

c. The Hebrew Text

The basic language of the Jewish people, Hebrew is the medium chosen for the Old Testament Scriptures. Our concept of inspiration is geared to the original autographs... which we do not have but which on the basis of uniformity of copies we attribute accuracy.

4. Classical Judaism

Judaism, as a religious practice, is an expansion on the Old Testament Scripture. It is biblical only to the degree that it follows that Scripture and in much of its development it does not. This can easily be seen in looking at the chief Jewish cults: Pharisees, Saducees, Essenes, etc., and seeing how their doctrines move away from the Scripture (or add to it...just about the same thing in reverse.)

As a religious system, Judaism lost something after the Roman war (70 AD and the insurgent Bar Cochba rebellion (120 AD). 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 further 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:

a. The aesthetic was personfied and made approachable ideas. The Judaeans did not worship the body as did the Greeks and they did not favor the remote and impersonal schemes of the gnostics or platonists. But the ideas of peace, prosperity, beauty, etc., were close to them. The highest goals of good were expressed in everyday concepts of life and thereby were applicable to and for the masses.

b. Heavenly messengers were accorded real station in Judaeans thought...and Judaism heavily depended on "divine revelation." It gave them a religion of mediatorial capacity.

c. A giant "self-help" concept existed in this mentality and Judaism was a faith that looked for the good in man and gave it a near-Pelagian concept of original sin and depravity.

d. Concepts of education were propagated in which the schools were seen as tightly knit to the community and the religious leaders of the community.

Perhaps the Judaistic ideas were well summarized in Philo of Alexandria (d. 40 AD). In his 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...a rather unreal vagary not to be confused with the logos of Scripture.