

# Avowed Enemies of Epicurus: Paul / Saul of Tarsus

Post by "Cassius" of February 12, 2020 at 10:18 AM

[\(This is a paste from the Epicurus.net website\)](#)

## Epicureanism and the Early Christians

As indicated in the discussion of Judea above, Christians originated as one of the Nazarene cults. Unfortunately, the various historical accounts of Jesus are highly unreliable and mutually contradictory, and many of the stories associated with him may be an amalgamation of folktales about several different Nazarene leaders and wholly fictional accounts (based on widespread myths in circulation at the time) written many decades after the alleged events described. As best as can be determined, Jesus appears to have been a renegade Mandaean who claimed to be a descendant of the royal house of David, the anointed ("messiah" or "christos") king of Jewish prophecy who would conquer the world. There are also strong indications that Jesus also claimed to be an incarnation of a "wisdom of life" that the Mandaeans equate with god.

[Possible Grave of Jesus]

Possible Grave of Jesus

Srinagar, Kashmir

Jesus's political pretensions were cut short at a crucial stage in his career when he entered Jerusalem in preparation for a coup against the Herodians, only to be betrayed by one of his own followers. Jesus was arrested and crucified, but to the dismay of the Roman/Herodian authorities, Jesus survived the crucifixion (possibly with the connivance of the commander of the Roman troops handling the crucifixion, who later became a Christian bishop in Cappadocia), and after his resuscitation was seen leaving the tomb-chamber assisted by two other Nazarenes. As the startling news of Jesus's resuscitation spread, his brother **James** announced that Jesus had been miraculously resurrected and that he had been personally deputized by Jesus to lead the Nazarenes as their "bishop of bishops" until Jesus's return (which was supposed to take place within a single generation of his original ministry). James's claim to leadership was accepted by most of the recent Nazarene converts, as he was the heir apparent to Jesus and thus next in line to be King of the Judeans. There is some evidence that Jesus meanwhile fled to Syria and then eastwards out of the Roman Empire, where he continued his teaching and faith-healing for many decades in Iran and Kashmir. A possible tomb of Jesus is located in Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir.

While James's sect in Jerusalem was largely destroyed by his execution and the flight of his followers from Judea prior to the Roman sacking of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., as well as the systematic campaign carried on by the Romans to kill the families of all messianic claimants, a missionary to non-Judeans by the name of **Saul of Tarsus** (also known by his latinized name **Paul**) transmitted a less militant form of Christianity to various cities in Turkey, Greece, and Italy. Rather than stressing Jesus's messianic role as a Judean world conqueror, Saul claimed that Jesus was not just a mere mortal from the house of David, but one of the immortals who shortly after his resurrection had ascended into heaven. Saul portrayed Jesus as a miracle-working demi-god, the son of the traditional Judean deity, who had come for the salvation of all mankind and not just Judeans. With this dejudaizing process initiated by Saul, Christianity could be made acceptable to non-Judeans, who otherwise would have had no reason to feel any loyalty towards a Jewish messiah.

In the course of his attempts to win converts Saul soon came into collision with the Epicurean communities that existed throughout the Greek-speaking world. Chapter 17 of the *Acts of the Apostles* records Saul's sermon to the Athenians, including Epicureans and Stoics, gathered at the Areopagus in Athens. When Saul gets ready to speak, the Epicureans present ask "What will this seed-pecker say?". The Epicurean response to Saul's discourse was not recorded, but even the author of *Acts* admits that Saul was not too successful in winning converts on that occasion.

A more significant aspect of Saul's evangelism was the extent to which he adopted certain peculiarities of Epicurean terminology and phraseology, and certain Epicurean social customs; and the extent to which he focused much of his rhetoric on gainsaying Epicurean denials of divine providence, resurrection, and an after-life. His letters to the Thessalonians and Corinthians in particular show this tendency. These letters offer strong indirect evidence that Epicureans were the principal ideological opponents that Saul had to contend with in Greece. Also very telling was his indirect references to Antiochus Epiphanes as the anti-Christ, making the same kind of anti-Seleucid/anti-Epicurean allusions that were illustrated above in connection with the Talmud.

After Saul, the fledgling Christian church faced persecution at the hands of the Romans, and was largely confined to winning converts from the uneducated segments of the population. The characteristic early Christian attitude towards Greek philosophers was summed up by the teaching that the wisdom of the world was foolishness, squarely placing Christian faith in fierce opposition to human rationality and the human desires embraced by Epicureanism.

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## **Post by "Cassius" of February 12, 2020 at 1:46 PM**

In addition to the material referenced above there is obviously a lot of relevant material in Norman DeWitt's "[St. Paul and Epicurus](#)" which contains a lot of good material relating Paul's

letters to Epicurean positions.

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## Post by “Cassius” of February 12, 2020 at 1:48 PM

And listing one more point of reference, there is [the Nietzsche material collected here](#):

One of the inflection points of world history which researchers into Epicurus will frequently encounter is the work of Paul of Tarsus. Norman DeWitt devoted a book to the subject ([St. Paul and Epicurus](#)), in which he explores the many references in Pauline letters which appear to be direct attacks on Epicurean philosophy.

It is also well known that Friedrich Nietzsche, a frequent admirer of Epicurus, was as much (or more) an enemy of Paul of Tarsus than of Jesus of Nazareth. In his last book, “[AntiChrist](#),” Nietzsche explains this in detail. He directs blast after blast against Paul, specifically accusing him of perverting the progress toward human happiness that had been made under Epicurus:

*But it [Roman civilization] was not strong enough to stand up against the corruptest of all forms of corruption—against Christians... These stealthy worms, which under the cover of night, mist and duplicity, crept upon every individual, sucking him dry of all earnest interest in real things, of all instinct for reality—this cowardly, effeminate and sugar-coated gang gradually alienated all “souls”, step by step, from that colossal edifice, turning against it all the meritorious, manly and noble natures that had found in the cause of Rome their own cause, their own serious purpose, their own pride. The sneakishness of hypocrisy, the secrecy of the conventicle, concepts as black as hell, such as the sacrifice of the innocent, the unio mystica in the drinking of blood, above all, the slowly rekindled fire of revenge, of Chandala revenge—all that sort of thing became master of Rome: the same kind of religion which, in a pre-existent form, Epicurus had combatted. One has but to read Lucretius to know what Epicurus made war upon—not paganism, but “Christianity”, which is to say, the corruption of souls by means of the concepts of guilt, punishment and immortality.—He combatted the subterranean cults, the whole of latent Christianity—to deny immortality was already a form of genuine salvation.—Epicurus had triumphed, and every respectable intellect in Rome was Epicurean—when Paul appeared... Paul, the Chandala hatred of Rome, of “the world”, in the flesh and inspired by genius—the Jew, the eternal Jew par excellence... What he saw was how, with the aid of the small sectarian Christian movement that stood apart from Judaism, a “world conflagration” might be kindled; how, with the symbol of “God on the cross”, all secret seditions, all the fruits of anarchistic intrigues in the empire, might be amalgamated into one immense power. “Salvation is of the Jews.”—Christianity is the formula for exceeding and summing up the subterranean cults of all varieties, that of Osiris, that of the GreatMother, that of Mithras, for instance: in his discernment of this fact the genius of Paul showed itself. His instinct was here so sure that, with reckless violence to the truth, he put the ideas which lent fascination to every sort of Chandala religion into the mouth of the “Saviour” as his own inventions, and not only into the mouth—he made*

*out of him something that even a priest of Mithras could understand... This was his revelation at Damascus: he grasped the fact that he needed the belief in immortality in order to rob "the world" of its value, that the concept of "hell" would master Rome—that the notion of a "beyond" is the death of life. Nihilist and Christian: they rhyme in German, and they do more than rhyme.*