

DID JERUSALEM CHRISTIANS FLEE TO PELLA?

Evidence from Biblical, Historical, Archaeological and Critical Studies^[1]

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Abstract

Early Christian historians Eusebius and Epiphanius claim that prior to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70 the Jerusalem Christians fled to the Decapolis city of Pella (note also Mark 13:14; Matt 24:15; Lu 21:20-22; cf. 19:43-44). During the last half of the twentieth century critical scholars have debated the accuracy of this report. This paper summarizes the major arguments in the discussion and evaluates them against a restudy of the evidence presently available. It concludes that the ancient writers are more likely than modern doubters to be essentially correct.

INTRODUCTION

This paper begins with a summary of the source material and contemporary critical reaction to the account of the flight to Pella by the Jerusalem Christians. It continues with a brief description of the site of ancient Pella (Tabaquat Fahil), the history of its occupations, and a notation of archaeological work there. The primary focus of the paper includes (1) comments on the negative critical assessments of the written sources, (2) observations on the possible relevance of archaeological evidence reported recently in *Biblical Archaeological Review*, (3) some very general personal observations of a few geographical features within areas involved in the tradition, and finally (4) a proposed scenario of what may have occurred as the Romans approached Jerusalem and the Christians of that city reacted to an "oracle" directing them to flee.

SOURCES

Biblical Evidence

As Jesus and his disciples exited the temple during "holy week," Mark says that one of them said, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings. And Jesus said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings?^[2] There will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down'" (13:1-2).^[3] Later, while Jesus was seated on the Mt of Olives, doubtlessly overlooking the city and temple, the inner circle of the disciples asked "when this will be?" and about the signs to indicate the accomplishing (*teleisthai*) of these things (13:3).

Jesus proceeds to give a discourse, in apocalyptic literary form, on "the end" (*to telos*). In so doing he seems to run together discussions about the end of (1) the temple, (2) the Jewish nation, and (3) of history and of the world.

In the discourse, according to Mark 13:14 and Matt 24:16, Jesus said, "When you see the desolating sacrilege^[4] set up where it ought not to be (let the reader understand), let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains...". Luke includes his words, "The days shall come when

your enemies will cast a bank about you and hem you in on every side: (19:43) and "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its destruction is near" (21:20).

Patristic and Related Evidence

A veiled reference in the Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* (I, 36 and 39) is sometimes thought to be the oldest reference to the flight from Jerusalem by Christians at the time of the first century war with Rome. I:39 says, "Everyone who, believing in the Prophet who had been foretold by Moses, is baptized in His name, shall be kept unhurt from the destruction of war which impends over the unbelieving and the place itself." The problems with this identification are (1) the uncertain date of the *Recognitions* and the sources which underlie them and (2) whether or not these words do in fact refer to an exodus by Jerusalem Christians.

The first clear reference comes from the fourth century church historian Eusebius. He says that as the Romans approached the city, "The people belonging to the church at Jerusalem had been ordered by an oracle revealed to approved men on the spot before the war broke out, to leave the city and dwell in a town of Peraea called Pella" (*EH* III:5). The destruction of the city, Eusebius says, came only after the Jerusalem Christians had made their escape. A late first or early second century sarcophagus found beneath the floor of a church in the western part of Pella may be a relic of the Christians stay in the city.¹⁵¹ The mid-second century Christian apologist, Aristo, came from Pella.¹⁶¹ Later, Epiphanius (315-403) makes reference to the same tradition as Eusebius and says there were both orthodox and heretical Jewish Christians in the Pella and other Decapolis areas centuries later.¹⁷¹ From the third century onward the remains of churches are found all around the area, including a large church complex in Pella itself. These may give further evidence of an on going tradition of Christian presence in the area.

The patristic statements obviously strengthen the case that at least some early Christians believed that Jesus' statements referred to the destruction of the temple, Jerusalem, and the Jewish nation by the Romans in A.D. 70. The question of whether the Jerusalem Christians left the city prior to its overthrow has significant implications. These include such issues as the nature of the first Jerusalem Church, the Mother Church of all Christianity, and the possibility of continuity between the Christianity in the first century and that of later times. This latter question has bearings upon the possibility of genuine, historical data about the historical Jesus and the experiences and theology of the apostolic church being present in the forms of Christianity which emerged later.

The Roman Attack Upon Jerusalem

Josephus describes the A.D. 66-70 war in great detail, especially in his *The Wars of the Jews*. Two events are important for our study. At the outset of the war, A.D. 66/67, the legate of Syria, Cestius Gallus, approached Jerusalem with the Twelfth Legion and occupied the northern suburb, Bezetha. Realizing he did not have sufficient forces to take the rest of the city he withdrew. His army was ambushed in the Beth Horon pass and suffered heavy losses. This victory added prestige to the Jewish rebels and increased hopes of eventual victory over the Romans. In the late spring of 68 the Roman general Vespasian had reduced the region beyond the Jordan, western Judaea, and Idumea to the south. At this point the death of Nero and civil war in Rome caused Vespasian to temporarily halt military operations in Judaea to await the

outcome of developments in Rome -- he was eventually elected Emperor. This provided the Jews with an unexpected respite which many interpreted as divine intervention on their behalf.

When finally the Romans attacked Jerusalem they did so with four Legions. The Fifth came from the west and camped on the west side of the city. The Fifteenth and Twelfth Legions came generally from the north and eventually encamped on Mt Scopus. The Tenth Legion, after subduing Jericho, attacked from the east and camped on the Mount of Olives.

Critical Skepticism

Walter Bauer,^[8] in a still highly influential work, argued that Christianity is completely the product of second and succeeding centuries. Originally there were several competing versions of Christianity existed as legitimate alternatives until one finally emerged as "orthodox." Bauer did not even include Jewish Christianity among the possible options.^[9] S. G. F. Brandon^[10] rejected outright the tradition of an escape to Pella and argued that the Church of Jerusalem "identified itself too closely with the nation from which it had originally emerged and in Israel's virtual annihilation it subsequently shared."^[11] Furthermore, he argues, not only did Christianity cease to exist in its original Jewish form, but Christianity as a whole was subsequently "virtually reborn." Thus the foundation is at least partly laid for dissociating Jesus and Christianity as a whole from the possibility of having reliable historical roots.

Brandon's reconstruction has gained some support.^[12] It also received severe criticism from the book's original reviewers^[13]-- including HJ Schoeps, the dean of mid-twentieth century studies of early Jewish Christianity^[14]. More recent investigations have tended to support at least some version of the traditional account of the flight of the Jerusalem Christians.^[15] Nevertheless Gerd Luedermann^[16] has made a strong defense of the major elements of Brandon's thesis and its implications.

ARCHAEOLOGY

The Site

The site of ancient Pella lies among rugged hills and sharp valleys in the modern country of Jordan, about 2.5 miles east of the Jordan River and 17 miles south of the Sea of Galilee. Just across the river, 8 miles to the west and slightly north, is Scythopolis (Bet Shan) and the opening to The Esdraelon Plain. The surrounding area used to be heavily forested but has been laid bare by ancient lumbering and other abuses of the land.

Pella^[17] stood on two mounds, separated by Wadi Jirm. The southern mound, Tell el-Husn, was occupied intermittently throughout history. The main site is a large oval mound to the north of the Wadi and rising some 100 feet above it. This is the location of the majority of ancient habitation and archaeological investigation. A spring flows into the Wadi from below the major tell which supported the ancient civilizations in the area.

Survey of the History of Pella

Here it is suffice to note the salient facts of the history of the site. It was occupied from at least Paleolithic times. There is evidence of occupation, although not necessarily as a city, during the Early Bronze Age. A city, part of the Canaanite culture, was present during the Middle Bronze period. Evidently this was a time of prosperity. Its name appears on Egyptian conquest lists but is not mentioned in the Old Testament.

Late Bronze seems to have witnessed decline in prosperity and population of Pella. Evidence for the Iron Age, including the Persian period, is minimal and may indicate a continuation of the decline during the earlier periods. The effects of entrance of Alexander the Great into the region in 332 BC upon Pella are debated. However, the Hellenistic age brought changes in the city's organizational structure, economy, and culture. The Semitic name *Pihil* or *Pihir* was hellenized to "Pella," the same as that of the Macedonian city of Alexander's birth.

Major events for our concern are those involving Pella's interplay with the Hebrews during the period of Second Temple Judaism. Initially it was relatively free from Hasmonean interference. Josephus^[18] says Alexander Jannaeus destroyed Pella about 83/82 BC. The Roman general Pompey made Pella part of the collection of ten semi-independent Hellenistic cities called the "Decapolis" in 63 BC.^[19] It was one of several Hellenistic towns and cities attacked by Jewish rebels at the outset of the AD 66-70 war against Rome. Evidently the city underwent considerable growth toward the end of the first century; its first Roman coins were issued in AD 82/83. Excavations show that by the second century it had been rebuilt as a Roman city with forum, public baths, a nymphaeum, and a small theater (odeum).

Enhanced by increased trade, during the sixth century Pella attained its greatest size and prosperity. It fell under Moslem control in AD 635. An earthquake severely damaged Pella about AD 746. It was not entirely destroyed nor, apparently, rebuilt. There is evidence of some occupation on the site into the Mamluk period (1291-1517).

Excavations

Two volumes by Gottlieb Schumacher^[20] detail what appear to be the initial serious studies of Pella. The surface survey of this nineteenth century explorer-archaeologist are frequently passed over in accounts of investigations of the area. However, his report of caves in the general area which had been inhabited at some point in history, possibly by refugees, and the presence of early Christian symbols in the general vicinity may have relevance to this study.

A couple of minor archaeological investigations at Pella followed those of Schumacher. Major systematic work began in 1966-67 by a team from Wooster College, Ohio, under the direction of R.H. Smith. In 1978 the Wooster College team was joined by one from the University of Sydney, led by J.B. Hennessy and A. McNicoll. Little has been found from Roman times save for the afore mentioned structures near the spring and a cemetery on the northeastern slopes of Tell Husn (Area X). Field work by the University of Sydney continues.^[21]

COMMENTS ON CRITICAL ASSESSMENTS OF THE SOURCES

Bauer, Brandon, and Leudemann exemplify those critics who approach ancient Christian sources with methodologies of suspicion. They appear to assume that nothing can be accepted from the ancients that does not comport with patterns, logic, or assumptions of modern western world. They seem to place little stock in implications from non-literary evidence such as geography and archaeology, but heavy emphasis upon logical implications of their own reading of written documents. Hence, in this case they virtually reject out of hand such records as the Bible, Eusebius, and others.

Brandon rejects the Pella-flight traditions for three major reasons. First, the absence of any reference to it in early Christian records (those mentioned above do not seem to count). Secondly, his unique reconstruction of the internal make-up and history of the Pre-AD 70 Church of Jerusalem which assumes it was virtually a monolithic whole. He conjectures that virtually all of its constituency participated in the nationalistic-revolutionary spirit aflame in the city. Therefore, he claims that the Christians remained in Jerusalem with their fellow countrymen during the AD 66-70 war and perished in the overthrow. Finally, Brandon argues that the destruction of Pella by Jewish revolutionaries at the outset of the war (ca. A.D. 66) rendered it an impossible haven by any Jewish group. We must comment on each of the latter two.

Brandon's suppositions about the nationalistic-revolutionary fervor in Jerusalem and the internal make-up of the Church there seem to me to be simplistic. There is no doubt that the majority first century Palestinian Jews yearned to breathe free. But the assumption that this led all to desire military action, at least prior to the last moments of the war, is questionable. Josephus seems to portray much of the population of Jerusalem as victims of fanatics, many coming from outside the city. The Pharisees were probably largely quietists, content to await God's deliverance of the nation. Furthermore, there is ample evidence that the primitive Christian community was far from anything approaching an unified entity.^[221] If nationalists were among its numbers they were from the right wing, legalistic extreme group. In fact, there is reason to assume that the leadership and with it the majority of the Jerusalem Christians had no such commitment.^[231]

Brandon's speculations about conditions and situations which made Pella unsuitable as a refuge for Jerusalem Christians is based on his own views about the implications of Josephus' notice of the Jewish attack on the city. This attack was part of a widespread Jewish retaliation for the attack and slaughter of of virtually all Jews in Caesarea Maritimee.^[241] The Jews, he says, "laid waste the villages of the Syrians, and their neighboring cities, Philadelphia, Sebonitis, and Gerasa, and Pella, and Scythopolis." He lists additional cities that were attacked, including others in the Decapolis, Tyre, along the Coastal Plain, and including Sabaste-Samaria and Askelon. In summarizing the action, Josephus tells of plundering by the Jews and "an immense slaughter... of the men who were caught in" the places attacked. Brandon argues that had Jerusalem Christians gone to Pella before the Jewish destruction of the city by the Jews, they would have perished with the Gentile inhabitants. If they fled after the destruction they would hardly have "chosen the place for a refuge, for not only would a devastated city have offered no shelter, but a party of Jews, whatever their particular religious tenants, would scarcely have been welcomed by any Gentile survivors of the Jewish reprisal" (170).

Such statements as Brandon's simply raise too many questions, both about the historical and social situations. We have no information about conditions in that region of Decapolis save that it was a time of disruption and chaos. The destruction of Pella by Jewish revolutionaries may have resulted in its being virtually abandoned, especially if there had been massive slaughter there as Josephus suggests. Indeed, there has yet to be discovered any archaeological evidence of substantial occupation until late in the first century at the earliest. Massacred or scattered inhabitants would have posed little threat to refugees of any origin. In turn it cannot be assumed that one group of refugees would necessarily turn upon another.

A sparsely inhabited area would have looked quite inviting to fleeing Christians who would hardly have sought a teeming city with five-star accommodations. Their concerns would have been primarily for the relative safety afforded by a semi-secluded area and, most important, water.

Then again, the Church fathers, in their accounts of the Jewish Christian migration, may be using "Pella" to describe only a general section of Transjordan-Decapolis, not a specific city. In any case, the Pella region as the place of refuge for at least some Jerusalem Christians, explains the undeniable presence of Jewish Christian groups in the area in the early part of the next century.

POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS OF SOME INDIRECT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

In 1990 Bargil Pixner published an article, "Church of the Apostles Found on Mt. Zion."^[25] He focuses attention upon the complex on the southwestern hill of Jerusalem, Mt. Zion, which now contains the traditional site of the Tomb of David, the Upper Room, and a Jewish Yeshiva. He describes a niche in the wall behind the cenotaph of David, a floor three layers, about 4 inches, below the present one, and a wall, part of the building's original one which he believes were part of a pre-AD 70 synagogue. He also demonstrates, convincingly to me, that the synagogue was Jewish Christian. The niche is aligned, not with the temple, but with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, pieces of plaster from the original floor level bear markings which, although controversial, may be read "Conquer, Savior, mercy" and "O Jesus, that I may live, O Lord of the autocrat."^[26] Furthermore, it seems that another Jewish Christian structure was built on the same site between A.D. 73 and 135. There is also literary evidence to support a Jewish Christian presence there at that time.^[27] Later a succession of Christian churches were built on the site. The presence of Jewish and other Christians on Mt Zion is documented by Church Fathers and pilgrims.^[28] After the Hadrianic war it seems that the Jewish Christians on Mt Zion may have isolated themselves with a crude wall which utilized a gate at the location of the earlier "Essene Gate."^[29]

Now, the significance of all this is the proximity of this Jewish Christian center to the Essene Gate, one of the two the southern-most and probably most remote of all gates of the pre-AD 70 city. This means that it provided relatively easy and fairly unobtrusive access to the routes to Jericho.^[30] Furthermore, the southern section of the city, protected as it was by the Hinnon and Kidron Valleys, was furthest away from any of the three major Roman camps.

Here I must insert some personal observations. In the 80's, after years of pondering the history and nature of the first Jerusalem Church, including the Pella tradition, and weeks of traversing the hills of Israel-Palestine on narrow, winding, undulating roads, our bus emerged from the Roman road through the Judean wilderness between Jerusalem and Jericho and turned

north. There before me was a clear cut ribbon of road. It was straight, and flat. Now, I am well aware that with the passage of time terrain changes, erosion pushes toward an egalitarian terrain of levelness, marshes are drained, forests and heavy vegetation appears and disappears. But I know too that the path or road along this Arabah, the Jordan Valley, had been a favorite route for travelers seeking to avoid the highs and lows of the hill country or the exposure of the highways along the Coastal Plain to the west.

A few minutes with a map confirmed that this valley road north led quite near Pella, a point at which a group of refugees might want to leave the road before entering the more open regions in environs of Scythopolis-Beth Shan and the Jezreel-Esdraelon Valley. And the Pella region would be all the better for a temporary refuge if it had been racked by recent military action.

There was yet one piece missing in the puzzle. What was the site of Pella really like? I needed the type of impressions that written descriptions cannot give. This past summer (1998) I stood at a vantage point overlooking Pella! There, in plain view, lay the two mounds with the wadi and spring between. The presence of sufficient water was evident by substantial vegetation around the spring. I gasped to my travel companions, "This place is huge!" Later, walking through the wadi, we were impressed with the volume of water poured out by the artisan spring. Here, especially in the forum area, the impressions formed -- this was a place to which the Jerusalem Christians could well have come. There was plenty of room for a relatively small group to establish temporary residence without much contact with others, save on trips to the spring. This was even more likely if for a time they lived in caves, as Schumacher suggested they might.

A PROPOSED SCENARIO OF JERUSALEM CHRISTIAN

ACTIONS AS THE ROMANS THREATENED THE CITY

Did the Jerusalem Christians flee to Pella just before the Romans destroyed their city? There is no way to know for sure. We can only deal in probabilities. If we accept as reliable the accounts of Eusebius and others, the issue is settled. If, as did Brandon, one begins by doubting those records and seeks reasons for supporting that skepticism, the answer to the question will most certainly be, "No," for when evidence is incomplete, selected and biased reading and interpretations of data can usually yield the desired conclusion.

Between these two are other options, including evaluating carefully both the primary sources and their critics. In addition, beyond the direct evidence there may be circumstantial, which although a bit oblique and supplementary, may be relevant. It is evidence of this type that we seek to add to the investigation of the Pella tradition.

Perhaps the situation and unfolding events were something like what follows. The Jerusalem Christian community was centered on the southwest hill of Jerusalem, now called Mt. Zion. In all probability it was here they had eaten the last passover meal with Jesus, were together when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, and may have constructed their own synagogue. This location, although containing such "up scale" residences as the palace of the high priest, the Christians probably shared it with others who were a bit out of the mainstream of Jerusalem life Jewish groups, such as the Essenes.

If indeed the Jerusalem Christians fled the city, we do not know whether they did so in mass, in small groups, or as individuals. Furthermore, the time of this exodus has been variously placed. Most likely^[31] are following the Jewish victory over Cestius Gallus (A.D.66/67),^[32] or in the period following the temporary withdrawal of Vespasian to await developments in Rome (A.D. 68/69).^[33] The latter would seem more logical to me. They would have already seen Jerusalem "surrounded by armies" (cf. Luke 21:20) and presumably

been free to travel toward Jericho since the Tenth Legion had pretty much left the area and was already established on the Mount of Olives; in any case, at this point in time Roman military activities had been halted.

They probably left the city through the Essene (or possibly the Tekoa) Gate, into Hinnon and on to the Kidron Valley. Although it is likely they would have avoided the Roman road, there were a number of more secluded routes through wadis and other paths open to them. This had been an escape route used before, for example by kings David^[34] and Zedekiah,^[35] and into the plain south of Jericho (the Buceiah).

Upon arriving in the Jordan Valley the friendly terrain to the north and the desire to move away from Jerusalem could have invited travel in that direction. As they neared Scythopolis they crossed the Jordan and settled in the region of Pella. Later, some remained in the Pella-Decapolis region and formed the nucleus of both the orthodox and heretical Christians found there in following centuries. Others returned not only to Jerusalem, to their old area on the southwest hill.

Those who returned brought with them a bridge between the original Jewish Christian community and the predominantly Gentile church which had arisen by the beginning of the second century. The Jerusalem-Jewish Church, weakened though it was, provided continuity with the historical Jesus and the apostles for wider Church. Their presence and their ties with the past made it unnecessary for Christianity to be "virtually reborn." The "Mother Church," frail from her experiences and limited by her environment, was back to help guide her children and grandchildren in the narrow way, the way of the truth and the faith which, through her had been "once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3).^[36]

11/13/98

^[1]Paper read at Wheaton College Archaeology Conference, Wheaton, IL, Nov 1998.

^[2]Jesus' limiting the complete destruction to the "great buildings" is significant. All buildings of the temple complex were indeed destroyed. Some "wonderful stones" of the lower courses of the retaining wall of Herod the Great's temple platform remain to this day.

^[3]See C. H. Dodd, "The Fall of Jerusalem and the `Abomination of Desolation,'" *JRS*, XXXIVV (1947); reprinted in *More New Testament Studies* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 69-83.

^[4]On the phrase "desolating sacrilege" see also Dan 11:31; 12:11; 1 Macc 1:54; 2 Macc 6:2; Josephus, *Wars* I:1,1-2 [31-35]; *Antiquities* 13:5:4 [248-256]; 7:6 [319-322].

^[5] R. H. Smith, Pella, " *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*. Ephraim Stern, ed. [New York: Simon and Shuster, 1993], vol 3, 1175.

^[6]Eusebius, *EH* IV:6,3.

^[7]"For when the city was about to be captured and sacked by the Romans, all the disciples were warned beforehand by an angel to remove from the city, doomed as it was to utter destruction. On migrating from it they settled at Pella, the town already indicated, across the Jordan. It is said to belong to Decapolis (*de Mens. et Pond.*, 15).

"Now this sect of Nazarenes exists in Beroea in Coele-Syria, and in Decapolis in the district of Pella, and in Kochaba of Basanitis-- called Kohoraba in Hebrew. For thence it originated after the migration from Jerusalem of all the disciples who resided at Pella, Christ having instructed them to leave Jerusalem and retire from it on account of the impending siege. It was owing to this counsel that they went away, as I have said, to reside for a while at Pella" (*Haer* 29:7).

"For when all who believed in Christ had settled down about that time in Peraea, the majority of the emigrants taking up their abode at Pella, a town belonging to the Decapolis mentioned in the Gospel, near Batanea and the district to Basanitis, Ebion got his excuse and opportunity. At first their abode was Kochaba, a village in the district of Carnaim, Arnem, and Astaroth, in the region of Basanitis, according to the information we have received. But I have spoken, in other connections and with regard to other heresies, of the locality of Kochaba and Arabia (*Haer* 30:2)... "[The Ebionites] spring for the most part from Batanea ... and Paneas, as well as from Moabitis and Cochaba in Basanitis on the other side of Adraa" (*Haer* 30:18).

(All quotations taken from A. Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, Translated by James Moffatt [2d ed. London: Williams and Norgate, 1908], vol 2, 100-102).

^[8][Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum](#) ([Beiträge zur historischen Theologie, 1934]. 2d ed. Edited by Georg Strecker. [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1964]; Eng trans Robert Kraft and Gerhard Krodel, eds. *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971).

^[9]An essay on Jewish Christianity by Georg Strecker was added to the second edition; it appears in the English translation of the work.

^[10][The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church](#) (1951; 2 ed; London: SPCK, 1957). Brandon has enlarged upon and sought to add support to his general thesis in two later books, *Jesus and the Zealots* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1967) and *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: Stein and Day, 1968).

^[11][Ibid](#), 184.

^[12]E.B. Bratcher, "The Effects of the Fall of Jerusalem on the Early Church" (unpublished Th.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, 1953).

^[13]E.g., reviews by T. Corbishly, *JRS* 44 (1954), 140 f; Wm. Barklay, *ET* 43 (1951-52), 42; Kenneth Graystone, *SJT* 6 (1953), 437 f; C.F.D. Moule, *JTS* NS 3 (1952), 106; F. L.A. Garrard, *HibJoun* 50 (1952), 201 f; F.F. Bruce, *EQ* 24 (1952), 115 f.

^[14][JEH](#) 3 (1952), 101 ff; cf his *Theologia und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (1949) and "Die Tempelzerstörung des Jahres 70 in der jüdischen Religionsgeschichte," *Aus Frühchristlicher Zeit* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1950), 144 ff.

^[15]Sidney Sowers, "The Circumstances and Recollection of the Pella Flight," *TZ* 26 (1970), 305 ff; John J. Gunther, "The Fate of the Jerusalem Church, The Flight to Pella," *TZ* 29 (1973), 81 ff; Barbara C. Gray, "The Movements of the Jerusalem Church During the Jewish War," *JEH* 24 (1973), 1 ff.

^[16]"The Successors of Pre-70 Jerusalem Christianity: A Critical Evaluation of the Pella-Tradition," *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, Vol 1: *The Shaping of Christianity in the Second and Third Centuries*. E. P. Sanders, ed (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 161 ff.

^[17]For summaries of the site and history of Pella I have drawn heavily from J. Basil Hennessy and Robert H. Smith, "Pella," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*. Eric Meyers, ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4, 256-259 and Robert H. Smith, "Pella," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* V, 219-221. Information about the general features and geography of the site have been augmented by my personal observations in June, 1998.

[18] *Ant* 13.392-397; *War* I.1-3-105.

[19] Josephus, *Ant* XII. 397; XVI, 75; *War* 1:4,8 [104], 7,7 [156]; Pliny, *NH* V,74. Excavator R. H. Smith says that when Pompey arrived, "Pella lay in ruins," *ABD* V, 220. If this is so there must have been some habitation there or he undertook to settle the area. A desolate site would hardly have been incorporated into the Decapolis confederation.

[20] *Across the Jordan* (London: Richard Bently and Son, 1886) and *Pella* (London: Palestinian Exploration Fund, 1888).

[21] "Site Bibliography" is available at <http://www.archaeology.usyd.edu.au/research/pella/pellabibl.html>

History of Excavations of the Site of Ancient Pella; see Smith, Pella," *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations*, vol 3, 1175-1179.

The following chronology is copied from: <http://www.archaeology.usyd.edu.au/research/pella/exc.html>

- * 1887: Schumacher conducts a survey of the site for the Palestine Exploration Fund.
- * 1933: A topographical plan of the site is produced for the Palestine Department of Antiquities by John Richmond.
- * 1958: Robert W. Funk and H. Neil Richardson place two brief soundings in the centre of the main tell, exposing Iron Age and Hellenistic remains.
- * 1963-1964: The Department of Antiquities instigate a rescue project, directed by Sami Rashid, to dig a number of Late Bronze Age tombs discovered on the slopes of Tell Husn, the mound directly to the north of Pella which acted as a cemetery for the bronze age city. This material is currently being studied for publication by Dr Stephen Bourke.
- * 1966-7: A team from Wooster College, Ohio, under the direction of Professor R.H. Smith prepare a topographic map of the site, and commence excavations in the following year.
- * 1978: A joint project is instigated between Wooster College and a team from the University of Sydney, led by Professor J.B. Hennessy and Dr A. McNicoll.
- * 1978-1985: Wooster continue excavations at the site, exploring the western church (Area I), Roman and Bronze age tombs in the eastern cemetery (Area II), a Roman cemetery southwest of Tell Husn (Area VII), the west cut (Area VIII), the Byzantine civic complex (Area IX), another Roman cemetery on the northeastern slopes of Tell Husn (Area X), a Hellenistic fort of Jebel Sartaba (Area XIII), south slope of the main tell (Area XXV). Wooster ceases excavations in 1985 to concentrate on publication of their work.
- * 1979-present day: the University of Sydney has conducted twenty field seasons to date, investigating occupation from the Epipalaeolithic down to the Islamic period. Between 1978 and 1985, now Emeritus Professor J.B. Hennessy and the late Dr A.W. McNicoll co-directed excavations, responsible for the pre-classical and classical/Islamic periods respectively. After McNicoll's premature death in 1985, Hennessy took as his co-directors Dr P.C. Edwards (Palaeolithic), Dr T.F. Potts (Bronze and Iron Ages, 1984-1988), Dr S.J. Bourke (1988-present day), Dr J.C. Tidmarsh (Hellenistic), Dr P.M. Watson (Roman/Byzantine), Kate da Costa (Roman/Byzantine 1997), and Dr A.G. Walmsley (Islamic).
- * 1994-1996: The Pella Hinterland Survey conducts a detailed investigation of the immediate area around Pella, to establish regional land use and settlement patterns beyond the urban frontier. This is a joint project between Dr Pam Watson of the BIAAH and Dr Margaret O'Hea of the University of Adelaide.

Excavations by a team from the University of Sydney are continuing, with the next season taking place in November 1998.

^[22]O. Cullmann, "Dissensions Within the Early Church," *USQR* 16 (1967), 48 ff; E.E. Ellis, "'Those of the Circumcision' and the Early Christian Mission," *Studia Evangelica* IV (1968), 390 ff; R. Pesch, "Were there Parties in the NT Church?" *Concilium* 8 (1973), 26 ff; J. Julius Scott, Jr., "Parties in the Church of Jerusalem As Seen in the Book of Acts," *JETS* 8 (1975), 217 ff.

^[23]This is the reconstruction of the Jerusalem Church I put forth in "The History and Influence of the Church of Jerusalem, A.D. 30-100: An Investigation of the Growth of Internal Factions and the Extension of its Influence in the Larger Church." Ph.D. Dissertation presented to the University of Manchester, England, 1969. (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1969/1983. [publication No. 1-8635.00]).

^[24]*Wars* 2:18,1 [458-460].

^[25]*Biblical Archaeological Review* 16/3 (May/June), 16-35; cf also his "Jerusalem's Essene Gateway," *BAR* 23/4 (May/June 1997), 23-31, 64-66.

^[26]"Church of the Apostles," 24.

^[27]"There was a very important Christian Church in Jerusalem, composed of Jews, which existed until the siege of the city under Hadrian." Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Proof of the Gospel Being the Demonstratio Evangelica*. W. J. Ferrar, trans (London: SPCK, 1920), vol 1, 143 [3:5 (124, d)]. A. Schlatter, *Die Kirche Jerusalems vom Jahre 70-130* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1898). I have also addressed this matter in my dissertation, "The Church of Jerusalem. AD 30-100, 271-346 and "Glimpses of Jewish Christianity from the End of Acts to Justin Martyr (A.D. 62-150)" (Paper read before the National Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, November, 1997, Santa Clara, CA.)

^[28]Pixner, "Church of the Apostles," 26-30.

^[29]Pixner, "Essene Gateway," 29.

^[30]Pixner ("Essene Gate," 31, 64) notes that Jerusalem gates were sometimes named for the direction toward which roads from them led, hence the Damascus, Joppa, and Tekoa Gates. Sometimes their names indicated the gate's function, as the Dung gate. He suggests the "Essene Gate" was so named because it gave that group easy access to their *bethso*, or latrine. This is probably but it is not beyond possibility that the Essenes living on Mt Zion may have thought of it as the way to those of their group who lived in the direction of Jericho, at Qumran.

^[31]Hans Lietzmann (*A History of the Early Church*. Translated by Bertram Lee Woolf. [Reprinted; London: Lutterworth Press, 1961] I, 178) and Jakob Jocz, (*The Jewish People and Jesus Christ* [London: SPCK, 1954; reprint, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980], 165) suggest they may have fled just after the death of James the Just (ca. A.D. 62). Although this might be implied in the death accounts of James (see my "James the Relative of Jesus and the Expectation of an Eschatological Priest, it seems too early to me. If so they would have been in Pella when it was attacked by the Jews." *JETS* 25/3 [September 1982], 326), it seems too early to me. Furthermore, had the Jerusalem Christian withdrawn to Pella in 62, they would have been in the city when it was attacked by Jewish rebels in 66 and almost certainly perished.

^[32]So Carl Weizsacker, *The Apostolic Age*, trans. James Millar, (London: 1912) II, 17 f.; F. F. Bruce, *The Spreading Flame* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 157; L. E. Elliott-Binns, *Galilean Christianity* (SBT; London: 1956), 68.

^[33]So Adolf Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion* II, 79 ff.; Arnold A. A. T. Ehrhardt, "The Birth of the Synagogue and R. Akiba," *The Framework of the New Testament Stories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1964), 112.

[\[34\]](#)2 Sam 15: ; note v 23, he "crossed Wadi Kidron...toward the wilderness"; (v 30) he went "up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, weeping as he went."

[\[35\]](#)2 Kings 25:4-5; Jer 52:7-8 which say he fled "in the direction of the Arabah: and that the Babylonians "overtook him in the plain of Jericho."

[\[36\]](#)I gratefully acknowledge the help of my colleague John M. Monson with this paper. His comments have been particularly helpful in the considering the possible routes of escape from Jerusalem by the Christians.
