

The Essenes



The Healers of a Nation

“And heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them,
The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” Luke 10:9

His Holy Church

Dedicated to the service of the Lord.

“For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.” (1Co 3:19)

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places].” (Ephesians 6:11,12)

“They are corrupt, and speak wickedly [concerning] oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.” (Psalms 73:8-12)

“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.” (John 15:19)

“For this [is] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.” (Hebrews 8: 10,11)

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The Essenes

If you were to divide the Jewish people, at the time of Jesus, into three different sects, you would see them parted along three political groups with very different religious perceptions of the *Kingdom*.

The first two we have mentioned were the Pharisees and the Sadducees, but the third are that which is least spoken or understood within the Biblical text and yet they may be the most important. They were sometimes called the Essenes.

Essene, or “assaya, which means doctor or healer... are not mentioned anywhere in the New Testament, although their numbers were at least as great as the Sadducees and Pharisees.”¹ The Essenes did not call themselves Essenes.

“The Dead Sea Scrolls community, who are probably Essenes, were led by a high priestly leadership, who are thought to be the descendants of the "legitimate" high priestly lineage, which the Hasmoneans ousted.”² The Essenes were a humble service-oriented group. According to Philo, the label “Essene” was not their own. This may be why the word, “Essene”, is not mentioned. “There are about sixty proposed etymologies, involving Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic and/or Syriac, Persian Avestan, Sanskrit, Akkadian, and others.”³ The “Essene” label was possibly derived originally from a word meaning “holy” or “separate”, or words that mean “healer”. Ahmed Osman suggests in his book, “Out of Egypt”, that “Essene” is translated as *Essa*, or “follower of Jesus.”

They desired to be of service in the “world”, but chose not to live of its authoritarian bureaucracy, but desired to purify their life in voluntary service to humanity.

They were labeled as *healers and doctors*. They sought the natural herbs and the use of oils in service, as well as the content of natural minerals and diet used in healing. They were devoted to service of poor and rich, Jew and gentile alike, even refusing to own slaves. They were hailed for their honesty, temperance, reason, and justice, as well as their talent as healers and prophets.

1 The Jesus Conspiracy, The Turin Shroud & The Truth About the Resurrection
Holger Kersten & Elmar Gruber, (1992)

2 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saducees>

3 Stephen Goranson

“The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,” Luke 4:18

Essene often lived in secluded places during training and preparation. Cities and towns did not have a monopoly on immorality, but they often had the lion's share of it. They believed that service and fasting allowed one to confront the beast or evil in their own heart. With the aid of grace, one could seek and find the truth of God's Way on earth through service and sacrifice.

“And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him.” Mark 1:13

The followers of Christ and John the Baptist were familiar with much of what was called “Essene”. They washed their bodies, but also their hearts. They spoke of enlightenment, not entitlements. They sought the sincerity in their novitiates with adherence to precepts, overlooked by others. They *studied* and *meditated* on the issues of man and God. Their “*Schools of Prophets*” were famous. Josephus tells of Manahem the Essene who prophesied Herod's kingship when he had no royal expectations. They believed divine revelation was essential.

“And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed [it] unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 16:17

They were almost a secret society, but were also in regular contact with the people. They did own land throughout Judea, but only as a group, holding that land in common, like the Levites. Individually, they owned no personal estate, but sought a godly Kingdom for all men. This Levitical status of owning no property in their own name would be repeated for centuries of man's history to this day.

In almost every city, their hospitality and the tender care as a healer was always to be found behind the *Door of the Essene* and was available to all for the price of asking.⁴

4 Flavius Josephus, War of the Jews, Bk II, Ch VIII, Sn 4. Also There were "more than four thousand" Essaioi living in "Palestinian Syria" (Philo, Quod

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:” Matthew 7:7

They dressed simply in white garments and shunned wealth and comfort. The use of oils was common in those days, but they avoided it for themselves as an extravagance.

“Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?” John 12:5

Philo wrote, “For they are unique among all the race of men, having become penniless and landless [no personal estate] by choice rather than lack of good luck. But they count themselves very wealthy, judging ready satisfaction and contentment with little (to be) abundance, as it is.”⁵ Because of their simple, even austere, lifestyle, they were not ones to be infiltrated by lustful usurers and comfort seekers. They held all things in common, much like that required of the ancient Levites. This choice today would be called a “vow of poverty”. Many Essenes were Levites by birth, but were true to those ancient requirements of God and Moses.

“And all that believed were together, and had all things common;” Acts 2:44

Much of Philo’s writings on the Essene have been lost, but early church writers claim:

"No one possesses a house absolutely his own, one which does not at the same time belong to all; for in addition to living together in companies ["haburot"] their houses are open also to their adherents coming from other quarters." "Whatever they receive for their wages after having worked the whole day they do not keep as their own, but bring into the common treasury for the use of all; nor do they neglect the sick who are unable to contribute their share, as they have in their treasury ample means to offer relief to those in need."⁶

One Hasidean term for renouncing all claim property is "hefker". It was a way of declaring a thing held by a company or order of men to be held in trust for another, in this case, for God.

Omn. Prob. XII.75), and "in many cities of Judaea and in many villages and grouped in great societies of many members" (Hyp. 11.1).

5 Philo, Every Good Man is Free 12.77

6 "Præparatio Evangelica" by Eusebius (viii.), (ch. Xi):

“...And all who volunteer for his Truth shall bring all their knowledge and powers and possessions into the Unity of God: to purify their knowledge by the truth of God’s precepts, and --to measure their powers according to the perfection of his ways and all their possessions according to his righteous counsel.”⁷

This idea of the ministers of God’s government was insisted upon by Abraham, Moses, and Jesus and no honest account could leave it out of the description of those in national ministry. The evidence is overwhelming that the instructions of Jesus and the acts of the early Church were in common:

“By selling all that they had and giving it to themselves collectively, by turning over to the Order all that they earned during many years of industry, and by living always in the strictest frugality, the members had made their community wealthy... the Society could practically guarantee life-long security from the ills and buffetings of a cruel and uncertain life.”⁸

“They reject personal wealth, and do not refrain from sharing what they have with those in need; in fact, none among them is richer than the other; for the law with them is that whosoever joins their order must sell his possessions and hand the proceeds over to the common stock; and the leader distributes it to all according to their need. The overseers who provide for the common wants are elected by them. They do not use oil, as they regard anointing as a defilement, and they always dress in white garments”.⁹

The idea of the ministers of God’s kingdom not owning any property in their own name is not popular today, but both Moses and Christ concurred on this subject. Having no personal estate or *no inheritance*¹⁰ is an essential prerequisite before receiving any tithing from the people as the government of God. Jesus not only told this to the rich man who wanted to join His ministry, but made it a

7 Dead Sea Scrolls, Community Rule (1QS) 1.11-13

8 The Essene-Christian Faith : A Study in the Sources of Western Religion, Martin A. Larson, The Noontide Press, Costa Mesa, California, 1989, p. 40.

9 Hippolytus, the author of "Refutatio Omnium Hæresium" (ix. 18-28) but quoted in Josephus.

10 Numbers 18:23-24, Deuteronomy 14:27-29, Joshua 18:7.

requirement for His disciple before appointing them the kingdom.¹¹

“...whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14:33

Here, the word hath is from *huparchonta*, meaning “wealth and property”. We find the same word again in Luke 12:33 when Christ instructed his disciples to sell their property:

“Sell that ye have (*huparchonta*), and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.” Luke 12:33

Jesus knew the importance of not centralizing power or wealth in His government. The temptation for corruption and tyranny proves too great for men who are not willing to make such a commitment.

“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” Mtt. 6:19-20

The Essenes appealed to the best part of the nature of man. They were not steeped in orthodoxy and legalism. They often fulfilled the tasks of the Levites. They were practical in the practice of their faith and humble and efficient in the performance of its service. They had a vision of the kingdom.

“... he will exercise piety towards God, and then that he will observe justice towards men, and that he will do no harm to any one, either of his own accord, or by the command of others; that he will always hate the wicked, and be assistant to the righteous; that he will ever show fidelity to all men, and especially to those in authority...¹²

There may seem at first to be a Roman Catholic or even communistic approach in the Essene community when we read perceptions of their history like:

“We must note that when the Essenes gave their wealth to the

11 “...I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me;”
Luke 22:29

12 Flavius Josephus, War of the Jews, Bk II, Ch XIII, Sn 7

poor, they were themselves those 'poor,' whose storehouses were amply stocked. What they surrendered as individuals, they regained as members of the group, which might possess unlimited wealth. Thus, their communism was a device by which to escape the sinfulness and contamination of private property without foregoing its blessings and benefits. It is interesting to note that one of the Dead Sea Scrolls proves that the Essene monastery possessed vast quantities of hidden gold and silver."¹³

There are distinctive elements to their common brotherhood that made them the antithesis of communism. They structured their community in cell groups called twelve 'men of holiness', which included a titular leader or *mebaqqerim*. Leaders served their constituency, which consisted of about ten families or family groups. They were accepted to their office by *unanimous agreement* of those they served, forming a national network of charity and thanksgiving or Eucharist.

"In the council of the community there shall be twelve men and three priests."¹⁴

Three 'priests' were often selected among the group to perform certain duties. In the Bible, we see Peter, James, and John taken aside by Jesus and given separate instructions.

"And after six days Jesus taketh [with him] Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them." Mark 9:2, Mark 14:33, Luke 8:51.

The *mebaqqer*, or "overseers", also gathered in groups of twelve to minister to their immediate group of overseers and to tie larger groups into a network of communication and efficient service. This was an identical system repeated in the early days of the Levites with the twelve tribes and also seen throughout the first-century Church. Remnants of this pattern were still being used in Europe¹⁵ at the turn

13 The Religion of the Occident : The Origin and Development of the Essene-Christian Faith, Martin A. Larson, Littlefield, Adams & Co., Paterson, New Jersey, 1961, p. 341.

14 Dead Sea Scrolls, Essene Community Rule (1QS) 8.1-4

15 Tithingmen, Hundredsmen and Eoldermen were the titular leaders of tens, hundreds and thousands.

of the first millennium after Christ's death and resurrection.

The Essenes were notorious travelers. The image we have of them living solitary lives in communes gives a distorted perception. They had to get out to the people and used communes as places of learning and rest. There were some groups that were more monastic, and even celibate for the time of their training. Some community records have survived because of their isolated locations.

Epiphanius, an early Church writer, distinguishes between the Osseans and the Nazarean Essenes. They both believed there were great errors in the reading and translation of scripture.

“The Nazarean - they were Jews by nationality - originally from Gileaditis, where the early followers of Yeshua fled after the martyrdom of James, the brother of Jesus, Bashanitis and the Transjordan. They acknowledged Moses and believed that he had received laws - not this law, however, but some other. And so, they were Jews who kept all the Jewish observances, but they would not offer sacrifice or eat meat. They considered it unlawful to eat meat or make sacrifices with it. They claim that these Books are fictions [as presented at the time], and that none of these customs were instituted by the fathers. This was the difference between the Nazarean and the others...” (Panarion 1:18)

Their priests were not really priests, as we might think today, but stewards or servants of the people. Service was the highest valued character or virtue. They all depended on hard work, self-reliance, and charity amongst the brethren, not upon taxes or accounted tithes. They were dispersed all over the country in every community throughout the world, living in it, but not of it.

“But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.”
Matthew 23:11

Their word was held so reputable that even Herod excused them from taking the *oath of allegiance*, which was demanded due to his fear of the people and his own love of Hellenism.

“They master an even temper and control their anger. They advocate trust and assist peace. And all that is spoken by them has more force than an oath. But they avoid swearing, regarding it worse than perjury. For they say that he who cannot be

believed unless God is against him is already condemned...¹⁶

Some refused to take oaths before men or serve any gods other than the Creator.

We see Christ saying the same, “But I say unto you, Swear not at all; ... But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.” Matthew 5:34-37

“But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and [your] nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.” Ja. 5:12

No trading or commerce was done except by barter or with commodity money, which is barter, not “business”. Their union of each cell or order was more that of family unit who shared a common brotherhood, not because of a common womb, but because they had one Father who was in Heaven.

“...for it is a law among them that those who come to them must let what they have be common to the whole order, insomuch that among them all there is no appearance of poverty, or excess of riches, but every one's possessions are intermingled with every other's possession, and so there is, as it were, one patrimony among all the brethren.... Nor do they either buy or sell anything to one another, but every one of them gives what he hath to him that wanteth it, and receives from him again in lieu of it what may be convenient for himself ; and although there be no requital made, they are fully allowed to take what they want of whomsoever they please.”¹⁷

Their exchange between orders was based on charity and national brotherhood, not commerce, incurring no national debt. They paid all their debts and debt was to be avoided.

“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.” Romans 13:8

They did not enjoy paying Roman taxes and avoided it even if it meant avoiding Roman tolls by traveling the ancient paths or living in a more self-reliant and independent way. Seeing contributions as a form of worship or homage. They contributed regularly to the

16 Josephus, Jewish War 2.135

17 Josephus, Wars of the Jews II viii 2 – 13.

common welfare through their own system of charitable congregational networks.

They avoided almost anything done merely for pleasure or self-gratification. With a few exceptions, this included delaying marriage. They considered marriage a sacred relationship and duty; and, as a divine institution, for the procreation of children.¹⁸ It was customary for Essenes, desiring to marry, to wait three years before the marriage took place, during which time they would take the vow of the Nazarite. In either case, they took their vows before God and kept them devoutly. Women were accepted, as a part of the brotherhood like sisters and they had an almost androgynous approach to the sexes when it came to rights and responsibilities.

“Our lawgiver, Moses, has trained thousands of disciples who, on account of their saintliness, I believe, are honored with the name of Essæi. They inhabit many cities and villages, and large and populous quarters of Judea. Their institution is not based upon family connections, which are not matters of free choice, but upon zeal for virtue and philanthropy... all are full-grown men, already declining toward old age, such as are no longer carried away by the vehemence of the flesh nor under the influence of their passions, but are in the enjoyment of genuine and true liberty.”¹⁹

The Essene network formed communities to which were ministered by these leaders, who had proven themselves faithful throughout their lives upon the precept of voluntary service. The broader Essene community included people and their families that had been served by these ministers in times of need. In turn, the humble and pious ministers and their missions were supported by the people who sought the charitable ways of the Kingdom of God in spirit and in truth. Communities grew in virtue as they were bound together by faith, hope, and charity.

Forgiving was as essential in their life as breathing in and out. Giving thanks for everything that came their way, both the good and the bad, the sunrise and the sunset, comfort or discomfort. All was a blessing from God and could be turned to good.

18 Josephus, Jewish War 2.160

19 comp. Pliny, 1.c

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.” Luke 23:34

They obtained such resolution of mind and body that Roman torture failed to produce fear or anger. *They met death with a smile.*²⁰ They were messengers of peace and yet allowed to carry a staff for defense or the protection of others. Even though some trained in military style for the coming of the Messiah, they were considered harmless by the Romans, who were generally suspicious of everyone.

The Essenes considered themselves as a people with a mission. They were not just the servants of God, but His sons and daughters. They were the depository of His secret knowledge and wisdom and workers for the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

“He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” Matthew 13:11

The Kingdom of Heaven on earth was a present reality in the Essene teachings. It passed from generation to generation through the families of the people who lived in righteousness by faith and hope through charity. Those who went out of the presents of God and His righteous light and lived by the dark laws of Cain and Lemech, oppressing one another for their personal benefit and security, walked in error.

“...From the God of Knowledge is all that is and shall be; before they were, he made all their designs. And when they come to be they testify to his glory as planned, fulfilling their deeds and changing nothing. In his hand are all judgments, and he will support them in all their needs. And he created Man (Enosh) for dominion over the earth; and he appointed two spirits for him to walk in until the time of his visitation. These are the Spirits of Truth and of Error. Those born of Truth are in a spring of Light; and those born of Error are from a well of darkness. In the hand of the Prince of Light is dominion over all the sons of Righteousness who walk in all the ways of Light. But in the hand of the Angel of Darkness is dominion over all the sons of Error, who walk in the ways of darkness.”²¹

20 The Jewish War By Flavius Josephus.

21 Dead Sea Scrolls, Community Rule (1QS) 3.15-21

The Essenes regularly donated to the temple, giving both freewill and sin offerings, but they absolutely would not participate in blood sacrifice, which was in accordance with the teachings of Jesus. They believed it was the result of misinterpretation of the ancient text.

“The doctrine of the Essenes is this: That all things are best ascribed to God. They teach the immortality of souls, and esteem that the rewards of righteousness are to be earnestly striven for; and when they send what they have dedicated to God into the temple, they do not offer sacrifices because they have more pure lustrations of their own; on which account they are excluded from the common court of the temple, but offer their sacrifices themselves; yet is their course of life better than that of other men; and they entirely addict themselves to husbandry.”²²

There were Nazarene Essenes, Pharisee Essene, Mandaean Essenes, and Sadducee Essene, just to mention a few. The Essenes’ influence, although not homogeneous, was more in line with Abraham, Moses, and Jesus Christ. They had a political philosophy that clearly manifested the precepts of God. The early Church was undoubtedly filled with Essenes.

“And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them.”
Deuteronomy 27:5

Many of the Essenes, as followers of Christ, were men of God, seeking His ways and performing the tasks of the ‘firstborn’ of a nation of God in faith, hope, and charity. There was no need for social insurance, either private or public.

"For the Essenes, the contribution of their erstwhile private property to the "union of God" meant nothing less than its reacquisition as a gift from God. The profits that the Essenes reaped thanks to their type of community of goods were at any rate so great that they were the only Jewish organization of their time to be able to afford to include nonmembers in their charitable system.”²³

22 Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, Bk XVIII, Ch I, Sn 5

23 *The Library of Qumran : On the Essenes, Qumran, John the Baptist, and Jesus*, Hartmut Stegemann, Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden, the Netherlands, 1993 / 1998:

They were the living altars of white stones made of flesh and bone. The law was written on their hearts and minds in service to the people of God and His Heavenly Kingdom on earth.

“To whom coming, [as unto] a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, [and] precious,” 1 Peter 2:4

“Moreover, if any of them should fall sick, he is medically treated out of the common resources. . . And so the old men if they happen to be childless, are wont to end their lives on a very happy and bright old age, inasmuch as they are blest with sons both many and good.”²⁴

Members of Modern Monastic orders are subject to the rule of the leaders of the orders, while the Essene's, love of liberty was the bedrock of their union. “[T]heir mode of life is our evidence of their liberty; none ventures to acquire any private property at all, no house or slave, or farm cattle, or any of the other things which procure or minister to wealth; but they deposit them all in public together, and enjoy the benefit of all in common.”²⁵

The Essenes owned nothing himself, but was designated as the ba'al, “possessor, holder,” and could “even engage in trade... even selling to pagans the products of their workshops. Their ownership... was basically inalienable.” The Overseer could accuse any member before the members of the Order. If there was any misappropriation of “community property” or through careless management they caused a loss for the community restitution might be required or exclusion from the community services, even though it was counted as the member's “property” because the “legal proprietor” was the Order.²⁶

Among all the people of that time, you will not find any living closer to the nature of the true Church than some of those early Essenes. Understanding their function and unique status, their practices would be essential to functioning of the early Church and

24 Apology for the Jews, in Eusebius, Preparation for the Gospel VIII, 8, Philo Judaeus

25 Philo Judaeus, Apology for the Jews, found in Eusebius, Preparation for the Gospel VIII, 8.

26 Quotes in this paragraph taken from The Library of Qumran: On the Essenes, Qumran, John the Baptist, and Jesus, by Hartmut Stegemann, Published by Brill, 1998. pp. 186 - 187

fits well into the old and new scripture. Modern Christians have a far different view of the early Church even though they must stretch the text as the Pharisees did to support it.

Judaism had undergone many changes during its years of captivity, under corrupt kings and priests, and on through the Hasmonean dynasty. Herod was no exception. With vast funds available, a temple was built, not only in Jerusalem, but many were constructed around the world. The constitutional provisions of Deuteronomy 17:15 had clearly stated that "...you may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother." Yet, Herod rose as king.

"As an Idumean he (Herod) was disliked by Judeans; as the usurper of the Hasmoneans he was resented by the aristocracy. During his reign he succeeded in creating his own 'aristocracy' from those loyal to Rome and appointed by himself. But he apparently favored those traditional religious groups who did not oppose him, such as Pharisees and Essenes"²⁷

Herod's grand scheme of a vast Kingdom of Heaven on earth involved sending out evangelists and missionaries all over the world. Herod enjoyed the support of some Essenes, although they would not hold an office requiring an oath. In part, this support was because of the prophecy concerning the Messiah coming during Herod's reign and for other reasons.

"Diaspora Essenes shared the divergent [solar] calendar and many traditions of Palestinian Essenes, but did not espouse their unworldliness and strict views on morality. For the Palestinians, the Diaspora kind were '*seekers after smooth things*', taking the easy way."²⁸

These were not the only evangelists and missionaries of the time. There were others baptizing people into a different kind of Kingdom of Heaven on earth. There was another King who was not Idumean, nor part of the world of Rome. He would establish His Kingdom, not by schemes of compelled Corban, offerings forced by statute, but by faith, hope, and charity.

27 *The Old Testament World* John Roberson and Philip Davies. First Edition published in 1989.

28 *Jesus and the Riddle of the Dead Sea Scrolls* by Barbara Thiering, Harper Collins: 1992

“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.” John 18:36

His Kingdom is not of the ‘world’ of Roman constitutional order. His Kingdom is established under the perfect law of liberty. His *ekklesia*, “called out”, or Christ appointed ministers, were priests of practical service to the people without exercising authority over the free contributions. They were to manifest the character of Christ to receive, preserve, and propagate His doctrines and ordinances, teaching the people to love their neighbor, rather than covet their goods and property through benefactors who exercised authority one over the other.

Governments, like history, repeat themselves. The only real choice is what side of history do we choose to live our lives. Even before Herod introduced his scheme for social security the Pharisees had devised new ways in what was to be the kingdom of God to collect revenue.

In 78 BC the Pharisees, a political party, had an ordinance passed,²⁹ requiring the temple tax be paid or the *appointed civil magistrates* of Judea would enforce collection. Funds flowed into the government’s temple whether it served the people or not. Soon the government served the people less and the people served the government more. The Essenes were being what the Levites had failed to be and what Christ would appoint for the Church.

“As for the Levite tithe, part of which would otherwise have gone to the cultic personnel at the Jerusalem Temple, and part to the general social-welfare fund and the state treasury, it was available in its entirety to the Essene union for its own social services.”³⁰

Because of the sloth and greed of the people and the offer of the government benefits the people were again entangled in the bondage of the world.³¹ Proverbs, David, and Paul warned us:

29 Salome- Alexandra (about 78 BC), that the Pharisaical party, being then in power, had carried an enactment by which the Temple tribute was to be enforced at law. Alfred Edersheim’s book *The Temple*.

30 *The Library of Qumran: On the Essenes, Qumran, John the Baptist, and Jesus*, By Hartmut Stegemann (pp. 185 - 186)

31 Galatians 5:1 “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us

“When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what [is] before thee: And put a knife to thy throat, if thou [be] a man given to appetite. Be not desirous of his dainties: for they [are] deceitful meat.” Proverbs 23:1, 2

“Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap.” Psalms 69:22

“And David saith, Let their table be made a snare, and a trap, and a stumblingblock, and a recompence unto them:” Romans 11:9

How Christians and the appointed Church engaged their faith was an indictment of the morals of Jew and pagan. At first there seemed to be no practical distinction between Jew and Christian “Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome.”³²

But the difference was acute and caused a stirring in the hearts of people everywhere. Rome had rose to prominence with an all voluntary system of social welfare that bound their society so tightly together that local militias would come together at a moments notice to oppose any danger to the peace of the community.

This was no longer the situation or state of Rome. The government was centralized the republic was all but dead, free bread and circuses and someones expense placated the populous which fed on the authoritarian benefactors of the new Roman Empire.

When Romans faced Germania they wrote of their government:

“The communities are wont, of their own accord and man by man, to bestow upon their Princes a certain number of beasts, or a certain portion of grain; a contribution which passes indeed for a mark of reverence and honour, but serves also to supply their necessities.”³³

The words 'of their own accord' is from the Latin 'ultra' meaning 'voluntarily'. “[O]ur modern reliance on government to make law and

free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

Galatians 4:3 “Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:”

32 Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum-Divus Claudius*, trans. J. C. Rolfe, Internet Ancient History Sourcebook, ed. Paul Halsall, 1999,

33 Tacitus says of the ancient Germans, in *Germania* 15,

establish order is not the historical norm.”³⁴ Voluntary societies dependent upon natural charity bear the greatest fruit when liberty and virtue are faithfully and religiously practiced.

When the people look to entitlements from men who only call themselves benefactors they gradually go from freedom to tyranny and the governments are corrupted by a little power and then a lot.

Instead of pure religion which was the care of the needy of society unspotted by such worldly systems a religion of superstition is needed to tickle the ears of the people and justify their slothful conscience. If any one dares suggest a return to the ancient paths they are met with envy and contempt.

“Because my people hath forgotten me, they have burned incense to vanity, and they have caused them to stumble in their ways [from] the ancient paths, to walk in paths, [in] a way not cast up;”
Jeremiah 18:15

Tacitus' description of Christians as “a class hated for their abominations” and who were convicted not for setting Nero's Rome on fire but for “hatred against mankind.”³⁵

The early Christians Church were accused by Rome of atheism.³⁶ Justin had written an Apology of Christian worship in 150 AD where he pointed out that Christians supported each other in a system of social welfare dependent on free will offerings through the Church ministers established by God and recognized by a body of believers. Their regeneration at Baptism³⁷ made them eligible for the benefits of that holy system of Christ through His ministers, and at the same time got them cast out of the unrighteous system of Corban offered by the Pharisees. The Romans had their altars and temples but they had changed like those of the Pharisees. They were supported by imposed contributions called taxes to provide individual welfare.

34 The Enterprise of Law: Justice without the State. Bruce L. Benson Publisher: Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy (San Francisco), 1991 ’

35 Tacitus, The Annals. Book 15: A.D. 62-65,

36 “Justin, when refuting the charge of atheism writes, “We reverence and worship the Father, and the Son, and the host of other good messengers (or angels), and the Prophetic Spirit,” And, “You call us atheistis: the charge is not true, for we not only believe in one God, who was sent by God.”” The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia By James Orr

37 <http://www.hisholychurch.info/declarations/baptism/baptism.php>

The ancient altars were instruments of sacrifice and part of a system of on going community trust or the establishment of social bonds of love through the exercise liberty and daily charity.

The lack of actual criminal behavior notwithstanding, Rome would be inclined to see Christians as threats to the popular order they had established for themselves. The truth was the early Christians were organized more like the early Romans and Israelite than the modern Roman State or the Jews of Judeah.

Christ brought a revolution of the heart and a liberation for those who would live it. Freedom based on love required moral discipline of the heart. Historians praised “the union and discipline of the Christian republic” As the Christian proclaimed another King, one Jesus the people in congregation “gradually formed an independent and increasing state in the heart of the Roman Empire.”³⁸

Justin had written his Apology to the Emperor Antonius Pius:

“And the wealthy among us help the needy; and we always keep together; and for all things wherewith we are supplied, we bless the Maker of all through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost.”³⁹

Setting men free from the servitude of sin in this world is a constant theme of the Bible, sometimes called salvation; but, if God is to release us from spiritual servitude, it is also mandatory to release us from greed, avarice, and covetousness that leads us into physical servitude. Jesus made it clear that God is the God of the living, so His salvation and liberty must include this world, as well as the next. The Essenes saw men first as a spiritual creature living in a physical body. They knew that, as they became spiritually close to the character of God, the whole man would be set free, just as Christ was set free upon His resurrection.

“It is a fixed belief of theirs that the body is corruptible and its constituent matter impermanent, but that the soul is immortal and imperishable. Emanating from the finest ether, these souls become entangled, as it were, in the prison-house of the body, to which they are dragged down by a sort of natural spell; but when

38 In Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chapter XV. Rousseau and Revolution, Will et Ariel Durant p.801. fn 83 Heiseler, 85.

39 AD 150, Justin Martyr's Apology (Ch. 65-67)

once they are released from the bonds of the flesh, then, as though liberated from a long servitude, they rejoice and are borne Aloft...”⁴⁰

The Kingdom of Heaven is first a spiritual place that begins with the incorporeal change of the individual. That change is not wrought with our will, but by the grace of God within us. That divine spark of truth should and will lead us to both a spiritual kingdom and a physical corporeal kingdom at hand. *His kingdom comes as His will is done.* The same is true of all kingdoms; only the will of the kings changes.

“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.”
1 Corinthians 15:50

The Levites began to occupy a distinct position as the spiritual primogeniture of a nation. Since that terrible scene of sin established with the golden calf. They were conferred with the office of service to the tents of the congregation. They were selected for this purpose because, as a tribe, they were willing to come out first and serve Moses and the Lord.

As being wholly consecrated or separated to the service of the Lord, they had no territorial possessions. Jehovah was their inheritance⁴¹ and, for their support, it was ordained that they should receive from the other tribes the tithes of the produce of the land and the people, but only *according to their service*. It was not automatic nor collected by force.

“Forty-eight civil jurisdictions were assigned to them, thirteen of which were called priest cities. Along with their dwellings they had 'suburbs', and 'commons', for their herds and flocks, and also fields and vineyards (Num. 35:2-5). Nine of these cities were in Judah, three in Naphtali, and four in each of the other tribes (Josh. 21). Six of the Levitical cities were set apart as 'cities of refuge' (q.v.). Thus the Levites were scattered among the tribes to keep alive among them the knowledge and service to God.”⁴²

By the time of Christ, the remainder of the Levites had become

40 Flavius Josephus, *War of the Jews, II, VIII, Sn 11*

41 Num. 18:20; 26:62; Deut. 10:9; 18:1, 2

42 Easton's Bible Dictionary.

steeped in apostasy. They were often rich and no longer served the tents of the congregation as much as the people were serving them. The men appointed to keep them free in the wisdom of God now kept them ignorant, superstitious, distracted, entertained, and in bondage.

The Essenes assumed the role of the Levites in Spirit and in Truth. Their teachings and actions paralleled those of Moses and the Levites from centuries before. Many of the Essenes and repentant Levites became the ministers of the Church. The Levites, like Josés, repenting, sold their land, set the money at the foot of the kingdom's Ambassadors, and went into the service as the Kingdom's first ministers, His Holy Church.

“And Josés, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, [and] of the country of Cyprus, Having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet.” Acts 4:36-37

In order for Barnabas to become a minister of Christ's Church, serving His Kingdom, he was required to sell all of his property as Jesus had commanded.⁴³ Ananias failed to do obey Christ and was struck dead, as we see in the very next verses:

“But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price... fell down, and gave up the ghost...” Acts 5:1-5

The mission of the Levites and the Essenes was the same for Christ's Church. Time and time again when society attempts to bind itself together by contracts and rulers it is soon corrupted. If we create offices of power where our elected leaders can rule over our neighbor for our personal welfare men who seek power over service will seek office.

Without the precepts and limitations laid down by Christ, Moses, Abraham and the prophets the bureaucracy of government would soon become ineffective or oppressive like Cain, Lemech, Nimrod, Pharaoh, and Caesar. Through avarice and apathy, covetousness⁴⁴

43 So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Luke 14:33

44 2 Peter 2:3 “And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: ...and their damnation slumbereth not.”

and contracts the people return to the bondage of Egypt entangled again in the elements of the world.

If we return to the way of God and seek His righteous Kingdom and do the will of the Father, then they shall again be a whole nation, under God with liberty and justice for all.

“That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.” Psalms 67:2

If we are to understand our place in God’s Kingdom of Heaven, we must also learn from and understand that which was held in common by the Levites, the Essenes, and the first-century Church, established by Christ Jesus the King.

“In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, [was there] the tree of life, which bare twelve [manner of] fruits, [and] yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree [were] for the healing of the nations.” Revelation 22:2

The origin of what was called Essene reaches back to Enoch who *walked with God*. They were the men who separated themselves from the ‘world’, living in it, but not of it. They live according to and under the authority of God’s government.

“The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,” Luke 4:18

When Christ said in Luke 22:25, 29: “...The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so:...” The Essene community said, “Amen!”

They were the first servants of God and they were the first spiritually-born Children of God in repentance and in the acceptance of God’s true character, doing all things in His ‘Name’. They fed His sheep in service to His Kingdom of God at hand, guiding men in freedom to liberty under God.

“And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.” Luke 9:2

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