

Maccoby, *The Mythmaker*, Chapters 9-11
Wesley Advocates 8 January 2017

The Road to Damascus

Considering the “road to Damascus” story, how does Maccoby distinguish conversion from revelation?

Why does Maccoby doubt Paul’s assertions about travelling to Damascus on the High Priest’s business? Why does Maccoby consider it a clandestine mission? To accomplish what?

Why did Paul need to “escape” from Damascus surreptitiously?

When was Paul writing his letters? And when did the Luke writer produce Acts?

How many accounts of the Paul-and-Damascus story appear in Acts? Elsewhere? What problems arise because of the differences?

Why does HM consider Paul a “divided self”? What is psychological dualism? What is cosmic (or metaphysical) dualism? How are both radically opposed to the Pharisaic notion of the “essential unity of human nature”?

Why does HM associate Paul’s dualism with the Gnostics?

Who were the “God-fearers”? HM concludes that Paul came from God-fearing parents: what does that mean? Why does HM think Paul was a recent convert to Judaism? How did Paul fail as a Jew and would-be Pharisee? More important, how does he respond to these failures?

How is Paul paralleled to Augustine of Hippo?

How do we know Paul was never “Saul, a lifelong Jew from the tribe of Benjamin”?

Please note all comments about the “Roman citizenship of both Paul and his father.”

Damascus and After

Whence came Paul’s ideas about the dying and resurrected deity and the believer’s oneness with that deity? What examples before Jesus might we cite?

If the Jerusalem Nazarenes imagined Jesus was resurrected, how did that change their relationship with him? With the Eternal Father?

HM distinguishes the ways Paul and typical Jews thought of salvation—the former for the individual only and the latter for the community. Explain.

Paul's road-to-Damascus experience produced a "sudden change from utter sinfulness to utter release, and sinlessness became the motif of the new religion which he began to develop from the vision which had marked him out from mankind." What are the key phrases in this quotation we must understand?

On what basis does Paul claim higher authority than the Jerusalem apostles, those who knew Jesus?

How does Paul parallel himself with Moses? With Jeremiah? To what ends?

On page 106, in middle paragraph beginning "If, however . . .," HM contends Paul says the Eternal Father revealed "his Son in me." What does that suggest?

What is a mystagogue? How does the term suit Paul?

Paul and the Eucharist

HM demonstrates the source of Paul's Eucharist as Mediterranean mystery cults in which initiates regularly partook of the body and blood of their god. When, according to HM, did the Hebrews renounce human sacrifice? What conflicts do we see here?

In what ways is the Lord's Prayer a typical Jewish prayer?

How specifically does Paul's story related in 1 Corinthians 11 indicate he initiated the notion of Eucharist in his own churches—and that authority derived from a vision? Describe what Paul contends.

What is the Greek phrase Paul uses for Eucharist? What is its source? What mystery occurs?

Even though the synoptic gospels describe something like a last supper in which Jesus distributes bread and wine to the disciples, how does that differ from the notion of Eucharist at the heart of Paul's ritual? Why would those persons writing the gospels even include a Eucharist story when purportedly writing about the life of Jesus?

How does the John writer handle the Last Supper-Eucharist material?

What was the Jerusalem Church's practice with regard to Eucharist?