

cees looked forward to the coming of a Messiah, a king with the power of David and the oriental splendor of Solomon. Christ came, contrary to their expectations and was consequently rejected by them.

This sect, a lot of infidels, held the power among the Jews at the time of Christ. It is difficult to measure the depth of spiritual degradation into which the people had gradually sunk since the voice of the last prophet had been silenced in death. But some idea thereof may be formed by reflecting on the fact that Annas and Calaphas, both infidels stained with numerous crimes, posed as the high priests of Jehovah, and dared to approach the sanctuary, carrying the emblems of the atoning blood, which they mocked and ridiculed in their hearts. How could God hold communion with such abominable hypocrites, who denied His existence? No more than He can communicate with the divines of our age who deny the necessity of revelation.

The Essenes were a sect less known than either of the two first mentioned. The very name seems to be a puzzle to philologists, there being about as many theories as there are authors upon the subject. A probable derivation is from the Hebrew word *chasha*, to be silent, referring to the oaths of secrecy whereby the members were bound together.

The learned Doctor Lightfoot traces their origin to the same source as that of the Pharisees, viz., to a desire of exclusiveness from the Gentile element, which prevailed in Palestine at the time of the return of the Jews from Babylon. Only, the Essenes carried this further than the Pharisees. They formed not merely a sect but an order, like the Pythagoreans among the Greeks and the Buddhists in India, or like the Catholic monks in later times. It seems probable that the idea of forming the brotherhood had been carried home with some of the Jews from the extreme East where they must have come in contact with many, to Judaism foreign elements.

It can be said of the Essenes that they were in a measure free from both the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and the immorality of the Sadducees. They laid very little stress on the ceremonial law and made moral conduct the great requisite for membership of their order. But at the same time they fell into many errors, as all people are sure to do, when they have no Divine

guidance through revelation. Their chief error was spiritualizing the Scriptures, whereby they arrived at the most startling conclusions. For instance, they thought it sinful to kill an animal and had, consequently, to reject the law relating to sacrifices. In their observance of the Sabbath they went so far as to even suspend the natural functions of the body, sitting immovable in one place all the day. They abhorred to enter into marriage relations and were bound by oaths to the strictest celibacy. No worldly employment was entered into by their members except agriculture.

When anybody wished to be admitted to the order, he had to stand a three years' probation. Then he had to swear that he would keep all the rules of the order, among which was one that he should touch no food but such as had been provided by the sect. There were various ablutions to be performed. The members had everything in common and generally appeared in public in a costume peculiar to the order, a scrupulously white dress.

Neander considers the Essenes a body of pious men who had withdrawn from the body of the people in order to cultivate their desire for something better than the political and religious strifes that broke the nation up and prevented the acceptable worship of God. Be this as it may, it is certain that we never hear of the Essenes having raised their voice against Christ or persecuted His followers. In the history of our Lord and of the history of the Church for the first quarter of a century, Essenism seems to have had no influence whatever upon Christianity.

It is all the more remarkable, therefore, to see, that, later, the doctrines of this order should come to exercise a most fatal influence over the Christian Church. Upon this subject Lightfoot says:

"Even as early as the year 58, when St. Paul wrote to the Romans, we detect practices in the Christian community of the metropolis, which may possibly have been due to Essene influences ('One believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs'). Five or six years later, the heretical teaching which threatened the integrity of the Gospel at Colosse shows that this type of Judaism was already strong enough within the Church to exert a dangerous influence on its doctrinal purity. Then came the great convulsion—the overthrow of the Jewish polity and nation. This was the turning-point in the relations between Essenism and Christianity, at least in Palestine. The Essenes were extreme sufferers in the Roman war of extermination. It seems probable that their organization

was entirely broken up. Thus cast adrift, they were free to enter into other combinations, while the shock of the recent catastrophe would naturally turn their thoughts into new channels. At the same time the nearer proximity of the Christians, who had migrated to Perea during the war, would bring them into close contact with the new faith and subject them to its influences as they had never been subjected before. But, whatever may be the explanation, the fact seems certain, that after the destruction of Jerusalem the Christian body was largely reinforced from their ranks. The Judaizing tendencies among the Hebrew Christians, which hitherto had been wholly Pharisaic, are henceforth largely Essene."

This influence which at first appeared only of small importance attracted the attention of the clear-seeing eyes of the Apostles and they hastened in their teachings, by word and by letters, to counteract it. But it grew. It developed into Gnosticism and gradually, although steadily combated, permeated the whole system, until the apostacy was accomplished and Papacy developed.

A sect of less importance than any of these were the Herodians, who seem to have been more a political than a religious party. They were the followers of Herod and favored the Romans in every particular. They insisted on the people paying taxes to the foreigners and adopting heathen customs and even idolatrous practices. They were properly apostates, but they had great influence at the time of Christ.

The Samaritans were a mixture of foreigners and Israelites, who had been left in the country after the invasion of the Assyrians. They had many idolatrous practices, although they imitated to some extent the worship of the Jews at Jerusalem. They are the only sect from that time that has been preserved to the present day, there being yet in Nablus, the ancient Sichem, a small community of 150 souls left. They own a synagogue and an ancient manuscript containing the Pentateuch.

The Gallileans were a small sect who were the direct opponents of the Herodians, inasmuch as they refused to pay taxes to a foreign government, declaring that they owed God alone their tribute.

The Zealots were enthusiasts who thought it their duty to resist the Romans with arms. They took a most active part in the futile defense of Jerusalem, when that city was destroyed by Titus.

This may give some idea of the condition of the Jews when Christ came. The Divine guidance through revelation had been with-