Locating Jesus' Place on the Political-Ideological Spectrum of Second Temple Jewish Society

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I cannot think for you,

you'll have to decide. —Bob Dylan

For Dr. Marvin R. Wilson, a true Hasid. In celebration of his years of teaching at Gordon College.

In the United States of America a vocal branch of the Christian Church has aligned itself almost completely with the Republican party. It is estimated that eighty percent of white Evangelicals voted for the current Republican president, Donald Trump, and Evangelical voters continue to provide the president with a solid base of political support.[1] Likewise, Republican politicians frequently play up to Evangelical concerns, promising to defend their religious liberty and to restore the (Evangelical version of the) Christian faith to its "rightful" place in society.

On the one hand, it is completely natural that religious conviction will and should express itself in political action. Christian morality and Christian ethics claim to be more than rules and guidelines for the inner devotional lives of individuals, they claim to be an expression of the divine will and universal law upon which the cosmos is founded and by means of which the created order will be redeemed. On the other hand, it is reasonable to ask whether the current Republican (or Trumpian) political agenda is an accurate expression of that divine will and universal law. Since Christians believe that Jesus, in his teachings and by his example, gave the fullest and clearest

revelation of the divine will, it is to him that we must look to measure the validity of the Evangelicals' claims.

The question I want to help followers of Jesus to think about critically is this: Do the politics of the white American Evangelical movement track with the views that Jesus himself espoused, and if so, to what extent? For it seems to me that despite its claims to be God's mouthpiece for our time, American Evangelicalism simply assumes that it has God on its side, while leaving the question of Jesus' place on the political-religious spectrum of his day largely —perhaps entirely—unexamined. Plotting Jesus' place on the ideological spectrum of his own time is the (admittedly audacious) undertaking I wish to attempt in the present essay.[2]

The Problem

Jesus lived at a time of great diversity of religious and political expression, when each of the different Second Temple Jewish groups supposed that they embodied the truest and purest form of religion. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the Zealots all believed that they had God on their side. But Jesus cannot have been equally close to all of them, and unless we are to imagine that Jesus fundamentally rejected all forms of Jewish expression—a position which serious-minded students of Second Temple Jewish literature and history are bound to dismiss—we cannot suppose that he was equally distant from all of them either. It is only logical to suppose that Jesus had more in common with some of his contemporaries than others.

Since each of the groups along the political-religious spectrum of his day claimed to have God on its side, and since Jesus, too, claimed to understand

God's will for his generation, it cannot simply be assumed from the outset that we know where Jesus' place on that spectrum lay. We certainly cannot assume that simply because white American Evangelicals claim to have God on their side means that the place they occupy on the political-ideological spectrum of our time implies anything about Jesus' place in his. Indeed, it would be a gross error of judgment to assume that the ideological spectrum upon which Jesus' views are to be plotted can be superimposed neatly onto the ideological spectrum which is operative in the United States today. Nevertheless, just as there are correlations between the political spectrums of two present-day countries, so there are likely to be broad resemblances between the ideological spectrums of Jesus' time and ours. Therefore, it will be necessary to determine where Jesus stood in relation to his contemporaries before drawing any conclusions about his position *vis-à-vis* the present time.

Opposing Orientations of the Right and the Left

Our task, then, is to discover whether Jesus' message sounded radical or moderate or reactionary or revolutionary to his contemporaries. Would Jesus' attitude toward Jewish customs, social interactions, and religious outlook have been perceived by his peers as wildly liberal, or staunchly conservative, or somewhere in the middle? In order to begin asking such questions, it is necessary to first plot other first-century Jewish groups on the political-ideological spectrum of their time. Having gained a rough idea of where these groups stood in relation to one another, we can begin to ask ourselves where Jesus stood in relation to them.

We will begin tackling our problem by accepting, at least provisionally, the common dichotomy between conservative and liberal approaches. According to convention, conservatives are placed on the right side of the ideological spectrum while liberals are placed on the left, like this:

In the United States the Democrats are the liberal rivals of the conservative Republicans. In the Second Temple period the issues and ideas that divided various Jewish groups from one another were different from those over which Republicans and Democrats quarrel today, but there were two competing groups of political and religious rivals in the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E. who were as fiercely opposed as the Republicans and the Democrats are now: these were the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Sadducees dominated the political playing field throughout most of the period that concerns us, but for a brief time under the Hasmonean queen Shelamzion Alexandra the Pharisees enjoyed the upper hand, and after the Temple was destroyed the political winds once again blew at the Pharisees' backs.

The Sadducees were a party of aristocratic priests who were centered on the Temple in Jerusalem, whereas the Pharisees were a non-priestly party with a diffuse power base. The origin of the Sadducees appears to have been a response to the removal of the Zadokite dynasty from the high priesthood toward the end of the Hellenistic period.[3] The Sadducees (Hebrew: צדוקים, "Zadokites") evidently began as a coalition of priests who sought to reinstate the Zadokite dynasty to the high priesthood.[4] Lineage, therefore, was especially valued by the Sadducees, as is typical among aristocratic circles, but especially among priests, since according to the Torah the priesthood was conferred exclusively upon the descendants of Aaron.

The Pharisees, by contrast, eschewed lineage, valuing merit instead. Anyone with aptitude for learning and dedication to Pharisaic ideas could become a prominent Pharisee.[5] The contrast between the Pharisaic and Sadducean

attitudes toward lineage is exemplified in Hillel's saying, "Be disciples of Aaron" ([m. Avot](#) 1:12).[6] Aaron, the brother of Moses, was the ancestor of all the priests, thus Aaronic parentage was what gave the Sadducees their prestige. The Pharisees, on the other hand, valued merit: anyone, by applying himself to Torah study, could become a disciple of Aaron.

Another, quite clearly related, point of conflict between the Pharisees and the Sadducees concerned access to and participation in the divine worship at the Temple. Whereas the Sadducees attempted to protect priestly privilege, the Pharisees advocated a democratization of worship: the Pharisees pushed for the rights of ordinary Israelites to view the sacred furnishings of the Temple; they clashed with the Sadducees over the procession of non-priests with palm branches around the altar (in an area usually restricted to priests) during the Feast of Sukkot (Tabernacles); the Pharisees insisted that the daily sacrifices be funded by the annual half-shekel contribution (which everyone made) instead of private donations, so that everyone had an equal stake in the daily workings of the Temple; and the Pharisees emphasized rituals such as the water-drawing ceremony, which was performed in the women's court where all Israelites had equal access.[7]

The Pharisees portrayed themselves as handing down ancestral customs ("traditions of the fathers"), and in one sense this is true: the Pharisees did incorporate popular customs (such as the aforementioned procession with palm branches around the altar and the water-drawing ritual) and beliefs (such as resurrection) not explicitly mentioned in the Torah into their expression of Judaism. On the other hand, the Pharisees were also innovators: they developed legal rulings meant to respond to changing cirucmstances (such as the *prozbul*, which allowed their followers to circumvent the laws of Sabbatical Year debt forgiveness), whereas the Sadducees rejected innovations and popular beliefs not sanctioned by the Torah and adhered to the older forms of practice.

Professor Daniel Schwartz has described the Sadducean approach to the

commandments as "realist," which he contrasts with the Pharisaic approach, which he calls "nominalist."[8] By "realist," Schwartz means that the Sadducees believed the commandments, particularly the ritual commandments of the Torah, correspond to and emanate from the nature of the universe, and therefore natural law could be taken into account when making halakhic decisions. The Pharisees were "nominalist" in the sense that they regarded the Torah's ritual commandments as essentially arbitrary. For instance, the Pharisees regarded an object as impure not because it was impure by nature, but because the Torah named that object as impure.[9] An example of the Pharisaic nominalist attitude toward ritual purity is found in a story about Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai (first cent. C.E.), who was asked why the ashes of the red heifer could purify a person from corpse impurity. His response was that the ritual had no inherent power: "By your life! The dead do not cause impurity and water does not purify, but the Holy One, blessed be he, said, 'I ordered the statute and I issued the decree: You are not permitted to transgress my decree'" (Num. Rab. 19:8). In other words, the ritual was mandatory only because God had ordered it, not because purity or impurity had any substance in and of themselves. The Sadducees, by contrast, would have found Yohanan ben Zakkai's admission to be shocking. From their point of view an object was not pure or impure because God said so. Rather, God called an object pure or impure because that is what it was. As a result, the Pharisees and the Sadducees argued over whether certain objects were pure or impure—a question that was not purely academic, since it was a sin to bring impure objects into the Temple. By adopting the realist view of purity the Sadducees maintained a much stricter attitude toward purity that was far more protective of the Temple than that of their rivals. The Pharisees, on the other hand, with their nominalist approach, had a less expansive view of what could be considered impure.

Another example of the Pharisees' nominalist approach versus the Sadducees' realism concerned the problem of levirite marriage. According to the Torah, if a married man died without any children his brother must marry his widow (Deut. 25:5-6). Since the Torah permits marriage to more than one wife, and

since a man who failed to have children with one wife might take a second wife with whom to try to raise children (Abraham and Jacob did something similar), the situation arose when the brother of a deceased man had his choice of widows to marry. In the Second Temple period, however, marrying one's niece was considered to be an especially good match, which means that if a man's brother died leaving behind two widows, there was a good chance that one of those widows was his own daughter. The Torah is clear that a man is not permitted to marry his own daughter (Lev. 18:17), but what about the other widow? For the Sadducees the answer was obvious: if the other widow was not a close blood relative, the man should marry her and fulfill the obligation of levirite marriage.[10] The Pharisees, on the other hand, insisted that natural law was not decisive in such case, what mattered was that both women were called the dead man's wife, and therefore both should be regarded as sharing an equal status. As equals, if one woman was invalid for levirite marriage, so must her co-wives be.[11] For the Pharisees it didn't matter that the two women were not "really" the live brother' daughters, it only mattered that both women were "called" wives of the dead brother, and therefore they ought to be viewed as identicals in the eyes of the law. In this case, the Pharisees' nominalist approach led to a stricter decision than the Sadducees' realist approach, while at the same time undercutting the importance of lineage in determining one's legal status.

Now, the qualities we have observed as characteristic of the Sadducees—emphasis on lineage, protecting the privilege of an elite class, rejecting religious innovation, realist approach to halakhic reasoning—are what most people would call "conservative," while the characteristics of the Pharisees—preference for merit over lineage, their advocacy for the democratization of access to the holy, their relative openness to religious innovation, and their nominalist approach to halakhah—are those that are traditionally identified as "liberal." We will begin constructing our model of the ideological spectrum of Jesus' time thus:

Identifying the "Centrists," or the Populist Middle

The clashes between the Pharisees and Sadducees are indicative of fundamentally different ideological orientations. Their arguments were not merely over fine distinctions, but concerned core principles. Therefore, we may conjecture that there was a fair amount of space between the Pharisees and the Sadducees on their ideological spectrum. The impression of distance between the Pharisaic and Sadducean ideologies is confirmed by the fact that one group occupied an intermediate space, switching alliances between these two parties at certain times. The group to which I refer is the Hasmonean dynasty, which was in power until the rise of King Herod the Great. The Hasmoneans rose to power as military leaders who gained popular support because they defended the Jewish religion and Jewish identity when it was threatened by the reforms introduced by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The Hasmoneans recaptured the Temple, established an independent Jewish state, and claimed for themselves the right to serve as high priests on the merit of their religious zeal.

At first, the Hasmoneans were allied with the Pharisees, which is understandable given that the Hasmoneans represented a populist movement for the defense of Jewishness, while the Sadducees, who desired the restoration of the Zadokite high priesthood, rejected the Hasmoneans' usurpation of that office.[12] Later, as the Hasmoneans consolidated their power and as the Sadducees reconciled themselves to the new political reality, the Hasmoneans switched alliances, finding common cause with the Sadducees, whose priestly interests coincided with their own. The political alliance switched again, however, when the Hasmonean queen Shelamzion Alexandra came to power. As a woman, her priestly interests were probably not as strong as the male members of her household, and she likely benefitted from the popular support enjoyed by the Pharisees. King Agrippa I, a scion of the Hasmonean dynasty who reigned in Judea after the death of Jesus, managed to maintain a balance that pleased both the Sadducees and the Pharisees. By continuing to appoint aristocratic families to the high

priesthood, he pleased the Sadducees. By participating in Jewish worship, respecting Jewish sensibilities, and asserting a degree of independence from Rome in the building of defensive walls for Jerusalem, he managed to win favorability among the Pharisees as well.

We have, then, identified an important space on the spectrum between the Pharisees and the Sadducees that could be occupied by those who espoused a nationalist-populist ideology. Defending ethnic-religious identity and asserting political independence for one's ethnic-religious group has obvious mass appeal, and, even after the Hasmonean dynasty was replaced by the reign of King Herod and later by direct Roman rule, this space on the spectrum continued to be occupied by other militant nationalist groups who appealed to the same zeal ideology to justify their political aspirations and the violent means they employed to attain them.

Differentiation on the Left

In the Second Temple period the Pharisees were divided into two main factions, the School of Hillel and the School of Shammai. The School of Hillel was known for its lenient rulings, its tolerance for diverse opinions, and its relative openness toward non-Jews. The School of Shammai, on the other hand, was generally more strict in its rulings, less imaginative in its approach, and known for its suspicion of non-Jews. In other words, the School of Shammai was more conservative in its ideological-religious expression than the School of Hillel.[13] I have therefore placed the School of Hillel farther to the left end of the spectrum than the School of Shammai:

Throughout the Second Temple period it appears that the left-leaning Hillelite wing of the Pharisaic movement was in the minority, while the right-leaning Shammaite wing of the movement had the upper hand. After the destruction of the Temple fortune favored the Hillelites.

Josephus described a third branch of the Pharisaic party, which he termed the "Fourth Philosophy" (in contradistinction to the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes).[14] According to Josephus, the "Fourth Philosophy" followed the traditions of the Pharisees, but they also espoused a radical militant-nationalist ideology, rejecting all forms of foreign rule, including the payment of taxes (*Ant.* 18:4-10, 23-25). They regarded it as a form of national-religious treason to recognize the political authority of anyone other than the God of Israel. The "Fourth Philosophy" advocated the use of violence to achieve political independence from Roman occupation. Members of the School of Hillel opposed the militant ideology of the "Fourth Philosophy," and it is likely that the "Fourth Philosophy" represented the hardline radical wing of the School of Shammai.[15] Their pro-independence fervor and their anti-Gentile stance marks this group as nationalist-populist, and they occupy the area of the spectrum close to that marked out by the Hasmoneans. The Sicarii, who appeared on the stage after the death of Agrippa I, may have been identical with, or an outgrowth of, the "Fourth Philosophy." The Sicarii not only hated Roman rule and sought to overthrow it, they also attempted to impose their political views upon their fellow Jews with physical coercion. They perpetrated assassinations against leading Jewish figures who did not adopt their own hardline policies. Thus, political independence and conformity to their own narrow ideal of religious observance were aims of the populist militant Sicarii terrorists.[16]

We can therefore insert the "Fourth Philosophy" and the Sicarii into the nationalist-populist zone at the center of the political-ideological spectrum:

Differentiation on the Right

We have placed the Sadducees on the "conservative" side of the ideological-religious spectrum, but we have also seen that the Sadducees were pragmatists. When it became clear that the Zadokite high priesthood would not be restored, they found it expedient to align themselves with the

Hasmonean high priests. Likewise, after the Hasmoneans were ousted from power, the Sadducees quickly allied themselves first with Herod and later with the Roman provincial governors. Another Zadokite party, however, was more ideological than pragmatic, holding out against the Hasmoneans in the hope of a return of the Zadokite high priesthood. As a consequence of its inflexibility, this group became alienated from the political playing field and it withdrew from mainstream society, rejecting the Temple as polluted and the populace as condemned. This is the sect known as the Essenes.

The Essenes themselves were divided into two strains or two tiers. Some lived in enclaves in Jewish towns, taking wives and rearing families according to their strict priestly halakhah without completely separating themselves from the broader society. Another group withdrew to Qumran near the Dead Sea, founding an isolated monastic community where ritual purity could be rigorously maintained and where adherence to their austere interpretation of the commandments could be strictly enforced. The Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrate that Essene halakhah had much in common with what is known of Sadducean halakhah, agreeing with the "realist" approach to the commandments mentioned above.[17] But the Essenes took their "realism" to an unprecedented extreme with respect to ritual purity. The Essenes believed that ritual impurity could result not merely from natural sources—corpses, bodily fluids from the sexual organs, contact with the carcasses of non-kosher animals, etc.—but also from sin. Sins (in their view) made a person ritually impure, and the Essenes feared that contact with sinners would make them impure just as if they had come into contact with a natural source of ritual impurity.[18] In their opinion, only persons who joined the Essene sect and adopted their strict interpretations of the Torah were able to purify themselves (1QS III, 3-6). The Essenes' desire to maintain a perpetual state of ritual purity motivated their separation from society, for in this way they could minimize contact with ritually defiling sinners. Their belief in the power of sin to transmit ritual impurity also confirmed their view that the Temple was ritually defiled, since it was run by illegitimate (i.e., non-Zadokite) priests who did not observe the Essenes' strict purity practices.

While they may have been "realists" with respects to the commandments, the Essenes had become so radicalized that they may rightly be described as fantastical with regard to their worldview. (According to scholarly parlance, their worldview is termed "apocalyptic.") The Essenes lived in a fantasy world in which they alone were the "sons of light" who were engaged in a cosmic war against the forces of evil.[19] The Essenes dealt with the problem of evil by supposing that all things (including a person's thoughts, as well as his or her actions) had been foreordained by God and that history unfolded according to a divine timetable. God had established eons in which Belial (the Essene name for Satan) ruled the world, but he had also appointed a time of judgment, after which evil would be erased and the vindicated righteous would reign in glory. In the meantime, taking action to fight against evil would be out of sync with the appointed times and thus constitute rebellion against the divine will. The present time of darkness was a time of testing, when the true sons of light would be separated out from the false, faithless, doomed sons of Abraham. God would redeem them, the true Israel, in the final battle against the "sons of darkness" and demonic hordes of Belial. So it was that their absolute black-and-white view of the world, their cosmic dualism, had the odd effect of undermining the Essenes' priestly values, especially with regard to lineage.[20] The Essene doctrine of double predestination (one is foreordained to be either a "son of light" or a "son of darkness") had a universalizing tendency. Categories such as Israelite versus priest, or Jew versus Gentile became less important than insider versus outsider.[21]

The Essenes' fantastical (or apocalyptic) worldview led to practical (albeit extreme) consequences. For one thing, the Essenes observed how the Gentile rulers of the empires and the corrupt rulers among their own people amassed enormous wealth for themselves, and how this rapacity was a root cause of much of their cruelty. Therefore, the Essenes eschewed personal property, idealizing poverty as a means toward spiritual purification. Everything they owned they shared in common with the other members of the sect. Their commitment to poverty was also related to their aim at total separation from

sinners (i.e., outsiders).[22] Social contacts with non-Essenes were to be kept to a strict minimum in order to reduce exposure to sin impurity. Members of the Essene sect were not even supposed to accept lodging or share meals with outsiders when they traveled. Anything they did accept was to be paid for so that there would be no feeling of camaraderie with, or obligation toward, outsiders. Their closed communistic system reinforced their apocalyptic worldview by discouraging contacts with all but likeminded members of the sect. It also concealed their true feeling of utter contempt and hatred for outsiders combined with unquestioning love for fellow members and absolute allegiance to the sect.

Another practical implication of their worldview that we have already mentioned was a conditional pacifism: the Essenes believed that until the cosmic war commenced at the divinely appointed hour, they were to be utterly subservient to the ruling powers, since God had established them for the time being. The oppression of imperial rule was a divine punishment for Israel's failure to correctly observe the Torah (i.e., to follow the Essenes' interpretations). Failure to submit to their punishment was nothing other than rebellion against the will of God. Nevertheless, their commitment to pacifism was not absolute: the Essene *War Scroll* describes in detail a future in which the "sons of light" would vanquish their foes in a final cosmic battle between good and evil.[23] Evidently, some Essenes believed that the war with the Romans that broke out in 66 C.E. was the sign of the end time, for Josephus tells us that some Essenes joined forces with the Jewish rebels (*Bel.* 2:567).

Their attitudes toward submission and violence are an example of the deep contradictions the Essene psyche attempted to maintain: priestly in orientation, but universalistic in terms of its apocalyptic outlook; rigorous in the extreme with respect to purity, but separated from the Temple, where purity mattered; abjectly submitting to authority, but harboring visions of bloody revenge for their humiliation; unconditionally loving their sect, but bearing uncompromising hatred for outsiders in their hearts.

Since the Essenes were even more stringent than the Sadducees and because they rejected the populist nationalist center, I have placed them to the right of the Sadducees on the spectrum with the Qumran Essenes on the far right end:

Another group that branched off from the Sadducees is the Zealot party.[24] The Zealot party was a priestly movement which grew out of a broader nationalist ideology that focused on the honor of the Temple, exhibited an anti-Gentile prejudice, and which took coercive measures to enforce conformity to their cultural-religious norms. The Zealot party dramatically entered the political arena when Eleazar, the captain of the Temple and son of the officiating high priest, ordered the cessation of sacrifices on behalf of Caesar (Jos., *Bel.* 2:409-410).[25] The links with the high priestly family suggest an affinity between the Zealot party and the Sadducees, but the explicit adoption of nationalist ideology demonstrates that the Zealots should be placed on the spectrum between the Sadducees and the Pharisees in the same general area that had once been occupied by the Hasmoneans:

The Fringes to the Far Right and the Far Left

We come now to two separate movements far removed from one another in terms of their position on the political-ideological spectrum. The two groups are poorly documented and therefore only dimly understood, for their existence is attested only in the works of authors who did not entirely share their views. The two groups to which I refer are the Hasidim on the one hand, and a dissenting group (or groups) on the fringes of the Essene movement represented, among others, by John the Baptist.

Let us begin—since he is probably most familiar—with John the Baptist and the fringe movement of which he appears to have been a specimen.[26] A relationship between John the Baptist and the Essenes had been suggested even before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, but following this

monumental discovery the parallels became even more pronounced.[27] Like the Essenes, John the Baptist—who according to the Gospel of Luke was a priest—removed himself far from the Temple and withdrew from society in order to prepare the Way of the LORD in the desert. Like the Essenes, John the Baptist held a realist view with respect to ritual purity. He accepted their unorthodox opinion that sin was also a source of ritual impurity, such that sinners had to undergo ritual immersions (viz., his baptism of repentance) in order to become ritually pure. Like the Essenes, John the Baptist shared an apocalyptic worldview: he predicted the imminent arrival of a cosmic redeemer figure who would judge all humanity (Matt. 3:11; Luke 3:16). John's apocalyptic preaching about the cleansing of the threshing floor (Matt. 3:12; Luke 3:17) hints at an Essene-like belief in a messianic priest who will purify the Temple (recall that Solomon's Temple was built on the threshing floor of Aravnah the Jebusite).[28] John also appears to have adopted the Essene view of a preordained timetable for the coming redemption: his baptism of repentance for the release of (the indebtedness of) sins hints that the Baptist believed that the eschatological Jubilee was beginning.[29] Hence, John's baptism combined the Essenes' extreme realist views regarding purity, their apocalyptic chronology, and their belief in the current impurity of the Temple.[30]

Despite these similarities to the Essenes, John the Baptist and those like him evinced important differences, most of which can be interpreted as the radicalization of certain Essene concepts that alleviated the contradictions in the Essene psyche. For instance, the Essenes' unconditional love for the sect was radicalized into an ethic of love for all humankind. The Essene commitment to share all their property with the sect was radicalized into a demand to share one's goods with all those in need (cf. Luke 3:11). And the Essenes' cosmic dualism, with its universalizing division of all humanity into those predestined either for redemption or destruction, was transformed into a moral dualism, in which every single person was summoned to choose between good and evil (cf. Matt. 3:7-10; Luke 3:7-9). At the root of the radicalization espoused by the dissident Essene groups, such as the one led by

John the Baptist, was a belief in human moral agency. And this, too, alleviated a contradiction in the Essene worldview, for the Essenes maintained that individuals who had been predestined to be born as "sons of darkness" would nevertheless be held responsible for committing the deeds of darkness. But how can there be culpability without moral agency? The solution adopted by John the Baptist and others like him on the fringes of the Essene movement was to posit the ability of human beings to change their ways from wickedness to justice. Rather than separating from impure sinners and living in self-righteous isolation, as the Essenes attempted to do, John the Baptist engaged with sinners, called them to repent, and purified them when they had done so. The radicalization of the Essene doctrines of universalism, sharing of goods, and unconditional love, and the rejection of fatalism in favor of moral agency resulted in a logically consistent and ethically rigorous worldview that demanded as much of its adherents as it did of the rest of Jewish society.

Since the views of John the Batpist and those like him on the fringes of the Essene movement are radicalized forms of Essene doctrines, it makes sense to place them to the extreme right of the ideological spectrum we have been mapping:

On the opposite end of the political-ideological spectrum, at the fringes of the Pharisaic movement, we find a group known as the Hasidim.[31] The Hasidim appear to have been concentrated in the Galilee and were known for their extreme acts of benevolence and their intimate relationship with God. They placed a heavy emphasis on good deeds, especially those that were for the public good, and they put little stock in the academic discussions of the rabbinic sages. The Hasidim related to God as though they had a familial relationship with him; their informal attitude toward their heavenly father could at times appear shocking to those who enjoyed a more formal (though no less personal) relationship with their creator. The Hasidim placed heavier emphasis on the ethical and universal commandments than on the the ritual

commandments particular to Judaism. Their self-expression was highly individual, they placed great value on courageous acts of faith, and they believed that miracles and other forms of divine intervention would vindicate their audacious trust in God. For instance, the Hasidim believed that a person should not interrupt prayer just because a government official was approaching, or even because a lethally poisonous snake was slithering past. They also maintained that counting on a miracle was preferable to surrendering a fellow Israelite during a siege. The Hasidim were, moreover, known for receiving answers to prayer, especially prayers for rain in times of drought and for healing of the sick. Because of their extreme acts of charity, and perhaps also because of the great quantity of time they devoted to prayer, the Hasidim were also famous for their poverty. But the Hasidim did not seek to improve their economic condition; they regarded wealth, rather than poverty, as an impediment to their spiritual and moral well-being.

On account of their divergence from rabbinic norms, their negative evaluation of wealth, and their reputation for healings and exorcisms, the Hasidim were sometimes, albeit wrongly, confused with the Essenes.[32] After the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the differences between the Hasidim and the Essenes became much more apparent. Whereas the Essenes formed separatist communities designed to hold their members accountable to their extreme standards of ritual conduct, the Hasidim practiced their highly individualized deeds of heroic faith within the life of the larger society. Unlike the Essenes, who had withdrawn from the Temple, the Hasidim were, despite their geographical distance from Jerusalem, constantly participating in the pilgrimage feasts and public rites of the Temple. And contrary to the Essenes' cosmic dualism, which divided humanity between the "sons of light" and the "sons of darkness," the Hasidim emphasized an ethical dualism: one is either walking on the road that leads to life (for oneself and others) or one is treading the road that leads to death (in one's soul and throughout one's community). Therefore, it was as important for the Hasidim to avoid a minor sin as it was to shun a major transgression, since one is either oriented toward God or away from him, and being oriented away from God means

heading down the destructive path.

Two stories concerning the early Hasidim are illustrative of the Hasidic worldview and how it differed from that of the Essenes. The first story takes place during the civil war between the Hasmonean rulers that raged prior to the Roman conquest of Israel. According to Josephus, a Hasid named Onias (or Honi in Hebrew) was called upon by one side in the conflict to curse the other side. The people who had summoned him to perform this deed thought that because Honi's prayers for rain had been answered, his curses would also be effective. But Honi responded with the following prayer: "O God, king of the universe," he prayed, "since these men standing beside me are your people, and those who are besieged are your priests, I beseech you not to listen to them against these men, nor to bring to pass what these men ask you to do to those others" (*Ant.* 14:24). Honi's prayer, though highly critical of both sides in the conflict, recognized both sides as integral to the people of Israel. His open attitude is diametrically opposed to the closed, schismatic view of the Essenes, who regarded only themselves as the true Israel, and looked for the rest of Israel to be cut off and destroyed at the final judgment. Honi's prayer also reflects the pacific attitudes of the Hasidim. Their commitment to peace was not limited to an apocalyptic time frame, but was based on the conviction that peace is the necessary precondition for the redemption of all Israel.

The second story is preserved in a rabbinic source that describes what worship was like in the Temple before the destruction of Jerusalem. According to the sages, the Hasidim would dance before the people in the Temple courts and sing, "Blessed is the one who has not sinned. But to all who have sinned, know that he is willing cancel to their debt." According to the sages, there were two groups among the Hasidim, those who had lived as a Hasid all their lives, and those who had converted to the Hasidic lifestyle at some point in their adulthood.[33] As they danced and sang before the people in the Temple, the first group, the life-long Hasidim, would say, "Blessed is my youth, which has not put my old age to shame." The converts to Hasidism,

on the other hand, would say, "Blessed are you, my old age, for you atone for my youth" (t. Suk. 4:2). Thus, in their joyful and optimistic manner, the Hasidim invited the people to repentance. Rather than separating themselves from an imperfect Temple and sinful people, the Hasidim freely associated with sinners in the Temple and offered them the opportunity to make a new start in their relationship with their heavenly father.

Because the Hasidim are generally found at the fringes of the Pharisaic movement, and since their leanings are toward the universal aspects of the Torah and away from the nationalistic zeal of the militant Jewish populists, it seems best to place them on the extreme left of the political-ideological spectrum:

Coming Full Circle

Despite their position on opposite ends of the spectrum, there are noteworthy similarities between the Hasidim on the far left and the John-the-Baptist-types on the far right. Both groups espoused an ethical universalism, both groups placed a negative evaluation on riches and idealized poverty, and both groups called the people at large to repentance. We also find that both the Hasidim and the John-the-Baptist-types disputed with the groups closest to them on the political-ideological spectrum about the relative importance of deeds versus study. The Hasidim disputed this issue with the rabbinic sages, the heirs of the Pharisees. Whereas the sages emphasized the importance of study, claiming that study is the only way to ensure that a good deed is done well, the Hasidim prioritized the actual performance of deeds of lovingkindness over academic minutiae. Similarly, we find that whereas the Essenes believed that they fulfilled Isaiah's prophetic call to prepare the LORD's way in the wilderness (Isa. 40:3) by studying the Torah for its secret revelations, John the Baptist believed that the proper act of preparation was to bear the fruit of repentance through the performance of good deeds, particularly acts of charity (cf. Luke 3:10-14). It is fascinating to observe that,

despite their different approaches, the Hasidim and the fringe Essenes arrived at similar solutions. Another solution they shared in common was their conviction that the catalyst for Israel's redemption from Roman imperialism would not be violent revolution. Acts of mercy toward fellow human beings and repentance toward God would be the keys to unlocking the power of the Holy Spirit. And it would be through God's spirit, not by might, that Israel's salvation would be accomplished.

Their arrival at similar solutions via opposite routes suggests that I have been drawing the ideological spectrum in a misleading manner. Rather than drawing it as a straight line with rays infinitely traveling in opposite directions, the spectrum ought to be curved, so that opposite ends meet in a middle opposite that of the nationalist-populist center:[34]

When drawn in this way the spectrum can be considered along two axes, not just in terms of "conservative" versus "liberal." In addition to the right and left, we can also make comparisons between the top and bottom of the curve. Below the dotted line we find parties where nationalism was so strong that they favored revolt against Roman domination. These groups tended to emphasize the particularism of Judaism and attached great importance to the Temple. Their perspective was one that expected and demanded Israelite sovereignty in the land of Israel. Above the dotted line we find parties where universalistic tendencies predominate and accommodation to the fact of Roman imperialism was expressed in various ways.

When the political-ideological spectrum is drawn as a circle, we get a sense of the "gravitational" pull toward the nationalist-populist center. I tend to think that this is where basic human instinct begins. At its core, however, the nationalist-populist center is so brutal that it projects normal, decent people out a little to one side or the other. It takes real growth and mental exertion to propel someone above the dotted line, however; and perhaps true genius to break the final bonds of tribalism and partisanship to attain that place where ends meet. But that space, where moral and intellectual achievements of the

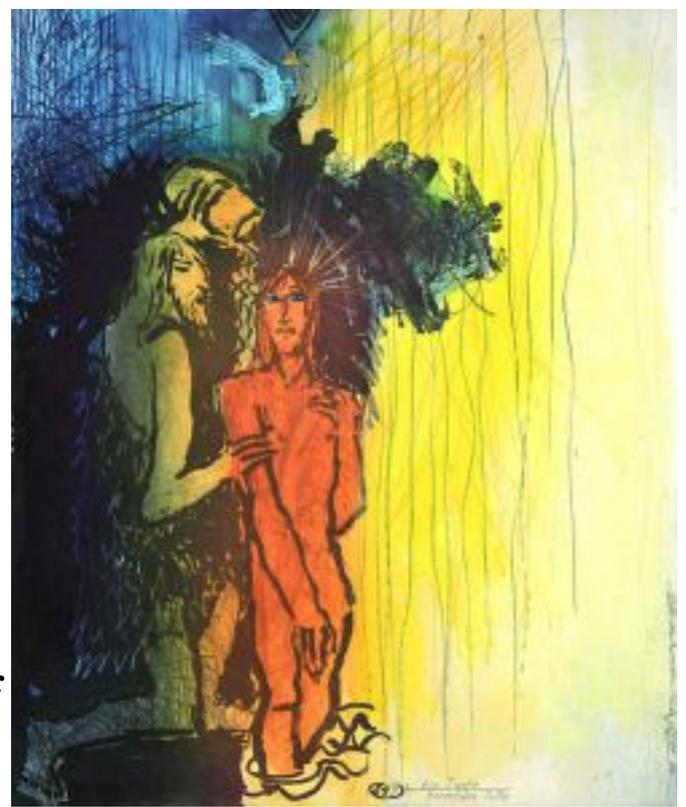left and the right converge, appears to be the place where we find Jesus and his disciples.[35]

Jesus' Place on the Spectrum

Jesus, as we know from the Gospels, was close to John the Baptist and those like him on the outer fringes of the Essene movement. Jesus not only listened to John and absorbed his teachings, he even participated in John's baptism. Yet we never hear that Jesus had any direct dealings with the Essenes, and the only time Jesus alluded to the "sons of light," the Essenes' name for themselves, it was in a critical remark (Luke 16:8).[36] It does not appear that Jesus approached John from the Essene side of the spectrum.

Jesus' similarity to the Hasidim is less familiar to most Christians, since the Hasidim are not mentioned in the New Testament, but the parallels between Jesus and the Hasidim have been extensively studied by scholars of Second Temple Judaism.[37] Like the Hasidim, Jesus was of Galilean origin, he performed miracles of healing and exorcism, he emphasized the Torah's universal ethics over the ritual commandments particular to Judaism, he enjoyed a familial relationship with God, and he despised riches and embraced poverty. But Jesus' frequent clashes with Pharisees suggest that he did not approach the Hasidim from the Pharisaic side of the spectrum. That leaves us with Jesus occupying the space where the far left bends toward the far right. Jesus incorporated ideas from both sides in new and creative ways that must have shocked and challenged his contemporaries, and that continue to stretch our imaginations and undermine our assumptions.

An example of Jesus' unique forging together of Essene and Pharisaic ideas that came up to him though Hasidic and baptistic channels is the way he spoke of "entering the Kingdom of Heaven," which combined the Essene way of speaking of joining their sect as "entering the covenant" and the Pharaisees' way of speaking about submission to God's will as "receiving the Kingdom of Heaven." Another example is the first beatitude in which Jesus

declared, "Blessed are the poor of spirit, for of them is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. 5:3). The "poor of spirit" was a term the Essenes used to describe themselves, but the Essenes never spoke of the Kingdom of Heaven. Apart from the New Testament, the "Kingdom of Heaven" is a term that occurs exclusively in rabbinic sources, but the sages never referred to anyone as "poor of spirit." Likewise, Jesus declared that the "mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven" had been revealed to his disciples (Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10). This declaration appears to be a hybrid created from the "mysteries of God," of which the

Handcolored etching of The Baptism by Adi Holzer. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Essenes boasted knowledge, and the "Kingdom of Heaven," an originally Pharisaic term. Thus in his very choice of vocabulary Jesus signaled his new synthesis of the currents within contemporary Jewish thought.

It is not my purpose here to explore all the ways in which this creative synthesis of left and right manifested itself in the teachings of Jesus. Our more modest task of finding Jesus' place on the ideological spectrum of his time has been sufficiently challenging. There are, however, two more observations about Jesus' place on the spectrum that I wish to make before moving on to the conclusion. The first is that there was a tendency, as one moved farther out from the nationalist-populist center, toward alienation from the masses. Among the Essenes, this tendency manifested itself in withdrawing to the secluded communal settlement of Qumran. Among the Pharisees and their rabbinic heirs, this tendency manifested itself in withdrawing into the elitist society of the Torah academies. The result was an elitist distain for the masses on the parts of the Essenes and the Pharisees and a reciprocal distrust toward the elites from the masses. Jesus, the Hasidim, and John-the-Baptist-types, on the other hand, appealed directly to the masses. Their teaching was not for the academy or the enclave; their healings

and prayers were mainly for the poor, and their summons to repentance was universal. This is not to say that their ideas gained wide acceptance among the masses, but instead of distain and distrust there seems to have been a general feeling of respect and mutual goodwill between these fringe types and the masses. Even when John the Baptist upbraided them as a "brood of vipers," the crowds of common folk held him in awe. And with regard to Jesus, the Sunday School portrayal of the masses who welcomed Jesus to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday but who viciously turned against him on Good Friday is more the product of Christian imagination stained with anti-Jewish bias than a careful reading of the Gospel records of Jesus' passion. Throughout his life and at his death Jesus generally enjoyed the sympathy, if not the complete understanding and acceptance, of the crowds.

The second observation is that whereas the groups above the dotted line advocated peaceful coexistence for the duration of imperial rule, Jesus appears to have been the only one to have realized the radical potential of peaceful resistance for bringing about redemption from oppression. Jesus realized that pacifism is not equivalent to passivism. Loving one's enemy involves respecting him enough to believe in his humanity, having faith in her capacity to change, and trusting God's ability to transform even violent oppressors into sisters and brothers of the human race.[38]

Conclusion

Jesus' approach was a synthesis of religious and political insights taken from widely divergent trends within Second Temple Judaism, an approach that avoided the pitfalls of the populist, nationalist, and militant instincts that attracted and ensnared so many of his contemporaries and that (as Jesus predicted) led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the burning of the Temple in 70 C.E. I do not know whether our contemporary political-ideological spectrum bends in the same way toward a new and higher center, far removed from those base and destructive ethnocentric instincts, as the

spectrum did in Jesus' day. Attempting to plot Jesus' place on our present-day political-ideological-religious spectrum may be like trying to locate Valinor, Tolkien's undying land of the elves, on a globe of our planet. But perhaps, the followers of Jesus, despite our present political climate, might find our way to embodying Jesus' teachings in our world, just as the elves were awarded passage to the Blessed Realm beyond the confines of Middle Earth.

A more gloomy conclusion to be drawn from our investigation is that the "God, Guns, and Country" ideology—which characterizes Trumpian Evangelicalism, and that justifies torture,[39] incites fear of refugees,[40] dehumanizes immigrants,[41] demonizes religious minorities,[42] blames poverty, glorifies riches, degrades women,[43] and valorizes militarism[44]—occupies approximately the same space on our spectrum as the militant Jewish nationalist zeal ideology did on the political-ideological spectrum of late Second Temple Jewish society. In other words, while the passage to Valinor may elude us, the orcs and their masters are still very much in our midst. This observation should give present-day followers of Jesus in the United States pause, because nothing could be farther from Jesus' ideals and values than nationalistic zealotry.

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Notes

[1] According to the Pew Research Center, 81% of the white evangelical vote went to Donald Trump in the 2016 election. On continuing Evangelical

support for the president's policies and agenda, see Gregory A. Smith, "[Most white evangelicals approve of Trump travel prohibition and express concerns about extremism](#)," *Pew Research Center (February 27, 2017); idem,* "[Among White Evangelicals, Regular Churchgoers are the Most Supportive of Trump](#)," *Pew Research Center (April 26, 2017); Lulu Garcia-Navarro,* "[An Evangelical Evaluation Of Trump's First Year](#)," *Weekend Edition Sunday: National Public Radio (December 17, 2017).*

[2] It hardly needs explaining that we in the United States are experiencing an especially tense and politically charged period in our history. What does require explanation is that my thoughts about Jesus' place on the political and ideological spectrum of his own time and place have been brewing in my mind for several years, stretching back to a time when political divisions seemed somewhat less intense than they do at present. In other words, the concepts and conclusions I will set forth below are not a direct response to the current political climate. Nevertheless, it is my hope that the presentation of these ideas and thoughtful engagement with them may, indeed, be timely.

[3] The occupancy of the high priesthood by the Zadokite dynasty extended back into the pre-exilic period.

[4] The last Zadokite high priest had been removed from office during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. With the rise of the Hasmonean dynasty, the Sadducees abandoned the hope of restoring the Zadokite dynasty, being content under Herodian and Roman rule to occupy the high priesthood themselves.

[5] Anyone, that is, who happened to be a male Israelite. The distinction between the different expressions of first-century Judaism is one of nuance and emphasis rather than absolutes. All the groups shared a fundamental commitment to the God of Israel, the Torah, and the people of Israel. The differences were expressed in differing prioritizations of shared values rather than in the outright rejection of one set of values in favor of another.

[6] The Mishnah attributes this saying to Hillel, a Pharisaic sage who lived a generation before Jesus.

[7] On the Pharisaic-Sadduecean conflict over the democratization of the Temple worship, see Daniel R. Schwartz, "Viewing the Holy Utensils (P. Ox. V,840)," *New Testament Studies* 32 (1986): 153-159, esp. 156.

[8] See Daniel R. Schwartz, "Law and Truth: On Qumran-Sadducean and Rabbinic Views of Law," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls After Forty Years of Research* (ed. Devorah Dimant and Uriel Rappaport; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 229-240; idem, "Doing Like Jews or Becoming a Jew?" in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. Jörg Frey, Daniel R. Schwartz and Stephanie Gripentrog; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 93-109; idem, "On Pharisees and Sadducees in the Mishnah: From Composition Criticism to History," in *Judastik und neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* (Göttingen: Vandenhoebk & Ruprecht, 2008), 133-145; idem, "'Someone Who Considers Something to Be Impure— For Him It Is Impure' (Rom. 14:14): Good Manners or Law?" in *Paul's Jewish Matrix* (ed. Thomas G. Casey and Justin Taylor; Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2011), 293-309.

[9] Hence the designation of the Pharisees as nominalist. "Nominal" means "in name only."

[10] The House of Caiaphas was a high priestly Sadducean family known to have practiced levirite marriage in just such a case (t. Yev. 1:10). See Ben-Zion Rosenfeld, "The History of the Resettlement of Two High Priestly Families in the Second Temple Period"; Tal Ilan, "'The Daughters of Israel are not Licentious' (*mYevamot* 13:1): Beit Shammai on the Legal Position of Women," in her *Integrating Women into Second Temple History* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2001), 43-81, esp. 56-58.

[11] In fact the issue divided even the Pharisees. The left-leaning Hillelite wing took the permissive nominalist view, while the right-leaning Shammaite wing took a stricter view.

[12] Since the Zadokites and other aristocratic priestly families were more open to adopting a Hellenistic lifestyle, they would likely have found the religious zeal of the Hasmonean nationalists distasteful.

[13] On the left- and right-leaning factions within the Pharisaic movement, see Louis Ginzberg, *On Jewish Law and Lore* (New York: Atheneum, 1970), 89-96; Shmuel Safrai, "Halakha," in *The Literature of the Sages* (2 vols.; ed. Shmuel Safrai; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 121-209, esp. 185-194.

[14] The three legitimate philosophies being, in Josephus' view, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes.

[15] See Peter J. Tomson, "Gamaliel's Counsel and the Apologetic Strategy of Luke-Acts," in *The Unity of Luke-Acts* (ed. J. Verheyden; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 585-604, esp. 588-589; Ilan, "'The Daughters of Israel are not Licentious' (*mYevamot* 13:1): Beit Shammai on the Legal Position of Women," 74-79.

[16] As such, the "Fourth Philosophy" and the Sicarii resemble the present-day Islamist groups who desire political independence from Western intervention and seek to impose their own strict version of religious law upon their populations.

[17] On identifying the Qumran sect, which produced the Dead Sea Scrolls with the Essenes, see Joseph M. Baumgarten, "The Disqualifications of Priests in 4Q Fragments of the «Damascus Document,» a Specimen of the Recovery of pre-Rabbinic Halakha," in *The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Madrid 18-21 March 1991* (2 vols.; ed. Julio Trebolle Barrera and Luis Vegas Montaner; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 503-513, esp. 504-505. On commonalities between the Sadducees and the Essenes, see the aforementioned article as well as idem, "The Pharisaic-Sadducean Controversies about Purity and the Qumran Texts," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 31 (1980): 157-170; idem, "Sadducean Elements in Qumran Law," in *The Community of the Renewed*

Covenant: The Notre Dame Symposium on the Dead Sea Scrolls (ed. Eugene Ulrich and James Vanderkam; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 27-36.

[18] See Jonathan Klawans, "The Impurity of Immorality in Ancient Judaism," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 48.1 (1997): 1-16, esp. 7-10; idem, "Idolatry, Incest, and Impurity: Moral Defilement in Ancient Judaism," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 29.4 (1998): 391-415, esp. 405-413.

[19] For an introduction to the Essene worldview, see David Flusser, *The Spiritual History of the Dead Sea Sect* (trans. Carol Glucker; Tel Aviv: MOD Books, 1989). See also his collection of articles in idem, *Judaism of the Second Temple Period: Qumran and Apocalypticism* (trans. Azzan Yadin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Jerusalem: Magnes & Jerusalem Perspective, 2007).

[20] On Essene univeralism undercutting their priestly values, see Daniel R. Schwartz, "On the Jewish Background of Christianity," in *Studies in Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity: Text and Context* (ed. Dan Jaffé; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 87-105. esp. 97-99.

[21] In this respect the Essenes resemble jihadist groups such as al-Qaida, who in their cosmic struggle between "good" and "evil" end up being far more deadly to their co-religionists than to non-Muslims. For a helpful discussion of the difference between Islamist and jihadist ideologies, I recommend Reza Aslan's lecture, "How to Win a Cosmic War" delivered at the Commonwealth Club of California on May 16, 2009. I found the lecture to be helpful for understanding the differences between the various zealot groups on the one hand and the apocalyptic Essenes on the other.

[22] On Essene economic separatism, see David Flusser, "The Economic Ideology of Qumran," in his *Judaism of the Second Temple Period: Qumran and Apocalypticism*, 32-37; idem, "Jesus' Opinion about the Essenes," in his

Judaism and the Origins of Christianity (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1988), 150-168.

[23] On the conditional pacifism of the Essenes, see David Flusser, "The Roman Empire in Hasmonean and Essene Eyes," in his *Judaism of the Second Temple Period: Qumran and Apocalypticism*, 175-206, esp. 196-197.

[24] On the distinction to be made between the Sicarii and the Zealots, see Menachem Stern, "Zealots," in *Encyclopedia Judaica Yearbook 1973* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1973), 135-152; Albert I. Baumgarten, "Josephus and the Jewish Sects," in *A Companion to Josephus* (ed. Honora Howell Chapman and Zuleika Rodgers; Chinchester: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 261-272, esp. 268-269.

[25] On sacrifices and prayers offered on behalf of the Roman emperor, see Joshua N. Tilton, "Contextualizing Prayer for Caesar."

[26] On "fringe" Essenes represented by *inter alia* John the Baptist, see David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, xviii-xix; idem, "The Social Message from Qumran," in *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 193-201; idem, *The Spiritual History of the Dead Sea Sect*, 79-82; Huub van de Sandt and David Flusser, *The Didache: Its Jewish Sources and its Place in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 180-190.

[27] On John the Baptist's similarities to the Essenes, see David Flusser, "The Magnificat, the Benedictus and the War Scroll," in his *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 126-149; Daniel R. Schwartz, "On Quirinius, John the Baptist, the Benedictus, Melchizedek, Qumran and Ephesus," *Revue de Qumran* (1988): 635-646; idem, "On the Jewish Background of Christianity," 99-100.

[28] See the lecture delivered by R. Steven Notley, "The Gospel According to John the Baptist," *Are You the One Who Is to Come? Jesus in First-Century Understanding (recorded September 19-21, 2002 in Zeeland,*

Michigan) (Holland, Mich.: En-Gedi Resource Center, 2006).

[29] See R. Steven Notley, "The Kingdom of Heaven Forcefully Advances," in *The Interpretation of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity: Studies in Language and Tradition* (ed. Craig A. Evans; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 2000), 279-311, esp. 308-309; idem, "Jesus' Hermeneutical Method in the Nazareth Synagogue," in *Early Christian Literature and Intertextuality* (2 vols.; ed. Craig A. Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2009), 46-59, esp. 55-56.

[30] See the forthcoming discussion in David N. Bivin and Joshua N. Tilton, "A Voice Crying" in *The* Life of Yeshua*: A Suggested Reconstruction*.

[31] On the first-century Hasidim, see Shmuel Safrai, "Teaching of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 16 (1965): 15-33; idem, "The Pharisees and the Hasidim," *Sidic: Journal of the Service International de Documentation Judéo-Chrétienne* 10.2 (1977): 12-16; idem, "Jesus and the Hasidim," *Jerusalem Perspective* 42-44 (1994): 3-22; Chana Safrai and Zeev Safrai, "Rabbinic Holy Men," in *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity* (ed. Marcel Poorthus and Joshua Schwartz; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 59-78. The Hasidim are not to be confused with the Hasideans mentioned in 1 Macc. 2:42. It is likely that the reference to Hasideans there is actually due to a corruption of the Greek text. See Daniel R. Schwartz, "Hasidim in I Maccabees 2:42?" *Scripta Classica Israelica* 13 (1994): 7-18.

[32] On scholarly confusion of the Hasidim and Essenes, see Safrai, "Teaching of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature," 16; Geza Vermes, "Jesus and charismatic Judaism," in his *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 58-82, esp. 80.

[33] On the possibility of "conversion" from one type of Judaism to another in the Second Temple period, see Peter J. Tomson, "Paul's Jewish Background in View of his Law Teaching in 1Cor7," in *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (ed. James D. G. Dunn; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 251-270, esp.

269-270.

[34] I am not the first to suggest that the ideological spectrum of the Second Temple period should be drawn in this way. See Daniel R. Schwartz, "Ends Meet: Qumran and Paul on Circumcision," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Pauline Literature* (ed. Jean-Sébastien Rey; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 295-307.

[35] Placing Jesus at the point where the extreme left wing of the Pharisaic movement meets the extreme right wing of the Essene movement was suggested by David Flusser. See David Flusser, "Jesus Between the World of Rabbinic Judaism and the World of the Essenes," in his *Jewish Sources in Early Christianity* (trans. John Glucker, Tel Aviv: MOD Books, 1989), 39-43; idem, *The Spiritual History of the Dead Sea Sect*, 81.

[36] See Flusser, "Jesus' Opinion about the Essenes," 150-168; idem, "Jesus and the Essenes," http://www.jerusalemperspective.com.

[37] See Safrai, "Jesus and the Hasidim"; David Flusser, "Jesus and Second Temple Pietism," in his *Jewish Sources in Early Christianity*, 33-37; Geza Vermes, "Jesus and charismatic Judaism," 58-82.

[38] On Jesus' dynamic pacifism, see Joshua N. Tilton, "Whole Stones That Make Peace"; idem, "Perfect Children"; idem, "A Mile on the Road of Peace."

[39] President Trump has not only spoken in favor of torture, he has promoted practitioners of torture to positions of high office. Cf., e.g., Tamara Keith, "On Waterboarding, A President Trump Could Face Resistance From Some Republicans," *NPR* (Nov. 21, 2016); Rachel Martin, "Sen. King Says He Can't Support Haspel's Nomination To Lead The CIA," *NPR* (May 10, 2018); Audie Cornish, "Former Ambassador James Pickering Discusses CIA Nominee Gina Haspel," *NPR* (May 10, 2018).

[40] On President Trump's attitude toward refugees and the real-world consequences, see Greg Miller, Julie Vitkovskaya and Reuben Fischer-Baum,

"'This deal will make me look terrible': Full transcripts of Trump's calls with Mexico and Australia," *The Washington Post* (Aug. 3, 2017); Deborah Amos, "The Year The U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program Unraveled," *NPR* (Jan. 1, 2018); idem, "The U.S. Has Accepted Only 11 Syrian Refugees This Year," *NPR* (Apr. 12, 2018).

[41] On President Trump's dehumanizing anti-immigrant rhetoric, see Kelsey Snell, "Trump Describes African Countries As 'S***holes' During DACA Negotiations," *NPR* (Jan. 11, 2018); Scott Neuman, "During Roundtable, Trump Calls Some Unauthorized Immigrants 'Animals'," *NPR* (May 17, 2018). Having friends and family members who immigrated to the United States, I find the dehumanizing anti-immigrant rhetoric of our president to be personally offensive.

[42] On President Trump's demonization of Muslims, cf., e.g., Brian Naylor, "Trump Retweets Incendiary Anti-Muslim Videos From Controversial Group," *NPR* (Nov. 29, 2017). As a member of a religious group that was once a minority and demonized for its beliefs and practices, I sympathize with our Muslim sisters and brothers.

[43] On President Trump's degradation of women, see Jessica Taylor, "'You Can Do Anything': In 2005 Tape, Trump Brags About Groping, Kissing Women," *NPR* (Oct. 7, 2016). Since my mother, my sister, and my wife all happen to be women, I am horrified by the president's suggestion that he has the right to sexually assault any or all of them.

[44] On President Trump's valorization of the military, see Jim Zarroli, "Why Donald Trump Likes To Surround Himself With Generals," *NPR* (Aug. 23, 2017); Adrienne St. Clair, Scott Neuman, and Tamara Keith, "Trump Wants Pentagon To Stage Military Parade Down Pennsylvania Avenue," *NPR* (Feb. 7, 2018); Tamara Keith and Tom Bowman, "Trump's Military Parade Could Cost As Much As $50 Million," *NPR* (Feb, 7, 2018); Barbara Campbell, "Trump's Military Parade Is Set For Veterans Day," *NPR* (Mar. 9, 2018).