

Religion:

Judaism

a. JUDAISM...the ideals and practices of the Hebrew community of New Testament times.

As a classical expression, Judaism lost something after the war with the Romans (70 AD) and the insurgent Bar Cochba revolt (120 ff). In the earlier period of time its rivalry with Christianity was keen but in the early second century the contest waned and the two groups moved increasingly apart. As far as the religious background for this course is concerned, we are interested only in a few of the idealogical concepts of the Judaistic thinking:

(1) The personification of the aesthetic... the ideals of Judaism, while not mundane or strictly physical, were still approachable ideas. They were not like the remote and impersonal schemes of the gnostics of the platonists. The highest goals of good were expressed in everyday concepts of life and thereby were applicable to and for the masses.

(2) The concept of heavenly messengers...and the dependence of Judaism on divine revelation. It made a religion of mediatorial capacity.

(3) The intense "self-help" concept in Judaism that made it a faith that looked for the good in man and gave it a near-Pelagian concept of original sin and depravity.

(4) The idea of education via schools knit to the community and the religious leaders of the community.

In some ways the Judaistic thrust was summarized in the Philonic idealogy (Philo of Alexandria) (d. 40 AD). In this system the aesthetics were rationalized in an allegorical sequence while God was thought of as totally transcendent and the "logos" was an intermediary between God and the physical universe...the "logos" being the first of all divine ideas. The logos of Philo (although actually called on occasion the "son of God") is still an unreal vaguary and not to be confused with the "logos" of the Scripture.

Judaean
Synchretisms

b. Synchretistic Judaen/Christian cults
Being a perversion of both groups and the answer to neither.

(1) the Nazarenes ..."Jewish Christians" who believed in Christ's divinity and virgin birth, but who saw in Paul the true apostleship and bound themselves to a strict observance of the Mosaic law. They honored only the Gospel of Matthew and had some points in common with current Messianic Judaism although many points differ, also.