

Monastics: Clannish Jewish groups seeking to maintain faith as they comprehended it. They gave themselves to living in isolated parts of the land and it is debated as to whether the Qumranians may have been one of these. A number of these bodies will show up in syncretized form in the first century of the Christian era.

No other religious expression had much real force in Palestine. There were tiny traces of the old polytheism; there was the rival Hebraistic interpretation of the Samaritan community and there may have been a few touches of Zoroastrianism around. Traces of eastern mystery religions seem occurrent and more of these will come to light in the next few centuries... with many of them combining ideals with gnosticism

The land was marked with religion and tradition and the composition of faithfulness was very much mottled and subject to prejudicial consideration.

II.1.h Intellect!

The Intellectual World

The Dominant philosophy was stoicism although the older philosophical models of Epicureanism and Platonism (with modifications on both) were still around. Thinkers turned towards stoic ideals in the face of the widespread moral and societal decay on the one hand and the excesses of wealth and privilege on the other. Stoics generally follow a "benevolent fatalism" and their influence is notable in Acts 17 on Mars Hill. It is a thought system of the thinkers and those who can emotionally condition themselves to its fatalistic thrust but it has less appeal to the common "man on the street". It is the sort of philosophy, however, that easily lends itself to the establishment of laws and policies.

Allegorism was the system popularly used for the explanation of past and present events. It matured in Alexandria and the Jewish scholar, Philo, had applied it to the study of the Hebrew Scriptures. Allegorism allows one to take the events of history and make them compatible with the present understanding (whatever it is) through the assignment of secondary meanings. The result is that the allegorist is rarely threatened or baffled on the intellectual plane. In allegorical meaning there is always an explanation which is intelligent to the allegorist and if it must be changed to meet a new set of facts, that is no problem