

**Is there evidence of Alexandrian Culture influencing the  
first century Christians? – a question explored through  
Christian connections to the practice of mummification.**

**Craig L. Hall B.Ec (UNE), M.A. (Alphacrucis)**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Research  
Department of Ancient History, Faculty of Arts, Macquarie University, Sydney.**

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## Declaration of Authorship

I, Craig L. Hall, hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgment is made in the acknowledgments.



Name: Craig L. Hall

Date: 9th October 2015

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**Abstract**

This thesis research seeks to explore early Christianity in Egypt, particularly first century, by answering the question: Is there evidence of Alexandrian culture influencing the First century Christians? – and whether this may be a marker for early Christians in Egypt. Rather than seeking evidence conventionally via specificity of the term *χριστιανοὶ* or other *nomina sacra* in papyri, made difficult by the lack of first century examples, this thesis therefore takes the approach of looking for evidence of Alexandrian culture in Christian practice or texts. Do the Christians say they encountered and converted people from Alexandria, and is there other evidence of Egypto-Alexandrian culture meeting Christian culture? Due to Graeco-Roman culture being explicable from outside Alexandrian Egypt, this discussion focuses on the specificity of unique residual Egyptian culture persistent in the Alexandrian sphere – such as the process of mummification evident in first century Egypt and early Christian burial methods as a potential marker for both syncretistic practice and early Christian activity in Egypt in the first century.

## Abbreviations

<i>Ar</i>	Aristophanes
<i>Athanasius vita Ant</i>	<i>Athanasius Vita Antoni</i>
<i>Aug De Res Mort</i>	<i>Augustine De Resurrectione Mortuorum</i>
<i>Dio Cassius Hist. Rom</i>	<i>Dio Cassius Historiae Romanae</i>
<i>Diodorus Siculus Lib Hist</i>	<i>Diodorus Siculus Library History</i>
<i>Diog L De Vit Philos</i>	<i>Diogenes Laertius De Vita Philos</i>
<i>Ecc Hist</i>	<i>Eusebius Ecclesiastical History</i>
<i>Hdt Hist</i>	<i>Herodotus The Histories</i>
<i>Hp Off</i>	<i>Hippocrates, De officina medici</i>
<i>P.Grenf</i>	Papyrus Grenfell
<i>P.Eirene</i>	Papyrus Eirene
<i>P.Petaus</i>	Papyrus Petaus
<i>Philo Emb Gaius</i>	<i>Philo The Embassy to Gaius</i>
<i>Philo Flacc</i>	<i>Philo Flaccus</i>
<i>Plb</i>	<i>Polybius Histories</i>
<i>PSI</i>	Publicazioni della Società Italiana ( <i>Papiri greci e latini</i> )
<i>SB</i>	Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Aegypten
<i>SB Kopt</i>	Koptisches Sammelbuch
<i>Sept</i>	<i>Septuagint</i>
<i>Simon., Anth</i>	Simonides
<i>T.Mom.Louvre</i>	Tiquettes de momies du Musée du Louvre (Tablets)
<i>X. Eph</i>	Xenophon of Ephesus <i>Ephesiaca</i>
<b><u>Biblical</u></b>	
<i>Acts</i>	Acts of the Apostles (Book of Acts)
<i>1 Cor</i>	1 Corinthians (First Letter to Corinthians)
<i>1 Pet</i>	1 Peter (First Letter of Peter)
<i>Gal</i>	Galatians
<i>Gen</i>	Genesis
<i>Neh</i>	Nehemiah (Book of Nehemiah)
<i>NIV</i>	New International Version

NKJV	New King James Version
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
Rom	Romans
2 Kgs	2 Kings (Second book of Kings)

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## Introduction

The information we receive from Classical Greece, Rome, Egypt and others before us is contained in writings, monuments and memories. Ancient History seeks to understand their historical and cultural importance, both then and now.<sup>1</sup>

This thesis seeks to answer the question: *Is there evidence of Alexandrian culture influencing the first century Christians?* The question presents itself because some scholarship holds that there is little evidence of Christianity in Egypt in the first century,<sup>2</sup> and the lack of an Alexandrian mission in biblical or non-biblical literature specifically mentioning Christians in Egypt in the first century is influential in the general scholarly disposition towards the topic. Some scholars write of the doubt or lack of evidence of Christianity reaching Egypt prior to the second century, notably Terry Wilfong in the *Cambridge History of Egypt*:<sup>3</sup> “the earliest documentary and archaeological attestations of Christianity in Egypt are considered to be from the second century ... [but are not] secure in date ... [until] the third century.” Of those who write about a first century Egyptian presence few do so with any certainty, C. Wilfred Griggs being one exception: “Christianity was introduced into Egypt during the first century as is well attested...”<sup>4</sup> The pessimistic position naturally maintains that therefore there is no extra-biblical evidence of contact between Alexandrians and Christians in the first century CE, a position which is held because there are no discovered texts from Alexandria that mention Alexandrian (Greek) contact with Christians in the first century. The key word scholars look for in papyri as evidence is

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<sup>1</sup> Ancient History via the sub-disciplines of first century Christians or Graeco-Roman Alexandria examines significant micro-cultures and seeks to encounter these in their ancient and residual modern settings in order to understand their historical context.

<sup>2</sup> Donald P. Senior holds that there is ‘little historical grounding’ for Mark as the founder of the church in Alexandria: “Mark” *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, second edition. ed. Birger Pearson. (New York, 1997), pp.719-720; Hvalvik notes ‘we have no knowledge of the coming of Christianity to Alexandria’ Reidar Hvalvik, “Named Jewish Believers Connected with the Pauline Mission” *Jewish believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (Peabody, 2007), p.157

<sup>3</sup> Terry G. Wilfong, “The non-Muslim Communities: Christian Communities” *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Islamic Egypt 640-1517*. ed. Carl F. Petry. (Cambridge, 2008), p.176; also Birger A. Pearson, “Egypt” *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Vol. 1, Origins to Constantine* (Cambridge, 2006), p.336 – ‘On the origins of Christianity in Egypt our sources are silent until the early second century.’ Wilfong represents the pessimistic view, Pearson represents the optimistic view.

<sup>4</sup> C. Wilfred Griggs, *Early Egyptian Christianity from its Origins to 451CE, Third Edition*, (Leiden, 1993), p.229 – it should be noted Wilfong cites Griggs in *Cambridge History of Egypt*, 176 note 2; also see Joseph Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt: From Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian* (Princeton, 1995), p.230 - being positive yet less confident but supports a Judeo/Pagan first century Christianity in Egypt.

the Greek *χριστιανοί*<sup>5</sup> (Christians). The problem with this specificity is the implicit suggestion that the word Christian did not exist until, as the New Testament book of Acts texts indicate, it was at Antioch that the followers of Jesus Christ were first called Christians:

χρηματίσαι τε πρώτως ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ τοὺς μαθητὰς Χριστιανούς.<sup>6</sup>

“It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.” Acts 11:26<sup>7</sup>

Yet even here it is problematic for papyri texts as neither Jesus nor Paul used the term, which makes sense as it was pagans who first used it to describe the Jesus followers. The term does not appear in the Gospels or any of Paul’s texts, but does appear in 1 Peter 4:16:<sup>8</sup>

εἰ δὲ ὡς Χριστιανός, μὴ αἰσχυνέσθω, δοξαζέτω δὲ τὸν θεὸν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦτου.

“However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.”

This suggests the term must have emerged after Paul’s time and in the second half of the first century, although Paula Gooder regards its origins as obscure, possibly from the Latin due to the ending *ianus*.<sup>9</sup> However this ending is a quasi-ethnic ending,<sup>10</sup> and Gooder’s view here seems to either presume the Latin text was first, as *ianus* is seen in the *Vulgate*:

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<sup>5</sup> Or its variants; *χριστιανος* etc.

<sup>6</sup> The Greek *χρηματίσαι* (from verb *χρηματίζω*) can also imply “to transact business (on behalf of God),” “proclaim/to utter an oracle/divinely declared,” or “be called or admonished,” and thus this moment of ‘naming’ may have had more significance for *them*, than is traditionally proffered. <http://greeklexicon.org/lexicon/strongs/5537/>

<sup>7</sup> NIV and throughout this thesis except where indicated otherwise for context.

<sup>8</sup> Grudem suggests the date of the writing of 1 Peter as between 62-64CE which does make some logic as *Romans* was written before that and the word Christian does not appear there; Wayne A. Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter: An Introduction and Commentary – The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Leicester, 1988), pp.35-37.

<sup>9</sup> Paula Gooder, “In Search of the Early ‘Church’: The New Testament and the Development of Christian Communities” *The Routledge Companion to the Early Church*. eds. Gerard Mannion and Lewis Mudge. (Abingdon, 2008), p.13.

<sup>10</sup> It is a quasi-ethnicity suggested by this word ending, as the actual ending in Greek is only *ος*.

si autem ut Christianus non erubescat glorificet autem Deum in isto nomine;<sup>11</sup>

or that the word was spoken in Latin and transliterated into Greek - the latter seems more likely.<sup>12</sup>

Nevertheless, any existence of Christians in Alexandrian Egypt prior to Antioch would be disguised textually by the lack of this term of reference as they would potentially be seen and described as a particular group of Judaic and/or Hellenistic people living a certain ascetic life – perhaps one group among the many that fit Philo’s

*Therapeutae*,<sup>13</sup> whom he describes as follows:

*“but the deliberate intention of the philosopher is at once displayed from the appellation given to them; for with strict regard to etymology, they are called therapeutae and therapeutrides, from therapeuomai, “to heal” either because they possess an art of medicine ... or else because they have been instructed by nature and the sacred laws to serve the living God, who is superior to the good, and more simple than the one, and more ancient than the unit; with whom, however, who is there of those who profess piety that we can possibly compare?...”*

*“... But the therapeutic sect of mankind, being continually taught to see without interruption, may well aim at obtaining a sight of the living God, and may pass by the sun, which is visible to the outward sense, and never leave this order which conducts to perfect happiness.”*

Philo *De vita contemplativa* I. 2-3, 11

Eusebius alludes to them as Christian in his comments on Philo’s *De vita contemplativa*:

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<sup>11</sup> Jerome, *Vulgate* (Perseus): 1 Peter 4:16.

<sup>12</sup> The Greek text of the NT preceding any Latin version must suggest at best the word may have been spoken in Latin, however it is equally or perhaps more likely to have been spoken in Greek even if it were Roman/Latin speakers who coined it, as many spoke Greek as well.

<sup>13</sup> In the early nineteenth century Augustin Calmet wrote that “the whole of what Philo said would not amount to a proof” but suggests they were Jews who converted to Christianity and “many of the ancient fathers thought they were Christians” – Augustine Calmet with Charles Taylor, “Therapeutæ” *Calmet’s Great Dictionary of the Holy Bible* (Charlestown, 1813) – the age of this text though outdated still offers an interesting historical perspective; Eusebius states they were called Therapeutae “because the name Christian had not yet become well known everywhere” and they did as the Christians did in Acts of the Apostles (*cf.* Acts 4:32-34) *Ecc. Hist.* II. Xvii, 3-6.

“Thus it is not necessary to discuss at length whether he [Philo] gave them this description of himself, naturally adapting the name to their manner of life, or whether the first ones called themselves this from the beginning, since the title of Christian had not yet become well known everywhere.”

*Ecc Hist* II. xvii. 3-6.

Yet this specific term *therapeutae* is far from certain, and cannot at this point be used as a marker for Christianity.<sup>14</sup> Prior to Antioch, Christians or followers of Christ would be known as followers of “the Way.”<sup>15</sup> Additionally the early Egyptian based Christians may be rather indiscernible amidst the social groups of Egypt or Alexandria who carried names not dissimilar from non-Christians there, and who were counted amongst the other ethnicities or group categories in the census – as is now well known from census studies, Jews were counted as Greeks or within other Hellenistic groups.<sup>16</sup>

This thesis therefore takes an alternate approach. Rather than looking for evidence of Christians in Alexandrian texts or archaeology, I look for evidence of Alexandrian culture influencing Christians – as a marker for first century contact. Do the Christians say they encountered and converted people from Alexandria, and is there other evidence of Egypto-Alexandrian culture meeting Christian culture?

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<sup>14</sup> Philo lived between 15 BCE to 50 CE and wrote about this group/or groups in Alexandrian Egypt which he called the *Therapeutae* (not so much a name but a descriptive) whose aesthetic living resembled the Christian one (*cf* Acts 4). Christians may actually have been this group, or been among the *Therapeutae*, but at the present point of scholarship, it is uncertain exactly who Philo was writing about in Egypt in the first century, as amidst Philo’s description they may be a monastic group which the Christians were not necessarily.

<sup>15</sup> This thesis will for convenience use the term Christians irrespective of chronology, unless specific context calls for use of followers of ‘the Way.’

<sup>16</sup> In the foundational work: Willy Clarysse & Thompson, Dorothy. J., *Counting the People in Hellenised Egypt. Vol.2: Cambridge Classical Studies - Historical Studies* (Cambridge, 2006), pp.140, 145.

## Chapter One

### Why should Alexandria be a focus?

The first century Mediterranean and Middle East (Levant) was dominated by the Roman Empire whose geographical points of reference for this study are provided by but not limited to the cities of Rome, Jerusalem and Alexandria.

Alexandria was the cultural, educational and commercial centre of the Hellenised world. The entire Nile Valley was controlled from Alexandria, with Egypt supplying a critical portion of the grain for the city of Rome – Roman Emperors were aware that anyone who controlled Egypt could threaten central Rome by cutting off the grain supply;<sup>17</sup> a fact borne out when Vespasian held Egypt against Vitellius, and Mucianus advised Vespasian to starve Rome into submission.<sup>18</sup> Alexandria's economic power and influence cannot be overstated - for example, 500 ships at a time took grain from Alexandrian ports to Rome<sup>19</sup> - a shipping and ship building industry influenced largely by Jewish merchants,<sup>20</sup> who at times would withhold grain in order to extort greater concessions and rights from Rome. These boycotts would restrict grain supply, and was a cause of food riots within Rome and provinces in the empire.<sup>21</sup> Alexandria was seen as a place of refuge which explains why Jesus' parents may have fled there.<sup>22</sup>

The event is related in Mathew 2:14:

“When they had gone, he took the Child [Jesus] and His mother by night and departed for Egypt, where he stayed until the death of Herod,”

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<sup>17</sup> Livia Caponi, *Roman Egypt: Classical World Series* (London, 2011), p.42.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Grafton Milne, *A History of Egypt Vol 5: Under Roman Rule* (Cambridge, 2013), p.41. The only issue was that grain restriction and “starving” Rome was a slow process so Vespasian chose direct military action as it was quicker.

<sup>19</sup> Carlo Alfano, “Egyptian Influences in Italy” *Cleopatra of Egypt: From History to Myth*. eds. Susan Walker & Peter Higgs. (London, 2001), pp.276-291. Fraser emphasised the importance of corn specifically; P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford, 1972), 800.

<sup>20</sup> Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton, 1993), p.425; Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (London, 1997), p.117.

<sup>21</sup> Bruce Winter is willing to say it caused food riots throughout the empire – Bruce W. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth: The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids, 2001), p.6; however Garnsey is more cautious on the varied causes of food shortage and the definition of “starving” as being a temporary shortage of food or dying due to lack of it, and adds that the reference in Acts is an “exaggeration”: Peter Garnsey, *Famine and Food Supply in the Graeco-Roman World: Responses to the Risk and Crisis* (Cambridge, 1993), p.21. (orig. 1988).

<sup>22</sup> E. Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian, A Study in Political Relations* (Leiden, 1981), p.220.

more poignantly the text of Matthew 2:15 “And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘Out of Egypt I called my son’” – in a biblical context this is suggestive of a provenance for Jesus coming out of Egypt for his ministry, and also for potential Christian prosopographic connections to Egypt and Alexandria.

Contrary to the scholarly emphasis placed upon Jerusalem and Rome, the Jewish population of Alexandria is estimated between 300,000 to 500,000, compared to approximately 40,000 each for Rome and Jerusalem.<sup>23</sup> Philo makes the very broad generalisation that the population of the Jews in Palestine was enormous:

“the inhabitants of Judea are unlimited in number,”

Philo *Emb Gaius* XXXI. 215.

while this may seem he is referring to the Judean population generally, he makes a further statement in the next sentence:

“and a nation of great stature and personal strength”<sup>24</sup>

– a reference to the Jewish people as a nation. This likely gave the impression the population of Jews of Palestine in Roman times were vastly greater than anywhere else and thus contributed to the reduction of the importance of Alexandria. Evidence of the distorting influence still in modern times is seen where David Scholer mentions that the population of Jews in Alexandria was perhaps one million yet also states this population of Jews in Alexandria “was the single largest Jewish community outside of Palestine in this period” thus implicitly believing the Judean population to be larger when in fact it was closer to a tenth the size of Alexandria.<sup>25</sup> The brother of this

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<sup>23</sup> There is debate on the actual number however figures range from Philo’s suggestion of one million to modern scholars who set it at approximately 300,000: refer Tessa Rajak, “The Jewish Diaspora” *Cambridge History of the New Testament: Origins to Constantine*. Mitchell, M. M. & Young, F. M. eds. (Cambridge, 2006), p.55; A. C. Bouquet, *Everyday Life in New Testament Times* (London, 1959), p.12; C. D. Yonge. trans. *The Works of Philo: New Updated edition* (Massachusetts, 2006), p.xii. At the very least it was a population in hundreds of thousand compared to 40,000 for Rome/Jerusalem.

<sup>24</sup> Translation by C. D. Yonge, “On the Embassy to Gaius” *The Works of Philo*, (Massachusetts, 2013), p. 777; alternatively “Their bodies are of the finest quality and their souls of the highest courage ... nobly born” Philo *Emb. Gaius*. XXXI. 215 - translation F. H. Colson. (Loeb: London, 1962).

<sup>25</sup> David M Scholer, “Foreword: An Introduction to Philo Judaeus of Alexandria” *The Works of Philo*, (Massachusetts, 2013), p.ix. Scholer would seem to be drawing directly on Philo - as noted a population of hundreds of thousands of Jews is more likely, and such a figure would still be larger than Judea by a factor of ten.

famed Alexandrian Jewish writer Philo personally financed coating the Jerusalem gates in gold,<sup>26</sup> and another Alexandrian Jew loaned 20,000 Drachmas to King Herod,<sup>27</sup> displaying an aspect that the Alexandrian population was wealthier and more educated than Judeans or Galileans: this is important considering Paul targeted affluent educated people in his missionary work, and considering the first converts to Christianity were from Judaic/Jewish groups.

Mummification in the Egyptian method continued – taken up by the Greek Ptolemy kings of Egypt, and thence into the Roman period (Graeco-Roman Egypt) being used by Roman and Greek elites in Egypt and even further afield – some fifty mummies have been found in Rome itself.<sup>28</sup> It should be noted these are not ancient Egyptian Pharaoh mummies removed from tombs and transported there but are mummies of Roman resident elites, and thus this practice was via syncretism, transferred to Rome itself while still being undertaken in Egypt upon Egyptian, Greek, Roman, military, priestly and various elites of multicultural groups resident there. The cultural transfer included the pyramid concept, as one is found in ancient Rome today built by Cestius in 20 BCE.<sup>29</sup> Arthur Darby Nock engages this relic as a “meaningless ... imitation” and thus is in line with Nock’s disposition on diminishing any capacity for Egypt to influence the erudite cultures of Rome or its Hellenistic empire. This mummification aspect of Egyptian culture was persistent into the Roman era through the first century CE and beyond, as Nock records that a mummified body was found in a sarcophagus dated to the fourth/fifth century CE.<sup>30</sup> Aspects of classical Egyptian

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<sup>26</sup> Lee I. Levin, *Jerusalem: Portrait of the City in the Second Temple Period (538 B.C.E. – 70 C.E.)* (Philadelphia, 2002), p.237. Levin cites Mishna *Middot* 1,4, being a description of the gates, and Josephus *Wars* 5.5.3 (205). Philo’s brother plating the gates in gold and silver is also mentioned being done (generally citing Josephus) “by Alexander (Alabarch of Alexander, brother of the philosopher Philo)” by W. Harold Mare, *The Archaeology of the Jerusalem Area* (Eugene, 1987), p.144. Josephus actually says the gates had ‘gold and silver poured upon them by Alexander (father of Tiberius)’ – William Whiston. trans. *The Works of Josephus, Complete and Unabridged New updated edition* (Peabody, 1987): *Wars* 5.5.3 (205).

<sup>27</sup> Bouquet, *Everyday Life*, 134.

<sup>28</sup> Alfano, *Egyptian Influences*, 289; also Dorothy J. Thomson, *Memphis Under the Ptolemies* (New Jersey, 2012), p.253; Arthur Darby Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World: On the Antecedents of Baptism ex Mysteries of Egypt* - 2 Vols. ed. Zeph Stewart. (Oxford, 1972), p.287 note 62.

<sup>29</sup> Arthur Darby Nock, “Cremation and Burial in the Roman Empire”, *Harvard Theological Review*, 25, (1932), p.358; subsequently reproduced more prominently in; Arthur Darby Nock, *Essays on Religion*, 306.

<sup>30</sup> Nock, *Essays on Religion*, 287 note 62.

culture were inculcated into Alexandrian culture and from there mediated through Alexandria, permeated other first century cultures.

### **Christianity in the Roman Empire**

Christianity initially marked its presence in the Roman Empire via the small church or ecclesia communities. It established primarily through Paul, the Pharisee, both Greek and Jewish formally educated. Paul was an active persecutor of Christians, then Christian convert turned church planter. It is more accurate to refer to Paul as a persecutor of followers of 'the Way':

“I persecuted the followers of this Way (τὴν ὁδὸν) to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.”

Acts 22:4-5

This reference to 'the Way' is how the followers of Jesus were known due to his being quoted as saying Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ὁδὸς [John 14:6] (I am the way), prior to the word “Christian” coming into usage.<sup>31</sup> The various locations in which the New Testament states churches were planted are, apart from Galatia, actual geographical cities within first century Roman Empire.<sup>32</sup> The cultural reach and influence of Rome is not disputed even though Rome is some 1,000 kilometres from Alexandria or Jerusalem. Stark suggests that the diaspora were concentrated in port cities and that Paul tended to “missionize” port cities.<sup>33</sup> Given Alexandria was a port city, with a large Jewish community, it is difficult to imagine it escaped the missionary focus of the first century Christians, particularly as ports were Christianised before land cities.<sup>34</sup> Further, 71% of cities within 1,000 miles from Jerusalem had a church by 100CE.<sup>35</sup> There is little debate that Rome had Christians by the mid first century, and given

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<sup>31</sup> “the way” at Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4, John 14:6, Acts 18:26. At John 14:6 the Greek Ἐγώ εἰμι is literally “I – I am” ἡ ὁδὸς “the way.”

<sup>32</sup> This discussion does not engage the debates around northern or southern Galatia or which specific city or town was involved; Galatia is sufficiently defined within Roman empire geography.

<sup>33</sup> Rodney Stark, *Cities of God: The Real Story of how Christianity became an Urban movement and Conquered Rome* (New York, 2006), pp. 123, 132.

<sup>34</sup> Stark, *Cities of God*, 76 (Hypothesis 3-1).

<sup>35</sup> Stark, *Cities of God*, 77.



Alexandria is one third the distance to Rome (and potentially more welcoming and familiar) therefore, are we willing to allow the suggestion that Alexandria “must” have had a church within the first century and that Alexandria likely would have influenced Christians in/from Palestine, because it is only 300 kilometres (inside the 1,000 miles) from Alexandria to Jerusalem and only a few days travel by frequently passing ships – ships being the mode of choice for travellers?<sup>36</sup> Stark leaves us with poignant statistically validated markers:<sup>37</sup>

1. The diaspora were concentrated in port cities.
2. Port cities were Christianised first.
3. Paul’s missionary focus was on port cities.
4. 71% of cities within 1,000 miles from Jerusalem had a church by 100CE.
5. Greek was the vehicle for evangelising.
6. Larger cities were Christianised sooner than smaller ones.
7. Hellenistic cities had Christian congregations sooner than Roman ones.

We may conclude Alexandria fits all seven markers for a Christian presence in the first century within the empire of Rome.

### **Roman influence in the New Testament Corpus**

The book of *Romans* in the New Testament, written according to consensus in the mid to late 50s CE, had its occasion being written to the Christian churches in Rome. These churches in Rome were not started by Paul but already existed, presumably started by Peter. Romans is the largest written work by Paul who, although a Jew, had the highly valuable asset of Roman citizenship which allowed him the freedom of travel throughout the Roman Empire, allowing him to establish churches in the cities of the Eastern Roman Empire. The extent of Paul’s travels is exemplified by his various missionary journeys, and the extent to which Christians could be exposed to Roman culture is evident.

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<sup>36</sup> Stark, *Cities of God*, 74-75: It was 1,000 miles to journey to Rome which took three weeks.

<sup>37</sup> All seven markers are deduced from Stark’s data: Stark, *Cities of God*, 74-81, note hypotheses 3-3, 3-4 for points 6 and 7.

## Christians as Roman subjects – Disciplinary Methodology

In 1960 Edwin Judge wrote a seminal work unusually in the form of a short book, *The Social Pattern of the Christian Groups in the First Century*, which suggested Christians should be regarded as a historical group and the gateway to this was to see them as Roman subjects.<sup>38</sup> This was followed four years later by Nock who wrote a two volume work: *Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background*.<sup>39</sup> This was followed in 1972 by *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World: On the Antecedents of Baptism ex Mysteries of Egypt*.<sup>40</sup> These and other works of Nock both diminished any role of Egyptian influence outside Egypt and purified the Roman funerary iconography, and were very influential, as prominent scholars felt Nock was the expert in the field of ancient burial, religious customs and its Christian context; such as Arnaldo Momigliano; “Nock the great Cambridge scholar from whom I have learnt most about my present subject,”<sup>41</sup> and Witherington; “Nock who knew the Graeco-Roman world and literature perhaps better than any of those of his era who *also* had some expertise in the NT.”<sup>42</sup> This is equally well displayed by others: “one of the greatest scholars of Christian antiquity of the twentieth century ... Arthur Darby Nock, one of the few people in the field who could claim intellectual superiority”;<sup>43</sup> and “... ever since Arthur Darby Nock’s scathing critique of Francois Cumont’s work on pagan Roman funerary symbolism, scholars have been somewhat less than confident in their interpretation of the iconographic ... Roman funerary contexts.”<sup>44</sup> However Nock was writing from a Roman worldview, and saw a diminished role for any culture to be able to influence one which had conquered it. As one editor of a compendium to Rome noted “where Nock led, just about the entire field has followed for well over half a century ... Nock’s intervention allowed Classicists to

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<sup>38</sup> E. A. Judge, *The Social Pattern of the Christian Groups in the First Century: Some Prolegomena to the Identity of New Testament Ideas of Social Obligation* (London, 1960) – being the full title.

<sup>39</sup> Arthur Darby Nock, *Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background*, (New York, 1964).

<sup>40</sup> Arthur Darby Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World: On the Antecedents of Baptism ex Mysteries of Egypt* - 2 Vols. ed. Zeph Stewart. (Oxford, 1972).

<sup>41</sup> Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 149. “Cambridge” that is Cambridge Massachusetts, location of Harvard.

<sup>42</sup> Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, 1998), p.59 – the italics emphasising “also” are Witherington’s.

<sup>43</sup> Bart D. Erhman, *Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford, 2003), p.82.

<sup>44</sup> Leonard V. Rutgers, “Cemeteries and Catacombs” *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Rome*. ed. Paul Erdkamp. (Cambridge, 2013), pp.506-507.

heave a collective sigh of relief and leave issues of belief and symbolic meaning to their early Christian brethren.”<sup>45</sup> Nock’s influence was manifest in a scholarly excising of Egypt out of first century Christian studies and contributed to the lacuna in scholarship this thesis investigates.<sup>46</sup>

The lacuna which Edwin Judge identified in the discipline and sub-discipline scholarly methodology towards Ancient History and Christians was that, rather than a historical group under Roman rule, Christians were seen as a Jewish sect: this Judge described as a sociological fallacy. From his classical Ancient History training he sought to view the Christians “against the backdrop of the late Republican and early Imperial” Roman perspective.<sup>47</sup> That is, because these Christians were living under Roman rule, he sought to view them as subjects of Roman culture, and as one of the many disparate ethnic groups living under Roman Imperial laws, rather than seeing them (as had traditionally been done) as one of the many Judaic groups.

The second lacuna that Judge identified was, rather than being seen as historical texts of the first century Roman period, the New Testament corpus was regarded only as a theological writing. This for Judge was an ideological fallacy because it analysed “only part of the historical reality while considering this to be the entire or essential reality.”<sup>48</sup> These fallacies, “sociological” and “ideological” were for Judge the two “fundamental deficiencies in methodology” of which Judge is critical.<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, according to Judge, by example, viewing the New Testament as a Judaic

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<sup>45</sup> Jan Esler, “Introduction” *Life, Death and Representation: Some New Work on Roman Sarcophagi*. ed. Jas Esler and Janet Huskinson. (Berlin, 2011), p.10: the full quote being: “I think it little exaggeration to say that where Nock led, just about the entire field has followed for well over half a century. Whether in the direction of mythological narratives, and classical interpretations, or into the world of social meanings and mourning, let alone more directly archaeological issues of formal influence, typology and iconography, Nock’s twin formula of ‘classicism and culture’ reigns supreme.”

<sup>46</sup> Among other scholars that cite Nock in this way include the influential scholars: R. E. DeMaris, “Corinthian Religion and Baptism for the Dead (1 Corinthians 15:29): Insights from Archaeology and Anthropology” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 114, No.4 (1995), pp.662-673; A. J. M Wedderburn, *Baptism and Resurrection: Studies in Pauline Theology Against its Graeco-Roman Background* (Tubingen, 1987), pp.159-160; Rodney Stark, *Cities of God*, 53 and note 82, and Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 59.

<sup>47</sup> E. A. Judge, *The First Christians in the Roman World: Augustan and New Testament Essays*. James R. Harrison. ed. (Tubingen, 2008), p.10.

<sup>48</sup> E. A. Judge, “The Social Identity of the First Christians: A Question of Method in Religious History.” *Social Distinctives of the Christians in the First Century: Pivotal Essays by E. A. Judge*. David M. Scholer. ed. (Grand Rapids, 2008), p.124 – the reception is outlined in pp.118-121.

<sup>49</sup> Judge, *First Christians*, 127.

theological narrative is the idealised view, (ideological fallacy) and romanticises the New Testament theological perspective of what Judge regards as a corpus of historical occasional documents. He also comments that Deissmann romanticised poverty. The extent of social and historical accuracy within the New Testament texts called for them to be seen as historical texts written by a social group living as Roman subjects. In more recent times N. T. Wright in suggesting that new categories of research are needed confirms the problem Judge so long ago identified: “the tools of our age seem inadequate for the data set before us” with the problem being “some philosophers are today moving away from materialism, or even moderate realism, and back towards *idealism*,” and the remedy “the theologians, kept prisoner for so long in *idealist* strongholds are finally rejoicing to discover some form of *realism*.”<sup>50</sup> Therefore systematic and philosophical traditions in method had created ‘strongholds’ producing anachronistic conclusions<sup>51</sup> manifesting as lacunas. The redefining of these two lacunas by Judge eventually methodologically united Ancient Historians with New Testament scholars in what became a new consensus, which was formalised by specific mention as the “new consensus” in 1977 by Abraham Malherbe.<sup>52</sup> The new consensus meant that the evidence of Roman influence on first century Christians and their texts was a historical reality – a consensus which still stands. This opens the possibility for Christians to be influenced by other significant cultures.

### **Hellenistic Egypt and the Ptolemies**

Macedonian Greeks conquered Egypt under Alexander the Great in 332 BCE, and scholarly tradition has held that the native Egyptians were not permitted to learn Greek, yet Manetho is an important exception.<sup>53</sup> Scholarship has held that the Greek culture was not influenced by the Egyptian culture, a position strongly influenced by Momigliano since his 1975 work and lectures.<sup>54</sup> The argument is that the high culture

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<sup>50</sup> N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God* (London, 1992), p.96. (my italics added for emphasis).

<sup>51</sup> Judge, *First Christians*, 127.

<sup>52</sup> For original mention refer Abraham J. Malherbe, *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (Baton Rouge, 1977), p.31; subsequently reproduced in *Social Distinctives of the Christians in the First Century: Pivotal Essays by E. A. Judge*. David M. Scholer. ed. (Massachusetts, 2008), p.127.

<sup>53</sup> Ian. S. Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism* (Cambridge, 2011), p.11.

<sup>54</sup> Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization* (Cambridge, 1975).

of the Greeks who civilised the world would not and could not allow themselves to be influenced by the “barbarian Egyptians,” the language barrier being the proof.<sup>55</sup> This is suggestive of both a sociological and ideological fallacy.<sup>56</sup> The evidence that the Greek literature did not appear to show Egyptian influence was additional proof of separate cultures. This was emphasised further when Orientalism came into the Classics - it “constrained scholars to canonical Greek texts.”<sup>57</sup> This scholarly presumed external cultural gap is further articulated by Paul McKechnie as an incorrect internal divide: “Alexandria as the home of Greek literature, and Alexandria, as the heart of the empire of the Ptolemies, too seldom appears in scholarly literature to be one city.”<sup>58</sup> McKechnie further comments that due to the way scholarship presents it, biblical and Judaic Alexandria may seem like “yet a third place.”<sup>59</sup> Contra to Momigliano, there is a significant possibility of the opposite, that the Greeks were indeed influenced by Egyptian culture, suggested by some non-literary historical realities. In 1899 Mahaffey saw a “persistence of the Egyptian element in Alexandria.”<sup>60</sup> Ian Moyer in his 2011 book, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism*, using the literary argument, proposes that the Greeks were influenced by Egyptian culture – while the literary approach may be the more difficult route to overturn the non-influence tradition, it nevertheless is a very important one and gains support considering certain other historical realities.

Alexander the Great made himself, or was proclaimed as pharaoh in 331BCE – just one year after conquering Egypt.<sup>61</sup> Alexander also planned to build a pyramid sized tomb for his father:<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Moyer critiques Momigliano’s comment that “no significant interaction could take place because of the language barrier” as now being “untenable”: Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism* (Cambridge, 2011), p.31.

<sup>56</sup> Edwin Judge sees this as a sociological fallacy, as he states the Greeks did not see the Egyptians as barbarians but respected them as a culture older than their own – discussion held with Judge, April 2015.

<sup>57</sup> Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, p.8.

<sup>58</sup> Paul McKechnie, “Ptolemy Philadelphus: A New Moses” *Ptolemy II Philadelphus and His World*. eds. Paul McKechnie and Philippe Guillaume. (Leiden, 2008), p.x.

<sup>59</sup> McKechnie, *Ptolemy Philadelphus*, p.x.

<sup>60</sup> Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, p.19 note 12 - citing John P. Mahaffey, *A History of Egypt under the Ptolemaic Dynasty*. Forgotten books reprint edition. (London, 2013). (original 1899).

<sup>61</sup> In the classical Egyptian kingly titula rite he was accepted as ‘King of Upper and lower Egypt beloved of Ammon and selected of Ra.’ Alexander “as Pharaoh” also sacrificed to the sacred Apis Bull

“A tomb for his father Philip was to be constructed to match the greatest of the pyramids of Egypt, buildings which some persons count among the seven greatest works of man.”  
Diod Sic *Lib Hist* 18.4.5

The Macedonian Greeks became pharaohs as the Ptolemy Dynasty of Egypt for approximately 300 years (until 30 BCE). Ptolemaic kings and queens are depicted in full Egyptian pharaoh regalia on statuary and monuments within Egypt but as Greeks on coins or rings suggesting a dual-culture representation.<sup>63</sup> Alexander the Great was entombed in the Egyptian style, and while Polybius (*Hist* xv 25 3-8) notes the bones of Ptolemy IV were placed in an urn, the Egyptian mummification method included body parts being placed in burial urns (canopic jars), so this Polybius reference may still allude as much to mummification as it does to cremation or burial. In this same period, third century BCE, cremation is evident via Hadra vases, which are specific, again, to the Chatby site Alexandria.<sup>64</sup> Yet many of the Greek Ptolemy kings were in fact mummified in the classical Egyptian fashion. Gunter Hölbl notes the Ptolemies adopted traditional pharaoh *Horus* names and in the temple to Amun-Re and Horus in the Bahariya Oasis, Alexander was depicted as a new Thutmosis III. Further the High Priest of Ptah of Memphis (the traditional capital of Egypt) carried out the Ptolemaic coronation ceremonies in a wholly Egyptian rite.<sup>65</sup>

These aspects suggest a certain degree of Egyptian cultural influence within the Alexandrian based Greek kings.<sup>66</sup> Due to a focus on the literary aspects, these

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(compared to the Persian king who killed the bull) and consulted Egyptian oracles and had Egyptian priests in attendance. - N. G. L. Hammond, *The Macedonian State: The Origins, Institutions and History* (Oxford, 1989), p.208.

<sup>62</sup> Diodorus Siculus *Library of History* 18.4.5; and cited by Hammond, *The Macedonian State*, 29.

<sup>63</sup> A dual cultural or bicultural aspect has support from Katelijn Vandorpe, “A successful but fragile biculturalism: The Hellenisation Process in the Upper Egyptian town of Pathyris under Ptolemy VI and VIII” *Agypten zwischen innerem Zwist und äußerem Druck: Die Zeit Ptolomaïos VI. bis VIII – International Symposium Heidelberg 16-19.9.2007*. eds. Andrea Jordens & Joachim Friedrich Quack. (Harrassowitz Verlag: Wiesbaden, 2011), 292-308.

<sup>64</sup> Some of the primary evidence for their association with cremation comes from a letter 1893 sent to the Museum by E. E. Farman. The publication mentions cremation on page 19 and 34, however the main focus of the vases appears to be in their inscribed dates, as a means of dating actual graves. Brian F. Cook, *Inscribed Hadra Vases: In the Metropolitan Museum of Art/ Metropolitan Museum of Art Paper – Paper No.12*, New York, 1966), pp.19,34.

<sup>65</sup> Gunter Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire* (London, 2001), pp.78, 85.

<sup>66</sup> Further afield it is suggested that “instead of Hellenising Asia, Alexander the Great tended to Asiatize Macedonia,” Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, 16 quoting Edmund Burke. More so, while

archaeological historical realities appear to have been overlooked and, it can be argued, do suggest remnant classical Egyptian culture persisted and influenced Alexandrian (Greek) culture, which subsequently permeated Alexandrian culture generally.

### **Alexandrian influence in first century Christians**

Given that in the formative years of Christianity the movement itself was from out of Judaism and its earliest converts were likely Jews, the presence of Judaism in Alexandrian Egypt is important.

Initially from an Old Testament view, regarding the Israelites, the Bible records the majority of them went to Egypt rather than to Jerusalem to re-establish their capital:

“all the remnant of Judah ... and Jeremiah the Prophet... so they went to the land of Egypt... to Pharaoh’s house at Tahpanhes”                      Jeremiah 43:4-7.

Scholarship debates the historicity of this movement of people recorded in Jeremiah. John Bright was very influential in positioning Jeremiah against the historical background of the Ancient Near East in his 1965 work.<sup>67</sup> The literature after Bright discusses Jeremiah through various viewpoints. C. F. Kiel placed the narrative within eastern Pelusium Egypt as their historical destination. Others saw genre and tradition anchored around a central historicity. Geoffrey Parke-Taylor, explores the “*genre* of doublets” and prophecy as poetry. He engages Jer 46 as cognate to Jer 43, which “may express poetic imagination at work”(p. 116). Yet in Jer 46:14 Parke-Taylor accepts poetry written around a historical event; “the internal references in the poem to Migdol and Tahpanhes and to Memphis would indicate Babylonian invasion of Egypt (ie 568 BCE) [which] is recorded in a Babylonian source (p.118). J. A. Thompson cites “symbolic acts” present in the narrative however it still is willing to anchor it in Egyptian archaeology by analysing the Hebrew words *melet* (clay mortar) and *malbēn* (brick kiln or pavement) as the stones of Pharaoh’s house. He also engages discussion of what this remnant constituted in a historical movement of

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acknowledging that Asiatics copied the Greeks, Moyer cites Grote in that the Greeks became Asiatized, Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, 17.

<sup>67</sup> John Bright, *Jeremiah: A New Translation with introduction and Commentary*. (New York, 1965).

people (p.668). H Lalleman – de Winkel, focuses on textual and source criticism, that Baruch may have been responsible for redaction of the text with such amendments included in new scrolls as they were rewritten (p.39). Further the text is regarded to be authentic Jeremianic language but subject to cultic stereotypical phrases. Yet an element of historical movement of people is still entertained interspersed with cultic nationalism. (p.226). Within variant views a central historicity is particularly held in the majority view, with which this thesis aligns.<sup>68</sup>

### **Jews at Elephantine Egypt**

Perhaps what would be disbelieved or rejected if there were not irrefutable evidence is that there was a long standing Jewish population at Elephantine in Egypt, complete with their own temple. Elephantine some 500 kilometres from Alexandria, gains its name as a translation of the Egyptian *Abu* meaning elephant, a reference to the ivory trading post it facilitated.<sup>69</sup> Yet in the Persian period and after it supported a Jewish military garrison, who left behind numerous papyri in Aramaic and a ruined temple to Yahveh,<sup>70</sup> or more specifically *Yahu*.<sup>71</sup> These Jews may in fact have descended from those who arrived with Jeremiah; interestingly they left behind numerous papyri written in Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke.<sup>72</sup> This Jewish presence is testament to the spread of immigration into Egypt.

The Ptolemies were instrumental in Jewish migration into Egypt in the centuries immediately preceding Christianity, as recorded in the *Letter of Aristeas* 12-13, but particularly 13, where it records:

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<sup>68</sup> Gerald Keown, Pamela J. Scalise, Thomas G. Smothers, *Word biblical Commentary, Jeremiah 26-52*. (Dallas, 1995), p.256 citing John Bright; C. F. Kiel, *Commentary on the Old Testament in ten volumes, vol VIII, Jeremiah Lamentations*. eds. Kiel & Dellitsch. (Grand Rapids, 1988), p. ; Geoffrey H. Parke-Taylor, *The formation of the book of Jeremiah: Doublets and recurring Phrases*. (Atlanta 2000), pp. 116,118; J. A. Thompson, *Book of Jeremiah*. (Grand Rapids, 1980), p.668; H Lalleman – de Winkel, *Jeremiah in the prophetic Tradition: An Examination of the Book of Jeremiah in the Light of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*. (Leuven 2000), pp. 39,226.

<sup>69</sup> Robert B. Jackson, *At Empire's Edge: Exploring Rome's Egyptian Frontier* (Yale, 2001), p.114.

<sup>70</sup> James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Times: A History of the Early World* (London, 1944), p.232 (orig 1916).

<sup>71</sup> Leon Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History* (Grand Rapids, 1970), p.410.

<sup>72</sup> Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History*, 410.



“the number of those whom he [Ptolemy I] transported from the country of the Jews to Egypt amounted to no less than a hundred thousand.”<sup>73</sup>

There is a consensus among scholars that the New Testament books and letters were written by 120 CE. The New Testament writers themselves state that they encountered Alexandrians and Alexandrian culture during the formative years of first century Christianity. The New Testament book of Acts records the development of the early Christian communities. At Acts 6:9 it states that Alexandrians were in Jerusalem disputing with Stephen and other followers of ‘the Way’ – both a meeting and a clash of cultures:

“Then there arose some from what is called the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen.”

Acts 18:24 introduces Apollos, a high status Jew born in Alexandria and trained in the scriptures:

“Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.”

Ephesus was the site of one of the early churches. Within Acts chapter 18:26-28 the Alexandrian born Apollos is very active in Christian circles and is presented as a minister of the Christian faith, publicly declaring Jesus:

“So he [Apollos] began to speak boldly in the synagogue ... Aquila and Priscilla [Paul’s friends] heard him ... the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to

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<sup>73</sup> *Letter of Aristeas* 12-13: “[12] Thinking that the time had come to press the demand, which I had often laid before Sosibius of Tarentum and Andreas, the chief of the bodyguard, for the emancipation of the Jews who had been transported from Judea by the king's father – [13] for when by a combination of good fortune and courage he had brought his attack on the whole district of Coele-Syria and Phoenicia to a successful issue, in the process of terrorizing the country into subjection, he transported some of his foes and others he reduced to captivity. The number of those whom he transported from the country of the Jews to Egypt amounted to no less than a hundred thousand. Of these he armed thirty thousand picked men and settled them in garrisons in the country districts. (And even before this time large numbers of Jews had come into Egypt with the Persian, and in an earlier period still others had been sent to Egypt to help Psammetichus in his campaign against the king of the Ethiopians. But these were nothing like so numerous as the captives whom Ptolemy the son of Lagus transported).”

receive him [Apollos]; and when he [Apollos] arrived, he greatly helped ... publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.” Acts 18:26-28

The first letter to the Corinthian church, 1 Corinthians, highlights Apollos as a Christian brother, and Apollos influencing others to become followers of Jesus Christ, to be Christians:

“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed [in Jesus], I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase;”

1 Cor 3:5-6

“our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you [at Corinth church] with the brethren.”

1 Cor 16:12

The text of Acts also mentions that Paul travelled on Alexandrian ships:<sup>74</sup> as the journey to Rome in favourable weather was some three to ten days,<sup>75</sup> the time was added to by the time ships spent in ports along the way. This lengthy journey in the close environment of a ship may plausibly be seen as providing opportunity for further cultural interaction with Alexandrian merchants, ship crew, and private passengers (of whom Paul was one).<sup>76</sup>

### **Disciplinary Methodology and Lacuna**

Historically the possibility of Christians going to Alexandria in the first century has been ruled out, (or so lacking in evidence that it cannot be argued sufficiently) even though the Eastern Church and Coptic writings record that Egypt was Mark’s missionary circuit.<sup>77</sup> Earlier scholars were more matter of fact on Mark in Egypt, as

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<sup>74</sup> Acts 27:6.

<sup>75</sup> Bouquet, *Everyday Life*, 100 – it was a sixty three day journey via the northern land route.

<sup>76</sup> The commercial ships were up to 180 feet long and were also designed to carry passengers: Thomas R. Hatina, “Rome and its Provinces” *The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social and Historical Contexts*. Joel B. Green & Lee Marten McDonald. eds. (Grand Rapids, 2013), p.564.

<sup>77</sup> A full discussion of this tradition is beyond the scope here; A very good survey of the tradition is within L. W. Barnard, “St Mark and Alexandria” *The Harvard Theological Review*, 7,2, (1964), 145-150; for this tradition on Mark via Jerome see A. Cole, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids, 1979), p.41; for this Markan tradition via the Coptic Church see Birger A. Pearson, “Egypt” *Cambridge History of Christianity: Origins to Constantine*. M. M. Mitchell & F. M. Young eds. (Cambridge, 2006), p.336; also K. S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity Vol.1: The First Five Centuries*. (London, 1947), p.9 note 157; Eusebius mentions the tradition also: *Ecclesiastical History* book II XVI.

noted by Wallis Budge in 1889 “within a hundred years of Christianity being preached in Alexandria by St. Mark, a large part of the population had become Christian.”<sup>78</sup> The lacuna which would overturn such stances on Mark began with Johann Gustav Droysen’s *Geschichte des Hellenismus* (1836-43) which influentially saw the Hellenistic period as a “pivotal transition between paganism and the predestined triumph of Christianity”<sup>79</sup> – but only as a western triumph. Around the time of Droysen writing, Egyptology was emerging as a discipline, fuelled mostly by Christian scholars seeking to find archaeological evidence to support the Biblical Old Testament claims, therefore these two Christianisation views had unintended alignment.<sup>80</sup> The idealistic fallacy identified by Judge is supported by N. T. Wright’s aversion to theological strongholds as noted.<sup>81</sup> Droysen’s *Hellenismus* influenced Momigliano towards what was seen as paving the way for Christendom. Nock in his 1964 work on ancient religious customs was influential - many (most) scholars saw Nock as the expert in things Egyptian. Prominent scholars looking to Egypt, would cite Nock, and then look away. To a large extent the scholarly dispositions became tacitly either for, or against, biblical historical reliability, which determined whether Egypt was “in” or “out” in terms of influence. Internally the worldviews collided as, for example, within Christian scholars the Egyptologist Christians sought to show Egyptian influence to prove Biblical claims, whereas the Theologians sought to disprove Egypto-Biblical influence in order to maintain the purity of the origins of Christian philosophy. This had so much earlier been identified in the late nineteenth

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<sup>78</sup> He notes just as matter of fact, that Mark “preached in Egypt” around 55CE but certainly in the age of Nero: Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *The Mummy* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (New York, 1974), pp.67, 310, 353. (orig. 1893).

<sup>79</sup> Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, 11.

<sup>80</sup> The extant Biblical/Egyptian socio-archaeology was substantiated when, via modern scientific archaeology, monuments bearing the name Pharaoh Ramesses were discovered throughout the Nile Valley, the same Ramesses whose city the Hebrews both built and passed by during the Exodus (Ex 12:37, Gen 47:11). In 1822 French code-breaker, Champollion deciphered hieroglyphics allowing the name Ramesses to be read in hieroglyphics and observed on monuments throughout Egypt, and also in the 1870s Sir Flinders Petrie set down the in situ evidence scientific method which became the standard practice of modern Egyptology and Archaeology. Notably the name Ramesses was unknown to Egyptology/Archaeology prior to this discovery – yet Biblical scribes knew of it at least 3,000 years before modern archaeological science – science had hitherto not believed the Biblical narrative on the Ramesses name. The discovery saw an ὄχλος of Christian Biblical academics descend upon Egypt seeking to prove Biblical claims, inaugurating the emergence of Egyptology as a discipline. On Ramesses in Egypt see David Rohl, *A Test of Time: The Bible from Myth to History* (London, 1995) - for Christian Egyptology origins see pp. 1, 114; on Ramesses see pp.113-117, 131, 149, 164.

<sup>81</sup> Wright, *Christian Origins*, 96 (as previously cited).

and early twentieth century by famed Egyptologist Gaston Maspero: “Christian apologists, restrained by a dread of awkward consequences to which they would have exposed themselves...led them to see only the ridiculous or indecent side [of Egyptian] ceremonies.”<sup>82</sup>

The real issue here, however, was that scholars of first century Christian or, first century Graeco-Roman studies, due to disciplinary divides, did not read into classical Egypt, and thus were reliant on Nock as seemingly the only one who did. Likewise, as alluded to by McKechnie, many scholars of Ptolemaic or Roman Egypt/Alexandria did not read outside Greek literature. If they did they regarded classical Egypt to have ended with the Persian conquest, likewise any possible influence of it.<sup>83</sup> Contra to this, Moyer commented on Momigliano that his work was “remarkable” for its absence of Egypt, stating the riposte “I address the absence of Egypt that Momigliano articulated.”<sup>84</sup> The sociological fallacy crept in and was picked up by Christian scholarship which saw Egypt as “Egypt of the Old Testament” and so very pagan that early Christianity, like the high culture Greek Ptolemies, could not and would not allow itself to be influenced by the “barbarian Egyptians.” At its most fundamental level this overlooks what Acts tells us about Apollos the Alexandrian. The concept continues to be overlooked by modern scholars: the consensus is represented by Margaret Mitchell’s comments in 2006 stating that “Egypt was out of Paul’s orbit”<sup>85</sup> - yet Wayne Meeks counters this by suggesting Apollos the Alexandrian “was drawn into Paul’s orbit.”<sup>86</sup> This anti-Egypt scholarly “consensus” saw a dismissal of the Eastern tradition of both the Markan missionary work in Egypt and his Bishopric of Alexandria.

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<sup>82</sup> Gaston Maspero, *New Light on Ancient Egypt*. Translated from French by Elizabeth Lee. (London, 1909), p.53 (orig. 1908).

<sup>83</sup> Classical Egypt in a very practical sense was finished but aspects of its religious culture persisted.

<sup>84</sup> Moyer (somewhat awkwardly) comments regarding Momigliano - “remarkable for its absence from his account is the ancient Egyptians,” and “significant absence of Egypt in his lectures.” Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, 1-2, and p.1 note 2.

<sup>85</sup> Mitchell, Margaret M. “Gentile Christianity” *Cambridge History of Christianity: Origins to Constantine*, eds. M. W. Mitchell & F. M. Young. Cambridge, 2006, pp.103-124.

<sup>86</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (New Haven, 2003), p.61.

## Contextual Conclusions

The preceding discussion has outlined the origins of and suggested a lacuna in scholarship of first century studies, and the potential for Alexandrian influence in the first century Christians. The discussion considered the disciplinary dynamic historically where secular scholars sought to dismiss biblical Egypt in order to diminish biblical historicity, and theologians sought likewise to dismiss Egypt for reasons of maintaining Christian philosophical purity. Additionally the idealised view by scholars of Classical Greece and Rome held that Egyptian culture was not capable of influencing the cultures of those nations by whom they were conquered.

Theologians and secular scholars were therefore unlikely partners in a lacuna - dismissing Egyptian/Alexandrian influence in the first century cultures, a lacuna, like the Egyptian influence in the Ptolemies which Moyer asserts is a “gap that continues to the present.”<sup>87</sup>

## Syncretism and Ancient Israel

The issue of syncretism associated with ancient Israel and its surrounding cultures is not disputed. The traditional consensus has been based upon syncretism between Israel and Canaanite deities and culture, which Mark Smith notes is “a historical reconstruction within scholarly thought.” Mark Smith notes that beyond this consensus there has been wide disagreement.<sup>88</sup>

On the contrary no consensus exists on the origins of monotheism in Ancient Israel.<sup>89</sup> However the Egyptian context does emerge with the famous monotheism introduced into Egypt by Pharaoh Akhenaton. Therefore if one accepts Israel’s earlier presence in Egypt under Moses or Joseph as historical, the seeds of monotheism reception or syncretism was present as one possible source – the only question being, if this was the source which way did the influence flow: Egypt to Israel, or Israel to Egypt. Smith considers that a section of the population of Israel likely held a sense that they had separate traditions of origins in Egypt.<sup>90</sup> In this context those born in Egypt held a

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<sup>87</sup> Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, 1.

<sup>88</sup> Mark Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*, second edition (Grand Rapids, 2002), p.4.

<sup>89</sup> Smith, *The Early History of God*, x.

<sup>90</sup> Smith, *The Early History of God*, 31.

varying identity to those born in the hill country, or those born closer to Jerusalem. The implications for syncretism also come from mixed marriages with other nations:

“And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.” 1Kgs 11:8

One view may be that the biblical texts are at least Hebrews’ recording of their own sociological events. Mentioning this of themselves, that this syncretistic socio-religious interchange was occurring lends itself to a historical reality - at least that is how they saw it. It is therefore helpful to consider some of the events which they saw as syncretistic risk or actual syncretism, as recorded in biblical narratives.

In the time of Jacob these foreign items were being carried with them:

“And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, ‘Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments.’” Gen 35:2.

In the mosaic period preceding the promised land conquest is both a prophesy and the outcome:

“And the Lord said to Moses: “Behold, you will rest with your fathers; and this people will rise and play the harlot with the gods of the foreigners of the land, where they go to be among them, and they will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them.” Deut 31:16.

The problem persisted in Joshua’s era:

“Now therefore,” he said, “put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel.” Jos 24:23, Judg 10:16.

In the book of Samuel the presence of idols takes prominence: “Then Samuel spoke to all the house of Israel, saying, “If you return to the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the foreign gods and the Ashtoreths from among you, and prepare your hearts for the Lord, and serve Him only.” 1 Sam 7:3

King Manasseh experience wrath and redemption as a result of syncretism:

“Therefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters, and carried him off to Babylon.” After repentance and returning to Yahweh, Manasseh was returned to the City of David where “He took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the Lord.” 2 Chr 33:15.

These narratives present the risk and actual detrimental effects, but more so that the matter worsens, or syncretism is increasingly likely as time passes and the Israelites encounter more foreign cultic motifs.

In the age of the prophets, Israelite integration into the Persian Empire is narrated:

“The King loved Esther more than all the other women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so he set the royal crown upon her head and made her Queen instead of Vashti.” Esth 2:17. With Esther as Queen, some level of syncretism is likely.

However, the manifestation of the syncretism from a sociological and cultural or nation state sense is related in the book of Nehemiah where the culture is being rapidly lost:

“In those days I also saw Jews who had married women of Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab. And half of their children spoke the language of Ashdod, and could not speak the language of Judah, but spoke according to the language of one or the other people,” and

“So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, “You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things?” Neh 13:23-25

It is a recurrent theme in the Old Testament of Israel encountering God’s ire from intermixing with those other cultures, largely as this may or often would lead them to worship other Gods or worshipping foreign religious rites. This may be seen as a

precursor to Jewish and Judeo-Christian syncretism in Greco-Roman Egypt in the first few centuries CE.

The purity of the Jewish culture in Alexandrian Egypt is also debated. The Jews being Egyptianised is mentioned in the third fragment of *Acta Isidori*: “the Jews live after the fashion of the Egyptians.”<sup>91</sup> Though debated somewhat as to being historical or a novel, Schäfer who makes the apologetic for Jewish culture is willing to accredit *Acta Isidori* as fiction but with historical value.<sup>92</sup> However Victor Tcherikover and Alexander Fuks give no indication of fiction but suggest matter of factly that the text’s history and characters are validated by Philo’s reference to the dispute of the Claudius delegation in 41CE.<sup>93</sup> Naturally, the text would be referring to Alexandrian Jews, an acculturation due to their long history in Egypt since their release by Persia in 525 BCE and forced immigration by Ptolemy I, and importantly, as many of the first Christian converts were Jews, like Apollos, an importing of some aspects of Alexandrian culture into the New Testament worldview is likely. Even if it were the case that Egypt was out of Paul’s range, the New Testament writers suggest Paul did not need to go to Egypt or Alexandria, as Alexandrians were willing to come to him. Alexandrian mobility suggests Paul had opportunity to encounter that culture in his travels.<sup>94</sup>

The fundamental principle here then, is that when two cultures encounter each other, it ought to be reflected in the texts and/or in adoption of cultural traits foreign to the social group (in this case Judeo Christian and Hellenistic converts), as indeed demonstrated by the new consensus after Judge, that Graeco-Roman culture appears in the Christian social groups as displayed and manifested in New Testament texts. Similarly then, this thesis seeks to explore the evidence for the extent to which the Alexandrian Christian cultural exchange, suggested by but not limited to Apollos

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<sup>91</sup> Also discussed by M. Whittaker, *Jews and Christians: Greco Roman Views: Cambridge Commentary on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200BC – 200AD* (Cambridge, 1984), p.110-112.

<sup>92</sup> Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes towards the Jews in the Ancient World* (London, 1997), p.153.

<sup>93</sup> Victor A. Tcherikover and Alexander Fuks, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum Volume II* (Cambridge, 1960), pp. 67-70.

<sup>94</sup> Stark, *Cities of God*, 74 generally, and 75 for Paul specifically.



as a 'type,'<sup>95</sup> and foreign burial practices appearing in the socio-archaeology of Graeco-Roman Egypt and New Testament first century era, and any such intercultural contact, should be evident in the socio-archaeology, which in turn may support evidence, or be an evidentiary marker for early Christianity in Egypt.

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<sup>95</sup> On Apollos as a representative of a first century Alexandrian Judeo-Christian colony see Modrzejewski, *The Jews Rameses to Hadrian*, 230.

## Chapter Two

### A Discussion of Method

#### Introduction

This thesis seeks to explore aspects of Egyptian culture persistent in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt which mediated through Alexandria may be apparent in New Testament (Christian) culture as evidence of both influence in Christianity, and early Christianity in Egypt. However the problem for this thesis in establishing first century evidence of this cultural interaction is that particular foci may not sufficiently be in evidence to establish the overall case, and thus a multidisciplinary approach is necessary and is supported by noted historians.

#### Historical Method

Witherington cites B. F. Meyer who suggested “it is wrong to decide historicity questions in peremptory fashion by a single acid test,”<sup>96</sup> suggesting applying the pure scientific method to humanities is incomplete,<sup>97</sup> or “the final task of the historian is to gather up the evidence and to describe that event in such a manner that is shown to lie within the structure of human life and to be intelligible to that context.”<sup>98</sup>

The standard method of statistics is to establish a hypothesis and then attempt to prove the hypothesis wrong - if one fails to prove the hypothesis wrong then the hypothesis can be presumed correct. The statistical syllogism is, in trying to prove one’s own hypothesis wrong, if you are wrong (fail to prove it wrong) then you are right.<sup>99</sup> By example, the hypothesis that the Egyptian culture did not influence the

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<sup>96</sup> Ben Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis, 1990). p. 24.

<sup>97</sup> The conventional academic or scientific method is to take a very specific methodological focus. It may be a particular chemical process for analysing the clay in pottery to determine its origin, or the graffiti of Alexandrian merchants in the Roman port of Puteoli, both can suggest certain cultural exchange – however these do not explain overall cultural responses – they may explain the what, but not the who or why.

<sup>98</sup> Witherington, *Christology*, 15; citing E. Hoskins & N. Davey, *The Riddle of the New Testament* (London, 1958).

<sup>99</sup> This does carry the Idealistic fallacy, that just because you prove another hypothesis wrong does not mean yours is correct, you may be wrong also. Statistics has an allowance for this where the acceptance or rejection of a hypothesis is done “with certain degrees of confidence” being either 98%, 95%, or 90% confidence. There are two types of errors in statistics: Type I – rejecting a correct hypothesis; and Type II – failure to reject a false hypothesis (accepting a false one). Further reading on hypothesis errors see: Alan H. Kvanli, C. Stephen Guynes, Robert J. Pavur, *Introduction to Business Statistics: A Computer Integrated Approach* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (St Paul, 1992), p.258.

Ptolemaic Greeks would have been difficult to maintain if it had been subject to a broad range of evidence in this contra-hypothesis method attempting to prove it wrong, rather than accept it as correct.<sup>100</sup>

Michael Licona lists five foundations of a scientifically reliable hypothesis:<sup>101</sup>

1. Explanatory Scope – it includes the most relevant data;
2. Explanatory Power – the quality with which it explains the facts;
3. Plausibility – explainable by other literature of other disciplines;
4. Less *ad hoc* – has less non-evidence assumptions;
5. Illumination – sheds light on other areas as well.

To Licona's list it is useful to add:

6. Broad test - should be subject to test by a broad range of evidence.

The underlying philosophy of this point 6 is; that the greater the range of data the more clarity – an approach to which Edwin Judge gave interdisciplinary validity.<sup>102</sup>

### **The Judge Method<sup>103</sup>**

Edwin A. Judge as mentioned distinguished for his work in the Roman Social worldview (perspective) of the first century, through the publishing of his 1960

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<sup>100</sup> More general foundational discussions on method in the literature include: Craffert asserts that it is possible to make firm conclusions about more difficult historical phenomena such as the resurrection. N. T. Wright states that method "... must include the data. The bits and pieces of evidence must be incorporated ...;" also from Sanders "one is looking for a hypothesis which explains more (not everything), which gives a good account (not the only one) of what happened, which fits realistically into the environment, and which has in view cause and effect." Pieter F. Craffert, "Jesus' Resurrection in a Social-Scientific Perspective: Is There Anything New to be Said?" *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, 7, (2009), p.150; N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God, Vol.1* (Minneapolis, 1992), p.99; E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia, 1985), p.58.

<sup>101</sup> Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Illinois, 2010). pp.109-111.

<sup>102</sup> Licona rightly suggest all hypotheses cannot be true; Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 109 – a valid consideration as often in scholarship numerous competing hypothesis are seen as true or plausible.

<sup>103</sup> In conversation (February 2016) with Prof Judge regarding all references to Prof Judge's method and criticisms on Social Scientific in this thesis, he confirms that he intended these to be understood as I have construed it.

seminal work.<sup>104</sup> Judge's reference to method specifically occurs in two of his essays,<sup>105</sup> however it is by inference implied in his approach, that his method is 'announced.'

The anachronistic method, sociological fallacy, according to Judge, was that the early Christians were seen as purely a movement from within Jewish Judean/Galilean poor rural groups, a view perhaps inspired by early church fathers such as St Basil, who asserts Christians should "sever the soul from sympatheia with the body and to become cityless, homeless, propertyless, without love of friends, without any resources, business, or social relations, without knowledge derived from human teaching."<sup>106</sup> Whereas from his background in the classics, Judge viewed the Christians within a Roman perspective<sup>107</sup> that is, as subjects of Rome. By definition, Christians at a certain point broke away from the Jewish cultural groups, and thereafter lost the protection that Rome gave to Judaism,<sup>108</sup> which helps explain their authors in some instances not identifying themselves – thus broadening the view of the subject under study allows further insight.

### **Ancient History in history - historical method**

Judge cites second century BCE writer Polybius, noting the state was part of an eternal cycle of events; kingship, aristocracy and democracy.<sup>109</sup> The worldview of people of the pre-Christian era was one of a cyclical view of existence, within the Hellenistic view of a holistic cosmic world compared to what became a Christian (and modern scientific) linear view.<sup>110</sup> Judge notes Thucydides in the fifth century BCE established the cyclical view in historical writing when recording the Peloponnesian

<sup>104</sup> E. A. Judge, *The Social Pattern of Christian Groups in the First Century: Some Prolegomena to the Identity of New Testament Ideas of Social Obligation* (London, 1960).

<sup>105</sup> E. A. Judge, "Biblical Sources of Historical Method" *Kategoria* 15, (1999), 33-39; E. A. Judge, "The Social Identity of the First Christians: A Question of Method in Religious History" *Journal of Religious History* 11:2, (1980), 201-217.

<sup>106</sup> Jack Lindsay, *Life and Pleasure in Roman Egypt* (London, 1965), p.264.

<sup>107</sup> Judge, *First Christians in the Roman World*, 10.

<sup>108</sup> James R. Harrison in Judge, *First Christians*, 14 (editor's introduction). Within Judge's method this fact explains why later NT documents had more emphasis on persecutions and drawing close as a (new Christian and no longer Judaic) community. The matter is comprehensively covered by T. D. Barnes, "Legislation Against the Christians" *The Journal of Roman Studies*, Vol. 58, Parts 1 and 2 (1968), pp. 32-50.

<sup>109</sup> Judge, *Historical Method*, 277.

<sup>110</sup> It is interesting to note the persistence of the cyclical view in modern thinking, as demonstrated by clichés such as "history repeats itself" or "if one doesn't learn from history one is liable to repeat it."

Wars, which also established the term 'history.'<sup>111</sup> Importantly in relevance to this thesis, is that the modern notion of history did not exist for the ancients of that era, which may contribute to the lack of specifics within literature on early Christians in Egypt.<sup>112</sup> Their world was not a linear scientific one as we know it but a worldview that held in the natural cycle of life, earlier events were destined to repeat themselves, as noted by Thucydides.<sup>113</sup>

This had the potential to impact the Judean/Judaic mindset that their domination by Rome was predetermined, and part of an Old Testament cyclical pattern of their domination by foreign powers,<sup>114</sup> which is why the 'Messiah cult' was so appealing to Judeans, whereas the afterlife aspects were more appealing to Egyptian and Alexandrians, where the Jesus messianic message and its resurrection may have had appeal. For Egyptians however their continuous four millennia of Dynastic rule, gave them a very different view, which is why a method of applying a unitary social model such as the purity of the Greek aspect of the Ptolemaic state or an expectation made of historical writing can be anachronistic, and supports a diverse evidence approach.

The aversion by Judge to romanticised approaches is prominent, and draws from Herodotus noting he used historical records (*logoi*) to distinguish from romances (*mythoi*),<sup>115</sup> and further the historians of the era were influenced by a sense of eyewitness evidence, *autoptai* – “eyewitness evidence.”<sup>116</sup> The change for their worldview was that “eyewitnesses had become agents of the logos (message), a personal commitment to its propagation.”<sup>117</sup> The eyewitness method believed to

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<sup>111</sup> E. A. Judge, “Biblical Sources of Historical Method” *Jerusalem and Athens: Cultural Transformation in Late Antiquity (Essays Selected and Edited by Alanna Nobbs)*. Alanna Nobbs. ed. (Tubingen, 2010), p.276 – originally published in *Kategoria* 15, (1999), 33-39 as cited.

<sup>112</sup> The persecutions of 70CE and 117CE are but two reason why the detailed history may not have been written.

<sup>113</sup> Judge, *Historical Method*, 276 – citing Thucydides “Where I have not been an eyewitness myself, I have investigated with the utmost accuracy attainable every detail...it favourably received by readers whose object is exact knowledge of facts which had not only actually occurred, but which are destined approximately to repeat themselves in all human probability.”

<sup>114</sup> It can be argued that pagans did not see it that way, particularly Alexandrian Graeco-Egyptians who had a worldview of Egypt reigning as Empire for 4,000 years, and thus that Roman domination was not destiny. That Rome allowed Alexandria to function as a semi-autonomous province, potentially confirmed it. This implies Alexandrian Jews had a different worldview to Palestinian or Judeans.

<sup>115</sup> Judge, *Historical Method*, 278.

<sup>116</sup> “and accurate research are classically Thucydidean” - Judge, *Historical Method*, 278.

<sup>117</sup> Judge, *Historical Method*, 278.

provide (greater) certainty is prominent with the writer of Luke and therefore New Testament texts display influence from the erudite cultures of the era:

“... just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses ... it seemed good to me also, ... to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.” Luke 1:1-4<sup>118</sup>

This provides a greater insight to the receptive mindset of the followers of Christ, the incentive Paul was tacitly able to appeal to, their capacity to be influenced by other methods, and the inherent drive within individuals to spread the message.

This background of ancient historical methodological culture in the Hellenistic tradition relates to New Testament narratives. The Gospel embraced a new word *catechesis*, being “a narrative of events, *historically verified*.”<sup>119</sup> Thus methodologically, via explanation we gain understanding, but not vice-versa. Judge saw scholars as too insular, as he robustly commented at an academic conference that scholars “incestuously concentrate all their time on their few texts, when there is a magnificent array of contextual material all around their texts, increasing rapidly every year.”<sup>120</sup> Robert Grant conveyed an equally robust sentiment that “neglecting the concrete actuality of the ancient historians, of papyri, inscriptions, coins, and other archaeological remains, they then seek to advance learning in their field by reading one another’s books.”<sup>121</sup> Grant also cautions on the methodology itself becoming the singular focus at the expense of data outside the method framework.<sup>122</sup>

As mentioned Judge contrasted two fallacies: firstly the “Idealistic Fallacy” seen as analysing “only part of the historical reality while considering this to be the entire or

<sup>118</sup> NKJV – my underlining is for emphasis.

<sup>119</sup> Judge, *Historical Method*, 278 – my italics for emphasis.

<sup>120</sup> Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians: The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, 2010), p.38 – quoting E. A. Judge.

<sup>121</sup> Robert Grant “American New Testament Studies 1926-1966” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 1, 87 (1968), 48. Grant is also cited by Theophilus, *Multispectral Imaging*, 279.

<sup>122</sup> Grant, *New Testament Studies 1926-1966*, 48. Thus the story inadvertently serves only to validate the method and not to advance understanding.

essential reality;<sup>123</sup> the second being the “sociological fallacy,”<sup>124</sup> where “modern social theories can’t be safely transposed across the centuries” - this is essentially a criticism of the social scientific method.

### **Social Scientific Method**

The social scientific is foundationally defined by its emphasis on using a predetermined social model as the basis for studying ancient cultures.<sup>125</sup> Its modern paradigm is in part defined by Bruce Malina:

*“Social Scientific ... scenarios involves retrojecting an appropriate model to the first Century eastern Mediterranean culture by using proper filters to keep out anachronism and ethnocentrism.”*<sup>126</sup>

The one model approach is also highlighted by Karen Southwood where “models from Mediterranean anthropology are selectively employed in order to gain a clearer picture of [ancient people],”<sup>127</sup> and further “Esler correlates ancient texts to plots within novels from around the world.”<sup>128</sup> The presumption being that biblical narratives are not true accounts, but fictional. This is confirmed by Phillip Esler himself, as Southwood notes: “Esler makes it clear from the outset that his approach, does not focus on ‘historical realities’” - to which Portis adds: “the recovery of historical meaning in texts is not necessarily the goal...as it obscures the real goals of social scientific enquiry.”<sup>129</sup> This apparent rejection of, or indifference to, ‘historical

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<sup>123</sup> Judge, *Social Identity*, 127. The article was first written in 1980.

<sup>124</sup> Judge, *Social Identity*, 127-128.

<sup>125</sup> Robert W. Friedrichs “The Uniquely Religious: Grounding the Social Scientific Study of Religion Anew” *Sociological Analysis*, 46/4, 1985, p.361 - particularly the New Testament, and religion in general, as laid down by its ‘Masters’: Marx, Weber, Durkheim, James, Freud, and Malinowski; “Masters” is Friedrichs’ term.

<sup>126</sup> Craffert, *Jesus’ Resurrection*, 129-130 – quoting Malina.

<sup>127</sup> Katherine E. Southwood, “Social Scientific Methodology and Biblical Interpretation” *Holy Land Studies*, 10.2, (2011), p.249; being a review of Philip F. Esler’s book *Sex, Wives and Warriors: Reading Biblical Narrative with its Ancient Audience* (Oregon, 2011).

<sup>128</sup> Southwood, *Social Scientific Methodology*, 250 – Esler presumes that because aspects of real characters of the NT are also found in the characters of novels, the NT texts are therefore fictional or mythical. His fallacy however comes from the confusion that reality reflects novels, rather than novels reflecting reality. He is victim of the statistical Type II error, accepting an incorrect hypothesis (being wrong but believing you are right).

<sup>129</sup> E. B. Portis “Theoretical Interpretation from a Social Scientific Perspective: An Example from Max Weber” *Social Scientific Quarterly*, 66/3, (1985), p.506. This suggests, by eliminating anything that obscures the goals of social scientific, that the discipline is thereby susceptible to circular arguments which self-justify the models.

realities' comes from the premise that it is not possible to know the truth of the past, which is the reason for Licona's assertion to the opposite and Judge's emphasis upon historical realities. This thesis avoids the application or presumption of particular social models, for as McKechnie notes, this obscures the historical realities.<sup>130</sup> The method used here follows after the Judge method being one of assessing diverse available data within the scope of the thesis question so as not to impose a social context but in order to reveal the extant social *realia*.

### **Heterogeneous Methodology of 'realia'**

Within Judge's method all data is permitted, with the emphasis being on 'historical realities.' For example, Judge is willing to see Jesus as "an itinerant Aramaic preacher," and further "the New Testament is not an orderly statement of dogma [the ideological fallacy], but a heterogeneous collection of writings addressed to various occasions."<sup>131</sup> This Judge approach is in contrast to Esler's social scientific disinterest in such realities.

In seeking to establish the plausibility of the interaction between Alexandria of Egypt and the first century Christians, this thesis is also similar to how Ian Moyer sought to prove the cultural interaction between Macedonian Greeks and subjugated Egypt. It is for comparative reasons that scholars may not hold to the two interactions; Alexandrian and Christian, or Macedonian Greek and Egyptian - and thus Moyer's methodological approach is of interest. The argument against Greeks being influenced by Egyptians is firstly that Egyptians were not allowed to learn Greek, and secondly the notion that the "high culture" of Greeks who civilised the world, would not (could not) be influenced by the Egyptian barbarians – and the language barrier is but one of the proofs, however this argument risks engaging both a sociological and idealistic fallacy. The subtle manifestation of this is highlighted by McKechnie

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<sup>130</sup> Paul McKechnie, *The First Christian Centuries: Perspectives on the Early Church* (Leicester, 2001), pp.14-15.

<sup>131</sup> Judge, *Prolegomena*, 10.



pointing out our perceptions can be misleading; the term Alexandrian also included and disguised Alexandrian Jews.<sup>132</sup>

Moyer states he does not seek “to critique monological models of a Greek hegemony over Egypt, [but] to follow inspirations found in a heterogeneous group of historians and anthropologists.”<sup>133</sup> Quoting Sahlins (1995) he further notes we “cannot do good history ...without regard for ideas, actions, and ontologies that are not and never were our own.”<sup>134</sup>

In accord with my thesis methodology, Moyer notes within his method and enquiry of the need to “use evidence ... ordinarily the purview of Egyptologists,”<sup>135</sup> and a heterogeneous collection of data to “provide the vital big picture of incessant flows of people, things and ideas between Egypt, the Near East and the Mediterranean.”<sup>136</sup> Moyer further adds “on Hecataeus, Hartog says within the evidence of his method he seems to rely on the principle of ‘common sense’ *δοκεῖν*.”<sup>137</sup> The other principle of “reasonable probability” from the Greek *κατὰ τὸ εἰκός* was used by Herodotus to reject ancient stories as myth.<sup>138</sup>

Robert Segal suggests it is due to too much specialisation, which prevents any comparison from being adequately evaluated. Further, he notes, that the selection of any model determines one’s conclusions.<sup>139</sup> In fact, true history is not as simple as what one model can describe. Thus Judge’s Roman social approach also admitted ancient history approaches, myth, military and political, socio-economic, and

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<sup>132</sup> Paul McKechnie, ‘Who were the Alexandrians? Palace and city, Aristarchus and Comanus, 170-145 BC’ Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2011. *Ägypten Zwischen Innerem zwist und Äußerem Druck: die Zeit Ptolemaios’ VI. bis VIII.: Internationales Symposium Heidelberg 16 (19.9.2007)*, p.219.

<sup>133</sup> Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, 35.

<sup>134</sup> Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, 48.

<sup>135</sup> Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, 36.

<sup>136</sup> Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, 41.

<sup>137</sup> Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, 76 - citing Hartog, 1980. That is, Hartog comments on the account that Hecataeus makes of his encounter with an Egyptian priest and being impacted by the detailed chronologies the priest had supported by father to son genealogies, predating the Greek genealogies by millennia. This supports Judge’s view that Greeks respected the antiquity of Egyptian culture.

<sup>138</sup> Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, 79. Moyer recalls the account that Hecataeus was sacrificed by the Egyptians but made his escape by killing over a thousand Egyptians single handed – Herodotus applied the reasonable probability method – that it is not possible, or reasonably probable, for a man to defeat a thousand men, thus Herodotus declared this story a myth.

<sup>139</sup> Robert A. Segal, “Assessing Social-Scientific Theories of Religion” *Bulletin/CSR*, 13/3, June (1982), p.71.

religious traditions, and in particular source documents including papyrology.

McKechnie in surveying early Christians and the church engages evidence of “the Christian movement in its widest sense” as any other method “obscures more than it reveals.”<sup>140</sup> We see this influence in N. T. Wright’s ‘model’ of including “all the bits and pieces” - an approach of considering all available data also used by P.M. Fraser in his Ptolemaic *magnum opus*.<sup>141</sup>

## Methodological Conclusions

Though Judge used a Roman Imperial social historical approach, this was not so much a model, but one of the ‘historical realities’ in which he based his methodology. In an almost restatement of the Judge method, Segal concludes “the more readily a theory can specify both yet unexamined religions or aspects of religion and conditions which would prove or disprove its parts, the better substantiated it is.”<sup>142</sup> The substantiation of the Judge historiographic method was that it bridged the gap between scholars of classical history, and biblical history, establishing the consensus that the first century Christians and New Testament writings were part of the same classical history as Graeco-Roman first Century – there was a Roman influence in the first century Christians. This cross-cultural influence is therefore essentially the task of what Moyer seeks to do with Egyptian influence upon the Ptolemies, and what this thesis seeks to explore with the persistent Egyptian elements within Alexandrian culture as a marker of influence upon first century Christians, potentially the New Testament, and for early Christians in Egypt.

This thesis, as with Moyer’s approach, necessarily embraces aspects of Egyptology, Ptolemaic Egypt, Graeco-Roman Egypt, avoids any presumed social model,<sup>143</sup> and makes use of the Judge heterogeneous methodological foundation, and additionally embraces using a common sense (δοκεῖν), and reasonable probability (κατὰ τὸ εἰκός) method in seeking to establish the historical realities of cultural interaction and influence between Egypto-Alexandria and first century Christians.

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<sup>140</sup> McKechnie, *First Christian Centuries*, 14-15.

<sup>141</sup> Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, vii.

<sup>142</sup> Segal, *Assessing Social-Scientific*, 71.

<sup>143</sup> That is the Social Scientific presumed model approach is not deemed valid, while the particulars of a social group are, subject to any robust challenge.

## Chapter Three

### Literature Review

In seeking to explore the position that persistent classical Egyptian culture was inculcated into the Ptolemy dynasties, mediated through Alexandria into the Graeco-Roman world and potentially encountered by first century Christianity, the tradition in literature has been varied but largely influenced by the lacuna previously mentioned.

In Polybius's *Histories* he makes a statement that the Egyptian culture had influenced the Greeks. The text is often viewed as suggesting the Egyptians were uncivilised and the Greco Alexandrians had lost civility (πολιτικὸν) due to them, yet the text actually states:

τό τε Αἰγύπτιον καὶ ἐπιχώριον φύλον, ὃξὺ καὶ πολιτικόν

the native Egyptians, an acute and civilised race:<sup>144</sup> Plb *Hist* 34.14.2

This text is disputed as “hopelessly corrupt”<sup>145</sup> due to its implying Egyptians were civilised, thus it is assumed an error and scholars have most often translated the text presuming Polybius made an error and meant ἀπολίτικον “uncivilised” due to the presumption Egyptians were barbarians; whereas Polybius seems to imply it was the Alexandrians and mercenaries who were not civil:

τῶν Ἀλεξανδρέων, οὐδ' αὐτὸ εὐκρινῶς πολιτικόν<sup>146</sup> Plb *Hist* 34.14.4

the Alexandrians ‘... the Alexandrians themselves, a people not genuinely<sup>147</sup> civilized (οὐδ' ... πολιτικὸν) for the same reason<sup>148</sup> ... and “the mercenaries, a numerous rough and uncultured set.”

<sup>144</sup> Translates literally as civil or courteous (thus civilised/cultured) as at Plb. 23.5.7; this translation is after W. R. Paton, *Polybius Histories Vol VI*: Loeb (London, 1968), p.335 (orig 1927).

<sup>145</sup> Ari Z. Bryen, *Violence in Roman Egypt: A study in legal Interpretation* (Philadelphia, 2013), p.293 note 14 – after mentioning that Strabo 17.1.12 quotes Polybius on this passage, Bryen then states of Polybius 34.14.2 “This passage is hopelessly corrupt ... as the Egyptians are said to be ... acute and inclined to civic life, when the text should instead read ill-tempered and ungovernable”; Bryen then supplies the replacement Greek that Polybius *should have* used!

<sup>146</sup> Plb. 34.14.4

Thus Polybius appears to imply the opposite of scholarly convention on the Egyptians and Alexandrians.<sup>149</sup> Scholarship has traditionally applied translations to Polybius' text here such that Polybius agrees with the convention, that Greek high culture would not have faltered, whereas it appears Polybius suggested the opposite.<sup>150</sup>

A very early problem for perceptions of Egypt was that hieroglyphics were, prior to 1822, undecipherable and due to their phonetic animal motifs were seen as the "cackling farmyard" of Egypt – just quaint children's pictures created by ignorant Nile Valley barbarians.<sup>151</sup> Among the earliest work on Hellenism was Droysen's work as cited however with as yet no English version this foundational work remains inaccessible to non-German linguists, except via intra literature citations. Droysen's discussion around the term *Hellenismus* being the German for Hellenistic/Hellenism<sup>152</sup> laid an early foundation and defined the direction of scholarly endeavour emphasising a Greek perspective, an outdated convention<sup>153</sup> which has prevailed to the present day in some areas of scholarship.

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<sup>147</sup> This has the sense of not being steady or regular in their civilised behaviour; thus "not civil or cultured": comparatively τῆμος δ' εὐκρινέες τ' αὔραι καὶ πόντος ἀπῆμων – "then the winds are regular, steady," Hes.Op.670.

<sup>148</sup> W. R. Paton translation in *Polybius Histories*, Loeb, p. 335 as cited.

<sup>149</sup> Of what is known of Greek indulgences such as banquets, the acceptance of older men maintaining younger ones, and other divergent activities may be among the reasons Polybius held this view on Greeks and Alexandrians being uncivilised or to have lost the sense of culture.

<sup>150</sup> On this editorial imposition see Frank W. Walbank, "Egypt in Polybius" *Glimpses of Ancient Egypt: Studies in Honour of H. W. Fairman*. eds. John Ruffle, G. A. Gaballa, and Kenneth A. Kitchen. (Warminster, 1979), pp.182-183. Ritner surveys this translation issue and notes "most editors simply insert 'not' before πολιτικόν", he asserts this is a "fabrication" which he notes Walbank accepted – Robert K. Ritner, "Implicit Models of Cross-Cultural Interaction: A Question of Noses, Soap and Prejudices" *Life in A Multi-Cultural Society: Egypt from Cambyes to Constantine and Beyond*. ed. Janet H. Johnson. (Chicago, 1992), p.288 and note 25.

<sup>151</sup> On this reference to hieroglyphics as "Cackling Farmyard" and the Victorian sensibilities which formed the early scholarly Egyptological and biblical scholarly worldview see David Rohl, *A Test of Time: The Bible from Myth to History* (London, 1995), p.112. Rohl states "Cackling Farmyard" as though it were a cliché within scholarship but does cite its origins – the phrase may otherwise be found in Chapter Four "For God and Country" of the various editions.

<sup>152</sup> The translation of the German *Hellenismus* is often rendered as Hellenistic or Hellenism but depends upon whether in the author's intent it is used as a noun or adjective, however in the German *Hellenismus* is the noun, *Hellenistisch* is the adjective.

<sup>153</sup> The Greek emphasis was not altogether incorrect yet is understandable given the period Droysen was writing. After all Egyptian hieroglyphics had not yet been deciphered and Egyptology as a discipline had not emerged and therefore any other influence in Hellenism, such as Egyptian, was not possible to be gleaned. It was some years later in 1822 that Champollion deciphered hieroglyphics revealing the Egyptians as an intelligible erudite society – their "cackling farmyard" was then recognised as actually writing – although the prejudice against them was firmly established.

J. G. Milne in 1928 discussed Egyptian nationalism under Greek and Roman rule from an Egyptian viewpoint arguing some degree of Greek and Egyptian fusion was necessary for Ptolemaic rule to succeed.<sup>154</sup> In fact Alexander the Great sought “a fusion of races in each province.”<sup>155</sup> Under ‘passive penetration’ Egyptian religious practice continued as did the cult of pharaonic worship - indeed Alexander and the Ptolemy kings “assumed the traditional position of the pharaohs,” thus Greek/Egyptian cultural fusion occurred via such mediums as the cult of Sarapis, schools permitting Egyptians to learn Greek, and access to gymnasia and Greek community.<sup>156</sup> Milne Citing Polybius has the view that Alexandrian Greeks had lost the virtue (ἀρετή) or the essence of a Greek community (πολιτικόν) – in doing so Milne holds to imposing the editorial tradition over Polybius.<sup>157</sup>

The other early work by Nock (1928)<sup>158</sup> particularly argued for a western Hellenistic encounter with Christianity. Scholarly endeavours in this area were influenced by a particular line of enquiry regarding the baptism carried out in association with the dead, alluded to by Paul in the first letter to the Corinthians [1 Cor 15:29].<sup>159</sup> For the next few decades scholars sought to locate this baptism within ancient religious and burial customs, with Egypt being among them.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> J. G. Milne, “Egyptian nationalism under Greek and Roman rule” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* Vol. 14, (1928), p.226.

<sup>155</sup> Milne, *Egyptian nationalism*, 226.

<sup>156</sup> Milne, *Egyptian nationalism*, 227.

<sup>157</sup> Milne, *Egyptian nationalism*, 229 – citing Polybius and the “not” πολιτικόν imposition as noted.

<sup>158</sup> Arthur Darby Nock, *Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation* (London, 1928).

<sup>159</sup> “Otherwise, what will they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead do not rise at all? Why then are they baptized for the dead?” 1 Corinthians 15:29 NIV

<sup>160</sup> As a sample: Herman Ridderbos .trans. John R. De Witt. *Paul: An Outline of his Theology* (Grand Rapids, 1975), p.24-25; Leon Morris, *The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Vol. 7: 1 Corinthians* (Illinois, 2008), pp.209-210; Gordon D. Fee, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, 1987), pp.764-765; Ciampa & Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 781; Everett Ferguson, *Baptism and the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, 2009), p.187 note 4; Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (London, 1967), p.283 (orig. 1931); F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians: The New International Commentary on the New Testament*. ed. F. F. Bruce. (Grand Rapids, 1972), p.372; Hull produced a book dedicated to this topic solely within 1 Cor 15:29, a reading of which provides the most comprehensive scope of the topic and historical debates, also for a comprehensive list of the scholars in debate see Michael Hull, *Baptism on Account of the Dead (1 Corinthians 15:29): An Act of Faith in the Resurrection* (Atlanta, 2005), p.11 note 14.

Judge's 1960 work <sup>161</sup> which suggested Christians should be regarded as a historical group, being Roman subjects. The trend of scholarly thought of which Judge's work was at the forefront of the new consensus established early Christians as significantly influenced by western Greek and Roman culture, however scholarly discussion tendency did not emphasise "eastern" culture in an Alexandrian sense as an influence.<sup>162</sup> Between Judge's publication and its acceptance as the new consensus, was a period of scholars exploring the socio-historical aspects of first century Christians. Shortly preceding Judge, A. C. Bouquet (1959) <sup>163</sup> also described Graeco-Roman influence in early Christians and their texts and his highlighting of this was a direction of scholarly thought around the time of Judge's famous work. However, whereas Bouquet wrote of various particulars of Christian texts which specifically match Graeco-Roman first century culture, Judge while not specifically engaging Bouquet, went further to suggest these specificities matched *because* the Christians were Roman subjects.

R MacMullen (1964)<sup>164</sup> sees Egyptian nationalism as having failed to arise in Roman Egypt with the fusion of Greek and Egyptian culture as a major reason. Yet notable is his evidence of the persistence of the pharaonic cult imagery in late Ptolemaic private tombs. He also sees the Fourth Dynasty Egyptian mythology of Heaven and Hell being imported into both the early Coptic apocrypha and into Egyptian Christianity – yet this eastern view was outweighed by the Roman and Greek and did not gain scholarly momentum – this being part of the long tradition in part going back to Droysen.<sup>165</sup>

A.E. Samuel (1962) through a study of chronological systems in Egypt found that there was a lateral existence of the Egyptian and Macedonian date regimes, which progressively lead to a fusion of the two, where "the Macedonian was made subservient to the Egyptian"<sup>166</sup> with ultimately the Egyptian prevailing as the

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<sup>161</sup> Judge, *Prolegomena*; as cited.

<sup>162</sup> Eastern not as in the Roman east but specifically as in Egyptian or Alexandrian; that is to say the western influence (through a western church tradition) was still the emphasis of the new consensus.

<sup>163</sup> A. C. Bouquet, *Everyday Life in New Testament Times*. (London, 1959).

<sup>164</sup> R. MacMullen, 'Nationalism in Roman Egypt' *Aegyptus* Anno 44, No. 3/4 (1964), pp.191-192, 195.

<sup>165</sup> MacMullen, *Nationalism in Roman Egypt*, 194.

<sup>166</sup> A. E. Samuel, *Ptolemaic Chronology* (Munchen, 1962), p.31.

standard during the later period towards the first century BCE, “and into the Roman era.”<sup>167</sup> This suggests the Egyptian chronology was that which characters like Apollos and extant first century CE Egypt based Christians would likely have known.

Nock’s 1928 work was subsequently updated in 1964, and was followed in 1972 by a study of Hellenistic influence in Christianity,<sup>168</sup> in part a response to long scholarly unfruitful exploration of Paul’s strange Corinthian baptism.<sup>169</sup> While Nock diligently investigated ancient culture practices for the dead including looking at whether Egyptian mummification may have been responsible for the confusion in Corinth,<sup>170</sup> it was however Nock’s comments that nothing in the pagan methods matched what was referred to in 1 Corinthians 15:29, and baptism being seen as a sacrament,<sup>171</sup> that influenced modern scholarly thought towards a diminished role of Egyptian influence outside Egypt and implicitly within early Christians, for Nock this notion “shatters on the rock of linguistic evidence.”<sup>172</sup> As noted this influenced many scholars away from seeing Egyptian or Alexandrian customs influencing first century Christianity at all.<sup>173</sup> Both works of Nock were perhaps influenced by and tended to

<sup>167</sup> Samuel, *Ptolemaic Chronology*, 138.

<sup>168</sup> Arthur Darby Nock, *Early Gentile Christianity and its Hellenistic Background* (New York, 1964); Arthur Darby Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World: On the Antecedents of Baptism ex Mysteries of Egypt* - 2 Vols. ed. Zeph Stewart. (Oxford, 1972).

<sup>169</sup> Refer discussions previously cited. The most comprehensive survey of the alternatives, discussing 200 variations of this verse, was done by Malthus Rissi, *Die Taufe für die Toten: Ein Beitrag zur Paulinischen Tauflehre: Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten - und Neuen Testaments*: Herausgegeben von W. Eichrodt und O. Cullmann. (Zürich, 1962); with a more modern discussion in Hull, *Baptism on Account of the Dead (1 Corinthians 15:29)*, 7-17 as cited. On this particular issue much debate about the meaning of ὑπὲρ (huper) in the sentence resulted in some 200 translations of this simple Greek phrase, the consensus being that the simple meaning ought to apply, however its most simple meaning of ‘baptising over the dead’ which does match the Egyptian method was by consensus denied of this Greek phrase, primarily due to Nock’s influence to avoid this conclusion, as “over the dead” most strongly pointed to Egyptian mummification –an Egyptian influence in Roman Corinth which Nock’s Roman worldview could not embrace.

<sup>170</sup> An investigation that the title of his work clearly announces: *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World: On the Antecedents of Baptism ex Mysteries of Egypt*.

<sup>171</sup> Nock, *Early Gentile Christianity*, 97-104, and 84, 132.

<sup>172</sup> Specifically “Any idea that what we call the Christian sacraments were in their origin indebted to pagan mysteries or even to the metaphorical concepts based upon them shatters on the rock of linguistic evidence” - Nock, *Essays on Religion*, 809.

<sup>173</sup> Nock asserted that the church in Rome had pure and organic beginnings being not from any missionary efforts of Paul or anyone else, but by migration from Palestine and Syria – which suggests no early Christian community in Rome was or was possibly established by Alexandrians even though the presence of Alexandrians is evidenced by the merchant graffiti in Puteoli, yet this is a view to which Stark ascribes: A. D. Nock, *Conversion: The Old and New in Religion from Alexander the Great to Augustine of Hippo*, (Oxford, 1933), p.207; for Stark citing Nock on this point; Stark, *Cities of God*, 53 and note 82.

reinforce the imperviousness of Greek and Roman cultures<sup>174</sup> - although Nock was willing to accept “any eccentricity might have representative ...centres” in Alexandria.<sup>175</sup>

Fraser’s foundational work in 1972 was inspired, he writes, to document “the main aspects of Alexandrian life in the Ptolemaic period.”<sup>176</sup> Fraser described examples of Egyptianization of the Macedonian Greeks and other Greek migrants of Alexandria, yet saw only negative manifestations that “disturbances” and “savage temper” were character traits of “Egyptians and the Graeco-Egyptian population from the second century BC[E].”<sup>177</sup> He, like Milne cites Polybius which may explain the negative Egyptian stereotype, yet this Egyptianization for Fraser is self-evident due to intermarriage, cultural and religious acculturation<sup>178</sup> – including poems written by “Alexandrian Egyptian Greeks” in the first century CE.<sup>179</sup> He also cites Droysen’s *Hellenismus* as a study “describing eastern culture that gave rise to Christianity.”<sup>180</sup>

This period of scholarship also saw Hengel’s 1969 German work translated into English in 1974<sup>181</sup> being a diligent influential study of Judaism’s encounter with Hellenism from a Palestine perspective – the Judaism of Alexandria though larger by a factor of ten, is not engaged. Influential too was Momigliano in 1975 seeing (cultural) confrontation between Greeks and Romans, Celts, and Jews as “an intellectual event of the first order.”<sup>182</sup> It is significant that Hellenism was also a time of Greeks encountering the physical and cultural presence of Egypt, yet for

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<sup>174</sup> It is fair to say that for a scholar to suggest the opposite would imply arguing against the newly accepted Jude consensus, although some do, see; Justin J. Meggitt, *Paul, Poverty and Survival*. (Edinburgh, 1998).

<sup>175</sup> Nock, *Essays on Religion*, 958 note 45.

<sup>176</sup> Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, vi.

<sup>177</sup> Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 800, 805.

<sup>178</sup> Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 81, 82, 796, 802, 805,

<sup>179</sup> Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, for literature generally, 674, 676; for poetry, 808.

<sup>180</sup> Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 11 and note 22.

<sup>181</sup> Martin Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus: Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jh.s v. Chr* (Tübingen, 1969); Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*. trans. J. Bowden, (London, 1974). It is of interest that reviews of this English translation were done by Theological rather than Ancient History journals with *JBL* reviewing it in 1971, as noted: *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 1 December 1975, Vol.43(4), pp.804-805; *Theology Today*, 1975, Vol.32(3), pp.336-337; *Theological Studies*, 1975, Vol.36(4), pp.785-787; *JBL* 90 (1971): 228-31.

<sup>182</sup> A. Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization* (Cambridge, 1975), p.2.



Momigliano Egypt is not part of this “first order” encounter, though the Celts are.<sup>183</sup> There was for Momigliano something about the hermetic and script character of the Egyptian language that made peasant to priest “singularly unable to communicate with the Greeks,”<sup>184</sup> and “the superiority of Greek language and manners” seemed to validate this.<sup>185</sup> However this seems unlikely otherwise how then could Manetho or Herodotus write their histories? His use of the terms “barbarian teachers” regarding Pythagoras studying with Egyptians, and “the natives” to refer to how Greeks viewed Egyptians<sup>186</sup> is interesting amidst modern cultural equanimity, yet the use of these terms needs consideration within the 1970s context. The confrontation between Greek and Jewish values produced “what we call Christianity” again Egyptian culture played no part,<sup>187</sup> was of no import<sup>188</sup> - so we may ponder why would Mark or early Christians go there?

Momigliano asserts Hellenism’s legacy as the triangle Greece-Rome-Judaea, with Persia, Mesopotamia and Egypt (in their place) “where Hellenistic erudition put them” as possessing only “barbarian wisdom.”<sup>189</sup> He comments that Droysen’s “*Hellenismus*” effectively described “the transition from paganism to Christianity.”<sup>190</sup>

The impermeability of high Greek culture is maintained by Ludwig Koenen (1993).<sup>191</sup> While noting a duality in Egyptian/Greek imagery, Koenen sees this as a one way projection of Greek culture over the Egyptian with no reciprocity. Yet the persistence of Egyptian culture he footnotes as: “Egyptian art remained faithful to its own traditions yet this does not preclude Greek influence.”<sup>192</sup> Koenen’s purity of Greek culture rests upon the fact that the Egyptians had little choice but to accept the

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<sup>183</sup> Significantly Momigliano cites Nock also “when the minority opinion includes the names [like] Arthur Darby Nock one has of course to proceed warily” *Alien Wisdom*, 117 - and this excising of Egypt may be Nock influenced.

<sup>184</sup> Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 4 - the inference is that a “cackling farmyard” culture is incapable.

<sup>185</sup> Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 7 – presumably Greek language as superior to the “childish” Egyptian.

<sup>186</sup> Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 9-10.

<sup>187</sup> Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 10.

<sup>188</sup> Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 12.

<sup>189</sup> Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 11.

<sup>190</sup> A. Momigliano, “J G Droysen Between Greeks and Jews” *History and Theory* Vol. 9, No. 2 (1970), 143-144.

<sup>191</sup> Ludwig Koenen, “The Ptolemaic King as a Religious Figure” *Images and Ideologies: Self Definition in the Hellenistic World*. eds. A. Bulloch, E. S. Gruen, A. D. Long, A. Stewart. (Berkeley, 1993).

<sup>192</sup> Koenen, *The Ptolemaic King as a Religious Figure*, 27 note 3.

Greeks. Koenen engages the persistent aspect of classical Egyptian culture more than most scholars however the presumption of the impermeable Greek culture leads to an incorrect interpretation: suggesting that priests not recognising the pharaoh would deny the priests own authority.<sup>193</sup> Within the classical pharaonic system the pharaoh's position was dependent upon acceptance by the populace which in turn was reliant upon the priests endorsing the pharaoh's legitimacy as being divinely chosen by the god Re, or Amun.<sup>194</sup> E. Gruen in introducing this volume, notes the Ptolemies faced two problems: they were both Greek, and kings – two alien aspects for Egyptians,<sup>195</sup> thus European kingship would not work upon Egypt. It may be said then that the Ptolemies in part had no choice but to accept influence from Egypt and make themselves pharaohs.

The suggested weakness of the Egyptian culture also supports a presumed strength of the Christian culture. R. E. DeMaris in 1995 carried support for the “conclusion of scholars who see nothing in the Greco-Roman environment that would have given rise to or shaped Christian Baptism”<sup>196</sup> – a line of argument which seeks to maintain purity in the origin of Christian practices. These representations by scholars suggest a consensus that Egyptian culture was primitive and unable to influence the ‘superior’ erudite cultures but was simply overwhelmed by the (proud) Greek and indifferent Roman civilised ones that colonised it. Scholars via Judge's consensus permitted Graeco-Roman influence in Christians but not the “weak” Egyptian.<sup>197</sup> Yet R. S. Bagnall (1997)<sup>198</sup> researches the nature of cultural identity in Egypt using the

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<sup>193</sup> Koenen's discussion has the correct conclusion that the ethnicity of a Pharaoh in classical Egypt did not matter yet concludes incorrectly that priestly position depended upon the pharaoh, whereas as the reality was the opposite, within the classical pharaonic system the priests controlled the public acceptance of the pharaoh – Joanne Fletcher, *Egypt's Sun King: Amenhotep III, an Intimate Chronicle of Ancient Egypt's most Glorious Pharaoh* (London, 2000), p.50, 52-53.

<sup>194</sup> Judith Pollard & Howard Reid, *The Rise and Fall of Alexandria: Birthplace of the Modern Mind* (London, 2006), p.83.

<sup>195</sup> E. Gruen, “Introduction” *Images and Ideologies: Self Definition in the Hellenistic World*. eds. A. Bulloch, E. S. Gruen, A. D. Long, A. Stewart. (Berkeley, 1993), p.4.

<sup>196</sup> DeMaris, *Corinthian Religion and Baptism for the Dead*, 662-663.

<sup>197</sup> That is the consensus after Judge permitted accepting Graeco-Roman influence – Judge made no comment on the Egyptian as it was outside the discussion of the foundational work upon which the consensus was based.

<sup>198</sup> R. S. Bagnall, ‘The People of the Roman Fayyum’ *Portraits and Masks: Burial Customs in Roman Egypt* ed. M. L. Bierbrier. (British Museum, 1997), p.6.

Fayyum<sup>199</sup> of the Roman period due to the proliferation of mummified bodies of the Greek and Roman inhabitants which particularly display portraits of the deceased. For Bagnall “the mummy portraits can be seen as such evidence”<sup>200</sup> of mummification transgressing self-perception or ethnicity. Bagnall views it as not unreasonable to consider that “our notions of their ethnic self-perception may not have even entered their thinking.”<sup>201</sup> Rather poignantly Koen Goudriaan (1988) suggests that the term or concept of “ethnicity simplifies a complex reality.”<sup>202</sup>

Earlier finds such as Oxyrynchus carried hope of papyrological evidence of first century Christianity in Egypt. McKechnie (2001) surveys the literary evidence, scholarly views, and pessimism,<sup>203</sup> the latter due to the paucity of first century Egyptian Christian papyrological documents. Despite paucity, and with support from Eusebius’ account of Mark in Egypt,<sup>204</sup> McKechnie’s survey of extant documents such as Apollos in *Acts*, (and *First Corinthians*), Codex Bezae, and Greek *Acts of Mark*, do hold sufficient presence to prevent the rejection of the Markan Egypt tradition.<sup>205</sup>

The lack of documentary evidence does then call for the investigation of archaeological evidence.<sup>206</sup> Gillian Bowen (2003-2004) presents both a study and survey of work carried out on Christian burial methods at ancient Kellis in Egypt.<sup>207</sup> Bowen outlines the aspects of burial which may indicate syncretistic influences, such as Christian burials amidst mummified ones, and particularly how such funerary and burial data do not necessarily provide a clear separation of practices between pagan and Christian, or of self-definition within or by these deceased persons.<sup>208</sup> Further,

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<sup>199</sup> The spelling differs; Fayum, Fayyum or Faiyum being variants, this thesis uses Fayyum unless context requires otherwise.

<sup>200</sup> Bagnall, *Roman Fayyum*, 6.

<sup>201</sup> Bagnall, *Roman Fayyum*, 6.

<sup>202</sup> Koen Goudriaan, *Ethnicity in Ptolemaic Egypt* (Amsterdam, 1988), p.114.

<sup>203</sup> Paul McKechnie, “Second-generation growth: Alexandria and Egypt” *First Christian Centuries: Perspectives on the Early Church* (Leicester, 2001), p.78-79.

<sup>204</sup> McKechnie, *First Christian Centuries*, 79.

<sup>205</sup> McKechnie, *First Christian Centuries*, 78-84.

<sup>206</sup> It should be noted that papyri from the first four centuries CE also form part of the archaeological record, particularly as they are often buried and need to be dug up like any other artefact, however papyrological documentary and literary evidences are seen as a group of evidences not necessarily “archaeological” but rather are viewed as forming part of a corpus of ancient literature.

<sup>207</sup> Gillian Bowen, “Early Christian burial practices at Kellis, Dakhleh Oasis, Egypt” *Artefact: the Journal of the Archaeological and Anthropological Society of Victoria*, Vol. 26, (2003), 77-88.

<sup>208</sup> Bowen, *Early Christian Burial at Kellis*, 84.

Arthur C. Aufderheide et al., report on mummies found at Kellis tombs 1 group.<sup>209</sup>

Following this line of self-identity investigation, Willy Clarysse and Dorothy Thompson (2006)<sup>210</sup> engaging a comprehensive survey of the census of Hellenistic Egypt, arranged the data revealing evidence that the previously held concept that a person's name identifies their ethnicity no longer holds true and is in need of review. The extant names reveal that the presumed clear lines of distinction did not prevail and that the communities were far more multicultural and integrated than scholarly tradition has held.

J. G. Manning (2010) as his book title suggests views the Ptolemies through an Egypt perspective via pharaonic imagery in a study of their "royal portraits"<sup>211</sup> - a new framework for viewing these sculptures conventionally viewed "predominantly through a classicist perspective."<sup>212</sup> Judge's ideological fallacy is alluded to as Manning notes the Ptolemies have traditionally been studied from an "implicit ideological position"<sup>213</sup> of Greek classicism – due understandably to a reliance on Greek papyri<sup>214</sup> at the expense of Nile valley statuary. However while rejecting ideological biases Manning engages Judge's sociological fallacy by accepting the social scientific modelling from Barclays "bargained incorporation" as suggesting how the Ptolemies integrated their rule upon Egypt. Manning cites Clarysse and Thompson's *Counting the People in Hellenistic Egypt* work on the Egyptian nome census noting it will "force revisions and refinements" of Ptolemaic Egypt,<sup>215</sup> and his preparedness to accept both mummification and Pharaonic imagery as persistent culture, supports the proposition of this thesis.

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<sup>209</sup> Arthur C. Aufderheide, Larry L. Cartmell, Michael Zlonis, Patrick Horne, "Chemical Dietary Reconstruction of Greco-Roman Mummies at Egypt's Dakhleh Oasis" *JSSEA* 30 (2003), 1-7.

<sup>210</sup> Willy Clarysse & Dorothy J. Thompson., *Counting the People in Hellenistic Egypt. Vol.1 & 2: Cambridge Classical Studies - Historical Studies* (Cambridge, 2006).

<sup>211</sup> J. G. Manning, *The Last Pharaohs: Egypt under the Ptolemies 305BC – 30 BC* (Princeton, 2000), p. xii.

<sup>212</sup> Manning, *The Last Pharaohs*, xii.

<sup>213</sup> Manning, *The Last Pharaohs*, 2.

<sup>214</sup> Manning, *The Last Pharaohs*, 202.

<sup>215</sup> Manning, *The Last Pharaohs*, xii,; Clarysse & Thompson, *Counting the People*, (Cambridge, 2006).

Moyer (2011)<sup>216</sup> asserts a direct influence upon the Greeks in Egypt by Egyptian culture, using a literary approach specifically the Greek Herodotus and Egyptian Manetho, both of whom wrote histories of Egypt in Greek.<sup>217</sup> This suggests or asserts an evident bilingualism and tends to overturn the Egyptian-Greek language barrier tradition. The title of Moyer's book seemingly announces his challenge to Momigliano.<sup>218</sup> The opening line of his book cites Momigliano (1975) and notes it is "remarkable" for its absence of consideration of the Egyptians,<sup>219</sup> and is critical of Momigliano for intentionally excluding Egypt from his lectures.<sup>220</sup> Moyer's beginning point regards Herodotus' *Histories* as being "Greek literature [reporting] Greeks meeting Egyptian priests."<sup>221</sup> Such meetings were *not* a one way Hellenistic imposition upon Egyptian culture for Moyer but a mutual "meeting of historicities,"<sup>222</sup> an interface of cultures suggested by the way the Ptolemies "idealized the form" of the (pre-Persian) Egyptian pharaohs.<sup>223</sup> Moyer limits Droysen's *Hellenismus* as a "pivotal transition between paganism and the predestined triumph of Christianity" (which is a similar to how Fraser and Momigliano viewed the work). Moyer sees Momigliano as revealing a gap in understanding of cultural interaction between Greeks and Egyptians – "a gap which continues to the present."<sup>224</sup>

Similarly, early Christian engagement with Alexandria of Egypt is explored by Bruce Winter (2002)<sup>225</sup> perhaps as an attempt to bridge this early Christian/Alexandria gap. Using a literary papyrology method Winter presents the cultural interface made

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<sup>216</sup> I. Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism* (Cambridge, 2011).

<sup>217</sup> For this to occur Moyer asserts someone had to be bilingual, Herodotus or the Egyptian priests he met with, and Manetho the Egyptian priest who wrote the history in Greek is suggestive of bilinguality and a bilingual tradition.

<sup>218</sup> Compare titles: Momigliano's *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization*, and Moyer's *Egypt and the Limits of Hellenism*.

<sup>219</sup> Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, 1.

<sup>220</sup> That is the 1970s season of lectures which form the basis of Momigliano's *Alien Wisdom*: Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, 1.

<sup>221</sup> Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, 83.

<sup>222</sup> Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, 42.

<sup>223</sup> An important difference that the Greeks looked back to a classical Egyptian form rather than ignore the pharaoh cult altogether. Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, 88-89.

<sup>224</sup> Moyer, *Egypt and the Limits*, 1.

<sup>225</sup> Bruce W. Winter, *Paul and Philo Among the Sophists: An Alexandrian and Corinthian Responses to a Julio-Claudian Movement* 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Grand Rapids, 2002).

manifest by the Alexandrian Sophist movement of travelling Alexandrian rhetoricians such as Apollos, which Paul had chance to encounter at Corinth.

In recent times entirely novel approaches have emerged, two of which are of note. Firstly as discussed by Michael Theophilos (2011),<sup>226</sup> the merging or borrowing from physics using multispectral imaging to “see through” stained or charcoaled documents whose text (importantly of the first and second century) is otherwise obscured and unreadable is an important new methodological tool.<sup>227</sup> Just the clarification of one letter in a document can add new insight to otherwise complex Greek.<sup>228</sup>

Secondly, Nice Daswani (2015) reports that most recently mummy masks emerge as new sources for first century Christian documents - “The first-century [Markan] gospel is one of hundreds of new texts ...[being] analyse[d] by using this technique of ungluing the [mummy] masks.”<sup>229</sup> Owen Jarus reporting on the same fragment goes further noting Professor Craig Evans commented that the scholarly team are prepared to date the text as a first century text, to approximately 90 CE or earlier based upon a combination of carbon 14, palaeography, and the other documents in the mummy mask layers.<sup>230</sup> Here though in both these reports the implicit potential connection to Christians and Egyptian mummification influence is not engaged. Fragments such as this may indeed be a new source of first century Christian documents and data in evidence of early Egyptian Christianity. Documents such as this may also benefit from the multispectral imaging mentioned by Theophilos.

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<sup>226</sup> Michael Theophilos, “Multispectral Imaging of Greek Papyrus Fragments from Oxyrhyncus” *Reading New Testament Papyrus in Context: Lire Les papyrus Du Nouveau Testament Dans Leur Contexte*. eds. Claire Clivaz – Jean Zumstein with Jenny Reid-Heimerdinger and Jukie Paik. (Leuven, 2011), pp.269, 276 -278.

<sup>227</sup> Theophilos, *Multispectral Imaging of Greek Papyrus*, 271.

<sup>228</sup> Theophilos, *Multispectral Imaging of Greek Papyrus*, 277-279, cites the previously unreadable single letter in fragment 51.4B.18/c (1-4)b of the earliest manuscript of James 3-4. The importance one letter can make in Greek is historically evident in the theological debate between ὁμοούσιος and ὁμοιούσιος (but which is not part of the discussion here).

<sup>229</sup> Nice Daswani, “Researchers claim to have found ancient Gospel of Mark fragment in mummy's mask” *Christianity Today* 21 Jan 2015, <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/researchers.claim.to.have.found.ancient.gospel.of.mark.fragment.in.mummys.mask/46387.htm> (accessed 6/6/2015).

<sup>230</sup> Owen Jarus, “Mummy mask may Reveal Oldest known Gospel” *Live Science* 18 January, 2015, <http://www.livescience.com/49489-oldest-known-gospel-mummy-mask.html> (accessed 24/8/2015).

In line with this thesis therefore, the Egyptian specificity of mummification or pharaonic cultism ought then to be an indicator or marker of Alexandrian-Egyptian culture influencing specific (not necessarily military) social groups who resided there (κάτοικοι) – whether they be Greek, Roman, Jewish or in particular any Christian converts.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> κάτοικοι is conventionally understood to apply to military settlers or retirees, however Sandra Gambetti suggests κάτοικοι also refers to a privileged fiscal status that gave exemption from the poll tax. Either way those κάτοικοι could have been Jewish or Egyptian military under service to the empire. On κάτοικοι: Sandra Gambetti, *The Alexandrian Riots of 38CE and the Persecution of the Jews: A Historical Reconstruction* (Leiden, 2009), p.61. The interpretation gets support from Shimon Applebaum that “Jews of Hierapolis (Phrygia) called themselves κατοικοῦντες a broad term without specific meaning ... and called their communal organisation κατοικία” - Shimon Applebaum, *Jews and Greeks of Ancient Cyrene* (Leiden, 1979), p.134.

## Chapter Four

### Origins of Christianity in Egypt in Context

The most significant issue in seeking to establish the historical origins of Christianity in Egypt is the lack of sufficient literature or documentary evidence which are from the first century and identifiable as of Egyptian or Alexandrian origin. Birger Pearson states the issue more directly in context of Christian texts from the first century Egypt “there are none at all,” and Bell says that Christianity “has left no trace”<sup>232</sup> – this perspective may become outdated if the Markan mummy mask fragment is accepted as a first century provenance in the way Jarus suggests. In the light of Pearson’s firm or pessimistic stance, a brief survey of texts which may qualify for classification as a first century Nile Valley Christian text is worthwhile as not as all of scholarship is as matter of fact on the textual evidence.

In this context we are not seeking text by Egyptians but from geographical Egypt or the Nile valley region. This sort of nuancing of terminology - what is meant by Egypt origins - is central to the problem of evidence in this topic. The ever present and unresolved problem is what is meant by early Christianity in Egypt; what characteristics did an early Christian of that region manifest? How would they have been identified and more so how would they have identified themselves? How would their self-identity have manifest amidst the various social groups? In fact the use of the very term Christian, that is, “to speak of Christians in a first century Alexandrian context is an anachronism” Pearson notes as the term is not attested in textual sources until the second century.<sup>233</sup> Contra to this however is the reference in the New Testament text in the book of Acts that it was at Antioch the Apostles of (Jesus) Christ were first called Christians.<sup>234</sup> This text would purport to record events prior to 70CE which suggest the term was in use early enough for it also to be in use in Alexandria in the first century however there is as yet no text to evidence that. Griggs

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<sup>232</sup> Birger A. Pearson, “Early Christianity in Egypt - some observations” Birger A. Pearson & James E Goehring eds. *The Roots of Egyptian Christianity: Studies in Antiquity and Christianity*. (Philadelphia, 1986), p.133; H. Idris Bell, *Egypt from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest: A Study in the Diffusion and Decay of Hellenism* (Oxford, 1966), p.86. (orig 1948).

<sup>233</sup> Birger A. Pearson ‘Earliest Christianity in Context: further observations’ *The World of Earliest Egyptian Christianity*. James E. Goehring & Janet A. Timbie. eds. (Washington, 2008), p.99.

<sup>234</sup> Refer page 1 as introduced.



is willing to support that Acts is a primary source which “support the position that Christianity reached Egypt (at least Alexandria) at quite an early date.”<sup>235</sup> He further notes that the Apollos episode in Acts is the only reliable text for an early arrival of Christianity in Egypt,<sup>236</sup> and while not going so far as to suggest a scholarly consensus, he appears to imply there is, apart from detractors such as Johannes Monck who holds that Apollos may have been educated in a city other than the one his family had originally resided in.<sup>237</sup> The pessimistic position of Monck has some support intertextually from the New Testament where Paul’s education is implied to have been also in a city other than his origin:

“I am a Jew born in Tarsus of Cilicia but brought up in this city [Jerusalem]. I studied under [lit. at the feet of] Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors.” Acts 22:3

The unsolvable aspects are that his [Paul] being born in Tarsus may be incidental to where his family actually lived, the same place he was raised - Jerusalem. His higher learning at the feet of Gamaliel was in Jerusalem, which may or may not be the city of his parents and thus Apollos may have likewise. While there is textual suggestion of this with Paul (far from certain), there is however no suggestion of an absent city of education for Apollos. Rather, the western text of Acts within the Codex Bezae (D) is to the contrary importantly stating that Apollos κατηχμένος: ἐν τῇ πατρίδι - had been educated in the homeland of the family, that is, his home city Alexandria.<sup>238</sup>

“Now a certain Jew named **Apollonius**, an Alexandrian by race, a learned man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the scriptures. He had been instructed **in his own country** in the **word** of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spake and taught carefully the things concerning Jesus, knowing only the baptism of John.”

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<sup>235</sup> Griggs, *Origins to 451CE*, 17.

<sup>236</sup> Griggs, *Origins to 451CE*, 22.

<sup>237</sup> Griggs, *Origins to 451CE*, 37 note 24.

<sup>238</sup> The size and stature of Alexandria was such that it functioned not unlike the Greek city states, and thus subsumed the surrounds to the extent it was both a city and geographical region justifying it being referred to as his homeland rather than just the city of his family.

Morton Smith somewhat controversially reports his discovery of a document in 1958, being suggested as a lost letter of Clement of Alexandria in which is stated Mark travelled from Rome to Alexandria after Peter's death, and that Mark wrote a more spiritual gospel version in Alexandria; *Secret Mark*:<sup>240</sup>

συνέταξε πνευμαικώτερον εὐαγγέλιον      Secret Mark Plate I 21-22  
composed a more spiritual      gospel<sup>241</sup>

In 1982 Smith produced a paper on the scholarly response to the document.<sup>242</sup>

Griggs commented that “virtually nobody” was willing to accept the validity of the gospel account therein as originating with Mark. Scholarly opposition to the document is clear by the titles of books the matter inspired.<sup>243</sup>

In light of the scholarly consensus that the document is not genuine,<sup>244</sup> it cannot be used as evidence for first century Christianity in Egypt. Despite the evidence against

<sup>239</sup> This is the translation of Canon. J. M. Wilson, as published in *The Acts of the Apostles, Translated from the Codex Bezae, with an Introduction on its Lucan Origin and importance*, by Canon J. M. Wilson, D.D. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1923). <http://www.bible-researcher.com/bezae-acts.html>; Divergences from majority text in **bold**.

<sup>240</sup> Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, 1973), p.446; Morton Smith, “Clement of Alexandria and Secret Mark: The Score at the End of the First Decade,” *Harvard Theological Review* 75:4 (1982), p.452.

<sup>241</sup> Smith, *Secret Mark*, 446 (English trans); 448 (Greek text) – the term πνευμαικώτερον from suffix τερος “wonder portent” thus “spiritual wonder” (comparative of πνευματικόν) could imply with supernatural effect: the translation “more spiritual” is from Smith and perhaps he toned it down to facilitate scholarly reception of what was already controversial. For plates; Smith, *Secret Mark*, 449, 551,553.

<sup>242</sup> Smith, *Clement: The Score*, 449-461.

<sup>243</sup> Griggs, *Origins to 451CE*, 21; Smith, *Clement: The Score*, 449. The document spawned a number of books specifically on it, and the titles leave no doubt as to the scholarly debate: *Ancient Gospel or Modern Forgery: The Secret Gospel of Mark in Debate – proceedings from the 2011 York University Christian Apocrypha Symposium*. ed. Tony Burke. (Eugene, 2013); Stephen C. Carlson, *The Gospel Hoax: Morton Smith's Invention of Secret Mark* (Waco, 2005); Peter Jeffrey, *The Secret Gospel of Mark Unveiled: Imagined Rituals of Sex, Death, and Madness in a Biblical Forgery* (London, 2007). It is perhaps of further interest that Carlson cites Nock whom he notes opposed this *Secret Mark* document, p.79, suggesting Nock's influence in excising Egypt continues, yet curiously Smith dedicated the 1973 book to Nock. Despite the scholarly responses the document has received provisional inclusion in the Berlin Clement compilation edition: *Clemens Alexandrinus* (CGS 4/1; 2d ed.; eds. O. Staßlin and U. Treu; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1980), xvii-xviii; cf. viii.

<sup>244</sup> Birger A. Pearson, “The Secret Gospel of Mark: A 20th Century Forgery” *Interdisciplinary Journal of Research on Religion*, (2008) Volume 4, Article 6 - from the abstract: “Two books recently published

the document, Griggs laments that this is evidence of the “continued scholarly bias against the traditional role of Mark in Egyptian Christian history.”<sup>245</sup> If this is the case, this suggests the lacuna which has overlooked (or denied) Christianity in Egypt in the first century has become reified and may persist in its own right despite any evidence to the contrary – given so much time has passed without fresh documents on Mark, it does raise the question what sort of test any new document would need to pass in order to be accepted.

Drawing from the particular passage from Acts 18:24-26, Griggs is willing to suggest “there is a general consensus that Christianity had to be taken to Egypt by approximately 50 CE and most commentators accept that interpretation.”<sup>246</sup> Outside of the New Testament texts Griggs highlights the problem for literal evidence documenting Christianity’s arrival in Egypt that “no manuscript has yet been discovered which defines the time when Egyptian Christianity was founded or chronicles the religion’s earliest development along the Nile.”<sup>247</sup> Inherent in this is the desire for an *Acts* type document relating to the formation of Christian groups and churches in Alexandria and Egypt.<sup>248</sup> Intrinsic to examination of any Alexandrian or Egyptian source text is the presence of an identifying marker – a Christian specific terminology or phraseology. This intertextual tool has been what can be agreed by scholars as Christian specific religious terms in their position of one of the *κάτοικοι* (specific groups) living in Egypt, terms specific to them as a unique social group.

These *nomina sacra* include the key terms: *Christos*, *Iesous*, *κύριος* (*Kyrios*), *Theos*,

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now show conclusively that Morton Smith forged the letter to Theodore and the gospel fragments. There never was a “secret gospel of Mark” in ancient Alexandria or anywhere else.”

<sup>245</sup> Griggs, *Origins to 451CE*, 21.

<sup>246</sup> Griggs, *Origins to 451CE*, 17. Griggs however does not write a comprehensive list of these commentators, and whether he was seeking to declare a consensus is not certain as scholarship has neither supported nor opposed Griggs on this point. It is notable that when Malherbe (as noted) first suggested a new consensus for the work done by E.A. Judge on Christians as a social group under Rome, other scholars did present subsequent affirmation as outlined by James Harrison, “Introduction” in Judge, *First Christians*, 17.

<sup>247</sup> Griggs, *Origins to 451CE*, 13.

<sup>248</sup> This however may be a modern imposition upon an ancient culture which saw no reason to record the history. It needs to be considered that even our NT *Acts* document purports to have been written only at the request of one high status individual, Theophilus, for their own personal reasons. There is no indication in that document that the church *ecclesia* itself had such a document for its own historical purposes – and the Egyptian Christian church may likely have concurred. Lack of documents may be due to persecutions also as noted.

plus Pneuma, ἄνθρωπος (Anthropos), σταυρός (Stauros), Pater, υἱός (Huios), Soter, Meter, Ouranos, Israel, Daveid, Ierousalem.<sup>249</sup> To this list it may be useful to add 'the Way.' Some of these terms may appear in texts of non-Christian origins. Theos for example can be of purely Jewish usage and therefore Christian documents may be indistinguishable from Jewish ones without Christian specific context.<sup>250</sup> For example the term brother *adelphos* may be normal familial usage without the form encountered in the New Testament letters particularly as an opening address typified by Phillipians 1:12:

Γινώσκειν δὲ ὑμᾶς βούλομαι, ἀδελφοί,<sup>251</sup> ὅτι τὰ κατ' ἐμὲ μᾶλλον εἰς προκοπὴν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἐλήλυθεν.

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters [adelphoi], that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.<sup>252</sup>

Thus a very Christian term in other contexts may simply be a letter to one's brother, sister, or friends. Even this Phillipians text would be difficult to determine as Christian without the key word gospel εὐαγγέλιον.

Other New Testament texts are suggestive of a Christian emergence in Egypt. Making use of the flight of Jesus' parents to Egypt as a link to Christianity's origins is "fanciful" according to Griggs.<sup>253</sup> Likewise for the traditions recorded in the *Arab Infancy Gospel* around Jesus as a miracle worker during the stay in Egypt. Within the *Gospel Pseudo-Matthew* is recorded the conversion of a town following Jesus performing a miracle in an Egyptian temple.<sup>254</sup> Texts such as these are not generally excepted as evidence partly due to their dating later than the first century but additionally because scholarship does not regard the events intrinsically credible - *vis à vis* Jesus as a child miracle worker. Likewise the Jesus infancy narratives within the accepted canon of the New Testament are believed to be at best a redaction of the

<sup>249</sup> Pearson, *Early Christianity*, 133 and note 7. Accepting also these terms were used by Judean based Christians.

<sup>250</sup> Pearson, *Early Christianity*, 134.

<sup>251</sup> adelphos or plural adelphoi being thus ἀδελφοί.

<sup>252</sup> NIV.

<sup>253</sup> Griggs, *Origins to 451CE*, 13.

<sup>254</sup> Griggs, *Origins to 451CE*, 13.

text or at worst an invention of the second century.<sup>255</sup> The effect of the persistent “not Egypt” lacuna discussed earlier is evident considering that due to being viewed through the lacuna lens these and other texts take on a folklore or legend status when located in Egypt. However if this temple miracle event had originally formed a part of the New Testament Matthean account, with the miracle being in the Jerusalem temple and the conversion of the town being a Judean one, the reception of it by scholars may have a more interesting status regarding the early ministry of Jesus and particularly the history of Christian origins.

### **Persistent Egyptian burial customs – mummification**

As mentioned the scholarly tradition has held a tacit presumption that evidence of Greek/Egyptian influence, either way, would be seen in literature. This is perhaps a post enlightenment expectation arising through the academic method particularly in twentieth and twenty first century worldview, given modernity has a high output of written materials. By comparison, in a study taken by Robert Dixon, analysing burials in the medieval town of Bury St Edmunds, he reports a scarcity of documents mentioning burial requests.<sup>256</sup> Lack of documents is not a first century Christian phenomenon alone. The imposition of a literary evidentiary based argument upon ancient cultures may not be a fair acid test. Manning observes that the study of Ptolemaic Egypt has been dominated by the search for papyri<sup>257</sup> to such an extent that the study of the Ptolemies had become the “preserve of papyrologists.”<sup>258</sup> A similar approach has been applied and expected of first century Christianity in Egypt. Due to a variety of social norms there may not have been the impetus to write in detail about the sort of things modern scholars would like clarity on. After all, modernity has not had its equivalent of the burning of the library of Alexandria, wherein much of the textual records we seek were lost. In this regard Andrew Monson notes that papyrological evidence “is not enough” in concluding an issue such as the period of the first century BCE to first century CE due to it being sparse in

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<sup>255</sup> Griggs, *Origins to 451CE*, 13.

<sup>256</sup> Robert Dinn, “Death and Rebirth in Late Medieval Bury St Edmunds” *Death in Towns: Urban Responses to the Dying and the Dead, 100-1600*. ed. Steven Bassett. (London, 1995), pp.153 -154.

<sup>257</sup> Manning, *The Last Pharaohs*, 1.

<sup>258</sup> Manning, *The Last Pharaohs*, 11.

documents.<sup>259</sup> The paucity of documents in the period 100 BCE – 100 CE compared to the papyrological quantity of other associated periods is a curious phenomenon in itself which scholarship is yet to explain.<sup>260</sup> It does however both require and justify a focus of socio-archaeological data such as burial customs.<sup>261</sup>

In the classical era of ancient Egypt a number of the pharaonic dynasties consisted of foreigners who conquered Egypt and made themselves pharaoh; these included Libyans, Ethiopians, Persians, and Macedonian Greeks.<sup>262</sup> The status of Egypt in the pre-classical world (prior to 1000BCE) was such that for any ambitious king or ruler, conquest of Egypt was the ultimate prize. Attacks on Egypt's southern border and its eastern border "the eastern gate" were regular events. However until the rise of major states these attacks from an Egyptian viewpoint were skirmishes and mostly a nuisance but which pharaohs made good use of as victory propaganda. The wealth and building prowess of Egypt far surpassed any other culture – as it has been best described that Egypt was building 400 foot, six million tonne 'sky scrapers' (pyramids) with state buildings coated in gold while the rest of the Ancient Near East was living in mud huts or emerging from the stone-age.<sup>263</sup> A god-king status was ascribed to the pharaohs, divinely chosen, child of the god Re-Amun, their power veritably absolute. They mummified their bodies successfully preserving them for centuries if not millennia, and were seen to hold the mystery of immortality<sup>264</sup> – and it may be said everyone wanted to be pharaoh. The strength of this is seen in the Seleucid King Antiochus IV who when conquering Egypt in 168 BCE proclaimed himself Pharaoh and planned a permanent occupation until the Romans forced him out.<sup>265</sup> Those foreign kings who conquered Egypt quickly inculcated into their culture (or were

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<sup>259</sup> Andrew Monson, *From the Ptolemies to the Romans: Political and Economic Change* (Cambridge, 2012), p.288.

<sup>260</sup> An equal mystery as Theophilus notes is why so much literature Biblical and other, was discarded, later to be found in the rubbish dumps of Oxyrhynchus: Theophilus, *Multispectral Imaging of Greek Papyrus*, 270.

<sup>261</sup> Equally so is the study of coins and statuary, however a detailed study of these is beyond the scope of this study, apart from contextual mention where appropriate.

<sup>262</sup> Peter. A. Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs: The Reign by Reign Record of the Rulers and Dynasties of Ancient Egypt* (London, 1994): for foreign pharaohs – Libyan p.182; Nubian p.190; Persian p.198, 201; Hyksos Syria/Palestinian p.98; Macedonian Greeks p.206; summary of foreign dynasties p.172.

<sup>263</sup> Fletcher, *Egypt's Sun King*, 76.

<sup>264</sup> Monson, *From the Ptolemies to the Romans*, 252.

<sup>265</sup> Michel Chauveau, *Egypt in the Age of Cleopatra: History and Society under the Ptolemies*. trans. David Lorton. (Ithaca, 2000), p.13; from French *L'Égypte au temps de Cléopâtre* (Paris, 1997).

inculcated into the Egyptian religious cultus) adopting the full religious ceremony, regalia, and even recording their names and achievements not in their native language but in Egyptian hieroglyphics, including royal cartouches, and upon their deaths, they too had their bodies mummified in the Egyptian fashion.<sup>266</sup>

In the late Egyptian period when Persia conquered Egypt, an event when classical Egypt is regarded to have ended due to these foreigners taking over, is part of the misconception: that is, it is perceived that classical Egypt ended *because* these pharaohs were foreigners however Egypt had numerous foreign pharaohs previously in the classical period. The decline of Egypt began with the end of the New Kingdom Period: after the end of the eighteenth dynasty Egypt's wealth and power would never be so great and was in decline from the nineteenth dynasty onwards.<sup>267</sup> Nevertheless the Persian period did bring a practical end, however some regard classical Egypt to have lasted into the fourth century BCE not ending until after the last native pharaoh Nectanebo II in 343BCE.<sup>268</sup> Either way, or despite this end, importantly it was not the end of two of Egypt's powerful socio-religious aspects: the Pharaonic cult and its associated after life methodology - mummification of the body.

In 332BCE Alexander the Great in conquering the Ancient Near East defeated the Persians and absorbed Egypt into his empire. There is a general consensus that Egypt did not resist these Greek invaders but saw them as liberators. Another aspect to the reception the conquering Greeks received from Egypt is that the Greeks and Egyptians had a long association where the Greeks were used as military mercenaries particularly in defending Egypt's delta region with its northern Mediterranean

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<sup>266</sup> Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs*, 182, 190, 198, 206 for foreign pharaoh use of Egyptian motifs.

<sup>267</sup> Specifically see William J. Duiker and Jackson J. Spielvogel, *World History - Volume 1: to 1800*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition (Boston, 2007), p.15; and generally Aidan Dodson, *Poisoned Legacy: The Fall of the Nineteenth Egyptian Dynasty* (New York, 2010); L. Elliott Binns, *The Book of Exodus* (Cambridge, 1924); Marc Van De Meiroop, *The Eastern Mediterranean in the Age of Ramesses* (Oxford, 2007), pp.235-253.

<sup>268</sup> Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs*, 217. The Nectanebo II dynasty suggests a potential revival of the pharaoh cult and mummification into the Greek period perhaps explaining why Alexander desired or felt compelled to adopt it.

exposure due to the Greeks being more familiar with defending water borne invasions.<sup>269</sup>

In spite of the fact that Egypt was conquered by foreigners at various times, the mummification of the dead did not end with the decline of classical Egypt. Not only did the Persians continue the mummification methodology but the Macedonian Greeks in Egypt did also and used the classical Egyptian style.<sup>270</sup> The degree to which this 'Egyptian method' of mummification continued and was taken up during the Greco-Roman era is central to the question of Christianity. This is important as the degree to which mummification and its associated Pharaoh cult permeated the socio-cultural background is linked to its capacity to influence Christians resident or visiting there, and therefore whether it had the capacity to influence many or just a few. It is therefore relevant to briefly survey the cultural permeation that occurred during the Ptolemaic and Graeco-Roman era. Not engaging this aspect tends to leave the landscape and our worldview of it as one of a purified Greek or Roman backdrop – and is partly responsible for causing mummification and Christian use of it to be a curious enigma. Once the cultural milieu is appreciated the manifestation of remnant classical Egyptian motifs and burial practices like mummification become understandable.

Mummification of the dead in the Egyptian fashion continued to be practiced and set a precedent for the degree to which certain aspects of Egyptian culture would permeate the ruling Greek culture within Egypt. Within one year of conquering Egypt Alexander became pharaoh of Egypt inaugurated via the traditional pharaonic ceremonial rite through the powers vested in the priest of the Amun temple system. Alexander was subsequently presented in public iconography in pharaonic imagery, on coins and public inscriptions in hieroglyphics.<sup>271</sup> Upon his death Alexander's body

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<sup>269</sup> These Greeks were diverse in their origins from Sicily, Cyrene, Crete, Rhodes, Aegean, Arcadia, Thrace and Temnos: Bezalel Porten with J. J. Farber, C. J. Martin, G. Vittman, *The Elephantine Papyri in English: Three Millennia of Cross-Cultural Continuity and Change* (Leiden, 1996), p.387.

<sup>270</sup> The other Macedonian kings in Syria (apart from Antiochus as mentioned) and those not in Egypt did not seek the mummification practice which suggests the influence of the practice was manifest in proximity to it.

<sup>271</sup> Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs*, 206-207.



was mummified and entombed in the city he founded, Alexandria.<sup>272</sup> His tomb built in the Egyptian not Greek style was a public monument. Once Alexander, who upon his death was perceived as a living god, had set this precedent of Egyptianization imagery it may be suggested it was difficult to reverse, therefore either by desire or need or both the Greek kings that succeeded him continued adoption of the pharaonic rite and its attributes especially mummification through the 300 years of what became the Ptolemaic dynasty of Greek pharaohs.

The transition from and revival of traditional Egyptian methods was also noted in the French excavations at Deir el-Medina where in Ptolemaic times reuse of new Kingdom tombs occurred. Lynn Meskell relates the practice was taken up by “organised groups of funerary workers called *chaochytes*. These were libation pourers of Djeme who were responsible for maintaining the mortuary cult of those buried in the necropolis of Djeme.”<sup>273</sup> These were usurped monuments where numerous (Ptolemaic era) bodies were deposited, giving further general Ptolemaic population exposure to the traditional mummification method. This reuse of Egyptian necropolis sites by Ptolemaic people, was a precursor to Christians doing the same with Ptolemaic sites.

The manifestation of the pharaoh cult by the Ptolemaic kings is not disputed given the artefact data and evidence in statuary, tomb art and royal seals. Perhaps most notable of these is the dual imagery displayed in the seals of Ptolemy VI depicted equally as pharaoh and Greek king.<sup>274</sup> There is a variance in literature as to how writers reference the Ptolemies, as any particular individual may be referred to as either Greek king Ptolemy, or Pharaoh Ptolemy. In this regard the Greek king emphasis is the preferred while authors such as Pollard and Reid are willing to refer to Ptolemy II as “The Pharaoh.”<sup>275</sup> It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss in detail the full range or nature of Egyptianisation of the Ptolemies. In scholarship debates centre around whether or not the Ptolemies were Egyptianised or were just

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<sup>272</sup> Pollard & Reid, *Rise and Fall*, 23.

<sup>273</sup> Lynn Meskell “Memory’s Materiality: Ancestral Presence, Commemorative Practice and Dysjunctive Locales” in *Archaeologies of Memory*. eds. Ruth M. Van Dyke, Susan E. Alcock. (Oxford, 2003), p. 51.

<sup>274</sup> Image in Appendix 1.

<sup>275</sup> Pollard & Reid, *Rise and Fall*, 80.

appealing to the native Egyptian populace via their familiar imagery. Smith for example asserts that in spite of how significant an example of interpenetration of Egyptian/Greek culture that a Ptolemaic Pharaoh statue may provide, these according to Smith were merely for “Egyptian consumption”, that the influence is “all one way” (from Greek into Egyptian), which is essentially a continuation of the suggested lacuna.<sup>276</sup> However contra to this Paul Stanwick observes “the ideological message is overwhelmingly consistent – sculptures convey the idea of Ptolemy as Pharaoh.”<sup>277</sup> This is confirmed by documentary evidence in the three decrees of Raphia, Memphis and Philae which specifically detail requisites of royal portraiture and images; that they should be in a conspicuous place in the temple and above all “be made in the Egyptian manner” – the Ptolemaic Pharaonic imagery was no casual affair.<sup>278</sup> It needs to be considered that if one did not want the populace to see one as an Egyptian pharaoh, it would be a serious mistake to portray oneself as a Pharaoh.

### **A Self-Identity Question**

Bagnall engages the traditional view that the distinction between ethnicity was clear and present, suggesting within the majority of the literature “most of what is written about Roman Egypt takes it for granted that the distinction between Greek and Egyptian was a straight forward one.”<sup>279</sup> With a presumed clear difference between Greek, Egyptian, Roman and (Judeo) Christian it would seem unlikely that there would be any take up of foreign customs by any of these groups, or that they would intermix them - this is indeed has been the traditional view, which again Moyer’s latest work seeks to rectify. Perhaps this ambiguity is seen within Ptolemy I whose family lived overtly in the Egyptian manner including the traditional Egyptian rituals, dress codes, and the incestuous marriages commonly acceptable with the New Kingdom period.<sup>280</sup> In making reference to Victoria Berenices, Callimachus uses this Pharaonic cultus in the suggestion of her being born of her parents’ sibling marriage,

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<sup>276</sup> R. R. R. Smith, “Kings and Philosophers” *Images and Ideologies: Self-Definition in the Hellenistic World*. eds. A. Bulloch, E.S. Gruen, A.D. Long, A. Stewart. (Berkeley, 1993), p.208.

<sup>277</sup> Paul Edmund Stanwick, *Portraits of the Ptolemies: Greek Kings as Egyptian Pharaohs* (Austin, 2002), p.81.

<sup>278</sup> Stanwick, *Portraits of the Ptolemies*, 28, 81.

<sup>279</sup> Bagnall, *Roman Fayyum*, 1.

<sup>280</sup> Pollard & Reid, *Rise and Fall*, 44.

when in fact the marriage was rather normal.<sup>281</sup> The question asserts itself as to how self-identity was held or displayed, tacitly or otherwise, as early Christians did not fit the presumed stereotype, to which Bagnall notes that “above all” it was in terms of the gods [religion] of the adopted land.<sup>282</sup> This proposes that religion was how these people expressed self-identity<sup>283</sup> - which may suggest this ought to be amongst the significant determinants of an early Christian in Egypt. To this can be added, it was the way they treated their own burial or body that announced where their identity truly lie. The specific identifiable burial practices of a religion announce the adherents’ identity<sup>284</sup> - this suggests a risk for the modern worldview to over emphasise ethnicity or language. However it may not be a question of self-identity that needs to be the decider – this question only arises in debates of the purity of Greek culture within the Egyptian context. The way a person treats their body at death may or may not be the primary determinant of identity, but it may be said with a degree of confidence the treatment of ones’ body at death reveals from which religious culture one has been significantly influenced or to which one has converted – irrespective of ones’ ethnic or cultural origins. This is important in identifying early Christians in Egypt as ethnic or cultural self-identity – appearing Greek, Egyptian or Roman in burials has been part of the methodology for rejecting a burial as early Christian. That is, if the burial looked Greek, Egyptian or Roman it has been presumed not to be a Christian one – the determinant has and largely still is whether it looks sufficiently “Christian” as presumed through a western Judeo Romano typology.

While it may be debated the degree to which Ptolemaic reproduction of Egyptian cultural aspects reflects passive engagement or Egyptianisation, a clearer view can be perceived by the contra position of what would be indicated by the complete rejection or ignoring of Egyptian culture by the Ptolemaic kings. The adoption of the

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<sup>281</sup> As sibling marriage was partly a royal requirement and at least highly acceptable to classical Egypt but ordinarily repulsive to Greeks, this suggests a cultural influence of Egyptian upon Greek. It was not an incestuous marriage as the parents were Magus of Cyrene and Apama – Thomas Gelzer, “Transformations” *Images and Ideologies: Self-Definition in the Hellenistic World*. eds. A. Bulloch, E.S. Gruen, A.D. Long, A. Stewart. (Berkeley, 1993), p.148.

<sup>282</sup> Bagnall, *Roman Fayyum*, 9.

<sup>283</sup> This is proposed by Bagnall, *Roman Fayyum*, 9; and Edwyn Bevan, *The House of Ptolemy: A History of Egypt under the Ptolemaic Dynasty* (Chicago, 1968), p.87.

<sup>284</sup> Lorelei H. Corcoran, “Mysticism and the Mummy Portraits” *Portraits and Masks: Burial Customs in Roman Egypt*. ed. M. L. Bierbrier. (London, 1997), p.46.

culture does increase the plausibility for Egyptianisation far more to the positive than a complete rejection or eradication would. In this regard a presentation of these aspects of engagement of the Egyptian culture by the Greek kings is important in order to reveal the depth of remnant and persistent Egyptian classical culture elements. Jean-Yves Empereur through a major archaeological project retrieving statuary from Alexandria's harbour, and studying the tomb archaeology of Alexandria has led the way in compiling non-papyrological evidence of Egyptianisation. From monuments retrieved, Empereur notes the volume of objects: Sphinxes, obelisks, papyrus columns and other items of Pharaonic architecture were transported to Alexandria giving the capital of the Ptolemies an "Egyptian look."<sup>285</sup> The classical Egyptian false door in tombs appears in Greek tombs at Gabbari.<sup>286</sup> The necropolis at Gabbari represents the first generation of Alexandrian tombs and thus this Egyptian burial acculturation was prominent very early in Greek burials, in part due to the long association with Egypt by Greek mercenaries.<sup>287</sup>

It needs to be mentioned, on the other hand, that a decidedly Greek king image is the predominant style of coins, and Smith argues that coins are the primary basis for identification of the Ptolemies.<sup>288</sup> In contrast to this however Alexander was posthumously depicted on coins as the Egyptian god Ammon.<sup>289</sup> The work of Empereur has been influential in modifying traditional scholarly perspectives. The recovery of Pharaonic sculpture has for Manning redefined Egyptianisation of the Ptolemaic state due to their "adoption of pharaonic ideology, imagery and [importantly] behaviour" which suggests a "hybridity increasingly evident" in the archaeology of Alexandria.<sup>290</sup> Interestingly for Smith "a portrait statue expressed key defining aspects of its subject" of where the person "stood in the broad scheme of things"<sup>291</sup> – that the Ptolemies were predominately displayed on megaliths as Pharaohs would seem to undermine Smith's thesis and the tradition against

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<sup>285</sup> Jean-Yves Empereur, *Alexandria Rediscovered* (London, 1988), p.118.

<sup>286</sup> Empereur, *Alexandria Rediscovered*, 193.

<sup>287</sup> Why use of the false door did not occur among Greeks in Egypt prior may be due to its use by the Ptolemy kings having given the practice acceptability. On Greek mercenaries see: Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs*, 204.

<sup>288</sup> Smith, *Kings and Philosophers*, 239.

<sup>289</sup> Clayton, *Chronicle of the Pharaohs*, 206 (text and coin image).

<sup>290</sup> Manning, *The Last Pharaohs*, 3.

<sup>291</sup> Smith, *Kings and Philosophers*, 203.

interpenetration or Egyptianisation. Dionysius of Halicarnassus records that many Greeks living amongst non-Greeks “barbarians” had in a short time forgotten all their Greek heritage, neither speaking Greek nor observing Greek customs or gods.<sup>292</sup> This feature is seen also with the Old Testament Hebrews as the book Nehemiah relates, that within a generation or two “their children did not know how to speak the language of Judah.”<sup>293</sup> Likewise then, it is likely that after a short time, as little as one generation, Christians in Egypt could readily have forgotten their socio-cultural heritage and adopted localised ways, such as Egyptian mummification of their dead.

The decline of Egyptian religious culture and thus the inability of the Egyptian culture to influence the Greeks let alone the Christians has also (wrongly been) presumed from phrases in first century literature such as *asylia* which records the temple or sanctuary in need of restoration which scholarly tradition asserts is evidence of decline of the religious culture. However this may be routine restoration, or more so, mention of restoration may suggest strong support for rebuilding or maintaining Egyptian religious infrastructure especially in comparison with a modern context where a state restoration meant the opposite.<sup>294</sup> The presumption that Egyptian culture must have gone into massive decline causes a text like *asylia* to be interpreted accordingly, however there is evidence to the contrary, for example hieroglyphic epigraphy during the Ptolemaic era was in full renewal.<sup>295</sup> No doubt the very fact that Egypt had been conquered by three foreign lands consecutively, Persian, Greek and Roman, indicates a decline in the nation state, however it does not necessarily coincide that the culture in entirety had declined. The indigenous population still asserted itself. Ptolemy Katochus in second century BCE describes himself as Makedon but is assaulted by Egyptians because he is Hellene,<sup>296</sup> and yet Hellene was a term the Macedonian Ptolemies used to categorise the non

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<sup>292</sup> Dionysius of Halicarnassus 1.89 - 4

<sup>293</sup> Nehemiah 13:24.

<sup>294</sup> In 2015 it was announced that the Federal Australian Parliament building was in need of restoration. This does not imply the Australian state culture is in decline but rather the opposite – Joe Kelly, “\$330m renovation rescue for our crumbling leaking parliament” *The Australian*, 26 June 2015. <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/m-renovation-rescue-for-our-crumbling-leaking-parliament/story-fn59niix-1227415373751?sv=1ccb8bf9beb6dc367fefa808af32dffc> (22.9.2015).

<sup>295</sup> Jean Bingen, “Normalité et spécificité de l’épigraphie grecque et romaine de l’Égypte,” in L. Criscuolo and G. Geraci. eds. *Egitto e storia antica dall’ellenismo all’età araba* (Bologna, 1989), p.258.

<sup>296</sup> Bevan, *House of Ptolemy*, 83 note 2.

“Makedonians.” This ambiguity was a part of the populace of Egypt from earlier than may be expected. From the early second century BCE there was an inter-mixing via intermarriage of urban Egyptians with lower classes of Greeks.<sup>297</sup> Intermarriage outside of Alexandria is prevalent between Greek and Roman residents of the Fayyum and locals (Egyptians).<sup>298</sup> This existed to the extent that Bagnall is willing to suggest Greek speaking inhabitants of the Fayyum region saw themselves as both Greek and Egyptian.<sup>299</sup> Bowen confirms that this inter-mixing with its associated self-identity ambiguity still existed in the third century CE burials in ancient Kellis - west tomb 1 burial arrangements did not make it possible to determine pagan individuals from Christian.<sup>300</sup> All of this other data appears to be validated, or to validate *Acta Isidori* as previously noted makes this reference to Jews in Alexandria becoming Egyptianised:

“They are not of the same character as the Alexandrians, but live after the fashion of the Egyptians.” 356c II 25-26<sup>301</sup>

Pieter Van der Horst qualifies that this is the through the voice “in the mouth of” an Alexandrian Greek “an utterly negative qualification.”<sup>302</sup> However this text in *Acta Isidori* may be most readily explained as Jews being Egyptianised or simply growing up enculturated. Against the suggestion of it being fictional is the reference in the text to Jews stirring up trouble in “the whole world” in *Acta Isidori* (τῆς οἰκουμένης 156c II 23) is also used by Philo *Flacc.44* and “has its exact parallel” in *Letter of Claudius*; a plague to “the whole world” τῆς οἰκουμένης is noted as internal historical evidence.<sup>303</sup> This therefore ought to add strength to the Egyptianisation of

<sup>297</sup> Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 81 – this does presume a twentieth century view of what lower class means, a distinction which is tacitly drawn from an industrial revolution – contra – Marxian view of class definitions - which may have meant little and been unknown to the people of 2,200 years ago.

<sup>298</sup> Susan E. C. Walker, “Mummy Portraits in their Roman Context” *Portraits and Masks: Burial Customs in Roman Egypt*. ed. M. L. Bierbrier. (London, 1997), p.3.

<sup>299</sup> Bagnall, *Roman Fayyum*, 10.

<sup>300</sup> Gillian Bowen, *Early Christian Burial at Kellis*, 84 – this distinction was more evident in other parts of the necropolis. This does however revisit the expected definitions of identity that the modern viewer needs and presumes but which these ancient people likely did not.

<sup>301</sup> Text and translation *Acta Isidori* 156c Col. II 25-26 from Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, 78-79 (66-81).

<sup>302</sup> Pieter W. Van der Horst, *Studies in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Lieden, 2014), p.31.

<sup>303</sup> On τῆς οἰκουμένης, Tcherikover and Fuks note “The term means the whole world” - Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, 55 note 100; and they further state “Philo *Flacc.44* uses this

Jews in Alexandria which is to be expected if they were Alexandrian or Nile valley born and bred.

Other significant aspects persisted such as the Egyptian calendric system which successfully competed with the Macedonian. Greek papyri display dates which equate the Macedonian and Egyptian date evidencing a “double date” system.<sup>304</sup> In the mid to late Ptolemaic period the Macedonian calendar was made subservient to the Egyptian with the Macedonian having no independent purpose apart from comparative reference to the Egyptian. This system continued into the Roman era.<sup>305</sup> Fraser adds to the Roman context that Augustus and his successors were worshipped as Pharaohs in the temples in Egypt,<sup>306</sup> which statuary confirm.<sup>307</sup> In the Fayyum and the *chora* generally Ptolemaic dynastic names continued to be used into the late Roman period.<sup>308</sup>

This paragraph has presented some of the evidence which suggests that core aspects, unique religious practices of Egyptian culture persisted and significantly influenced those who lived there.<sup>309</sup> The most resilient aspect of Egyptian culture, where “old Egypt continue[d] to make an imposing appearance” was religion.<sup>310</sup> Despite the prejudices scholarship has shown towards the ancient Egyptians it was not necessarily the view held of Egypt by other ancient people. The desire to be pharaoh manifest by all those who conquered Egypt is evidence that there was a degree to which Egypt was held in awe.<sup>311</sup> Further, the religious environment of the first century Mediterranean was polymorphic. Egyptian and Greek religion inter-mixed in a similar fashion as how “Theosophy spirituality” fuses in modernity.<sup>312</sup> The

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term for the Jewish diaspora in the Roman empire.” On the interconnection to *Acta Isidori* and “its exact parallel” *Letter of Claudius*, see Tcherikover and Fuks, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, 68.

<sup>304</sup> Alan Eduard Samuel, *Ptolemaic Chronology* (Munich, 1962), p.31.

<sup>305</sup> Samuel, *Ptolemaic Chronology*, 31, 138.

<sup>306</sup> Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 803; also Gregory Steven Dundas, “Pharaoh Basileus and Emperor: The Roman Imperial Cult in Egypt” *PhD Dissertation: University California* (Los Angeles, 1994), p.5.

<sup>307</sup> Stanwick, *Portraits of the Ptolemies*, 61, and 213 for full size statue (item G2).

<sup>308</sup> Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria*, 803.

<sup>309</sup> Seleucids and others not resident in Egypt did not, as noted.

<sup>310</sup> Bevan, *House of Ptolemy*, 80.

<sup>311</sup> A view Bevan concedes, Bevan, *House of Ptolemy*, 86; supported by E. A Judge, that the Greeks respected the Egyptian culture being more ancient; Judge as cited.

<sup>312</sup> Bevan, *House of Ptolemy*, 88.

Graeco-Roman disposition may have been inclined towards animal worship,<sup>313</sup> which we also see filtering through in Paul's comment in the book of *Romans* against the worship of animals:

“Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.”<sup>314</sup> Rom 1:22-24

This is later seen continued in the worldview of Rome as reflected by Dio Cassius, and theologically by Augustine:

““should [we] then bear the insults of this throng, who, oh heavens! Are Alexandrians and Egyptians (what worse or truer name could one apply to them?) who worship reptiles and beasts as gods and embalm their own bodies...” Dio Cassius *Hist. Rom* L, 24.6-7

and Augustine;

“Hence Rome sank almost to the level of the Egyptians, who worship beasts and birds, when the goose was honoured in annual ceremonies;”<sup>315</sup>

superstitionem Aegyptiorum bestias avesque Roma deciderat, ...

Egyptian superstition of wild birds by which Rome degraded.....)<sup>316</sup>

Augustine *The City of God against the Pagans* II. XXII

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<sup>313</sup> Bevan, *House of Ptolemy*, 88: Bevan suggests the Romans were less inclined towards animal worship but as to the Greeks “there was nothing in the Greek religion to cause them to see the Egyptian religion as pagan.” Gilhus, too supports the notion that “Romans did not worship any gods in animal shapes” yet notes animal worship “swarmed” onto the religious scene in the first century: Ingvild Saelid Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman and Early Christian Ideas* (Abingdon, 2006), p.93; and the Romans knew of animal worship in Egypt from 50BCE: Mary T. Boatwright, *Peoples of the Roman World* (Cambridge, 2012), p.112.

<sup>314</sup> Romans 1:22-24. The worship of reptiles such as the crocodile god and snake god is most strongly manifest in Egypt and this text may indicate the Christians knew of it. Also the Egyptian frog goddess *Heqt* is especially interesting as it was connected to resurrection – this may then suggest an example of Alexandrian culture appearing in the NT texts, and possible Alexandrian influence – on Crocodile god and mummification of crocodiles: Alan K. Bowman *Egypt After the Pharaohs: 332 BC – AD 642* (London, 1986), pp. 17, 172; also on the frog goddess of Egypt see Wallis Budge, *The Mummy*, 266.

<sup>315</sup> Translation George E. McKracken, *Saint Augustine: The City of God against the Pagans*. eds. T. E. Page, E. Capps, W. H. D. Rouse, L. A. Post, E. H. Warmington. (London, 1966). (Orig. 1975). p.229.

<sup>316</sup> This more literal translation is mine to simplify the sense of Augustine's aversion.



What Paul and Augustine relate here however, was a rejection of what *was occurring* – worship of animals by Rome, and Hellenes. Therefore the Roman, Greek or more generally the Hellenistic mind had no specific reason to outright reject Egyptian religious practice. In fact more the opposite as Barbara Borg notes the Egyptian influence “is especially strong in religious matters, even in the beliefs about death and the after-life.”<sup>317</sup> The disposition was rather one of curiosity towards other gods and beliefs which again Paul was able to make use of by speaking about God, raising the dead, and the resurrection of Christ as a salvation concept (σωτήρ) at the Areopagus in Athens:

“‘He seems to be advocating foreign gods.’ They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, ‘May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.’ (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)”<sup>318</sup>

The Christian message, intermixed with the Judaic messiah motif, and associated with the concept of ‘the unknown god’ [Acts 17:23] was capable of being met with a positive reception by the “hearing ear” of the Hellenistic audience. Paul engages their poets and philosophy:

“‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring’”...

“Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the

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<sup>317</sup> Barbara Borg, “The Dead as a Guest at Table? Continuity and Change in the Egyptian Cult of the Dead” *Portraits and Masks: Burial Customs in Roman Egypt*. ed. M. L. Bierbrier. (London, 1997), pp. 27-28. Supported by Bevan, *House of Ptolemy*, 80 as noted, also Gilhus, *Animals, Gods, Humans*, 93.

<sup>318</sup> Acts 17:19-21. The brackets represent the scribal margin notes or emendation by the redactor to add further context – a context that these people were interested in the latest ideas.

world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by (ἀναστήσας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν) raising him from the dead.”<sup>319</sup>

Here ἀναστήσας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν is a powerful and purposeful phrase.<sup>320</sup> The Greek ἀναστήσας has the meaning of “to stand upright”; νεκρῶν is specific to a dead body or a corpse, and is here in the genitive plural, implying from (among) the corpses or dead bodies – implying a very literal bodily resurrection which was rejected by some listeners but of interest to others. That the idea was not outright rejected suggests is due to it being a concept informed by pre-existent Hellenistic worldview ideas – the bodily preservation within Egyptian mummification and its associated afterlife dependence upon the body remaining in good condition was a readily if not an obvious association. More importantly, the idea of bodily preservation or regeneration was intrinsic now to the Christian worldview. This would be an important concept when Christianity arrived in Egypt and encountered bodily preservation within Egyptian mummification methods.

### **Mummification in Graeco-Roman Egypt**

It is a reasonable assumption that the take up in any form of the Egyptian mummification method testifies to the persistence of this aspect of the Egyptian religious culture and the influence it had. The process was known in the Graeco-Roman world well before the Christian period. Chicago Woodhouse dictionary have the one word ταριχεύειν for both mummify and embalm, and this is the same word

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<sup>319</sup> Acts 17:32-34 relates some rejected the idea but others were receptive: “When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, ‘We want to hear you again on this subject.’” At that, Paul left the Council. Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.”

<sup>320</sup> ἀναστήσας is in the aorist active participle; a past tense completion, thus “by raising him from (among) the dead” – it is something already done and witnessed by others (c.f. 1 Cor 15:6) an important aspect in the Hellenistic historical narrative of establishing believability or truth: c.f. Luke 1:1-4 where the author seeks to establish such believability or “certainty” via eye witnesses: “Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.”

used by various ancient sources when describing the Egyptian method of dead body preparation.<sup>321</sup>

The word ταριχεύω and its variants within Greek grammar is the same word used by both Herodotus and Strabo when specifically describing the detail of the process of the Egyptian mummification:

On Alexandria Strabo writes;

εἴθ' ἡ Νεκρόπολις τὸ προάστειον, ἐν ᾧ κῆποι τε πολλοὶ καὶ ταφαὶ  
καὶ καταγωγὰὶ πρὸς τὰς ταριχεύειας τῶν νεκρῶν

Strabo *Geographica* 17.1.10

“Then follows the suburb Necropolis, in which are numerous gardens, burial-places, and buildings for carrying on the process of embalming the dead.”<sup>322</sup>

On the Egyptian mummification method Herodotus writes;

ταῦτα δὲ ποιήσαντες ταριχεύουσι λίτρῳ κρύψαντες ἡμέρας  
ἑβδομήκοντα: πλεῦνας δὲ τουτέων οὐκ ἔξεστι ταριχεύειν.

Hdt *Hist* 2.86.5

“After doing this, they conceal the body for seventy days, embalmed in saltpetre; no longer time is allowed for the embalming.”<sup>323</sup>

Diogenes Laertius also makes mention of it:

θάπτουσι δ' Αἰγύπτιοι μὲν ταριχεύοντες, Ῥωμαῖοι δὲ καίοντες

Diog L. *De Vit. Philos.*, IX, xi, 84.

<sup>321</sup> S. C. Woodhouse, *The University of Chicago: English Greek Dictionary* (London, 1910), pp.266, 546.  
Or internet version: [http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/efts/dicos/woodhouse\\_test.pl?keyword=embalm&sortorder=Keyword](http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/efts/dicos/woodhouse_test.pl?keyword=embalm&sortorder=Keyword)

<sup>322</sup> Perseus translation.

<sup>323</sup> The word mummy/mummify comes from the Arabic *mumiya*, a reference to the black bitumen appearance the Arabic conquerors of Egypt noted on the preserved bodies, therefore this word did not exist in ancient times which is why the word “preserve” is used, and why scholarly convention has used “embalm” – however to what extent this accords with the lacuna excising the Egyptian from the ancient mentioning of body preservation is a question for consideration.

“In honouring their dead the Egyptians use embalming, but Romans burn.”<sup>324</sup>

The terms used above summarised in tabular form are:

ταριχεΐας (Strabo)

ταριχεύουσι (Hdt)

ταριχεύειν (Hdt)

ταριχεύοντες (Diog L.)

Although not specifically mentioned in the Old Testament, the 400 years of slavery in Egypt would presumably have exposed the Hebrews to the method.<sup>325</sup> There are parts of the Old Testament text which allude to the Egyptian burial method, most notable are Jacob, and Joseph being embalmed:

“Then Joseph directed the physicians in his service to embalm his father Israel. So the physicians embalmed him,”<sup>326</sup> Gen 50:2

In the Septuagint which draws from the original Hebrew, the reference via the translation convention is more specific and leaves no doubt:

“And Joseph commanded his servants the embalmers to embalm his father; and the embalmers embalmed Israel.” Sept Gen 50:2<sup>327</sup>

<sup>324</sup> R. D. Hicks. trans. *Diogenes Laertius: Loeb* Vol. II (1965), p.497; Alternatively; “The Egyptians honour their dead with embalming but the Romans burn.”

<sup>325</sup> The fact that they do not appear to mention it specifically may be due to terminology unfamiliar to us, and the Old Testament ought not be judged too harshly on this as the ancient Egyptians do not specifically mention how the pyramids were built yet no one doubts they did build them.

<sup>326</sup> The translation consensus of “embalmed” is based on the Hebrew טָבַחַל (Strong’s 2590) see <http://biblehub.com/interlinear/genesis/50.htm>.

<sup>327</sup> Translation <http://qbible.com/brenton-septuagint/genesis/50.html>, likewise Lancelot Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (Peabody, 1986), pp.68-69. The Septuagint text is: προσέταξεν Ἰωσήφ τοῖς παισὶν αὐτοῦ τοῖς ἐνταφιασταῖς ἐνταφιάσαι τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐνταφίασαν οἱ ἐνταφιασταὶ τὸν Ἰσραὴλ; and the word ἐνταφιά implies to wrap the body for burial thus ἐντάφιον, ου, τό, “a shroud, winding-sheet,” *Simon., Anth.* (Perseus). The difference between ἐνταφιά and ταριχεύειν may be similar to the comparative use in English of “mummify” or “embalm.” The Hebrew טָבַחַל has the sense “to salt or spice” and thus preserve relating more to ταριχεύειν (salt/preserve) thus English embalm; whereas ἐνταφιά “to wrap” relates to the bandages and wrapping used to mummify – this goes some way to explain the variance in translations. However the full discussion of this etymology is beyond the scope here and this thesis premise is not dependent

The Hebrew, *ârôwn*, having the meaning of an ark, chest, or coffin,<sup>328</sup> and used in combination with “embalmed” draws very close to suggestion of the Egyptian mummification method. This is added to by the specific Egypt context of the narrative, particularly Joseph’s death:

“So Joseph died at the age of a hundred and ten. And after they embalmed him, he was placed in a coffin in Egypt.” Gen 50:26

The use of the term embalming in this text is revealing as the usual Hebrew method involved burying the deceased on the same day without embalming, this then, if taken on face value as a historical account is potentially a direct reference to two Hebrews being buried, “mummified” in the Egyptian fashion.<sup>329</sup> Apart from translation conventions, within these textual references it would not be incorrect to use the term “mummified”<sup>330</sup> – particularly as this agrees with Chicago Woodhouse.

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upon the Joseph story or the Septuagint Greek - the Genesis Hebrew and Egypt context prevailing: Hebrew עָרַן “embalm/mummify.”

<sup>328</sup> Genesis 50:29. The Hebrew *ârôwn* (*aw-rone*) defined by consensus, specifically from *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible: New American Standard Version*. ed. Spiros Zodhiates. (Chattanooga, 1990), (orig. 1984); Gen 50:29, p.76; and in the same volume, “Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary and Concordance,” p.16.

<sup>329</sup> An early tradition Syriac text which Budge dated to the sixth century has Adam being embalmed: “But command thy sons, and order them to embalm thy body after thy death with myrrh, cassia and stakte...” E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Cave of Treasures: A History of the Patriarchs and the Kings their Successors from the Creation to the Crucifixion of Christ* (London, 1927), p.67; and on Jacob “the wise physicians of Pharaoh embalmed him...” p.160; likewise for Mahalalel (Gen 5), p.72. The work is self-attributed to *Ephrem Syrus* who died in 373 CE thus its origins are believed to be from the fourth century with our current version no later than the sixth, pp.21-22. The work is thus historically positioned in the fourth to sixth centuries, an era when Christians were still mummifying their dead.

<sup>330</sup> The use of the term “mummified” in translations for Jacob or Joseph would have more immediate connotations, questions and debates as to whether they were in fact therefore pharaohs. Due to the lack of evidence attesting to this in the Nile Valley archaeological record, the translation convention defers to “embalming” as other non-Egyptian style methods are known such as that used for Alexander. However, given the ambiguity that exists for the ethnicity of mummies, if indeed the mummies of these two Hebrew patriarchs were found, the question is would they be identifiable as the Hebrew patriarchs, or would they remain amongst the unidentifiable items. If they did exist as mummies, given the history of burning and eating of mummies that has occurred, they may have met that fate and in any event be lost to history, or possibly yet to be discovered. On eating of mummies see Sarah Wiseman, “Preserved for the Afterlife” *Nature*, Oct 25, (2001), Vol.413, p.783.

## Chapter Five

### The Geographical spread of the Egyptian Method

#### Mummification in the Pacific

The practice of mummification in the classical or traditional Egyptian method is unique as a burial practice in the Ancient Near East. Mummification is not unique to Egypt but appears in various cultures and forms around the world. However none are so ancient, specific, intentional and purposeful, nor so elaborately inculcated into royal court, state and religion as in Ancient Egypt, justifying the scholarly reference to its use in burial as “the Egyptian fashion.” Interesting similarities to the “surgical” process of Egyptian mummification have been interpreted as occurring in a mummy from the Torres Straits. Writing in 1915, Professor Elliot Smith examined the mummy and reported that it displayed “evidence of processes ... which correspond with the technique of an advanced stage of Egyptian mummification.”<sup>331</sup> This and other Papuan mummies may add to evidence for the capacity for cultural penetration and geographical spread of the Egyptian mummification method.

#### Mummification in Ephesus

The Egyptian method was not confined to Egypt but at least an awareness of it and potentially the practice spread farther afield bringing it inside the geographical sphere of the Palestinian/Judean New Testament Christians. An example of mummification is recorded in the narrative *An Ephesian Tale* by Xenophon of Ephesus being a late first or early second century novella.<sup>332</sup> The story is situated in Ephesus (as is the writer) and includes a husband having his wife mummified in the Egyptian fashion. Although potentially dated to later than the first century this does not preclude it as support for early Christian exposure to the practice, as being so

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<sup>331</sup> The mummy itself was discovered in the seventeenth century and agrees with other Papuan mummies that had been discovered (p.256-257) and the spread of the Egyptian method is theorised by Smith to have taken place along with certain waves of migration around 800BCE (p.257). While the implications of this mummy are beyond the scope of this thesis, if it is indeed an ancient mummy, it does testify and align with the aspect of this thesis to the strength and capacity for inculcation in other cultures that the Egyptian method possesses – full discussion see G. Elliot Smith, *The Migrations of Early Culture. On the Significance of the Geographical Distribution of the Practice of Mummification: A Study of the Migrations of Peoples and the Spread of Certain Customs and Beliefs* (Manchester, 1915) as reviewed by W. H. R. Rivers, *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 2/4, Oct (1915), 256-258.

<sup>332</sup> James N. O’Sullivan, *Xenophon of Ephesus: His Compositional Technique and the Birth of the Novel*, (New York, 1994), p.1.

late into the Roman era when it might be presumed that the practice ought to have declined or be well on the way to doing so, this story strengthens the proposition for persistence of the Egyptian practice. It might otherwise be detected within literary criticism, that this story is so very strange for the author to situate this custom in Ephesus, but neither in scholarly critique of it or the narrative style is the strangeness of the custom mentioned, nor “unbelievable” that the practice would be so far afield from the Egyptian source. For James O’Sullivan the Xenophon tale relates to us that the man keeps his beloved’s mummified body beside him as a part of “true love”; even for Borg who expresses some doubt it is Egyptian style, there is no strangeness to mummification occurring in Ephesus. Borg does appear to reject this mummification that it “cannot be connected to the Egyptian custom ...to which Corcoran seem to agree in principle,” however Lorelei Corcoran sees this as a mummification that is “embalming in the Egyptian style.”<sup>333</sup> The mummification in the text for Borg “cannot be connected to the Egyptian custom,” however Borg primarily rests this view on the basis that the text *implies* the woman’s body was not wrapped in linen due the “physiognomy ... old age” of the body being apparent. Borg points out that the Greek word used for mummification or embalming is ταριχεύω which is the same word used for indicating the preserving of fish.<sup>334</sup> Borg suggests doubt about mummification in the story because the man was a fisherman and he may have applied the method for preserving fish to preserving his wife, and thus for

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<sup>333</sup> A reading of Corcoran’s article does not give the impression Corcoran doubts the Egyptian connection, and Borg citing Corcoran in this way does not seem robust given both articles are in the same publication. Borg’s comment on the absence of linen (p.27) is not robust as there is no specific mention of an absence of linen, and even if there was such absence this still does not preclude it being inspired by or to be a crude attempt of the Egyptian method if we accept the Egyptian being ‘especially strong’ in influence. Borg, *The Dead as Guest?*, 27; for Rosenmeyer it is “a scene intended to touch us not disgust” - Thomas S. Rosenmeyer, *The Mask of Tragedy: Essays on Six Greek Dramas*, (Austin TX, 2012, orig 1963); Anton Bierl, “Space in Xenophon of Ephesus: Love, Dreams, and Disseminati”, *Harvard* <http://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/5637> originally published as “Räume im Anderen und der griechische Liebesroman des Xenophon von Ephesos. Träume?” A. Loprieno (ed.), *Mensch und Raum von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, Munich and Leipzig: Saur 2006 (Colloquium Rauricum 9) 71–103; for O’Sullivan’s it should be viewed as “his beloved, Thelxinoe, whose mummified body he still keeps by him ... [as] true love” - O’Sullivan, *Xenophon of Ephesus*, 27; for Corcoran this is “in the Egyptian style” - Corcoran, *Mysticism and the Mummy Portraits*, 50.

<sup>334</sup> Borg, *The Dead as Guest*, 27. However *Perseus* has the first meaning as “to preserve the body by artificial means, to embalm, of the Egyptian mummies”; and second meaning as “to preserve meat of fish by salting.” Notably salt (Natron) is a main ingredient for the Egyptian mummification method.

Borg this was not the Egyptian method, thus: “the behaviour of the fisherman in Xenophon cannot be connected with the Egyptian custom.”<sup>335</sup>

The word is drawn from “preserving” and is thus used for preserving fish or preserving the body of the dead. The actual text of Xenophon of Ephesus - *Ephesiaca* is:

τὸ δὲ σῶμα αὐτῆς ἐτέθαπτο ταφῇ Αἰγυπτία: ἦν γὰρ καὶ τούτων  
ἐμπειρος ὁ γέρον X. Eph 5.1.10

The phrase ἐτέθαπτο ταφῇ implies “to honour the dead,” or “give the rites due to a corpse,”<sup>336</sup> this together with Αἰγυπτία in the dative “in Egyptian” provides a direct reference to the “honouring of her dead body in the Egyptian method.” The next line goes on to say he then sought one who was skilled in the craft, and did not do it himself, thus confirming that mummification in the Egyptian method is what the author of Xenophon of Ephesus intended, and gives a clear example of the practice being culturally inculcated far from Egypt and far into the world of the New Testament.

Borg’s rejection of this is potentially a contra to Borg’s general view of the “Egyptian being especially strong in influence” and is unsubstantiated from the text as the physiognomy of Egyptian mummies in the later period was often evident, and this may simply mean the process was a cheaper unsophisticated one. The argument is perhaps concluded by the evidence in Egypt itself of Anubis mummifying a fish<sup>337</sup> and thus the association with preserving fish and mummification is an argument in favour of *Ephesiaca*.

### Mummification in Rome

The Xenophon of Ephesus mummification narrative does in fact, displayed within its intrinsic cultural memory, suggest or even demonstrate that the practice was not so unusual outside Egypt – if perhaps not as prolific. This is supported by the evidence

<sup>335</sup> Borg, *The Dead as Guest*, 27.

<sup>336</sup> Perseus; from the translation Xenophon of Ephesus. *Erotici Scriptores Graeci*, Vol 1. Rudolf Hercher. in aedibus B. G. Teubneri. (Leipzig. 1858).

<sup>337</sup> Refer image Appendix 2.



previously cited of some fifty mummies found in Rome itself which do argue the case against Borg – Rome being even farther some 1,000 kilometres distant from the Egyptian or Alexandrian source<sup>338</sup> - and is in favour of its potential to spread and/or impact culture. The influence is also seen to flow both ways, not only with the Egyptian flowing into the Roman world as evidenced by these mummies, but Roman influence is seen in mummy portraits on mummy cases displaying Roman fashion in hairstyle, clothing and jewellery applicable to that fashion evidenced in first century Rome and surrounds.<sup>339</sup>

The use of the Egyptian fashion by Greeks mummifying their dead is evidenced as early as 200BCE.<sup>340</sup> While it may be tempting to push this use back further, for example, to the time of Alexander the Great whose body it is agreed was mummified and entombed in an Egyptian style tomb, his body however is reported to have been mummified in a solution of salt and honey, and thus not in the Egyptian fashion.<sup>341</sup> Whether due to the Ptolemy kings validating the method or other religious reasons, mummification was taken up by the general population in Egypt, those that could afford it, yet full anthropomorphic mummification was only available to the affluent.<sup>342</sup> The evidence is seen by papyri such as one particular second century example of a Greek will from Oxyrhynchus:

“I wish for my sons and heirs to make an equal outlay of my body in the  
Egyptian fashion” PSI XII 1263.7-8

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<sup>338</sup> Alfano, *Egyptian Influences*, 289; Thomson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, 253; Nock, *Essays on Religion*, as cited.

<sup>339</sup> Walker, *Mummy Portraits in their Roman Context*, 2.

<sup>340</sup> Borg, *The Dead as Guest*, 28.

<sup>341</sup> This may be due to the fact his body was displayed in a glass coffin and the Egyptian wrapping would have obscured this: Wallis Budge, *The History of Alexander the Great*, 141.

<sup>342</sup> Sarah Wisseman, *Preserved for the Afterlife*, 783; Bowen, *Early Christian Burial at Kellis*, 78; Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs*, 180; Roger S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton, 1993), p.188.

## Chapter Six

### Christians and Egyptian Mummification

Sofia Tovar through a study of Christian mummy labels, poignantly observes there is a perplexing aspect and difficulty understanding the “development of early Christian practices [mummification], their inheritance from the pagan religion,” and aspects which “defined their cult.”<sup>343</sup> This does sit at the centre of the enquiry of this topic mainly because the use of mummification by Christians is ordinarily so very unexpected. This comes from a modern observer’s view that firstly the Egyptian religious and burial custom seems so pagan and alien to how Christianity is perceived, *vis à vis*, the neat western Judaic Romano persona or personification that the West has given to Christianity. This view is informed by such 2nd – 3rd century writers as Dio Cassius who characterised the Egypto-Alexandrians when he wrote:

“should [we] then bear the insults of this throng, who, oh heavens! are Alexandrians and Egyptians (what worse or truer name could one apply to them?) who embalm (ταριχεύοντες) their own bodies to give them the semblance of immortality”

Dio Cassius *Hist. Rom.* L, 24. 6-7

Of importance is the mention that both Alexandrians and Egyptians embalm (mummify) their own bodies – evidencing the cross-cultural penetration of the practice.

This personification of Judeo-Christianity is a legacy of the Roman Church and its associated western apologetic. It has it be said, and is increasingly obvious from the material associating Christianity with mummification, that this western view is not how they would have seen themselves – clearly they didn’t see themselves that way or this mummification question would not be presenting itself. That is to say, if the early Christians were as the west has perceived them to be, they would not have engaged the mummification practice at all, as indeed the later Christians did not. That they did suggests the early Christians were not as we perceive.

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<sup>343</sup> Sofia Torallas Tovar, “Egyptian burial practices in late Antiquity: the case of Christian Mummy Labels”, *Cultures in Contact: Transfer of Knowledge in the Mediterranean Context – selected papers*. eds. Sofia Torallas Tovar & Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala. (Cordoba, 2013), p.13.

Bagnall suggests it is a reasonable conclusion that “most Greek speaking inhabitants” of the Fayyum region saw themselves in a duality; being both Greek and Egyptian in self-identity, which manifest in their burials engaging the “entire Egyptian funerary context.”<sup>344</sup> This general cultural duality is common even today amongst those who have migrated to and spent many years living in another country.

Initially the issue Tovar raises may seem as she notes, not “easy to understand”<sup>345</sup> however by considering some aspects of Christian conversion, that is, the diverse group and dispositions they came from, the explanation for their practices become clearer. It is pointed out that our modern mindset or worldview makes it difficult to imagine “the religious feeling of a Greek living in Egypt”<sup>346</sup> - can the same be said for a Christian living in Egypt? An insight to this dilemma and the nature of early Christians can be gained by considering the matter somewhat removed from the western tradition. The western tradition as mentioned poses a Judean geographical emergence and migration for Christianity. This rightly sustains that if Christianity went into Egypt early it did so from Judea or Rome, and Mark is seen as the potential vehicle for that transfer, albeit with significant scholarly doubt or reservation due to lack of an Egyptian “Acts” document. The other possibility for Christianity’s incursion into Egypt comes via the persona of Apollos – as an actual person and/or as a ‘type’ for high status educated Alexandrians transporting the message back to their homeland. Other mediums for transmission include the regular interchange of Alexandrians, Egyptian or Alexandrian Jews, god-fearing Greeks or actual Egyptians travelling to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast and other festivals.<sup>347</sup> This is a feature which during the first century prior to CE 70, would have involved large numbers, who had chance to engage with the message of “the Way” or later the Christian

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<sup>344</sup> Bagnall, *Roman Fayyum*, 10.

<sup>345</sup> Tovar, *Christian Mummy Labels*, 13.

<sup>346</sup> Jean Bingen, with Roger S. Bagnall, *Hellenistic Egypt: Monarchy, Society, Economy, Culture* (Edinburg, 2007), p.249.

<sup>347</sup> Griggs, *Origins to 451CE*, 15.

message, and then take it back to their communities in the greater Nile Valley<sup>348</sup> – not only Alexandria, but up-river locations such as the Fayyum, and Oxyrhynchus.<sup>349</sup>

Jean Bingen further challenges the traditional view, by asking to what degree and at what “point did the Greek become integrated into this [Egyptian] religious exoticism, as the funeral customs we observe strongly suggest?”<sup>350</sup> If the focus is moved from Judea to Alexandrian Egypt, the scope of diversity of who or what a Christian may be, or what group they may come from is very different to the traditional western view. There needs to be caution in the perception of Christianity in Egypt being one of a migration to Egypt:<sup>351</sup> the rise of early Christianity in Egypt it is reasonably plausible to consider, would have come from evangelical efforts converting those that already lived in the Nile Valley. Of these there are some specific groups: Macedonian elite who were encouraged to become some of the original Alexandrian citizens whose descendants maintained an elite position; members of the army who were mostly Greeks with some Jews, retired Romans and native Egyptians. Also Alexandrian Jews who were a very different group to that of Judea being born and bred in Alexandria or its environs – Egyptian or Alexandrian Jews who spoke Greek and had no knowledge or use of the Judean dialects of Hebrew or Aramaic, and who may never have been to Jerusalem,<sup>352</sup> as well as native born Egyptians who spoke the Egyptian language, or who had learnt Greek. It is important then to consider people drawn from these different groups, born and bred in Egypt, having grown up in that cultural mix surrounded by gigantic pharaonic statuary, temples and pyramids, a people any of whom may convert to Christianity – and bringing into that faith conversion many long held beliefs and practices, a social conditioning which would not immediately

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<sup>348</sup> Griggs, *Origins to 451CE*, 15.

<sup>349</sup> This process is suggested within the Acts narrative chapter 8 with the Ethiopian eunuch who had been to Jerusalem, was baptised by Phillip and converted to ‘the Way’ and was heading back to his homeland, a journey which very likely would have taken him via Alexandria. Nevertheless the narrative is suggestive that he would be one who would take the Christian message back to another culture.

<sup>350</sup> Bingen, *Hellenistic Egypt*, 249.

<sup>351</sup> This migration view comes from the incursion of Christianity identifiable in the second and third century, when viewed from that perspective it does seem Christianity arrived, rather than an earlier internal post-evangelical emergence. Christianity in Egypt was in all probability due to both.

<sup>352</sup> There existed in Alexandria a large synagogue “the Glory of Israel” and a temple at Leontopolis the latter of which competed against the Jerusalem temple. These structures for some could have been sufficient focus of their Judaic faith.

disappear upon conversion. The proof of this is some of the issues Paul addressed in his letters.

Among these issues Paul addresses in his letters is the strange baptism over the dead which, if we allow a new reading,<sup>353</sup> may have caused Christian converts to doubt the resurrection of Jesus:

“But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 1 Cor 15:12;

“Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?”<sup>354</sup>

1 Cor 15:29;

the issues of eating food offered to idols:

“As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols” Acts 21:25;

and whether circumcision was necessary:

“And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’” Acts 15:1

“‘You must be circumcised and keep the law’—to whom we gave no such commandment.” Acts 15:24b

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<sup>353</sup> This particular scripture is highly disputed with no consensus or majority reading. The most detailed survey of scholarship translations was undertaken by M Malthus Rissi, *Die Taufe für die Toten: Ein Beitrag zur Paulinischen Tauflehre: Abhandlungen zur Theologie des Alten - und Neuen Testaments*: Herausgegeben von W. Eichrodt und O. Cullmann. (Zürich : Zwingli-Verlag: 1962), where he notes there range of scholarly versions range from 40 to 200 different. This thesis suggests a possible new reading.

<sup>354</sup> Concerning 1 Cor 15:29: βαπτίζόμενοι ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν, and what the word ὑπὲρ means, “over” “for” etc (discussion as cited); despite decades of commentary and some 200 different translations of this simple Greek phrase (noted above), there is no consensus on what the baptism was that Paul refers to here. It was obviously not Christian as it was being imported into the Corinthian church community and was conflicting with Christian belief, yet Paul does not condemn it but uses it as proof of the Christian resurrection. On what this practice was Gordon Fee notes “but finally we must admit that we simply do not know” - Fee, *The New International Commentary*, 767.

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value.”

Gal 5:6

This matter of circumcision is important not only due to its presence in Judaism, but in the context of this discussion circumcision is important as it was a marker for the presence of Jews and Egyptians in the populace.<sup>355</sup> Therefore certain specific practices can be a marker for the presence of a specific socio-religious group.

The importation of customs and culture into Christianity by individuals who form part of the citizenry and *chora* of Egypt would plausibly have involved how they treated their dead relatives or preparations for their own bodies at death, and thus mummification would not ordinarily be expected to be abandoned by them immediately, or at all – especially given they had Paul’s and Christ’s words which do not specifically condemn the Egyptian method. Indeed the practice of mummification was taken up by Christians in Egypt and not spoken against until Athanasius and Augustine in the fourth century.<sup>356</sup>

For Athanasius:

“The Egyptians like to mummify and swathe in bandages (περιελίσσειν ὀθονίοις)<sup>357</sup> the bodies of the faithful who are dead, especially of the holy martyrs; and not to hide them underground but to place them on couches and keep them by them in the house, since they think that in this way they honour the departed.”<sup>358</sup>

Athanasius *Vita Ant* 90.2<sup>359</sup>

<sup>355</sup> It is pertinent that the Jews and the Egyptians practiced circumcision, and thus this was a point of mutual and rather exclusive custom. It may not then be surprising if a Judaic group (Christians) held another mutual custom in common, such as mummification, with Egyptian residents in the Nile Valley.

<sup>356</sup> Warren R. Dawson, “References to Mummification by Greek and Latin authors” *Aegyptus*, July 9, 1 / 2, (1928), p.107.

<sup>357</sup> The Greek text is from: G. J. M. Bartelink, *Athanes d’Alexandrie: Vie d’Antoine* (Paris, 1994), pp.362, 364, 366, 368. Trans of ὀθονίοις “bandages” *Hp.Off.8* and *Ar.* (Perseus).

<sup>358</sup> The keeping of the mummified body in the house should be noted for similarity to the man in Xenophon of Ephesus keeping his mummified wife in the house with him.

<sup>359</sup> The English translations of Athanasius *Vita Ant* passages from: Tim Vivian and Apostolos N. Athanassakis. trans. *Athanasius of Alexandria: The Life of Antony, the Coptic Life and the Greek Life* (Kalamazoo, 2003), pp.249-253.

Athanasius quotes Anthony on the Egyptian method:

“And he would shame the laity and rebuke the women, saying, ‘This practice is neither lawful nor in any way godly’” Athanasius *Vita Ant* 90.4

The reason the church was commenting on this practice is because “mummification was so generally practiced among the early Christians.”<sup>360</sup> Athanasius was born in Alexandria which naturally means he was also born in Egypt.<sup>361</sup> The term of reference for Athanasius is not the issue, the point is that being “Alexandrian” he would as such have grown up with mummification all around him which may explain his manner of fact comment on the practice, mentioning it in association with the term “holy martyrs” without rebuttal.<sup>362</sup> Athanasius continues:

“When they heard this, therefore, many people hid their dead under the earth from that time.” Athanasius *Vita Ant* 90.6

While commentary suggest these passages of Athanasius ex Antony are speaking against the Egyptian method, Anthony’s last words are specific to his real concern:

“... do not allow anyone to take my body to Egypt lest they keep it in their homes... Therefore you yourselves bury me and hide me under the earth.”

Athanasius *Vita Ant* 91.6-7

Antony’s concern appears not against mummification but against keeping bodies in homes. Indeed Anthony states: “I will receive my body back imperishable from the Lord at the resurrection of the dead” Athanasius *Vita Ant* 90.8 – there is an implied emphasis here on the body, yet whatever Anthony intended in his mind as to what would facilitate the body is unclear. Within this sentiment however, given the imperishable aims of mummification, it is easy to see how early Christians ill-

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<sup>360</sup> Philip David Scott-Moncrieff, *Paganism and Christianity in Egypt* (Cambridge, 1913), p.105.

<sup>361</sup> The church would naturally prefer to call Athanasius an Alexandrian, but he was also Egyptian by geography. As to whether he was Alexandrian or Egyptian and or both and what cultural influences one would have in that climate is part of the issue of cultural or religious identity that also applied to Christian converts in Egypt. The matter is a complex one within what is meant by race and ethnicity; is it by birth, custom, parentage or geography, all of which is a disciplinary enquiry in its own right.

<sup>362</sup> This is a similar response as with the strange baptism over dead which Paul does not condemn but engages without rebuttal and uses it as a defence of the resurrection even though the Corinthian (1Cor 15:29) baptism practice is obviously not Christian.

informed about Pauline Christology,<sup>363</sup> could confuse the Egyptian method with some aspect of efficacy to getting the 'body back imperishable' for resurrection purposes.

Christians in Egypt gained exposure to the Egyptian mummification practice in a number of ways: for example one of the safe havens for Egyptian Christians was the natural oasis of the Wadi-el-Natrun which also had the fame of being the primary location where Natrun a naturally occurring salt was mined and prolifically used as a preservative in the mummification process.<sup>364</sup> One of the understandable reasons for Christians engaging mummification was as Athanasius mentions, the preservation of the bodies of the saints and martyrs, and as the church doctrine later changed and turned against or away from this due to its association with paganism, the attributes of the practice simplified from the mid third century towards embalming and progressively eliminating the Egyptian style rites.<sup>365</sup> Part of the reason for this is it was safe in the later mid fourth century period to specifically identify oneself as Christian.<sup>366</sup> While it may be tempting to presume an altruistic theological reason for the simplification of and move away from an Egyptian style method of mummification, Sarah Wisseman proposes an economic influence, suggesting it may otherwise have been due to increasing cost and declining availability of materials used in the traditional (classical) process<sup>367</sup> – considering both causes for a move away from mummification avoids the potential ideological fallacy. Nevertheless there is an identifiable three centuries (at least)<sup>368</sup> of Christians being comfortable with mummification amidst and despite growing concern under the Roman church Bishops and leaders.<sup>369</sup> In these early centuries there is no evidence of a clear break from pre-Christian practices, indeed mummification continued to be practiced within

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<sup>363</sup> Re Pauline Christology - cf 1 Cor 15, "But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?' You fool!" ... "it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." 1 Cor 15: 36, 44.

<sup>364</sup> Bowman, *Egypt After the Pharaohs*, 15-16. The location implies their awareness of the industry.

<sup>365</sup> Bowen, *Early Christian Burial at Kellis*, 77-78.

<sup>366</sup> Bowen, *Early Christian Burial at Kellis*, 77-78. Especially after Constantine's ascension.

<sup>367</sup> Wisseman, *Preserved for the Afterlife*, 783.

<sup>368</sup> It was during the first three centuries of Christianity that the mummification process gradually transformed away from the classical Egyptian method – Tovar, *Christian Mummy Labels*, 15: but as stated this may be more associated with economics (especially as the process was inherently costly) rather than a theological offensiveness to what modernity sees as a pagan practice.

<sup>369</sup> Tovar, *Christian Mummy Labels*, 15.



Christian circles as late as 600CE.<sup>370</sup> The tendency was to remove or for pagan elements to be gradually but not systematically discontinued.<sup>371</sup> Why would Christians be so attracted to mummification? The evidence of use of the method is very specific in terms of mixed use burial locations, and mummy labels.

### Christians, Mummification, and Mummy Labels

Tovar expresses the conundrum of the phenomena of Christian mummy labels that:

“Mummy labels are closely related to Egyptian funerary practice, and hence unexpected among Christians.”<sup>372</sup> The syncretistic potential for Egyptian culture is seen in the festival of the divine king Horus, usurped by Ptolemy Soter in Egyptian temples, which morphed into the Aion festival, and ultimately the Christian Epiphany.<sup>373</sup> Christians are also seen to have adopted the classical ancient Egyptian *ankh* symbol emerging most notably as the Coptic cross.<sup>374</sup>

Initial evidence of Christians associated with the practice comes from their preparedness to use the same graveyards (necropolis) as pagans. Rather than being repulsed by the concept which might be otherwise expected, Christians were buried alongside pagans. The Metropolitan Museum reports on Bagawat excavations (1908-1937) a Christian/pagan co-use site, display the difficulties. One burial has a tombstone (stele) with Greek god ΠΟΤΙΔΩΝ (Posidon) (image appendix 3) scratched into its plaster surface, unfortunately the body was missing – was it a mummified body, and/or a Greek or Christian?<sup>375</sup> As seen at Kellis there are Christian burials among mummified bodies as Kellis is where Christians usurped a pagan cemetery.<sup>376</sup> The tombs themselves carried a mix of pagan and Christian belief displayed, including the appearance in graves<sup>377</sup> of the *ankh* symbol or Coptic

<sup>370</sup> Tovar, *Christian Mummy Labels*, 15; and Nock's evidence of a mummy in the fifth century as cited.

<sup>371</sup> Euphrosyne Doxiadis, “From Eikon to Icon: Continuity in Technique” *Portraits and Masks: Burial Customs in Roman Egypt*. ed. M. L. Bierbrier. (London, 1997), p.78.

<sup>372</sup> Tovar, *Christian Mummy Labels*, 14.

<sup>373</sup> Koenen, *Ptolemaic King as Religious Figure*, 80-81.

<sup>374</sup> Tovar, *Christian Mummy Labels*, 15.

<sup>375</sup> Records of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Excavations of the Late Roman and Early Byzantine Sites in the Kharga Oasis: “Series II: Excavation Records and Research 1907-1937, 1982-1989”, “Bagawat: Pit Graves, No. 1–70 (Tomb Cards), circa 1907-1908”; [Box 1, Folder 20, 1907-08, Tomb card 11 cont]; <http://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16028coll10>

<sup>376</sup> Bowen, *Early Christian Burial at Kellis*, 77-88.

<sup>377</sup> Tovar, *Christian Mummy Labels*, 15.

cross.<sup>378</sup> Aufderheide et al. report that in the Kellis tomb 1 group, the team “examined and sampled 15 mummified bodies found in the first 12 tombs and in 1998 examined an additional 34 mummies from tombs 16-21.” Of these 12 were anthropogenically mummified.<sup>379</sup> Griggs adds to the evidence of mixed use with his report of the excavations at Fag el-Gamus where Christians again usurped a pagan burial site. The top burials Griggs dates to the first century, and have the bodies facing the opposite direction to the lower ones which Griggs suggests is due to these being Christian, as he notes no other first century social change can account for it.<sup>380</sup>

A well-known text *Epistle of Psenosiris* mentions a group of Christian νεκροτάφοι “undertakers” who performed mummification. Though contested as may be expected,<sup>381</sup> there are the identifying Christian *nomina sacra* ἀδελφους (adelphos), κυρίῳ (Kyriow/ in the Lord), and πιστοῖς (faithful) present in the text:

ἀγαπητῷ ἀδελφῷ ἐν κυρίῳ,

*P. Grenf* II. 2-3

τοῖς καλοῖς καὶ πιστοῖς ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν νεκροτάφων<sup>382</sup> *P. Grenf* II.12-14

The text conceptually is perhaps supported by the presence of mummy labels which intrinsically are regarded as evidence of Christians continuing of the tradition and practice of mummification.<sup>383</sup> There are a number of mummy labels which have acceptance as being Christian, in tabulation they are:<sup>384</sup>

<sup>378</sup> The *ankh* symbol was the symbol of power, specifically the power of life or giving of life. It is often depicted in the Amarna inscriptions as being given by the hand of the god to the pharaoh.

<sup>379</sup> Aufderheide et al., *Greco-Roman Mummies at Egypt's Dakhleh Oasis*, 1.

<sup>380</sup> C. Wilfred Griggs, “Excavating a Christian Cemetery Near Selia, in the Fayum Region of Egypt,” in *Excavations at Seila, Egypt*, ed. C. Wilfred Griggs, (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1988), 74–84; <https://rsc.byu.edu/archived/excavations-seila-egypt/5-excavating-christian-cemetery-near-selia-fayum-region-egypt>

<sup>381</sup> The scholarly discussion references are mentioned in Tovar, *Christian Mummy Labels*, 16.

<sup>382</sup> Part of the disputed discussion centres around whether πιστοῖς ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν νεκροτάφων “faithful ... grave diggers” are necessarily Christian - the use of the word πιστοῖς would seem to way in favour of it being a Christian document. This topic is raised by Phillip David Scott-Moncrieff, *Paganism and Christianity in Egypt*. (London, 2013), pp.92-93. (orig. 1913).

<sup>383</sup> Tovar, *Christian Mummy Labels*, 16; Gillian Bowen, “Some Observations on Christian Burial Practices at Kellis” GE. Bowen and C.A. Hope. eds. *The Oasis Papers III: Proceedings of the Third International Conference of the Dakhleh Oasis Project*. (Oxford, 2004), p.169.

<sup>384</sup> The list is a sample and not exhaustive.

<u>Papyrus</u> <sup>385</sup>	<u>Identifier</u>	<u>Date</u>
1) <i>SB I 1190</i>		3 <sup>rd</sup> to early 4 <sup>th</sup> century
2) <i>SB I 3533</i>	ἀμήν (amen)	3rd to early 4th century
3) <i>SB XII 10814</i>	fish symbol	4th century
4) <i>SB I 1201</i>	cross symbol	?
5) <i>B 1205</i>	“to die” Christian verb form	3rd to 4th century
6) <i>T.Mom. Louvre 1006</i>	“son of god has him”	3rd to 4th century
7) <i>P.Eirene 211 TM78194</i>	cross symbol	7th to 8th century
8) <i>SB Kopt II 1065</i>	Jeremiah reference <sup>386</sup>	5th to 6th century
9) <i>Wood tabula ansata</i> <sup>387</sup>	Jeremiah reference	5th to 6th century

Item 2 in this list is of interest due to the name used Ὡρίων(ν) within the dedication ἐβίωσε 96 ἔτη / Ὡρίων(ν). ἀμήν / ρς. “Horion lived 96 years”: Horion is an Egyptian name. The name (Hor-ion) contains the Egyptian god *Hor* with a Greek variant,<sup>388</sup> in the same way *Horus* is derived.<sup>389</sup> This suggests an Egyptian convert to Christianity and is an example of how the mummification can be imported into Christian practice – this person Horion naturally enough chose to have his body treated according to that which his (Egyptian) family has used by tradition, and more importantly, it could be seen to facilitate his expectation of a resurrected body – a bodily resurrection association also linked to mummification at Kellis.<sup>390</sup> On the concept of resurrection Augustine confirmed at least the Christian view of the Egyptian method:

<sup>385</sup> Items 1 to 9 with scholarly discussion cited, are listed by Tovar, *Christian Mummy Labels*, 18.

<sup>386</sup> The Jeremiah reference may be purely a Jewish reference, or possibly a Jewish Christian convert.

<sup>387</sup> Whether a larger piece of wood is a mummy label is undecided yet some support for labels of wood comes from a mummy with wooden label at the Egyptian Museum Cairo, Inv. 33221 as discussed by Lorelei H. Corcoran, “Evidence for the Survival of Pharaonic Religion in Roman Egypt: The Portrait Mummy” Temporini, Hildegard *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der Neueren Forschung* (Series II) Vol. 18 part 5, p.3323.

<sup>388</sup> There is the slight possibility that this is a Greek person who adopted an Egyptian name, but the cultural influence was mostly the other way, but a Greek marrying an Egyptian woman may result in a child having an Egypto-Greek name, rather than a Greek transliteration of an Egyptian.

<sup>389</sup> The often used *Horus* is sometimes presumed to be purely Greek, however it too is derived from the Egyptian god *Hor* with the Greek nominative appended to give *Horus*. An example of this confusion may be evident in Corcoran’s commentary on the fusion or adaptation of Egyptian gods into the Ptolemaic state, Corcoran notes “Horus is known by the name Harpocrates, a Greek form of the ancient ‘Horus the child of Isis’” – as noted *Horus* is already the Greek form of the Egyptian *Hor*. On Harpocrates as Horus see: Corcoran, *Mysticism and the Mummy Portraits*, 46.

<sup>390</sup> Bowen, *Early Christian Burial at Kellis*, 78.

“soli Aegyptii bene credunt resurrectionem mortuorum”

Egyptians believe in the resurrection of the dead, as the only option.

Aug. *De Res Mort* (Sermo 361, De Diversis cxx)

Therefore this reflects the syncretistic potential for Christians to relate to the Egyptian beliefs and practices, and for Egyptians to see their bodily preservation method as having efficacy to the Christian resurrection.

This *Psenosiris* fragment which includes detail of transportation of a body can be compared to a mummy label regarding transportation of a body but is devoid of Christian *nomina sacra*: Llewelyn with Kearsley list *SB VI* 9126, a mummy label from the third/fourth century which clearly mentions σῶμα “body” and νεκροτάφοις “undertaker”:

σῶμα ... Πλουριανοῦ      body of Plousianos

τοῖς ἐ νεκροτάφοις      the undertakers there      *SB VI* 9126 3,6

but unlike *Psenosiris* this mummy label has no Christian identifiers.<sup>391</sup> Yet another example, second century *P.Petaus* 28 sits between these two having discussion of transportation of a corpse and with mention of ἀδελφους in an opening greeting and closing prayer form similar to that used in Christian letters:

Παψαῦς Ἀσκλαῖτι τῷ ἀδελφῷ πολλὰ χαίρειν.

ἀσπάζομαί σε καὶ ὅλον τὸν οἶκόν σου.      *P.Petaus* 28, 1-2

“Papsaus to Asklas his brother (ἀδελφῷ) many greetings.

I greet you and your entire household;”

and the closing:

ἀσπάζομαί σε καὶ τὸν υἱόν σου καὶ ὅλον

τὸν οἶκόν σου. ἐρῶσθαί σε εὐχομαι.      *P.Petaus* 28, 23-24

<sup>391</sup> S. R. Llewelyn with R. A. Kearsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity Volume 7: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri published in 1982-83* (Macquarie University, 1994), pp.30-31.

“I greet you and your son and your entire house.

I pray that you are well.”<sup>392</sup>

Despite the prayerful ending this cannot be assigned as a Christian document based solely on ἀδελφος, and may be a Jewish letter as it has no other *nomina sacra* to confirm as Christian.<sup>393</sup> What is of import is the mummy labels which can be ascribed as Christian date to the very early period of Christianity.<sup>394</sup> Mummy labels are as Tovar points out distinctly Egyptian in character which “briefly entered the world of early Christian burial practices together with other related aspects of Egyptian funerary practice.”<sup>395</sup> This reasonably strengthens the case that the earlier the Christian the more likely for use of mummification in Egypt, and the more likely to display traditional Egyptian features, and thus less likely to be seen as “Christian” – it may be in this way that first century Christians in Egypt are rejected and inadvertently ‘disappear’ into the background. Marjorie Venit further adds - “Despite their wide geographical distribution, comparatively few Christian tombs have been identified in Alexandria. The reason for this discrepancy between the relatively large early Christian population and the relatively small number of surviving tombs remains unclear. Identification of Christian tombs is exacerbated because few, if any, appear to have been cut originally for Christian burial; architecturally nothing distinguishes Christian hypogea from others in Alexandria.”<sup>396</sup> A clear example of this is that ordinarily a burial which contained the Egyptian *ankh* symbol would be interpreted as an Egyptian burial however the *ankh* symbol paradoxically can be or is one of the markers of a Christian burial in Egypt.<sup>397</sup>

The previous section sought to explain some of the socio-cultural reasons which may lead to this adoption and use of mummification: such as these early Christians who could be or were drawn from individuals who converted from paganism, and thus the

<sup>392</sup> Translation Richard S. Ascough, Philip A. Harland, John S. Kloppenborg, “290. Letter Concerning Transportation of a Corpse” *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook* (Waco, 2012), p.174; Greek text and dating - <http://www.papyri.info/hgv/8847>.

<sup>393</sup> This may be an example of a Christian letter disguised by the lack of specifics scholarship requires.

<sup>394</sup> Tovar, *Christian Mummy Labels*, 19.

<sup>395</sup> Tovar, *Christian Mummy Labels*, 23 – presuming three to five centuries can be seen as brief.

<sup>396</sup> Marjorie Susan Venit, *The Monumental Tombs of Alexandria: The theatre of the Dead*. (Cambridge, 2002), p.181.

<sup>397</sup> Tovar, *Christian Mummy Labels*, 23.

desire to be buried with the rest of the family who had not converted, may result in choosing to be buried in the same graveyard. It becomes strongly inherent here, that the notion of what we see as pagan was not evident to them.<sup>398</sup> They may simply have been friends and family members who had adopted a new faith (Christianity) and no distinction beyond that was needed – in the same way as a modern family whose members are of Christian and non-Christian may be buried alongside each other. Engaging this notion assists removing part of the strangeness of this ancient Christian practice of mixed burials.

This is evident in that what we look for in identifying a Christian burial is defined by a preconceived persona image of what a Christian (or Christian burial) should look like. It is conceivable that we may be looking at the grave of an early Christian but not able to discern it due to the lack of identifying features.<sup>399</sup> Drawing on the *Didascalia Apostolorum* such features will include “the body was washed, anointed and sometimes embalmed.”<sup>400</sup> The reference to “sometimes embalmed” is however a benchmark drawn from a third century document where Christian styles were becoming more defined, and embalming was (due to cost or theology) starting to be phased out, whereas earlier Christian styles were still very ambiguous and mixed. The implication may be that embalming was central to early Christian burials – at least those in the Nile Valley. This may be compared to a New Testament description that

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<sup>398</sup> In the same way that the chronological marker of BCE/CE is important to the modern mind but was non-existent for them – the transition from BCE to CE was just another year for them.

<sup>399</sup> See Tovar, *Christian Mummy Labels*, 14; Bowen *Early Christian Burial at Kellis*, 79.

<sup>400</sup> Bowen, *Early Christian Burial at Kellis*, 79 – comparisons of burial style and contents will naturally be made with what is known of early Christian methods - “the body was washed, anointed and sometimes embalmed” citing John Davies, and Cross and Livingston, who draw on information contained in the third century Greek document *Didascalia Apostolorum*. John Davies actually implies that this was “in essence what we know of an ‘ordinary’ early Christian burial.” John Davies, *Death, Burial, and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity* (London, 1999), p.199. The actual *Didascalia Apostolorum* verse often cited in referenced to Christian burials because it is one of the earliest descriptions is: “For in the Second Legislation, if one touch a dead man or a tomb, he is baptized; but do you, according to the Gospel and according to the power of the Holy Spirit, come together even in the cemeteries, and read the holy Scriptures, and without demur perform your ministry and your supplication to God; and offer an acceptable Eucharist, the likeness of the royal body of Christ, both in your congregations and in (p. 119) your cemeteries and on the departures of them that sleep -- pure bread that is made with fire and sanctified with invocations -- and without doubting pray and offer for them that are fallen asleep” - *Didascalia Apostolorum* XXVI.vi.22

Witherington<sup>401</sup> highlights where the Christians at Corinth were “washed, consecrated and justified” which draws directly from 1 Cor 6:11b:

“but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified.” In tabulated form these are insightful:

washed - anointed – embalmed      *Didascalia Apostolorum*

washed - sanctified – justified<sup>402</sup>      1 Corinthians 6:11

Perhaps here we see the difference between the two is that one group of Christians were embalmed “as well” but the other were not, and the difference is whether they were in Egypt or not, or pagan converts or not – this is pertinent as the *Didascalia Apostolorum* is a document from Antioch by converts from paganism.<sup>403</sup> This being a comparison of the two methods each alluding to salvation which may via syncretistic resurrection concepts have become confused with Egyptian burial practices; with 1 Cor 6:11 suggested as a salvation type by Witherington, and *Didascalia Apostolorum* suggested by John Davies.<sup>404</sup> It is a reasonable assumption that the earlier the Christian burials are, the more disguised (pagan, or purely Egyptian) they will be by the mixed cultural motifs they display – a feature also exhibited between Roman or Greek,<sup>405</sup> Roman or Egyptian.<sup>406</sup> As seen with the Egyptian name *Hor* on the mummy label, that between Nile valley based communities and Judean Christian communities, mummification may have been seen to have efficacy both in the Egyptian religion and Christian to provide an aspect of mutual religious cultural exchange via after life concepts of resurrection.

<sup>401</sup> Ben Witherington III, *Conflict & Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, 1995), p.117.

<sup>402</sup> It is noteworthy that sanctification for the Corinthian text would have included anointing, and the Egyptian religious rite included justification.

<sup>403</sup> <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/didascalia.html> citing J. Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. 2, pp. 147-148.

<sup>404</sup> See Witherington, *Conflict & Community in Corinth*, 117, and John Davies actually implies that this was “in essence what we know of an ‘ordinary’ early Christian burial.” John Davies, *Death, Burial, and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity*, 199.

<sup>405</sup> Tomb 99 in burials at Tarkham surveyed by Petrie it was not possible to tell if they were Roman or Greek: W. M. F. Petrie and E. Mackay, *Heliopolis Kafr Ammar and Shurafa* (London, 1915), p.38.

<sup>406</sup> In mid second century burials in Egypt at Dier el-Bahari it was not been possible to determine whether burials were Roman or Egyptian, and likewise for first century burials at Denderah: Wolfram Grajetzki, *Burial Customs in Ancient Egypt: Life in Death for Rich and Poor* (London, 2003), pp.129,131.

## Resurrection as an attractant

Given that within Christian belief and after-life, resurrection is the main aspect of soteriology, they were naturally drawn to any methodology which may facilitate that. Dunn suggests for early Christians their view of resurrection was as “a general resurrection soon to be realised”<sup>407</sup> - that is a bodily resurrection after death. Their immediate basis for this was the bodily resurrection of Jesus. They were also able to draw upon Old Testament motifs. In 2 Kings 5:1-14 Naaman washed himself and then “came up with his flesh restored to that of his youth.” Profoundly here is an Old Testament use of washing which has a direct connection to restoration of the flesh, or bodily regeneration, and the Septuagint term used in this text is βαπτίζω. This is the same term derivative Paul uses for the Corinthians (chapter 15) in referring to Baptism (βαπτιζόμενοι) as support for the resurrection of the dead.<sup>408</sup> This gives a pre-Christian Old Testament reference to the practice of washing, purification, or immersion, having efficacy towards bodily and fleshly regeneration, being the very outcome to which the Egyptian method was dedicated. The period of 2 Kings has, within the narrative, examples of the Israelites making direct contact with, and being heavily influenced by Egyptian Pharaohs and the Egyptian Empire - for example:

“Hoshea ...sent messages to King So of Egypt,” 2 Kings 17:4

and

“Look the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians.” 2 Kings 7:7

This text makes for interesting potential syncretism transfer of the Egyptian method into Israelite culture and thence to Jewish and later Judeo-Christians living and migrating to Egypt.

References to resurrection of the dead appear in the *Didascalia Apostolorum*:

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<sup>407</sup> J. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, Revised Edition (Grand Rapids, 2005), p.328.

<sup>408</sup> The phrase is Ἐπεὶ τί ποιήσουσιν οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν (1 Cor 15:29).



“And not only by the Sibyl, brethren, was the resurrection preached to the Gentiles, but by the holy Scriptures also our Lord proclaimed beforehand, to the Jews and the heathen and Christians at once, and announced the resurrection of the dead which is to be for men; and even by a dumb bird, we mean the Phoenix, which is but one alone, by means whereof God gives us again abundant demonstration of the resurrection... If then by means of a dumb animal God shows us concerning the resurrection, we who believe in the resurrection and in the promise of God ought much more, as men deemed worthy.”

*Didascalia Apostolorum* XX.7.12

This paragraph draws upon and references Ezekiel:

“Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord God: “Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves, O My people, and brought you up from your graves.”’

Ezekiel 37:12-13

Within the *Didascalia Apostolorum* passage above there is a curious reference to the Phoenix:

“... and announced the resurrection of the dead which is to be for men; and even by a dumb bird, we mean the Phoenix, which is but one alone, by means whereof God gives us again abundant demonstration of the resurrection... If then by means of a dumb animal God shows us concerning the resurrection.”

This evidences a document compiled by pagan converts to Christianity, who import a Hellenistic myth (the Phoenix) as their *evidence* for arguing for the Christian resurrection. This makes it plausible that Egyptian pagans or indeed Egyptianized Alexandrians, converting to Christianity may import the Egyptian method of mummification to facilitate in a very pragmatic way, the preservation of the (their) body in anticipation of the resurrection they had just learned and believed from their newly adopted faith of Christian theology. Warren Dawson suggests that “under the influence of Christianity the [mummification] motif was believed to be to facilitate

resurrection.”<sup>409</sup> Sir Wallis Budge in the late nineteenth century, according to the early scholarly tradition, was more specific:

“... the resurrection of the body of Christ made the Egyptians hope for resurrection of their own bodies...”<sup>410</sup>

The matter is very poignantly stated by Tovar that despite this pagan practice of mummification being “so characteristic of the Egyptian religion”, it was nevertheless “the only known way to preserve the corpse from decay”<sup>411</sup> and a well proven one<sup>412</sup> – a critical need for one anticipating a bodily resurrection like that of Jesus their central figure.

### **Conclusion - Mummification as a Christian marker**

The discussion has presented the evidence for the continuation and persistence of the Egyptian practice of mummification from the classical era through the Persian period, being adopted by the Macedonian kings of what became the Ptolemaic “pharaonic” dynasty. The practice of mummification survived the both the Greek and Roman conquest of Egypt and continued into and within the Christian era in Egypt. The 12 anthropogenic mummies in the Kellis 1 group reported by Aufderheide et al., adds to the evidence of Christian burials in proximity to mummification and pagans. Therefore there is a continuous chronology of mummification through the first century. Coeval with this is the emergence of Christianity in the mid to late first

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<sup>409</sup> Dawson, *References to Mummification*, 107. The phrase ‘to be to’ is Dawson’s.

<sup>410</sup> Wallis Budge, *The Mummy*, 310. That is according to the early Egyptology tradition which sought to validate biblical history through the archaeology of Egypt. Budge was among the early generation of Christian Egyptologists – an era when the discovery/translation of the (Biblical) name Ramesses in Egypt made “Christianised” Egyptology and Archaeology fashionable – a trend which waned due to the rise of pure scientific method in the mid twentieth century. Nock emerges again here, as Esler, *New Work on Roman Sarcophagi*, 10 notes: “But it is worth asking if the secularist agenda which itself has been ascendant since Nock is not itself limiting.” This is a trend which is seen as unnecessary and which prominent Egyptologist authors like David Rohl seek to overturn – as he hazards to suggest “perhaps the Bible was right all along;” David Rohl, *The Lords of Avaris* (London, 2010), p.196.

<sup>411</sup> Tovar, *Christian Mummy Labels*, 14.

<sup>412</sup> The method was proven to preserve the body from decay in that we today have mummies of ancient bodies some three millennia or more old, complete with eyelashes, fingerprints and even remnant DNA. In the first century the mummified body of well-known Ramesses was in a public monument near Alexandria in the so called Ramesseum. Here again the evidence for the method’s efficacy was all around for anyone born and bred in Alexandrian Egypt, which was a different case to someone born in Judea or Rome.

century, emerging in the third century manifesting the mummification practice for their burials.

The early prominent church personalities such as Clement, Origen and Eusebius were, Griggs asserts, supporters of the western church convention and thus “imposed” a particular persona upon what a Christian “looked like” and thus did not consider earlier Christians in Egypt as Christianity at all.<sup>413</sup> The practice of mummification among these early Christians may be one reason for the church fathers holding this view. Griggs suggests that the early Christians “developed eccentric tendencies” and the western tradition saw this as heretical and gnostic, but which was “simply Christian” to the early Egyptian Christians.<sup>414</sup>

The question this poses is in the absence of literary evidence, can the mummification practice be a marker for the presence of Christianity in Egypt in the mid to late first century in the way circumcision is for Jewish groups, or the Coptic cross is for Copts?<sup>415</sup> Is it plausible to draw a retrospective conclusion that the presence of mummification with Christians in the third century, their accepted arrival in the second century, implies a presence of Christians in Egypt in the first century? Can this notion be sustained due to the fact that it is not reasonable to presume this practice was “suddenly” taken up in the third century – there is a high probability of Christians practicing this in the first century Egypt which passed the practice on to the following generations of Christians in Egypt, into the second and later centuries.

Pearson has the view that it is valid to draw a retrospective analogy from later evidence; specifically for example extrapolating back from second century sources to first century sources as we may gain “hints from second century sources.”<sup>416</sup> Further he notes that there was continuity between primitive Egyptian Christianity and post 117 CE Alexandrian Christianity,<sup>417</sup> in the same way that later school texts contain

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<sup>413</sup> Griggs, *Origins to 451CE*, 28. Griggs asserts “a reconstruction of the history of Egyptian Christianity during the first two centuries would account for [for example] the strange silence of Eusebius concerning Egypt for most of that period” – p.33.

<sup>414</sup> Griggs, *Origins to 451CE*, 32-33. Gnosticism, Platonism and Philo philosophy are not engaged in this thesis.

<sup>415</sup> Or in the way mummification was a marker for Egyptians in the classical era.

<sup>416</sup> Pearson, *Earliest Christianity in Egypt: Further Observations*, 100.

<sup>417</sup> Pearson, *Earliest Christianity in Egypt: Further Observations*, 100.

traditions of first century Alexandrian Judaism.<sup>418</sup> In this regard the combined multi-use necropolis at Kellis is assessed as having its earliest use from the late first century.<sup>419</sup> Therefore is the mixed pagan/Christian usage actually pagan and Christian co-use of the same site, or is it what we would expect of the variance in self-identity displayed by those of a Christian community comprising mixed cultural groups drawing from Egyptians, Hellenised Egyptians, Greeks, Hellenised Egyptian Jews, having converted to Christianity which we see as variant pagans, but which to them was “simply Christianity”? It can be argued that the Kellis (reflected by Christian/pagan use of North Tomb 1) grave sites and burials do reflect what we would expect to find in a mixed community of new (pagan) converts to Christianity, and thus mummification present in first century gravesites may be a marker for early Christianity in Egypt, but these sites and burials need closer scrutiny from this perspective to obtain what may be called “pagan conversion markers” for early Egyptian Christians – mummification being one such marker.

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<sup>418</sup> Pearson, *Earliest Christianity in Egypt: Further Observations*, 101.

<sup>419</sup> Bowen, *Early Christian Burial at Kellis*, 78.

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## Ancient Sources &amp; Papyri

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## Appendix 1

Royal seals showing Ptolemy VI as Egyptian Pharaoh and Greek King



Source: [wikipedia%252Fcommons%252F2%252F22%252FRing\\_with\\_engraved\\_portrait\\_of\\_Ptolemy\\_VI\\_Philometor](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ring_with_engraved_portrait_of_Ptolemy_VI_Philometor)

## Appendix 2

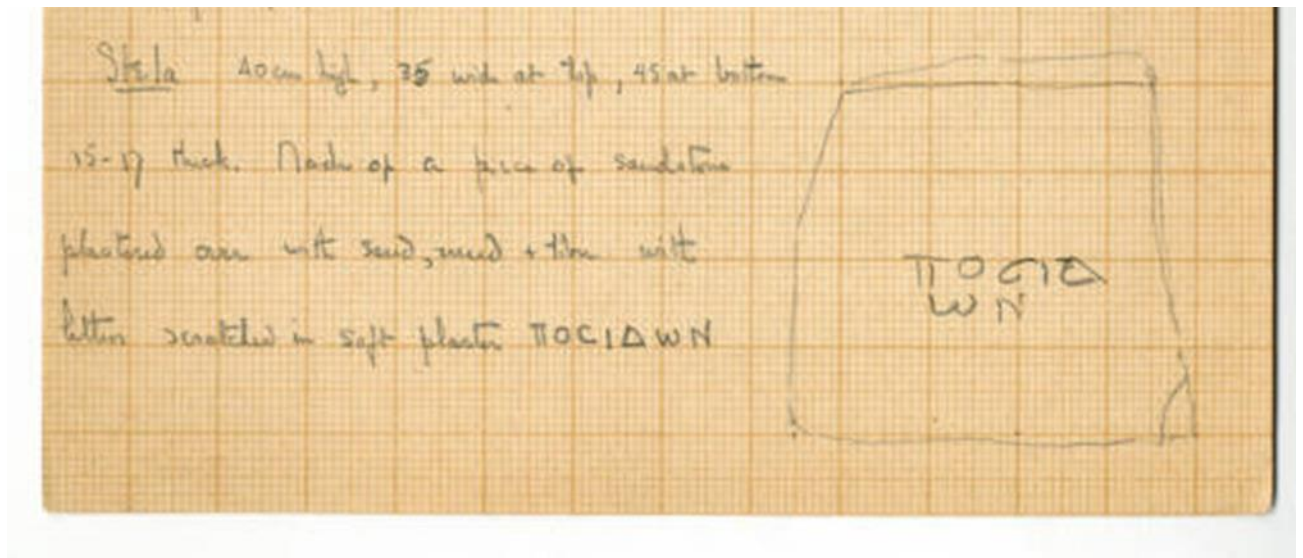
Image of Anubis mummifying a Fish - Tomb of Khabekhnet Deir el-Medina



Source: [http://www.deirelmedina.com/sitebuilder/images/TT2\\_4\\_Rissoto-514x315.jpg](http://www.deirelmedina.com/sitebuilder/images/TT2_4_Rissoto-514x315.jpg)

## Appendix 3

## Tomb Stele Bagawat "POSEIDON"



Source: <http://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p16028coll10/id/155/rec/8>