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ZEALOTS AND SICARII, THEIR ORIGINS AND RELATION

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It has long been the common opinion that the Zealots were the party founded by Judas the Galilean — so Graetz and Jost, for instance, writing in the middle of the past century.¹ Derenbourg, it is true, observed that the term “Zealots” was not applied to the opponents of the Romans before the revolt, but when he came to the events of the revolt he made a descendant of Judas, Menahem, the leader of the Zealots and so apparently assumed the connection of the party with Judas.² Schürer’s adherence canonized the common opinion, and also the common description of the *Sicarii* as a more fanatical fraction of the party — though the sources contain nothing to suggest that the party had split before the *Sicarii* appeared.³ Hence, with only minor variations, Eduard Meyer,⁴ Bousset,⁵ Baron,⁶ and Yadin’s account of the Zealots in Masada,⁷ to name only the largest studies.⁸

¹ H. GRAETZ, *Geschichte der Juden*, 5 ed., ed. M. Braun (Leipzig, 1900–1905), III.i, 250, 258; III.ii, 431f., 458ff.; J. JOST, *Geschichte des Judentums und seiner Secten*, I Abt. (Leipzig, 1857), 327, 436, 443. JOST differs with GRAETZ by denying the Zealots’ relation to the Shammaites (p. 327) and in other details, but accepts the connection of the party with Judas.

² J. DERENBOURG, *Essai sur l’histoire et la géographie de la Palestine*, . . . I, *Histoire de la Palestine* . . . (Paris, 1867), 195 n. 2; 238f.; 260f.; 472f.

³ E. SCHÜRER, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, 3–4 ed. (Leipzig, 1901–1911), 4 vols.; I, 486f. (with bibliography); 573ff., etc.; I, 487 n. 139 is contradicted by III, 300 — the author of *The Assumption of Moses* was not a Zealot, after all.

⁴ *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums* (Stuttgart, 1921), 3 vols.; II, 402ff. (contrary to SCHÜRER, Judas the Galilean and Judas the son of Hezekiah were not identical).

⁵ W. BOUSSET, *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter*, 3 ed., ed. H. Gressmann (Tübingen, 1926; *HdbNT* 21), 87f.

⁶ S. BARON, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, 2 ed. (N.Y., 1952), II, 46ff.; 58, 74, 101, 346 n. 55.

⁷ Y. YADIN, *Masada, Herod’s Fortress and the Zealots’ Last Stand* (N.Y., 1966).

⁸ Others are, e.g., J. LIGHTLY, *Jewish Sects and Parties in the Time of Jesus*

A new trend, however, set in just after Schürer's work, at the beginning of the present century. Kohler tried to date "a league of Kanna'im or Zealots" back to Maccabean times,⁹ though he did not put the organization of the political party before the time of Herod.¹⁰ His attempt to connect their forerunners with the Hasidim¹¹ was unfortunate, since one of the few things we know about the Hasidim is that they abandoned the Maccabees and went over to the Seleucid High Priest, Alcimus,¹² an action incompatible with Judas the Galilean's teaching that Jews may recognize no ruler save God.¹³ However, Kohler did succeed in showing that the admiration of "zeal" (exemplified by the murders committed by Phineas and those instigated by Elijah)¹⁴ was widespread in Judaism from Maccabean times on, that imitation of Phineas and Elijah was often spoken of, and that such thought and practice was closely connected with resistance to foreign rule. Enthusiasm for his subject and neglect of distinctions led Kohler to absurd conclusions — "Josephus was sent by the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, composed chiefly of Zealots"; the Idumaeans were Zealots, too, and so were all the leaders in Jerusalem, in spite of their hostility to each other¹⁵ — but the recognition of the wide extent of the

(London, 1925), 323ff.; C. GUIGNEBERT, *The Jewish World in the Time of Jesus*, tr. S. Hooke (London, 1939). (For G. the Zealots were less an organization founded by a single individual than a movement generated by a common state of mind — p. 170; cp. 39f., 169f. In this respect G. is followed by W. FÖRSTER, *Palestinian Judaism in New Testament Times*, 3 ed., tr. G. Harris (Edinburgh, 1964), who accordingly puts the origin of the Zealots in the last days of Herod, 89f. (cp. 99f., 104f., etc.), and by O. CULLMANN, *Die Bedeutung der Zelotenbewegung für das Neue Testament*, in *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, 1925–1962, ed. K. Frölich (Zürich, 1966), 292ff. GUIGNEBERT, FÖRSTER, and CULLMANN all think *sicarii* a term applied to the Zealots in general; similarly A. MOMIGLIANO, *Rebellion within the Empire*. iv–vii, in the *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. X (Cambridge, 1934), 852ff., and STUMPF, *ἡρώδης, ἡλωρής*, *ThWb* II (1935), 884ff. (undistinguished). M. SIMON, *Les Sectes juives au temps de Jésus* (Paris, 1960), was less cautious and his statement (p. 39), "Josèphe la qualifie (sc. la secte des Zélotes) d'école philosophique — au même titre que les Pharisiens," is false.

⁹ K. KOHLER, Zealots, in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, XII (1906), 639ff.; Wer waren die Zeloten oder Kannaim? in *Festschrift zu Ehren des Dr. A. Harkavy*, edd. D. von Günzburg and I. Markon (St. Petersburg, 1908), 6ff.

¹⁰ *JE* XII, 640.

¹¹ *Festschrift . . . Harkavy*, 13.

¹² I Macc. 7:13ff.

¹³ JOSEPHUS, *Ant.* XVIII.23.

¹⁴ Numbers 25; I Kings 18:40; 19:10.

¹⁵ *JE* XII, 643.

terminology and of its background both in literature and in practice was a major contribution, most important because it indicated that private individuals might often have adopted the ideal on their own. Accordingly we cannot suppose that every individual who claimed to be a "zealot," or was called so by his neighbors, was a member of an organization.

Kohler's observations were taken up by Schlatter¹⁶ (whose theological romanticism carried him even beyond Kohler in glorification of these heroes who fought "for freedom alone"),¹⁷ and later by Farmer who worked out in detail the relations between the Maccabees and later representatives of the tradition of zeal — whom he calls "zealots" (as many of them probably called themselves), but whom he rightly distinguishes from the political party which took that name.¹⁸

It is not unlikely that this distinction was due to the work of Kirsopp Lake, who in 1920 had contributed to volume I of *The Beginnings of Christianity*¹⁹ an appendix, written with his usual brilliance,²⁰ in which he pointed out that Josephus never uses the term "Zealots" to refer to a political party before 66 A.D., that he then uses it to refer to one party clearly distinct from and at odds with the others, and that there is no justification for identifying this party with the "fourth philosophy" — the sect founded by Judas of Galilee.²¹ Lake also distinguished the Zealots from

¹⁶ A. SCHLATTER, *Geschichte Israels von Alexander dem Grossen bis Hadrian*, 3 ed. (Stuttgart, 1925), 261ff. (his attempt to rearrange JOSEPHUS has won no praise); *Die Theologie des Judentums nach dem Bericht des Josephus* (Gütersloh, 1932), 214ff.

¹⁷ *Theologie*, 224; contrast MOMIGLIANO's realistic evaluation of the economic motives of those who resisted Roman rule, *CAH* X, 853.

¹⁸ W. FARMER, *Maccabees, Zealots, and Josephus* (N.Y. 1956), 24, n. 3 (with a good review of the literature, 25-44); see also his article *Zealot*, *IDB* IV (1962), 936ff.

¹⁹ F. JACKSON and K. LAKE, *The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I, Vol. I, Prolegomena I*, 421ff.; that the Appendix (A. The Zealots) was written by LAKE is stated by F. JACKSON in *Josephus and the Jews* (N.Y., 1930), 264 n. 2.

²⁰ E.g., p. 424, "Schürer's statement that Judas ben Hezekiah is 'sicherlich' the same as Judas of Galilee seems . . . quite indefensible, except in so far as the use of 'sicherlich' in theological writing indicates the combination of insufficient evidence with strongly held opinion."

²¹ "No doubt the Fourth Philosophy supplied the intellectual attitude from which the Zealots and the *Sicarii* started, but there is no possibility of clearness in historical writing if the name of a political party be given to its logical antecedents," p. 422.

the *Sicarii* (422ff.) and finally pointed out the reason for the common misconception of the Zealots, viz., the long-standing and widespread admiration for "zeal" and praise of "zealots," which undoubtedly determined the party's choice of its name, but which, for that very reason, must have been prior to and wider than the party.²²

Appendices are not read, and even when they are read, they may not be cited. Drexler, in his study of Josephus' politics, followed Josephus in distinguishing the *Sicarii* from the Zealots, but said nothing of the origins of the latter nor of Lake.²³ Moore, a colleague of Lake's, remarked in passing that Josephus did not identify the Zealots with the "fourth philosophy,"²⁴ but he himself shared Josephus' disapproval of revolutionary and Messianic movements; they were not the sort of Judaism he wanted to describe; accordingly the indices of his great description of ancient Judaism contain no reference to the Zealots nor to the *Sicarii*.²⁵ Zeitlin seems also to have noticed Lake's observations, though when he repeated them, he did not refer to Lake and differed from him in declaring that the Zealots were followers of Eleazer ben Simon,²⁶ whereas Lake had believed them the followers of John of Gischala.²⁷

So far as I know, the first explicit reference to Lake's thesis was by J. Klausner,²⁸ whose enthusiastic Zionism made him anxious to represent the ancient opposition to Roman rule as a spontaneous movement of the united Jewish people, and therefore unwilling to recognize the differences and individual concerns of the anti-

²² 424f. LAKE also pointed out the importance of the reference to the apostle, Simon, "called the zealot" (Lk. 6:15; Acts 1:13), in shaping the common opinion.

²³ H. DREXLER, *Untersuchungen zu Josephus und zur Geschichte des jüdischen Aufstandes 66-70*, *Klio* 19 (1925), 277ff., esp. 284-87.

²⁴ G. MOORE, *Fate and Free Will in the Jewish Philosophies according to Josephus*, *HTR* 22 (1929), 373.

²⁵ *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (Cambridge, Mass., 1927-1930), 3 vols.

²⁶ S. ZEITLIN, *Judaism as a Religion*, *JQR*, N.S. 34 (1943-44), 351 n. 364. He refers to his own work, *Who Crucified Jesus?* (4 ed., N.Y., 1964) which does not make this point but does acknowledge (p. vii) the use of LAKE's work for its text of Acts.

²⁷ Zealots, 423. We shall come back to this question.

²⁸ First, I understand, in *Keshe'ummah nilhemet 'al herutah*, which I have not seen; subsequently in *Historia shel habayit hasheni*, 2 ed. (Jerusalem, 1950), 5 vols., esp. IV, 200ff.; V, 29ff.

Roman parties. For him the Zealots were Pharisees, because Josephus says they differed from the Pharisees in only one important characteristic;²⁹ they were also the Hasidim, and also the "fourth philosophy"; in fact, they were the leaders of all the revolts in all parts of the country.³⁰ Proof of all this is Josephus' statement that the "fourth philosophy" and the fanaticism it inspired were the root from which grew all the subsequent troubles.³¹ But in describing the subsequent troubles Josephus treats them as independent incidents and says nothing of any one party's organizing them, therefore his statements that they all grew up from the work of Judas the Galilean probably mean *only* that Judas was the first to make resistance to alien rulers a religious duty and to set an example of the fanaticism which later led to disaster, *not* that Judas started an organization which produced all the later incidents.³² This interpretation is admittedly based on an argument from silence, but the argument is a strong one because Josephus wrote in part to persuade the Romans of the innocence and loyalty of most Jews; had he been able to put the blame for all incidents of resistance on a single party and so exculpate the rest of his countrymen, he would surely have done so. He frequently tries to do so by suggestion,³³ and the passage noted by Klausner is one of these attempts. Neither it nor the others can stand against his account of the course of events, which testifies to widespread Jewish resentment of Roman rule and to many independent cases of resistance, breaking out in all the Jewish districts.³⁴

Another attempt to refute Lake was made by Brandon in 1957.³⁵

²⁹ *Ant.* XVIII.25; KLAUSNER, IV, 201f.

³⁰ IV, 202.

³¹ *Ant.* XVIII.25; KLAUSNER could also have cited the similar statements in XVIII.6 and 8-10, and other passages.

³² So the passages in question were understood by F. ABEL, *Histoire de la Palestine* (Paris, 1952), 2 vols., I, 425. Of all scholars who have dealt with the question, ABEL and LAKE were probably the two best trained in Greek and best qualified to judge the exact significance of JOSEPHUS' Greek expressions. ABEL says nothing of KLAUSNER (who was his neighbor in Jerusalem) nor of the relations between the Zealots and the *Sicarii*.

³³ This was already noticed by O. HOLTZMANN, *Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte* (Tübingen, 1906), 206; recently, e.g., M. HENGEL, *Die Zeloten* (Leiden, 1961), II.

³⁴ To argue, as KLAUSNER does (IV, 202), that since JOSEPHUS' account of the Zealots' religious devotion, love of liberty, and self-sacrifice fits the "fourth philosophy," therefore the two groups must have been one and the same party, is fallacious.

³⁵ S. BRANDON, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church* (London, 1957),

He argued, (1) as Klausner had, that Josephus "clearly associates the movement of Judas of Galilee with the politico-religious fanaticism which goaded the nation into war"; (2) that the action of Judas must have involved actual revolt, not just seditious teaching, because both Josephus and Luke ³⁶ look back to it as a memorable event; (3) that the existence of a "zealot" among the apostles proves the existence of the Zealots as a party before 66. But we have already seen that Josephus' statements about Judas indicate only that he set the example and provided the rationale for resistance to Rome, not that he founded the Zealot party, which Josephus never in any way connects with him. Consequently, the question whether Judas did or did not lead a considerable revolt is immaterial. As for the notion that the presence of a "zealot" among Jesus' disciples proves the existence of the Zealot party in Jesus' time, that is not an argument, but a bad pun. Kohler and Farmer, as we said, have demonstrated the wide popularity of the notion of zeal and of the ideal of "the zealot" as a private individual, imitating Phineas and Elijah. This popularity makes it quite unjustified to take an isolated reference to a "zealot" as evidence that the individual referred to was a member of the party. The term is used, for example, of Phineas in IV Macc. 18:12.

At least Brandon was aware of Lake's position. Cecil Roth, in *The Historical Background of the Dead Sea Scrolls*,³⁷ seemed never to have heard of it. He followed uncritically the common opinion, even though he made a special study of the conflict between the Masada *Sicarii* and the revolutionary forces in Jerusalem. In reporting this conflict Josephus — our only source — always refers to the Zealots as a Jerusalem group and never locates them in Masada. But Roth simply reversed the terminology and

105 n. 1, citing *Ant.* XVIII.1.16 (read 1.6; i.e., XVIII.23-25, discussed above); XX.v.2 (102); *War* II.117f.; 433-40; IV.158-161. Of these the last refers to the Zealots but not Judas or his descendants, the preceding ones to Judas and his descendants, but not to the Zealots. Nothing in any of them indicates a connection between the two groups. BRANDON's later publications on the subject, *The Zealots: the Jewish Resistance against Rome, A.D. 6-73*, *History Today* 15 (1965), 632ff., and *Jesus and the Zealots* (Manchester, 1967), 26ff., add nothing of importance to the discussion.

³⁶ Acts 5:37.

³⁷ Oxford, 1958, revised, augmented and republished as *The Dead Sea Scrolls, a new historical approach* (N.Y., 1965); I cite from this latter edition.

wrote that it was "obvious that the Zealots in Masada did not consider that they owed allegiance to the Jewish revolutionary authorities in Jerusalem." For this and for his identification of the Zealots with the *Sicarii* he was taken to task by Martin³⁸ and Zeitlin,³⁹ and justly so — his arguments were often fallacious. For example: ⁴⁰ the defenders of Masada were Zealots and held out to the end; the defenders of Machaerus, Herodium, and the forest of Jardes held out to the end; therefore they too were Zealots; therefore "it appears that" the Machaerus gang had authority over them. And so on.

When the inadequacy of his arguments, and the inconsistency of his conclusions with his evidence — i.e., with Josephus — were pointed out, Roth presented the amusing spectacle of a distinguished scholar trying to wiggle out of a distinguished blunder.⁴¹ He blamed Josephus for using terms inaccurately, and subsequent historians for making Zealots of all left-wing leaders of Jewish resistance (as he had been doing when caught in the act). He then established the (familiar) fact that the *Sicarii*, led by the descendants of Judas the Galilean, were presumably continuators of the "fourth philosophy"; he admitted that "how the Zealots came into the picture is somewhat less certain"; ⁴² but he identified the two groups on the basis of a single passage. In *War* II.444 Josephus speaks of Menahem, the head of the *Sicarii*, as taking with him, when he went into the Temple, τοὺς ζηλωτάς. This of course means τοὺς ζηλωτὰς αὐτοῦ — "his fanatical followers" — as Thackeray translated it.⁴³ It had so been understood in antiquity

³⁸ M. MARTIN, review of *The Historical Background of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, *Biblica* 40 (1959), 1048f.

³⁹ S. ZEITLIN, *The Idolatry of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, *JQR* 48 (1957-58), 256f.

⁴⁰ *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 16ff. That there were some Zealots among those who fled to Jardes (*War* VII.215, cp VI.92) does not prove that all were Zealots.

⁴¹ The Zealots in the War of 66-73, *Jnl. of Sem. Studies* 4 (1959), 332ff.

⁴² The Zealots in the War, 334.

⁴³ THACKERAY's words are, "his suite of armed fanatics" (*Josephus*, vol. II [London, 1927], *ad loc.*). ROTH's objection to this translation (The Zealots in the War, 332, n. 2) are grounded on the fact that it does not suit his theory. O. MICHEL and O. BAUERNFEIND (*Flavius Josephus, De Bello Judaico*, Bd. I [Bad Homburg, 1960], *ad. loc.*) agree with THACKERAY, "ein Schar bewaffneter Eiferer," but in their note they try to explain that both Menahem and his opponents (who were then about to murder him) were "Zeloten" — there had been a split in the party (but JOSEPHUS had neglected to mention it, no doubt because it was essential for an understanding of the events). DREXLER, *Untersuchungen*, 286, also agrees with THACKERAY; so does BAUMBACH, *Zeloten*, 733 (see below, n. 82).

by the Latin translator ⁴⁴ ("studiosos sui in armis habebat") and by the translator-author of Hegesippus.⁴⁵ And Josephus elsewhere consistently refers to Menahem's party as "the *Sicarii*," and uses "the Zealots" to refer to a quite different party which he never in any way connects with Menahem, Judas of Galilee, or any other of Judas' descendants. It is therefore almost incredible that in this one instance Josephus should have contradicted his regular usage by referring to the followers of Menahem as "the Zealots."

Roth, to bolster his mistranslation, appealed to *Ant.* XVIII.1ff., the already familiar passage attributing all the Jews' disasters to the teaching and example of Judas of Galilee. This he misunderstood as referring to the actions of the members of Judas' "fourth philosophy" and he claimed that the same things were said of the Zealots in *War* VII.268-70, therefore the "fourth philosophy" must have been the Zealots.⁴⁶ But *War* VII.268-70 says only that the Zealots excelled even the Idumaeans in lawlessness and were zealous emulators of all bad actions. There is nothing about their being responsible for all the nation's disasters. On the contrary the passage is part of a long digression (VII.253-274) in which Josephus lists and distinguishes the revolutionary parties. First, he insists, came the *Sicarii* (254, 262), who set the example of crime and cruelty; then John of Gischala went on to violation of the food laws (264); then Simon ben Giora added treachery and tyranny (265); then the Idumaeans, madness and anarchy (267); and finally the Zealots emulated every sort of evil and claimed, withal, to practice virtue (268f.). These distinctions are rhetorical and imprecise, but the intention to distinguish the five parties is clear, and the passage is decisive *against* that identification of the Zealots and the *Sicarii* for which Roth cited it.

⁴⁴ *Flavii Josephi . . . Opera*, ed. M. Weidmann (Coloniae, 1691), *War* II.xviii of the Latin text (p. 812). The title page attributes the Latin translation to Rufinus. On its quality see J. VON DESTINON, *De Flavi Josephi bello iudaico recensendo*, (Prog. Kiel, 1889), 15. "Quae (antiqua versio latina) sive Rufini Aquiliensis fuit, id quod vulgo creditur, sive Hieronymi, facta certe est ab homine et graecae et latinae linguae satis perito, quique et graeca verba plerumque recte interpretaretur et pro suae aetatis (IV c.) indole . . . satis eleganter latino sermone redderet."

⁴⁵ *Hegesippi qui dicitur historiae libri V*, ed. V. Ussani, vol. I (Vienna, 1932), Book II.x.6, "stipatoribus tamquam regio more comitantibus."

⁴⁶ Zealots in the War, 344.

As a further argument for the identification he adduced the fact that both the *kanna'im* (zealots) and the *sikarin* (*sicarii*) in rabbinic literature are murderers. Therefore, he argued, they must have been members of the same organization. This he thought proved by the fact that in one instance in *Abot de Rabbi Natan* text A has *kanna'im* where the parallel, text B, has *sikarin*.⁴⁷ But confusions of mediaeval copyists are not substantial evidence, and neither ζηλωτής nor *sicarius* nor *kanna'i* nor *sikari* can be taken as invariably indicating membership in an organization — there were plenty of private fanatics and assassins, and most rabbinic passages seem to refer to them.⁴⁸ From such — and even feeble⁴⁹ — arguments Roth went on to guess at implausible reasons why the term “Zealots” was not used of the “fourth philosophy” during the sixty years before the great revolt; he lightly passed over the murder of a lot of the *Sicarii* and their leader, Menahem, by the Jerusalem revolutionaries (whom he here identified with the Zealots) and he concluded, “However this may be . . . we must consider the *Sicarii* and the Zealots, whatever minor distinction there may have been between them, in close association.”⁵⁰ Murdering the leader of an opposing party, with all of his followers you can catch,⁵¹ indicates only a “minor distinction” — the opinion of a true liberal.

The rest of Roth's article is an amazing muddle of misinterpreted texts and baseless conjectures; it need not detain us.⁵²

⁴⁷ Zealots in the War, 334; the correct refs. are *ARN*, text \aleph , ch. 6, end; text \beth , ch. 13, middle (ed. S. Shechter, N.Y., 1945, 31f.).

⁴⁸ This is obvious for references to periods after the first revolt; for others, the same conclusion has been defended by B. SALOMONSEN, Some Remarks on the Zealots with Special Regard to the Term ‘Quanna'im’ in Rabbinic Literature, *NTS* 12 (1965–66), 168ff., but his arguments are even worse than Roth's. His article is rich in references to works on the Zealots by assorted cranks — a handy guide to what should not be read.

⁴⁹ *Numbers Rabba* 20.26 on Num. 25:7 represents Phineas, the model zealot, hiding the blade of his spear in his garment, so as to get past the guards of the man he intended to murder; the *Sicarii* were said to hide their swords in their garments (*Ant.* XX.164, etc.); ergo the Zealots were the *Sicarii*.

⁵⁰ Zealots in the War, 337.

⁵¹ *War* II.442–48.

⁵² Note: On p. 339 — Acts 21:38 is not intended to prove the Egyptian a *sicarius*, but the centurion an ignoramus. P. 340 — The priestly group which murdered Menahem was not “moderate,” it had begun the revolt. P. 341 — Once again there is no indication that the Masada *Sicarii* were ever Zealots, nor that the Jerusalem Zealots ever “adhered to the ‘Fourth Philosophy.’” P. 346 — “It is . . . impos-

In subsequent articles⁵³ he did not succeed in obfuscating the difficulties of his position. He did discover Hippolytus' ⁵⁴ confusion of (private?) zealots and *sicarii* with the Essenes⁵⁵ in an attempt to explain a reference to division of the Essenes into four grades. The reference stood in the old source which was also used by Josephus, but the explanation is peculiar to Hippolytus and is obviously a muddle of misunderstood hearsay, worthless as evidence for original identification of the groups it confuses.⁵⁶ The rest is pure speculation, insistence on whatever differences can be found between the Dead Sea documents and Philo's, Pliny's, and Josephus' accounts of the Essenes, and neglect or denial of whatever differences can be found between the same documents, Josephus' reports of the Zealots and the Pharisees, and the remarks about persons so called in rabbinic literature.

After Roth's speculations Hengel's *Zeloten*⁵⁷ seems a model of solid scholarship — that is the great German façade. When, however, one goes behind the monumental annotation and examines the actual structure, it turns out to be built on the old, unjustified assumptions: references to zealots and *sicarii* in rabbinic literature and the Gospels are taken as references to members of *the* Zealots and *the* *Sicarii* (the organizations);⁵⁸ the mistranslation

sible . . . to distinguish guiding principles," because he has given the Zealots a creed they never held and made Zealots of a body who never were so; the resultant muddle is explicable only by his determination to save what he could of his thesis and his face. P. 348 — That the groups in control of Masada, Machaerus, and Herodium are all called *λησται* does not prove them all one party; *λησται* is simply "robbers" and is applied by JOSEPHUS to all robber bands regardless of their principles, or lack of them, see HENGEL, *Zeloten*, 25ff. and esp. 35ff. vs. RENGSTORF, *λησταις*, *ThWb* IV (1942), 262ff.

⁵³ The Zealots — a Jewish Religious Sect, *Judaism* 8 (1959), 33ff.; The Zealots and Qumran: The Basic Issue, *Revue de Qumran* 2 (1959-60), 81ff.

⁵⁴ Or his immediate source's? Late second century A.D.?

⁵⁵ *Philosophumena* (= *Refutation of All the Heresies*) IX.26.

⁵⁶ See M. SMITH, The Description of the Essenes in Josephus and the *Philosophumena*, *HUCA* 29 (1958), 282f.

⁵⁷ M. HENGEL, *Die Zeloten* (Leiden, 1961; *Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Spätjudentums und Urchristentums*, I).

⁵⁸ *Zeloten*, 21f., etc. As to *sicarii*, however, there is an honorable exception, 50f., where HENGEL recognizes that the term has both a general and a specific use, but draws from this fact the unlikely conclusion that divisions in the liberation movement developed only in 66, which he thinks the earliest date for which JOSEPHUS' specific use of the term *sicarii* (to refer to the party led by Judas' descendants) can be demonstrated. But in *War* VII.253f. JOSEPHUS speaks of the *sicarii* as uniting to form a definite organization in the days of Judas the Galilean — and the

of *War* II.444 is again used — in defiance of all other evidence — to make the Zealots followers of Menahem; ⁵⁹ the worthless parallel of *kanna'im* and *sikarin* in *Abot de Rabbi Natan* A6 and B13 is again used to identify the parties; ⁶⁰ the disciple Simon “the zealot” is again evidence of an organization of Zealots in the time of Jesus (and the similar use of the term for Phineas in IV Macc. 18:12 is again neglected); ⁶¹ Hippolytus’ muddling of the sects is again evidence of their identity two centuries before his time.⁶² All these hoary howlers are embedded in a mass of learned data about even more dubious details which add nothing of importance to the discussion.

There is, however, one new argument: since the Zealots were the smallest of the revolutionary parties,⁶³ the fact that Josephus, when surveying the course of the revolt (in *War* VII.253–74), puts them last shows he attributed to them special importance, perhaps because he knew they had a larger role in the prehistory of the war than the size of their rump in Jerusalem would indicate.⁶⁴ This “perhaps” is pure conjecture, not justified by anything in the text. The passage declares that the order is one of increasing wickedness, with the Zealots coming at the end because, to the crimes of others, they added hypocrisy, by their claim to be zealots for the good deeds.⁶⁵ But along with this rhetorical order there is a chronological consideration — Josephus thrice and emphatically indicates that the *Sicarii* came first in order of time; ⁶⁶ it would be plausible therefore to suppose that the Zealots, placed at the end, became an organized and important group only late in the revolt.

presumption is strong that this was the organization founded by Judas and led by his descendants, cp. VII.262 (πρωτοι). If so, *Zeloten*, 67, is mistaken in making the party of Judas different from and prior to the *Sicarii*.

⁵⁹ *Zeloten*, 66; the alleged reason — that the adjective is here determined and without further specification — is false; the specification *αυτου* is indicated by the context and was understood by the ancient translators, see above at notes 44 and 45.

⁶⁰ *Zeloten*, 68.

⁶¹ *Zeloten*, 72f.

⁶² *Zeloten*, 73.

⁶³ *Zeloten*, 65, 2,400 men, *War* V.248ff., vs. 10,000 followers of Simon ben Giora, 6,000 of John of Gischala; and 5,000 Idumaeans.

⁶⁴ *Zeloten*, 67.

⁶⁵ *War* VII.263, 265, 267, 268–70.

⁶⁶ *War* VII.254, 262, 324. I see no reason to doubt that these passages refer to

Oblivious of this consideration, Hengel tries to show that Judas of Galilee's fourth philosophy was the single controlling organization behind all the revolutionary movement from 6 to 66.⁶⁷ Here again his basic argument (1) is familiar: misinterpretation of Josephus' statement that all the troubles began with them.⁶⁸ He also argues (2) that Judas' party had a clear succession of leadership through the whole period (but this does not indicate that it controlled the other groups); (3) that there are no traces of party conflict till late in the revolt (but this probably indicates that the early incidents were largely spontaneous, not managed by any organized party); (4) that Menahem's claim to become leader of the whole movement must have been based on his recognized authority over it (but this is false; it was based on his armed followers, and the other *revolutionists* did not recognize it); (5) that the murder of Menahem began the breakup of the movement (but Josephus says nothing of this, and he would have been delighted to report it); (6) that Josephus' failure to say more about Judas' sect is due partly to unwillingness, partly to ignorance (but ignorance is unlikely and unwillingness inexplicable; he would have been happy to blame most of the trouble on a single sect); (7) that the sect must have had a strong organization because two procurators had to resign themselves to negotiating with its leaders (but *Ant.* XX.215, 255, which Hengel cites, say that the procurators were bribed to coöperate; a terrorist organization can be effective, even though small; and even a large organization would not imply direction of the whole revolutionary movement). In sum, this collection of arguments is worthless.

Fortunately Hengel's book goes on to a full and richly documented exposition of theological positions which may plausibly be attributed to the Zealots or to the *Sicarii* or to both — and even if the attribution should be incorrect, the exposition would be valuable as an account of themes which were of great importance

the organization of the party and its attempt to start a revolt in the days of Judas of Galilee. DREXLER's supposition that they refer to otherwise unknown events of 66 or thereabouts (*Untersuchungen*, 286) seems to me groundless.

⁶⁷ *Zeloten*, 86ff., whence the following six arguments are derived.

⁶⁸ See above, following n. 30.

in the thought of first-century Judaism.⁶⁹ But all that concerns us here is the distinction and external history of the sects. To this Hengel returns in his last chapter,⁷⁰ an account of the development of the Zealot sect.

He recognizes that the many messianic and pietistic revolts of Herodian times were spontaneous and unconnected outbreaks, diverse in origin and nature, and showing no sign of long preparation or unified leadership,⁷¹ but he attributes to Judas of Galilee the introduction of the organization which "eventually succeeded in bringing almost all Palestinian Judaism into open revolt against Rome."⁷² For this theory he still has no substantial evidence. None of the major political and religious disturbances between the suppression of Judas in 6 and the rise of the *Sicarii* after 54 has any reported connection with Judas' party. Josephus has no hesitation about referring to this party; he reports that the two sons of Judas were crucified by Tiberius Alexander about 45,⁷³ so presumably the party continued existence and resistance, but achieved no results worth mentioning. The social conditions to

⁶⁹ In fact, the extensive documentation of all of these ideas makes it impossible to consider any of them characteristic of either the Zealots or the *Sicarii*. Presumably these sects were distinguished, as were the other Jewish sects of the time, less by their theological concepts than by the *details* of their halakic rulings and, of course, by personal and historical conflicts. On the differentiation of ancient Jewish sects (including Christianity) see M. SMITH, *The Dead Sea Sect in Relation to Ancient Judaism*, *NTS* 7 (1960-61), 347ff.

⁷⁰ His discussions of prophecy (235ff.), exegesis (240ff.), the wilderness (255ff.), and martyrdom and suicide (262ff.) involve a number of identifications of historical figures as Zealots, but these are purely conjectural and need not be refuted. In his account of the resistance to Rome as a "holy war" two errors on p. 289 may be mentioned: there is no evidence that Eleazar ben Dinai had any connection either with the Zealots or with the *Sicarii* (and JOSEPHUS would almost certainly have mentioned such a connection had any been known or suspected); the gathering into Jerusalem of bands from all over the country (*War* IV.135) did not precede but followed Menahem's putsch and death (*War* II.442-47) and Menahem cannot plausibly be represented as the leader of those who joined his murderers. HENGEL supposes (289, n. 5) that after Menahem's death "the war probably ceased to be a holy war." At least the survivors of Judas' sect seem to have done nothing substantial for it; they sat it out on Masada. But it is only then that the Zealots, as an organized group, appear. I believe that the ancient Jews would have considered any war in which they were engaged a holy war. Therefore the appearance of elements of holy war theory and practice is not evidence for the existence of any special organization; it testifies only to the common Old Testament background.

⁷¹ *Zeloten*, 324, 333ff.

⁷² *Zeloten*, 336.

⁷³ *Ant.* XX.102.

which Hengel attributes growth of the troubles — overtaxation of the peasantry, etc. — ⁷⁴ were of a sort to favor the development of local robber bands, which is just what Josephus says they did produce. They would not favor the growth of a single, organized, ideologically motivated party — the means of communication were lacking, the grievances were largely economic, there was no strong motive for submitting to a central organization, and there was natural disinclination to do so — each local leader had his own interests, and foremost among them would be his leadership. Consequently it is not surprising that there is no evidence of any major, country-wide resistance organization, even down to the beginning of the war. The *Sicarii* may have numbered several thousand, but hardly more — terrorist bands depend on tight secrecy, and as numbers increase, the difficulty of maintaining secrecy increases greatly. Individual prophets attracted large followings, but they were evidently individualistic lunatics, not representatives of any organization, and Josephus explicitly distinguishes them from the *Sicarii* as he does the *Sicarii* from the ordinary brigands.⁷⁵ Admittedly he sometimes calls all revolutionists “brigands,” and this is made an argument — with an undistributed middle — for supposing that all brigands must have been revolutionists and therefore Zealots and therefore *Sicarii*.⁷⁶ The fallacies are obvious. That robbers had the sympathy of the peasants of their neighborhood — often, no doubt, their relatives — proves nothing as to their ideology; ⁷⁷ the Mafiosi still do. That the *Sicarii* ever had very large support among the people seems unlikely — at least the populace of Jerusalem joined in murdering Menahem and his followers, and the followers who escaped made no attempt to raise the countryside but only fled to Masada.⁷⁸ Nor does any trace of any other more extensive revolutionary organization appear. When the Jerusalem leaders decide to orga-

⁷⁴ *Zeloten*, 341.

⁷⁵ *War* II.254, 258; to interpret II.264 as reporting the coöperation of an organization of *ληστροίκοι* with an *organization* of *γόνιτες* (! — so HENGEL, 239) is amusing. What the Greek means, however, is that the two sorts of fanatics, by their different actions, produced a common effect — that of stirring up the people.

⁷⁶ E.g., the interpretation of Mk. 14:48 to mean, “as against a Zealot,” *Zeloten*, 346.

⁷⁷ Contrast *Zeloten*, 357ff.

⁷⁸ *War* II.445–49.

nize resistance after the defeat of Cestius Gallus, there is no question of any organization with (or against) which they will work; they send out individuals of quite different backgrounds and affiliations to different parts of the country.⁷⁹ In particular, Josephus' two detailed accounts of his attempt to organize the war in Galilee contain no mention of either Zealots or *Sicarii*. Yet he would have been happy to shift all the blame he could onto them. Evidently neither group was of importance in that part of the country. These facts being so, Hengel's account of the development of the Zealot party is mainly a work of fantasy.

After Hengel's book appeared, Zeitlin pointed out again the facts as to Josephus' statements about Zealots and *Sicarii*,⁸⁰ Salomonsen attacked especially Hengel's connection of the Zealots with the Pharisees,⁸¹ and Baumbach reviewed the evidence, noticing the work of Lake, but following Zeitlin in supposing the Zealots were a Jerusalem priestly party, sharply opposed to the *Sicarii* organized by Judas of Galilee and mainly of Galilean peasant origin.⁸² This reconstruction neglected what Jackson had already pointed out,⁸³ that Judas' nickname, "the Galilean,"⁸⁴ probably indicated the district from which he had come to Jerusalem. Since he raised his revolt in opposition to the introduction of the census in 6 A.D. and the census at that time was introduced in the former kingdom of Archelaus — mainly Judea — the probability is that he worked in Judea, and that is the only place where the *Sicarii* are found — there is no good reason to connect them with Galilee.

Moreover, it is also somewhat unlikely that the Zealots were a Jerusalem priestly party. Here the evidence is somewhat less clear. The main passage is *War* IV.129–61, where Josephus de-

⁷⁹ *War* II.562–68. The *δημος* that was *gradually* won over to Eleazar was that of Jerusalem.

⁸⁰ S. ZEITLIN, Zealots and *Sicarii*, *JBL* 82 (1962), 395ff.

⁸¹ B. SALOMONSEN, Nogle synspunkter fra den nyere debat omkring Zeloterne, *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift* 27 (1964), 149ff.

⁸² G. BAUMBACH, Zeloten und Sikarier, *ThLz* 90 (1965), 727ff.; his Bemerkungen zum Freiheitsverständnis der zelotischen Bewegung, *ThLZ* 92 (1967), 257f., reports a popular development of the same ideas.

⁸³ J. FOAKES JACKSON, *Josephus and the Jews* (N.Y., 1930), 264.

⁸⁴ Cp. *War* II.118 (ἀνὴρ Γαλιλαῖος); 433 (τοῦ καλουμένου Γαλιλαίου); *Ant.* XVIII.4 (Γαυλανίτης ἀνὴρ ἐκ πόλεως ὀνομα Γάμαλα); 23 (ὁ Γαλιλαῖος); XX.102 (τοῦ Γαλιλαίου).

scribes at length the formation of the Zealot party. He says that when Vespasian, having conquered Galilee, began to move south in mid-winter of 67–68, the conflict in the southern towns between the advocates of resistance and the advocates of surrender became acute. The former, having most of the younger men, got the upper hand and began by looting their neighbors, then ravaged the countryside, then withdrew to Jerusalem, where they merged into one gang and eventually became strong enough to terrorize the city, arrest, imprison, and murder a large number of prominent citizens, get control of the Temple, and appoint a new high priest of their own choosing. They called themselves “the Zealots,” Josephus says, “on the pretense (ὡς) that they were zealous for good deeds, and not for the worst actions possible.”⁸⁵

From this time on Josephus frequently refers to this party. It had a complicated history, shifting its allegiance from leader to leader, sometimes allying with other parties, sometimes divided against itself, but — to judge from Josephus’ expressions — always a recognizable group. At the end of his story, therefore, when Josephus is looking back over the whole course of events, he distinguishes the Zealots clearly and places them last among the groups responsible for the disaster.⁸⁶

This much is clear — but there are three passages in *War* II where Josephus refers to zealots. What can we do with these? One, II.444, has already been disposed of — the term there certainly means “fanatical adherents.”⁸⁷ In the other two I think it means individual zealots. The type was becoming common in Jewish society — preachers had been praising it ever since Maccabean times; Roman taxation and misgovernment had produced much fanatical hatred which expressed itself as piety. In fact, the popularity of the ideal must be supposed to explain why a party should decide to call itself “*The Zealots*,” as Josephus says our heroes did.⁸⁸ Consequently it is likely that before the formation of the party there were many individual zealots in the city, and that these made up a considerable part of the following of Eleazar ben

⁸⁵ *War* IV.161.

⁸⁶ *War* VII.260–71.

⁸⁷ Above, at notes 43 and ff.

⁸⁸ *War* IV.160.

Simon (*War* II.564) and posed a considerable problem for leaders of the pro-Roman party, as Josephus says they did (*War* II.651). From leadership of a group including many such fanatics, Eleazar went on to play an important role in the Zealot party (*War* IV.225[?]; V.5, 10, 12, 21, 99, 250), but this does not prove that the party was generated from his followers or was, to begin with, mainly made up of them.

These earlier references to considerable groups of zealots therefore need not stand in the way of our accepting at its face value the account Josephus gives of the organization of *the* Zealots as a party. If so, the roots of that party were mainly in the Judean peasantry, and the facts that the first things they did were attack the city aristocrats, seize control of the Temple, and elect as High Priest a villager of their own sort — all these⁸⁹ fit perfectly with peasant piety. It is understandable, too, that they soon found themselves besieged by the city population, the *πλῆθος* or *δῆμος*.⁹⁰ If this interpretation is correct, Baumbach's sociological analysis was based on two false premises and may be dismissed.

The more recent works I have seen on the Zealots and *Sicarii*⁹¹ are not important for the purpose of the present paper — deter-

⁸⁹ *War* IV.138–61.

⁹⁰ *War* IV.162, 193–207.

⁹¹ On G. DRIVER, *The Judean Scrolls* (Oxford, 1965), see the crushing review of R. DE VAUX, *The Judean Scrolls. 2. Essenes or Zealots*, *NTS* 13 (1966), 89ff. C. DANIEL, *Esséniens, Zélotes, et Sicaires*, *Numen* 13 (1966), 88ff., is ignorant nonsense. On BRANDON, *Jesus and the Zealots*, see above, n. 35. (The argument that JOSEPHUS did not call the Zealots by their name because the name was an honorable one and he did not wish to admit their moral claims is refuted by the fact that he does call them by their name, often, and emphatically.) K. WEGENSET, *Zeloten*, *RE* R2 XVIII (1967), 2474ff., abbreviates HENGEL — a pity, since it will probably be quoted as Scripture by generations of graduate students. S. HOENIG, *The Sicarii in Masada*, *Traditio* 11 (1970), 5ff., has applied the opinions of ZEITLIN to the propaganda of YADIN, with devastating effect. V. NIKIPROWETZSKY's résumé of his lectures on the Zealots (quoted in A. DUPONT-SOMMER, *Histoire ancienne de l'orient*, *Annuaire*, École pratique des hautes études, IV^e section, 1969–1970, 132ff.) reports an attempt to compromise between the common opinion and that of ZEITLIN. N. was forced to suppose JOSEPHUS' terminology inaccurate; it is easier to sacrifice his theories than JOSEPHUS' statements. A concluding touch of humor was furnished by the *ex cathedra* comment of the *directeur d'études* (DUPONT-SOMMER) on "zealots" and "*sicarii*," "En fait, Josèphe emploie indifféremment l'un ou l'autre terme." H. KINGDOM, *Who Were the Zealots and Their Leaders in A.D. 66?* *NTS* 17 (1970), 68 ff. reviews the evidence in Josephus and corrects some details of LAKE's account but shows almost no knowledge of the rest of the discussion and bumbles to the usual incredible conclusion that the "zealots" of Menahem and their priestly murderers were one and the same party.

mination of the origin and relations of the two groups. Therefore the results of the preceding discussion may be summed up as follows:

From at least Maccabean times many Jews fostered the admiration of "zeal," and individuals undertook, or were thought, to be "zealots" on the models of Phineas and Elijah. This admiration and these models were presumably influential in shaping the resistance to direct Roman government, in which resistance the first prominent figure was Judas of Galilee. It seems unlikely, however, that the organization Judas founded — Josephus' "fourth philosophy" — called itself "the Zealots,"⁹² for had it done so, the same title could hardly have been taken, as it was in the revolt, by a quite different party. Whatever it called itself, Judas' sect survived, continued its opposition to the Romans, was led by his descendants, and in the mid-fifties, when Roman control of the country began to disintegrate, made itself notorious by a series of murders of distinguished individuals. These won this party the name of "the *Sicarii*," by which Josephus consistently refers to it from this time on, but we cannot suppose that every assassin (*sicarius*) in Palestine was therefore a party member. All that we know of the party locates it in Judea, where the census was introduced and where Judas of Galilee presumably staged his opposition. Neither Josephus' detailed accounts of events in Galilee nor the Galilean material in the Gospels shows any trace of it, and the notion that it organized all the resistance to the Romans is unsupported by evidence and refuted by the lack of evidence. It is also refuted by the course of events, for the party played only a minor role in the war against Rome. In 66 it allied with that portion of the priesthood which had started the revolt, and its alliance enabled them to get control of the city.⁹³ It also got control of Masada,⁹⁴ which enabled it to recruit and arm a considerable number of troops. Relying on these, its leader, Menahem, attempted to take control of Jerusalem, but the priests

⁹² Since we never hear what Judas' party did call themselves, it is not unlikely that the name was "Israel," that is, that they claimed to be the only true Israel and thought those who submitted to the Romans were apostates. This point I shall argue in another paper.

⁹³ *War* II.425ff.

⁹⁴ *War* II.408, cp. 433f.

who had started the revolution attacked him in the Temple and murdered him and most of his followers.⁹⁵ In this they had the help of the Jerusalem *demos*.⁹⁶ Most of the *Sicarii* fled to Masada and there did nothing of importance for the rest of the war, nor thereafter, until the place was taken by the Romans in 73. A few remained at large and some of these escaped to Egypt and Cyrene after the war, but there too they failed to secure general support and were handed over or betrayed to the Romans.⁹⁷

In all this history there is no evidence of any connection of these *Sicarii* with the Zealots. The latter, as a party, did not come into existence until the winter of 67–68 (more than a year after Menahem had been murdered and his followers driven out). There had, indeed, been many individual zealots in the city before this time; they had formed an important element in the following of Eleazar ben Simon,⁹⁸ and had posed a serious problem for those leaders who wanted a peaceful settlement with Rome,⁹⁹ but there is no clear evidence that they yet formed a definite party, and Josephus in *War* IV.130–61 gives a full description of the formation of the party in Jerusalem, as a result of the common interest of the rural resistance groups who took refuge in the city when the Romans moved south from Galilee, but not before. We may therefore plausibly see in the Zealot party the representatives of Palestinian, principally Judean, peasant piety, hostile alike to the rich of the city, the upper priesthood of the Temple, and of course the foreign rulers. In Jerusalem it was a relatively small but highly militant and effective party, which tried to strengthen itself by various alliances, played an important and determined role in the defense of the city, and was finally involved in its destruction.

⁹⁵ *War* II.433–48.

⁹⁶ *War* II.449.

⁹⁷ *War* VI.409–19; 437–50.

⁹⁸ *War* II.564.

⁹⁹ *War* II.651.