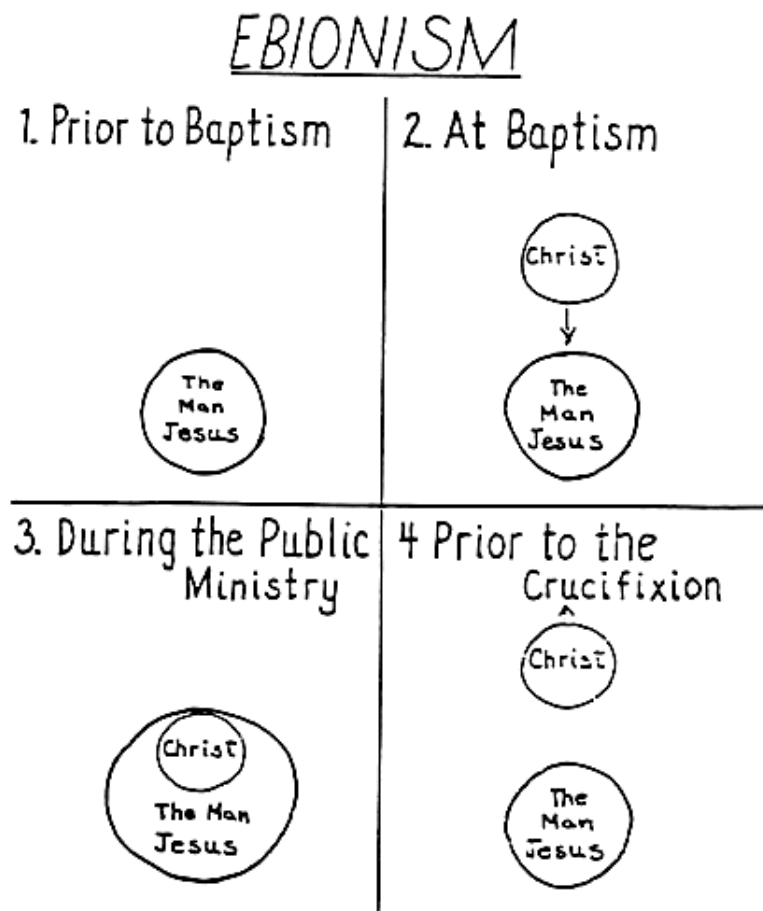


C. Aberrations from the Doctrine

1. The Ebionites

This Jewish sect of Christianity flourished in the second century. Its adherents refused to recognize Paul's apostleship (they regarded him as an apostate from the Law), and demanded that all Christians should submit to circumcision. They held that Jesus was the natural son of Joseph and Mary, and that he so completely fulfilled the Law that God chose him to be the Messiah. However, Jesus did not become the Christ until the Holy Spirit descended upon him at his baptism. Thus the Divine Spirit abiding in the man Jesus constitutes the divinity of Jesus Christ.



2. The Elkesaites

This Jewish sect of Christianity also flourished in the second century. Its adherents were theosophic Jews who also rejected Christ's virgin birth, and who observed circumcision, the sabbath, repeated ceremonial washings, and a strict asceticism. They also practiced magic and astrology, and held secret doctrines respecting the observance of the Law. They rejected the deity of Christ, and spoke of him as a higher spirit or an angel, perhaps even the highest archangel. It may well be that the Epistles to the Colossians and Timothy refer to this heresy.