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Was Jewish Proselytism a Factor In the Rapid Acceptance of Christianity In the Graeco-Roman World?

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for ordination

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my dear parents, Frank and Roberta Goldstein, who nurtured my Judaism and set me on the path of helping to lead our people. The seeds of my dreams have been sown with their love.

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Digest

The rapidity of Christianity's successful incursion into the Graeco-Roman world is difficult to explain. This thesis examines whether Hellenistic Judaism may have provided a bridge for Christianity's penetration into the Diaspora. Specifically, the proselytizing movement of first century Jewry is examined for evidence of interaction with early Christian missionizing and early Christian converts. We hold that there is good reason to believe that Jewish proselytism helped prepare the proselytizing path for early preachers of Christianity in the Graeco-Roman world.

Chapter I examines the significant religious attitudes of the Hellenistic world in the first Christian century. In Chapter II, we focus on the nature of Hellenistic Judaism: the socio-political status of Jews in Graeco-Roman lands, the make-up of the Jewish communities, as well as the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in the Diaspora at this time. With this background we proceed, in Chapter III, to examine the phenomenon of Jewish proselytism in the Hellenistic world. Here we concentrate on the evidence our sources furnish concerning proselytizing methods, locales of operation and the newly-won adherents to Hellenistic Judaism. Chapter IV addresses our central problem: Was Jewish proselytism a factor in the rapid acceptance of Christianity in the Graeco-Roman world?

The evidence provided by our sources gives us good cause to conclude that early Christianity's missionary success was significantly indebted to the activity of Jewish proselytism.

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this thesis without his supervision, suggestions, and inspiration. Because of his high standards, I take great pride in the culmination of this work. He has my deepest respect and appreciation.

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CHAPTER I

The Hellenistic World in the First Christian Century: An Overview of the Significant Religious Attitudes

Any investigation of Jewish and Christian proselytism in the first Christian century must have as its foundation an understanding of the spectrum of contemporaneous religious attitudes in the Graeco-Roman world. Many of these attitudes were significantly affected by the process of Hellenization commencing with the rule of Alexander (336-323 B.C.E.).

The policies of Alexander effected sweeping changes throughout the Mediterranean region. As a ruler over various populations of diverse philosophic and religious orientations, he sought to unify them into one culture, the "oikoumene": "The domain of a Hellenism diffused over an area from Italy to India, possessed of many states but of a single set of cultural ideals and a single language innocent of dialectical variations."[1] Obviously, Greek, as the universal language, was responsible in a fundamental way for the progress of unification; it facilitated written and oral interchange between peoples formerly of different linguistic backgrounds but now part of one cosmopolitan community. Sophisticated highway systems under the Greeks and, later, the Romans allowed for and encouraged more extensive travel between countries.[2] Sea-routes as well as roadways facilitated interstate commerce. Economic prospects in neighboring parts of the empire motivated considerable resettlement of those engaged in business. Increased communication and travel between peoples led not only to commercial-

economic intercourse but cultural-religious interchange as well.

This "revolution" of external factors was bound to affect the internal disposition of the individual. Amid such flux in society at large, amid exposure to new customs and ideas, one's beliefs could not long remain stationary. A traveler from one city to another naturally encountered many a new religious cultus, while, conversely, the influence of foreigners as they settled in a new area slowly infiltrated components of the local cult. This interchange among various religions, the borrowing and adoption of certain aspects of a foreign cult after its transplantation by new settlers, is known as religious syncretism.[3]

Yet what was there about this physical unification of the empire which jarred the complacency and sufficiency of the local religious framework? What were the underlying factors which disposed people to turn to new religious modes of expression?

The onset of cosmopolitanism was disorienting for the individual. Heretofore he possessed a sense of "security in the comparative isolation of such a time that the larger world does not afford, a confidence born of the very ignorance of all the possibilities of misery and bliss which the great world outside contains."[4]

This situation is analogous to that of a small town boy who goes to "the big city" for the first time, and is bewildered by the noise, the lights, and the towering immensity of this new world. Before exposure to the effects of the cosmopolitan process, the individual derived an inner confidence in being able to touch the limits of his existence; by the first century B.C.E., however, the walls of local tradition had crumbled under the weight of a broad and dominating empire. People felt bereft in a sea of change where the government, located far

off in Rome, loomed as an impersonal guardian of the Empire.

Further anxiety accrued from the addition of new and unfamiliar divinities, belonging to the pantheon of other cults, to those capricious spirits which were part of one's local habitat. "Every unscientific age knows its fears in the face of the forces of the universe, its helplessness in the grip of what are regarded as the live, personal . . . and too often malevolent powers, that surround men on every side. . . . Men feel themselves surrounded on every hand by mysterious influences with which they must learn to cope in order to avoid disaster."[5] Combine these fears of daily life with the dread of the finality of death and one can anticipate as well as understand the great longing for immortality.

People became more conscious of their individual needs precisely in response to a world which, stressing a commonality amongst people, effectively effaced individual differences. In other words, the individual's concerns grew in direct proportion to their de-emphasis in the "official" culture of the Empire.[6]

Such developments demanded readjustment. Increasingly, people looked to the future to justify the unsettled situation of the present. In the search for security and individual identity, they turned to smaller more personal groups to satisfy their needs. Reflections of these desires and needs emerge in the religious cults which became popular at that time.

A. The Mystery Cults

As early as the seventh century B.C.E., the so-called mystery cults had begun to invade the western world. Their growth increased

sharply following the conquests of Alexander and the unification of his empire. By the first century C.E. these cults were to be found virtually throughout the Roman Empire.[7] Due to the changing social conditions of the Graeco-Roman world, the pantheons of Greece and Rome had, to a large extent, lost their position of superiority in the minds of the people. The way was thus paved for the incursion of more "promising" religious elements to fill the religious void and fulfill individual expectations.

One of the earliest of these cults was that of Dionysus, the Thracian god of vegetation. In this cult the god was seen as being fused into a sacrificial animal, the living flesh of which was torn and eaten in order that the devotees might take the god into themselves. This is in keeping with the myth of Dionysus who, in the form of a bull, was captured and eaten by the Titans. His heart, however, was rescued by Athena and fed to Zeus who subsequently gave birth to a new Dionysus. Zeus, in anger, destroyed the Titans with a thunderbolt. It was from out of their ashes that man emerged. Because of man's composition from the Titans he was sinful. However, he maintains a divine spark through the god devoured by the Titans.

The Phrygians, coming from Thrace at an early period, had identified their god with the gods of their new country.[8] Thus Attis takes on the main characteristics of Dionysus. He, too, is the god of vegetation and is united with the goddess Cybele. The myth tells of the unfaithfulness of Attis to Cybele, the "Great Mother of the gods." After she kills the god's lover, Attis, in madness, dies of self-emasculation. However, Cybele restores him to life through her mourning and divine powers. These powers become manifested for the devotees in the "Mysteries of Attis."[9]

Thus, in both cults we see the idea of resurrection, of rising again to life from a torturous death. In commemorating and reliving this act of renewal on the part of Dionysus and Attis, the adherents to these cults worked themselves into a frenzy: "The adherents of Dionysus, mainly women, wandered on mountain sides. They were called by various names such as Maenads and Bacchae, indicating their spiritual union with the god. In ecstasy they danced and rent animals and devoured the flesh raw. . . ."[10] In the cult of Attis and Cybele we find: ". . . the worshippers yield to a frenzy of sympathetic grief, beating and cutting themselves. The priests and initiates sometimes in the excitement of the moment mutilated themselves, thus participating in the experience of the god and thereby receiving his spirit."[11]

We have in the cult of Attis the rite of the taurobolium. In this ceremony a pit is dug, into which the initiate descends, and a grating is placed over it. Then a bull, symbolizing Attis, is killed and its blood allowed to pour down upon the initiate. Emerging in the blood of the god, he too is greeted as a god for he has been "baptized" in the blood of Attis. Inscriptions concerning this rite say that the initiate "rises to everlasting life" (<u>in aeternum reratus</u>).[12]

We find in these two cults several "drawing" factors. They both promote the attainment of immortality through the mysteries wherein the initiates participate in the resurrection of the deities. In the cult of Dionysus, salvation is derived from the act of eating flesh; in the cult of Attis, through baptism in blood. These powerful sacraments are remarkably similar to their counterparts later developed by the Church (not to mention the idea of a resurrected lord found in both). For the moment, however, we concern ourselves with the basic religious ideas

and attitudes of the Hellenistic world as gleaned from the popular mystery religions.

We find in the Eleusian Mysteries the attainment of immortality through the experiential rites of Demeter. The myth deals with the return of Persephone to her mother Demeter after having been carried away to the underworld by Pluto. The religious rites involve themselves with Demeter's sorrow due to her loss and her subsequent joy at the return of her daughter.

Plutarch describes the experience as follows:

> The soul at the moment of death undergoes the same impression as the initiate into the great mysteries. A march full of terror, in which initiates were led across labyrinths, hearing strange and terrible sounds--a vivid portrayal of the underworld that the initiates might share in the sorrow of the goddess mother. Then, as her joy succeeds her sorrow, so the pain of the initiate is transformed into delight, as, no longer in the terrors of death but in places of dazzling light and ecstasy, he beholds the gods and listens to their voices.[13]

Hence, we find the "rebirth" of the initiate through participation in the mystery of Demeter.

The Egyptian mysteries of Osiris and Isis are to be noted for they had syncretistic influence in Alexandria on the god Serapis. Most importantly, they underscore the desire for salvation through belief in a savior-god who dies and is restored to life. Osiris, slain by his brother, is placed in a coffin and laid in the Nile. Isis, wife of Osiris, finds the coffin only to have it stolen by the brother who cuts the body of Osiris into pieces and scatters them. Isis, however, gathers the pieces and restores the god. We also find that Osiris is presented as the sun-god who dies every evening but is resurrected each day.

Like Dionysus and Attis, Osiris is a god of vegetation while the role of Isis is much like that of Cybele in that both goddesses help restore the gods to life. The Greeks since the time of Herodotus identified Dionysus with Osiris and Demeter with Isis.[14] Hence, these syncretistic tendencies point up all the more the mutual religious concerns and predilections of the people in the Graeco-Roman world.[15]

It was Ptolemy Soter (323-283 B.C.E.) who founded the cult of Serapis at Alexandria, introducing a hellenized version of the Egyptian religion. F. Cumont calls it a "clever political idea," on the part of the Ptolemies, "to unite in one common worship the two races inhabiting the kindgom . . . to further a complete fusion."[16]

Hence, in Serapis the Egyptians recognized their savior-god. In the transformation of Osiris to the cult of Serapis, however, the cultic language became Greek. The images of the god were carved by Athenian sculptors. Thus, "the Ptolemies had given their new religion a literary and artistic shape that was capable of attracting the most refined and cultured minds."[17] The Greeks were also more receptive to Serapis due to his close identification with the mysteries of Dionysus which had been part of Greece for a long time.

Hence, we find, familiarity breeds acceptance. This becomes increasingly important as we examine those elements of Judaism and early Christianity to which pagans initially could relate out of conscious or subconscious recognition of these familiar traits. It also stands to emphasize that where Judaism did not prove familiar and syncretistic there was needed a stronger attraction in order for Jewish proselytism to be successful.[18]

We now turn our attention to the Persian god Mithra who differed from the gods already mentioned in that he was an "astral deity" and not connected with the soil or vegetation. The myth centers around Mithra's capture and slaying of a bull. (Here we find the struggle of the hero-god.) In his battle with the bull, Mithra plunges his knife into the beast, causing herbs and plants to come forth for the benefit of man. Because of his earthly trials, he acquires an empathy with mankind which leads to his role as guardian of mortals when he ascends to heaven. Mithra is the god of light who never actually experiences death. The cult had initiation rites in the mountain caves with the use of bright lights and a retelling of the trials of Mithra.

We find in Mithraism a more highly developed religious and ethical concept. It made of evil a rival god, introducing dualism as a fundamental principle in religion.[19] The struggle between good and evil underscored the ethical element of this cult. As C. Bailey points out, "the unique appeal to the common man was that in Mithraism there was a morality with a theological and religious basis. For the human race too had its part to play in this age-long struggle. . . ."[20] Therefore, in fighting the evil influence in the world a devotee was serving his god.

It should be noted that the Magna Mater of Pessinus in Asia Minor also attained a great following throughout the Roman Empire. She was identified with Cybele, Isis, and a number of other goddesses. Her wide acceptance symbolized the need and desire of the people for a mother-figure to whom they could turn for shelter.[21]

Thus, Graeco-Roman paganism in the Hellenistic world, in the centuries preceding and contemporaneous with emerging Christianity,

interacted with Oriental influences to fashion the mystery cults just described. Such an overview of these cults reveals fundamental religious conceptions shared by all, though the ritualistic garb may vary. We can list these conceptions as follows:

1) The myth of the savior-god who dies and is restored to life.

2) A cult fashioned around this myth with "the promise of release from the evils of this present life and the perpetuation of the soul life in a world after death, won through the participation in the experiences of the hero god. . . ."[22]

3) Emotional and dramatic rites, the aesthetic element, in which the devotee or initiate participates in the experience of the gods.

4) An elementary conception of morality hinting at reward and punishment through the eventual victory over darkness (death; evil) by the god(s).

It is evident that the emotional and soteriological mystical aspects of the mysteries were their dominating features. Their tremendous appeal, in an age of transition wherein the individual sought security and freedom from the finality of death, is readily understandable.

B. Gnosticism

Another religious element which may have existed in the Graeco-Roman world in the first Christian century is gnosticism. However, this phenomenon requires careful investigation and precise definition.

Gnosticism first appeared to scholars as a splinter movement from Christianity. It was seen as having arisen in the second century C.E.--a newly-posited theology which was a distortion of the Christian faith. Initially, our only sources on gnoticism were excerpts from gnostic texts

passed down to us by the church fathers of the early Christian centuries, replete with the transmitters' negative assessment of the heretics. From these obviously biased sources we are able to discern the basic elements common to the various gnostic systems they describe:

> . . . (1) a distinction between the unknown and transcendent true God on the one hand and the Demiurge or creator of this world on the other, the latter being commonly identified with the God of the Old Testament; (2) the belief that man in his true nature is essentially akin to the divine, a spark of heavenly light imprisoned in a material body and subjected in this world to the dominance of the Demiurge and his powers; (3) a myth narrating some kind of pre-mundane fall, to account for man's present state and his yearning for deliverance and (4) the means, the saving gnosis, by which that deliverance is effected and man awakened to the consciousness of his own true nature and heavenly origin. This deliverance, and the eventual return of the imprisoned sparks of light to their heavenly abode, means in time the return of this world to its primordial chaos, and is strenuously opposed at all points by the hostile powers.[23]

The conveyor of the gnosis is depicted as a heavenly redeemer; this is the role assigned the Christ of Christianity by gnostic systems. The Christ was deemed never really to have suffered on the cross; rather, he was allegedly only a spirit never embodied in a decadent matter. He only seemed to suffer. Such a view, along with the rejection of the God of the Old Testament was naturally offensive to many church spokesmen.

Though the traditional view of gnosticism as a Christian heresy has long held sway, succinctly identified by Adolf Harnack as the radical Hellenizing of Christianity,[24] a new interpretation has arisen in recent decades. Here, gnosticism is seen as a religious entity possibly co-existing with or even antedating Christianity, rather than derivative from it or distortive of it. R. M. Wilson remarks that according to this view gnostics are seen as having belonged

> to the forces of reaction. They represent not the

> pioneers of Christian theology but almost the last resistance of the ancient world to the triumph of Christianity. Gnosticism, on this view, is not merely a deviation from Christianity but a recrudescence and resurgence of ancient Oriental religion, indeed a religion in its own right, invading the West as the rival and competition of the Christian faith.[25]

A problem with this approach is that it is impossible to locate the origin of gnosticism. Some suggestions have centered around Egypt, Persia, and Alexandrian or even Palestinian Judaism.

With regard to the source of origin lastly named, Herman Gunkel wrote:

> In the earlier period Judaism was much more richly structured. Alongside the scribes there were other movements, from which the apocalypses are derived, movements that inflamed the population to attempted insurrections, and from which persons arose claiming to be prophets or even the promised Christ himself. All apocalypses seek to be secret writings and transmit secret traditions. Accordingly we are to imagine that there were at that time certain circles that were edified by means of such secret knowledge and that concealed themselves from public attention. From the same time we hear expressly of a secret band of Essenes. The secret traditions of the apocalypses treat especially eschatology, angelology, cosmology, and primal history. This is the real place where foreign material entered into Judaism in floods.[26]

Thus we see a hypothesis posited that Judaism may have been the religious soil in which gnosticism took root and which then was influenced by the Oriental religious milieu into which it sprouted. It is, therefore, possible to view gnosticism even as pre-Christian, perhaps dating back to the emergence of Greek dominance.

> In a latter time of the Orient we see then new formations, whose beginning we may put at about the beginning of the Greek period. We usually become acquainted with these phenomena only when they extend their propaganda over onto Graeco-Roman terrain. For the time being we do not know where

> and when they originated in the Orient. One may designate their advocates with a word that was used by these circles themselves: "gnostics" (Mandaje).[27]

Some scholars, therefore, have posited the existence of an "incipient gnosticism" earlier than the second century, or, indeed, even a "pre-Christian gnosticism" or "gnosis," reserving the term "gnosticism" itself for the second century heresy as polemicized against by the church fathers.

Clearly, our main concern here is with the possible existence of a gnosticism either prior to or contemporaneous with developing Christianity; if it existed, how might it have influenced pagan peoples to be more receptive to Christian propaganda? (There is even the possibility that pre-Christian gnosticism may have affected Hellenistic Judaism and helped introduce elements into it that would later be found in Christianity.) In this context we must note three points stressed by C. H. Dodd:

> 1. There is no Gnostic document known to us which can with any show of probability be dated--at any rate in the form in which alone we have access to it--before the period of the New Testament.
> 2. The typical Gnostic systems all combine in various ways and proportions ideas derived from Christianity with ideas which can be shown to be derived from, or at least to have affinities with, other religious or philosophical traditions.
> 3. The various Gnostic systems differ widely in the way in which they introduce and combine these disparate elements, and each system has to be considered separately for what it is in itself. No general and all-embracing answer can be given to the question, What is the relation of Gnosticism to Christianity?[28]

With these points in mind we more fully realize the difficulty of firmly establishing the origin of gnosticism. However, it is generally agreed that gnosticism "is fundamentally syncretistic, welding into a

new synthesis elements from diverse cultures."[29] Thus, the question is, at what point were the gnostic systems, as we know them from the church fathers, developed? If their syncretistic growth culminated in the first century C.E. or before then, they most certainly could have influenced the pagan world which would see similar ideas in Christianity. However, if they developed after contact with nascent Christianity, these gnostic systems may, indeed, have been influenced by Christianity and not vice versa. A. D. Nock recognized "the existence of 'a gnostic way of thinking' in the period prior to the New Testament," yet fully believed that full-blown gnosticism was a Christian heresy.[30]

At this point, then, perhaps the most we can say with some sense of security is that there were elements of what would later appear as gnosticism present in the first Christian century.

It is interesting to note that in 1915 Francis Legge provided a great deal of material dealing with pre-Christian gnosticism. He suggested that Orphism, the Essenes, and Simon Magus were the originators of gnosticism. Magus was seen by the church fathers as the parent of all later gnosticism.[31] However, as Wilson makes clear, Legge's writings, because of their early date, did not take into consideration the later findings at Qumran concerning the Essene community. The Dead Sea Scrolls gave little evidence of a gnostic system in all its glory, though they contained elements of a gnostic system particularly in conjunction with Jewish apocalyptic.

Our knowledge of gnosticism has been enhanced by texts other than the excerpts preserved by the church fathers. In 1946, there was discovered near Nag Hammadi, in Upper Egypt, a library containing an extensive collection of fourth-century Christian and non-Christian

gnostic writings.

> For the first time, students of Gnosticism have at hand a large collection of original Gnostic writings with which to understand the movements so bitterly and successfully combated by church authorities in the early centuries of our era. Such major problems as that of the origin of the Gnostic religion are enlightened by these documents, and the Christian, Jewish, and pagan contributions to the syncretistic amalgam of Gnostic myth can be distinguished with greater clarity.[32]

The Nag Hammadi collection appears to enhance the possibility that gnosticism emerged from non-Christian sources since the library contains several works that are not obviously Christian in orientation; these documents may provide for a "fully developed Gnostic myth with a Gnostic redeemer figure who is not inspired by the Christ of the New Testament."[33]

How ancient are the roots of this outlook? Our documents themselves are late, and therefore no definite conclusion may be reached. Yet the possibility exists that oral traditions culminating in these works extend back several centuries.

Thus, we have the compelling possibility that an incipient gnosticism may have existed at the time of nascent Christianity and could have rendered this new faith more readily acceptable amongst the masses by virtue of the similarity of aspects of Christianity to ideas and motifs already present in the religious milieu of the day. However, due to the lack of source materials dating back to the first century C.E., we must stress once more that this position cannot be documented and thus remains merely a possibility.

C. Other Components of the Religious Milieu

Other elements of the Graeco-Roman milieu should be mentioned here as they may account for some of the success of Christian missionaries

whose preaching contained similar motifs and utilized similar literary devices.

Among these was the aretalogy. This term refers to a report of miraculous deeds by a divine man or wonder-worker. On the basis of inscriptional evidence, scholars find that the term was current from 300 B.C.E.-300 C.E.[34] Some say that the aretalogy depicted "the miraculous birth of a wise miracle worker, his struggles with his opponents, his martyrdom, and his apotheosis."[35] Others posit that it retold the miracles of a powerful figure in order to prove the assertion that he was a divine man. Whichever is the case, the important factor is that aretalogies are prominent in the New Testament.[36] It would seem logical that such reports figured prominently in attempts to proselytize the masses. Morton Smith states that the miracle stories of the Graeco-Roman world

> contain many close parallels to those in the Gospels; the resemblance was noticed already in antiquity and is important for the criticism of the Gospels, since it indicates that the two groups grew up in similar cultural environments with similar concern for veracity.[37]

It is this "similar cultural environment" which is our concern.

A type of aretalogy is to be found in the "miracle stories" prominent in the rabbinic and Hellenistic popular stories of the first Christian century, counterparts of which can also be found in the Gospels. The miracle stories characteristically spoke of an incurable disease, its length, how it was cured, and how perceived. Thus, the stories serve to enhance the deeds of the deity as well as the reputation of the miracle worker or agent of the deity.

The role of miracle worker was, then, prominent in the Hellenistic

world of the first Christian century. The Cynic-Stoic wandering teacher-preachers of Asia Minor and Syria were, as H. C. Kee states, "The closest analogy to the itinerant ministry of Jesus and his disciples as portrayed in the Gospels."[38] Kee points out that the function of the Jewish (i.e., Haninah been Desa) and pagan charismatics differs in kind from that of Jesus as miracle worker. However, we are interested in the fact that such charismatic figures did exist in the religious milieu of the time. Indeed, "eschatological deliverers working redemptive miracles are expected in a range of texts from 200 B.C. on (e.g., Ecclus. 48:5-10, Test. Levi 5:2ff., Apoch. Baruch 71:1-75:8)."[39]

Closely allied with this image of "miracle worker" is that of the "divine man." "Both historical (e.g., Socrates) and mythological (e.g., Apollo) figures were accorded this status. . .at the beginning of our era, and largely in Egypt, attempts were made to demonstrate the divinity of kings (e.g., Augustus, Alexander) and wise men by attributing to them prescience or miracles."[40]

The divine man was perceived as having special access to the will of deity, thus enabling him to predict events and/or enact legislation in the name of that deity. Hellenistic Judaism, especially Philo, viewed Moses, Elijah, etc. as belonging to a similarly privileged category of man. The prevalence of such a type in the first Christian century might have conditioned pagans to more readily accept Jesus who may similarly have been perceived in the role of "divine man."

The next step up from perceiving a man as having special human status is to attribute to him divine status. Indeed, the Graeco-Roman world was conscious of many holy men attaining divine stature. Deities were also seen as partaking in the human experience.

> There were gods who had been born and had various adventures--including servitude, suffering, and death--like those of men. Almost any god was likely to appear in human form, and consequently a number of historical persons had been supposed to have been deities or daimones in disguise. There were mythical demi-gods (men born of a union between mortals and gods), who had achieved full godhood, e.g., Hercules, and there were also historical figures who actually thought--or pretended--that they were gods or similar to such supernatural beings.[41]

Thus, the possibility presents itself that the divine man motif incorporated such notions as the attainment of divinity on the part of a human being or the involvement of a deity in human affairs. This popular image could possibly have elicited credence in the figure of Jesus as well as helped determine the way in which that image was fashioned and presented to would-be pagan converts.

In conjunction with the "divine man" were signs which authenticated his special status. These can be understood as being similar to the "signs and wonders" ascribed to Moses which validated his role as messenger of God. In the eschatological view of many in the first Christian century, apocalyptic portents were to signal the end of time and herald the coming of the Messiah. Thus, we find in the Gospel of John (6:2) that Jesus' miracles are referred to as signs (and indeed some scholars posit a "Gospel of Signs" underlying the canonical Gospel). The Book of Daniel notes certain signs or eschatological portents and these come to figure prominently in early Christian literature. The motif of "signs" appears to have had a place in the religious propaganda of the new faith, for such "signs" were inherent in the religious milieu of that period.

Another facet of the religious atmosphere of the Graeco-Roman world is the so-called Hermetic Literature otherwise known as the Trismegistic Literature. These theosophic writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus

("Hermes thrice greatest"), a sage deified for his wisdom, gained prominence in Egypt. The evidence points to the dating of these philosophic and religious tractates in the second and third centuries C.E. where they originated as mystical documents produced after contact with Greek philosophical ideas and Hellenistic Jewish mysticism. However, there is some reason to believe that the initial kernels of Hermetic Literature may be traced back earlier than the second century C.E.

G. R. S. Mead, who published a massive work on the Trismegistic Literature, states: "The early Church Fathers in general accepted the Trismegistic writings as exceedingly ancient and authoritative, and in their apologetic writings quote them in support of the main general positions of Christianity."[42] If this be so, it would appear to be at least possible that the Church Fathers referred to a tradition accepted by many because it originated early enough to have been passed down with authority.

It would also appear possible that some form of this literature which was to be found in Egypt in the second century C.E. originated at a time when the Hellenistic religious experience was developing there as evidenced by Philo. Much is written of Egyptian dominance of this period when the Greek ideas mixed with Oriental religious tendencies, emerging in syncretistic forms. It is entirely possible that some aspects of Hermetic Literature are to be found existing in the earlier contact in Egypt of Hellenism and Orientalism.

One aspect of Hermetic Literature, specifically the first writing entitled "Poimandres, " contains a gnosis, a knowledge of God, by which one attains immortality. It speaks of the prophets' role in preaching repentance which allows one to pass from death-ignorance, error, etc.

to the way of life-truth, knowledge of God, etc.

There is also the element of the Logos described as "the body of reason." In the thirteenth tractate, entitled "Secret Discourse About Regeneration," Hermes is asked, "From what womb can a man be born again, from what seed?"

> He is told that the womb is wisdom, the seed is the true good, the begetter is the will of God, and the ministrant is some man who is a son of God, working in subordination to God's will. To be born again a man must cleanse himself from the irrational torments of matter. Then the powers of God come and build up the body of reason. This is due to the mercy of God. These powers are described as truth, the good, life, and light.[43]

Thus, the "body of reason," or the Logos, is built upon the body of the reborn man. This mystical element is to be found in the Gospel According to John. Scholars would claim that the specific hermetic document is to be dated after John. However, "there are yet points of contact which show that a religious vocabulary was at the disposal of a Christian missionary who could give a historical content to these mythological speculations."[44]

* * * * * * * * * *

What we have undertaken to offer in this opening chapter is an overview of the significant religious attitudes prevalent in the first Christian century. Thus, we have examined the various mystery religions, common motifs, and the possibility of the existence of certain religious and literary elements in the Graeco-Roman world at that time. We have sought to illustrate points of religious commonality present in that society so as to better ascertain the aspects of Judaism and Christianity which may have been familiar to a pagan and thus engender

an affinity for these religions in the mind of a would-be proselyte. Likewise, we should be aware of those aspects of Judaism and Christianity which would be unfamiliar to a pagan in that society. Thus we may seek to understand to what degree a proselyte movement on the part of Hellenistic Jewry contributed certain unique elements into the religious environment which would find their way into the proselyte movement of Christianity. In such a way we can better understand if such a proselytism was a factor in the acceptance of Christianity.

However, we must first examine Hellenistic Judaism itself to understand its teachings and motivations. This will better enable us later to examine its view of proselytism and the extent to which Hellenistic Jews were active in this endeavor.

Notes to Chapter I

1. F. E. Peters, The Harvest of Hellenism, p. 63.

2. J. Klausner, From Jesus to Paul, p. 55, states: "One can say without any exaggeration, that the Roman routes of travel by land and by sea, traces of which are to be found wherever the Roman soldier set his foot, were the best that even western Europe knew until the nineteenth century, until the coming of the railway into the world."

3. For an examination and general description of "religious syncretism," see A. Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity, pp. 31-35; also Klausner, op. cit., pp. 95-119.

4. Helen S. Stafford, Paul's Experience in His Hellenistic Environment, p. 2.

5. Ibid., p. 9.

6. See also E. Rivkin, "Pharisaism and the Crisis of the Individual in the Graeco-Roman World," Jewish Quarterly Review 61 (1970):27-53.

7. F. Cumont, Oriental Religion in Roman Paganism, p. 22f.

8. Ibid., p. 48.

9. Klausner, op. cit., p. 105; also note A. D. Nock's article, "The Vocabulary of the New Testament," Journal of Biblical Literature 52 (1933):135, where he speaks of the pagan convert to Christianity, Firmicus Maternus (fourth century), and the "certain cryptic passwords" preserved by him which speak of these "mysteries." (Though the source is late, it conceivably transmits kernels of evidence from an earlier time.)

10. A. D. Nock, Conversion, p. 24.

11. Stafford, op. cit., p. 28.

12. Cumont, op. cit., p. 68.

13. Requoted from Stafford, op. cit., p. 29. It would appear that this citation is taken from Plutarch's Treatise on Osiris and Isis though I have been unable to verify its location.

14. R. Drews, The Greek Accounts of Eastern History, p. 129.

15. We find similar resurrection elements in the Syrian cults of Astarte and Adonis. For a detailed description see Cumont, op. cit., pp. 103-134.

16. Cumont, op. cit., p. 75.

17. Ibid., p. 77.

18. See Chapter III.

19. Cumont, op. cit., p. 151.

20. Cyril Bailey, Phases in the Religion of Ancient Rome, p. 210.

21. For a description of the acceptance of the Great Mother by Rome see Nock, op. cit., p. 68f.; also Bailey, op. cit., pp. 180-184. Bailey points out that Rome saw a need for legal restrictions concerning participation by its citizens in the rites and priesthood of this cult because it might prove to be "a dangerous excitement."

22. Stafford, op. cit., p. 34.

23. R. M. Wilson, Gnosis and the New Testament, p. 4.

24. A. Von Harnack, History of Dogma, p. 226.

25. Wilson, op. cit., p. 5.

26. Requoted from the translation of the original German as found in Robinson and Koesten, Trajectories through Early Christianity, p. 261.

27. Ibid.

28. C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel, p. 98.

29. Wilson, op. cit., p. 6.

30. Ibid., p. 8. (See also the Introduction to A. D. Nock's Early Christianity and Its Hellenistic Background, New York, 1964.)

31. Francis Legge, Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity, p. 176.

32. G. MacRae, "Nag Hammadi," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Suppl. Vol., p. 613.

33. Ibid., p. 618.

34. H. C. Kee, "Aretalogy," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Suppl. Vol., p. 52.

35. Ibid.

36. Matthew 12:22; Luke 5:31-37; Luke 9:11-17.

37. Morton Smith, "Prolegomena to a Discussion of Aretalogies, Divine Men, The Gospels and Jesus," Journal of Biblical Literature 90 (1971):178.

38. H. C. Kee, "Miracle Workers," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Suppl. Vol., p. 598.

39. Ibid.

40. H. C. Kee, "Divine Men," op. cit., p. 243.

41. Morton Smith, op. cit., p. 181f.; See also p. 182, note 54.

42. G. R. S. Mead, Thrice-Greatest Hermes, p. 17.

43. W. F. Howard, "Introduction to the Gospel According to John," Interpreter's Bible, 8, p. 453.

44. Ibid.

CHAPTER II

Judaism in the Hellenistic World

A. Our Sources

Our investigation of Jewish proselytism in the Graeco-Roman world must take into account the nature of Hellenistic Judaism. The major primary sources which elucidate the beliefs and encounters of Hellenistic Jews are Philo and Josephus (including the writings of Strabo as found in Josephus' Antiquities). We will also have reason to consult the so-called Letter of Aristeas, a work which, though largely fictional, nevertheless sheds light on the historical period in which it was penned. We will have lesser recourse to other sources: The apologetic works, III and IV Maccabees, the Sibylline Oracles, and the Wisdom of Solomon which reflect philosophic aspects of Hellenistic Judaism. We will also consult certain Greek and Roman writers who convey historical data as well as an idea of pagan attitudes towards Jews in the Graeco-Roman world. Finally, we will note archaeological finds which have uncovered symbols and modes of expression of Hellenistic Jewry.

Our investigation of the nature of Hellenistic Judaism has the following purpose: To help us more fully understand the phenomenon of Jewish proselytism in the Graeco-Roman world. We do not seek to recount a history of the dispersion nor to detail the totality of the Hellenistic Jews' life and experience. Rather, we seek to enumerate those aspects of Hellenistic Judaism which will bear directly on Jewish

involvement in conversionary activity and interchange with the pagan world.

B. The Dispersion in the Mediterranean World: Origins and Dimensions

The entrance by Jews into the Diaspora began largely as a result of Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem and subsequent exile of the Jews. While, as we know, many of these Jews ended up in Babylonia, forming the origins of what would prove to be the important Jewish community of Parthia, other Jews ended up in such places as Egypt and Cyrene. Concerning their dispersion, Josephus quotes Strabo:

> Now these Jews are already gotten into all cities, and it is hard to find a place in the habitable earth that hath not admitted this tribe of men, and is not possessed by it: and it hath come to pass that Egypt and Cyrene, as having the same governors, and a great number of other nations, imitate their way of living, and maintain great bodies of these Jews in a peculiar manner, and grow up to greater prosperity with them, and make use of the same laws with that nation also. Accordingly, the Jews have places assigned them in Egypt wherein they inhabit, besides what is peculiarly allotted to this nation at Alexandria, which is a large part of that city. . .[1]

Indeed, Josephus alleges that the Jews owe their origins and great liberty in Alexandria to Alexander himself, who "upon finding the readiness of the Jews in assisting him against the Egyptians, and as a reward for such their assistance, gave them equal privileges in this city with the Grecians themselves."[2]

Given Josephus' propensity for apologetics we should take note of additional references to the movement of Jews into the Graeco-Roman world. We find that Hecataeus, a contemporary of Alexander's, fails to mention the establishment of Jews in Alexandria under Alexander's

guidance. Indeed, Josephus himself cites Hecataeus but on the basis of his testimony can only deduce that, "though many myriads of our race had already been deported to Babylon by the Persians, yet after Alexander's death, myriads more migrated to Egypt and Phoenicia in consequence of the disturbed condition of Syria."[3]

Aristeas, a later source (probably second century B.C.E.), and possibly dependent on Hecataeus, claims that it was Ptolemy I (322-285 B.C.E.) who brought the large population of Jews to Egypt, and not as free men but as captives. Aristeas represents himself as a Greek courtier in Alexandria who approaches the King, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, son of Ptolemy I, to request freedom for the Jews:

> Thinking that the time had come to press the demand, which I had often laid before Sosibius of Tarentum and Andreas, the chief of the body guard, for the emancipation of the Jews who had been transported from Judea by the King's father--for when by a combination of good fortune and courage he had brought his attack on the whole district of Coele-Syria and the Phoenicia to a successful issue, in the process terrorizing the country into subjection, he transported some of his foes and others he reduced to captivity. The number of those whom he transported from the country of the Jews to Egypt amounted to no less than a hundred thousand.[4]

Though Aristeas has been recognized by scholars as a Jew who wrote an apologetic work, perhaps in order to better the Jews' position in his day, some of his work has been accepted as having been based in fact. Tcherikover states that "there are no grounds for doubting the historical trustworthiness of this [particular] tale. . . ."[5] There are, however, sufficient grounds for doubting the figure of 100,000 captives, "for such a large number of prisoners would have meant the complete destruction of Palestinian Jewry."[6] With this exception

noted, Tcherikover concludes: "It may therefore be accepted as a historical fact that the Jewish diaspora in Hellenistic Egypt began under Ptolemy I. . . ."[7]

It is thus more reasonable to assume that the Jews entered the Hellenistic Diaspora, in this case, Egypt, as slaves and not as freemen with rights in the society. This is an important point as we examine the condition of Jewish life in the Graeco-Roman world just before and during the first Christian century. As we continue to explore this area, it is noteworthy that we find the Jews having to defend their faith in the Diaspora, from the very beginning, as evidenced by the Letter of Aristeas.

While there is much information that we can glean from our sources, concerning Egyptian Hellenistic Jewry, particularly Alexandrian Jewry, there is comparatively little material extant on Jews elsewhere in the Graeco-Roman world. With regard to Cyrene, we have Josephus' citation from Strabo concerning Jews being found there during the first half of the first century B.C.E.: "There were four classes of men among those of Cyrene: that of citizens, that of husbandmen, the third of strangers, and the fourth of Jews."[8] Jews had begun their emigration to Cyrene in the early third century B.C.E.; when Ptolemy I "was desirous to secure the government of Cyrene and the other cities of Libya to himself, he sent a party of Jews to inhabit them."[9]

Josephus informs us that Jews had entered Asia Minor and Lower Syria by the mid-third century B.C.E., attaining the citizenship by virtue of their friendship with Seleucus I (early third century B.C.E.): "The Jews also obtained honours from the kings of Asia, when they

became their auxiliaries; for Seleucus Nicator made them citizens in those cities which he built in Asia, and in the Lower Syria and in the metropolis itself, Antioch. . . ."[10] However, we have no confirmation that this statement is correct. Indeed, it smacks of apologetics and is generally regarded as such. Certainly, Jewish presence in Antioch, however, need not be discounted, as we shall see later.

Between 210 and 205 B.C.E., Antiochus III allegedly sent two thousand Jewish families from Mesopotamia and Babylon to Lydia and Phrygia in order to bring stability to that seditious area. Antiochus, in a letter to an official by the name of Zeuxis, orders this transfer, as quoted by Josephus: "For I am persuaded that they will be well disposed guardians of our possessions, because of their piety to God, and because I know that my predecessors have borne witness to them, that they are faithful, and with alacrity do what they are desired to do."[11] While there has been some scholarly dispute over the letter's authenticity, Tcherikover notes that the document is now generally regarded as authentic.[12]

We find mention of numerous other locations throughout Asia Minor where Jews, in the mid-second century B.C.E., could be found. Simon the Hasmonean sent a convoy to Rome in order "to renew the old friendship and confederacy."[13] Thus was a proclamation in favor of the Jews sent out by the Roman consul, Lucius, to the cities and areas in which Jews could be found. Among those named are Caria, Pamphylia, Lycia, Halicarnassus, Myndas, Cnidus, Phaselis, Side, Arysos, and the islands of Delos, Samos, Cos and Rhodes.[14] E. M. Smallwood notes that

> the origins of the communities in the coastal cities of Aradus, Tyre, Sidon, Ptolemais, Dora,

> and Ascalon, and in the inland cities of Apamea on the Orontes, Damascus, Gerasa, Gadara, Hippos and Scythapolis, attested in the first century A.D., are not recorded, but some probably date from the period of Hasmonean expansion, when Jews settled also in the coastal cities under their rule.[15]

Philo calls our attention to areas in Greece and surrounding regions where Jews could be found in his day. He speaks of Jerusalem being the mother city of many countries

> in virtue of the colonies sent out at divers times to the neighboring lands of Egypt, Phoenicia, the part of Syria called the Hollow and the rest as well and the lands lying far apart. Pamphylia, Cilicia, most of Asia up to Bithynia and the corners of Pontus, similarly also into Europe, Thessaly, Boeotia, Macedonia, Aetolia, Attica, Arges, Corinth, and most of the best parts of Peloponnese. And not only are the mainlands full of Jewish colonies but also the most highly esteemed of the islands Euboea, Cyprus, Crete. . . .[16]

One gets a sense of Philo's religious pride as evidenced by the extent of his testimony concerning the magnitude of the Jewish presence. However, it is generally agreed that Jews were indeed found in these regions at this time.

The New Testament confirms some of the above attestations. Acts clearly lists a number of locations where Jews could be found. The author can hardly be said to have a pro-Jewish apologetic motive for listing these places. Rather, they are included to recount the locations visited by early Christian missionaries. Thus, we find Jews in Antioch, Iconium, Tarsus in Cilicia, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi in Macedonia, Thessalonica, Beroea, Athens and Rome.[17] (We will have reason to refer to these locations further in our discussion of Jewish proselytism and its interaction with Christian missionaries.)

As concerns Rome herself, it appears that Jews arrived in numbers

not before the first century B.C.E. In 61 B.C.E., Pompey brought to Rome many Jewish slaves. Philo remarks that in the time of Augustus (beginning around 27 B.C.E.): "The great section of Rome on the other side of the Tiber" was "occupied and inhabited by Jews, most of whom were Roman citizens emancipated."[18] Cicero makes mention of the large crowd attending the trial against Lucius Valerius Flaccus in 59 B.C.E. He alludes to the Jews and "how they stick together, how influential they are in informal assemblies."[19] We infer from this statement that Jews had arrived and begun to consolidate their strength in Rome at least several decades earlier.

Thus, we get an idea of the diversity and number of locations in which Jews were settled throughout the first Christian century. Indeed, there is some amount of truth to the testimony of the Sibylline Oracles: "the whole land and sea are full of Jews."[20] The question remains as to the size of this dispersion. Exactly how many Jews were settled in these various cities and regions? This has sparked much controversy.[21] This is pertinent to our later discussion on Jewish proselytism, for the number of Jews in a certain location may include converts to Judaism made after settlement in a certain area. While some scholars have posited a figure of five million Jews in the Diaspora, others have estimated two million and perhaps lower.[22]

It is obvious that if we base ourselves on the figures of ancient writers, no certainty can be reached. Some, as those of Josephus and Philo, are generally regarded as exaggerated.[23] Tcherikover concludes that "the adoption of any figures at all must be unfounded guesswork without adequate historical basis, and this should be avoided as far as possible. But whatever the results of the inquiry, it is. . .clear that

the Jewish population was quite considerable in the Graeco-Roman world, especially in the eastern half of the Mediterranean."[24]

C. Jewish Life in Diaspora Communities

How did Jews remain such outside of Palestine and what was the nature of their experience as Jews in the Graeco-Roman cities? Before we can concern ourselves with missionary activity on the part of Hellenistic Jews, we must first determine what Jewish elements mattered to them most and thus would be transmitted by them to others. We also need to understand their political situation, for this too would affect their contact with the pagan members of their communities.

It is easy to understand that Jews coming from Palestine would want to stay together; there is strength in numbers, and many patterns of observance and worship required communal organization. Thus, wherever the Jews settled there was formed a community. The best information we have of the nature of such a community and its practices concerns itself with Alexandria.

Josephus tells of a special quarter set aside for the Jews of Alexandria.[25] Within this quarter they possessed a form of self-government known as the "politeuma." Contrary to what we read earlier in Josephus[26] in regard to the extent and equality of rights held by the Alexandrian Jews, we now find some discrepancy.

The earliest reference to the Jewish "politeuma" in Alexandria is found in the Letter of Aristeas.[27] Here we find the picture of an independent and separate community within the City. We find a council of elders and leaders at its head. In the time of Augustus (11 C.E.), we find an ethnarch set-up as head of this Jewish "politeuma."[28]

However, how did this "politeuma" function within the larger city of Alexandria? What was the status of its members? H. A. Wolfson raises the question, after noting that both Philo and Josephus refer to this Jewish "politeuma" in Alexandria as "politeia" and the Jews as "politai" (citizens) of this "politeia": were Jews "politai" of just their "politeuma" or also of the larger polis, city-government, of Alexandria?[29] Scholars disagree on whether to trust Josephus who claims citizenship for Jews in Alexandria.[30]

In trying to solve this problem, we may receive some help from Philo who speaks of the status of settlers: "For strangers, in my judgment, must be regarded as supplicants of those who receive them, and not only supplicants but settlers and friends, eagerly seeking equality of privilege with burgesses and already being near in status to citizens, differing but little from natives."[31] Wolfson notes that Philo "goes out of his way to make a plea for strangers." They are to be looked on as settlers. Referring to Philo, Wolfson states: "Evidently the position of settlers (metoikoi) was already established in the eyes of those to whom he addresses himself." Thus it would appear that settlers were little different from natives, close to citizens, and were in a position to seek equality of privilege with burgesses, the privileged Greeks. Wolfson concludes that the native Alexandrian Jew and those who settled later were thus in line for promotion to the highest status within the polis.[32]

It will be of additional help, in determining Jewish status, to cite a couple of passages in Josephus in which the Jews' rights in the Hellenistic world are stated. As has already been mentioned, Josephus would have us believe that Jews had equal rights in Alexandria. As has

been shown,[33] his allegation that Alexander bestowed these rights is questionable in and of itself. Nevertheless Josephus may be referring to actual rights given to the Jews by later rulers. He may simply be relegating the event to an earlier time in order to give the fact added significance. Thus, we read that Alexander

> gave them equal privileges in this city with the Grecians themselves; which honorary reward continued among them under his successors, who also set apart for them a particular place, that they might live without being polluted (by the Gentiles) and were thereby not so much intermixed with foreigners as before; they also gave them this further privilege, that they should be called Macedonians. Nay, when the Romans got possession of Egypt, neither the first Caesar, nor any one that came after him, thought of diminishing the honours which Alexander had bestowed on the Jews.[34]

It is well accepted that Josephus' writing are apologetic works on behalf of the Jews. But he was writing for a Roman audience and thus, it would seem, could not totally have fabricated the status of the Jews of Alexandria in his day. The veracity of his statement could easily have been checked. Indeed, Josephus would appear to be on solid ground when referring to the decrees of Caesar[35] in favor of the Jews which were certainly to be found in the public records of Rome. Josephus appears aware of this proof, as he states in Antiquities:

> . . .for whereas many will not believe what hath been written about us by the Persians and Macedonians, because these writings are not everywhere to be met with, nor do lie in public places, but among us ourselves, and certain other barbarous nations, while there is no contradiction to be made against the decrees of the Romans, for they are laid up in the public places of the cities, and are extant still in the capitol, and engraven upon pillars of brass; nay, besides this, Julius Caesar made a pillar of brass for the Jews at Alexandria, and declared publicly that they were citizens of Alexandria.[36]

It does seem credible, then, that the Jews in Alexandria had, at one time, a fair amount of rights within the larger community.[37] How far we may go in supposing these rights were established for the Jews throughout the Graeco-Roman world is questionable. However, there is some evidence dealing with the exemption of Jewish participation in the Roman army which will enlarge our understanding of the status of the Jew. Because of dietary laws and Sabbath observance, Jews found themselves unable to take part in military service with pagan units. In 49 B.C.E., when the Roman army was mobilizing and, in the process, conscripting people into the army, the issue of Jewish participation arose. Lucius Lentulus, a Roman consul, declared: "I have dismissed these Jews who are Roman citizens, and who appear to me to have their religious rites. . .,"[38] from military duty.

Indeed, in 43 B.C.E. when Rome again prepared for civil war in the East, Hyrcanus II appealed to Dolabella, the prefect of Asia. Dolabella "sent an epistle to all the Asiatics, and particularly to the city of the Ephesians, the metropolis of Asia," concerning conscription of Jews: "I do therefore grant them a freedom from going into the army, as the former perfects have done, and permit them to use the customs of their forefathers. . . ."[39]

Similarly, Jews were exempted from emperor worship. Josephus' testimony on this matter could easily have been refuted by Roman readers if it had been blatantly false:

> Moreover, Apion would lay a blot upon us, because we do not erect images for our emperors; as if these emperors did not know this before, or stood in need of Apion as their defender; whereas he ought rather to have admired the magnanimity and modesty of the Romans, whereby they do not compel those that are subject to them to transgress the laws of their

> countries, but are willing to receive the honours due to them after such a manner as those who are to pay them esteem consistent with piety and with their own laws. . . .[40]

The Jewish community lived by these laws in the Diaspora, organizing itself into a synagogue. It appears that the term "synagogue" (Greek συναγωγή, Latin synagoga) referred to the collective of Jews. The actual building of prayer was referred to as a "proseucha" or meeting place.[41]

As concerns the policy of Rome towards the institution of the synagogue, we are told that Augustus maintained the Jews' religious rights as first set down by Julius Caesar.[42] Indeed, Philo tells us that Augustus

> knew that /the Jews/ have synagogues and meet together in them, particularly on the sacred sabbaths when they receive as a body a training in their ancestral philosophy. He knew too that they collect money for sacred purposes from their first fruits and send them to Jerusalem by persons who would offer the sacrifices. Yet, nevertheless, he neither ejected them from Rome nor deprived them of their Jewish citizenship also, nor took any violent measures against the houses of prayer, nor prevented them from meeting to receive instruction in the laws, nor opposed their offerings of the first fruits.[43]

From this one paragraph it would appear that Jews under Augustus, and apparently before, were allowed to meet and study in their houses of prayer, they were permitted to collect funds for Jerusalem which continued to hold importance for Diaspora Jewry, and they maintained some privileges within the community.

In the light of the testimony of our sources it would appear safe to say that by the first Christian century Jews, under Rome, were free to live and worship according to their religious laws while adhering to

the civic laws except where otherwise noted (e.g., emperor worship). This freedom of Jewish rights guaranteed by Julius Caesar, and later by Augustus, affected Jews throughout the Roman Empire. This freedom would be necessary if any form of Jewish proselytism were to be successful at all.

D. Relations of Jews and Pagans

We now examine the attitudes of Jews towards pagans, and of pagans towards Jews, in order better to understand the prejudices and sympathies which might have affected Jewish missionary activity and the reaction it engendered among the pagan world.

As early as 140 B.C.E., the Jewish apologetic work known as the Sibylline Oracles declared, "And every land shall be full of thee and every sea; and everyone shall be incensed at thy customs."[44] Clearly Jews in the Graeco-Roman world were conscious of their differences from their context; this put them under certain pressures, and they sought ways to alleviate them. As has been shown, Jews received certain privileges and exemptions that enabled them to preserve their identity and perpetuate their way of life. This statement of security and legal acceptance proved to be a bone of contention amongst pagans of the communities in which Jews resided. Many were outraged that the Jews were exempted from having to partake in emperor worship and were privileged both to delay their pick-up of food distribution until Sunday (when originally scheduled for Shabbat), as well as to collect taxes earmarked for the temple in far away Jerusalem.

Many of those who had but recently acquired rights in Hellenistic society were not so willing to have others do likewise. S. W. Baron

explains that

> the Hellenized citizens of the 'Greek' municipalities of Alexandria, Navleratis, and Ptolemais (after Hadrian, also Antinoupolis) resented the Jewish drive for full civil and political equality with them. Particularly, after the Roman conquest these 'Greeks' and 'Macedonians,' having themselves become a subject population, doubly wished to differentiate between their own and the Jewish groups then still growing by leaps and bounds.[45]

Rome's annexation of Egypt in 30 B.C.E. had an adverse effect on Jewish-pagan relations because Jews were loyal to this new administration. Alexandrians had not only lost prestige by virtue of their annexation by a greater power but they were forced to live by rules set down by Rome--rules which, in part, protected Jews.

It appears that at least some of the Jewish community in Alexandria aspired to greater privileges under Roman rule.[46] The friction caused by these aspirations and general hatred for the conquering country led to an outbreak of violence in Alexandria. The Greek nationalist party gained a measure of control there and sought satisfaction for their grievances by molesting the Jewish population. It must be noted that this account is found detailed only in Philo[47] and could therefore be biased. However, the event is generally accepted as being based in fact.

It does not serve our purposes to detail the attack by the Greek mob on the Jewish inhabitants of Alexandria.[48] Suffice it to say that in 38 C.E. due to the weakness of the prefect Avillus Flaccus, the Greek nationalists:

> collected great bodies of men to attack the meeting houses, of which there were many in each section of the city. . . The meeting-houses which they could not raze or burn out of existence, because so many Jews

> lived massed together in the neighborhood, they outraged in another way, thereby overthrowing our laws and customs. For they set up images of Gaius in them and in the largest and most notable a bronze statue of a man mounted on a chariot and four.[49]

Not only did the mob destroy the synagogues of Alexandria, but they forced the insecure Flaccus to declare the Jews were "aliens and foreigners" in Alexandria, undermining their "politeuma" status as "resident aliens."[50] They lost the privilege, acquired over the centuries but lacking legal basis, of residing in all parts of the city, and the "Delta section, allocated to the original Jewish settlers as a privilege, was converted into a ghetto to which they were now to be compulsorily confined. . .the first known ghetto in the world."[51]

After further humiliation, and the arrest of Flaccus by Roman authorities for charges that remain unclear, Philo himself led a delegation of Jews to Rome to seek redress for their grievances. It was the emperor Claudius who ultimately affirmed Jewish rights. He spoke of the venerated past concerning the Jews of Alexandria as well as the liberties given them by Augustus. Claudius' edict concludes:

> I will, therefore, that the nation of the Jews be not deprived of their rights and privileges, on account of the madness of Caius; but that those rights and privileges which they formerly enjoyed, be preserved to them, and that they may continue in their own customs. And I charge both parties to take very great care that no troubles may arise after the promulgation of this edict.[52]

We are aware that anti-Jewish sentiment was not confined to Alexandria. We note that Jews in Antioch and Doris were also victims of anti-Semitism.[53] Josephus refers to a further edict that Claudius sent out on behalf of the Jews.[54] This edict sent to the rest of the Roman Empire reiterates the defense of Jewish rights stated above.

E. The Synthesis of Jewish and Hellenistic Expression

From the information we have cited concerning anti-Jewish sentiment we arrive at a plausible motive for Jewish apologetics in the Graeco-Roman world. Through the challenge of Hellenization and the pressures of anti-Semitism a gradual reconstruction was imperative if Jews in the Diaspora were to maintain their Jewishness and extend their influence amongst the pagans. A new brand of Judaism eventually emerged which was more readily acceptable to Hellenized Jews. This was a synthesis of Hellenistic thought and symbols with the Bible and practice enjoined by Scripture. Let us briefly examine examples of this synthesis.

To begin with, the Hebrew language was inadequate in suiting the needs of Hellenistic Jews living in a Greek culture; accordingly, as far back as ca. 250 B.C.E., the five books of Moses were rendered into Greek. The Letter of Aristeas attributes the impetus for this Greek edition of the Torah to King Ptolemy II, who wanted to collect all great books for his library.[55] To be sure, we don't know the actual purpose of the writer. Perhaps by this device he sought to convince pagan readers of the worth of the Pentateuch: if Jewish Scripture was valuable to so great a figure as the king, surely it should be recognized for its value to others. In such a way, Hellenistic Jews may have sought to enhance the stature of Judaism in pagan eyes. On the other hand, it is also possible that the intention was to assure Jews themselves that the Greek Pentateuch was just as reliable as the Hebrew original.

The Wisdom of Solomon, written most probably in the first century B.C.E., combines Jewish religion with Greek philosophy.

> The idea of God in part one is that of Greek philosophy--a transcendent God who has no immediate contact with the world. . . the author conceives God to be so remote, that He performs His will by means of an intermediary, whom He sends forth into the world. This intermediary is Wisdom, and possesses all the attributes of Deity.[56]

Within this work we find elements of traditional eschatology--notably references to "the day of decision" and to the day "when their sins are reckoned up."[57] However, we also note Greek concepts such as one dealing with the immortality of the righteous entered upon immediately after death.[58] This view would alter the traditional judgment schema. Indeed, the personification of wisdom is Greek.[59] It is evident that Jewish and Greek aspects are herein combined with some success. The writer sought to make sense out of the righteous God of Judaism and man's reward and punishment. He utilizes Greek ideas to revise tradition and create new meanings. This reflects a transition in Jewish thought. We also find in the last section of this book an extolling of Jews contrasted by scorn for those who worship idols.[60] Here, perhaps, we catch a glimpse of the disdain felt by the Alexandrian author, and plausibly others, for the pagan devotion towards deities.

We find other negative opinions of pagan idolatry purportedly written by such a figure as the Sibyl, an ancient oracle.[61] In the Jewish books of the Sibylline Oracle (probably written in the second century B.C.E.), we find the advancement of pro-Jewish sentiment in a Graeco-Roman framework.[62]

There are many other examples where Jewish and Greek thought and literature are intertwined to meet the needs of the Hellenistic Jew: preeminently the writings of Philo, an Alexandrian Jew who lived in the time with which we are most concerned (ca. 20 B.C.E. - 40 C.E.). As Samuel Sandmel states: "It is well known and universally agreed

that by and large Philo's writings represent, at least coincidentally, a reconciliation of Jewish revelation and Greek philosophy."[63]

It is not certain whether Philo sought to bring Judaism in line with current Greek philosophy or whether he genuinely conceived Judaism as containing the ingredients of Greek philosophy with which he infuses his writings. That is to say, was Philo writing to defend Judaism or simply to elucidate the popular view of Judaism held by other Alexandrian Jews at this time?[64] Whatever the case, Philo carries great importance in our study of Hellenistic Judaism for he provides us with a clear concept of what Judaism meant to a first century Diaspora Jew. Nevertheless, the problem remains as to how representative Philo was of Diaspora Jews in general. The problem is insoluble. However, it behooves us to mention some of the highlights of Philonic thought. Philo utilized the allegorical method in his view of Scripture. Thus, in his

> treatises "On Abraham," "On the Migration of Abraham," and "On the Life of Moses," Philo represents men who have transcended the material aspects of existence and have ascended the ladder of mystic perfection, until the one, Abraham, has become "the unwritten law and justice of God," and the other, Moses, "transformed. . . into a most sun-like mind. . . wholly possessed by inspiration. God accounts a wise man /Moses/ as entitled to equal honour with the world itself, having both created the universe and raised the perfect man from the things earthly up to himself by the same word.[65]

Philo thus examines the teachings and writings of Judaism and finds symbols imbued with deeper meaning. However, one need be "initiated" to perceive such added significance.

> The divine and secret ordinances are to be given only to those initiated persons who are worthy of the knowledge of the most holy mysteries. And those who are thus worthy are they who, with all

> modesty, practice genuine piety. The Sacred Revelation is not for those who are afflicted with the incurable disease of pride of language.[66]

It has been Erwin R. Goodenough's thesis that Philo represented a mystical Judaism that allowed Jews to be part of the mystery religion trend without leaving their faith. He maintains that Hellenistic Jews were captivated by their neighbors' religion and thought. Therefore, on the basis of Philo, Goodenough finds a "great mystic conception of Judaism and of life" was developed.

> Yet since a Jew could not. . .simply become an initiate of Isis or Orpheus and remain a Jew as well, the amazingly clever trick was devised, we do not know when or by whom, of representing Moses as Orpheus and Hermes-Tat, and explaining that the Jewish "Wisdom" figure, by translation "Sophia," was identical with that "Female Principle in nature" which Plutarch identified as Isis! All that now needed to be done was to develop sufficient skill in allegory. . .whereby Judaism was at once transformed into the greatest, the only true, Mystery.[67]

Hence, according to Goodenough, Philo represented the pinnacle of this developing process. However scholars may disagree with Goodenough,[68] the allegorical method utilized by Philo and the use of Greek philosophy is proof of the effectiveness and extent of Hellenization. Whether Judaism truly became a mystery religion is not as important as the fact that it is characterized in terms that recall the initiation process of such cults as well as the higher ideas contained in Greek philosophy.

Philo insisted that the literal meaning of the law be observed. Indeed, it is Philo's contention that the Laws of Moses were the best imitation of the law of nature, that adhered to by Abraham and Moses by virtue of their intellect. Philo responds to members of the Jewish

community in Alexandria who apparently have discontinued use of the specific laws of Moses because they have already attained knowledge of the law of nature:

> There are some who, regarding laws in their literal sense in the light of symbols of matters belonging to the intellect, are over punctilious about the latter, while treating the former with easy-going neglect. . . . Nay, we should look on all these outward observances as resembling the body, and their inner meanings as resembling the soul. It follows that, exactly as we have to take thought for the body, because it is the abode of the soul, so we must pay heed to the letter of the laws.[69]

However,

> the Law, as commandments, was said to be only the projection of the true Law, the Logos, into the material medium of nouns and verbs. . . . But its spiritual value was secondary altogether to that of the great Source of the written Law, the Unwritten Law, the unwritten streaming Logos-Nomos of God. Only as one came up to this, the one true Law of Judaism, had one fulfilled the Law of Moses.[70]

Hence, Philo advances a concept of "logos" which goes beyond that of law or literal words and enunciates a concept of a living light, a wisdom, mystical or not, that allowed one to attain the highest spiritual perfection in life. "Logos" in Philo sometimes appears to be the "divine pattern of the Cosmos" with an independent existence; other times simply the "immanent divine reason which pervades it."[71]

The question remains as to Philo's contribution to this concept. Sandmel suggests that the importance of Philo's concept of Logos, and the rest of his theosophic writings for that matter, lies in its appearance in the Hellenistic milieu. That is to say, the environment helped shape the words and concepts of Philo and, adds Sandmel, those of Paul as well.[72]

Philo's emphasis on use of the intellect to perceive the initial creation of God and His essence[73] readily exemplifies Greek philosophical pursuit. Yet what Philo was pursuing was the God of Moses. Thus, he insists that the real origin of such Greek philosophy is found in Judaism and its biblical figures. Philo, then, bridges the gap between participating in Greek thought and maintaining strict adherence to his faith. This is the synthesis and the genius. This Hellenistic Jew was able to absorb the compelling philosophy of his environment and utilize it to enhance his own Judaism without feeling disloyal to his religious tradition. Sandmel sees Philo as

> saying something like this, "We Jews of Alexandria, loyal to our inherited Judaism, have come to understand it in the light of those themes, motifs, and comprehensions that are intimately part of us, for they are part of our new environment, and part of the intellectual horizons that have become natural to us. It is not that we are changing our religion, but rather we are understanding it from a new perspective."[74]

We should note at this juncture that the dominant philosophy of Alexandria, the main scene of contact of Judaism and Hellenistic thought, was Stoicism. In theory Stoicism, especially later on, was monotheistic, whether it was or was not in practice. Being intensely ethical, Stoicism was concerned with righteousness. Alexandrian Judaism, as we perceive it through Philo, found this philosophy comfortable. Greeks might say that Plato taught of one God; Jews knew Moses stated it long ago. This was just a matter of orientation.

W. L. Knox points out that the Jewish view of creation was that God created the world with divine wisdom, which was a pseudonym for Torah. This figure which we find in Proverbs[75] and Ecclesiasticus[76] is "the great mystery of post-exilic Judaism."[77] However, Knox sees

a development in this view upon contact with Greek thought:

> The effect of contact with Greek thought on the figure of wisdom was twofold. Wisdom became less obviously the personification of the Torah and became for more the divine power immanent in the cosmos, the rational element in man and the ruling power in the life of the wise man. In other words, it becomes the infused divine principle of Stoic cosmogony. . . .[78]

Hellenistic Judaism, however, as seen in Philo, eliminated polytheism "and the grosser elements of natural religion, at a time when the Stoics had succeeded only in reducing them to a comparatively harmless form by substituting ethical idealism for religion in the philosopher and leaving the common man to please himself."[79]

Knox believe that Philo did have a specific purpose in writing.

> The function of the philosophy [set forth by Philo] is to prove that Judaism is intellectually respectable, and so convince the Gentile that it has a claim to be heard, and dissuade the intelligentsia of Alexandrine Judaism from abandoning the religion of their fathers.[80]

There is some proof for this position as we note in Josephus' Antiquities that Philo's own nephew left Judaism for a career in the imperial service.[81] As mentioned earlier, the question still persists as to whether there was a motive of proselytism in his writing. Be that as it may, Knox seems to suggest that apologetics was an underlying factor.

Certainly, some of the allegories of Philo seem to predicate themselves on the unification of Jews into one people. We find this in his description of the High Priest as one who acts as mediator with God and who prays for the nation in order that he may join it into one communion similar to that of the several members of the human body.[82] W. L. Knox notes that the "thought that the members of the state or

of mankind are all members of one body is, of course, a Stoic commonplace; it is interesting to find it in Philo, since it shows that Jewish-Hellenistic thought was familiar with the conception which Paul develops into his doctrine that the Church is the body of Christ."[83]

The question is raised as to the scope of this Jewish-Hellenistic thought. That is, was Philo a unique phenomenon, as G. F. Moore insists?[84] This question is of great importance to our inquiry into the extent and influence of Jewish proselytism in the Graeco-Roman world for it touches on the Hellenistic Jewish structures and concepts which might have been offered to pagans.

E. R. Goodenough disagrees with Moore on the issue of Philo's unique expression of Hellenistic Judaism. He believes that Philo

> speaks to and of a group of mystic Jews, and contrasts their point of view frequently with that of the ordinary Jew, who could not 'cross the Jordan,' as he called it, that is, get beyond, while still observing the legal requirements, to come into the metaphysical reality that Philo found implicit in the Torah.[85]

Goodenough argues for the existence of a Hellenized Judaism, "different from rabbinic or 'normative' Judaism . . ." He states, however, that "only one body of evidence speaks directly for popular Judaism in the Graeco-Roman world, namely, the archaeological data."[86] He feels that Philo's interpretation of the Torah in terms of Hellenistic religious values and aspirations could have been that held by many in the Diaspora. However, there is little literary evidence for a Hellenized Judaism as a popular movement of the masses. Since the literary evidence is minute, Goodenough felt that other Jewish works should be examined. This led him to the archaeological evidence mentioned above.

Both Goodenough and S. W. Baron examined the remains of Judaism

in the Roman world after Christianity began. It seemed apparent to Goodenough that the Jewish art uncovered was most probably created under Hellenistic inspiration. That is, if Josephus and the Gospels can be trusted, as well as rabbinic references, to wit, that there was a protest against pictorial representation, then this Jewish art must be from the Hellenistic world. Goodenough asserts that "the character of the art itself suggested a Hellenized Jewish origin, for all remains of the art that I could find were perhaps orientalized, but belonged clearly by their techniques and the dress of the heroes, to Hellenistic tradition."[87]

The symbols found by Goodenough and Baron were: the menorah, Torah scroll, etrog and lulav, as well as the shofar, all clearly dependent on Jewish roots. However, also discovered were pagan symbols such as the wreath of victory, birds eating grapes, and the zodiac. (Philo himself thought that the stones on the breastplate of the High Priest represented the zodiac.)[88]

The usage of these symbols on Jewish graves and in synagogues would seem to point to a common meaning for these Jews. The victory wreath, for example, has obvious overtones of immortality, or at least the hope for it, when found in a burial place. Goodenough points out that the "crown of victory for Philo was the final vision."[89]

We note, as with Philo, that the method of assimilating Hellenistic thought modes and religious symbolism is through allegory. Philo, Goodenough asserts, sought not to abandon Judaism but enhance its meaning--to define it in terms of the society in which he lived. Jews judaized pagan symbols, giving them explanations in harmony with Judaism. They adopted the art and invested it with Jewish meaning.

Jewish symbolism represented a fusion of the Greek culture from which the art-symbols came and the Jewish culture which adopted them.

Goodenough insists that the Jewish symbols found in synagogues and cemeteries were against the grain of rabbinic Judaism. He states that "the rabbis knew very well that these representations were more than decorative" and thus were not allowed under rabbinic control.[90] He suggests that some other force must account for the proliferation of these Graeco-Jewish art symbols which appear to express a religious attitude.[91]

We must be cautious in evaluating Goodenough's findings. He believes that a mystical Hellenistic Judaism had to exist in order for later Christianity to have a foundation. I would agree with Dr. Sandmel when he proposes that we look at the evidence before reaching our conclusions on Hellenistic Jewry.[92] I agree with Goodenough that, indeed, in light of the writings we do have, coupled with the archaeological evidence, a strong case can be made for a Hellenistic-Jewish religious outlook which may have helped bridge the gap between Palestinian Judaism and nascent Christianity.

It is the existence and extent of Jewish proselytism in the Diaspora of the first Christian century which is the crux of our investigation. In the next chapter we will examine the evidence for active proselytizing in the Hellenistic world. With a keener understanding of the life and religious tendencies of Hellenistic Jews we are now better equipped to comprehend the motivations for such an activity.

Notes to Chapter II

1. Antiq. XIV. vii. 2.

2. Wars II. xviii. 7.

3. Against Apion. i. 22.

4. Letter of Aristeas, 12. For the text and analysis see The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, ed. R. H. Charles, II. pp. 368-390.

5. V. Tcherikover, Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959), p. 273. It should be noted that the Letter of Aristeas deals mainly with the creation of the Septuagint. The historical accuracy of Aristeas' account of the Pentateuch's translation is not readily accepted.

6. Ibid., see also p. 424, n. 45.

7. Ibid., p. 273.

8. Supra, n. 2.

9. Against Apion. ii. 4.

10. Antiq. XII. iii. 4.

11. Ibid.

12. Tcherikover, op. cit., p. 287f., see also p. 501-502, n. 60-62.

13. I Maccabees 15:15-24.

14. Ibid., see also E. Mary Smallwood, The Jews Under Roman Rule (1976) p. 121, n. 5.

15. Ibid.

16. The Embassy to Gaius, 281f.

17. Acts 13:14; 14:1; 16:12-14; 17:1; 17:10; 17:16; 18:2; 18:19; 28:14-17.

18. Op. cit., 155.

19. Pro Flaccus 28:66; as found in T. Reinach, Textes D'auteurs Grecs et Romains (Paris: 1895), p. 238.

20. Sibylline Oracles, III, 273.

21. Tcherikover, op. cit., p. 504f., n. 86.

22. Ibid.

23. The picture drawn by Philo in The Embassy to Caius (214f.) is one of inestimable proportions in terms of Jewish population.

24. Tcherikover, op. cit., p. 294f.

25. Against Apion ii. 4, 6.

26. Supra, n. 1.

27. Letter of Aristeas, 310.

28. Antiq., XIV. vii. 2.

29. H. A. Wolfson, "Philo on Jewish Citizenship in Alexandria," Journal of Biblical Literature, 63 (1944), 165-168.

30. H. I. Bell, Jews and Christians in Egypt (1924), p. 14, n. 1; M. J. Cook, "Judaism, Hellenistic, " Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Suppl. Vol.; p. 355; in general, see V. Tcherikover, op. cit., pp. 310-328 for a full discussion on this problem.

31. On the Life of Moses, 1:7, 35.

32. Wolfson, op. cit., p. 166.

33. Supra, n. 3.

34. Wars II. xviii. 7.

35. It has been noted that Josephus may have erred in ascribing the building of a pillar to Julius Caesar. Actually, it could have been Augustus Caesar. See Tcherikover, op. cit., p. 514, n. 81. Also M. J. Cook, op. cit., p. 355.

36. Antiq., XIV. x. 1.

37. Some scholars doubt, however, that these rights included that of citizenship. Indeed, M. J. Cook points out: "it is difficult to conceive of Greek cities bestowing citizen rights on people who refused to acknowledge the city's official cult; most likely Jews were eligible to become full citizens only if, renouncing their ancestral religion, they worshipped the gods of the πόλις "; op. cit., p. 355. Note also Tcherikover's summation on the issue, op. cit., pp. 327ff.

38. Antiq., XIV. x. 19.

39. Antiq., XIV. x. 12.

40. Against Apion ii. 6.

41. The Embassy To Gaius, 132. It is very possible that in many places the terms 'synagogue' and 'proseucha' had similar meanings. By virtue of Philo's testimony, however, it would appear that in Alexandria 'proseucha' referred to the houses of prayer specifically. Ellis Rivkin has suggested that there is a distinction between 'synagogue' and 'proseucha'. There is little doubt, however, that Jews did indeed meet for prayer and instruction in certain buildings designated for these purposes. See the excellent article by Isaiah Soone, "Synagogue," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, IV, 476-91, for a discussion of these terms. See also, Ellis Rivkin, "Ben Sira and the Nonexistence of the Synagogue: A study in Historical Method," in Daniel Jeremy Silver (ed.), In the Time of Harvest Essays in Honor of Abba Hillel Silver on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday (1963), 320-55; S. Sandmel, The First Christian Century in Judaism and Christianity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 102, n. 17; Menahem Stern, "Diaspora," Encyclopedia Judaica (Jerusalem: The Macmillan Co., 1971), p. 15; also references in Jacob Mann, "The Observance of the Sabbath and the Festivals in the First Two Centuries of the Current Era, according to Philo, Josephus, The New Testament and the Rabbinic Sources," Jewish Review, London, 1914, Jan.-April, IV, No. 23, 446ff.; G. F. Moore, op. cit., I, 307; R. H. Pfeiffer, History of New Testament Times (New York: Harper and Bros., 1949), p. 179.

42. Antiq., XVI. vi. ii.

43. The Embassy To Gaius, 156f.

44. Sibylline Oracles, III, 271-272.

45. S. W. Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1952), I, 190.

46. E. Mary Smallwood, op. cit., pp. 234-235, n. 55-60.

47. See Against Flaccus and The Embassy To Gaius.

48. E. Mary Smallwood provides an excellent summary, op. cit., pp. 235-255.

49. The Embassy To Gaius, 132-134.

50. Against Flaccus, 51.

51. E. Mary Smallwood, op. cit., p. 240; see also n. 75.

52. Antiq., XIX. v. 2.

53. See E. M. Smallwood, op. cit., p. 360f., where she explains citizen reaction to Jewish prosperity in Antioch provoking riots in 67 C.E. For the incident at Doris, see Antiq. XIX. vi. 3.

54. Antiq. XIX. vi. 3.

55. Letter of Aristeas, 9, 10.

56. Samuel Holmes, introduction to The Wisdom of Solomon, in The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, ed. R. H. Charles, I, p. 527.

57. Wisdom of Solomon, 3:18, 4:20.

58. Ibid., 4:7f.

59. See M. Hadas, "Wisdom of Solomon," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, IV, pp. 861-863, for a discussion on the Greek and Hebrew elements of this work.

60. Wisdom of Solomon, CC. 13, 14.

61. Sibylline Oracles, III, 8-45.

62. This format would also be utilized by some Christian writers to authenticate and accentuate their own cause. See the excellent introduction to The Sibylline Oracles by H. C. O. Lanchester in The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, ed. R. H. Charles, II, pp. 368-76.

63. Samuel Sandmel, Philo's Place in Judaism, p. 2.

64. The point becomes moot for our purposes when we realize that it was not Judaism but Christianity which preserved Philo's writings, thus proving their importance in Christian thought no matter what Philo's motives were at the time he wrote.

65. Nahum Glatzer, The Essential Philo, preface, p. viii-ix.

66. On the Cherubim, 12.

67. E. R. Goodenough, By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), p. 7.

68. See Morton Smith, "Erwin R. Goodenough," Encyclopedia Judaica, Vol. 7, p. 778f.; Samuel Sandmel, The First Christian Century in Judaism and Christianity, pp. 125ff.; Harry Austryn Wolfson, Philo-Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1947), I, p. 44f.

69. The Migration of Abraham, 89-93.

70. Goodenough, op. cit., p. 8.

71. Ibid.

72. S. Sandmel, op. cit.; see Chapter III.

73. On The Creation of the World, 10.

74. Sandmel, op. cit., p. 123.

75. Proverbs 1:20-33; 8:1-36.

76. Ecclesiasticus 1:4-10, 14-17; 51:13-26.

77. W. L. Knox, "Pharisaism and Hellenism," The Contact of Pharisaism with Other Cultures, ed. H. Loewy, Vol. 2, 66.

78. Ibid., p. 67.

79. Ibid., p. 70f.

80. Ibid., p. 72.

81. Antiq. XX. v. 2.

82. The Special Laws, XXIII.

83. W. L. Knox, op. cit., p. 82.

84. G. F. Moore, op. cit., I, p. 214.

85. E. R. Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Graeco-Roman Period (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953-68), I, 7.

86. Ibid., IV, p. 25.

87. Ibid., I, p. 24f.; see pp. 4-32 for details of this art.

88. On the Life of Moses, 3.

89. Goodenough, op. cit., p. 60.

90. Ibid., IV, p. 24; see Ludwig Blau's "Early Christian Archaeology from the Jewish Point of View," HUCA, III, 1926, 169-203. Writing of excavations at Bet Alpha, Dura, and Sheikh Ibreiq, he says, "Not only did there exist a pre-Talmudic Judaism, but there was an extra-Talmudic Judaism."

91. It is from this juncture that Goodenough begins his study to prove the existence of the Hellenistic Judaism implicit in the artwork uncovered.

92. S. Sandmel, op. cit., Chapter 3, provides an excellent synopsis of Hellenistic Judaism and a short critique of Goodenough's work in this area.

CHAPTER III

The Evidence for Jewish Proselytism In The Graeco-Roman World

We must first investigate the existence of Jewish proselytes and an active Jewish propaganda before drawing conclusions as to their possible effects on early Christianity. We will, therefore, examine our sources for evidence of Jewish proselytism: Philo, Josephus, the New Testament (primarily Acts), the Pseudepigrapha, and to a lesser extent the Apocrypha, and also the testimony of the Greek and Latin authors.

A. The Testimony of our Sources: Proselytes

Post-exilic Judaism had long advanced the notion that the peoples of the world would and should accept the God of Israel. Deutero-Isaiah had stressed the idea that Israel's mission was to bring other nations to the true God.[1] We find in the Apocryphal Book of Tobit (ca. second century B.C.E.) the belief that "all nations shall turn and fear the Lord God truly, and shall bury their idols."[2] There is no question that there were universalistic elements in Judaism at this time which were understandably enhanced by the fusion of the Hellenistic view of world unity with Diaspora Judaism.[3]

However, despite this universal tendency, the Jews on the whole did not give up their laws for the sake of compromise. Indeed, Philo tells us that the Jews were

> accustomed to accept death as willingly as if it were immortality, to save them from submitting to

> the destruction of any of their ancestral traditions, even the smallest, because as with buildings if a single piece is taken from the base, the parts that up to then seemed firm are loosened and slip away and collapse into the void thus made.[4]

Anti-Jewish activity (noted in the previous chapter) coupled with their own motivation towards universality, led Jews gradually to formulate a defense and an offense in order to maintain their laws and extend their teachings into the world of the Gentile. Only in this way could they preserve themselves and their faith while fulfilling Judaism's potential as the religion of mankind. F. M. Derwacter notes:

> Jews could not defend their faith without offering it to these others. Completely to convince meant completely to convert; completely to conquer meant completely to assimilate.[5]

Faced with attacks by such figures as Apion and Tacitus,[6] Jews responded with apologetics and propaganda.

Certain of the writings of Josephus and Philo can easily be viewed in this light. Josephus answers Apion by demonstrating the antiquity of the Jewish people, the honor bestowed on them by Greek and Roman authorities, and the virtue of their faith.[7] Philo points out that Judaism is the source of the Graeco-Roman philosophies. He emphasizes the superiority of monotheism and the greatness of Mosaic law.[8] With the exclusiveness of the Jews attacked and their humanity maligned,[9] Josephus replies:

> we, though we do not think fit to imitate other institutions, yet do we willingly admit of those that desire to partake of ours, which I think I may reckon to be a plain indication of our humanity. . . .[10]

Philo speaks of the attraction of Jewish institutions for the non-Jew:

> They attract and win the attention of all, of barbarians, of Greeks, of dwellers in the mainland and islands, of nations of the east and the west,

> of Europe and Asia, of the whole inhabited world from end to end.[11]

Though Philo seems to have had a flair for overstatement, we need only look to our other sources to see that Jewish proselytes were to be found in the Graeco-Roman world. Josephus tells us that the Jews of Antioch "made proselytes of a great many of the Greeks perpetually, and thereby, after a sort, brought them to be a portion of their own body.[12] He notes elsewhere that many of the Grecians "have come over to our laws."[13]

The New Testament is not silent on the matter of Jewish proselytes. Indeed, the often quoted statement in Matthew[14] that the Jews traversed land and sea to make one proselyte appears to refer to a proselytism movement. (It is possible that this remark is a reaction by the early Church to the success of Jewish proselytism; we will explore this further at a later point.) The Book of Acts speaks of a convert to Judaism in Antioch,[15] as well as the presence of "devout converts" at the local synagogue.[16] The mention of these proselytes indicates that they were recent converts, still known for their Gentile backgrounds, and thus evidences the attractiveness of Judaism in the first Christian century.

The story of the conversion of the royal family of Adiabene clearly illustrates Jewish proselytism at work. Here we find that Izates, heir to the throne, is visiting a neighboring monarch. There he comes upon "a certain Jewish merchant, whose name was Ananias," who had "got among the women that belonged to the kind, and taught them to worship God according to the Jewish religion."[17] Ananias persuades Izates to embrace Judaism while another Jew back in Adiabene persuades Izates' mother, Queen Helena, to join the Jewish faith.[18]

Conversion to Judaism, it should be noted, meant a change in life. Writing at the end of the first century C.E., Tacitus notes that the acceptance of Judaism led proselytes to "despise the gods, to abjure their country and forget their parents, their brothers and their children. . . ."[19] It would seem clear that conversion to Judaism was a "social revolution." We might pause at this point to underscore the significance of conversion to Judaism in contradistinction to the other "religions" of the day. A. D. Nock, in discussing this period, notes that political takeovers and cultural interplay did not lead

> to any definite crossing of religious frontiers in which an old spiritual home was left for a new one once and for all, but to man's having one foot on each side of a fence which was cultural and not creedal. They led to an acceptance of new worship as useful supplements and not as substitutes, and they did not involve the taking of a new way of life in place of the old.[20]

Nock calls this phenomenon "adhesion" as opposed to "conversion." "Conversion" is . . .

> The reorientation of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning which implies a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right.[21]

Judaism demanded such faith, not merely the involvement in a rite but a new life. Such a break with the past is indeed that to which Tacitus refers above. As Nock describes, the mystery cults said to the Hellenistic Gentile:

> You are not in bad shape; we will of course give you a preliminary rite or rites of disinfection which will insure the requisite ritual purity. That is to be followed by our holy ceremony, which will confer on you a special kind of blessedness, which guarantees to you happiness after death.[22]

While Judaism said to a would-be proselyte:

> You are in your sins. Make a new start, put aside idolatry and the immoral practices which go with it, become a naturalized member of the Chosen People by a three fold rite of baptism, circumcision, and offering, live as God's law commands, and you will have every hope of a share in the life of the world to come.[23]

With this keener understanding of the meaning of conversion, we return now to our examination of Jewish proselytes in the Graeco-Roman world. Speaking of proselytes in his day, Philo, in partial agreement with Tacitus, notes that "these men have forsaken their country and their national customs. . . and have come over to piety."[24] The Epistle of Barnabas (ca. 130 C.E.) is aware of a movement towards Judaism, exhorting its readers, "that we should not rush forward as proselytes of their laws."[25] This concern on the part of early Christianity with Jewish proselytes clearly indicates their numbers and strength.

Philo notes that under Mosaic law, "newcomers too should be accorded every favour and consideration as their due. . . God commands all members of the nation to love the incomers, not only as friends and kinsfolk but as themselves in body and soul. . ."[26] Philo goes on to emphasize that once Gentiles have converted they "become at once temperate, continent, modest, gentle, kind, humane, serious, just, high-minded, truth-lovers. . ."[27] Indeed, the praise and attention Philo gives to proselytes make it seem highly probable that converts to Judaism were numerous in Alexandria and that some form of proselytizing was a factor in Jewish life.

We find additional evidence of the attraction to Judaism in the writings of Seneca. Writing in the time of Nero, the philosopher complains bitterly about the widespread adoption of Jewish practices:

". . . the customs of this accursed race have gained such influence that they are now received throughout all the world. The vanquished have given laws to their victors."[28] Further, it should be noted that the upper class in Rome did not remain untouched by Judaism. According to Josephus, a noble Roman lady named Fulvia, wife of the senator Saturnimus, had become a proselyte to Judaism.[29] Josephus relates how she was swindled by Jewish thieves posing as money collectors for the Temple. Allegedly because of this incident, Tiberius banished the Jews from Rome.[30] We are unsure how far to trust Josephus in this account. Yet, at the very least, we have before us a form of propaganda attributing the acceptance of Judaism to an upper class Roman. H. Leon, in his excellent study The Jews of Ancient Rome, concludes:

> It is not unlikely that Sejanus (prefect of Rome), taking advantage of the activity of the Jews in gaining proselytes at a time when the Emperor was trying to strengthen the traditional religion of Rome, and profiting by the scandalous Fulvia episode, persuaded Tiberius to expel from Rome those Jews who could be so treated under the Roman law.[31]

In other words, the proselytizing efforts were sufficiently bothersome and successful that Jews were punished for the activity.

We have the further testimony of Epictetus (ca. 50-130 C.E.):

> Whenever we see a man halting between two faiths, we are in the habit of saying, "He is not a Jew, he is only acting the part." But when he adopts the attitude of mind of the man who has been baptized and has made his choice, then he is a Jew in fact and is called one.[32]

Dio Cassius (ca. 150-235 C.E.) also is well aware that people of various backgrounds practice the Jewish faith: "What is the origin of this term /Jew/? I do not know. But it applies to all men, even of different races, who follow the laws of the Jews."[33] Though the last two remarks come from the second century C.E. it appears safe to say that the

existence of proselytes was not considered a new phenomenon by these writers. They seem familiar with the situation, suggesting that Jewish proselytes had been around for quite a while.

Justin Martyr (ca. 150 C.E.) also makes frequent mention of proselytes in his Dialogue with Trypho, going to great lengths to persuade Trypho, "and . . . those who wish to become converts /to Judaism/," of the veracity of the Christian message.[34] Indeed, for Justin's passionate argument to make sense the presence of proselytes (perhaps in great number) is to be assumed. The existence of Jewish converts and the attractiveness of Judaism have motivated his remarks.

We also cite the Latin inscriptions found in the Jewish catacombs in Rome. H. Leon notes:

> Among the earliest to be copied of the Jewish inscriptions of Rome is that of the proselyte Beturia (for Veturia) Paulla, found on the fragment of a sarcophagus (523). We learn from her epitaph that she was "consigned to her eternal home" at the age of eighty-six years and six months, after having been a proselyte with the same Sara for sixteen years. She was also honored as the Mother of two Synagogues, those of the Camesians and the Volumnesians.[35]

Leon makes mention of several other inscriptions concerning Jewish proselytes.[36] They complement the picture we now have of Hellenistic Jews enthusiastically accepting converts and Gentiles actively seeking to join Judaism in the first and second centuries C.E. On the basis of the evidence noted we may conclude that at this time proselytes existed in Antioch,[37] in Rome,[38] in Alexandria,[39] in Carthage,[40] in Cyrene,[41] in lands east of Palestine,[42] and according to Acts, throughout the Graeco-Roman world.[43]

B. The Testimony of Our Sources: God-Fearers

There is a by-product of Jewish proselytism which cannot be overlooked in our study. I refer to those Gentiles who were motivated to accept Judaism but only to a limited degree. That is, they attached themselves to Jewish circles, yet never officially became converts to Judaism. These people are usually referred to as "God-fearers."[44] There is, to be sure, no such classification as "semi-proselyte" in Judaism. The testimony of our sources, however, indicating a preponderance of Gentiles who involved themselves with Diaspora Judaism is evidence of its attraction. By getting some idea of the proportions of Judaism's appeal we will have a better basis for judging its possible effects on early Christianity. I refer specifically to the acceptance of the new faith by those previously drawn towards Hellenistic Judaism.

Josephus speaks of trouble in Damascus due to the influence of Judaism on many of the wives of the men of the city.[45] We also find mention of the Empress Poppaea, wife of Nero, who is represented as being in sympathy with the Jews and is referred to as "God-fearing,"[46] though never called a proselyte. Josephus also quotes Strabo in explaining that the Jewish customs were especially strong in Egypt and Cyrene.[47] Clearly the people were drawn to certain customs without fully joining the Jewish people. We note, also, Josephus' mention of donations to the temple given by "all the Jews throughout the habitable earth, and those that worshipped God. . . ." This appears to be a reference to non-Jews who, nevertheless, are "fearers of Heaven."[48]

Many Gentile writers have remarked about a group of people who observed the Jewish Sabbath, feasts, and other customs. Plutarch (ca. 46-120 C.E.) speaks of "a free man who is suspected of practicing

Judaism," and who appears at a trial and is ridiculed by Cicero.[49] Horace tells of an occasion where he hopes to engage his friend Aristius Fuscus in conversation. When approached Fuscus declares that he cannot talk business for "today is the thirtieth day, a Sabbath. Would you affront the circumcized Jews?" Horace replies that it is of no concern to him, to which Fuscus replies that he is "a somewhat weaker brother, one of the many. You will pardon me, I'll talk another day."[50] It would appear that Horace's friend is referring to the Sabbath of the New Moon and thinks enough of the Jews not to wish to transgress their laws.

Probably the best example in Roman literature of the partial observer of Judaism, in contrast to the proselyte, is found in Juvenal. He speaks of a father who follows the Sabbath, observes certain dietary laws, and "worships only the clouds and the sky." Because this man does not like to work on the Sabbath, Juvenal concludes he becomes a God-fearer whose children go so far as to be circumcized; "trained to despise the Roman laws, they learn to keep the laws of the Jews which Moses wrote in a mystic book."[51] It appears to be the case that, where circumcision stood as a barrier to the adult who feared God, the child was initiated into the covenant becoming a full-fledged member.[52]

We find important corroborating testimony in the Book of Acts: the account of the centurion Cornelias. He is called "a devout man who feared God."[53] He is, nevertheless, a Gentile with whom Peter hesitates to associate because he is not a Jew.[54] This "God-fearer" is represented as giving alms to the Jewish people and praying regularly to God.[55] He thus maintained an unofficial but definite relationship with Judaism.

We find in Acts frequent use of the terms employed to characterize Cornelius. In the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia, we find Paul talking to the "men of Israel, and you that fear God."[56] It might appear that these classifications are synonyms, yet we find several verses later Paul's exhortation to the "sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you that fear God."[57] It would seem that Paul is referring to two distinct segments of his audience.[58] It is important to emphasize that these people who "fear God" are present at the synagogue which would indicate some measure of informal acceptance by the Jews. It would seem logical that this was the location in which many non-Jews learned of Judaism and to which they came for further instruction. At Philippi Paul meets Lydia "who was a worshiper of God."[59] Later in Corinth, upon being opposed by the Jews, Paul announces he will go to the Gentiles. Thus he goes to the house of Titius Justus, "a worshiper of God," whose house was next to the synagogue.[60] We find Paul in Thessalonica arguing his case in the synagogue. There he persuades "many of the devout Greeks" to join the new faith.[61] Later at the synagogue in Beroea, he finds eager followers among "Greek women of high standing as well as men."[62] Several verses later we find Paul at the synagogue in Athens arguing "with the Jews and the devout persons."[63] In all these passages it seems evident that we are dealing with non-Jews who gathered in the synagogues to follow, in some measure, the Jewish faith. This is further evidence of the attraction of Judaism amongst non-Jews as well as proof for the existence of "God-fearers."

It should be pointed out that some have seen the different classifications of "proselyte" and "God-fearer" in Acts as corresponding to the rabbinical categories of "proselyte of righteousness" (ger

hatzedek) and "proselyte of the gate" (ger hasha'ar).[64] G. F. Moore, however, points out that the "phrase ger sha'ar, 'gate proselyte,' is not found in any Talmudic source."[65] Indeed, its use, along with the ger toshab ("resident alien"), cannot be construed as referring to the devout non-Jew in Acts. The former designation appears not until the thirteenth century.[66] The latter speaks of the non-Jew who settles in Jewish territory and must follow certain rules in order to remain.[67] The Hebrew original of "God-fearers" appears as "Yirei Shamayim" (literally, "fearers of Heaven")[68] and seems to refer to those who can take on the yoke of the commandments, thus becoming proselytes. Therefore, it would seem that we cannot find any formal rabbinic classification for a non-Jew who assumes partial observance of Jewish law. Yet we can find proof of the existence and acceptance of such a person in rabbinic literature. The Roman senator, found in Deuteronomy Rabba, who helped delay the enactment of the Emperor's decree of Jewish expulsion, is referred to as "God-fearing man." It is clear that he is not a proselyte because the account explicitly states that he was circumcized only just before his death. Even before this, however, we see recognition and care expressed for this "God-fearer" by Rabbi Gamaliel and others.[69]

The Talmudic account of Antonius again indicates the Jewish recognition of a Gentile who maintained partial observance of Jewish law. Here we find an interchange between the non-Jew Antoninus and Rabbi Judah. Antoninus inquires whether he will be able to eat Leviathan with the rabbi in the world to come. Rabbi Judah answers that he will. Antoninus expresses amazement that if this be the case why is it that he may not share in the Passover meal. Rabbi Judah

explains that no uncircumcized person may eat of it.[70] This account illustrates that the Jew, at least at the time this was written, had a place for the God-fearing Gentile in his eschatological outlook. Indeed, such an attitude would likely be prevalent with Diaspora Jews among whom acceptance of non-Jews was frequent and encouraged.[71]

On the basis of the testimony cited in Josephus, Philo, certain Greek and Latin authors, and the Book of Acts, we are certain of the existence of two groups of Gentiles who were attracted to Judaism. One group, the proselytes, gave up their past to join completely with the Jews.[72] We also find a group that followed certain of the laws of Judaism and who, while never officially converted, nevertheless are considered a definite segment of the Jewish community.[73]

C. Active Propaganda

Having cited the evidence for proselytes and devout Gentiles, we now more fully answer the compelling question: To what extent was there an active propaganda to convert Gentiles to Judaism? To be sure, people may have chosen Judaism by virtue of association with local Jews. Indeed, the testimony of Josephus and Philo[74] indicates that non-Jews were, in many cases, attracted to the religious customs of Jews who had settled in their land simply by personal observation. Is there, then, any reason to believe that Jews in the Graeco-Roman world actively sought converts to any large degree?

Let us look, for a moment, at the famous verse from Matthew 23:15 where Jesus is alleged to have addressed the Pharisees: "You traverse sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves." At first glance it would appear that this verbal blast was directed

against the Pharisees in Palestine. To be sure it speaks of a propaganda but seems to refer to that enacted by one sect of Judaism. However, there was a growing tendency of using 'Pharisee' and 'Jew' as synonyms.[75] Indeed we find it entirely possible to conceive of a non-Palestinian author identifying what was considered a negative Jewish activity with the "infamous" Pharisees. That Matthew was written outside of Palestine and decades removed from the time of Jesus is generally recognized.[76] The language used by the author has even been characterized as "that of a competitor."[77] It would appear, then, that we could very well be reading about a contemporary Jewish missionary movement taking place in the locale in which the Gospel was written. The strongest argument, though it is not conclusive, favors Antioch as the probable site of the Gospel's composition.[78] F. M. Derwacter believes this to be compelling evidence that Matthew 23:15 refers to active Jewish propaganda in Antioch.[79] Furthermore, the fact that this verse is without parallel in the Gospels of Mark and Luke adds to the argument that the author of Matthew was probably not dependent on any other source for its inclusion. Thus it is highly likely that he wrote the verse, based on his own experience, and attributed it to Jesus. Whereas, we are not totally convinced that this experience need necessarily have taken place in Antioch, it would appear convincing that this verse does indeed refer to the existence of a propaganda in the Diaspora, a propaganda of which the author of the gospel was well aware and to which he was bitterly opposed.

We find in another Christian source a verse which seems to refer to an active Jewish propaganda. In the Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians (ca. 110 C.E.) Ignatius exhorts his readers: "if anyone

preach the Jewish law unto you, listen not unto him."[80] Once again the passionate language of the author indicates a contemporary danger presented by active Jewish proselytism. The earlier existence of this activity is further indicated by Josephus' account of the conversion of the royal family of Adiabene,[81] to which we have already referred. We mention it here to re-emphasize the action-oriented propaganda that is attributed to Ananias and to two other Jews. Josephus' reference to the making of proselytes in Antioch, also cited earlier,[82] indicates far more than a passive proselytizing movement. That the Jews in Rome were active proselytizers is noted as early as the time of Augustus. The poet Horace notes that if his critic will not indulge him his weaknesses then Horace will be joined by a large band of fellow poets who, "like the Jews, will compel you to make one of our throng."[83]

Hellenistic Jewish literature furnishes further proof for the existence of an active Jewish propaganda to convert Gentiles. Derwacter notes that, in some cases, this literature "sought to make its acceptance surer in Gentile circles by obscuring its Jewish origin and by affecting names which had won a place in Gentile religious thought."[84] Thus we find one of the most important of these works under the name of the Sibylline Oracles.[85] While the oracles contain Jewish and Christian material, we refer specifically to Books III - V which can be shown to be, to a large degree, of Jewish origin.[86] In these Jewish Sibylline Oracles we find the inspired Sibyl, the ancient bearer of divine messages, espousing pro-Jewish sentiments to the nations of the world. In such a way, the Jewish author "took ancient oracles and pieced them together, adding passages of his own which breathed strong

monotheism and the glorification of the Jewish people."[87] In Book III we find a denunciation of idolatry and a lauding of the true God.[88] The reader is told that if he does not flee from his idolatrous life then he "shall be burned with torches the livelong day throughout the age." However, the Sibyl emphasizes, "they who honor the true and everlasting God inherit life, throughout the aeonian time dwelling in the fertile garden of Paradise. . . ."[89] We find here a reference to the salvation offered to all who accept the One God. As noted previously,[90] this promise of salvation was extremely important to many people living in the fluctuating Graeco-Roman world. The Sibyl exhorts the idolators to "reverence the name of the Father of all and forget him not."[91] The message of repentance is evident when they are told to "stretch your hands to heaven, seek forgiveness for your former deeds."[92] Finally, the non-Jew is clearly urged to convert: "Come, let us change the grievous custom we have received from our fathers, whereby, performing processions and rites to gods of stone and earthenware, they had no sense. Let us turn ourselves and hymn the immortal God. . . ."[93] If indeed these books are to be identified as, for the most part, being Jewish, then we clearly have evidence of an active Jewish literary propaganda as early as the second century B.C.E.

Other examples of similar literary propaganda attributed to Gentile authors can be found.[94] As with the Jewish Sibylline Oracles, we find an exhortation to the pagan to change his ways and join the righteous followers of the One God in a life of righteousness and salvation. The Letter of Aristeas is a further pseudepigraphic work which illustrates the kind of literary propaganda utilized by Hellenistic Judaism. Probably penned in the first century B.C.E.,[95] directly or

indirectly it emphasizes the great value of the Septuagint for non-Jews. As H. T. Andrews notes: "it is not too much to say that the writer's one object is to demonstrate the supremacy of the Jewish people--the Jewish priesthood, the Jewish law, the Jewish philosophy, and the Jewish Bible."[96] Indeed, it is easy to see how this work, in part, exemplifies an attempt to convince non-Jews of the correct path to be taken. We also note that the Septuagint could be viewed as an instrument of propaganda by virtue of the acceptance and praise given it, as we are told, by a pagan king.[97]

It has been suggested that The Wisdom of Solomon (ca. 100 B.C.E.)[98] which is obviously not attributed to a pagan author, is also evidence of a Jewish propaganda.[99] While this work, representative of the Wisdom literature, does place an emphasis on the rewards of the righteous and the punishment of the idolators,[100] it is not at all clear that the author intends his message for anyone other than Jewish readers.

It would appear quite evident, on the other hand, that Philo speaks specifically to Gentiles in an active literary attempt to bring them to Judaism. Here, in the name of Moses, he "exhorts everyone everywhere to pursue piety and justice." Upon repentance and recognition of the One God, he offers the high reward "of membership in the best of commonwealths."[101] Here, as in the rest of his treatise On The Virtues, Philo's writing exemplifies Jewish literary propaganda aimed at convincing the non-Jew of the supremacy of the Jewish God and the benefits of joining the Jewish people.

D. Official Reaction to Jewish Proselytism

Having investigated the existence of Jewish proselytes and devout Gentiles, as well as having cited examples of active Jewish propaganda,

we will conclude this chapter with mention of the official reaction to this proselytizing activity. After all, a reaction is evidence of an action taken. Thus, reaction to Jewish proselytism is added evidence of the success of this endeavor. We have already spoken of the remark made by Horace where he refers to the way Jews compel others to join their faith.[102] T. Reinach remarks that this comment is an "allusion-la plus ancienne dans la litterature romain-a la rage de proselytisme qui distinguait alors les Juifs."[103] We note in the comments by Horace,[104] Seneca,[105] and Juvenal,[106] to name a few, the anti-Jewish reaction brought about by the act of Jewish proselytism. We also have noted the writings of Justin Martyr whose Dialogue with Trypho underscores the seriousness with which Christianity, seeking to consolidate its strength, viewed Jewish propaganda. So, too, as late as in the third century C.E., we find Tertullian in Carthage writing a treatise in reaction to Jewish proselytizing efforts entitled An Answer to The Jews.[107]

However quite earlier than this we have the first official government reaction to Jewish proselytism. In 139 B.C.E. we are told that Jews were expelled from Rome for seeking to infect the Romans with their ways.[108] Though there has been some question as to the accuracy of this statement, attributed to Valerius Maximus, the possibility is that it is based in fact.[109] We find a further mention of Jews being expelled from Rome by Tiberius in 19 C.E. Earlier we noted that this reaction was in part due to the crime perpetrated against the wealthy proselyte Fulvia. However, Tacitus explains that this expulsion was due to the danger of Jewish propaganda. Indeed, he notes that some of those who had taken on the Jewish mode of life were sent to suffer in the mines of Sardinia.[111] Furthermore, there is some strong evidence

to support the possibility that in 95 C.E. Domitian punished his niece Flavia Domitilla and her husband Flavius Clemens, who was the Emperor's cousin, for adopting a Jewish life.[112] However, Leon emphasizes that although the statement by Dio Cassius specifically refers to their having been accused of practicing Judaism, "Christian tradition has made of Clemens and Domitilla martyrs in a persecution of the Christians by Domitian, a view which is often repeated and accepted by modern scholars."[113] Nevertheless, as Leon points out, the statement by Dio Cassius coupled with the image presented to us of Domitian's tyranny (i.e., his oppressive tax of the Jews: Fiscus Iudaicus)[114] argue strongly for the oppressive measures having been taken against Jewish proselytizers. Finally, Hadrian's edict against circumcision seems clearly to have had, at least partially, a motive of checking the spread of Jewish proselytes.[115] We note that Hadrian's successor, Antoninus Pius, permitted the Jews alone to practice this rite, and only on fellow Jews.[116] This would seem to indicate an official cognition of Jewish proselytism which in turn elicited a public edict forbidding non-Jews from being circumcized.

Throughout this chapter we have cited the evidence indicating the presence of a flourishing and active Jewish propaganda. The proponents of this propaganda sought and found numerous proselytes to Judaism. The fact that many other non-Jews, while never converting, were attracted to Judaism, is further proof of the success of this missionary endeavor. The variety of references to this proselytizing movement, by Jew and Gentile alike, likewise argues for its strength and scope. With the existence of Jewish proselytism firmly established we may now move to our investigation of its effects on early Christianity. Our concern

centers on whether Jewish proselytism can be shown to have been a factor in the acceptance of Christianity in the Graeco-Roman world.

Notes to Chapter III

1. Isaiah 44:5.
2. Book of Tobit 14:5.
3. See above, p. 1f.
4. The Embassy to Gaius, 16:117.
5. F. M. Derwacter, Preparing the Way for Paul, p. 70.
6. In general, see Against Apion and Tacitus' History Vol. 2-4; found in T. Reinach Textes D'auteurs Grecs et Romains (hereafter referred to as Textes) pp. 301-306.
7. Against Apion.
8. On Circumcision, On Monarchy, On Coveting, On Humanity, as well as Philo's defense Against Flaccus.
9. Against Apion II. 31.
10. Ibid.
11. On the Life of Moses, 2:20.
12. Wars, VII. iii. 3.
13. Against Apion, II. 11.
14. Matthew 23:15.
15. Acts 6:5.
16. Ibid., 13:43.
17. Antiq. XX. ii. 2. I believe that S. Sandmel's classification of this as an example of "passive reception" of a convert is an overstatement. I respectfully beg to differ with him based on the activity of Ananias noted in this account. See S. Sandmel, The First Christian Century in Judaism and Christianity, p. 21, n. 45.
18. Ibid., XX. ii. 4.
19. Tacitus History V. 5; Reinach, Textes, p. 307.
20. A. D. Nock, Conversion, p. 6f.
21. Ibid., p. 7.

22. Ibid., p. 12.

23. Ibid.

24. On Those Sacrifices, X.

25. Epistle of Barnabas, 3:6.

26. On the Virtues, X.

27. Ibid., XXXIV.

28. Reported by St. Augustine in De Civitate Dei, VI. II; Reinach, p. 263.

29. Antiq. XVIII. iii. 5.

30. Ibid.

31. Harry J. Leon, The Jews of Ancient Rome p. 19.

32. Epictetus, as found in Arrianus, Dissertationes, II, 9:19-21. W. A. Oldfather, trans. Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism (hereafter referred to as GLA), p. 543.

33. Dio Cassius History of Rome, XXXVII, 16-17; Reinach, Textes, p. 182.

34. Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter 24.

35. H. J. Leon, op. cit., p. 254.

36. Ibid.

37. Acts 6:5; Wars VII. iii. 3.

38. Antiq. XVIII. iii. 5; Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho; Dio Cassius, Inscriptions.

39. Philo, On The Virtues.

40. As evidenced by Tertullian's mention of a conversation with a proselyte in his treatise An Answer to the Jews, as found in The Anti-Nicene Fathers, ed. Rev. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Buffalo, 1885) V. 3.

41. Acts 2:10.

42. Antiq., XX. ii. 2-4.

43. Acts 2:1-10.

44. G. F. Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, I, 325; also F. M. Derwacter, op. cit., p. 30f.

45. Wars II. 2.

46. Antiq. XX. viii. 11. See also H. J. Leon, op. cit., p. 253.

47. Antiq. XIV. vii. 2.

48. Ibid.; see also G. F. Moore, op. cit., p. 325, n. 2.

49. Plutarch, Life of Cicero, c. 7; Reinach, Textes, p. 150.

50. Horace, Sermones I, 9:69-70; GLA, p. 325.

51. Juvenal Satires XIV, 96-106; Reinach, Textes, p. 292f.

52. See Reinach, Textes, p. 293, n. 1.

53. Acts 10:2.

54. Acts 10:28.

55. Acts 10:2.

56. Acts 13:16.

57. Acts 13:26.

58. H. Pope points out that some scholars have maintained that these verses refer to proselytes and not "God-fearers." Their proof rests with Acts 13:43 where the listeners are designated as "Jews and devout converts." Pope believes that "though this might appear a neat case for the synonymy of 'God-fearer' and 'proselyte' . . . it may be simply a textual error or a loose use of the term 'proselyte.' See Popes' article on the "Proselyte," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, III, p. 928f. I note that the 1818 edition of the Bible by the American Bible Society translates Acts 13:42: "when the Jews had gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath." Here we find non-Jewish adherents to the synagogue. So, too, the 1880 version of the Bible by Bishops and other clergy of the Anglican Church.

59. Acts 16:14.

60. Acts 18:6, 7.

61. Acts 17:4.

62. Acts 17:12.

63. Acts 17:17.

64. E. Schürer, History of the Jewish People, Eng. trans., Div. II, Vol. II, pp. 316ff.

65. G. F. Moore, op. cit., p. 341.

66. Ibid.

67. Avodah Zarah 64b.

68. E. g., Isaiah 44:5. See G. F. Moore, op. cit., p. 325, n. 2.

69. E. g., Deut. Rabba 2:24.

70. Meg. 74a.

71. See above, nn. 12-19; 24-33.

72. See above, n. 19.

73. It would be likely that proselytes to Christianity would emerge from this group which, due to certain barriers, e.g., circumcision, never accepted Judaism completely (which explains why we read of more female converts than male; see H. J. Leon, op. cit., p. 256). The importance and probability of this occurrence will be discussed in our concluding chapter.

74. Wars VII. iii. 3; Against Apion II. 11; On the Life Of Moses II. 20.

75. F. M. Derwacter, op. cit., p. 43, n. 6.

76. H. B. Green, The Gospel According to St. Matthew, p. 29ff., also G. D. Kilpatrick, The Origins of the Gospel According to St. Matthew, p. 7.

77. H. B. Green, op. cit., p. 191.

78. G. D. Kilpatrick, loc. cit.; B. H. Streeter, The Four Gospels, pp. 500-523; Sherman E. Johnson points out that even if Antioch is not the site, the larger setting of Syria is fairly convincing. See The Interpreter's Bible, VII, intro. to The Gospel According to St. Matthew, p. 241.

79. F. M. Derwacter, op. cit., p. 43ff.

80. Epistle of Ignatius to the Philadelphians, 6:1. Trans. from The Anti-Nicene Fathers, ed. Rev. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, V. 1.

81. Antiq. XX. ii. 2-4.

82. See above, n. 12.

83. Horace Satires I, 4, 138f.; Reinach, Textes, p. 244.

84. F. M. Derwacter, op. cit., p. 48f.

85. For an analysis and text of the Jewish Sibylline Oracles, see Lanchester, in The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, ed. R. H. Charles (hereafter referred to as Charles) II, 368-406; also J. J. Collins, The Sibylline Oracles of Egyptian Judaism (1974), p. 21ff.

86. J. J. Collins, loc. cit.

87. Lanchester, op. cit., p. 370.

88. Sibylline Oracles III, 8-48.

89. Ibid., 44-48.

90. See above, p. 1f.

91. Sibylline Oracles III, 50.

92. Ibid., IV, 66.

93. Ibid., V, 93-97.

94. See Derwacter, op. cit., p. 49, n. 36, for a list of examples.

95. See H. T. Andrews' discussion on the date of the Epistle in Charles, op. cit., p. 85ff.

96. Ibid.

97. The Letter of Aristeas 3.2.

98. See G. B. Gray's discussion of the date in Charles, op. cit., p. 627f.

99. F. M. Derwacter, op. cit., p. 50f.

100. Wisdom of Solomon XIII-XV.

101. On The Virtues XXXIII. 175.

102. See above, n. 83.

103. T. Reinach, op. cit., p. 244.

104. See above, n. 83.

105. See above, n. 28.

106. See above, n. 51.

107. See above, n. 40.

108. Valerius Maximus quoted in the Epitome of Julius Paris I, 3,3; Reinach, Textes, pp. 258-59.

109. For a discussion on this issue see Reinach, Textes, p. 259, n. 3.

110. Antiq. XVIII. iii. 5.

111. Annals II. 85; Reinach, Textes, p. 295.

112. Dio Cassius Epitome of Xiphilin, LXVII, 14; Reinach, Textes, p. 195f.

113. H. J. Leon, op. cit., p. 34. In general see Leon, pp. 33-35, for a discussion of the case of Clemens and Domitilla.

114. See Suetonius Domitian, II, XII; Reinach, Textes, p. 333.

115. F. M. Derwacter, op. cit., p. 59; also H. J. Leon, op. cit., p. 252.

116. T. Reinach, Textes, p. 343, n. 2.

CHAPTER IV

Was Jewish Proselytism a Factor in the Rapid Acceptance of Christianity in the Graeco-Roman World?

> . . . any attempt to understand the development of early Christianity must recognize the fact that it is largely the story of the transformation and modification of the heritage from Judaism under the influence of the thought and practice of the Graeco-Roman world. To neglect the influence of either heredity or environment cannot fail to give a one-sided and essentially inaccurate picture.[1]

This observation by Morton Enslin holds true for Hellenistic Judaism as well. In our investigation we have attempted to understand the religious elements which were the inheritance of Hellenistic Jews as well as the influence of the Graeco-Roman-Oriental world upon them. This was necessary in order to gain a more accurate picture of Jewish proselytism which, as has been shown, was a factor in the Hellenistic Jewish experience. Now we seek to explore whether it is possible to say that Jewish proselytism was a factor in the rapid acceptance and Hellenization of early Christianity in the lands of the Dispersion. As Enslin emphasizes, the influences of heredity and environment are extremely important. We propose to illustrate that Hellenistic Jewish proselytism served to some degree as the hereditary background and environment of Christianity and hence a catalytic agent in its spread in the Graeco-Roman world; that indeed it did not inhibit but rather enhanced the growth of early Christianity.

A. The Problem of our Sources

Our earliest sources which offer direct testimony about the Christian

mission in the Graeco-Roman world are Paul's Epistles and the Book of Acts. In terms of events and descriptions, however, Paul's Epistles provide us with but sparse information. They deal, for the most part, with his eschatological outlook and theology of the risen Christ. We can, however, find some reference to historical conflicts (such as the circumcision issue) in Paul's genuine epistles.[2] Acts, on the other hand, deals almost exclusively with the history of the early Church. It presents precisely the kind of information one would need concerning where and to whom the early Christian missionaries preached and, indeed, it has long served as the great source for many reconstructions of early Christian history. Regrettably, however, one must be extremely cautious about accepting information contained in Acts; it exhibits the tendentiousness of its author, "Luke;" precisely as was the case with the Third Gospel itself.[3] When, however, material in Acts can be shown to buttress or be in line with our reliable sources, such as Paul's genuine epistles or the Graeco-Roman sources noted in our previous chapter, then perhaps Acts can be of some use.[4]

We propose, then, to sift carefully through Acts and Paul's Epistles in search of information which can aid our study of the contributions of Hellenistic Jewish proselytism to the early Christian mission.

B. The Early Christian Mission in the Light of Our Sources

According to Acts, following Stephen's execution in Jerusalem many followers of the new faith traveled to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch.[5] It is noted here that most of them spoke their message only to Jews. A few, however, preached to the Greeks and, we are told, many converts were made. At this point Acts tells us that Barnabas sent for Paul to

come and teach in Antioch. Paul's association with Barnabas can be accepted on the basis of Galatians 2:1. Whether, however, Barnabas sent for Paul or not is uncertain; compare Galatians 1:21. If the report is factual, the import is the following: Barnabas saw the need for a Hellenistic Jew to preach the "word" to other Hellenistic Jews and God-fearers. That Paul was a Diaspora Jew is evident from his Epistles which being "written in Greek and redolent of the Greek atmosphere, point unmistakably to his being a Greek Jew."[6] Paul was thus, presumably, very familiar with Hellenistic Jewish communities. On the basis of Acts 4:36-37 and Acts 9:27, it would appear that Barnabas was more closely attuned to the Jerusalem Church. Therefore, a man such as Paul would be of extreme help in persuading those steeped in the Hellenistic Jewish milieu. Indeed, it would be only natural to call on one more aligned with the thoughts and expressions of would-be converts in the Diaspora. There is no proof whatsoever that this was Barnabas's motivation. That it may, however, have been a contributing factor to Paul's selection for the mission in Antioch is wholly conceivable.

Now we read in Acts that Barnabas and Paul go to Salamis where they "proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews."[7] They then proceed to Antioch of Pisidia where Paul preaches in the synagogue on the Sabbath day.[8] Acts' claim to Paul's presence in Antioch is supported by (dependent upon?) Galatians 2:11ff. However, the events described by Acts concerning the location in which he preached and the people present there find no confirmation in Paul's Epistles. Indeed, one may ask: How can the author of Acts know that Paul went to the synagogues and spoke to the Jews first? Was he there? Might not the author of Acts be simply modeling Paul and other missionaries on the

experiences of Jesus as detailed by the Gospel writers (and, naturally, "Luke" in particular)? There Jesus is shown as going to the Jews, only to be rejected in Nazareth (Luke 4) and proceed, in turn, to the Gentiles. So it is possible that the author of Acts, widely accepted as being the author of the Gospel According to Luke as well, duplicates Jesus' experience through the person of Paul.

Nevertheless, we do have reason to believe that Paul did go to the Jews first (and that indeed, indirectly, it is the image of Jesus which is modeled on the experience of Paul!) He tells us in no uncertain terms that the gospel . . . "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."[9] Again, Paul notes that there will be ". . . glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek."[10] He clearly indicates that the Jew had first rights on the new faith. Indeed, Paul believes that the Christ was the natural outgrowth of Judaism and thus a Jew's inheritance.

> They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; and to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed forever. Amen.[11]

There is definite reason to believe that Paul had gone first to the Jews. He speaks of his anguish over the non-acceptance of Christ by the majority of Jews.[12] When he argues that "it is not as though the word of God had failed,"[13] he acknowledges that an attempt had been made to convince Jews to join the new faith. He reasons that the fact that Gentiles had joined Christ would lead to eventual acceptance of the new faith by the Jews.[14] He notes further that the "elect" amongst the Jews have already obtained salvation by accepting Christ.[15] All of

these references by Paul argue convincingly for his earlier mission amongst the Jews. Now in order for Paul to go to the Jews it is only natural that he would go to the synagogue where they would congregate. Once in the synagogue Paul's words could not help but be heard by proselytes and God-fearers whom, as we established in our previous chapter,[16] were present there. As James Parkes notes:

> Paul might have had new things to say about the status of the Gentiles who accepted his message; but he did not have to argue that Gentiles had a right to hear it--they were there already listening to him in the synagogue or in whatever other places Jews foregathered.[17]

Thus, if Paul made any converts at all amongst this group of proselytes and God-fearers, one would have to view the Jewish proselytism movement which welcomed them into the synagogues as having been a conditioning factor in his success. It must be noted that there is no clear cut proof given by Paul's genuine Epistles as to his conversion of Jewish proselytes and/or God-fearers. Thus we must rely on the picture of the Graeco-Roman world we have presented in our previous chapters to confirm any indications which Paul himself gives us as to those who accepted his message.

Returning to the testimony in Acts, we find Paul and Barnabas in the synagogue at Iconium. There, we are told, they converted a great company of Jews and Greeks.[18] In Philippi we note that on the Sabbath Paul goes outside the gate to the riverside because he hopes to find a place of prayer. There he convinces Lydia, apparently a "God-fearer," to join the new faith. Once more we are told that a Gentile adherent of Judaism is won over to Christianity. Acts would have us believe that it is in such a Jewish environment, synagogues and other places of Jewish prayer, that Paul looked to make converts. One may assume,

therefore, that at least Luke's readers found nothing anomalous about the suggestion; it certainly appeared to them entirely plausible that Paul spoke in the synagogue, and achieved some measure of success there. Yet is the testimony of Acts alone sufficient?

Well, as confirmation of Paul's presence in Philippi we have his letter to the Philippians. Here we note that he argues against the Judaizers who sought to circumcize those Gentiles joining the new faith. Paul states that if any believe they have reason for confidence in the flesh he has more: "Circumcized on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law blameless."[19]

Are we to presume that these credentials are enumerated to an audience unfamiliar with Jewish customs? If Paul is addressing a Gentile audience, quite plausibly he is speaking to people who are acquainted with the law, Hebrews, Pharisees, etc., by virtue of their exposure to efforts of Jewish proselytism. It was this very openness of attitude which induced Graeco-Romans to become educated and, in some cases, even to join Judaism. Horace's account of his discussion with Fuscus as to the question of respecting the circumcized Jews on their Sabbath is evidence of Gentile familiarity with Jewish terms.[20] Conceivably, Paul taught these Gentiles what it meant to be circumcized on the eighth day, to be a Pharisee, and to be righteous under the law, just as the exposure of Gentiles to Jewish missionaries fostered such education.

Whether our recourse is to Acts or Paul's Epistles, it is clear that Paul saw himself as preaching the fulfillment of Judaism. As Enslin

notes, Paul, as other early Christian teachers and missionaries, was "Jewish to his fingertips":

> Even a man like Paul, who in later years could term as refuse and loss those things which he had previously considered of the greatest value, never lost his essentially Jewish attitude, however much he seemed to inveigh against the law. The Old Testament Jewish Scripture was his Bible; its ideals were his ideals.[21]

Thus we note in Romans that Paul sees himself as an apostle called to teach "the gospel of God which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures."[22] It seems very likely that such a claim would carry a lot more weight with an audience who had come to respect the Jewish Bible (Septuagint). A Gentile who had previously become acquainted with Judaism's promise to salvation could more easily see the expansion and fulfillment of that salvation in Paul's message. Based on the testimony of our sources noted in Chapters Two and Three, it is evident that Jews were to be found throughout the Graeco-Roman world.[23] We have also noted that many Hellenistic Jews were very eager to spread the word of the Septuagint and gain respect for its teachings.[24] Is it not conceivable that the efforts of Hellenistic Judaism to gain new adherents, alluded to in remarks by Seneca[25] and Horace,[26] were responsible for familiarizing and creating respect for the Jewish faith and its Scripture?

We have noted that Acts paints a picture of Paul customarily going to the local synagogue to argue his case. In Thessalonica, he engages in this activity, "explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead. . . ."[27] We are told that some of those listening to Paul were persuaded, including "many of the devout Greeks."[28] Now by what were they persuaded?--by the

proof which Paul offered. And how did Paul's proof manifest itself?--through explanation and quotation of Scripture. This is precisely the procedure attested to in Paul's own genuine Epistles.[29] It would appear that those people who accepted Paul's argument were familiar with the Scripture proofs he cited.

Now it may be argued that, since the Greeks were very impressed with antiquity,[30] Paul's citation of Scripture was purely for effect, and would have been the case even if the Gentiles in question were totally ignorant of Judaism. After all, the Bible related events as far back as the origins of the world. It is perfectly possible that Paul could quote from "revelation" with which the Greeks were unfamiliar and yet were willing to revere. Yet the very extent to which Paul avails himself of Scriptural prooftexts and alleged prefigurement argues for the familiarity of at least some of his Gentile audience with Jewish Scripture. Otherwise, to what avail would such "overkill" be? Clearly, Gentiles believed and accepted the prophecies which Paul utilized in "explaining and proving" his case. As F. F. Bruce notes:

> Once it is accepted that according to Old Testament prophecy the Messiah must die and rise again, the next stage in the argument is that since Jesus is the only one in whom these things came to pass, He must therefore be the Messiah.[31]

It is our strong inclination that the activity of Jewish proselytism educated and convinced the Gentile adherent of the veracity of Scripture--and thus was laid the foundation for receptivity to Paul's method of proof. Acts goes on to tell us that once, in Beroea, Paul and Silas go immediately to the synagogue. By now it is clear, as the author of Acts would have it, that they have found success in this setting. One may argue that these details of Paul's preaching and

converting in the synagogue are not mentioned in Paul's Epistles and are therefore without credibility. Yet there is nothing implausible about them. And could the author of Acts have successfully made outlandish claims about the early missions? Moreover, Gentiles reading the claims in Acts would thereby have themselves become more receptive to the Christian preachment, just as their predecessors had allegedly been--clearly, many Gentiles would have found Luke persuasive enough to accept the

The early Church, which accepted Acts as its history, must have supported views of synagogue-based conversions as having some basis in fact. Thus we are told that the Jews, "with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men," eagerly accepted Paul's teaching.[32] In doing so, they examined the Scriptures to "see if these things were so."[33] Once again we find that knowledge of Scripture, and here we refer to the Septuagint (or something approximating it) as taught by Hellenistic Jews, is a prerequisite and pathway for the new faith. The evidence strongly suggests that the Greek-speaking Jews and "God-fearers" were familiar with the text and needed only Paul's direction to come to a new realization of its meaning in Christ. The familiarity of Gentiles with aspects of Paul's message was, almost assuredly, a by-product of Jewish proselytism.

It seems clear that Paul met with Jewish resistance also. Acts tells us that Paul left the synagogue and went to the Gentiles, going next door to Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. The author would have us believe that this Gentile is a "God-fearer" who is open to Paul's message. Indeed, Bruce believes that "Paul chose a residence near the synagogue in order to keep in touch with the 'God-fearers.'"[34] There

is, however, no corroboration of this event anywhere in Paul's Epistles. It would appear that the author of Acts is trying to show that Christianity is the continuation of mainstream Judaism--when Paul is not found in the synagogue he is next door with adherents on the fringe. Still Paul's testimony as to his anguish over Jewish reluctance to accept Christ[35] is compatible with the parting of the ways which Acts indicates. Clearly at some point Paul left off from attempting to convince Jews on a large scale. It is possible that his remark that "Jews demand signs"[36] is a reference to his attempts to convert them. He does go on to indicate that some Jews are called, thus there had been some success amongst them. When Acts tells us that Paul left the synagogue and went to the Gentiles there is some basis for believing that Paul may have done just that. In doing so he would take his new-found converts with him and form a church. That he founded churches throughout the Graeco-Roman world is evidenced by his Epistles: churches in Antioch, Syria, Galatia, Damascus, Cilicia, Philippi, Ephesus, Thessalonica, and elsewhere in Asia Minor and Greece, all places inhabited by Hellenistic Jews.[37]

Some may argue that this is mere coincidence; that, indeed, Paul and other early missionaries could have themselves gathered up non-affiliated Gentiles in the streets and marketplaces in order to preach to them. The evidence, however, implies otherwise. When one views the extent of the Jewish dispersion, the preponderance of proselytes and "God-fearers," and the importance of the synagogue as a meeting house and center for dissemination of Hellenistic Judaism,[38] one has good reason to conclude that these factors played a prominent role in the initial stages of Paul's Diaspora mission. As A. Harnack concludes in his classic on the Mission and Expansion of Christianity:

> To nascent Christianity the synagogues in the Diaspora. . . formed the most important presupposition for the rise and growth of Christian communities throughout the Empire. The network of the synagogues furnished the Christian propaganda with centres and courses for its development, and in this way the mission of the new religion, which was undertaken in the name of the God of Abraham and Moses, found a sphere already prepared for itself.[39]

Paul's Epistles, and the Graeco-Roman sources we have cited (Horace, Seneca, etc.) are supportive of the view that: 1) Gentiles in the Diaspora were educated as to Jewish customs and many attended synagogues in the Diaspora;[40] and 2) Paul sought converts in the synagoges and, after some strong Jewish resistance, turned to a full-time Gentile mission outside the synagogue. He was, however, most probably able to claim many "God-fearing" converts from the synagogue ranks with which to begin churches throughout the Graeco-Roman world. We find no evidence that expressly contradicts this view. To be sure there is nothing absolutely conclusive about it either. After all, only Acts offers direct testimony. However, the weight of all the testimony when taken together leads us to agree with Bruce when he states: "Moreover, knowing himself called to evangelize Gentiles, Paul recognized in the 'God-fearers' on the fringe of synagogue congregations a providentially prepared bridge-head into the Gentile world."[41] Accordingly, we must also recognize that Jewish proselytism helped create such entities as "open-door" synagogues and "God-fearers" that proved expedient to early Christianity's mission.

C. Paul's Mission in the Light of his Hellenistic-Jewish Environment

To be sure, there were many other early Christian missionaries besides Paul. We have already referred to Barnabas as one example. Indeed, many Gentile churches sprang up without Paul, including the

major church of Rome.[42] It is generally recognized, however, that Paul was the Christian missionary par excellence. By virtue of his unrivaled literary contribution to the New Testament, in sheer volume alone, he is worthy of special consideration. Thus, we would refer to Paul's mission in the light of his Hellenistic Jewish environment to see if Jewish proselytism in any way contributed to that mission.

Sandmel has pointed out that Paul as presented in Acts is at times in conflict with the image of Paul emerging from his Epistles. He cites the example of Gal. 1:15-22, where we find that Paul does not go to Jerusalem until after a visit to Arabia and a return to Damascus, some three years after his conversion. Acts 7:58 and 8:1-3, however, would have Paul in Jerusalem much earlier, at the time of Stephen's execution. Indeed, Acts 20:3 has Paul say that he was brought up as a student of Gamaliel in Jerusalem. In Acts 9:1, Paul, still in Jerusalem, receives permission to go to Damascus.[43] These conflicting reports, and more important contrasts on doctrinal issues, would appear to be irreconcilable. Therefore, as Sandmel emphasizes, we must choose Paul's genuine epistles for a more accurate picture of the apostle.[44] The importance of this point, for our purposes, lies in the fact that Paul's Epistles show him to be a Hellenistic Jew thoroughly steeped in the religious atmosphere of Diaspora Judaism, not Palestinian Judaism. Sandmel notes:

> Not only did he give the terms which he employed meanings different from those of Palestinian Jews, but even beyond such elementary things there was a change in the fabric of religious suppositions and in the goal of the religious quest.[45]

Paul spoke out of the traditions of Hellenistic Judaism, with the method of interpretation peculiar to it. With Philo, his contemporary, Paul shared the religious quest of Diaspora Judaism, not to mention the

Graeco-Roman world. Both of these men were motivated to seek meaning in their religion by the need for soterai: to find salvation for the individual under the auspices of the religious milieu of their day. One problem inherent in that religious milieu in the Diaspora must be mentioned--the Law of Moses. It is easy to understand how Hellenistic Jews, living far from the Temple in Jerusalem, could begin to question the validity of certain legal requirements which they were unable to fulfill. Temple sacrifices and pilgrimages to Jerusalem were impractical and out of the question for most Jews distant from Palestine. This was the case in Paul's time when the Temple still stood. How much the more would these laws seem impractical when the Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E.! Thus, for many Hellenistic Jews, who, like Paul, studied the Jewish laws and traditions,[46] the disuse of certain laws must have been cause for religious concern. Indeed, Diaspora Jewry's response to the problem of the irrelevance of parts of Mosaic Law seems to have been a relaxation of strict adherence to that Law. We found evidence for such liberal conduct vis a vis the Law in our Chapter on Jewish proselytes and "God-fearers." Josephus' account of the conversion of Izates, of the Adiabene royal family, to Judaism bears witness to two views of conversion. There we find that Ananias affirms that Izates may worship God without being circumcized. We find, however, that a Palestinian Jew objects to such a practice and persuades Izates that in order to properly serve God he must be circumcized.[47] Such a willingness on the part of Ananias to change tradition, out of the necessities inherent in Diaspora life, would seemingly exemplify the liberalness with which Hellenistic Jews approached the Law. Jewish proselytism's welcoming of "God-fearers" is a good example of Graeco-Roman Jewry's willingness to

accept those who failed to comply strictly with Jewish Law.

For those who were brought up zealous after the Law, as Paul states he was,[48] liberal attitudes to the Law would have been no answer to the problem of its validity. Indeed, the tension involved in being required to do that which you could not do must have been great. Thus, an answer would have to be found to abrogate the Law and relieve the concerned Hellenistic Jew from his impossible situation. Philo's answer was to keep Mosaic Law but allegorize the Bible in order to illustrate that on a higher spiritual level it contained, indeed originated, the basic truths of Greek thought. Paul, however, viewed history as showing that justification by faith in God had been possible before the giving of the Mosaic legislation and remained available subsequent to it as well. Indeed, faith replaced Law as the means by which one attained soteria. Paul replaced the Law with the Christ, faith in whom would lead one to this higher realm where salvation could be found. It is plausible that many Jewish proselytes and "God-fearers," who also must have been attuned to the problem of keeping a Law that seemed irrelevant, would have been receptive to Paul's ideas.

To a certain extent, then, one can argue that Paul's religious environment provided him with the problems with which to wrestle (i.e., Mosaic Law) and the liberal inclination with which to solve them. This is not to belittle Paul's individuality which no doubt played a key role in the answers he offered. We are simply suggesting that Paul could continue to view himself as a true Jew precisely because he viewed his Hellenistic Jewish experience as "naturally" providing him with the means by which he could more fully experience God. Other Hellenistic Jews might have argued that he was distorting the teachings

of Judaism. However, as Sandmel emphasizes:

> . . . Paul had no sense of his being something other than a Jew. He was fully aware that his convictions separated him from his erstwhile coreligionists, but he had no sense that he was abandoning Judaism. Rather, from his standpoint, his fellow-Jews had failed to come along with him on the final step which he felt they, as true Jews, should have taken.[49]

We might add that this was another reason for Paul to seek converts amongst Jewish proselytes and "God-fearers." Since they had accepted Judaism, they were in a better position than pagans to seek Judaism's fulfillment which he preached. Thus, in Romans, Paul states that salvation will come to those that have faith, "Jews first, but Greeks as well. . . ."[50] We have illustrated that Acts shows Paul going to the synagogues to make his converts. His early successes are solely amongst these Jews and Greeks found in the environment of Hellenistic Judaism.

In Romans 4, we find Paul building the case for faith as one's justification, as opposed to circumcision and Law. He employs the example of Abraham, "the ancestor from whom we are all descended," in such familiar terms that one may easily perceive his readers' knowledge of the patriarch. Just as Philo utilized the Stoic allegorical method to personify wisdom and logos, so Paul personifies the Spirit. As Paul sees it, God sends the Spirit "to teach us to understand the gifts that He has given us."[51] Given the Hellenistic Jewish familiarity with such changes from concept to personality, Paul's use of "Spirit" is more understandable. Concerning this point, Johannes Weiss notes of Paul:

> As for him, flesh and sin, law and the world, are not only concepts or "principles," but highly real, almost personally-imagined powers, so he is able to equate the personality of the highest Lord with "the Spirit" . . .[52]

Paul explicitly states his use of allegory in Gal. 4:24 in his explanation

of the story of Hagar and Sarah. We cite this point only to propose that it is conceivable that those who listened to and/or read Paul's words dealing with allegory and Biblical figures were aware of these religious elements precisely due to their earlier attraction to Judaism. Indeed, Paul's whole utilization of proof-texts from Jewish Scripture[53] suggests that those to whom his words were directed understood his argumentation. How else could Paul have been so successful, at least initially, if he had not preached in meaingful terms? He was able to do this, it would seem, because the way had largely been paved for him. The anti-idolatry, pro-monotheistic message of Hellenistic Judaism made its imprint. M. H. Pope notes: "When Paul nullified the ritual laws and made baptism sufficient, without circumcision, the God-seekers and God-fearers welcomed the new faith."[54] This, Pope suggests, is Paul's and Christianity's debt to Jewish proselytism. The term Christ, or "anointed," had been passed on from the Greek translation of the Hebrew "mashiach." Paul contributed a new dimension to the meaning of the word. His addition was of no small consequence to Christian theology. But he built on the familiar term as found in the Septuagint. Enslin remarks:

> Actually the Septuagint came soon to be regarded as essentially the property of Christians, not Jews. Not only was it believed to be full of prophecies of Jesus, the coming Messiah, but that it had actually been written for Christians.[55]

Paul initially was able to elicit such confidence in the terms and proof-texts he took from the Septuagint because Jewish proselytism had cultivated confidence in the Greek Bible. This may also be true in terms of his usage of the concept of logos as the indwelling offshoot of God. We find it present in Philo and others.[56] Now Christianity may

not have needed the intermediation of Hellenistic Judaism in order to preach the logos to Greek listeners. However, rooted in Hellenistic Judaism, it is sensible that early on in the missionary venture these expressions were meant for the Hellenistic Jewish listeners already familiar with them.

There is an interesting sidelight to this discussion of Paul's mission in the light of his Hellenistic Jewish religious heritage and the non-Jews attracted to that heritage. To be sure Paul came to the synagogues and preached to the Jews and non-Jews gathered there. But the unanswered question is--where did Paul get the idea to come and preach altogether? Our concern here is not with Paul's conversion or beliefs. Rather, we ask if Paul and other early Christian missionaries were totally original in preaching to would-be proselytes in the synagogue. Gunther Bornkamm raises the interesting notion that Paul originally saw himself as a missionary for Judaism:

> . . . because of his ancestry, education, and gifts, the youthful Paul, still a member of the Jewish faith, was eminently marked out to become a missionary to the Gentiles. There is, indeed, something to be said for the idea that he believed himself to be a missionary of the Jewish faith.[57]

The "ancestry, education, and gifts" to which Bornkamm refers, could have been affected by Paul's inheritance of a religious milieu marked by the missionary precedent of Jewish proselytism. Bornkamm suggests that when the Hellenistic Jew Paul became a Pharisee, he decided to preach his brand of Judaism to the Gentiles:

> This is suggested by the fact that later on, when his Judaizing opponents in Galatia maintained the need for circumcision, they exploited the apostle's former activities against him. He said in reply: "But if I, brethren, still preach circumcision, why am I still persecuted? In that case the stumbling block of the

> cross has been removed" (Gal. 5:11). This most probably means that had he continued in the kind of missionary preaching that the Judaizers were now propagating afresh, but with which Paul had long also broken, he would have been spared persecution at the hands of the Jews--but at the cost of the gospel of the cross.[58]

We are by no means convinced that Paul had intended to be or ever was a seeker of proselytes for Judaism. If he were, one could surely not question the important contribution of Jewish proselytism to early Christianity.

D. Early Christianity's Indebtedness to Hellenistic Judaism

Having taken into account the testimony of our sources as concerns the early Christian mission, specifically the mission of its most prolific and prominent spokesman, Paul, we can better assess the effect of Hellenistic Judaism and its proselytizing movement on the spread of Christianity. In doing so, we mean in no way to detract from the genuine success and contributions of the Christian missionaries and their message. Rather, we seek better to understand one facet of that missionary phenomenon.

We would suggest that, in the first place, the Christian mission owes a debt to Hellenistic Judaism for acquainting the Graeco-Roman world with the moral and ethical teachings and the monotheism which Christianity itself espoused. Our study of Jews in the Diaspora, as noted in Chapter Two, amply attests to the extent and influence of Hellenistic Judaism during the period with which we are concerned. In each of these Hellenistic Jewish communities could be found centers of worship in which the teachings and philosophy of Diaspora Judaism were expounded. Secondly, the willingness of Hellenistic Judaism to encourage non-Jews to accept these teachings and philosophy facilitated acceptance of early Christianity's message and mission. The presence of many non-Jews in the synagogues

of the Diaspora, as attested by Graeco-Roman writers, Philo and Josephus, not to mention the Book of Acts, provided the Christian missionaries with potential converts familiar with the Scriptural text (Septuagint), methods of preaching, and concepts used by Paul, and probably other early Christian missionaries. Thus, as Johannes Weiss suggests:

> The nearest and surest road to the Gentiles led directly through the synagogue, for here the preachers--and this is just what is shown in the first missionary journey--met with a number of proselytes who were already won over to monotheism and had acquired a tolerable familiarity with the Scriptures, so that they could understand the proclamation of the Messiah.[59]

Thirdly, the Christian mission found its way paved by Hellenistic Judaism's universalistic tendency, a hybrid of the prophetic view of world wide conversion to the one God and the Greek concept of world unity. This emphasis on universalism was a contributing factor in the growth of a Jewish proselytism movement. It conceivably provided the impetus for early Christianity's mission to the Gentiles. Hence, Jewish proselytism could be viewed as having set a precedent for Paul and others follow and enlarge upon in their proselytizing activities. Fourthly, and perhaps most importantly, Hellenistic Judaism and its Jewish proselytism movement provided a religious environment which consciously or unconsciously, raised questions as to the feasibility of a total observance of Mosaic legislation. Thus, the precedent of less than total adherence to the Law helped condition Jews and "God-fearers" to be more receptive to a faith which eventually came to tolerate and then encourage a break with the Law. Indeed, Hellenistic Jews' problems with maintaining certain of the legal prescriptions found in the Torah conceivably prepared a Diaspora Jew such as Paul to consider the Law an inadequate

means of achieving his most profound religious quests, and to formulate a response which carried him away from the Law altogether.

For the reasons outlined, therefore, we conclude that Christianity's indebtedness to Hellenistic Judaism and its mission is without question. We may not go so far as to agree with A. Hornack's assessment: "The amount of this debt is so large, that one might venture to claim the Christian mission as a continuation of the Jewish propaganda."[60] There is no doubt, however, that the proselytism movement of Hellenistic Judaism was a factor, at least initially, in the rapid acceptance of Christianity in the Graeco-Roman world.

Notes to Chapter IV

1. Morton Scott Enslin, Christian Beginnings (New York: Harper and Row, 1938), Part II, p. 183.

2. Galatians 2; also Paul's discussion of the divisions in the Corinthian Church, I Cor. 1:1ff.

3. See S. Sandmel's chapter on "Paul and the Acts of the Apostles," The Genius of Paul (New York: Schocken, 1970), pp. 120-162, for a summary of the scholarship on Acts. A more conservative treatment is that by W. Ward Gasque, A History of the Criticism of the Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975). Also W. C. Robinson, Jr.'s article on the "Acts of the Apostles," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Suppl. Vol. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1976) pp. 7-9.

4. Morton Enslin, "Once Again, Luke and Paul," Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft 61 (1970): 253-271, suggests the fascinating possibility that the author of Acts utilizes Paul's Epistles. If this is indeed the case, then in those areas of possible dependence, we can only rely on Paul. At the very least it is clear that both sources must be examined together.

5. Acts 11:19.

6. Sandmel, op. cit., p. 12.

7. Acts 13:5.

8. Acts 13:14.

9. Rom. 1:16.

10. Rom. 2:10.

11. Rom. 9:4-5.

12. Rom. 9:2.

13. Rom. 9:6.

14. Rom. 11.

15. Rom. 11:7.

16. See Chapter III, Sections A and B.

17. James W. Parkes, The Foundations of Judaism and Christianity (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1960), p. 109.

18. Acts 14:1.

19. Philippians 3:5-6.

20. See Chapter III, n. 50.

21. Enslin, Christian Beginnings, p. 183.

22. Rom. 1:2.

23. See Chapter III, nn. 37-43.

24. E.g., Letter of Aristeas.

25. Chapter III, n. 28.

26. Supra, n. 83.

27. Acts 17:1f.

28. Acts 17:4.

29. Rom. 3:10-18; 8:36; I Cor. 1:19, 2:9; Gal. 3:8, 4:22f; consult footnotes in the Revised Standard Version, often indicating the Scriptural antecedents of Paul's outlook.

30. As noted in Chapter I concerning the acceptance of Oriental mystery cults that claimed venerated pasts.

31. F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles, p. 325.

32. Acts 17:10ff.

33. Ibid.

34. Bruce, op. cit., p. 345.

35. Rom. 9.

36. I Cor. 1:22.

37. See Chapter II.

38. Note Chapters II and III.

39. A. Harnack, The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries, p. 1.

40. See Chapter III, nn. 50-52.

41. F. F. Bruce, New Testament History (Great Britain: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1969), p. 261.

42. Rom. 1:13.

43. Sandmel, op. cit., pp. 3-35. See also Sandmel's A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament, pp. 37-106.

44. This does not mean that we must denigrate Acts as concerns its report of the location and characteristics of the early mission. However, Paul may appear more in line with Palestinian Jewish Christianity in Acts than in truth he actually was, as is underscored by his own epistles. Donald Guthrie, on the other hand, maintains a great deal of faith in the historicity and general accuracy of Acts. See his New Testament Introduction (London: Tyndale Press, 1970), pp. 336-379.

45. Sandmel, The Genius of Paul, p. 15.

46. Gal. 1:14.

47. Antiq., XX.ii.iv.

48. Supra., n. 45.

49. Sandmel, op. cit., p. 21.

50. Rom. 1:16.

51. I Cor. 2:12.

52. Johannes Weiss, Earliest Christianity (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959) II, 435.

53. Rom. 9: II Cor. 9:9f.; Gal. 3:6f. Note how this use of Scriptural proof-texts buttresses the validity of Paul's similar usage in Acts.

54. M. H. Pope, "Proselytism," Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962) v. 3, p. 931.

55. Enslin, loc. cit.

56. See Sandmel's discussion of these Hellenistic Jewish elements found in Paul in his chapter "Paul the Convert," op. cit. Note also the observations of Weiss on Paul's linguistic antecedents, op. cit., p. 431.

57. Gunther Bornkamm, Paul, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 10.

58. Ibid.

59. Johannes Weiss, op. cit., I, 211.

60. Harnack, op. cit., p. 15.

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