

The Cambrian Pesher

A Voice of the Desposyni to the Dispersion

Day of the Holy Cross,
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Melchizedek & The Priesthood of the Uncircumcision

Beloved Friends:

Let me begin with an abstract,

Pesher Abstract

This Pesher serves as further elucidation of the First of the Three Branches of Christianity in its distinction from the Pauline and Apostolic branches. Referred elsewhere in its antecedent as the "House of Bethany," it was also known as that of the Nazoraeans and the Desposyni. Focus here is on the recent rise of a deficient Ebionism, which has become a renewed attempt to "Judaize" Christianity. This has come as an overreaction to the Marcion heresy which has rooted itself in American Evangelicalism. This Pesher represents a continued irenic effort and the reader is encouraged to read the Peshers of recent years to gain context. Go to <https://2046AD.org> for a collection of The Cambrian Peshers.

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Circumcision

Noah was the beginning of our race; yet, uncircumcised, along with his children he went into the ark. Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High, was uncircumcised; to whom also Abraham, the first who received circumcision after the flesh, gave tithes, and he blessed him: after whose order God declared by the mouth of David, that He would establish the everlasting priest.

- Justin Martyr, "Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter IXX"
(*Ante-Nicene Fathers - ANF*, Vol. 1 p. 204)

Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

- Psalm 110:4 (cf. Hebrews 5:6)

Behold, a greater than Solomon is here.

- Luke 11:31

We may never be entirely sure why God instituted the ordinance of circumcision for the descendants of Abraham. Some have supposed that the practice was hygienic, or perhaps a mutilation which causes a change in the masculine temperament. There is the observation that circumcised men may tend to be more jaded and aggressive, a result tailor-made for a war culture. Others hold that the foreskin causes sexual dysfunction in some men which is corrected by circumcision. There are alleged to be reduced risks from already rare diseases which are a benefit from circumcision, but such diseases can be argued to be the result from unsanitary sexual practices, which can be corrected by avoiding deviancy. Opinions are often partisan and passionate.

[So-called scientific studies "proving" these medical benefits ascribed to circumcision ought to be tempered with the observation that many of these researchers have a bias from their prior religious commitments.]

Regardless, circumcision was an ordinance unique to that tribe of people, although not unknown evidently. God did not have to explain the procedure to Abraham, and some have supposed that during his long-stay in Egypt (maybe 20 years) he was "educated" in the various forms of genital mutilations practiced by the Egyptian priests of Osiris.

It is a strange custom, but for the seed of Abraham, its purpose appears to have pertained to citizenship which affected holding land-title in the future Covenant Kingdom. It was relatively easy to identify citizenship in Israel through this physical alteration, although, obviously, it required an invasion of privacy, and some have argued, child abuse. It was a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant which was considered an eternal ordinance for those living in the Holy Land. More on that below.

However, theologically, as a ritual pertaining to salvation (Acts 15:1-2), the mutilation of the male sex organ is also a graphic affirmation of the view that Original Sin is sexual. Picked-up later by St. Augustine and his monastic contemporaries, a sexual interpretation of man's fallen nature is manifested in the "heat" of lust in the process of begetting. "*Circum* (around) *cision* (cutting)" is the cutting away of the most erogenous portions of the head of the glans penis and takes away much of the stimulation of sexual arousal. Hence, it is presumably a bloody ritual which "atones" the man for his sinful lust. In circumcision, Judaism affirms that mankind is born in sin and must be physically altered to be cured of this metaphysical deficiency.

This view is reinforced in the numerous Old and New Testament texts which call for the "circumcision of the heart." We are to infer that "circumcision" then is a "cutting away" of something which is a spiritual impediment and thus creates a new man. "Spiritual" circumcision imparts a new and sanctified heart, just as "physical" circumcision somehow sanctifies the man's sexuality and absolves him of Original Sin.

Salvation or Dominion?

The prolific author and archaeologist, E. Raymond Capt, has argued from Josephus that the Establishment Jews of Christ's lifetime were Idumeans: Edomites. Herod was an Edomite. Edomites were the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother, and, like the Israelites, were recipients of the ordinance of circumcision through their common ancestors, Abraham and Isaac.

Ishmael, the other son of Abraham through his Egyptian concubine, Hagar, along with Midian (the son of Keturah), the father of the Midianites, became the progenitors of numerous tribes in the Transjordan region, just outside the land of the Canaanites. They all practiced circumcision and were recipients of the Abrahamic Covenant, just as were Jacob and his Israelite descendants. Their common thread was not the Mosaic Law; it was circumcision.

Consequently, in considering this fact, how does circumcision, then qualify the circumcised for salvation or dominion? Certainly, Esau was considered unworthy of the

Covenant of grace and of dominion? We are tempted to follow St. Paul's lead on this point: that circumcision counts for nothing.

Sign & Seal?

Additionally, it can be argued that the Mosaic Law had no regard for circumcision as a sign of the Covenant, either. During the entire Wilderness experience, the Israelites did not practice circumcision. Not until the time of Joshua and the crossing of the Jordan to commence the Canaanite Wars was it reinstated. Presumably, they could not receive Abraham's patrimony without it. But it can be theoretically argued from this fact alone that circumcision did not have to do with salvation, and never did. Try to replace the word "circumcision" with the word "baptism" in the following account, and consider the theological problems it creates:

Now all the people that came out were circumcised [baptized] but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised [baptized].

For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people . . . were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD . . .

- Joshua 5:4-12

Christians are so because they have taken upon themselves the name of Christ in baptism. Likewise for the Jews, they are heirs of the Abrahamic Covenant because they are circumcised. Without it, they are Gentiles or worse, infidels.

If we imagine that Passover was mandated to be observed by the Israelites, we are at a loss to explain how it was that Israelite families could have kept the Feasts with uncircumcised children during the 40 years in the Wilderness. It was a requirement (Exodus 12:48). So either Moses disallowed Passover during the 40 years in the Wilderness, or he waived circumcision. In either case, it is quite clear that circumcision has never had anything to do with salvation: that is, of course, if we can infer that to be "cut off" from Israel, did not mean damnation, but only expatriation.

In reference to Moses, he would have been indifferent to circumcision had not God expressly commanded it. He failed to circumcise his own sons (Exodus 4:24) and obviously did not require it during the wanderings in the desert.

The Israelites would have been required otherwise to follow the Mosaic Law Code, whether they were circumcised or not, whether they possessed the Promised Land or

not. The Book of Numbers is replete with sometimes harsh enforcement of the code upon both the circumcised and the uncircumcised in the encampment.

As indeed was the case much later with the deported Ten Northern Tribes by the Assyrians, circumcision was abandoned. But the Mosaic Law was still in force, because at its core, as was the "Law of the Covenant" (Exodus 20-23), it was not merely a tribal law code; it was an expression of the moral law.

Rabbinic Dispensationalism

Of course, Rabbinic Judaism has an answer for everything, it seems. Historically, theological debate has been a favorite pastime among rabbis, just as it was for medieval scholastics who might have argued over the proverbial "angels standing on the head of a pin." Trick questions were sport to them, and Jesus had to match their wit on numerous occasions.

The heavenly manna is offered in the stead of the Feasts. Although an attractive explanation, it does not answer the main point of the purpose of the Feasts: they were pedagogical. How were the children brought up "in the Covenant" without its praxis? How could there become a "culture" of the Covenant People without it?

For Christians, the notion of refusing baptism to a child of the Covenant would be an outrage as would be refusing them the sacraments. The essence of excommunication is that the offender is barred from the Eucharist. Anabaptist rationale notwithstanding, arguing that it is acceptable to "excommunicate" a child because he is in a "state of innocence" becomes an absurd excuse for dereliction. With this logic, in banning the children of the Covenant from the Lord's Table, we are "offending these little ones" (Mark 9:22) and "doing evil that good may come" (Romans 3:8). Exclusion from the sacramental life of the Covenant People was exactly the complaint of the fugitive David when driven out of Israel to find sanctuary amongst the Philistines: "Go, thou, and serve other gods." (1 Samuel 26:19). He was forced to live in a land which did not practice the Feasts of Israel, but instead, had their own idolatrous festivals.

Likewise with the Jewish argument that the Israelite children born in the Wilderness were sharing in the punishment of their parents, are we really expected to believe that God punished the disobedient people by demanding more disobedience? They were denied the signs and seals of the Covenant. That is not what you do to the innocent.

Herod's War Against the Covenant

During the time of the Herodians, the Levitical and Davidic lines were destroyed as lineages of public record. Our only source for this information is the 3rd Century historian, Julius Africanus. But we have no reason to disbelieve him. The only record of Herod's slaughter of the innocents of Bethlehem, for another example, is the Gospel of Matthew. No Roman or Jewish record acknowledges the atrocity.

Herod had every incentive for both atrocities. He was mad with paranoia of real or imagined conspiracies against him to the extent that he murdered the members of his own family. As William Whiston points out (that esteemed patristic scholar, colleague of Isaac Newton and translator of Josephus), Herod had both motive and opportunity to use a wide dragnet to murder the proclaimed baby Messiah, just as he had motive and opportunity to destroy the Temple records. Roman historians who were Herodian sympathizers would want to whitewash the history of the Herodian era.

The meaning of the Hebrew word for "perish" is "to lose the memory of one's ancestry" (literally: *ab · ad*, "to vaporize the father"). Destroying Israel's historical records would have been equivalent to destroying the nation itself. To lose national identity is to become something else. Herod was an aspiring messiah. He tried to curry the favor of the Jews and could not understand why they hated him. Yet, it was during his reign, as the reign of a *pseudo-christ*, that Israel became the "valley of dry bones" (Ezekiel 37).

Against the Zadokites

The father of John the Baptist, Zacharias, was the last of the Levitical priests with a pure lineage. Jesus charged the Herodian priests of the Temple with his murder (Luke 11:51). Most commentators overlook this, but apocryphal accounts attest to the truth of it: that Jesus was referring to the martyrdom of John's father.

Later, the martyrdom of John the Baptist, who died without issue, ended the valid Aaronic line. Ever after, Jesus and His followers joined with the Baptist's displaced disciples and the Samaritans (the mongrel descendants of the Ten Northern Tribes) in condemning the Temple authorities. The Qumran sect denounced the Pharisees as "the Seekers after Smooth things." The Temple priesthood was a rogue priesthood and stood in direct opposition to the First Christians, as the martyrdom of St. Stephen in the Book of Acts gives witness.

Their colleagues on the Sanhedrin, the Sadducees, were Herodian collaborators. Just as Herod was a false messiah, the Sadducees were false "Zadokites." Even though

the names mean the same thing - "the righteous ones" - there was a difference. *Sad·duc·ee* is derived from "Tsduk" in the Hebrew, while *Zadok* is "Tsdk." We usually do not place much stock in the vowel differences in Hebrew words, as the vowel points were added later by the Masoretes. But some Hebrew letters doubled as consonants and vowels, the vowel sounds being derived from such letters as the *aleph* and the *yod*. In this case, the "oo" vowel sound in *Tsaduk* is supplied by the *Vav* (Waw) and creates, not just a difference in pronunciation, but a difference in spelling.

Zadokites were Messianic and dedicated to the Davidic line. The Sadducees were Messianic too, but dedicated to the Herodians.

Sometimes they were in opposition to the Pharisees. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection, while the Sadducees did not. The Pharisees promoted the teaching ministry of the rabbis in synagogue and an oral tradition. In contrast, the Sadducees wanted control of the sacrificial system and the Temple. It was lucrative. Herod appointed them to the priesthood.

Many Pharisees became Christians, so much so, that there was alarm among the Jerusalem elite (Acts 5:28; 6:7). The Bible of the First Christians was the Septuagint, or at least, the same Hebrew scrolls from which the Septuagint was derived. The Septuagint has many Messianic prophecies which Herod did not fulfill, but Jesus did. The Jerusalem elite did not like this competing canon.

Against the Septuagint

That is why Rabbinic Judaism has sought to undermine the credibility of the New Testament record and of the paleo-Hebrew Torah from which the Septuagint was translated. It is not so much that the Greek Septuagint is such a "perfect" translation, because it is not. In every language, idiom and nuance are lost in translation, and every Bible interpreter who has an "aha" moment when he declares what the Bible says in the "original" Greek or the "original" Hebrew, must temper his zeal with the knowledge that his Bible "helps" were written by men who were separated by time and distance from the "original" manuscripts - which do not exist.

The Septuagint is valuable because, as a translation from the third century B.C., it points to an earlier tradition of Hebrew source manuscripts which differed from the ones which belonged to the Jerusalem Canon. And the first leaders of Christianity, particularly St. Stephen (see Peshier for St. Stephen's Day, 2021, "The Cult of the Dead" <http://2046AD.org>), argued their defense before the Sanhedrin using these source documents. The early Church fathers always complained that the Jews were altering the

biblical texts: Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement, and many others acknowledged the same.

Modern Protestant leaders are simpletons on this subject because Bible translators have listened to the Jewish pretensions to antiquity and have incorporated the Masoretic texts into our English translations and lexicons - even the King James Version. That is why when the New Testament writers quote the Old Testament, it differs from what it says in the Old Testament of your Bible. The New Testament writers relied upon the Greek Septuagint, while your English Bible translators have chosen an Old Testament translated from the Masoretic texts - definitely, an unequal yoking.

William Whiston thought this practice was insane:

That although the modern Jews, and almost all the modern Christians, who, by an unhappy fatality, have been deluded by them, are very positive for a kind of perfection in our Masorete Hebrew copy; and it has been a long while accordingly styled, The Hebrew Verity; yet is the truth of the case for certain far otherwise. That, on the contrary, those books have come down to us in a very imperfect and disordered condition . . . That, for certain, the present Masorete copy is the most imperfect and corrupt of them all . . . (ff. Septuagint, Samaritan Pentateuch, and the first eleven books of Josephus' Antiquities). The Works of Josephus, Whiston's Dissertation #4 from the Appendix, Hendrix Publ., p. 847 .

The study of the Dead Sea Scrolls is still an on-going process. But thusfar, the texts discovered have tended to favor the Septuagint over the Masoretes. But if the thesis holds up that many if not all of the Scrolls represent the Temple library smuggled out during the Roman siege of Jerusalem (cf. Norman Golb, *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1995), then it would still contain the corrupted texts of the Jerusalem/Herodian Canon. So we would get mixed results.

A true Christian translation of the Old Testament ought to be from the Septuagint. Even the Latin Vulgate would be an improvement. It was the *Textus Receptus* relied upon by John Wycliffe when he translated the Bible into English.

After the death of John the Baptist, the Qumran sect gradually gave-up on the idea of reconstituting the Aaronic priesthood as inspired by the Prophet Ezekiel. The early histories tell us that James the brother of Jesus tried to use the Temple as "a house of prayer for all peoples" - at least once - when he entered the inner sanctuary wearing the sacerdotal breastplate (Epiphanius, *The Panarion* 29, Amidon, Oxford, 1990). This when the Jewish priests had stopped offering sacrifices on behalf of the Empire. This was on

the eve of the revolt and one wonders if it was the incident which triggered the violence. James appears to have been murdered by the mob for the sacrilege.

The Christian War Against the Edomites

While the non-Herodian Jewish aristocracy preserved their private genealogies - from which the Gospel accounts derive the genealogies of Jesus - one could not use them alone for legal standing. Other indicia were required.

In the case of Jesus, He had to fulfill all of the Messianic prophecies, and even then, a long process of evangelism and missionary outreach would be necessary to make "the kingdom" into a reality in the world.

The Paracletes: A Legal Advocacy in the Roman World

The Davidian movement was an end run around Herod's usurpations. It began with a literary *apologian* about the middle of the 1st Century by the "paraclete brigade." These were men who were associated with Barnabas. He was the first "paraclete," the first Church scholar with legal training. Known by the Apostles as the "son of consolation" (Acts 4:36) - i.e. "consolation" being the same Greek word, *paraclete* - it was a title, not a nickname (cf. *House of Bethany Peshier*, <http://2046AD.org>).

Historically for the Jews, the priestly role of the Levites was a small component of their activity. Very often, they pursued medical and legal careers. Barnabas was a Levite, a rich Levite, and a "paraclete," the Roman term for an attorney. As can be shown, Barnabas was not merely an expert in Judaic law; he was proficient in Roman law, as well, such that he could operate in Roman courtrooms.

A number of the books of the New Testament are organized as legal briefs: the Fourth Gospel (composed by Barnabas when he went to Cyprus after parting ways with Paul), Luke (composed by him, while he was with Barnabas, with travels to Caesarea from Cyprus to depose witnesses), Acts (after he was sent by Barnabas to travel with Paul and document his activities), John Mark (who was his nephew, the true "John the Evangelist," and who composed the Book of Revelation as a covenant lawsuit) and then later, the Epistle of Hebrews (which was either written by Barnabas or John Mark, the very last book of the New Testament Canon). These men, along with St. Stephen, were the "paracletes" of the New Testament Church who wrote its founding documents. While Stephen with the help of James, may have been responsible for the Gospel of the Nazoraens (now lost to us but believed to have survived, in part, in the "Hebrew"

Gospel of Matthew) - it being the official record of the life and teachings of Jesus - the Gospel of Mark was the only truly "apostolic" Gospel account. The Fathers tell us it preserved the memories of Peter in an orderly, Roman way because it was written by John Mark. John Mark was also Peter's amanuensis in Rome when he composed his two Epistles, although his 2nd Epistle might have been finished by John Mark, as it was on the eve of Nero's persecution. 2 Peter bears striking resemblance to the Book of Revelation.

[For an introduction to the New Testament writings as Roman legal compositions, consult Beth M. Sheppard's doctoral dissertation for the University of Sheffield, 1999 "The Gospel of John: A Roman Legal and Rhetorical Perspective." Of the three kinds of rhetoric taught in the academies of the Roman Empire, "forensic rhetoric" was the kind necessary to present a case before a judge. The value of Sheppard's dissertation is its bibliography to find sources which establish that these New Testament writings mentioned above achieved that level of competency. She has had a productive career in biblical research (<https://bethmsheppard.com>). See also the popular book, *Paul On Trial The Book Of Acts As A Defense Of Christianity* by John W Mauck, 2001].

As for St. Paul's writings, his best literary work was the Epistle to the Romans, which contains so many ambiguities that it would have tried the patience of any Roman jurist. Paul was a competent jurist, and obviously represented himself well before Imperial magistrates. But his Epistles do not reflect that competence, probably because they were personal letters sometimes written in haste. Romans is a pastoral epistle and depends upon the theological and cultural literacy of its intended recipients. More below.

Perhaps fortuitously, Paul's Epistles had a limited circulation in the 1st Century and did not matter much as a source of Christian doctrine until the time of St. Ignatius and Clement of Rome. Even then, Ignatius was partial to "John the Evangelist" - who would be mistaken later as the Apostle John - and Clement, who according to the Clementine writings of the Early Church, ascribes his conversion to the time when Barnabas was in Rome, not to Paul.

The Kinsman-Redeemer of the Jesus Clan

We believe that Barnabas was Lazarus, the Beloved Disciple, whose name in the Hebrew is Eleazar, and means essentially the same as "paraclete." [Removing "El" from "God's helper" to make "Lazarus" would be the etymological equivalent of "paraclete" and could be used interchangeably.]

We have noted elsewhere that as the Beloved Disciple, Jesus had commissioned Lazarus as the legal "executor of the estate" for his family and heirs: the *go'el* (ga'al) or "kinsman-redeemer" (John 19:26-27). [See the "House of Bethany" Peshar, Christmas, 2020, <https://2046AD.org>].

Along with Barnabas, Eastern Orthodox tradition has Barnabas bestowing a bishopric upon Lazarus in Cyprus. So, now we have the incongruity of two men whose names mean the same thing (one in Hebrew, the other in Aramaic), in the same place, with the same official position, at the same time. Could they be the same man?

In the New Testament Church, it was against ecclesiastical law to have more than one bishop to rule in a parish. And bishops were appointed for life. So, either these men were rival bishops, or they were the same man.

We are told by Hippolytus that both Luke and John Mark were numbered with the Seventy (*Ante-Nicene Fathers - ANF*, v. 5, p.255-256, Schaff collection). The Syriac "Book of the Bee," (Budge, Oxford,1886, p. 94) has Luke as a deacon for Lazarus in Cyprus. Luke's Acts of the Apostles has John Mark with Barnabas in Cyprus at the same time. The coincidences are more than suggestive.

Furthermore, as has been said before, the only "Mary" of wealth in the New Testament was Lazarus' sister, who is conflated with Mary Magdalene in Tatian's *Diatesseron* (a 1st Century Syriac harmony of the Gospels, and perhaps our earliest Gospel source). Barnabas, too, has a sister who is named "Mary," who is a wealthy benefactor of the Jerusalem Church, and is also the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12; Colossians 4:10). How many coincidences are needed before we recognize that these two men were one and the same?

Hebrews: the Zadokite Manifesto

But it was the book of the Hebrews Epistle which completely destroyed Herodianism because it affirmed that the priesthood was no longer that of descent through the Aaronic line. Rather, it was an eternal priesthood after "the order of Melchizedek" which did not depend upon genealogy. The public records destroyed by Herod did not matter. A new sacerdotal order had come. And it taught a priesthood based upon the eternal kingship of Jesus Christ and who, as the Great Prophet foretold by Moses, retained ultimate interpretive authority over the Law of the Covenant. Historically, interpretive authority was represented in the prophetic office. Prophets

were counselors to the king and interpreters of the king's law to the people. Their "prophecies" were merely warnings of the consequences associated with the laws when obeyed or disobeyed.

Thus, just as Melchizedek would have been his own interpreter of Divine law as a king of "righteousness" (zedek), Jesus set a standard which forever disqualified the likes of an irreverent Edomite Herodian.

Paul, the 13th Apostle?

Paul was accepted by the Apostles at Jerusalem because of Barnabas (Acts 9:27). As Lazarus, Barnabas had been commissioned by Christ to be the guardian and the kinsman-redeemer of the Messianic household (John 19:26-27). He was the first benefactor to finance the Jerusalem mission to the new converts in the early chapters of Acts (4:36-37). As the acting "firstborn" of the Messianic family, he would have supervised the young Stephen and appointed him to James as the "heir apparent" to the episcopal office of the Jerusalem Church. He was respected by the Apostles. Paul would not have been accepted had he not been befriended by Barnabas.

This would not have been easy for Barnabas. He was Christ's "avenger of blood" (also the meaning of *go-el*) and he was Stephen's, as well. As Saul, Paul was the first persecutor of the Church, and had been "complicit" in Stephen's murder. But each of these martyrs prayed absolution for their killers: "Lay not this sin to their charge." Barnabas had to oblige and forgive.

But he also saw potential in Saul, who became Paul, because the mission to the Gentiles was just beginning. This had been Stephen's vision:

*Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing
on the right hand of God. - Acts 7:56*

This was a direct reference to the Prophet Daniel's vision of the enthroned Messiah following the Ascension (Daniel 7:14), and His destined rule over the Gentiles:

And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away.

Stephen was telling his colleagues in the assembly that it was time to start the Gentile mission as an expansion of the Messianic kingdom. Immediately after this, Philip preaches to the Samaritans in Acts 8 and Peter preaches to Cornelius' household in Acts 10.

It is not entirely clear why Stephen became a "deacon" to the widows in Acts Chapter 6, when the early Church Fathers have him assigned to James. We have cited St. Ignatius for support of this, which should be sufficient as he is a 1st Century source (legend has it that Ignatius was the child whom Jesus sat on His lap when He taught the discourse on "suffer the little children to come unto me"). But we also have attestation from the Apostolic Constitutions of Stephen's unique status (Book V, Sec. I, Ch. VIII - ANF, v. 7, p. 492), which is also early and a collaborated work. [Whiston believed it was a 1st Century collection.]

Barnabas accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey to the Gentiles through Cyprus, Asia Minor, and the Levant. It was Paul's first real act toward personal redemption. If we consider the mistaken identities in Acts 14:12, Barnabas should have been the team leader even though Paul did most of the talking. After the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas parted ways in a disagreement over John Mark.

Paul might not have entirely understood his mission. He was Barnabas' *apostolos* - not Christ's - in the sense that he was commissioned to the Gentiles to establish bishoprics for the Desposyni: the sons of the Messianic household. In rejecting John Mark, he was rejecting the reason he was befriended and recruited by Barnabas. Acts tells us that the disagreement was "sharp" between them. It was after this split that Paul went "rogue." His theology became a sometimes convoluted imitation of a Greek mystery cult, only concerned with internal spiritual experiences and the afterlife. He also reverted to a Herodian political doctrine of state absolutism (Romans 13), an overly literalistic interpretation of Essene apocalyptic futurism (1 Thessalonians 4), and a convoluted antinomianism (Galatians) in which it is sometimes difficult to tell when he is talking about the ceremonial law (circumcision, etc.), the moral law (i.e. the Ten Commandments) or penology (the judicial status of being under the verdict of the law).

The leaders of the New Testament Church were required to report to James in Jerusalem at least every seven years according to the Clementine accounts. This was so in part because Judaism had a Roman legal status of *collegium licitum* (or *religio licitum*): a legal religion within the Empire. At the beginning, Christianity was considered a branch of Judaism. But Paul, being a Roman and a Herodian, felt he had no need of that legal umbrella, and that he had the legal standing to start his own religious movement. Certainly, as the Jewish revolt against Rome materialized in the 60s AD, the standing of Judaism itself was called into question. The Messianic aspects of the Davidic monarchy had to be removed from both Judaism and Christianity for those religions to avoid the subversive label. For the Gentile Christians, Pauline pietism would be embraced and the Desposyni were discarded. This process began during the Jewish Revolt in 67-73AD

(the fall of Masada) and ended after the Bar Kochba rebellion *circa*. 134 AD.

It must be understood that whatever "Christianity" might have been in the 1st Century; it became something else in the 2nd Century, and all New Testament writings were redacted to exclude any subversive references to the House of David. The New Testament we have today reflects a view of the Church's mission after this process of redaction. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Nag Hammadi Library, and other similar manuscripts have helped us to reconstruct the role of the Desposyni among the First Christians.

If both Luke's Gospel and the Acts were expected to be seen by civil magistrates - especially if the "most Excellent Theophilus" was indeed such a magistrate - then the obfuscation of identities would have been essential. The "sons" of Jesus would have been ascribed Greek or Roman names, instead of their real Hebrew patronyms. The identity of the Apostles would also have been obfuscated (James the brother of Jesus is not identified as such in Acts, merely as James), Philip "the deacon" replaces the Apostle in the narrative, and the Church's richest benefactor - Lazarus (Eleazer) - missing in Luke's Gospel except for the Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man - is only known to us as "Barnabas" in Acts. Paul may not have really known who Barnabas was. John Mark replaces the Apostle John. The Davidic presence would have been diminished enough not to alarm Rome with sedition.

However, the book of Hebrews teaches us that the Kingdom of God does not require an Aaronic priesthood or a Davidic Messiah. It argues for a priestly and kingly provenance that pre-dates Moses and even Abraham. It reaches back to the time of the earlier patriarchs to make Jesus become a true "Messiah of the Gentiles."

Melchizedek and Natural Law

After citing the prophecy in Amos of a resurrected "tabernacle of David" to rule the Gentiles, James issued his ruling in Acts 15:19. The *Apostolic Constitutions* renders it thus,

Wherefore my sentence is, that we do not trouble those who among the Gentiles turn unto God: but to charge them that they abstain from the pollutions of the Gentiles, and from what is sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; which laws were given to the ancients who lived before the law, under the law of nature, Enos, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Job, and if there be any other of the same sort.

- James, First Bishop of Jerusalem, "Apostolic Constitutions,"
(ANF, v. 7, p. 455)

If this account is correct, and we believe that it is, then this would be the only other time, outside the book of Hebrews, in which Melchizedek would have been mentioned in the New Testament. It is significant; for it would mean that the book of Hebrews would be Jamesian and a true doctrinal expression of "Ebionism" which is another label by which the First Christians were known.

The Law of Nature & of Nature's God

In James' reference to "laws given to the ancients" "under the law of nature," he is suggesting a larger corpus than what the Mosaic Law provides. He is arguing for the witness of our "created design" as testified in nature and as discovered by science. He is acknowledging a "wisdom tradition" from which the Mosaic code was drawn. It also suggests that the Mosaic law code was provisional, remedial, and pedagogical. This was certainly true of the ceremonial aspects of the law.

For example, the Seventh Day as a sabbath finds its origin in the Creation account, not in the Law of Moses. Likewise, the classification of animals into "clean" and "unclean" is a thing known to Noah, not an invention of Moses. What kind of revelations or observations in nature would have been required to know these distinctions? The Bible doesn't say.

But it would be misguided to claim, as our modern-day Paulists insist, that these ceremonial laws "are done away with in Christ." They are only "done away" if the lessons they were meant to teach have been understood and obeyed. We should ask, "What kind of choices are inculcated by observing these ceremonies?"

If a blood atonement is required for sin, should that not teach us not to sin?

If, for example, a blood atonement is required every time a woman menstruates (Leviticus 15:22-33), should that not teach us that menstruation is a sin?

Everybody thinks they know what James meant when he ordered the Gentile converts to abstain from "fornication" because the Greek word is "porneo" and the lexicons tell us that it refers to "sexual immorality" or "prostitution." Your church says that if you are not "married" when you have sex then you have acted like prostitutes. Thus, in an ever circling tautology, we never come to an understanding of what James meant because we have invented a vague term - "sexual immorality" - to define the term.

James was an Ebionite and "fornication" in the Ebionite lexicon was not sex for pay or even sex without marriage. **It was sex without conception.** It did not mean what Paul meant in terms of prostitution or temple prostitution. James and the Ebionites felt that non-fertile sex was fornication. Marriage was not a license for pleasure-seeking. There was such a thing as "fornication" with one's wife. An Ebionite would understand why menstruation was a sin in the Old Testament and required a blood atonement. A Paulist Christian would not.

The created design for our sexuality is reproduction. The pleasures experienced in the process of reproduction are positive reinforcements provided by our Creator to reward our reproductive activities. The failure to conceive is a "sin" because it "misses the mark" established for the purpose of sex: conception.

The *Clementine Homilies* have Peter explaining this Ebionite view:

And Peter said: "Because men, following their own pleasure in all things, cohabit without observing the proper times; and thus the deposition of seed, taking place unseasonably, naturally produces a multitude of evils. For they ought to reflect, that as a season has been fixed suitable for planting and sowing, so days have been appointed as appropriate for cohabitation, which are carefully observed." (ANF, v. 8, p. 337 Chap. XXII under the "Sins of Ignorance").

Peter credits the health and longevity of the Biblical Patriarchs to this "wisdom tradition."

Paulism: The Slippery Slope

As noted above, the Paulist tradition gained the upper hand after the Bar Kochba rebellion at the middle of the 2nd Century. For the Gentile Christians, the 1st Day of the week became the Sabbath; meats were no longer classified as clean or unclean.

But there is a difference between choosing a different day for sabbath, and having no sabbath at all. Likewise, "clean or unclean" was different from James' Noahide prohibitions: "things strangled, things offered to idols, and from blood." These were not optional commands; yet, some Gentile Christians, citing Paul, began pushing against these limits in a profane way.

Menstruation began to be looked upon as a physical infirmity and then later with indifference. Instead, in an inversion of values, the masculine "spilling of seed" was regarded as the greater sin, even a manifestation of Original Sin. While before, it was merely a hygienic matter; after, it became a moral issue. Thus, "righteousness" in this new standard required celibacy and the repression of seminal production through fasting and abstinence.

In contrast, the Ebionites required early marriage as a remedy for seminal production and menstruation, as Epiphanius complains,

At present they [Ebionites] strictly forbid virginity and continence, as is true of the other sects like there's. (Panarion, 30.6)

The contrast between the Paulists and the Ebionites on this teaching should be emphasized. In the tradition of the pagan mystery cults, virginity was a glorified institution. For the Ebionites, it was considered evil because it meant menstruation and other sins of uncleanness. Paulists viewed the man's lust as Original Sin. The Ebionites considered it a divine inducement to reproduction.

Like the fork in a road, the implications of these contrasting views lead to radically different ethical systems. The one leads to the perversions of the Canaanite Baalists; the other leads to the institutions of the righteous Hebrews of old.

Loosening Family Ties

But a woman cannot have sex with just any man in order to avoid menstruating. She must avoid, as James requires, the "pollutions of the Gentiles." She must cohabit within the Covenant and "marry" "in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:39). Even Paul got that right, but then gives it all away by insisting that if she remains unmarried - if she

continues in her life of menstruating: "she is happier" (v. 40) - as if the institution of marriage exists only for our personal fulfillment, never mind the Creator's purpose for it.

The Greek word for "pollutions" here is used just once in the New Testament. It is *alisgema* which means "to be soiled or stained" and we are told by the lexicons that the Hebrew counterpart is "ga'al" which we know is translated elsewhere as "kinsman-redeemer" and "avenger of blood," but also less frequently with negative associations, such as, "be defiled, polluted, and stained." Spelled with the *ayin* instead of the *aleph*, it can become "abhor," "loathe" and "fall" (cf. *Young's Concordant Lexicon*, Eerdmans, p. 15).

The connection requires a logical inference. If you are "stained" with the same blood as your kinsman - you share the same blood, the same soil - then the affinity requires the duties of the "next of kin." In forbidding the new Gentile Christians these "pollutions," James is here saying that they must avoid a "kinsman" relationship with the Gentiles. **Your kinsman-redeemer must be a man of the Covenant.** And an Old Testament example of this would be Ruth the Moabitess who demanded the coverture of Boaz as a Covenant man.

[For the benefit of paleo-Hebrew enthusiasts who might argue that this "ga'al" begins with the obsolete letter "ghah" and not the "gimal," it does not change anything. In fact, our picture of the "ghah" as a twisted rope meaning "twisted, dark, or wicked" might be a better *paleo* rendering for the kinsman-redeemer and avenger of blood because they both refer to binding relationships that sometimes require the performance of "dark" or difficult tasks.]

Thus, James is requiring that the new Gentile Christians must cut-off family ties which will bring them under the authority of idolatrous priests and false gods. Mixed marriages with the heathen is certainly included in its meaning, and even Paul could see that:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

- 2 Corinthians 6:14-16

Although, he waffles on that point elsewhere in his counseling (1 Corinthians 7).

In terms of marriage, the "bishop" becomes the kinsman-redeemer of the local congregation. That is why it was the standard in the Church canons from the time of the Apostolic Constitutions through the Ecumenical Councils, as says Ignatius, who again we cite as a first century champion of the episcopal office:

*But it becomes all such as are married, whether men or women to come together with the consent
of the bishop,
that so their marriage may be according to godliness, and not in lust.*

- Ignatius to the Antiochians, ANF, v. 1, p. 191

The episcopal office is not an apostolic office, but rather a Desposynic office. It grows from the Old Testament doctrine of the kinsman-redeemer.

Melchizedek and Natural Revelation

In the Jerusalem ruling by James, he adds, "If there be any other of the same sort," suggesting that there would be another source for this "wisdom tradition" which can be inferred from the revealed will of God in nature as in the written revelation. In citing Melchizedek, he invites a closer inspection as to what might be meant by "natural revelation."

The writer of Hebrews gives us important clues in the form of a Targumist Peshet:

Melchisedek was

- 1) A "zedek" king of justice and of the righteous ones (Hebrews 7:2);
- 2) A priest upon his throne (7:3);
- 3) Qualified without lineage as a type of the eternal priestly king of heaven (7:3);
- 4) Superior to Abraham, for he received tithes of him (7:4); who
- 5) Blessed Abraham for the slaughter of the *melechs*, the kings - specifically, vengeance in the role of *the go'el* (7:1);
- 6) The priest of "El Elyona" "possessor of heaven and earth" - the supreme deity of the Canaanite pantheon (7:1);

- 7) The king of Salem (*shalom*), the king of "peace" (7:2);
- 8) The ruler of the Jebusites, a tribe of the Canaanites (Joshua 18:28);
- 9) The ruler of the "trodden down" and of the "down-trodden" which is the meaning of the name of the "Jebus" (cf. 2 Samuel 24:16-18); who
- 10) Offered a bloodless sacrifice of bread and wine, an offering of fellowship (Genesis 14:18); as
- 11) The head of a religious "order" (Hebrews 7:21, et al); for
- 12) Those who follow in this order and are made so by a Divine oath (7:21); of whom
- 13) Solomon was the first successor of this divine oath (Psalm 110:4), and which
- 14) Jesus established as an eternal sacerdotal line (Hebrews 7:28).

The implications of each of these fourteen points deserve to be considered, discussion of which has been offered in the various publications provided by the Cambrian Church (The Kinsman-Redeemer; The Ministry of the Firstborn, etc.). Space does not allow for a full exposition here, except for the following observations:

First, Judaism and Apostolic Christianity are not what is in view here. Judaism requires circumcision; Apostolic Christianity requires a sacramental system administered by bishops of the apostolic succession.

Second, the true Ebionism of the House of Bethany, or what is called the "Johannine Community" among scholars, requires adoption into the *family* of Jesus Christ per the standards of the Mosaic Law - the "Law of the Covenant" (Exodus 20-23). That is what the Desposynic bishops were all about. They represented a "discipling" ministry that operated through the family structure, not the diocesan.

In the beginning, they were known as the "elders" or fathers of the Church (Acts 15:2). They were the "zadoks" - the interpreters and teachers of the law to their own households on their own estates. All of those within their coverture were "clean" whether circumcised or not. They could commemorate the Feasts of Israel and the sacraments of the Church because they were within the Ark of God. Like Jesus, the Desposyni became as a "Christ over [their] own house" (Hebrews 3:6) to mediate the rule of Jesus as His undershepherds (1 Peter 5:3-4).

Third, it is the essence of this priesthood that the offices of priest and king be combined into one person and to be passed down through the generations in a *procession* rather than a *succession*. Melchizedek is himself described in Hebrews as without ancestry with no record of his death. But in describing him as the great "firstborn brought back into the world," Melchizedek becomes a symbol of a new Adam in a new creation, who is the firstborn "among many brethren." Because the principle of eternity has been restored to the human experience - mediated by the Holy Spirit who spans the generations - successors are no longer needed in the Kingdom of God as it was in the past. Continuity is achieved through the "procession of the Holy Ghost" as the kingdom expands through colonization, just as it would have had Adam never fallen in the garden of Eden and brought disruption to human society through the principle of death.

The writer of Hebrews contends there was no lineage of descent from Melchizedek or Jesus, either. There is no succession of the priestly office as there was to the Aaronic priesthood. Rather, the priesthood comes with the royal title. And royal title comes from the prerogatives of fatherhood. As argued in the *The Family Abbey* (Stivers, 2004, 2014), the regal right grows from the rights of fatherhood. Melchizedek in the Canaanite system was the king and priest of his people because he was, either in a literal sense or in a putative sense, the *father* of his people, i.e. the Jebusites. The expansion of the role of fatherhood as a cultural symbol organizes human society on different principles.

Fourth, it is a different kind of royal title. In this system, one does not become king through conquest or through right of descent, but through fatherhood. It is an elevation of fatherhood into a regal classification in which he rules over them who can call him father. And the regal right descends through *syneisactum*, not primogeniture. Succession is still a functional feature of the Divine economy because death still exists, but it is no longer one of a Divine right as it was for the covenants of the patriarchal age.

Melchizedek was the first priest-king of Jerusalem, and through the ordinance of the [term redacted] he was the putative father to his people. He was also a *zadok*, which means he was his own prophet or interpreter of the Divine Law, as well. When the Scriptures describe him as "the priest of the Most High," this was a specific title for the supreme Deity in Canaanite theology: "El Elyona." *El Elyona* was the father-god of the Canaanite pantheon, as Zeus was to the Greeks and Odin was to the North people. By some process of qualification unknown to us - perhaps because he was king of the "threshing floor" or "king of the harvest" - the king of the "Jebus" was, according to the custom of the Canaanite city-states, the high priest. He was the "minister of justice" and held an appellate jurisdiction over the city-states of the Canaanites.

This concept may seem to be pandering to a polytheistic perspective, but it really is not. Rather, it is satisfied in the Christian doctrine of the ontological Trinity.

Fifth, he was a champion of the weak, the great "kinsman-redeemer" to society at large, which is why he blessed Abraham when he returned from "the slaughter of the kings." These kings had come for plunder and carried away the people as slaves. In rescuing his nephew, Lot, and his family, he also rescued all the people who had been captured by these "human traffickers" of his day.

Because of his exalted status among the Canaanite city-states, Melchisedek was able to provide judicial covering to Abraham for "the slaughter of the kings." Abraham was guilty of killing heads of state. Even though the rescue of Lot was justified, their killing - in a time when kings were looked upon as gods - was considered deicide, not just regicide. Only Melchizedek as priest of the "Most High God" - the god who was above all other gods, including presumably these god-kings - the "possessor of heaven and earth" - he could give that judicial sanction which Abraham needed to escape reprisal.

The Book of Hebrews Misrepresented

The story of Melchizedek has always been an embarrassment to the Jews. The Book of Jasher claims - at least, the version that has come to us from the Intertestamental Period - that he was the Patriarch Shem, the son of Noah upon whom was pronounced the priestly blessing. This seems unlikely, as Jasher would have been known to the writer of the Book of Hebrews, who declares the lineage of Melchizedek to be unknown. Also the Septuagint chronology of the patriarchal period does not support the notion that Shem and Abraham were contemporaries.

In the ongoing war propaganda of Jewish partisans, Jasher probably represents the attempt to make Melchizedek Semitic rather than Canaanite. It would have been offensive to them to acknowledge the superiority of a Canaanite king over their beloved Abraham. The Canaanites were considered a cursed race upon whom the genocide committed against them many centuries before by the Israelites would have been justified.

Why the Judaizers Hate the Book of Hebrews

Today, there is a very strong Judaizing movement within Evangelical Christianity in a quest to return to an Anabaptist simplicity of Christian doctrine and custom. It is a reaction to the prevailing Marcion heresy entrenched in Dispensationalist dogma.

There is a disavowal of Paul and anything associated with him. While the Cambrian Church has always assigned a deutro-canonical status to Paul's writings (cf. *Our Neglected Heritage*, Taylor, Covenant Publishing; *James, the First Bishop of Jerusalem*, Elder, <https://2046AD.org>); that is, they must be held to the standard which requires corroboration rather than left to "private interpretation" (2 Peter 2:20), we say the apostolic tradition must be corroborated, as well. The Desposynic writers of the New Testament (James, Jude, and Barnabas with his *paraclete* brigade) form the standard as "chief cornerstones" (i.e. "Christkind," cf. *Pesher of the Procession*, <https://2046AD.org>) of doctrinal teaching. We do not reject Paul's place in the Canon altogether as do the Judaizers. In fact, Paul saw clearer than anyone, perhaps, that Judaism was a dead-end. He helped to liberate the world from the abomination that was the Temple of Jerusalem.

The Judaizers do not want to accept the doctrines of the Trinity, the Virgin Birth, and the deity of Jesus Christ. The Book of Hebrews stands in the way. While the purpose of this Pesher is not to form a digression on each of these doctrines, some sense of how they are taught in Hebrews ought to be mentioned.

Hebrews has been targeted for attack, first by marginalizing it as Pauline, and then by attacking its use of the Septuagint as the Old Testament Canon.

Their textual criticism tries to undercut the Septuagint upon which the Book relies. In so doing, they are unwittingly attacking the Messianic claims of Jesus Himself and will in time reduce their own faith to a form of Judaism in which Jesus is no longer "Christ" but rather a great teacher or prophet.

The Three Complaints of the Judaizers

First, Judaizers commit the "heresy of the literalists" in disallowing the enigmatic language of the writer's analogies. Obviously, the author of Hebrews does not intend to make Melchizedek into a god by an analogous allusion to him as an eternal person without "beginning or ending of days," (7:3) and the writer says so: "made *like* unto the Son of God." This analogy is no worse than Jesus' cannibalism speech in John Chapter 6. Yet, these Judaizers try to portray it as an attempt to teach a Gnostic demiurge, which is an unjustified inference. The entire book is about Jesus, not about Melchizedek. Who Melchizedek really was is immaterial to the larger discussion about the eternal priesthood of Jesus Christ.

Second, they display a lack of theological understanding by misinterpreting the likening of God as a dead testator (10:16) to make way for a new relationship in a new era with a new priesthood. They accuse the author of teaching a "God is dead" ideology.

To the contrary, Hebrews uses this legal analogy to build on the reader's understanding of Roman inheritance law with the backdrop from the Mosaic Law, especially as found in Exodus 21. It was anticipated by the Prophet Hosea (2:16-17) in which God told the Israelites that they would no longer know Him as their "Baal" but as their "Ish." The "Baal" or "husband" relationship would "die" so that the "Ish" or "lord" relationship might replace it. Modern Christians are unfamiliar with the use of these terms in Old Testament law and it requires some explanation.

This analogy is different from the Pauline analogy of the death of the husband which freed the woman so she could marry another. This analogy has to do with an inheritance and the status of a concubine with her children; specifically, it represents the emancipation of the slave so that he might be adopted to become a son and an heir.

The entire book of Hosea is about how the husband of an adulterous wife has sold her into slavery, but has promised to liberate her from her bondage, to redeem her, and to restore her to her former condition.

In the testator analogy in Hebrews, the writer is arguing for the termination of the penal component of the suzerain treaty between Yahweh and the Israelite nation in which the Israelites were penal slaves represented by service to Yahweh as Baal, or as depicted by the Hebrew prophets, the pagan kings who served as Baal proxies for Yahweh. "Baals" in the ancient world were rulers who had derivative authority from the suzerain. They were not autonomous.

A bondage to a "baal" was a servitude relationship rather than that of an heir. Servants could not inherit anything.

To find a path of restoration, Yahweh, as the suzerain lord, kills or executes the baal proxy so that He can resume the previous relationship. The use of "Ish" in the Old Testament conforms to our modern assignation of "mister" for men who have an independent legal status. Contrary to Paul's use of the Sarah/Hagar analogy, in which he cites the Scripture which says "Cast out the bondwoman with her son" (Galatians 4:30), in Barnabas' use of this testator analogy in Hebrews, it is better illustrated by the story of Jacob's sons by his concubines, who were emancipated and made to receive an equal inheritance along with the sons of Leah and Rachel. Even though he does not specifically mention them, they would be an example of what Barnabas and the Prophet Hosea had in mind in the change of Israel's relationship to Yahweh. Jacob's *baal* relationship with Zilpah and Bilhah "died" (was legally terminated) and was succeeded by that of freewomen with their "Ish." In other words, Jacob "died" to them as their baal/master (a marriage based upon bondage) and was resurrected to become their

ish/husband (a marriage based upon love). That change in their legal status made their sons heirs. The only difference in Hosea is that the servitude was penal and required atonement. In Hebrews, Barnabas calls attention to the atonement of Christ and the New Covenant as the remedy to that legal estoppel.

Finally, objection has been made to the use of Psalms 2 and 45, *et al*, as Messianic prophecies in which - as they are rendered in the Septuagint: "The Lord said unto my lord;" "Therefore, God, even thy God" - are used to make Jesus into a divine being.

Again, as was said above, and as was argued in the St. Stephen's Day Peshier (<https://2046AD.org>), the early Christians used the Septuagint Canon of the Old Testament which differs from the Rabbinic Masoretic Canon. It is a partisan position to argue that the Septuagint is invalid. I would invite the reader to consult William Whiston's Fourth Dissertation in the Appendix of his translation of the *Works of Josephus* to find a non-partisan defense of the Septuagint.

Whiston was accused of Arianism and lost his position at Cambridge in a heresy trial. If anything, Whiston should have been partial to the Masoretic texts - and indeed, he did hold them with respect - but he acknowledged the Septuagint as superior. He understood that the deification language of the Messianic prophecies were analogical and not literal. More another time.

"This day have I begotten thee" (1:5) is an expression which the Judaizers misunderstand, as have most of the Church Fathers, unfortunately. It reflects the ancient custom of acknowledgement of the son for the purposes of inheritance. **When an heir is declared, the son is begotten.**

In the Roman world, adopted sons received legacies. Begotten sons received the estate. Legacies have strings attached. Begotten sons are autonomous.

While we naturally suppose that "begetting" refers to the sexual act which causes conception and birth, in the ancient world, the process of begetting is not completed until a father bestows his name upon the child. That occurs in the form of a declaration by which the father verbally acknowledges the child, which may or may not occur at birth. It might be, and often is the case, that a son is not "begotten" until much later in life after he has proven his worth as an heir.

Solomon was not "begotten" until he received his father's regal crown. Likewise for Jesus, it was on the day of his baptism that he received the heavenly affirmation of his sonship - not by the word of angels, but by a voice from heaven. While we might want

to suppose that Jesus experienced a unique supernatural presence at his baptism - especially since the Holy Spirit descended upon him as a dove - that divine presence was really the Father's permission for Jesus to take his Bride. "The dove" was bridal imagery in the ancient world. **The day of His baptism was the day of His espousals.**

While the Judaizers want to believe that Christ was "begotten" on the day of His baptism - that some miracle occurred by which the man, Jesus, became divine, or became imbued with a divine presence - to the contrary, the true Christian would recognize that His baptism was the day of His Entitlement: He was pronounced the Divine Heir.

The Mysteries of the Gospel

The doctrine of the deity of Jesus and that of the Holy Trinity could not have been taught among the Jews without the charge of heresy and apostasy. 1st Century Jews practiced a lynching culture, as we see of Stephen in the book of Acts. But the Jews also had assassins known as the *Sicarii* (cf. Eisenman), whose job it was to murder the zadoks - the teachers of the law - if they departed from accepted Judaism and especially if they tried to teach the Gentiles. The victimhood of modern Jews does not square with the behavior of their religious ancestors during those early years, which was full of fanaticism and violence.

The deity of Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity were taught as an esoteric tradition in the first Christian century. Only after Judaism was destroyed as a temporal power did it become safe for Christians to teach the full implications of these doctrines. Until then, they were among the "mysteries" of the Church.

The Feast of the Holy Cross: *If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me - Jesus*

On this day of the Holy Cross, let us not despair of the sometimes controversial disagreements among the followers of "the Way." The Jews have reacted to the various heresies of the Church, which currently among the Evangelicals, is that of "Paulinism": they have replaced Jesus with Paul.

But Jesus said He would draw all men to Himself and we can have faith, that in the course of time, as men come to an epistemological self-consciousness, that they will recognize that in every aspect of His life and teachings, Jesus has truly shown us "the Way . . . the Truth . . . and the Life."

A Servant of Jesus,

James

Collect for the Day:

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ was lifted high upon the cross that he might draw the whole world to himself, Mercifully grant that we, who glory in the mystery of our redemption, may have grace to take up our cross and follow him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. AMEN.

The Cambrian Peshier is the pastoral epistle of the Cambrian Episcopal Church of the Grail, a fellowship and abbey adhering to a spiritual tradition from ancient Wales. We use the Authorized Version of the Bible (King James Version) as our default translation and the Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopalian Church for liturgical guidance. We are not an affiliate of any denomination.

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