

Encratites

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Entry tags: Early Christianity, Early Christianity, Ancient Mediterranean, Religious Group

It's a popular early Christian movement characterized by the defense of chastity, rejection of marriage and perhaps a refusal of meat and wine. However, it's a poorly defined movement as there aren't clear boundaries of where and when it took place and who were its adherents. The name comes from the Greek word *egkrateia*, which means restraint from one's emotions and desires and self-control. This was considered a virtue in the Greco-Roman world, and examples of communities that abstained from sex and had strict diets are abundant already in pre-Christian communities. In Christian context, Encratism appears in second-century charges of heresists against Marcion, Saturninus and Tatian. But in addition to naming a heresy and identifying a specific group, encratism it is also understood as a general tendency of eschatological early Christian communities to refuse sex and sexuality. In the first scenario, we have the writings of Church Fathers, namely Irenaeus (185) and Clement of Alexandria (190), accusing Marcion and Saturninus of presenting marriage as corruption and Tatian of advancing these ideas. Irenaeus and Hippolytus (ca.225) also mention they abstain from eating living things (probably meat). Jerome (385) is the first Church Father to also add refusal of wine as an Encratite rule. According to these Fathers, Encratic rules were based on theological formulations about salvation. Tatian would've posited that Adam and Eve created separation from the Holy Spirit through the original sin putting humans and animals on the same level. As a consequence, humans acquired animalistic characteristics such as mortality and sex drive. The vegetarian diet and chastity were intended to lessen these characteristics and bring humans close to their original purity and proximity with the Holy Spirit. In the second scenario, it seems that from the second century throughout Late Antiquity, Christians from several sects adopted at least some form of continence or dietary restrictions. Whether Encratism was an actual movement or just a widespread practice is uncertain. Its interwoven with other movements is clear in the Edict of 382, for example. In the document, the Emperor Theodosius pronounces a death sentence to all that take the name of Encratites and affirms they are Manichaeans (another persecuted sect) in disguise. In scholarship, encratism has been used interchangeably with early Christian asceticism. It has also been linked to the Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of the Egyptians, the Apocryphal Acts, particularly in relation to chaste women, and passages of the New Testament (Luke 2:36; Matt 1:24; I Tim 4:1-4).



Date Range: 100 CE - 400 CE

Region: AncientMediterranean

Region tags: Asia Minor, Carthage, Phrygia, Greece, Egypt, Edessan region, North Africa, Iberia

North of Africa, Egypt, Palestine, Asia Minor and Iberia.

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

– Source 1: Tissot, Yves. "Encratism and the Apocryphal Acts." In *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Apocrypha*, edited by Andrew F. Gregory, C. M. Tuckett, Tobias Nicklas, and Jozef Verheyden, First edition.

Oxford Handbooks. Oxford ; New York, N.Y: Oxford University Press, 2015.

– Source 2: Petersen, William L. "Tatian the Assyrian." In *A Companion to Second-Century Christian "Heretics,"* edited by Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen, 125–58. *Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae*, v. 76. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2005.

– Source 3: Quispel, Gilles. "The Study of Encratism: A Historical Survey." In *Gnostica, Judaica, Catholica: Collected Essays of Gilles Quispel*, 329–64. *Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies*, v. 55. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2008.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Online sources for understanding this subject:

– Source 1 URL: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah05068>

– Source 1 Description: Koltun-Fromm, N. (2012). Encratism. *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*.

– Source 2 URL: <https://www.earlychristianwritings.com/apocrypha.html>

– Source 2 Description: Browse for the Apocryphal Acts, Gospel of the Egyptians and Gospel of Thomas.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Relevant online primary textual corpora (original languages and/or translations):

– Source 1 URL: <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103128.htm>

– Source 1 Description: English translation of Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.28

– Source 2 URL: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/hippolytus8.html>

– Source 2 Description: English translation of Hippolytus, *The Refutation of all Heresies* Book 8 Ch.8

– Source 3 URL: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/apocrypha.html>

– Source 3 Description: Browse for English translations of the Apocryphal Acts, Gospel of the Egyptians and Gospel of Thomas.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

General Variables

Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Is the cultural contact competitive:

– Yes

Notes: From the 2nd to 4th century, several Church Fathers (Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus of Rome, and Jerome) accuse Encratites of being heretical. In heretical discourse, writers oppose and slander others in order to affirm themselves as morally superior. Scholars suspect this is what happens here. In fact, recent scholarship (Knust, Jennifer. *Abandoned To Lust: Sexual Slander and Ancient Christianity*) questions if encratism was actually a distinct group at all or if this is just an impression we get from heretical speech that accused some leaders of encratite tendencies.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Is the cultural contact accommodating/pluralistic:

– Yes

Notes: Even though Christianity is a monotheistic religion, recent research has been more and more open to the idea that new converts kept at least some degree of engagement with local beliefs and rituals.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does the religious group have a general process/system for assigning religious affiliation:

– No

Notes: Overall Christian religious affiliation depended heavily on baptism and here the adoption of a chaste lifestyle and specific diet are important but it's hard to pinpoint if it merely showed devotion or were absolute requirements.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

– Yes

Notes: Early Christians at large were focused on conversion and those deemed as founders or leaders of the heresy of Encratism (Tatian, Marcion and Saturninus) were apologists. That is, they elaborated theological discourses to convince others of their viewpoint. Additionally, texts usually linked to Encratism such as the Apocryphal Acts and the Gospel of Thomas portray religious leaders and new converts trying to convert pagans.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Is proselytizing mandated for religious professionals:

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Is proselytizing mandated for all adherents:

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does the religion have official political support

– No

Notes: Encratite practices usually go hand in hand with denying wealth. This is clear in Tatian's "Oratio" and in popular texts read by scholars as showing encratite tendencies. Moreover, at least from the late second century onwards, it developed apart from Catholicism, which later grew in Roman Imperial support. That being said, the practice was so widespread that it's impossible to make generalizations. It's possible it counted with local political support in some cases.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Is there a conception of apostasy in the religious group:

– No

Notes: Early Christianity framed itself as an exclusive religion and required that converts abandoned previous practices, even though there may be some tolerance and accommodation. One of the Apocryphal Acts' main themes is the ideological conflict between chaste Christians and Roman authorities that defend marriage for young converted virgins.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– Field doesn't know

Notes: It's particularly hard to estimate the number of adherents to Encratism because it was widespread and interwoven with other movements. In fact, because the primary direct sources on Encratism are all heresists writing against it, scholars ponder if this was ever a defined movement, in which people would self-identify as members, or if it was more of a common practice. In any case, we do know encratite ideas were widespread given its presence all over the Ancient Mediterranean. In "The Study of Encratism: A Historical Survey", Gilles Quispel associates its beginning with Jewish Christians, who took these ideas from Palestine to Alexandria, where they also flourished within Catholic circles before the end of the second century. Then, they grew towards the East, achieving the North of Africa, Greece, Syria, and later the Iberian Peninsula.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (% of sample region population, numerical):

– Field doesn't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also “oral scriptures” (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Are they written:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Are they oral:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Is there a story (or a set of stories) associated with the origin of scripture:

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– No

Notes: Places of reunion could be churches, houses and public spaces like markets or associations. Encratism (understood broadly as early Christian asceticism) is also linked to early monasticism in Egypt and Syria. However, there's no archeological evidence of monumental architecture particularly

linked to them.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Are there different types of religious monumental architecture:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Is iconography present:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Beliefs

Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer “no” only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Spirit-mind is conceived of as having qualitatively different powers or properties than other body parts:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Spirit-mind is conceived of as non-material, ontologically distinct from body:

– Yes

Belief in afterlife:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Is the spatial location of the afterlife specified or described by the religious group:

– Yes

↳ Afterlife in specified realm of space beyond this world:

– Yes

Reincarnation in this world:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Field doesn't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Are grave goods present:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

Notes: This may change according to local practices but overall Christian burials happened in cemeteries, catacombs or simply reserved natural spaces like caves.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ As cenotaphs:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ In cemetery:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Family tomb-crypt:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities):

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Other formal burial type:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

Notes: In general, we see the presence of the Holy Trinity (Father, Son and Spirit). Texts that elaborate on cosmogony, like Tatian's *Oratio*, also explain that a perfect high god (the Father) had created angels and the demiurge responsible for the creation of this world.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god is anthropomorphic:

– Yes

Notes: The Canon isn't formed until the 4th century but groups worked with a collection of texts that often included the Torah. The high god is conceived as personal and capable of emotions like humans.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god is a sky deity:

– Yes

Notes: The realm of God is often described in a celestial language. Tatian's Oratio, for instance, speaks of the creator as a "celestial Word."

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god is chthonic (of the underworld):

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god is fused with the monarch (king=high god):

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The monarch is seen as a manifestation or emanation of the high god:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god is a kin relation to elites:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god has another type of loyalty-connection to elites:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god is unquestionably good:

– Yes

Notes: The problem of evil was an important issue to Gnostics and to Tatian. In their view, God (the Father) is unquestionably good and was the only entity in the beginning. Then, there was a partition that created a demiurge (the Word) responsible for the creation of the world, humanity and for allowing evil works.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Other feature(s) of supreme high god:

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god has knowledge of this world:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme god's knowledge is restricted to particular domain of human affairs:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region:

– No

Notes: It's an omnipresent god.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is unrestricted within the sample

region:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god's knowledge is unrestricted outside of sample region:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god can see you everywhere normally visible (in public):

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home):

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives):

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god knows your basic character (personal essence):

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god knows what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight):

– Yes

Notes: Only a few humans will be saved and receive eternal life, those who receive the spirit of the revelation of God and become properly religious.

Predestination defines destiny and the afterlife;

Specific to this answer:
Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god has other knowledge of this world:
– I don't know

Specific to this answer:
Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god has deliberate causal efficacy in the world:
– Yes

Specific to this answer:
Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god can reward:
– Yes

Specific to this answer:
Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god can punish:
– Yes

Specific to this answer:
Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god has indirect causal efficacy in the world:
– Yes

Specific to this answer:
Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god exhibits positive emotion:
– I don't know

Specific to this answer:
Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god exhibits negative emotion:
– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god possesses hunger:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Is it permissible to worship supernatural beings other than the high god:

– Yes

Notes: There are other supernatural beings worthy of praise, such as good angels. Worship may be a strong word but there is a sense of devotion to other supernatural entities as well.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god possesses/exhibits some other feature:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ The supreme high god communicates with the living:

– I don't know

Notes: God communicates with humans beings through revelation, dreams, and ecstasies. But these come through the Spirit, not the Father (the highest god).

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– No

Notes: Although there isn't the idea of reincarnation or that previously human spirits are somehow still present, there are some texts linked to encratism that show resurrection or conversation with the dead. In the Acts of Thomas, for example, the apostle ressurects dead girls with prayer. In the Acts of Paul and Thecla, the Queen has a vision/dream with a deceased daughter who asks for intercession so she can be moved to a better place in the afterlife.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

– Yes

Notes: We have angels, the Holy Spirit as a helper that enables many visions, ecstasies and revelations, and a demiurge that created this world and by creating it, enabled evil.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ These supernatural beings can be seen:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ These supernatural beings can be physically felt:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge of this world:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge restricted to particular domain of human affairs:

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge restricted to (a) specific area(s) within the sample region:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge unrestricted within the sample region:

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have knowledge unrestricted outside of sample region:

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see you everywhere normally visible (in public):

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see you everywhere (in the dark, at home):

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings can see inside heart/mind (hidden motives):

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings knows your basic character (personal essence):

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings know what will happen to you, what you will do (future sight):

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have other knowledge of this world:
– Yes [specify]: Demiurges and angels know the history of creation and of the end of times.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:
– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:
– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit positive emotion:
– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit negative emotion:
– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ These supernatural beings possess hunger:
– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ These supernatural beings possess/exhibit some other feature:
– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Mixed human-divine beings are present:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Organized by kinship based on a family model:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Organized hierarchically:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Power of beings is domain specific:

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Other organization for pantheon:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



There is supernatural monitoring of prosocial norm adherence in particular:

Prosocial norms are norms that enhance cooperation among members of the group, including obviously “moral” or “ethical” norms, but also extending to norms concerning honouring contracts and oaths, providing hospitality, coming to mutual aid in emergencies, etc.

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Supernatural beings care about taboos:

– Yes

Notes: In Tatian's view, which also lend itself to Gnostic readings, one's behavior regarding food and sex would define purity and salvation.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Food:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Sacred space(s):

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Sacred object(s):

– Field doesn't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Supernatural beings care about other:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of coreligionists:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other religions:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about murder of members of other polities:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about sex:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Adultery:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Incest:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Other sexual practices:

– Yes [specify]: Chastity and virginity

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about lying:

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about honouring oaths:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about laziness:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about sorcery:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about non-lethal fighting:

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about shirking risk:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about disrespecting elders:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about gossiping:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about property crimes:

– Yes

Notes: References are specific about denying wealth and leaving property behind or donating it for communal profit.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about proper ritual observance:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about performance of rituals:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about conversion of non-religionists:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about economic fairness:

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about personal hygiene:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Supernatural beings care about other:

– Yes [specify]: Modesty, which means dressing simply, rejecting wealth and, for women, avoiding public speech. Other common topics are baptism, fasting and marriage.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Is the messiah's whereabouts or time of coming known?

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Coming in unspecified time in near future:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Is the messiah's purpose known:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



↳ Other purpose:

– Yes [specify]: According to Tatian, to save humanity from pain by rejoining the nature of two spirits (soul and the image/likeness of god) that was split in the creation. The purpose of the messiah is very much debated in these centuries, particularly among Jewish Christians that are divided on whether he is a political or priestly figure or both.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Is an eschatology present:

– Yes

Notes: Eschaton was expected in this lifetime or in the near future. It also helped explain the rejection of marriage and bearing new children.

↳ Eschaton in this lifetime:

– Yes

↳ Eschaton at unspecified time in near future:

– Yes

Norms and Moral Realism

Are general social norms prescribed by the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: The group is particularly against marriage which was the main social institution in the Greco-Roman world. They're also against paying tribute to other gods which wasn't seen as a simple issue of faith and personal choice in the Greco-Roman world but as civic duty. Whoever enraged the gods could be putting all society in danger of retaliation. On the ideological conflicts regarding marriage, specifically, see Cooper, Kate. *The Virgin and the Bride: Idealized Womanhood in Late Antiquity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1996.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Is there a conventional vs. moral distinction in the religious group:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Practices

Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require celibacy (full sexual abstinence):

– No

Notes: Chastity is one of the main issues in Encratism. Leaders seem to have recommended them to all but there was some conflict on how it would work for married people. The Gospel of Thomas, for example, suggests that only bachelors can be saved. The Apocryphal Acts of Thomas displays chaste couples among the best disciples of the Apostle. Clement of Alexandria (Strom III 82.6) discusses Tatian's alleged view that since the coming of Christ marriage has been abolished. This recommendation is rooted in an eschatological view that awaits for the second come of Christ shortly, making children dispensable and the need for purity as an urgent matter. In such texts, the view of the beginning of the world is that Adam, the first human, was created as androgynous being and that the Word had separated Adam's spirits into spirit and soul or male and female, and created Eve. When the female enters, mortality and death come into the world but Jesus is expected to give eternal life back and reunite the two spirits or spirit and soul into one. This is expected to happen soon, and therefore, bringing more humans into the despair of this life is pointless. The language of Jesus undoing the work of the female, and of mothers giving "death", not life, to children is common.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does membership in this religious group require constraints on sexual activity (partial sexual abstinence):

– Yes

Notes: Although heresists emphasize the radical abstinence among Encratities, scholars believe there were degrees of adoption of this principle and that some type of moderate Encratism simply praised virginity and conjugal chastity and condemned second marriage by widows without enforcing these rules.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Monogamy (males):

– Yes

Notes: Singlehood was preferred but if married people wanted to adhere encratic practices, they were expected to maintain loyalty to each other.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Monogamy (females):

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Other sexual constraints (males):

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Other sexual constraints (females):

– Yes

Notes: Avoiding children was encouraged and is commonly presented as an opportunity to women foster autonomy and create a spiritual family rather than a birth family. There was much control of female sexuality and the idea that a woman, to become worthy, should become male through acquiring male virtues and practicing chastity.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does membership in this religious group require fasting:

– Yes

Notes: There seems to be a practice of fasting before baptism.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does membership in this religious group require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods):

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does membership in this religious group require permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does membership in this religious group require painful physical positions or transitory painful wounds:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– Yes

Notes: Encratite tendencies value self-sacrifice through torture and martyrdom in the hands of Roman authorities.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of property/valuable items:

– Yes

Notes: Evidence isn't specific but Tatian argues strongly against wealth (*De Oratio*) and novelistic texts such as the apocryphal acts show people disposing of goods to follow an itinerant and simple lifestyle.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



To other in-group members:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ To out-groups:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Destroyed:

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Other:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of time (e.g., attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.):

– No

Notes: Attendance to meetings were part of some encratic groups, like Priscillians, but there is nothing particular about it that differs from other Christian groups.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does membership in this religious group require physical risk taking:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does membership in this religious group require accepting ethical precepts:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does membership in this religious group require marginalization by out-group members:

– Yes

Notes: Encratism is defined first and foremost a heresy, and many Church Fathers (Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus, Jerome) oppose it. However, in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, it seems to have

been a widespread movement within the Catholic church in Alexandria (E. Peterson, "Die Spiritualität des griechischen Physiologos", Byzantinische Zeitschrift 1954).

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does membership in this religious group require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household):

– No

Notes: Baptism was an important ritual.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals: i.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale "ceremonies" and "festivals."

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Are extra-ritual in-group markers present:

E.g. special changes to appearance such as circumcision, tattoos, scarification, etc.

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does the group employ fictive kinship terminology:

– Yes

Notes: Christians, in general, adopt the language of a spiritual family: God, the Father; Jesus, the son; and fellow Christians as brothers and sisters. In addition to this, Tatian, in *Oratio*, highlights God's firstborn: the Word and/or (his language here is confusing) the fallen angel that has encouraged the original sin.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Fictive kinship terminology universal:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

|

↳ Fictive kinship terminology widespread:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

↳ Fictive kinship terminology employed but uncommon:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Society and Institutions

Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

– An empire

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Welfare

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized famine relief:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Is famine relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized poverty relief:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Is poverty relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Is institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Is formal education available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.



Is extra-religious education open to both males and females:

– Yes

Notes: Elite women would receive only basic education whereas only elite boys would advance to advanced rhetorical education.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Bureaucracy

Do the group's adherents interact with a formal bureaucracy within their group:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Do the group's adherents interact with other institutional bureaucracies:

– Yes

Notes: As part of the Roman Empire, they dealt with bureaucracies involving work, trade, education, and politics.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Is public food storage provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: The Roman Empire and local leaders made grain stocks available to the population at large on specific occasions such as famine and war.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does the religious group in question provide water management (irrigation, flood control):

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Is water management provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does the religious group in question provide transportation infrastructure:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Is transportation infrastructure provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: The Roman Empire had a transportation system between cities that could be used by the population at large.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Taxation

Does the religious group in question levy taxes or tithes:

– I don't know

Notes: It's possible they collected tithes or offerings, as other Christians, but no particular information is given in primary sources.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Are taxes levied on the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: The Roman Empire collected taxes from citizens throughout all the Empire.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized police force provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized judges:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized judicial system provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: As other Christians, they were under Roman Imperial rules and dealt with official persecutions for religious betrayal (in case of denying to pay tribute to Roman Gods) and, in extreme cases, martyrdom.

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does the religious group in question enforce institutionalized punishment:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Are the group's adherents subject to institutionalized punishment enforced by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Does the religious group in question have a formal legal code:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Are the group's adherents subject to a formal legal code provided by institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Warfare

Does religious group in question possess an institutionalized military:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Do the group's adherents participate in an institutionalized military provided by institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Are the group's adherents protected by or subject to an institutionalized military provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Written Language

Does the religious group in question possess its own distinct written language:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Is a non-religion-specific written language available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Is a non-religion-specific written language used by the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: Members used several local (Hebrew, Aramaic, Coptic) and Imperial languages (Greek and Latin). After the second century, Encratism seems to have flourished in Syrian Christianity (Syriac) and in the Iberian Peninsula (Basque and perhaps Gallaecian and Lusitanian)

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Calendar

Does the religious group in question possess a formal calendar:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Is a formal calendar provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– I don't know

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Is food provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– No

Specific to this answer:

Region: Ancient Mediterranean.

Bibliography

General References

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Manichaean Studies.

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