

(2) The Ebionites: Pharasaic Jews who denied Christ's divinity and virgin birth, regarded Paul as an apostate from Mosaic law, demanded that all Christians should submit to circumcision, and held that Christ was supposedly a legally pious human Messiah.

(3) The Elkasites: Theosophic Jews who rejected Christ's divinity and virgin birth, but spoke of him as a higher spirit, or an angel, or the highest archangel, and who observed circumcision, the Sabbath, repeated ceremonial washings, and a strict asceticism. They also followed magic and astrology and had an "inner circle" doctrine on the fulfillment of the law.

In the case of these groups we have splinter cults. The Ebionites felt that at baptism Christ was taken to a higher or divine station and some have suggested the the book of Colossians may have been written against an Elkasite mentality. I summarize them in these notes to give an idea of the sort of mental movements that were found in the world of this time.

It is interesting to note that the earliest Christian apologies were directed against the pagan persecutors and the Jews. To the world, the Christian apologists would stress the "right to be" while to the Jews they would argue for the religious continuity of their faith.

Religion

Christian perversions

c. Expressions of altered or perverted Christianity.

(1) Manicheanism, named for Mani (d. 276) who used his near-eastern background to formulate a fusion of elements of Christianity and Persian mystery religions. To this group the universe is a battleground between the forces of darkness and light, good and evil, spirit and matter. Salvation comes through an ascetic life with the withdrawal of self from matter. The overall teachings allowed for a small group were truly called and a great many who just followed along...an elite and a band of commoners hoping to make the elite someday.

(2) Marcion (early 2nd century), not a gnostic in the normal sense although some have put him there (note the good discussion in Berkhof: History of Christian Doctrines, p. 56 ff). He saw Paul as the great apostle and antithesis of the other apostles. Hence he accepted only ten of his letters as Scripture along with the Gospel of Luke for which he thought Paul the responsible source. He saw a total break in the Old Testament/New Testament picture