itself was completed in a year and a half, but the outer buildings and porticoes were not finished until A. D.62 or 64. When Jesus' enemies said that the temple had been forty-six years in building, they implied that the work was still going on (John 2:20)

The building itself was made of white marble, a large part of which was covered with gold, which reflected the sunlight and made it an object of dazzling splendor. The temple court occupied a rectangular space about 585 feet east to west and about 610 feet north to south. Inside the wall of this court was a set of cloisters with a double row of columns on the south side. The eastern cloister was known as Solomon's porch (John 10:23; Acts 3: 11; 5: 12) because it was traditionally a survival from Solomon's temple. Offices were located along the walls or between the porticoes.

The outer court was known as the court of the Gentiles. No restrictions were placed on access to it, and it was at times used as a marketplace. At the northern end of the court and transverse to it was the temple proper, consisting of the inner court with its buildings. At the eastern end was-the women's court, and at the 'western end was the court of the Israelites from which women were excluded. Centered within the court of the Israelites was the court of the priests, in the middle of which was the sanctuary. The inner court stood on higher ground than the outer court. Between the two, on the edge of the inner court, was a stone parapet, on which were inscriptions warning all Gentiles to stay out of the second enclosure under penalty of death. The wall was pierced by nine gates, four on the north, four on the south, and one on the end that may have been the Beautiful Gate mentioned in Acts 3.

The sanctuary itself was elevated above the inner court and was reached by a flight of twelve steps. Its divisions were similar to those of the Tabernacle: The Holy Place, on the east, which was about sixty feet long, and the Most Holy Place, which was about thirty feet long. The former contained the table of shewbread on the north, the seven-branched lampstand on the south, and the altar of incense between them. Only the priests could enter the Holy Place. The Most Holy Place was empty, for the Ark of the Covenant had been lost when the temple of Solomon was destroyed. The high priest entered the Most Holy Place once a year on the Day of Atonement, when he made propitiation with blood for the sins of the people. The division between the Holy place and the Most Holy place was a thick double veil, which shut off the inner sanctuary from prying eyes. On the outside of the sanctuary were built small rooms, arranged three stories and accessible by a staircase, in which priests lived, or which could be used for storage.

Within the court of the priests east of the sanctuary was the great altar of burnt offering, about eighteen feet square and fifteen feet high. On this altar perpetual fire burned and animal sacrifices were consumed in the daily ritual. Just north of the altar was a space for slaughtering the victims and preparing them for sacrifice. Only the priests could remain within the court of the priests, except for those who brought animals to be offered as sacrifices, since they had to lay their hands on the victim before it was slaughtered. The Jews were allowed by the Romans to maintain a police corps to keep order within the temple precincts. Its chief officer was called a *strategos,* or "captain of the temple" (Acts 4:1; 5:24-26). It is possible that a detachment from these men took Jesus at the betrayal, rather than a cohort of Roman soldiers. They were charged with the apprehension and safekeeping of Peter and John when the latter were arrested for preaching, probably within the temple enclosure. The guard watched the temple day by day to see that

no unauthorized person entered forbidden enclosures. At night the gates were shut, and a watch was stationed to prevent the entrance of marauders.

The temple was the main center of worship in Jerusalem. Jesus himself and later his apostles taught and preached within its courts. As late as A. D. 56 the church in Jerusalem still had in its ranks men who made vows in the temple (21:23-26) and who adhered closely to its legal observance. Only with the development of the Gentile church did its connection with Christianity cease.

The Synagogue

The synagogue played a large part in the growth and persistence of Judaism, as previously noted. The Jews of the Dispersion founded synagogues in every city of the empire where there were enough Jews to maintain one, and foreign synagogues flourished in Jerusalem. Galilee, which in the days of the Maccabees was largely Gentile (I Macc. 5:21-23), was filled with synagogues in the time of Christ. The synagogue was the social center where the Jewish inhabitants of a city gathered weekly to meet each other. It was the educational medium for keeping the law before the people and for providing instruction for their children in the ancestral faith. It was the substitute for temple worship, which was precluded by distance or by poverty. In the synagogue the study of the law took the place of ritual sacrifice, the rabbi supplanted the priest, and the communal filth applied to individual life.

Each synagogue had as its leader the "head of synagogue" (Mark 5:22), who was probably selected from among the elders by vote. The leader presided over the services in the synagogue, acted as instructor in case of any dispute (Luke 13:14), and introduced visitors to the assembly (Acts 13:15). The synagogue attendant, or *hazzan,* acted as custodian of the property and had the responsibility of caring for the building and its contents. His duties included warning the village people of the beginning of Sabbath on Friday afternoon and notifying them as well of its close. Probably he was the official mentioned in Luke 4:20 who brought forth the Scripture from which Jesus preached in the synagogue at Nazareth and who replaced the roll in its proper niche when Jesus had finished reading from it. On occasion the *hazzan* served as the master of the local synagogue school.

The synagogue buildings were usually substantial structures of stone, sometimes richly furnished if the congregation or sponsor was wealthy. Every synagogue had a chest in which the roll of the law was kept, a platform with a reading desk from which the Scripture of the day was read, lamps for lighting the building, and benches or seats for the congregation. Most of the equipment in use in the ancient synagogues still appears in its modem counterparts.

The synagogue service consisted of recitation of the Jewish creed or *Shema,* "Hear, **O** Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah: and thou shalt love Jehovah thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deut. 6:4-5), accompanied by sentences of praise to God called *Berakot* because they began with the word "Blessed." Following the *Shema* was a ritual prayer, concluding with an opportunity for individual silent prayer on the part of the members of the congregation. The reading of the Scriptures, which came next, began with special sections of the law that were assigned to holy days; but as time went on, the entire Pentateuch was divided into sections that gave a fixed cycle of one hundred fifty-four lessons to be read in a definite period of time. The Palestinian Jews read through the Pentateuch every three years, whereas the Babylonian Jews completed the reading in one year. The Prophets were also used, as Jesus' reading in the synagogue shows (Luke 4: 16ff.). Probably on that occasion Jesus himself selected the reading. A sermon followed the reading of the Scripture, explaining the portion that had been read. The sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth was in full keeping with the regular procedure of the day. The service was closed with a blessing, pronounced by some priestly member of the congregation. If no person with priestly qualifications was present, a prayer was substituted for the blessing.

The influence of the nature and order of synagogue worship on the procedure followed by the church of the first century is fairly obvious. Jesus himself attended the service of the synagogue regularly and took part in it. His disciples also had been accustomed to its ritual. Paul in his travels made the synagogues of the Dispersion his first points of contact whenever he entered strange cities, and he preached and debated with the Jews and proselytes who gathered to hear him (Acts 13:5,15-43; 14:1; 17:1-3, 10, 17; 18:4, 8; 19:8). The many close resemblances between the usages of the synagogue and those of the church may doubtless be accounted for by the fact that the latter absorbed or followed to some degree the procedure of the former. It is possible that some early Christian worship may have been carried on within the synagogue, even as early Christians continued to frequent the temple, as "at the hour of prayer" (Acts 3: 1), A possible reference to this practice occurs in James 2: 1-2 (although the Greek term *synagoge* may have been transferred to meetings of Christian congregations, as in Hebrews 10:25, where *epi synagoge* has basically the same sense). Because of the summary and persistent rejection of the gospel of Christ by the Jewish people, the church and the synagogue parted company. Today they are far apart and are in many respects antithetical. Nevertheless, in the prominence given to the written Scriptures and in the use of homily and sermon, the synagogue and the church still show a close

relationship.

The Sacred Year

The Jewish year consisted of twelve lunar months, with an intercalary month added to the calendar whenever it was needed to equate the lunar year with the solar year. The civil year commenced with the seventh month, corresponding roughly to October on the modern calendar. The religious year began with the first month, in which occurred the Passover, the first great feast of the Jewish cycle. The sequence of the months is as follows, using the religious year as the standard:

Month (Hebrew)	**Month (English)**	**Special Days**
Nisan	April	14 - Passover 15 - Unleavened Bread 21 - Close of Passover
Iyra	May	…
Sivan	June	6 - Feast of Pentecost - seven weeks from the Passover (Anniversary of the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai)
Tammuz	July	
Ab	August	
Elul	September	
Tishri	October	1&2 - The feast of Trumpets Rosh Hashanah, the beginning if the civil year. 10 - Day of Atonement 15-21 - Feast of Tabernacles.
Marchesvan	November	
Kislev	December	25 - Feast of lights, or Dedication Hanukkah
Tebeth	January	
Shebet	February	
Adar	March	14 - The Feast of Purim

The festivals, or feasts, were seven in number: Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Pentecost, the New Year and Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Dedication, and the Feast of Purim. Of these, the first five

were prescribed by the Mosaic law; the last two were postexilic in origin.

The Passover

The Passover was the most important of all the feasts, historically and religiously. It marked the anniversary of the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt and their establishment as an independent people by the redemptive act of God. Jewish usage distinguished between the "Egyptian Passover" and the "permanent Passover." The former was to be observed on the tenth of Nisan, when the blood was sprinkled on the doorposts and the lamb was eaten in haste. The permanent Passover was observed for seven days with the use of unleavened bread. Both were closely connected in time and constituted one festal season.

The public celebrations of the Passover were intended to be annual, but the Old Testament mentions only a few of them during the span of its recorded history (II Chron. 8: 13; 30: 15; II Kings 23:21; Ezra 6: 19). Doubtless it was kept rather regularly, although there were probably occasional lapses during periods of religious declension. The feast seems to have been held regularly during the New Testament period, for Mary and Joseph took the boy Jesus up to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover (Luke 2:41) as was their regular custom, and he himself kept the feast during his ministry.

On the day of the feast every male Jew who was physically fit for travel and who was not disqualified by ceremonial uncleanness was requested to appear in Jerusalem if he lived within fifteen miles of the city. Women also participated in the worship, though they were not obligated to do so. Pilgrims came from the outlying sections of Palestine and even from foreign provinces to bring their offerings and join in the festive worship. Josephus states as the Passover season the total population of Jerusalem may have reached three million. Many of these people camped outside the city at night, since all accommodations within the walls were filled.

During the Feast of Unleavened Bread sacrifices of two bullocks, one ram, and seven lambs of the first year were offered daily together with a goat as a sin offering (Num. 28: 19-25). On the second day a sheaf of new grain was offered as a wave offering with a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering (Lev. 23:10-14).

Pentecost, or the Feast of Weeks

The Feast of Weeks, or the Day of the first fruits, was celebrated in the month Sivan, seven weeks after the offering of the wave sheaf after the Passover. The name *Pentecost* originated from the interval of fifty days that separated the two.

According to Jewish tradition, it took place on the anniversary of the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai. The special feature of the day was the offering of two wave loaves of leavened bread, made from the ripe grain that had been harvested. Although the feast is not mentioned in the history of the Old Testament, it is of great importance in the New Testament as the time at which the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples of the Lord Jesus, who, in obedience to his command, were waiting in Jerusalem. It became the birthday of the church.

The Feast of Trumpets, or the New Year (Rosh Hashanah)

The civil year of the Jews began on the first day of Tishri. During the entire New Year's Day horns and trumpets were blown in the temple from morning to evening. Unlike the Passover and Pentecost, the feast did not attract many pilgrims to Jerusalem, for it was celebrated in the synagogue as well as in the temple. The book of Nehemiah (Neh. 8:2-12) states that those who returned from the exile observed the feast by the public reading of the law and by general rejoicing.

The Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement was more properly a fast than a feast and is so called in the New Testament (Acts 27:9). The special feature of the day, apart from the ordinary daily sacrifices, was the presentation of the annual atonement by the high priest. Laying aside his ceremonial robes and dressed in plain white linen, he entered the Holy of Holies with a censer full of coals taken from the alter and with a basin full of blood from the bullock that had been made a sin offering. The altar of incense and the brazen altar outside of (he sanctuary were also sprinkled with blood. A live goat was presented by the priest, who placed his hands on its head and confessed the sins of the people. The live goat was then taken out into the wilderness and released apparently as a sign that the people's sins had been carried away forever (Lev. 16:23, 27-32; Num. 29:7-11).

When these ceremonies were completed, the high priest took off his clothes, bathed, and resumed his official robes, after which the usual sacrifices were offered. Much of the symbolism of the Day of is applied to Christ by the book of Hebrews. Many of his priesthood are described in terms of the ritual of the Old. In modern Judaism the New Year and the Day of Atonement are united in the days of penitence, during which the devout worshiper searches his heart and seeks forgiveness for the sins of the past year in order that he may enter forgiven into the year to come.

Feasts

The Feast of Tabernacles

Five days after the Day of Atonement was the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:34; Deut. 16: 13). The feast included the fifteenth to the twenty-second days of the month. It commemorated the wandering in the wilderness and was a thanksgiving at the close of the harvest. It was celebrated by the construction of booths or huts made of branches, in which the people lived temporarily as a reminder of the sojourning of their forefathers in the wilderness. Many sacrifices were offered on the successive days of the feast, and at the close there was one great day of convocation, called in John "the last day, the great *day* of the feast" (John 7:37), which marked the conclusion of the ecclesiastical year. Among the observances of this day that came into existence later than the giving of the law were the pouring out of water at the altar from a golden pitcher, the singing of the Hallel (Ps. 113-118), the lighting of the four great candelabra in the court of the women, and the singing of selected Psalms. The Feast of Tabernacles was popular and joyous in nature.

Two other feasts were added later in postexilic times:

The Feast of Lights

The Feast of Lights or the Feast of Dedication was observed for eight days beginning with the twenty-fifth of Kislev. It is mentioned in John 10:22. It was first established in 164 BC, when Judas Maccabeus cleansed the temple, which had been profaned by Antiochus Epiphanes, and rededicated it to the service of God. Every Jewish home was brilliantly lighted in its honor and the stories of the Maccabees were repeated for the benefit of the children. It corresponds almost exactly in time to the Christian Christmas.

The Feast of Purim

Purim, or "lots," as the word signifies, was kept on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar. On the evening of the thirteenth day the whole of the book of Esther was read publicly in the synagogue. It contained a minimum of religious observances and was rather a national holiday, corresponding somewhat to the Fourth of July as Americans used to celebrate it. It is not mentioned in the New Testament, unless John 5: 1 is an allusion to it. A few other minor fasts and feasts were current in the Judaism of the first century, but they were of no great importance and do not appear in the records of the New Testament.

The Educational System

Among the Jews of the Dispersion, education must have taken on an important place at an early date, for they were dependent solely on the perpetuation of their national convictions for their survival. Uprooted from their land, with no military defense of their own, they could keep their national identity only as they maintained themselves as a separate group with their own culture and spiritual life. As far back as the time of Ezra, there was public reading of the law and instruction in its meaning-a kind of adult education that was consistently maintained by the synagogue.

Along with the synagogue developed the school. Judaism never had the general compulsory education that prevails in America at the present day; but the Jewish community usually provided some sort of instruction for children so that they might read the Torah, write, and do simple arithmetic.

The schools of Palestine in the time of Christ were traditionally the result of the influence of a famous Pharisee and scribe, Simon ben Shatach, who lived about 75 B.C. According to the Talmud, he decreed that all children should attend an elementary school. His words as quoted are ambiguous. They may imply that all children should be put in schools already established, or that schools should be organized for them. In either case, Simon is credited with a reform by which the state provided teachers for boys from the provinces, and by which it also founded schools in the country towns. Joshua ben Gamla instituted public schools for boys six or seven years of age in all the cities of Palestine. One teacher was every twenty-five boys. If there were forty in the school, the teacher was given an assistant.

The instruction was limited but it was thorough. Before the child went to school at all he would have learned at home the *Shema,* or Jewish creed (Deut. 6:4), to which Jesus referred when he was asked what the great commandment of the law was (Matt. 22:35-38). He would also have memorized passages from the Torah, certain common proverbs, and some selected Psalms. In the school itself he would repeat the words of the Torah as he was drilled by the teacher. Usually the teacher sat on a low platform with his pupils seated in a semicircle on the ground before him, as Paul sat 'at the feet of Gamaliel" (Acts 22:3). As the pupil advanced, he would be instructed in the Oral Tradition (later assuming written form in the Mishna and the Talmud), and if he proved to be bright and alert he might ultimately be sent to one of the training schools for scribes.

Jewish education was narrow but precise. The student was trained to make fine distinctions of definition and to remember exactly what he had learned. What he studied he mastered, and he could interpret the law from every possible

approach. Original thinking and scientific research were not encouraged, however. The rabbis of Jesus' time were astute in interpreting minute points of the law and in unraveling casuistic questions, but they laid little emphasis on the knowledge of the natural world that has so large in the curricula of modern schools.

Jewish education was thoroughly integrated, for every branch of Jewish knowledge merged with theology. The law was the core of the curriculum. Some knowledge of Greek and perhaps a little Latin were permitted in the most advanced schools, but many of the rabbis frowned on Gentile learning, and would not permit their pupils to indulge in it.

The Jews favored vocational education. The rabbis had a saying, "Whosoever does not teach his son a trade makes him a thief." Almost every Jewish boy learned how to work with his hands and thus to support himself. According to the Gospel records, the Lord Jesus was a carpenter (Mark 6:3), or possibly a stone mason, since the Greek word translated *carpenter* may mean *master builder* or mason. Paul worked at the tent makers' trade (Acts 18:3). This healthy emphasis on manual training made the Jewish male citizen independent. It balanced his intellectual pursuits with physical skills and it enabled him to find gainful employment.

Girls were not generally educated in the synagogue schools. They were trained at home in household arts in preparation for marriage. With the fall of the Jewish state, Judaism succumbed to Hellenism in the Diaspora. In Palestine the Jewish schools expelled the Greek learning and laid the foundation for the strict system that has characterized Jewish. The study of the Torah was a sign of piety and the devout Jew spent much time with the law. Since educational culture was regarded as an aspect of religion, the Jewish people preserved an intellectual standard that many Gentiles did not have. As Moore says:

> ... the endeavor to educate the whole people in its religion created a unique system of universal education, whose very elements comprised not only reading and writing, but an ancient language and its classic literature. The high intellectual and religious value thus set on education was indelibly impressed on the mind, and one may say on the character of the Jew, and the institutions created for it have perpetuated themselves to the present day (G. F. Moore, *Judaism,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972, p.322).

The Literature

More than any other nation antiquity the Jewish were the people of the book. Others may have possessed a larger and more varied literature or even a more ancient one,

but none, not even the Greeks in the heyday of the Periclean Age, showed such an absorbing interest in their national writings as the Jew showed in his law. For him the Torah was not simply representative of a cherished national culture, it was the voice of God. Its precepts were to be obeyed unquestioningly, and its most remote implications were to be regarded as sacred mandates. The ordinances were woven into the very fabric of his life and the underlying theism of the law colored all his thinking.

The influence of the canonical Jewish Scriptures on the New Testament is so obvious that it scarcely needs comment. The Lord Jesus Christ and his disciples were familiar with them from their earliest years. Jesus quoted with equals readiness from the law, the Psalms, and the Prophets (Luke 24:44), the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible, and argued from them as the basis of revelational authority (John 10:34-36) concerning his own person. Throughout the Acts and Epistles, the apostolic writers show by their frequent quotations their familiarity with the Old Testament, whether they used the Hebrew text or the Greek Septuagint. Paul asserted that the Old Testament was 'God –breathed' (inspired of God, II Timothy 3:16) and declared to Timothy that the Scriptures of the Old Testament were "able to make ... wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (3:15). So thoroughly did the early church take over the Jewish Scriptures that a new Jewish version of the Old Testament in Greek was made, because the Septuagint had become to all intents and purposes a Christian book. About A. D. 130 Aquila, a Jew of Pontus, produced a very literal Greek translation of the Hebrew text. This was followed by the translation of Theodotion, like Aquila a proselyte to Judaism. The translation of Aquila became the official version for Greek-speaking Jews.

Following the era of the Old Testament, which closed with Malachi, the last of the prophets, at 450 B.C. or thereabouts, there grew up in Palestinian Judaism a body of works later called the *Apocrypha.* The term *Apocrypha,* which is of Greek derivation, means "hidden," "recondite," or "secret," as applied to matters that are not to be disclosed to common people, but are to be revealed only to the initiated few. As time went on, the name was applied to those works which had biblical or religious flavor, but which were not generally accepted as authoritative. They might be read for educational and moral purposes but would not be regarded as on a par with the authoritative text. The Old Testament Apocrypha appear as an integral part of the Septuagint, being distributed throughout its text rather than being grouped in one place, as they appear in the Latin Vulgate and later in certain of the English versions, such as the Great Bible of 1539 and the original King James Version of 1611.

The apocryphal books are given as follows in their usual order: I Esdras, II Esdras, Tobit, Judith, The Rest of Esther, The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, The Song of the Three Holy Children, The History of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, The Prayer of Man asses, I Maccabees, and II Maccabees. This order is not chronological. Exact dating is impossible, but an approximate location of these books with respect to their time of writing is given here, after the sequences proposed by Oesterley:

Pre- Maccabean

1 Esdra	c. 300 BC
Tobit	c. 250 BC
The Hymn in the song of the three Holy children	c. 200 BC
Ecclesiasticus	c. 200BC

Maccabean

The Prayer in the song of the Three Holy Children	c. 160 BC
Judith	c. 150BC
The Rest of Esther	c. 140-130 BC
Bel and the Dragon	c. 150 BC

Post- Maccabean

I Maccabees	90-70 BC
II Maccabees	50 BC
The History of Susanna	?
The wisdom of Solomon	AD 40
Baruch	AD 70 or after
II Esdras	AD 100
Prayer of Manasseh	?

Most of these books were written in the period of unsettled national life and struggle between the return from the exile and the destruction of Jerusalem. They reflect the restlessness and the dissatisfied spirit of the Jews, who were still dreaming of an independent commonwealth. Their themes indicate the Jewish reaction to the oppression, uncertainty, and hope that characterized the entire period.

Of the list given above, three are historical: I Esdras, which corresponds in content somewhat to Ezra and Nehemiah; I Maccabees, which is a simple and straightforward narrative of the revolt of Mattathias and his sons in 168 B.C. that

terminated in the defeat of the Syrians and the establishment of the Hasmonean state; and II Maccabees, an inferior digest of the work of Jason of Cyrene, which supplements in some degree the content of Maccabees. Tobit, Judith, The Rest of Esther, and The History of Susanna are romantic tales illustrating God's justice in vindicating his people. Bel and the Dragon, a spurious addition to the book of Daniel, belongs in the same category. The Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus are philosophical treatises in the form of epigrams, somewhat like the book of Proverbs. The Song of the Three Holy Children and The Prayer of Manasseh are expressions of devotion to God and of hope in his promises.

The language and style of all these books resembles that of the canonical Old Testament; but with the exception of the book of I Maccabees their historical allusions are not accurate and they have no solid connection with identifiable characters as authors. Their effect on the writers of the New Testament was slight, although occasionally there seem to be references to them in the text. Ecclesiasticus 44: 16, "Enoch pleased the Lord, and was translated," may be echoed in Hebrews 11:5: *By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for he hath had witness borne to him that before his translation he had been well, pleasing unto God.* These two passages do not correspond so exactly that one can be called a quotation of the other. Both could originate from independent comments on the account given in Genesis.

A second list of works that have never been included in the Scriptures, whether Jewish or Christian, is given below. These consist of writings that were either never of canonical status or were considered as representative of individual or group viewpoints.

The book of Jubilees	200-150 BC
The Testimony of the twelve Patriarchs	
The Psalm of Solomon	100-50 BC
III Maccabees	
IV Maccabees	
The Assumption of Moses	AD 1-50
Adam and Eve	
The Martyrdom of Isaiah	
The Book of Enoch	
II Baruch	
The Sibylline Oracles	

In this list several of the books can be dated approximately, whereas others cannot. The Book of Enoch, for instance, is apparently composed of sections written at different times, all of which were finally combined not long before the Christian era. Some of its phraseology is paralleled in the New Testament, especially the well-known passage in Jude 14-15, which is an exact replica of Enoch 1 :9: *And to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied saying, Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.* The Book of Enoch, the Assumption of Moses, II Baruch, II Esdras, and parts of the Sibylline Oracles belong to the class of apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic literature is predictive, generally using symbolism that seems grotesque and often inconsistent with itself. Uniformly it prophesies dire physical judgments on the wicked, from which the righteous shall be delivered by the supernatural intervention of God. Angels are frequently actors in the drama of apocalypse. Many apocalyptic works are pseudonymous or are ascribed falsely to eminent men who never could have written them. For example, the Book of Enoch was not written by Enoch, but it was attributed to him because he had a reputation for piety and wisdom.

In style and imagery, the Old Testament books of Ezekiel and Daniel have been classed as apocalyptic, although they could not rightly be called pseudonymous. Revelation, in the New Testament, is of the same literary type.

Apocalyptic literature was usually produced in a period of persecution, when people's hope turned to future deliverance. It was intended to encourage believers to persist in their allegiance to God, and its imagery discouraged hostile readers from attempting to fathom its meaning. The fact that certain of the canonical books are apocalyptic does not disqualify them as inspired writings, since the inspiration of the Spirit appears in all kinds of literature within, the covers of the Bible. With the overthrow of Jerusalem in A.D.70 Judaism ceased to be an independent political state and became solely a religious community. With the cessation of the temple sacrifices came the decline of the priesthood and the rise of the rabbinate. The study of the law took the place of offerings, and the teacher supplanted the priest. As the teachers sought to interpret the law, they codified the traditions that had grown up around it and ultimately reduced them to writing. The Pharisees looked on these traditions as contemporaneous with the written law and equally as binding, while the Sadducees repudiated them entirely.

Undoubtedly the Hebrew people observed ethical standards prior to the giving of the law at Sinai. Certain regulations and observances related to the lives

of Noah and of Abraham as recorded in Genesis, and there could scarcely have been the perpetuation of unity during the bondage in Egypt had there not been some stable form of morals and worship to hold the people together. Whether these traditions were transmitted through the many vicissitudes of Israel's history to the first and second centuries AD is uncertain. One thing is certain; the mass of tradition contained in the Talmud includes much that is older than the writing of the book itself. The existence of the oral law is attested by the references Christ made to "the tradition of the elders" (Mark 7:3).

The collection of these traditions *with* the comments on them by early rabbis constitutes the Talmud. The name is derived from the verb *lammid,* which means "to teach." The Talmud comprises two elements, the Mishna and the Gemara. The Mishna is the oral law as it was known up to the end of the second century A. D. The Gemara is the interpretation of the oral law that the scholars of Babylon and Jerusalem produced between the beginning of the third century A. D. and the end of the fifth century. These interpretations or discussions were of two kinds: The Halakah, which dealt with the code of law, and the Haggadah, which was general preaching, or everything that was not Halakah.

The Halakah stated the rule or statute by which one is guided, the definite religious usage of the day. Strack says that "anything becomes Halakah (1) when it *is* held in acceptance for a long period; (2) when it is vouched for by recognized authority; (3) when it is supported by accepted proof from Scripture; (4) when it is established by majority vote. Anyone or all of these reasons could establish a principle of the oral law. ''Since no new principle of law could be established by invention, but rather by relation to an already existing principle, the rabbis became expert in manipulating the inferences from the existing law, oral and written, in order to cover all possible cases that might be brought before them. The records of these cases and the reasonings concerning them made Halakoth.

The Haggadah included scriptural interpretation that is non-hakalic in character. It was an attempt to develop the meaning of the implication of the law rather than to enlarge on its explicit statements. The argument of Jesus for the resurrection from Exodus 3:6 follows somewhat the pattern of Haggadic procedure (Matt. 22:31-33). Together, the Halakah and Haggadah are called the Midrash, a word derived from the Hebrew verb *darash,* meaning "to search," or "to conduct research." The research into the meaning of the law, oral and written, was thus made a part of the Talmud.

The Talmud contains sixty-three sections or tractates, each of which deals with some aspect of the law. Two Talmuds, representing the Palestinian and

Babylonian schools of the Amoraim, or doctors, are in existence. The Palestinian Talmud, the shorter of the two, written in Western Aramaic, dates from the close of the fourth century. The Babylonian Talmud was written about the end of the fifth century in Eastern Aramaic dialect. Both are incomplete, lacking whole sections or parts of sections. In the thirteenth century the Talmud came under the ban of the church, and so many copies were destroyed or damaged that its survival was threatened. The marvel is that it exists at all.

To this day the Talmud is the standard of orthodox Judaism, regulative of faith and ritual practice. It sets the interpretation of the law and is often more directly influential on beliefs and life than is the Old Testament itself.

The Sects of Judaism

Judaism was no exception to the human trend toward sectarianism in religion, even, though its solidarity was greater than that of the other religions of the Roman world. Although all of the sects gave allegiance to the law, their emphases ranged from liberalism to rationalism and from mysticism to political opportunism.

The Pharisees

The largest and most influential sect in New Testament times was that of the Pharisees. Their name is derived from the verb *parash,* "to separate." They were the separatists, or Puritans of Judaism, who withdrew from all evil associations and sought to give complete obedience to every precept of the oral and written law. They originated as a separate group shortly after the times of the Maccabees, and by 135 B.C, they were well established in Judaism.

Their theology was founded on the entire canon of the Old Testament, which included the law of Moses (or Torah), the Prophets, and the Writings. In interpretation they used the allegorical method in order to allow for elasticity in applying the principles of the law to new questions' that might be raised. They attached great value to the oral law or tradition, which they observed scrupulously. They believed in the existence of angels and spirits, in the immortality of the soul, and in the resurrection of the body. They practiced ritual prayer and fasting and tithed their property meticulously (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42). They kept the Sabbath very strictly, allowing not even for healing the sick nor for the casual plucking of grain for eating by the wayside (Matt. 12: 1-2).

Kohler lists seven types of Pharisees who were extremists."

1. The "shoulder" Pharisee, who paraded his good deeds before men like a badge

on the shoulder.
2. The "wait-a-little" Pharisee, who would ask someone to wait for him while he performed a good deed.
3. The "blind" Pharisee, who bruised himself by walking into a wall because he shut his eyes to avoid seeing a woman.
4. The "pestle" Pharisee, who walked with hanging head rather than observe alluring temptations.
5. The "ever-reckoning" Pharisee, who was always counting his good deeds to see if they offset his failures.
6. The "God-fearing" Pharisee, who, like Job, was truly righteous.
7. The "God-loving" Pharisee, like Abraham.

Although many of the Pharisees were so introspectively intent on obedience to the law that they often became fussily self-righteous, many among them were truly virtuous and good. Not all of them were hypocrites. Nicodemus, who earnestly sought out Christ during his earthly ministry, and who ultimately shared with Joseph of Arimathea the responsibility of burying Jesus' body, was a Pharisee. Saul of Tarsus, vehement persecutor of the church though he was, avowed that he was a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6)" and that "touching the righteousness which is in the law, the was found blameless" (Phil. 3:6). The moral and spiritual standards of Pharisaism may have tended toward self-righteousness and consequently toward hypocrisy, but they were high in comparison with the average of their day. Of all the sects of Judaism, Pharisaism alone has survived. It became the foundation of modern orthodox Judaism, which follows the pattern of Pharisaic morality, ceremonialism, and legalism.

The Sadducees

The Sadducees, according to tradition, derived their name from the sons of Zadok, who was high priest in days of David Solomon. The sons of Zadok were the priestly hierarchy in the time of the captivity (II Chron. 31: 10; Ezek. 40:46; 44: 15; 48: 11): and apparently the name persisted as the title of the priestly party in the days of Christ. Less numerous than the Pharisees, they possessed political power and were the governing group in the civil life of Judaism under the Herods.

As a party in Judaism, the Sadducees adhered to the strictly literal interpretation of the Torah, which alone they held to be canonical, having a higher authority than the Prophets and the Writings. There was consequently no room in their thinking for the oral tradition that the Pharisees studied with delight. As

rationalists and antisupernaturalists, they denied the existence of angels and spirits (Acts 23:8) and did not believe in personal immortality. Their religion was coldly ethical and literal and was much more open to Hellenizing influences than was Pharisaism. Politically the Sadducees were opportunists and were quite ready to ally themselves with the dominant power if by so doing they could maintain their own prestige and influence.

Unlike the Pharisees, they did not survive the destruction of Jerusalem. The cessation of the priesthood, to which most of the Sadducees belonged, and the hostility with Rome, which had formerly protected the Sadducean clan, ended their existence as a group.

The Essenes

Little is known of this sect which Josephus described in detail in his *Wars of the Jews.* The meanings of their name is uncertain, but it was connected by some with the Greek word *hosios,* meaning "holy." The Essenes, unlike the Pharisees and the Sadducees, were a definite ascetic brotherhood that could be entered only by those who were willing to submit to the regulations of the group and to undergo ceremonies of initiation. They abstained from marriage and recruited their ranks by adoption or by receiving converts. Their communities held all property in common, so that none was rich, and none was poor. Self-support was maintained by manual labor. They ate the plainest of food and dressed habitually in white garments when they were not working.

In behavior the Essenes were sober and restrained, not giving way to anger nor using oaths. They observed the Sabbath with utmost strictness and were exceptionally attentive to personal cleanliness. Any digression from the rules of their order was punished by expulsion from the community.

Theologically the Essenes were akin to the Pharisees in their close observance of the law and in their supernaturalism. They taught that the soul of man is intangible and immortal, imprisoned in perishable body. At death, the good pass to a region of sunshine and cool breezes, while the wicked are relegated to a dark and stormy place of continual torment.

The ascetic tendencies of the Essenes are comparable in many ways to the monasticism that grew up in early Christianity. Some of their doctrines seem to have sprung from contact with Gentile thought, for in their attitudes they resembled the Stoics. Curiously enough, they are never mentioned in the Gospels. Some writers have suggested that John the Baptist and Jesus were Essenes, so that Christianity was an outgrowth of Essenism. In spite, of some superficial likenesses, the strict

legalism of Essenism in contrast to the Christian emphasis on grace makes such a connection extremely improbable.

A new chapter in the history of the Essenes has been opened by the excavations at Qumran, a site about seven miles south of Jericho on the heights above the Dead Sea. The existence of buildings at this spot had been known for years, but they were thought to have been the ruins of a Roman garrison outpost. In the spring or early' summer of 1947 some Bedouin shepherd discovered in a cave near Qumran eight large jars containing ancient scrolls. Three of these scrolls came into possession of St. Mark's Syrian Orthodox Covenant in Jerusalem, and were dated by their style of writing as belonging to the first century before or after Christ.

Subsequent visits to the cave where these scrolls were found and to others near them brought to light more scroll material. A large hoard of manuscripts had evidently been secreted in the caves to preserve them from capture and consequent destruction. The dating indicated that they must have been consigned to their resting places in the caves about the time of the first Jewish revolt in A.D. 66-70. In 1951 the ruins at Qumran were excavated. The exploration proved that they were not built originally as a Roman fort. They seemed to mark the living quarters of a large settlement, with a common dining hall, dormitories, cisterns, and scriptorium. All material evidence found in the ruins indicates that the community was flourishing in the era just preceding the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The next question is: Who were the people that comprised the community?

Along with the manuscripts of the Old Testament found in the caves were other documents belonging to the former inhabitants. The *Manual of Discipline,* the *Damascus Document,* the *Thanksgiving Hymn,* and the *Order of Warfare* were cult documents, embodying the tenets and regulations of the Qumran community. From these works one may deduce that the people ate, lived, and worked together on a common basis. They had withdrawn from official Judaism and had undertaken a monastic life in the wilderness. The organization was subordinate to the president of the congregation, who acted as arbiter in law, disciplinarian of the entire group, and the military leader in case of war. The congregation included men, women, and children. The governing council had both priests and laity in its ranks. Volunteers for this order underwent a period probation lasting several months and finally were purified by baptism in order that they might enter the community. Within the group there was constant moral and spiritual discipline. The group was independent of all other movements and was completely self-contained. Its energies were directed to the study of the law.

The theology of the Qumran sect is practically identical with that of Judaism. There is one God, the Creator, who has placed man in the world, and to whom man is responsible for his actions. He determines the course of history and possesses all wisdom and all power. From his righteousness comes the pardon of sin, and in his mercy is all human life.

Subordinate to God are the good and evil principles that control life. Under their influence men are divided into the "sons of light" and the "sons of darkness." Because of the influence of these warring powers there are two ways of life, the way of righteousness that ends in personal happiness, and the way of evil that ends in disgrace and doom. This moral dualism is not reflected in a cosmological dualism, for evil is not eternal nor on a plane of equality with the good.

Recent scholarship tends to favor the identification of the Qumran community with the Essenes referred to in Josephus. There is similarity in geography and chronology, as well as in organization and customs. Some of the problems of identification may be solved by noting exceptions in the sources; for example, while Josephus said the Essenes abstained from marriage, he admits that there were also married members in the community (and female skeletons have been found in graves at Qumran).

It is likely that most of the discrepancies in testimony of writers such as Josephus, Pliny, and Philo may be accounted for by (1) the variety in reliability of the writers, and (2) the variety in the readers addressed. Except for Josephus, these writers wrote as outsiders; they did not always have firsthand information. The Qumran sectaries, however, have given us "primary documents," written from within the community.

The Zealots

The Zealots were not a religious sect in the same class with the Pharisees or the Essenes. They were a group of fanatical nationalists who advocated violence as a means of liberation from Rome. Their creed was pointed: God is the only Lord; thus, no tribute is to be paid to the Roman emperor. Apparently founded by Judas the Galilean in A.D. 6 (see Acts 5:37), they modeled themselves after "zealous" followers of Yahweh such as Phinehas and Elijah, of Old Testament fame, and the Maccabean fighters of the second century B. C. At the time of the siege of Jerusalem Titus they formed one the factions within the city, and the dissension they caused contributed heavily to its downfall. Perhaps they related to the 'Assasins' mentioned in Acts 21:38. One of Jesus' disciples, Simon, had belonged to them, as his name indicates (Luke 6: 15; Acts 1: 13).

The Diaspora

Although Palestine was the traditional homeland of the Jewish race, by far the largest number of Jews in the Roman empire lived outside the borders of the Holy Land. Known as the Diaspora, or the Dispersion, they were found in almost all the large cities from Babylon to Rome and in many of the smaller settlements as well, wherever commerce or colonization had taken them. The scattering of the Jewish people began with the captivity of the northern kingdom in 721 B. C. when Sargon of Assyria deported inhabitants of Israel and settled them in new colonies in Assyria. The southern kingdom of Judah was conquered by Babylon in 597 B.C., and many of the upper class were carried away to Babylon. A second and third deportation followed, leaving only the poorest people of the land unmolested. Although several thousand returned from exile in the restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah, a large number chose to remain in the land of their captivity where they had established themselves and had begun to prosper.

The conquests of Alexander in the fourth century B. C. opened new opportunities for migration and settlement. The domination of the Near East by one great military power removed temporarily the petty hostilities between kingdoms that had made free travel almost impossible. As business opportunities increased and as the Seleucid and Ptolemaic successors of Alexander encouraged colonization by offering citizenship and exemption from taxation to those who would migrate to their own domains, many Jews took advantage of these offers and established new homes in the growing Hellenistic settlements. Some of them became temporary residents of the Greek cities, while others were granted citizenship and settled down in new homes and new occupations. In Alexandria one entire section of the city was Jewish, with its own governor and officials who were practically autonomous. Its population has been estimated at two million and it represented the largest single concentration of Jews in anyone city of the world at that time.

In the Roman Empire the Jewish settlements increased rapidly. The slaves that Pompey brought back from Palestine to Rome were ultimately freed and settled on the right bank of the Tiber near the dicks. In 4 BC there were eight thousand in the city. Under Julius Caesar and Augustus, they were given legal standing, and in some cities such as Corinth they were freed from military service and the jurisdiction of the heathen courts.

Unquestionably the Greek influence affected the Jews of the Dispersion, and many of them lost the distinctive characteristics and the faith that marked them off from other peoples. The majority of them, however, remained Jews. They clung tenaciously to their monotheistic faith based on the law of Moses. They kept contact

with the temple at Jerusalem by pilgrimages to the annual feasts and paid the yearly tax of half a shekel. They observed the Sabbath and maintained synagogue services wherever there were enough of them to constitute a worshiping group. Within the Diaspora were two distinct groups-the Hebraists and the Hellenists.

The Hebraists

The Hebraists, or "Hebrews," were mentioned by Paul, who was one of them. He said that he was "circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee . . ." (Phil. 3:5). The Hebrews were those Jews who retained not only the religious faith of Judaism but also the use of the Hebrew or Aramaic language and the Hebrew customs. Paul said that he was brought up "according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers" (Acts 22:3). His quotations from the Old Testament show that he was familiar with the Hebrew Bible as well as with its Greek version. Although he was born in Tarsus, a Greek city, and although he proudly claimed Roman citizenship (21:39; 22:25-29), he was still a thoroughgoing Jew, uncorrupted by the Gentile heathenism that surrounded him from youth. Doubtless there were many others like him. Probably the bulk of the Hebraists, however, lived in Palestine itself, where their worship centered in the temple. Acts pictures some of these Hebraists of the Diaspora in the Jews of Asia who accused Paul of desecrating the temple by bringing a Gentile into its sacred precincts (21:27-29).

The Hellenists

A far larger number of Jews, however, had absorbed the Graeco-Roman culture and had ceased to be Jewish except in matters of faith. They spoke Greek or whatever happened to be the language of the country where they dwelt, they adopted the customs of their neighbors, and in many cases were virtually indistinguishable as Jews. Syncretistic elements appeared in their worship, as in a synagogue at Dura-Europos on the Euphrates that had heathen mythology depicted in the mosaics and paintings on its walls.

Both classes of Jews are mentioned in Acts 6, where the division between them began to endanger the unity of the church. Apparently, the Hellenists were somewhat broader in their sympathies than the Hebraists and were perhaps a bit readier to see the wider implications of the Old Testament Scriptures. Stephen was probably one of them.

Counting both classes, the Jews in the Roman empire numbered about four and a half million. They were not generally popular because of their clannishness

and because they would not join in the public worship of heathen gods. Frequently they were dubbed atheists by those who did not understand how anybody could worship an invisible God. On the other hand, their sobriety, industry, and upright morality commended them to their neighbors, who were compelled to acknowledge their ability and integrity.

On occasion the Jews could be turbulent, especially when their religious freedom was threatened. Under Claudius they were expelled from Rome because of an uprising, and there were serious riots in Alexandria later in the century. There is no evidence that the Jews of the Dispersion took any part in the Jewish war of A. D. 66 to 70, or that they offered any protest against the siege and capture of Jerusalem. Their apparent indifference to their national status even while they were exiles among the Gentiles is part of the paradox of the millenniums that is the Jew.

5

The Social And Economic Worlds Of The New Testament

Introduction

The world of the first century was not unlike the modern world of the twenty-first century. Rich and poor, virtuous men and criminals, freemen and slaves lived side by side, and the social and economic conditions that prevailed were like those of the present day in many respects.

The Social World

Jewish Society

Both in Judaism and in the pagan world there was a wealthy aristocracy. In Judaism it was a religious group, consisting chiefly of the families of the priesthood and of the leading rabbis. The clan of the Hasmoneans had dominated Palestinian society from the days of the Maccabees until the time of Herod the Great. During his reign and during the reigns of his sons the Hasmonean priesthood was in control, and the glimpses of the hierarchy that appear in the Gospels show that they were the virtual rulers of Judea. They controlled the business traffic that was connected with the temple, and they participated in the revenues that were derived from the sale of animals for sacrifice and from the exchange of money involved in the temple taxes. Among the members of the Sanhedrin, which was the high council of Judaism, were well-to-do men like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. Probably they were landowners who rented out their farms and profited from a share of the crops.

Most of the Palestinian people were poor. Some were farmers, some were artisans, and a few were businessmen. Slavery was not widely practised in Judaism, and probably the vast majority of the Palestinian Jews were freemen. Some, like the fishermen who became disciples, owned small independent enterprises that supported them fairly well.

Social divisions among the Jews were somewhat restrained by the common obligation that the law imposed on its followers. If they were all equally responsible to God for obedience to it, they were consequently morally equal in his sight. Although the Jew regarded the wealthy man as especially blessed by God's favour, and therefore as righteous, there was no reason why any man should not by good works merit equal favour. While an aristocracy tends to be self-perpetuating, at least the inherent moral equality kept the Jewish oligarchy from becoming too oppressive.

Pagan Society

The Aristocracy

In the pagan world of the first century the strata of society were more sharply contrasted. The civil wars of Rome, which had preceded disrupted the entire social life of the empire. The old free landholding populace of Italy had disappeared. Many of the earlier senatorial families had perished in the party struggles, though some had survived. In their places had risen a new aristocracy, the landholders, who controlled public lands by their influence and who bought cheaply the private lands of those whose families were impoverished by war or by the impossibility of making a living from a small farm. The exploitation of the newly conquered provinces opened another avenue of profit, and the businessmen who acted as government contractors and as speculators reaped an enormous harvest. The consequent luxury enervated the aristocracy and discouraged the lower classes, who found that for all their toil they seemed to prosper less as the years rolled along.

The Middle Class

Largely because of the rise of slavery, which was built on the use of military captives, the middle class was almost crushed out of the empire. Many had been killed in the wars and proscriptions. Many others had been unable to meet the competition of slave labour and had slowly been starved out of their small farms and estates. Gradually they swelled the homeless and foodless mobs that filled the great cities, especially Rome, and they became dependent for their sustenance on the state. The hungry, idle crowds, who would vote for any candidate whose promises sounded better than those of his competitor, were a dangerous and unpredictable factor in the social life of the empire.

The Plebs

The plebs, or poor people, were numerous and their condition was pitiful. Many lacked steady employment and were worse off than slaves, who at least had assurance of food and clothing. The unemployed proletariat were ready to follow any man who would give them a dole to feed stomachs and amusements to while away their idle hours. They were easy prey for demagoguery of every description.

The Slaves and the Criminals

Slaves made up a large proportion of the population of the Roman Empire. No exact figures are obtainable, but probably less than half of the inhabitants of the Roman world were free men, and only relatively few of them were citizens with full rights. War, debt, and birth recruited the ranks of the slave population at a rapid rate. Not all of them were ignorant. Many, in fact, were physicians, accountants, teachers, and skilled artisans of every kind. Epictetus, the renowned Stoic philosopher, was one of them. They performed most of the work in the great agricultural estates, they acted as household servants and as clerks in business houses, and publishers employed them as copyists. Where modern enterprises operate by machinery, the ancients used cheap labour.

The effect of slavery was debasing. The ownership of slaves made the masters dependent on the labour and skill of their servitors to the extent that they lost their own ingenuity and ambition. Morality and self-respect were impossible among those whose only law was the will of an arbitrary master.

Trickery, flattery, fraud, and fawning obedience were the slave's best tools to obtain what he wanted from his superiors. In many households the children were entrusted to the care of these menials, who taught them all of the vices and sly tricks that they knew. Thus, the corruption that prevailed among the oppressed classes spread to their overlords.

Undoubtedly many masters and mistresses treated their servitors kindly, just as many slaves laboured in the bond of friendship rather than in the bond of fear. Some of them were able to amass a bit of property from tips and gifts, with which they purchased their freedom, and some were manumitted by their masters either during the lifetime of the latter or at death. Consequently, a steady stream of freedmen poured into the life of the empire, filling with trained workers the ranks of the lower and middle classes that had been depleted by the wars. Many of these freedmen, like Pallas under Claudius, became prominent in the government, and were important in the growth of the bureaucracy.

The institution of slavery is reflected in the New Testament by the frequent

use of the term "slave" and by occasional references to the ownership of them. Nowhere in its pages is the institution attacked, nor is it defended. According to Paul's letters to the Asian churches, there were Christians among the slaves and slaveholders. The slaves were enjoined to obey their masters and the masters were commanded not to be cruel to them. Such was the power of Christian fellowship. However, the institution of slavery gradually weakened under its impact and finally disappeared.

The restless hordes of the unemployed, the sharpers who made their way to the great cities for the purpose of preying on society, the despairing and the disinherited - all made a fertile ground for the breeding of criminals. To say that crime prevailed in the empire might be unfair, for there were a large number of decent citizens; but in consideration of the unscrupulous and immoral character of so many of the emperors and higher officials, it is not surprising that society at large was permeated with all kinds of evils. The ghastly picture of the heathen world that appears in Romans 1:18-32 was not overdrawn. There was no inherent standard in paganism to check the downward moral drift.

Cultural Attainments

Literature

Under Augustus came a literary revival in Rome. Vergil, the poet, became the prophet of the new era. His *Aeneid* was an attempt to glorify the Rome of Augustus by showing through the epic adventure of his hero the divine origin and destiny of the empire. In his writings the hope of a golden age to come was also reflected, and at least one of the Eclogues (the Fourth) seems to show that he had some knowledge of the Old Testament. The Augustan age was the golden period of Roman poetry, graced by Horace, who cast Latin poetry in Greek molds, and by Ovid, whose stories of Greek and Roman mythology reveal the contemporary moral attitudes of the Roman people.

Nothing of note was produced between the periods of Augustus and Nero. Seneca, the Stoic moralist and Nero's tutor, wrote philosophic essays and dramatic tragedy. Petronius, the wealthy social arbiter of Nero's court, composed a novel that is still one of the best sources for understanding the common life of his day.

In the latter third of the first century Pliny the Elder wrote his *Natural History,* one of the first attempts at a scientific account of the natural world. It was encyclopedic in scope and showed a vast amount of research, although it was quite uncritical and inadequate when judged by modern standards. Grammar and rhetoric were treated extensively by Quintilian. Martial, whose spicy epigrams still

make pungent reading, was the newspaper columnist of his day.

Under the governments of Nero, Trajan, and Hadrian, literature took the turn of self-criticism. Tacitus and Suetonius, the historians, narrated the history of the Caesars in unvarnished language. Tacitus, since he related to the old republican aristocracy, was not very friendly toward the emperors. The content of his *Annals* and *Histories* shows the feeling against the principate that smoldered under the surface of public opinion. The satirist Juvenal also wrote in the early second century. Like Martial, he was a bitter critic of the manners and morals of his day. Even if it be granted that some of his caricatures are overdrawn, they reveal the prevalent corruption of high Roman society and generally confirm the impression left by his predecessor, Martial.

Art and Architecture

Under the emperors of the first century Rome expanded materially, and new construction was continually going on. Although the Romans were not singularly original in their decorative art, they excelled in producing enduring monuments of utilitarian character. Many of their bridges, aqueducts, theaters, and baths remain as a witness to Roman thoroughness in construction. They knew how to use the principle of the arch to good effect and were skilled in building with brick and cement.

In ornamental and memorial art, they created a great deal of sanctuary; it generally represented persons rather than abstract ideas. Funerary carving on tombs and sarcophagi, busts and equestrian statues of the reigning emperors, and historical sculpture such as the Arch of Titus in Rome were common.

Music and Drama

Music and the stage were committed to entertainment of the mob rather than to stimulating the thought of intellectuals. The Roman stage degenerated rapidly and contributed directly to the moral degradation of the people. The farces and mimes of the early empire were coarse and cheap; their plots dealt with the lowest kind of life and their presentation was shameless. The theatrical representations of the first century A. D. were far different from those of the great Greek tragedians such as Aeschylus and Euripides, who were almost as much philosophers and theologians as they were playwrights.

Music of all kinds was familiar in the empire. Stringed instruments and flutes were used chiefly, but brass, wind instruments, and drums and cymbals were employed occasionally. The lyre and the harp were the most popular instruments.

Religious rites and processions were generally accompanied by music, and the aristocracy entertained guests with dinner music that their slaves provided.

Arena

The amphitheater was a more pernicious influence on the Roman public than the stage. The bloody contests between men and beasts or between men and men were promoted by the emperor, or occasionally by aspirants for political office who wished to gain the favour of the crowds. The participants were usually trained gladiators who were slaves, captives of war, condemned criminals, or volunteers who sought fame in the arena as a modem pugilist does. Some of them succeeded in winning favour and fortune for themselves so that they were able to retire to peaceful private life. The majority probably died in the arena. The gladiatorial shows accustomed the audience to the sight of bloodshed, and even whetted their appetite for it. In order to please their patrons, the spectacles became increasingly elaborate and increasingly shocking. If the stage with its coarse mimes and farces schooled the populace in obscenity and lust, the gladiatorial shows glorified brutality.

Languages

The chief languages of the Roman world were Latin, Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew. Latin was the language of the law courts and of the literature of Rome. As a popular tongue it was spoken mostly in the western Roman world, particularly in North Africa, Spain, Gaul, and Britain, as well as in Italy itself. It was the language of the conquerors and was learned by the subject peoples, who quickly adapted its pronunciation and vocabulary to their own dialects. Greek was the cultural language of the empire, familiar to all educated persons, and was the lingua franca of most of the populace from Rome eastward. Even in Palestine Greek was currently spoken and was probably used by Jesus and his disciples whenever they had to deal with Gentiles. Aramaic was the predominant tongue of the Near East. Paul addressed the people of Jerusalem in Aramaic (Acts 22:2) when he made his impromptu defense from the steps of the Castle of Antonia, and some recorded quotations of Jesus indicate that he used it customarily (John 1:42; Mark 7:34; Matt. 27:46). It also appears in the religious phraseology of the early church, such as Abba (Rom. 8:15) and Maranatha (I Cor. 16:22), showing that the earliest believers spoke Aramaic. Classical Hebrew, to which Aramaic was closely related, had been a dead language since the times of Ezra, except among the learned rabbis who made it a medium for theological thought. It was not understood by the rank and file of the people.

The wide use of the first three of these languages is shown by the statement that the inscription on the cross over the head of Jesus was written "in Hebrew [Aramaic], and in Latin, and in Greek" (John 19:20). Even in Palestine all three were current and were recognised.

Such interchange of language in the center where Christianity originated brought to bear on it the influence of the civilization and literature that these languages represented and gave to Christianity a means for universal expression. Neither Latin nor Hebrew played a large part in the history of the church during the first century, but Aramaic and Greek did. Tradition says that some of the earliest accounts of the words of Jesus were composed in Aramaic, and the fact that the New Testament was circulated in Greek almost from the time of its origin is too patent to need comment. All the epistles were composed in Greek, and the Gospels and Acts have survived only in Greek form, even if it should be granted that some Aramaic accounts of the words of Jesus were extant in the middle of the first century.

Science

The Romans, who dominated the world of the first century, were not interested primarily in mathematical and scientific pursuits. They were largely content to confine themselves to such elementary processes as were necessary in the measurement of land or in the calculation of finance. The appliances that they possessed, such as ships for navigation and engines of war, had all been invented by the Greeks, from whom they borrowed.

Certain fields of learning had already been explored by the time of Christ. Geometry, literally the science of measuring land, had begun with the Babylonians and Egyptians, and was brought to the Greek world by Thales of Miletus, if tradition is correct. Euclid of Alexandria (c. 300 B. C.) developed plane geometry so completely that his propositions have been studied with little change to the modern day.

Mechanics and physics had been investigated by Archimedes of Syracuse (287-212 B.C.), who developed the theory of the lever and discovered the principle of estimating the composition of bodies by the relation of their weight to the weight of the volume of water they displaced. He found the formula for the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter, and in doing so he discovered the basic approach to calculus. Several of his numerous mechanical devices were used in the wars of Syracuse against Rome.

Astronomy made great advances in the pre-Christian world. The sphericity

of the earth and its revolution on its own axis were known to some Greek scientists in the fourth century B. C. Hipparchus (c. 160 B. C.) invented both plane and spherical trigonometry and calculated the size of the moon and its distance from the earth. The predominant theory of the motion of the earth and of the planets was not that all revolved about the sun, but that the planets revolved around the earth. Eratosthenes of Alexandria (27 192 B.C.) calculated the circumference of the earth to a surprising degree of accuracy in spite of his crude instruments.

The science that owed its greatest advance to the period including the first century was Geography. Ptolemy of Alexandria (A. D. 127-151) wrote a work on astronomy that remained the standard until the rise of the Copernican theory in modern times. He created maps of the world that included all regions known at that time.

Medicine flourished in various centers of the world. The University of Tarsus had an affiliated hospital in the temple of Aesculapius, where the sick went to be healed. A school of Greek medicine was begun in Rome during the reign of Augustus. Celsus, a physician, who lived in the reign of Tiberius, wrote a treatise on surgery that showed extensive knowledge of the technique of operating. Another doctor, Dioscorides, wrote a description of some six hundred plants and their medical uses. Galen (A. D. 129-200) reduced Greek medical knowledge to a system. He carried on biological experiments and made notes of his discoveries. Although many of his conclusions were erroneous, he exercised a powerful influence on medical science down to the close of the Middle Ages.

Such scientific knowledge as the Romans did possess showed little originality or intellectual curiosity. Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* was an encyclopedia of the learning of his day in thirty-seven volumes. It covered every subject from agriculture to zoology. Pliny drew heavily on other writers as well as on his own observations. He may be regarded as an honest witness to the culture of his times, but he failed to distinguish between fact and fable, so that his conclusions were not always reliable.

The Hebrews were not particularly interested in speculative science. In the first century none of them was renowned for proficiency in mathematics or the natural sciences. The church, which sprang from the matrix of Judaism, did not concern itself with science as such, for its main interests were in the ethical and religious fields. On the other hand, the revelation on which the church based its teaching was not inherently opposed to science. Paul, speaking of God, says that "the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, *even* his everlasting power and

divinity..." (Rom. I:20). There is no conflict between the theological investigation of God's revelation through his Spirit and the scientific investigation of his revelation through creation. The New Testament is not primarily a book of science, nor was it written by men whose training could be called scientific in the full modern sense of the term, but it is not antiscientific either in its statements or in its spirit.

Schools

The modern system of free compulsory education by the state for all children under the age of sixteen was unknown in the Roman Empire. Not until the time of Vespasian did the rulers take any active interest in supporting public education. The training of the child in the average Roman household began with the *paidagōgos,* a slave who was charged with the responsibility of teaching the child his first lessons and of conducting him to and from one of the private schools in the city where he lived. Up to the time of his acknowledgment as a young man with adult responsibilities, the Roman boy was under the superintendence of his tutor.

The schools themselves were rather dreary affairs, held in the public alcoves or halls where the markets and the shops were located. School masters knew and practised little educational psychology, but taught by endless repetition, punctuated with corporal punishment. With rare exceptions these schoolrooms were bare, chilly, unattractive halls, devoid of the blackboards, charts, decorations, and other equipment regarded as essential to the modern school.

The curriculum was essentially practical. Reading, writing, and arithmetic were the basic subjects of the elementary curriculum. As the pupil progressed, he studied the Greek and Latin poets, and memorized long passages that he had to recite with the proper expression. Later he might learn the elements of oratory: how to compose a speech, and how to deliver it convincingly. Sometimes the wealthier youths went abroad to study in the Greek universities of Athens, Rhodes, Tarsus, or Alexandria, or they might attend the lectures of traveling philosophers.

The education of the Jewish boy followed somewhat the same pattern, except that his curriculum was more restricted. He learned to read and write from the Old Testament. Among the Jews of the Dispersion the synagogue schools doubtless used both Greek and Hebrew. He also learned the traditions of the fathers and was schooled in the ritual of Judaism. In some instances, he was permitted to read Gentile literature. If he aspired to become a scholar, he usually went to study with some great rabbi, as Paul received instruction at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of his fathers (Acts 22:3).

No adequate data exist for drawing conclusions concerning the state of

education in every corner of the empire. Apparently, each municipality of people within its bounds was responsible for its own educational programme. The prevalence of writing, however, even in the poorest parts of Egypt as attested by the papyri, shows that a fair degree of literacy was attained by the people of the first century and that reading, and writing were practised by the lower classes. Probably the average attainment of the early empire would compare very favorably with that of the Middle Ages, or even with some parts of Europe in the eighteenth century of the present era.

Moral Standards

The moral condition of the Roman Empire may not have been as black as some historians have painted it. As usual the virtuous people went unnoticed because of their virtue and the criminals were singled out for attention. Only crime was "news." Nevertheless, all indications in the history, literature, drama, and art that have survived point to a standard of morality generally lower than our own. The tremendous indictment of mankind in Romans 1:18 to 3:20 was originally directed against the empire, and all available witness supports its accuracy.

Moral declension does not mean that no comparatively decent people existed, or that virtue was completely stifled. It does mean that the prevailing trend in society verged downward to indulgence and lawlessness. Human life was cheap, and murder was frequent. Divorce was easy to obtain and was generally accepted in society. The exposure of unwanted infants was a common practice. Superstition and trickery of every kind flourished.

There were moralists like Seneca, Nero's tutor, who in their writings advocated 'lofty ideals and spoke words of wisdom; but their protestations made little impact on the entrenched evils of their day. They imparted to their readers no spiritual dynamic that could make their precepts effective, and, as in the case of Seneca, they did not exemplify their own counsel. Paganism was devoid of any power to lift it above itself, and the growing consciousness of its own impotence brought on it pessimism and a depression that it could not escape. Corruption in politics, debauchery in plea- sure, fraud in business, and deceit and superstition in religion made life in Rome depressing for the many and unendurable for the few.

The Economic World

The Christians of the first century, like the Christians of today, had to earn their living in a workaday world. The propagation and practice of their faith were affected by prevailing economic conditions much as Christianity is affected today. Agriculture, industry, finance, and transportation and travel − all had a bearing on the spread of the gospel.

Agriculture

During the time of Christ and the early church the Roman empire occupied the lands surrounding the Mediterranean basin. Judging from the ruins of towns that are still extant, the coastal territories were more fertile than they are today. North Africa, which is now semiarid or else largely desert, contained immense farms on which cattle grazed or which grew fruits and vegetables. In Italy were large estates, which the owners rented out to tenant farmers and sharecroppers, where almost all kinds of fruits and grains could be grown. In the western provinces of Britain, Gaul, and Germany, agriculture flourished, and some of the farms were irrigated by government projects established by Augustus.

Industry

Manufacturing never was so important in ancient times as it is today, for machine tools were practically unknown, and goods had to be produced by human labour. In many cases the factories were private enterprises employing slaves. Small shops were the rule rather than the exception. Certain types of goods were produced in particular localities: copper vessels were manufactured in Campania; linens and paper came from Egypt; the best quality of earthenware originated in north Italy. Small wares, furniture, and household goods were generally produced locally, in the same way that similar commodities were supplied in the early American colonies by the skill and ingenuity of the town craftsmen such as the blacksmith and the carpenter. Probably every small village in the empire had its workmen who provided for the needs of their fellow townsmen.

Luxury goods were imported. Gold, ivory, and rare woods came from Africa and from the East; pearls and jewels were found in India; furs came from central Asia and Russia, and amber came from the far north. Caravans were cumbersome and were subject to attack by robbers. Although the empire had many good roads, vehicles were drawn by animals, so that traffic was costly and slow. Shipping was done on navigable rivers and on the ocean only during the summer months. Mass production of cheap goods was practically impossible, for neither

machinery nor transportation was available.

Finance

The standard coins in the empire were the *denarius* and the gold *aureus,* or pound. One pound was worth forty *denarii.* The *denarius* is mentioned *several* times in the New Testament, where it is variously translated "penny" or "shilling." It was the ordinary day's wage for a laboring man in the East (Matt. 20:2). Many of the cities of the empire had the right to mint their own coinage, and the coins of the conquered nations were not retired from circulation, so that various kinds of money were used concurrently within the realm. Money changers did a thriving business in dealing with travelers, as the episode of Jesus' cleansing of the temple showed (Matt. 21:12).

Banking was generally practised, although it was not like the intricate system of finance that is known to the modern world. The banks were not subsidized by the state but consisted usually of private companies. Sometimes mercantile firms with foreign connections carried on negotiations for their customers. Borrowing, lending, discounting of notes and foreign exchange were undertaken, and letters of credit were issued. Funds were often supplied to the banks by private individuals, whereas the bank acted only as agent. The normal rate of interest varied from four to twelve percent, though individual brokers often charged more. Brutus on one occasion paid as high as forty-eight percent on a loan. The parables of the talents (Matt.25: 15) and of the pounds (Luke 19: 13) show that money lending was a common means of enlarging one's fortune.

Transportation and Travel

The rule of Rome over the provinces was greatly facilitated by its excellent system of roads, which, until the recent era of the automobile, were the best that the world had ever seen. The Romans built their roads as straight as possible, making cuts through hills and using viaducts to bridge valleys and streams. In building their highways they excavated the topsoil and filled the roadbed with three different layers of road material, crowning the center to throw off water, and then paving the top with stone. The roads were seldom more than fifteen feet wide, but they were smooth and durable. Some of them are in use to the present day.

Along these roads, which stretched in every direction from Rome to the frontiers, moved the armies and the caravans of commerce. The imperial post carried the government dispatches, whereas private businesses had their own couriers.

Several of these roads were famous in antiquity. The Appian Way was the main line of communication between Rome and the south of Italy. It ran from Rome through Capua to Brundisium. From Brundisium a traveler could sail eastward to Dyrrhachium on the western side of Illyricum, from which the Egnatian highway crossed Illyricum and Macedonia to Thessalonica, and from there to Byzantium, now Istanbul. Another route led from Troas down to Ephesus on the western coast of Asia Minor, then eastward through Laodicea and Colosse to Antioch of Pisidia, and from there south-ward through Iconium and Derbe to the pass of the Cilician Gates, through which it went on to Tarsus and to Syrian Antioch. From Antioch roads led eastward to the Euphrates, where they tapped the trade routes to India.

The Via Flammia ran northward from Rome to Ariminum and thence to Mediolanum. From Mediolanum several roads branched out westward to Gaul, Germany, Rhaetia, and Noricum.

The Via Claudia Augusta, begun in 15 B.C. and completed by Claudius, connected Verona with the Danube. Roads along the Danube connected Verona with Byzantium.

To the west, the Via Aurelia ran from Rome to Genoa, from which the Via Domitia communicated with Massilia (Marseilles). From Massilia the Via Augusta crossed the Pyrenees to Tarraco, from there southward to the Sucro River, and through Corduba and Hispalis to Gades in Spain. In Gaul and Britain numerous shorter roads connected the chief towns with each other.

The vehicles on these roads varied according to the wealth of their owners. Some people trudged the weary miles on foot. Some rode on donkeys. The more well-to-do afforded horses or mules, and officials or magnates might travel in light carriages. Inns were located at convenient intervals, so that the travelers could stop for meals and shelter. Few of the inns were luxurious, and probably still fewer were really clean. Middle- and upper-class travelers usually counted on the hospitality of their friends, so that they were not at the mercy of avaricious landlords and their conscienceless servants.

Most of the commercial transportation was by water rather than by land. The Mediterranean Sea abounded in good ports; these were busy all through the season for navigation. Alexandria was the chief port, since it was the outlet for the grain crop of Egypt.

The Alexandrian merchant ships were the largest and finest of the day. Some of them were more than two hundred feet in length. They were propelled by sails and carried enough oars so that the crew could maneuver the ship in an emergency. One of the largest ships of which there is any record carried twelve

hundred passengers in addition to its cargo. Most of the Alexandrian ships were engaged in the corn trade that supplied Rome with grain. Under Claudius, their upkeep was subsidized by the government in order to insure a regular delivery of grain for the needs of the populace. Paul, at the time of his shipwreck, was aboard an Alexandrian ship (Acts 27:6), and after his rescue at Malta sailed for Italy in another (28: 11) named "The Two Brothers."

Warships were lighter and faster than merchantmen and were generally propelled by oars pulled by galley slaves. Ships with two, three, and five banks of oars were not at all uncommon, while some had even ten banks. Sails were sometimes used in cruising. In battle, where the outcome depended on the action of the ships, propulsion by hand became necessary for safe and accurate control.

On the inland rivers and canals barges were used, chiefly for carrying cargoes of freight. Apparently, they were not greatly patronized by passenger trade. No mention of such travel appears in the New Testament.

6

The Literary World of the New Testament

Introduction

The literary context in which the New Testament emerged included the Hebrew Scriptures, the Septuagint (LXX), The Old Testament Apocrypha, the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Greco-Roman Literature.

The Hebrew Scriptures

At the time of Jesus, the Jewish people in Palestine and in the Diaspora had a body of authoritative religious literature known as "the Scriptures." Manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible were used in the synagogues for worship and instruction and for intense study by such religious leaders as the Scribes and Pharisees.

Many passages in the Gospels show Jesus' great reverence for these Scriptures. As a Jew he would have been brought up to appreciate their significance for his people as well as for himself. From the Scriptures Jesus repudiates the devil during his temptation by appealing to "what is written" (Mt 4:4-10 and parallels); he inaugurates his public ministry in the synagogue of Nazareth (Lk 4:16-21) by claiming that he fulfills what is written in the prophet Isaiah (58:6; 61:1-2). And in his disputations with the religious leaders of his day, he often takes issue with their interpretation and application of the "scriptures" (Mt 22:29; In 10:35; 19:36), "the law" (10:34; 12:34; 15:25), "the law and the prophets" (Mt 5:17; 7:12; 22:40; Lk 16:16) and "the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms" (Lk 24:44). Jesus was in no way against the Scriptures, but only against misinterpretations. Matthew in particular takes care to explain to the Jews of his day that Jesus did not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets but "to fulfill" them (Mt 5:17).

Since the early church consisted mainly of Jewish believers, it should not

surprise us that they had great respect for the Jewish Scriptures. By their confession of Jesus as the Messiah *(Christos),* they believed that God had indeed inaugurated the kingdom of God and that they were living in the new age. What God had promised in the Scriptures had now been fulfilled in the person of Jesus and in the sending of his Spirit (Acts 2). They were the "true" Israel.

The early believers continued to use the Hebrew Scriptures in their worship and study, but these took on fresh significance and meaning for their faith as they began to study them in order to see how they bore witness to Christ. Peter used several texts to demonstrate to the crowd gathered in Jerusalem for the celebration of Pentecost that what was happening was a fulfillment of Scripture (Acts 2:16-21, 25-36). Paul, after his conversion, became a prime interpreter of the fact that the Hebrew Scriptures - the Law and the Prophets - had been fulfilled in Christ (e.g., Rom 1:2; 10:4; 1 Cor 15:3-4). In a sense, Paul and others were simply doing what the resurrected Lord had done on the Emmaus road to two bewildered disciples: "Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures" (Lk 24:27). This new center of reference for interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures led to increasing conflicts between believing and nonbelieving Jews. Although both could agree on the authority of the ancient Scriptures and their place in the religious life of God's people, they differed significantly on matters of interpretation.

The book of Acts records how the early apostles such as Peter and John were persecuted because they now claimed a new authority in the person of Jesus and used passages from the Old Testament to justify their beliefs and actions (Acts 2-6). Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was stoned because he used the Scriptures to condemn the Jews for their obduracy throughout history and for their role in the death of Jesus (Acts 6:8-7:60).

Paul attempted to demonstrate the true meaning of Scripture to the Jews but made very little progress with them. When he traveled throughout the Greco-Roman world and visited the synagogues to explain the Scriptures to his people, he often was rejected and persecuted (Acts 13:44-46; 14:1-7; 17:1-9; 18:1-11; 19:8-10). Many Jews continued to oppose him throughout his ministry up until his final arrest in Jerusalem (Acts 21-23). While he was able to win many Gentiles to the faith, Paul essentially was unsuccessful in convincing his own people of the true nature and purpose of the Law. Small wonder that he agonized so passionately in Romans 9-11 over the Jewish rejection of the gospel and the future of his people.
Considerable disagreement exists in scholarly circles about the status and extent of the Hebrew Scriptures (the term "Old Testament" was not introduced until the end

of the second century A.D.). Basically, the issue is whether there was a threefold designation of "Law," "Prophets" and "Writings" during the time of Jesus and the apostolic age.

Some scholars are convinced that the limits of the Hebrew canon were firmly established by the beginning of the first century, so that the Old Testament used by the early Christians was virtually identical with the one we have in our Bible today. Others, however, reason that the boundaries of the Old Testament canon may not have been decided until the Council of Jamnia (or Yavneh/Jabneh) around A.D. 90. It does appear that first-century Judaism was not uniform in designating its" sacred Scripture." On one occasion Jesus asks:
"Is it not written in your law *[nomos] ...?"* (Jn 10:34-35). But then he proceeds to quote from Psalm 82:6 and not the Law. There is no simple way of knowing whether the reference to "Psalms" in Luke 24:44 ("what is written in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms") includes *all* the Scripture that became designated as the "Writings." We cannot be certain that the early church had *a fixed body of these Scriptures* at its disposal before the second century.

The Septuagint (LXX)

Alongside the Hebrew Scriptures, the Jews studied and used a Greek translation known as the Septuagint" (from the Latin *septuaginta,* meaning seventy, abbreviated as LXX). Such a translation was necessary because of the large number of Jews who were living outside Palestine - the Diaspora. Some estimates suggest that as many as four and a half million Jews lived in different parts of the Roman Empire during the time of Caesar Augustus.

It appears that work on the LXX began in Alexandria early in the third century B.C. with the Pentateuch and continued into the second century B.C. with translations of the Prophets and Writings. External evidence for the existence of a Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures in the second century B.C. is found in the book of Ecclesiasticus, also known as the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach (c. 200-180 B.C.). In its prologue, mention is made of the Law, the Prophets and the rest of the books.

The formation of the LXX was a gradual process spanning several centuries. Scholars have rightly judged that the *Letter of Aristeas* (c. 275-295 B.C.) is a legendary or romantic piece of Jewish propaganda about the origin of the LXX. In this document, the author narrates how King Ptolemy II Philadelphus (c. 284-247 B.C.) requested that priests in Jerusalem send seventy-two scholars, six from each of Israel's tribes, to begin translating the Law into Greek for the

library in Alexandria. These translators were isolated on the Island of Pharos, near Alexandria, and after seventy-two days they completed identical translations. This was then read with great excitement before the Jewish community in Alexandria. And since this translation was done accurately and reverently, it was concluded that no revision or deletion of it should ever take place *(Letter 310-11)*.

But the translation of certain parts of the Old Testament into Greek was not always done consistently and carefully. Some books differ considerably from our present Hebrew Bible. Jeremiah, for example, is about one-eighth shorter and Job about one-fourth shorter in the LXX than in our Old Testament. There also is a different order of materials in the Psalms and Proverbs. Joshua has several changes, including additions and omissions. These observations lead to the conclusion that the LXX is a collection of translations of the Hebrew Scriptures produced over several centuries by Jews of the Dispersion.

Another significant feature of the LXX is that it contains a number of additional books not found in the Hebrew Scriptures. Most of them are Greek translations of Hebrew and Aramaic, but others, such as the Wisdom of Solomon and 2 Maccabees, were originally composed in Greek.

These books, now known to us as the Old Testament Apocrypha, were written during the first and second century B.C. No one is certain, however, when they actually became part of the LXX. But given their early composition, their popularity with the Jewish people, the many allusions, parallels and ideas in the New Testament (see below), their use by the early church fathers, and their appearance in the best Greek codices of the Bible (such as Sinaiticus, Vaticanus and Alexandrinus), one can safely assume that they were part of the LXX in the first century A.D. and were, therefore, known to the Greek-speaking Christians and the writers of the New Testament. They were included in the Vulgate and thus continue to be part of the Roman Catholic Bible today. The Protestant church, on the other hand, adopted the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament, which did not contain these Apocrypha books.

The most striking feature of the LXX for this study is that it was the predominant version of the Old Testament used by the early church and the writers of the New Testament. It would have been known in Jerusalem because there were many Hellenists (Greek-speaking Jews) in the city (Acts 6), as well as a synagogue of the Freedmen (Acts 6:9). Stephen, a Hellenist, is portrayed by Luke as using some form of the LXX when he disputed with the religious authorities in Jerusalem (Acts 7). Paul would have used the LXX when he visited the synagogues in the Diaspora in the hope that the Jews would come to believe that Jesus was the

Messiah (e.g., Acts 13:17-18; 17:1-3). At least 80 percent of the Old Testament quotations found in the New Testament are taken from the LXX. In fact, there are many Old Testament passages in the New Testament which agree with the LXX but differ considerably from the Hebrew Old Testament (e.g., Amos 9:11-12 in Acts 15:16-17; Is 7:14 in Mt 1:23).

Once Christians began using the LXX for missionary and apologetic purposes, it began to lose favor with the Jews. Their earlier acceptance of this version waned when they found how consistently and effectively it was used against them in arguments. More and more the LXX became identified *as the Old Testament of the Christian church.* This led to a Jewish rejection of the LXX in its current form and the production of several other Greek versions that attempted to translate the Hebrew text more accurately. These revisions by Aquila, Theodotion and Symmachus in the early second century A.D. were produced roughly at the same time the Hebrew Old Testament canon was completed without the Apocryphal books.

Since the LXX was used so extensively by the early Christians, it is natural that certain portions of the New Testament contain echoes of its language and concepts. Theological terms such as *law, righteousness, mercy* and *truth* were taken over directly from the LXX by New Testament writers. By becoming the Bible of the early church fathers, the LXX influenced church dogma as well as the formation of the Old Testament. Even the Hebrew threefold division of Law, Prophets and Writings was replaced with the Greek fourfold division of Law, History, Poetry and Prophets.

The Old Testament Apocrypha

This body of literature that is included in the LXX and the Roman Catholic Bibles became known as the Apocrypha (from the Greek "to hide," "to conceal"). Initially, this was a literary term applied to certain books that were to be kept from the public (thus hidden away, not read publicly) because of the secret doctrines and esoteric wisdom they were thought to contain. Currently, however, it is used more in the sense of spurious or noncanonical. Thus when we talk about the Apocrypha today, we mean a body of literature that is not regarded as canonical by Protestants. Roman Catholics accept these books as authoritative and prefer the term *deutero-canonical* to distinguish them from the "protocanonical books" - those found in the Hebrew Old Testament.

The books of the Apocrypha include:

1. The First Book of Esdras
2. The Second Book of Esdras
3. Tobit
4. Judith
5. The Additions to the Book of Esther
6. The Wisdom of Solomon
7. Ecclesiasticus, or the Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach
8. Baruch
9. The Letter of Jeremiah
10. The Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Young Men
11. Susanna
12. Bel and the Dragon
13. The Prayer of Manasseh
14. The First Book of the Maccabees
15. The Second Book of the Maccabees

Most of these books originated during times of oppression and persecution, when the Jews in Palestine were ruled by such Greek despots as Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.), John Hyrcanus (135-105 B.C.) and Alexander Jannaeus (104-78 B.C.), who sought to Hellenize Palestine at all costs. Many of the historical events of this era are recorded in the Apocryphal books. In others the authors attempt to provide a message of hope for God's people who were undergoing suffering and hardships or to write a "theodicy" - a vindication of the justice of God in the midst of evil in the world.

Besides giving valuable historical background material, the Apocryphal literature shows the development of some important concepts found in the New Testament such as demons, angels, resurrection, rewards, the kingdom of God and the Son of Man. Students of the Bible should become familiar with this literature and appreciate its significance as a bridge between the Old and New Testaments. There are many passages in the New Testament that are closely parallel, allude to and contain ideas from the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. Scholars who have worked in this area have made extensive comparisons between books of the Apocrypha and sayings of Jesus in the Gospels, Romans, Hebrews, James and Revelation. (See. the examples in table 1.1)

Several things need to be kept in mind when one evaluates the significance of the parallels, allusions and reminiscences between the Apocryphal literature and

the New Testament.

First, the writers of the New Testament were influenced by the common literary expressions and religious ideas of their day and did not necessarily borrow everything from their predecessors. Analogy does not always mean genealogy.

Second, although the writers of the New Testament were familiar with the Apocryphal writings from the LXX, we do not know whether they gave any type of scriptural status to them. On the one hand, they nowhere quote any Apocryphal books as authoritative. But this does not prove anything decisive about their attitude toward the Apocrypha, because the New Testament also lacks quotations from several canonical books that were regarded as authoritative Scripture, such as Joshua, Judges, Chronicles and Ezra. Thus, we cannot say with absolute certainty, if Paul treated Esther, or the Song of Songs as scripture any more than we can say if these books belonged to the Bible which Jesus knew and used.

Third, the early church fathers quoted from the Apocrypha in the same way they quoted from the books of the Old Testament. Later church fathers such as Origen (A.D. 185-243), Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D. 315-386) and Jerome (A.D. 340-420) sought to separate the Apocryphal books from the rest of the Old Testament as "outside books." Tradition, however, prevailed, and most of the Apocrypha was included in the Vulgate and eventually became an authoritative part of the Roman Catholic Scriptures.

Table 1.1 Sample Parallels: New Testament and Old Testament Apocrypha

Matthew 11:28-30	**Sirach 51:23-26**
Come to me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light	Draw near me, you who are uneducated, and lodge in the house of instruction. Why do you say you are lacking in these things, and why do you endure such great things?
2 Corinthians 5:1, 4	**Wisdom of Solomon 9:15**
For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens…For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.	… Put your neck under her yoke, and let your souls receive instruction

Romans 1:20 Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made. So, they are without excuse	**Wisdom of Solomon 13:5** For from the greatness and beauty of created things comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.
James 1:19 …let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slower to anger.	**Sirach 5:11** Be quick to hear but deliberate in answering.

The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

Much of what has been said about the Apocrypha applies equally to the Pseudepigrapha. It would be better to designate this and other literature that was written during the postexilic period as "intertestamental literature" or simply "noncanonical literature."

The term *pseudepigrapha* literally means "false writing" and has come generally to designate books that were attributed "falsely" to ideal and/or heroic individuals from the Old Testament. Some books truly are pseudepigrapha (1 *Enoch, Revelation of Ezra, Apocalypse of Baruch, Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs);* others simply are anonymous (from an unknown author). James Charlesworth comments, "Contemporary scholars employ the term 'pseudepigrapha' not because it denotes something spurious about the documents collected under that title, but because the term has been inherited and is now used internationally."(*Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,* 2vols, New York: Doubleday,1983,1:xxv).

For the most part, these books were written in Palestine and areas of the Diaspora between 200 B.C and A.D. 200. Like the Apocrypha, they provide valuable information about Jewish history and the nature and variety of religious thought during that period. Themes that run throughout the books include perseverance during suffering, God's righteous character despite evil circumstances, resistance to Hellenism, and the exaltation of Judaism through commendations of faith, the Mosaic law and ancestral traditions. That these works were known and used by some elements of Christianity is reflected directly in the New Testament: Jude 14-15 quotes from 1 *Enoch* 1:9, and Jude 9 alludes to the *Assumption of Moses.*

A special genre (classification) of literature within the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha is known as "apocalyptic" (Greek, "to unveil," "reveal,"

"uncover"), and it includes such books as 1 *Enoch,* 4 Ezra and 2 *Baruch.* Students of the Bible are familiar with this type of material from portions of the book of Daniel in the Old Testament and from Revelation (also known as "the Apocalypse of John") and apocalyptic sections such as Matthew 24, Mark 13 (sometimes called "the Little Apocalypse"), 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 and 2 Peter 3:1-12 in the New Testament.

Apocalyptic literature characterizes the world as a battle between two opposing cosmic powers, God and Satan. The temporal evil age under Satan will eventually be overthrown by God, who will establish a perfect and eternal age where he will rule and the righteous be blessed forever. Much of the message of apocalyptic literature is couched in revelations, visions, prophecies, dreams, animal symbolism, numerology and astral influences (angels and demons). And although Christianity rejected or reinterpreted some of the teachings of Jewish apocalyptic, it also took over and incorporated many apocalyptic concepts into its theology. To this extent the New Testament writings provide a useful commentary on such apocalyptic doctrines as the resurrection of the dead, judgment, Messianism and the end of the present evil age.

The eschatological (i.e. end-time) expectations that the early Christians adopted from Judaism were reinterpreted in light of their belief that Jesus was the Messiah whose coming had inaugurated the new age. This new belief set their theology at odds with the Jews, who were still awaiting the "Coming One." So while the church was using apocalyptic ideas more and more to clarify what had taken place with the coming of Christ, the Jews, on the other hand, found this literature less and less attractive and sought to distinguish themselves from the Christian faith. Many apocalyptic books were rejected and eventually destroyed.

Table 1.2. The books of the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

Apocalyptic Literature	**Prayer, Psalms, Odes**
1 Enoch	More Psalms of David
2 Enoch	1. Psalm 151
3 Enoch	2. Psalm 152
Sibylline Oracles	3. Psalm 153
Treatise of Shem	4. Psalm 154
Apocryphon of Ezekiel	5. Psalm 155
Apocalypse of Zephaniah	Prayer of Manasseh
4 Ezra	Psalms of Solomon

Questions of Ezra	Hellenistic Synagogal Prayers
*Revelation of Ezr*a	Prayer of Joseph
2 Baruch	Prayer of Jacob
3 Baruch	Odes of Solomon
Apocalypse of Abraham	**Poetry**
Apocalypse of Adam	Philo the Epic Poet
Apocalypse of Elijah	Theodotus
Apocalypse of Daniel	**Oracles**
Testaments	Orphica
Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs	**Drama**
Testament of Reuben	Ezekiel the Tragedian
Testament of Simeon	**Other**
Testament of Levi	Fragments of Pseudo-Greek Poets
Testament of Judah	1. Pseudo-Hesiod
Testament of Issachar	2. Pseudo-Pythagoras
Testament of Zebulon	3. Pseudo-Aeschylus
Testament of Dan	4. Pseudo-Sophocles
Testament of Naphtali	5.Pseudo-Euripides
Testament of Gad	6.Pseudo-Philemon
Testament of Asher	7.Pseudo-Diphilus
Testament of Joseph	8.Pseudo-Menander
Testament of Benjamin	**Philosophy**
Testament of Job	Aristobulus
Testaments of the Three Patriarchs	Demetrius the Chronographer
1.Testament of Abraham	Aristeas the Exegete
2. Testament of Isaac	**History**
3. Testament of Jacob	Eupolemus
Testament (Assumption) of Moses	Pseudo-Eupolemus
Testament of Solomon	Cleodemus Malchus
Testament of Adam	**Romance**
Expansions of the Old Testament and Legends	Artapanus
Letters of Aristeas	Pseudo-Hecataeus
Jubilees	5 Maccabees

Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah	
Joseph and Asenath	
Life of Adam and Eve	
Pseudo-Philo	
Lives of the Prophets	
Ladder of Jacob	
4 Baruch	
Jannes and Jambres	
History of the Rechabites	
Eldad and Modad	
History of Joseph	
Wisdom and Philosophical Literature	
Ahiqar	
Pseudo-Phocylides	
3 Maccabees	
4 Maccabees	
The Sentences of the Syriac Menander	

The Dead Sea Scrolls and Greco-Roman Literature

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls began in 1946, when a young shepherd boy wandered into a cave in the wilderness of Judea to retrieve a wayward goat. Since that time, most archaeologists have concluded that the site at Khirbet Qumran, situated southeast of Jerusalem near the Dead Sea, was inhabited by a group of religious Jews that resembled the Essenes, a sect of Judaism that existed in Palestine from about the middle of the second century B.C. until the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

This community probably had its origin in the second century B.C., when Judaism was going through some difficult religious and political struggles. The Hasmonean high priests of the time, John Hyrcanus and Alexander Jannaeus, were Hellenistic sympathizers, and Antiochus Epiphanes was a Seleucid ruler who ruthlessly imposed Hellenistic customs and ideas on the Jews. Among those who opposed Hellenism was a group of pious and conservative Jews known as the Hasidim. When they could no longer tolerate the persecution and compromises to their faith, they withdrew to the wilderness and set up their own type of eschatological community. By putting a special nuance on the prophecy of

Isaiah 40:3 *"* A voice cries out: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God' *",* they believed that they were preparing for the coming day of the Lord. The community existed from the middle of the second century B.C. Until A.D.68, when it was finally destroyed by the Romans.

The discoveries at Qumran are significant for at least two reasons. First, they provide information about the existence of a religious community during the time of Jesus and the early church. Archaeological reconstruction of the site shows that the facilities included a large meeting room for study and the common meal, a library, storerooms for food and deep cisterns to store water for drinking and for their baptismal rite. Extensive rules and regulations governing the community are described in the *Manual of Discipline* or the *Rule of the Community.*

Second, the caves yielded a marvelous treasure of religious documents. Some of the manuscripts included copies of the Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphal texts discussed earlier; other scrolls consist of hymns and psalms; another is a *War Scroll,* which outlines plans for the final eschatological battle between the forces of good and evil, represented by the Children of Light and the Children of Darkness. Two incomplete medieval fragments of the *Damascus Document* (also known as *Fragments of a Zadokite Work)* had been discovered in the Genizah (a storage chamber for unused manuscripts) of the Ezra Synagogue in Cairo in 1897. More extensive fragments of this document were recovered from the Qumran caves.

The most important manuscripts, however, are the numerous biblical texts. The scrolls contain excerpts from all the Old Testament books, with the exception of the book of Esther. The two scrolls of the book of Isaiah are a thousand years older than previously known manuscripts of the Hebrew Old Testament.

Since the Qumran community was contemporary with the early Christian movement, one has to wonder about any possible contact between the two. Scholars who have examined this question have noted both similarities and differences. Some suggest that John the Baptist belonged to this community because he lived in "the wilderness," practised an ascetic way of life and gave teaching focused on baptism and repentance (cf. Mt 3:1-12 and parallels). Others note similarities with John's Gospel as well as between Jesus and the Teacher of Righteousness mentioned in the Scrolls. Both early Christianity and Qumran were apocalyptic movements which saw themselves as living in the last days and engaged in a battle against Satan and the powers of darkness. The dualism in the Qumran literature (light-darkness; good-evil) also has been compared with the language in the Gospel of John and the Epistle to the Hebrews.

At this point it seems fair to say that there is no proof that Christianity and Qumran influenced each other directly. Many of the similarities are from their common heritage in Judaism and/or religious beliefs, expressions and practices during the time of Christ. Analogy, as mentioned earlier, does not necessarily mean genealogy; nor should plausible, or even probable, theories be given more certainty than they warrant. It would be best to conclude that the influence of the Qumran community upon early Christianity as reflected in the New Testament is, at this stage of our knowledge, minimal. Nevertheless, the texts from Qumran are a valuable source of information for the milieu that gave birth to Christianity.

Greco-Roman Literature

Since Christianity emerged within a Jewish *and* Hellenistic environment, one would expect Greco-Roman literature to be an important component in reconstructing the composition of the New Testament. The discovery of the ancient papyri in Egypt at the turn of the century was just the tip of the literary iceberg. Since that time, other materials have been uncovered and published. Scholars continue to examine the Greco-Roman literary environment of the New Testament with renewed passion and have shown that the writers of the New Testament utilized the literary models, conventions, styles and practices of their day.

This observation should not surprise or alarm us. The writers of the New Testament were familiar with this literary world and were seeking to communicate the good news about Jesus and to explain the nature of the Christian religion to a culture that used, understood and appreciated such forms.

At times the Greeks used the "diatribe," a form of Greek discourse and exhortation used by schools of philosophy such as the Sophists, Stoics and Cynics. "The distinguishing feature of the diatribe," writes David Aune, "is its dialogical or conversational character, a pedagogical method based on the model of Socrates."(*The New Testament in Its Literary Environment,* Philadelphia: Westminster, 1989, p. 200). It includes such distinguishing features as rhetorical questions, hypothetical objections and imaginary opponents.

We also know that the Greeks and Romans were great rhetoricians and that audiences were fascinated by the power of speech. Rhetorical "manuals" or "handbooks" were written by such important people as Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), Cicero (106-43 B.C.) and Quintilian (c. A.D. 35-95) and were an essential part of education in Greek and Roman society.

The aim in rhetoric is, of course, persuasion and response - a purpose similar to that of a speech or sermon today. And since much of early Christianity

involved public preaching and teaching (see Jesus, Paul, the speeches in Acts, etc.), it would be natural to assume that rhetorical principles were utilized in oral and written communication.

Another major area of research has concentrated on letter writing among the Greek and Romans. Letter writing is one of Rome's most distinctive legacies to the literature of the world. Stanley Stanley Stowers has identified six distinct letter types from this period (friendship, family, praise and blame, exhortation and advice, mediation, apologetic) and has discussed their influence upon letter writing in the early church" (*Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity,* Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986, pp. 41-175). It would be fair to say that the research of Stowers and others has given us a deeper appreciation for the structure and meaning of letters in the New Testament. The same can be said for the relationship between the Gospels and ancient biography or history in the writing of Luke-Acts.

The importance of this research for our study is voiced by Stowers when he writes:

> Something about the nature of early Christianity made it a movement of letter writers. We possess more than nine thousand letters written by Christians in antiquity. Twenty-one of the twenty-seven writings in the New Testament take the form of letters. Two of the remaining works, the Acts of the Apostles and the Apocalypse, contain letters within them. If the interpreter is willing to understand early Christian letters as Greco-Roman letters, they can provide a fascinating window into the world of those Christians (*Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity,* p. 15).

7

The Canon of the New Testament

Introduction

The word "canon" is derived from the Greek *kanon* which mean a "reed," and then a "rod" or "bar," by which, because it was used for measuring, came to mean metaphorically "a standard." In grammar it meant a rule of procedure; in chronology, a table of dates; and in literature, a list of works that would correctly be attributed to a given author. The term "canon" as applied to the New Testament means the accepted books that constitute the New Testament document.

The earliest list of New Testament books containing only twenty-seven appeared in 367 CE in a letter to Athanasius, bishop of Alexandra. The order was Gospels, Acts, General Epistles, Pauline Epistles, and Revelation. In the first century Peter spoke of Paul writing "in all his letters" (2 Pet. 3:16), and by the early second century the letters of Ignatius were being collected. Evidence of exclusive collections being made in the second century is seen in the writings of Justin Martyr, who argues for only the four canonical Gospels. Discussions about authorship and authority of various letters appears in writings of the second century, and one canonical list - the Muratorian Canon - dated from the second to the fourth century, between books that are suitable to be read in worship and those that should be read only in private devotion.

The fact that other books formed a larger deposit out of which the twenty-seven eventually emerged is seen in the reference to a prior letter to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 5:9, a letter to the Laodiceans in Colossians 4: 16, and the inclusion of 1 and 2 Clement in the fifth century manuscript of the Greek New Testament, Codex Alexandrinus, as well as Barnabas and Hermas in the fourth century Codex Sinaiticus. Eusebius cited a letter from the second century bishop of

Corinth, Dionysius, stating that Clement's letter was read in the church there "from time to time for our admonition" *(Ecclesiatical History* 4.23.11).

The formation of the New Testament canon was not a counciliar decision. The earliest ecumenical council, Nicea in 325, did not discuss the canon. The first undisputed decision of a council on the canon seems to be from Carthage in 397, which decreed that nothing should be read in the church under the name of the divine Scriptures except the canonical writings.

The council could list only the books that were generally regarded by the concensus of use as properly a canon. The formation of the New Testament canon, must, therefore, be regarded as a process rather than an event, and a historical rather than a biblical matter.

Factors that led to the New Testament Canon

Any academic inquiry into the New Testament cannon will reveal the following:

1. The early church inherited a body of authoritative literature known as the Hebrew Scriptures.
2. All the documents which make up the New Testament were probably written before the end of the first century.
3. Each of the four Gospels was included in the fourfold Gospel collection by the end of the second century.
4. Paul's letters became part of a thirteen-letter corpus by the beginning the third century.
5. The Catholic Letters initially circulated independently but were brought together under this title by the fourth century.
6. The copying, circulation, collection and use of these books during the first four centuries shows that nearly all of them had universal appeal and authority for the church before the final canonical list was made in A.D. 397.

The historical and creative process by which the twenty-seven books came to make up the New Testament is known as *canonization* and took four centuries to complete. The word *canon* (from the Greek *kanon,* a loan word from *the Semitic* languages, meaning "reed" or "straight rod" initially was used by the early church fathers for a *norm* or *rule* of faith. But the fourth century it referred to lists or tables and in this sense was applied to *the* books which were given *canonical* status by the church.

In examining the criteria that were used in the formation of the New Testament canon, several observations should be kept in mind: First, the most

important criterion appears to be whether or not a document was a trustworthy witness to the apostolic' faith. Second, for the most part, the other criteria should be understood as operating interdependently or concurrently rather than independently or sequentially. This means that one should not attempt to rank them in importance. Third, certain criteria were given different weight by some churches and leaders - a phenomenon which explains why a few hooks took longer to gain universal acceptance.

Following is a brief discussion of the criteria that were used.

1. The Authority of Jesus

The New Testament teaches that the ultimate authority for the early church was the authority of the resurrected and exalted Lord. Followers of Jesus remembered him as one who spoke from God ("Never has anyone spoken like this"- John 7:46); and whose words carried the message of eternal life - John 6:68). Although no evidence exists that Jesus committed any of his thoughts to writing, his spoken words were extremely important to his followers. He was considered a "standard" or "canon" of authority long before his is words were written down, collected and officially canonized by the church. As the Gospels were written down and gradually came into general use in the churches, the authority they acquired was accorded to them not in the first instance as holy books, but as books containing the holy words of Jesus. The authority of the words was primary; that of the books was secondary and derivative.

2. Apostolicity

On the surface, this criterion suggests that the documents of the New Testament were written by apostles and would, therefore, fall within the apostolic Age (c. A.D. 30-65). This would be the case, for example, with the Gospels attributed to Matthew and John or letters written by Paul, Peter and James.

Further study, however, reveals that the concept of apostolicity implied for the early church more than just apostolic authorship. Certain writings which claimed to be written by apostles (for example, the *Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Peter Preaching of Peter, Apocalypse of Peter)* or which claimed apostolic authority were not canonized. On the other hand, some documents were included in the canon because they were *indirectly* connected with an apostle. This appears to be the case with Mark and Luke, who were not apostles but whose writings were given apostolic authority on the basis of their association with Peter and Paul, respectively.

This rather elastic concept of apostolicity may explain why other

letters of the New Testament were canonized. For example, according to current historical-critical study, Hebrews appears to have gained general acceptance once it was attributed to Paul; James and Jude may have been included because they were regarded as written by brothers of the Lord; and the letters of 2 and 3 John were associated with the apostle who wrote the Fourth Gospel and the book of Revelation.

3. Usage in the Church

It appears that the books that were canonized are those that enjoyed a special status and were utilized both frequently and universally by the church. In other words, believers accepted certain Christian writings as authoritative for their faith because they transcended the immediate or situation for which they initially were written. Those that possessed only a temporary importance were not given canonical status. This criterion appears to be more significant in canonizing writing than either apostolicity or catholicity.

However, we need to remember that there were regional differences in the early church. The churches in the West used Revelation, but not those in East; the East accepted Hebrews and regarded it as Pauline, while the West took many more years to come to a similar position. And there is no doubt that some of the churches used non canonical books.

4. Orthodoxy

The church existed under the threat of false teachings and found it necessary to protect the truth of the gospel (see Gal 1:6-9) from such heresies .

These include:

Gnosticism, Docetism and other heterodox movements of the late first and early second centuries. In the first century this was done by appealing to apostolic teaching and traditions (2 Thess. 2:15; 1 John 1:5), the word of truth (2 Tim 1:14; 2:15), good doctrine (1 Tim 4:6), sound teaching and doctrine (I Tim 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3), the faith (2 Tim 4:7; Jude 3, 20) and testing the spirits (1 John 4: 1-4). These early appeals to orthodoxy led to a conformity to the “rule of faith” in the second and third centuries. Orthodoxy, however, does not mean that there was a sterile or even uniform theology in the early church. Recent studies have helped us to appreciate the diversity as well as the unity of early Christian theology.

5. Inspiration

Initially, the concept of inspiration was not crucial to the canonicity of the New

Testament. The early Christians believed that the Holy Spirit was the possession of every believer and thus inspired the entire community and not only the writers of their sacred literature (Acts 2: 17; Rom 8:9; 1 Cor. 2: 14-16; Rev 2:7). It must be noted that the author of the book of Revelation is the only writer of the New Testament who expressly claims that his words are prophetically inspired (see 1:1; 3:22; 22; 18-19) but gradually the church came "to recognize, accept, affirm, and confirm the self-authenticating quality of certain documents that imposed themselves as such upon the church. Therefore, with the exception of prophetic and apocalyptic documents, inspiration was attributed by the church to a book only after it was recognized as canonical; it was considered a corollary of canonicity rather than a criterion of canonicity. According to K. Stendahl, "it was not until the red ribbon of the self-evident had been tied around the twenty-seven books of the New Testament that 'inspiration' could serve theologians as an answer to the question: why are these books different from the other books?" (K. Stendahl, "The Apocalypse of Jon and the Epistles of Paul in the Muratorian Fragment," in *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation,* ed. W. Klassen and G. F. Synder, New York: Harper, 1962, p. 243).

The concept of Inspiration was not restricted to the New Testament. The statement in 2 Timothy 3:16 that "All scripture is inspired by God [literally, 'God-breathed']," refers to the Old Testament, but we have no way of knowing whether "Scripture" meant the canon of the Old Testament as we have it today. It was only later, when the New Testament writings were included with the Old Testament, that the term *inspired* was attributed to them as well. Clement of Rome claims "inspiration" for his works (l Clement 63.2), as does Ignatius *(To the Romans 8.3).* In sum, at no time was inspiration considered the unique or primary criterion to determine which writings of the New Testament should be canonized. The role and nature of inspiration with respect to the canonicity of the New Testament continues to be debated in many circles today.

There is no unanimous agreement on the definition of the term *inspiration.* Such statements as "a book was included in the canon because it was believed to be inspired" and "a book was believed to be inspired because it was in the canon" reflect the circular reasoning often evident in the debate. Students of the New Testament and early church history must define their terms carefully and not impose any preconceived ideas of inspiration and authority upon the text.

It is important to note that the Council of Carthage did not settle all the issues of the canon for Christendom, because different opinions on the status of certain books continued to exist in both the Eastern and Western churches. Some

manuscripts appear which either lack one or more of the twenty-seven books (e.g., Hebrews) or add some books that originally were not included (e.g., *The Epistle to the Laodiceans).*

Adoption of the canon

Significant debates on the New Testament canon also took place during the Renaissance and the Reformation; Martin Luther questioned the apostolic and canonical status of Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation and relegated them to the end of his 1522 edition of the New Testament (he called James" an epistle of straw"). Calvin, on the other hand, accepted the traditional form of the New Testament canon. The Roman Catholic Church made its final decision on the canon of Scripture, including the Apocrypha, at the Council of Trent in 1546. The important fact, however, is that all these confessions acknowledge the same twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

Questions about the canon of the New Testament continue to be raised today. Which form of the text is canonical? Is the canon open or closed? Is there a canon within the canon? Responses to these questions, however, go beyond the purpose of this study which is only an introduction to the New Testament. For our historical survey on the canon of the New Testament it seems wise to end this section with the judicious words of F. F. Bruce, a scholar who devoted much of his life to a study of the canon:

> That the New Testament consists of the twenty-seven books which have been recognized as belonging to it since the fourth century is not a value judgment; it is a statement of fact. Individuals or communities may consider that it is too restricted or too comprehensive; but their opinion does not affect the identity of the canon. The canon is not going to be diminished or increased because of what they think or say: it is a literary, historical and theological datum (F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture,* Downers Grove, Ill, IVP, 1998, p. 250).

8

The Text and Transmission of the New Testament

Introduction

Collecting the books of the New Testament was a slow process, of which few traces remain. The Gospels and Epistles were written at different times and places and were sent to widely separated destinations. The originals were probably written on papyrus, a thin and fragile kind of paper made from the reeds of the papyrus plant, which grew in the marshes of Egypt and the Middle East. They were inscribed by hand with pen and ink (III John13) and were usually transmitted by messengers to the persons or churches for whom they were intended (Rom. 16:1; Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-9, 16).

It is impossible to determine when the first collections of New Testament writings were created. Copies of the Gospels and epistles must have been made and circulated at an early date. There are traces of the utterances of Jesus in the Pauline writings, though these may have been taken from oral tradition rather than from written accounts. "All [Paul's] epistles" are mentioned in II Peter (3: 15-16) before the end of the first century, and they must have been published as a group, since they never appear singly in manuscript form. By the middle of the second century the Gospel of Luke had been separated from Acts and had been combined with Matthew, Mark, and John to make a fourfold life of Christ. Justin Martyr (c. 140) alluded to the "memoirs of the apostles," (*1 Apology* LXVII) and Irenaeus (c. 180) (*Against Heresies* III. Xi.7) mentioned the four by name. Tatian (c. 1 70) combined them into the first harmony, the Diatessaron, which had wide vogue in the Eastern church and was generally used for public reading until the beginning of the fifth century.

The remaining writings of the New Testament, commonly known as the

General Epistles and Revelation, did not initially constitute a fixed group, for they do not appear in any uniform sequence in the works of the earliest Church Fathers. Gradually they were drawn into the larger collection with the others, until the New Testament as it now exists emerged in the early third century.

The Transmission of the Text

The books of the New Testament were first reproduced either by private individuals for their own use or by professional scribes for churches and monasteries. Usually copies were made one at a time, but as the demand increased, it is likely that trained slaves transcribed a number of copies simultaneously from dictation. In the process of transcription errors crept into the manuscripts that were perpetuated by later copyists, so that a large number of variants appeared. As the copies multiplied, the variants tended to increase, but the very multiplicity of the documents enhanced the probability that the original text would be preserved in at least a few of them.

From the beginning of the second century to the close of the third the church suffered intermittent persecution from the Roman government. Christians were arrested, tried before the local judges, and condemned to death. Frequently their Scriptures were confiscated, with the result that many manuscripts were destroyed, and others were damaged, making survival precarious. One Gospel manuscript of the fifth century, Codex Washingtoniensis (W), shows traces of having been copied from several different sources that may have been earlier fragments left from the devastation accompanying the persecution of Diocletian (A. D. 302-311). During this period the production of manuscripts must have been irregular, and probably many copies were made by persons who had little learning or skill in writing. The major divergences in the readings of the New Testament text date from the period before Constantine and may reflect the stress and confusion prevailing in the Christian world.

With the cessation of persecution after the victory of Constantine and the virtual adoption of Christianity as the state religion in A. D. 313, Christians began to prepare the scriptural text for public use. Constantine himself ordered that fifty copies of the Bible be made and distributed to the larger churches in the cities of the empire. These “authorized editions” doubtlessly became the archetypes for many lesser manuscripts, while others that may have been even more ancient were reproduced in monasteries and in smaller communities. From the fourth to the twelfth century the New Testament was published either in portions such as the Gospels or Pauline epistles, or occasionally in complete volumes called *pandects.* In this process new materials were employed for writing. Papyrus was too frail for

use in public services or in monastery libraries. The scribes generally used *vellum,* thin sheets of calfskin, or *parchment,* manufactured from sheepskin. From the time of Constantine almost to the age of printing these materials prevailed; paper was unknown until a relatively late date.

Despite the mediocre ability and limited knowledge of many scribes, the text that they produced was surprisingly accurate. Available manuscripts for copying were often defective. Carelessness and prejudice occasionally affected a scribe's judgment in altering or "correcting" the original. On the other hand, some of the scribes whose names are known from their signatures were phenomenally accurate and show by their painstaking exactness that they endeavored to follow faithfully their archetype. While none of them was infallible, few deliberately altered or falsified the text.

The Sources of the Text

Despite the numerous possibilities for error, the New Testament is probably the most trustworthy piece of writing that has survived from antiquity. There are greater resources for reconstructing its text than for any document of the classic age. One small piece of papyrus, the Rylands Fragment of John, may have been written within fifty years of the lifetime of the Gospel's author, while the Chester Beatty papyri, originally containing a large part of the New Testament, were produced about A. D. 250. By contrast, the dialogues of Plato, the works of the Greek dramatists, and the poems of Virgil have come down through copies that are very few, and that may be separated from their originals by as many as 1400 years. It is not unlikely that a first century papyrus of some Gospel or epistle may yet be discovered that will carry the written text back to the second generation of the Christian church.

For the purpose of reconstructing the text of the New Testament, five different types of sources are presently available. The first and most important of these comprises the manuscripts, which are the Greek texts that have been preserved from remote antiquity. The Rylands Fragment mentioned above, a single piece of papyrus about an inch and a half square, the Chester Beatty papyri, containing portions of the Gospels, Acts, the epistles of Paul, and Revelation, and the Bodmer Papyrus of John date from the third century or earlier. The most ancient extensive manuscripts are Aleph, or Codex Sinaiticus, now in the British Museum, and B, or Codex Vaticanus, belonging to the Vatican Library in Rome. Both were written in the fourth century and may have been among the copies that Constantine ordered for the churches. Originally, they contained the entire New Testament, though both

have suffered the loss of some pages.

The foregoing manuscripts belong to the class known as "uncials," so named because they were written in large printed letters that seemed an inch in height. They were evidently made for public reading and were copied quite carefully. For this reason, the uncial text is generally the most reliable.

A second type of text, called "cursive," was written in a flowing hand. The letters, instead of being printed separately as in the uncial manuscripts, were connected by ligatures. Many of the cursives were used privately, others were made for public reading. Generally, they belong to a later date than the uncials, beginning with the tenth century and passing out of existence in the fifteenth century, after printing was introduced into Europe. In some instances, they seem to have preserved a text that parallels that of the uncial manuscripts; the majority represent the popular text of the Byzantine church.

Another source of information is provided by the numerous "versions" or translations that were made during the missionary expansion of the church. As the gospel spread westward into the Latin speaking portion of the Roman Empire, and eastward into the Aramaic settlements of the Middle East, the Scriptures were translated into Latin and Syriac. These two versions may have been produced as early as the latter half of the second century and were consequently based on Greek manuscripts older than any that now survive. Although it is not always possible to ascertain by a translation the precise word used in the original writing, the versions afford exact knowledge of the general order and content of their underlying text.

Many Old Latin manuscripts date from the fourth to the seventh centuries, and a few even later. There is little uniformity among them; there were almost as many versions as there were copies. Either they were produced independently of each other, or else the first translation was so freely altered and so carelessly copied that the variants multiplied rapidly. The former alternative seems more probable, for the early leaders of the western church spoke both Latin and Greek, and used their Greek Testament to a great degree for much of their studying and teaching. Some of the early manuscripts, like Codex D (Bezae) of the fifth century, were bilingual, and show that the persons who used them were more familiar with Latin than with Greek.

The proliferation of Latin translations became so confusing that Pope Damasus in A.D. 384 commissioned Jerome to produce a new standard Latin version. By means of the oldest Greek manuscripts that he could find he corrected the Latin text, and produced the Vulgate (common) version, which is still the standard Bible of the Roman church.

The Old Syriac version is represented chiefly by two manuscripts of the Gospels: **The Curetonian Syriac**, discovered by William Cureton in the British Museum among some manuscripts brought from a monastery in the Nitrian desert of Egypt, and the Sinaitic Syriac, which was found in 1892 by two sisters, Mrs. Agnes Lewis and Mrs. Margaret Gibson, in the monastery of St. Catherine on Mt. Sinai. The latter was a **palimpsest,** a manuscript that had been partially erased and rewritten. Both dated from the fifth century, and many of their readings resembled closely those of the Old Latin.

Along with these should be noted the Diatessaron of Tatian, the first attempted harmony of the four Gospels, dating from the late second century. A recently discovered fragment shows that it existed in Greek as well as in Syriac, and that the Syrian harmony was a translation. It was the popular version of the Eastern church until the beginning of the fifth century when Rabbula, bishop of Edessa (A. D. 411), decreed that the churches must use the four independent Gospels, known as "the Separated Ones." He sponsored the Peshitta, the Syriac Vulgate, which is the present official version of the Syrian church.

In later centuries other versions were produced, some directly from the Greek text, some from the Latin and Syriac. The Old Armenian, now known only through occasional readings appearing in the newer Armenian version, the Georgian, the Coptic, Ethiopic, and Gothic, were produced before the beginning of the seventh century. They have preserved some ancient witness to the early text but are less valuable for purposes of study than the Latin and the Syriac. Today there are more than one thousand versions of the New Testament or parts of it, but they do not affect the essential character of the text, which has already been well settled. A third important source for knowledge of the primitive text is the writings of the early Church Fathers, the leaders and teachers of Christianity during the first six centuries, who used the language of the New Testament freely in their sermons and books. In many cases the references were mere allusions; a large number are seemingly inexact, but identifiable; and in some instances, an enough consecutive verses were quoted to show plainly what was the original text. Even though many of these "quotations" were loose, so much of the New Testament appears in the patristic writings that if the existing copies were lost, all but a few verses could be reconstructed from these works. The accord between these allusions or quotations and the readings of various manuscripts affords valuable clues for establishing the date, place of origin, and types of the text that they reproduce.

By way of example, Cyprian, a Christian preacher who lived in North Africa about A. D. 250, quoted extensively from a Latin version. His quotations

agree closely with the readings of k, an Old Latin manuscript of the fourth or fifth century. The agreement shows that *k* contains a type of text that must have been current in North Africa in the middle of the third century, and that consequently antedated the Vulgate of Jerome.

The "lectionaries," or collections of readings used in the liturgical worship of the church, preserve some passages from the Gospels and Epistles. They are of much lesser importance than the sources previously mentioned, since they are manifestly incomplete and date mostly from the ninth century or later. Because they were used for public reading of the Scriptures their uniformity was carefully guarded, and they are useful in checking the type of text the medieval church officially sanctioned.

A few scattered texts have been found written on *ostraca,* the broken pieces of pottery that served very poor people as memorandum pads. Because of their nature an extensive amount of writing could not be inscribed on them; certainly, nobody could keep an entire Gospel or epistle on ostraca, to say nothing of the New Testament. They do afford an insight into the way in which popular quotations were made, and while they are more open to error than carefully prepared manuscripts, they may occasionally preserve genuine readings of contemporary texts.

During the first fourteen centuries of the present era the New Testament was kept alive by the manuscript tradition. Most of these documents were in the possession of the great central churches and monasteries or in the libraries of the wealthy men, though it is not impossible that individuals may have owned copies of the Gospels or epistles. In the fifteenth century two events occurred that greatly affected the distribution of the New Testament: the invention of printing by Johannes Gutenberg in 1437, and the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453.

The fall of Constantinople brought the dissolution of the Byzantine Empire, which was the last direct heir of Graeco-Roman culture. Its court had been a center of Greek learning, and its library contained the finest existing collection of classical and biblical manuscripts in the civilized world. Many of these were lost, but a large number were transferred to monasteries scattered throughout Asia Minor; others were taken by scholars who fled westward into Europe, where they reintroduced Greek learning in the schools of the western church. The resulting revival of interest in classical Greek brought with it a new familiarity with the Greek Testament, which in the West had been almost completely supplanted by the Latin version. Scholars began to collect and study these manuscripts, which had been neglected for years, and to discuss their merits.

The first book issued by Johannes Gutenberg from his press in Mainz, Germany, was the now famous Mazarin or Gutenberg Latin Bible, which appeared in 1456. The mechanical reproduction of printed text guaranteed uniformity, eliminating the possibility of widespread errors, and reduced the cost of production so that persons of ordinary means could possess copies of the Scriptures. Whereas the manuscript copies of the Greek text or of the earlier translations had been circulated by dozens, the printed copies could be distributed by hundreds. The new interest in Bible study that followed the wider dissemination of the Bible promoted the Protestant Reformation under Luther, Calvin, and their associates in the sixteenth century. Luther's German Bible was a powerful agent in awakening and enlightening his countrymen.

Modern Translations

Translations of the Bible into English began before the Reformation. John Wycliffe, in 1382, published an English Bible based on the Latin text. The Old Testament was largely the work of his friend Nicholas of Hereford; the New Testament was Wycliffe's. After his death John Purvey revised it and published it in 1388. It was circulated widely in manuscript form but did not have the wide distribution that printed books enjoyed later.

William Tyndale, a graduate of Oxford, had probably seen Erasmus' Greek Testament, which was published in 1516. Realizing that the laity could be established in the faith only if they possessed the Scriptures in their own tongue, he undertook to make a new translation. He began his task in London, but finding too great opposition in England, he went to the Continent and finished his work abroad. The first edition of his New Testament was published at Worms in 1525. When it was brought to England the bishops confiscated all available copies and burned them publicly. So thoroughly did they do their work that only two or three copies of the early editions have survived. A revised edition followed later in 1534; it was more widely distributed. Tyndale was burned at the stake in 1536 for heresy, but his influence has lived on. His phraseology has colored every major English translation since his day. In quick succession several English versions appeared. Coverdale's was based on the Latin Vulgate, compared with Tyndale's translation and that of Luther in German. "Matthew's Bible" (1537) was really the work of John Rogers, a friend of Tyndale, who used both Tyndale's and Coverdale's work. It became popular and quickly went through five editions. In 1539 it was revised by Richard Taverner.

Coverdale's Bible, or "The Great Bible," as it was called, was begun about

1536, and production was started in 1538 by Regnault, a French printer. During the Inquisition attempts were made to confiscate the sheets, but most of them were rescued, and printing was completed in London in 1539. It was authorized for use in the churches and was so eagerly welcomed that seven printings were exhausted in three years. The Anglican prayer book still contains the Psalms according to Coverdale's translation.

The Geneva Bible of 1560 was produced through the efforts of English Protestants who were leaving to escape the rigors of repression at home. It became the Bible of the Puritans and was the means whereby the English population came to understand the meaning of biblical doctrine.

The first of the English versions still in active use is the King James, so called because it was finished in the reign of James I of England. Several Oxford and Cambridge scholars collaborated, using the preceding English versions as models. In 1611 the new version was presented to the public, and in half a century it became the standard Bible of England. For nearly three hundred years it has been the most popular of all English translations.

From the Greek manuscripts to the King James, Revised, American Revised, and Revised Standard Versions of the present day there is an unbroken line of descent. To be sure, there are some errors in transmission, and some uncertainties of rendering. There are not enough, however, to warrant a charge of wholesale corruption of the text, nor can it be said that the New Testament of today is far different from that of the early church. The very multiplicity of manuscripts provides checks by which errors may be detected, and the numerous versions demonstrate by their ancestry that there was a common origin. The modern English Bible is a faithful reproduction of the apostolic teachings in which the essence of the gospel was first expressed in written form.

By the mid-nineteenth century the discovery of new manuscript sources affecting the Greek text of the New Testament, and the progressive changes in English speech from the usages of the Elizabethan period called for a revision of the King James Version. In 1870 a committee including almost all the contemporary biblical scholars in Britain and many of those in America was organized by the Anglican Church. The American and British revisers worked cooperatively, though there were differences between them. The English revision was published in 1881, the American Revised Version in 1901. The differences between the two lie chiefly in the use of Jehovah for LORD, and in the elimination of some Anglicisms that would seem strange to American ears. Basically, the two versions are alike, giving as literal a rendering of their underlying text as possible. Numerous archaisms were

purposely retained if in the opinion of the revisers they were intelligible to literate readers. The American revision preserved fewer of these renderings than did the English revision. Both attempted "to give to modern [1885] readers a faithful representation of the meaning of the original documents" (*Revised Version;* Preface to the Edition of 1885).

The twentieth century has brought several more editions, undertaken for the express purpose of bringing the translation of the King James up to date. The first of these, the *Revised Standard Version*, was begun in 1937 by the International Council of Religious Education (now known as The Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America), which included forty denominations in the United States and Canada. The version was an attempt to carry further the work of the *American Revised Version*, and to prepare for public and private worship a Bible that would preserve the literary values of the *King James Version*, incorporating at the same time whatever advances had been made in scholarship since 1900. *The Revised Standard Version* of the New Testament appeared in 1946; the entire Bible in 1952. Not all its renderings have been acceptable, and in a few instances its choice of readings in the Greek text seems erroneous. The work purports to be a revision of the *American Standard Version* and preserves much of the phraseology of its predecessors.

The second translation, the *New English Bible*, planned and directed by representatives of the major denominations in the British Isles, was published jointly by the Oxford and Cambridge Presses in 1961. It is not a revision of the former versions but is a totally new production in modern English. The result of the Committee's labors is a work that is eminently readable and generally faithful to the original, though it is not absolutely literal, and occasionally resembles a paraphrase more than a translation. For purposes of study and theological discussion it is less satisfying than the other standard versions, which are more literal.

A number of other committee translations have appeared in recent years, aside from many individual translations and paraphrases. The *New American Standard Bible* (1963) is a more literal rendering of the Greek text, accurate in most respects, and well suited for a study text. In 1974, the New Testament segment of the *New International Version* was published (and the Old Testament in 1978). It is a new and fresh translation, acclaimed by many for use in both private and public reading. One of the most widely heralded efforts has been *Today's English Version/Good News for Modern Man* (1966, 1976), prepared and distributed by the American Bible Society. It is based on the principle of translation called

"dynamic equivalence," one giving much attention to the receptor language and thus benefitting the modern reader. Most recent has been the *New King James Bible* (1982), an effort to conserve the essential style and content of the 1611 edition, while bringing the language up to date.

9

An Overview of the New Testament

Introduction

Many people would find it difficult to answer the question, "What is the New Testament?" Sometimes students say, "What they read in church," or "the story of Jesus is not straight forward". You will see twenty-seven different writings listed in the table of contents. What holds the whole collection together? They are not twenty-seven chapters in a single book. The most general answer you could give would be to speak of a common belief shared by all the writers: Jesus of Nazareth represents a decisive turning point in God's relationship to humanity. Or, to put it in the words of Acts 4: 12, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven, given to human beings by which we must be saved".

This Common belief in Jesus Christ is expressed in many different ways in the New Testament. We will constantly be asking ourselves how each way of expressing the message speaks to the situation of Christians in an author's audience. The New Testament provides us with a window into the emergence of Christianity.

You may also have noticed that the NT writings are arranged in groups. The four gospels are grouped together at the beginning. That meant separating the gospel written by Luke from Acts, which he considered to be the second part of the work he had begun in the gospel. Then we have fourteen letters that were either written by Paul or were attributed to his authorship. The last, Hebrews, does not really belong in the group, since it does not claim any connection with the Pauline tradition. The others, whether by Paul or by disciples writing in Paul's name, are divided into two groups, each in descending order of length. The first group comprises letters addressed to churches. The second comprises

were attributed to other apostolic figures: James, Peter, John and Jude. Finally, Revelation, a prophetic vision of the end of this world with the great victory of Jesus and his "holy ones," brings the collection to its close.

Dating Books in the New Testament

Unlike modern books most ancient writings do not carry dates. Clearly, any book must be written after events to which it refers and sometime before it is used by another writer or before the date of our earliest manuscript fragments. Sometimes, like the book of Daniel, which seems to have been written around 167 B. C, a book may "pretend" to be written in an earlier time. Daniel is set in the Babylonian captivity of the sixth century B.C. But even distinguishing when a work was composed from the fictive time in which it is set does not tell the whole story. Daniel chapters 1-6 contain several stories about Jewish courtiers and their dealings with Babylonian kings. Scholars think that some of these stories originated several hundred years before they were taken over by the author of Daniel.

To even guess at when a biblical book was written, we must answer several questions. First, does the book refer to any historical persons or events for which we can give dates based on other historical information that we have? Second, is the book itself taken up and used by later writers? Third, how does the date suggested by such clues compare with the setting implied by the narrative? Has the author chosen to write as though living at some other time or place? Fourth, what about the possible dates of stories or traditions being used within a book? Has the author used older traditions or even earlier written materials that we can identify? (Lk 1:1 claim familiarity with several earlier accounts, for example.) Fifth, can we isolate possible time and place of origin for any of the traditions being used?

We can only estimate when writings were composed. What follows is a very rough, "best guess" chronology. Some of the guesses can be established with more certainty than others. Any commentary on a particular writing will discuss the problems of dating and some of the alternatives proposed by scholars.

The Contents of the New Testament

I. Gospels and Acts

***(1) Matthew* (ca. A. D. 85-90).** This gospel makes use of Mk as well as other traditions about Jesus and collections of Jesus' sayings. It was composed in Greek. ('the reference to Daniel as "the prophet" in 24: 15 implies. (It is only in the Greek translation of the OT that Dan is included among the prophets.') Matthew also contains special material which suggests a Palestinian origin such

as the references to the "towns of Israel" (10:23; 2:26-:21, "land of Israel"). Many scholars think that the community which formed the basis of the Matthean church had come from Palestine and settled in Syria. Mt 4:24 has the only reference in the gospels to Jesus' fame spreading "throughout-all Syria." The community may have been predominantly Christians of Jewish background, since non-Jews (Gentiles) are referred to as outsiders (5:47; 6:7,32; 10:5-6,17-18; 18:17). The community continues to reverence the Jewish law (5:18-19; 23:2).

(2) Mark **(ca. A. D. 68-70).** Our earliest gospel, Mk has been used by both Mk and Lk. Mk emphasizes the need for Christians to expect suffering. Mk 13:9-10 speaks of persecution by Jews and "governors and kings." Many scholars think that the crisis of suffering should be linked to Nero's 'execution of Christians at Rome ca. A. D. 62, which claimed the lives of both Peter and Paul. Others think that Mk is referring to the sufferings of Christians in Palestine during the Jewish revolt against Rome *(A.* D. 66- 70). Mk 13 collects a number of prophecies about the coming destruction of the temple and Jerusalem, and Mk 16:7 focus our attention on Galilee as the place where Jesus' frightened disciples are to see him again. The Marean community is predominantly Gentile. Explanations for Jewish customs are given (e.g. Mk 7:3-4, He, 19c). Freedom from Jewish Sabbath rules and purity regulations applies to all Christians (e.g. 2:27-28; 7:3,8,19)

(3) Luke **(ca. A. D. 85).** When Luke repeats the prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem from Mark, Luke makes sure that they-reflect details of Titus' siege of Jerusalem (cp. Mk 13:2 and Lk 21:5; Mk 13:14 and Lk 21:10; as well as the sayings about Jerusalem in Lk 13:35a and 19:43-44). Lk 1:2 clearly separates the author from the generation of persons who were "eye-witnesses" to the ministry of Jesus. Luke's uncertainty about Palestinian geography suggests that he could not have been from that part of the world. The quality of his writing points to education beyond the elementary level. Luke shows familiarity with the Greek Old Testament and with Hellenistic Literary techniques. Luke tries to locate the emergence of Christianity within the context of the larger Greco-Roman world. Some exegetes identify Luke with the "fellow worker" in the Pauline mission (Phlm 24; Co1 4: 14 [basis for the later story that Lk was a physician] and 2 Tim 4: 11).

(4) ***John*** **(ca. A. D. 90).** Johannine traditions about Jesus are quite different from what we find in the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke). They do show points of contact with Marcan and Lucan material, which suggests that the Johannine

traditions represent an independent line of development of the Jesus tradition. It alludes to expulsion of Christians from Jewish synagogues (9:22; 16:2a). Many scholars link that event with the addition of a curse against Jewish Christians to the benedictions of the synagogue liturgy around A.D. 90. Our earliest fragments come from the first quarter of the second century. The gospel's author is unknown, though its traditions are attributed to an anonymous figure in the narrative, "the beloved disciple". This disciple is not one of the Twelve; he only appears in the story during Jesus' last days in Jerusalem, at the cross (Jn 19:35) and in the resurrection stories (21:24). He may have been the founder of the Johannine community. John 21:23 hints that unlike Peter he did not die a martyr but lived to a considerable age. He may have been responsible for the unique symbolic language that we find in the gospel.

(5) Acts **(ca. A. 0.95).** Acts 1: 1-5 identifies the book as a continuation of Luke's gospel. The introduction summarizes the gospel story and prepares the reader for the new stage that begins with Pentecost. Acts does not appear to have been intended to be a ''history" of the earliest years of the church. The events mentioned do not extend 'beyond Paul's imprisonment at Jerusalem and subsequent removal to Rome for trial (ca. A. D 57-60). The story of Peter and the other apostles is dropped when the narrative shifts to Paul's journeys. We never learn about the martyrdom of either of these famous apostles.

II. Pauline Letters

(1) Romans **(ca. A.D. 55-58).** Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Rome as he was winding up his missionary activity in Asia Minor and Greece. After delivering a collection from those churches for the poor in Jerusalem, he hoped to visit Rome and receive aid from Christians there to begin a missionary effort in Spain (Rom 15:22-32). Chapter16 contains greetings to fellow workers who had been active in Paul's mission in Asia Minor and Greece.

(2) 1 ***Corinthians*** **(ca. A. D. 53/54).** Paul had spent eighteen months working in Corinth (ca. A. D. 50/52) and had founded the church in this important commercial city. He has received a letter from Christians there as well as various reports about problems at Corinth. He expects that 1 Cor. will arrive before his associate Timothy comes to Corinth. He urges the Corinthians to give Timothy a warm welcome and to set aside money for the poor. Paul himself expects to travel through Macedonia to Corinth for a visit (1 Cor 16: 1-11).

***(3)* 2 *Corinthians* (ca. A. D. 55/56).** This is a very complex letter, since it appears to be made up of three or four different letters that Paul sent to Corinth. The visit mentioned in 1 Corinthians had been a disaster. Paul had been humiliated by someone in the Corinthian church (2 Cor 2:5-8), His apostleship was being challenged as "weak" and lacking in power by traveling 'missionaries who had come to Corinth and won a following among the Corinthians (2 Cor 10:10-11; 11:4-6). Paul had apparently cancelled another visit to Corinth and had written a very sharp letter of rebuke (2 Cor 1:23- 2:4), 2 Cor 1-7 gives thanks that the rift between Paul and the Corinthians has been healed through the work of Titus. But 2 Cor. 10-13 is written in such a. painful tone that many think these chapters were copied from the earlier «tearful letter." 2 Cor 8-9 deals with a different subject entirely, the collection for the poor at Jerusalem. These chapters may be a single letter of appeal or a combination of two letters, one to Corinth and one to the Christians elsewhere in the province of Achaia.

(4) Galatians (ca. A. D. 55). Paul tells us that he founded this church when he became ill on a journey through Galatia (Gal 4: 13). His letter does not mention any plans for a future visit to the church there, so some scholars think that Gal was written toward the end of Paul's missionary work. Paul is confronting a serious problem. When he had converted the Gentiles of this region to Christianity, he did not require that they adopt any Jewish customs. Now others are telling them that they should also adopt Jewish ways. They should show loyalty to the covenant between God and the Jewish people by being circumcised, keeping certain Jewish holidays and observing some Jewish dietary restrictions. Some people may have said that Paul had violated the agreements he had made with Peter and James in Jerusalem by not imposing such requirements. Paul is furious. He retells the story of his conversion and his early association with the Jerusalem church (Gal 1:11-2:14). He insists that they all agreed that Gentile converts would be free from the obligations of the Jewish law but that Paul would take up a collection among the Gentiles to be brought to Jerusalem for the poor.

***(5) Ephesians* (date uncertain).** This letter appears to have been written sometime after Paul's death in Rome. Phrases in the letter echo another letter, Colossians. Ephesains develops some of Paul's themes about the church as the body of Christ and praises the apostle as the one to whom God had given special insight into the plan for bringing Gentiles to salvation. The second half

of Ephesians reminds the audience that they have to live lives of holiness, putting aside all the immorality of the "pagan/Gentile" world around them.

(6) Philippians **(ca. A. D. 52/54).** Paul is writing from prison. The letter will be taken back to Philippi by Epaphroditus who had brought Paul money from the Philippian church and had fallen seriously ill (2:25-30). Older books sometimes presume that the mention of Caesar's household" (4:22) means that this letter was written when Paul was jailed in Rome before his death. However, most scholars now reject that view. Paul really expects to be released (1:.250, and there is an exchange of news between Paul and the Philippians that would not be possible if Paul were in Rome. Paul Was jailed on a number of occasions (e.g, I Cor 15:32; 2 Cor 11:23; 2 Cor 1:8-11). 'There was a cohort of the imperial guard in Ephesus, so it seems plausible that this letter was written from an imprisonment in Ephesus.

(7) Colossians **(ca. A. D, 62/70).** There are enough differences in phrasing and expression between this letter and others by Paul to lead scholars to think that Paul did not compose it. Its opening says that the church at Colossae was founded by Epaphras, not Paul (1:6-7) and that neither they nor the Christians in Laodicea have ever seen Paul (2: 1). However, these 'churches are being troubled by false preachers who apparently want to combine Christ with elements of Jewish mysticism and perhaps even pagan philosophy. This letter has been sent in Paul's name to encourage Christians not to be led astray but to hold fast to what they have learned about Christ. Greetings are sent to Christians in the area from others who have been working in the Pauline mission.

(8) 1 Thessalonians (ca. A. D. 51). This appears to be one of the earliest of Paul's letters. He had been worried about the newly founded church in Thessalonica, the capital of the province, and had sent Timothy from Athens to check on the church. Timothy has brought back a glowing report of the faith and love among the Thessalonians. He also reported that the Thessalonians were troubled by the death of Christians in their church. Paul sends them this letter of encouragement.

(9) 2 Thessalonians (date uncertain). Again, the language about judgment of this letter is not typical of Paul elsewhere and the opening verses appear to be an attempt to compose something that will reflect 1 Thessalonians. 2 Thess 2:2 refers to a letter that claims to be by Paul which had led Christians to think the Day of Judgment was around the corner. The author, writing in Paul's name, wants to

tell them not to accept such teaching. The end of the world will come only when God decides. In the meantime, Christians are to follow the example Paul had set, working hard to earn a living and continuing in love of one another. (1.5-17) 1 *and* 2 *Timothy, Titus* (ca. A. D. 1(0/110). Timothy and Titus were very important associates of Paul. He often sent them on missions to churches that he was unable to visit. These letters called the "pastoral epistles," are written as though Paul was writing from his prison cell in Rome. But they reflect a different situation than that in the Pauline letters of the 50's and 60's. In these letters, Timothy and Titus are the models for those persons who are to be "bishops," people who will lead the local churches and keep them from falling prey to all the different opinions about Christianity that are circulating, especially now that the apostles are no longer around to resolve the problems. Thus, these letters want to guard the tradition of the Pauline churches for the future.

(10) Philemon (ca. A. D. 52/54). Another letter from an imprisonment (also Ephesus?) that Paul expects will soon be over (V. 22). It is addressed to Philemon, one of Paul's converts. Philemon's slave, Onesimus, had runaway and wound up in jail where Paul had converted him to Christianity.

Paul is now sending the slave back to his master. He wants Philemon to receive the runaway back as a "beloved Christian brother," not as a runaway who deserves punishment.

III. Other "Apostolic Letters"

(1) Hebrews **(ca. A. D. 90).** This writing is an extended homily, which has been transmitted with a conclusion that might be found at the end of a letter (13:20-25). The author presumes that his audience have been Christians for some time and are in danger of growing lukewarm in their faith or even abandoning it altogether. Heb has no connection with Paul in theology and is composed in a very polished Greek quite unlike the apostle. But because it mentions that Timothy has been released from prison (13:23), the letter was sometimes spoken of as though Paul had written it.

(2) James **(ca. A. D. 65--85).** Although it claims to be by "James", the leader of Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, the careful Greek style of this work makes its composition by one of Jesus' Galilean relatives unlikely. However, it does represent the ethics of Jewish Christianity. Like Hebrews, Jas is really not a letter but a sermon for the faithful. It has been transmitted with a brief letter of introduction to establish James as the authority behind it.

(3) 1 Peter **(ca. A. D. 90).** This letter was written in the name of Peter from Christians at Rome to those in rural churches of Asia Minor. Its conclusion mentions Silvanus, a frequent associate of Paul in Asia Minor, and Mark, who was originally part of Paul's mission and had then worked with Barnabas. Some think that they may have been responsible for sending this letter. The Christians are suffering harassment and persecution from their "pagan" neighbors because they have become Christians. The author wants to encourage them to live in holiness so that the people who are tormenting them will see what God has done in turning them from their former sinful ways to lives of goodness (2:11-12; 3:14-16; 4:4-5).

(4) 2 Peter (ea. A. D. 110). This letter appears to be one of the latest in the New Testament. It incorporates material from Jude. Apparently, some people using material from Paul's letters (3:16) have been telling Christians that there will be no day of judgment. The author defends the traditional view that Christ will come again in glory, and he refers to the. gospel story of the transfiguration (1:16-21) to prove the truth of that belief.

(5-6) 1 and 2 John (ca. A. D. 100). 1 John is really a treatise defending the interpretation of the Johannine tradition held by the author and those persons who remain in fellowship with him (l: l-4). Other Christians have apparently broken off from the Johannine fellowship and started their own groups. 2 John is a brief note to Johannine Christians in another church warning them not to have 'anything to do with the Christians who have broken away.

(7) 3 John (ca. A. D. 100). A brief personal note from the elder who wrote 2 John to a man named Gaius. Diotrephes, the leader of a Christian group in the area where Gaius lives; had begun to refuse hospitality to missionaries who came from the elder's church and was telling others to do the same. The elder hopes that Gaius will offer the missionaries hospitality, and he includes words of recommendation for Demetrius, who is carrying the letter.

(8) Jude **(date uncertain).** This is a brief piece which invokes the certainty of divine judgment against some who are said to lead the community astray. Its claims are defended by references to apocryphal Jewish traditions attached to Moses and Enoch.

(9) Revelation **(ca. A. D. 95).** The author of Rev tells us that he is a Christian

prophet named John. He had been exiled to an island called Patmos for preaching the gospel (Rev 1:9-10). You will notice that John is a very common name. This Christian prophet is not the same as Jesus' disciples named John or as the John to whom the fourth gospel is attributed. Rev is like the book of Daniel in the Old Testament in that it contains symbolic visions about the end of the world. These visions describe political powers (in Rev the Roman empire and its rulers) in cryptic symbols. The visions are interpreted by angelic figures and they also describe the future glory of those who have remained faithful to God. However, Rev is also influenced by the important Christian practice of sending apostolic letters to churches to instruct them about how they are to remain faithful. Therefore, the author begins with letters from the heavenly Jesus to the seven leading churches of Asia Minor (chs.2 and 3). Scholars can tell from the symbolic visions that the author was living in the time of the emperor Domitian around A.D. 95.

10

The Arrangement of the New Testament Books

Introduction

Once students of the New Testament appreciate the criteria used to determine which twenty-seven books were canonized, they often wonder why the books are placed in the order in which they are found. Who determined this arrangement? When? Why? Was it always this way, or did different sequences exist at different times in history? Is there something "sacred" about this order? Did God lower it this way from heaven on a golden string? In this section we will explore some of the principles of arrangement that were at work with early editors and attempt to answer the questions posed above.

The Arrangement of the Books

The arrangement of the books that we have in our current English translations and Greek editions of the New Testament is often referred to as the canonical order," Some believe that it can be traced to Erasmus of Rotterdam and the twelfth- and thirteen-century manuscripts that he used to produce his 1516 edition of the Greek New Testament. Others have suggested that the current arrangement goes back to the lists produced by Eusebius (c. 264-340) and the Council of Carthage. However, these two lists differ from the, order of our New Testament. For our study, let us observe the propositions below.

1. The Gospels are placed first, probably because they deal with the word and deeds of Jesus. However, they are arranged differently in a number of manuscripts. Augustine (AD. 354-430), and other early church fathers, taught that the current canonical order of the Gospels was based on the *chronological order* in which they were believed to have been written- i.e., Matthew, Mark

Luke and lastly John (his theory has come to be known as the "Augustinian Hypothesis"). Eusebius records a statement by Clement of Alexandria that those Gospels "which contain the genealogies were written first". This would place Matthew and Luke up front.

2. Goodspeed suggested that the Gospels were arranged from *the most Jewish to the most Greek. "* Bruce conjectures that the primacy of Matthew is due to its *catholic nature-in* other word not chronological considerations but as "a proper catholic introduction to a catholic gospel collection and, in due course, to the catholic New Testament. Metzger notes that in Codex Bezae (D) "the Gospels stand in the so-called Western order, with the two apostles first and the two companions of the apostles following (Matthew, John, Luke, Mark).
3. H. Conzelmann and A. Lindemann, although skeptical about attributing any theological value to the sequence of letters, nevertheless state that "it is not by accident that the Gospel of Matthew-highly esteemed by the early church-was placed at the beginning of the canon, while the disputed Apocalypse was placed at the end". Unfortunately, they are unable to suggest any specific concerns that led to the current order.
4. The book of Acts did not always assume its current position in the list of canonical books. In Codex Claromontanus (sixth century) it appears after Revelation, The Cheltenham Canon (c. 350) and Codex Sinaiticus (fourth century) place it after the epistles of Paul and before the Catholic Epistles. One wonders if the editors of this arrangement felt that Acts, with its history of such church leaders as Peter, James and John, was an appropriate introduction to letters which bore the name of these apostles. Another possibility is that Acts and the Catholic Letters were just bound together because they formed a codex. According to Bruce, "The placing of Acts after the Pauline epistles and before the Catholic Epistles reflects the earlier practice of binding Acts and the Catholic Epistles together in one smaller codex. But why, then, did others relocate it before Paul's letters? Another author suggests that Acts, with its positive presentation of Paul, was placed between the Gospels and Paul's letters as a "bridge" to guarantee the true apostolicity of his letters." Although this comment regarding apostolicity is questionable, there is no doubt that Acts eventually found its place into the canon between the Gospels and Paul *as a link* between the two collections. The unfortunate consequence was that Acts was severed from its companion volume, the Gospel of Luke. Hence most readers fail to appreciate the unity of Luke-Acts. Although the order or sequence of Paul's letters varies in many lists, there is enough similarity and

tangible evidence to offer the following suggestions.

5. The earliest collection of Paul's correspondence may be the "seven churches" edition of ten letters, arranged according to the principle of decreasing length, with letters to the Corinthians and Thessalonians considered as a single unit.
6. The expansion of Paul's letters to thirteen (or fourteen when Hebrews is included) was arranged by length, first according the congregations to whom they were written (Rome, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, Thessalonica), and second to Individuals (Timothy, Titus, Philemon).

Two items require a brief comment:

1. The principle of decreasing length is not violated with the Pastoral (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus) if one considers that letters addressed to individual were treated separately from those addressed to congregations.
2. The one exception to the rule is that Galatians precedes Ephesians even though it is shorter (by twenty stichoi). Did the editor fail to detect this slight variation? This seems doubtful, because the principle is followed with Philippians and Colossians, where the difference in length is even smaller (stichoi). Who knows what led the first compiler of this arrangement to place Ephesians this way?

The Catholic Epistles also appear in some interesting sequences. Some early Greek manuscripts place them immediately after Acts but before the Pauline epistles (Vaticanus, Alexandrinus; but Sinaiticus has Paul, Acts, and Catholic Letters). Perhaps this was because they "were attributed to apostles who had been associated with Jesus '" and partially because they were addressed, not to individual churches, but to any and all Christians." One observes further that whereas James commonly stood first, Peter, because of his primacy in the church at Rome, assumes this position in lists from the West (cf. Council of Carthage). The principle of decreasing length is not used with these individual letters; otherwise one would expect Peter (403 stichoi), John (332 stichoi) James (247 stichoi) and Jude (71 stichoi) in that order. Athanasius also arranges Paul's epistles after Acts and the Catholic Epistles. But Eusebius, the Council of Carthage and most subsequent lists place Paul's epistles between Acts and the Catholic Epistles. Hebrews, due to doubts concerning authorship and lack of appreciation by the Western churches, appears in a number of different places. The four oldest Greek manuscripts (Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus, Vaticanus, Ephraemi) regard Hebrews as Pauline and place it after 2 Thessalonians because it is addressed in a congregation (at least a "group" called "Hebrews") and not to an individual. The book of Revelation (the Apocalypse),

due in part to its teaching on "the last things," appropriately comes at the end of the canon.

Yet Metzger's point that Revelation occasionally follows the Gospels because it contains "the words of the heavenly Christ directed to the seven Churches" is well taken. It is not clear whether any systematic theological presuppositions- or prejudices-were used to determine the place of any books in the New Testament. Because the order varies in so many lists, one is forced to assume that there were a number of different factors at work. In addition to those already mentioned, church usage in worship and liturgy may have been a factor.

F. W. Beare make a cautious but intriguing suggestion that the change from a roll to the codex form of manuscripts required a serious and deliberate decision as to which particular books should be placed together. Collections like the Four Gospels and Paul's letters could each form a single codex. Bound into codex form, these and/ or other materials would be viewed as unity.

These brief-and incomplete-observations show that there was no consistent or authoritative pattern employed by those who arranged the books of the New Testament canon. The decision to include these twenty-seven books did not specify how they were to be arranged. The one discernible exception is the principle of decreasing length applied to Paul's letters written first to congregations and then to individuals. Other arrangements were determined by questions of authorship, apostolic primacy, ecclesiastical preferences, codex production, scribal errors and editorial decisions that may have been based on some theological grounds which are not discernible to the modem reader. If anything, the above discussion should prevent us from making any dogmatic statements and conclusive pronouncements about the order of the New Testament before the sixteenth century. From that time on, most editions of the English Bible have followed the traditional order that first appeared in the authorized Great Bibles in 1539.

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Possible Examination Questions

1. To what extent can it be said that the New Testament is a product of happenings during the intertestamental period and the ministries of Jesus and Paul.
2. Discuss two (2) factions among the Jews that the political pressures, cultural changes and religious questions produced in the New Testament.
3. With reference to examples, discuss the assertion that the New Testament has an Old Testament background.
4. Evaluate two (2) philosophical and two (2) religious ideas that characterized the intertestamental period.
5. Explain how only twenty-seven (27) books came to be accepted as the New Testament document.
6. Examine how the books of the New Testament were transmitted in the first four centuries C.E.
7. Discuss the history and government of Palestine under Greek rule.
8. Discuss the contributions of the Roman background to the New Testament.
9. Discuss the Judaism background of the New Testament.
10. Examine the religious background of the New Testament under the following headings:
    (a) The Greco-Roman pantheon
    (b) Emperor worship
    (c) The mystery religions
    (d) The worship of the occult
11. What is meant by canon of the New Testament? How was the canon of the New Testament compiled?
12. Why is it important to study the background of the New Testament before studying its individual books?
13. Discuss the political state of Palestine when Jesus was born.
14. Analyse the arrangement of the New Testament books.
15. Discuss the assertion that the New Testament did not drop from heaven.

Subject Index

Symbols

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