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May 11, 1961Report on Rabbinical Thesis of Alan L. Ponn
Entitled"The Relationship Between Josephus's View of Judaism
and his Conception of Political and Military Power"

Josephus was an important Jew, a notorious general, and a controversial historian. His writings are of inestimable value both for the historian and for the student of Judaism. Yet scholars have by no means fully explored the rich materials that these works contain.

Mr. Ponn has attempted to explore the relationship between Josephus' conception of Judaism and his conception of political and military power. As a political realist, Josephus analyzed the comparative strength of the opposing forces and recognized that a revolt against Rome was doomed to failure. His active role was thus determined by his evaluation of the facts, and he threw in his lot with Rome. As an adherent to Judaism, however, Josephus not only remained loyal to monotheism and the law, but he became an ardent champion of the superiority of Judaism.

Mr. Ponn points out that Josephus utilized religious arguments when he urged his countrymen to surrender, for he considered that the fact of Roman power was clear evidence that God would not intervene in the political realm. That Josephus did not view political independence as essential to Judaism is demonstrated conclusively by his Antiquities and Contra Apionem which argue eloquently for the superiority of Judaism.

Mr. Ponn undertook a difficult task, perhaps too difficult a one. He gropes seriously with the issues and he makes every effort to advance his point of view. Yet his thesis has an unfinished quality. It is loosely organized and tends, at times, to be disjointed. The ideas of Mr. Ponn are better than his presentation allows them to be, and his major points are frequently obscured by the minor. The thesis gives evidence of a struggle to formulate valuable insights which has not as yet been fully resolved.

Mr. Ponn, however, is to be commended for his efforts. He read the sources and sought to strike out on his own. He was aware that Josephus' writings have not been sufficiently investigated by scholars, and it is to his credit that he was motivated by this awareness to undertake so challenging a research project.

I therefore, recommend the acceptance of this thesis by the Faculty.

Ellis Rivkin
Referee

Thesis:

" The Relationship Between Josephus's View Of Judaism
and his conception of Political and Military Power"

by Alan Ponn

Referee- Dr. Ellis Rivkin

May, 1961

Digest of Thesis

A study was made to evaluate the works of the historian Josephus by a careful look at the world in which he lived, and the events which brought about his writings. Particular emphasis was placed on the relationship between Josephus's conception of Judaism and his conception of political and military power.

In his speeches and writings, Josephus makes religious statements which do not seem unconnected with the environmental influences and activities which were a part of the current political world of Josephus.

When Josephus exhorted the people, he quoted Biblical history. When Josephus answered anti-semitic insult, he utilized the Jewish past to answer the critics of his time. In each case, his particular use of religious material is studied in relationship to the particular needs and political realities of Josephus's time.

Josephus's particular analysis of the power relationship between Jerusalem and Rome, his description of the self-defeating factionalism behind the Jewish lines, and his account of the world after the Jews had been defeated have been presented in this thesis as interrelated with the religious views that Josephus expresses.

INTRODUCTION

Josephus, the great Jewish historian, considered himself a faithful Jew. Although Josephus was denounced by many of his countrymen as a traitor to the Jewish people, Josephus contended that he was indeed a true and genuine Jew. The concepts of Judaism which Josephus held were in many cases novel and divergent. Yet the Jew of today might find them quite acceptable and familiar.

It is important to discover what was the political and historical background in which these religious views were nurtured; to assess the interplay of the world which produced such a particular theological outlook. For religious viewpoint and outlook are not the result of spiritual exercise alone; are they not rather the spiritual reaction to worldly things- things that have to do with politics, with the struggle for earthly power, with such unholy things such as war and human conflict?

The prophets of Israel were religious leaders who related themselves to very real power conflicts, the struggle against Assyria, Babylonia, the problems of alliances with Egypt, the question of rebellion versus appeasement. Indeed the prophets can scarcely be understood except with reference to exceptionally concrete political situations.

Josephus, of course, was not primarily a religious leader, although he expressed quite thoroughly his views on the Jewish religion. Yet these religious views are indeed important for us, and can be scrutinized best only if they are thoroughly related to the political situation which gave birth to them.

Just as Moses and David expressed Jewish viewpoints which are the response to concrete political problems, just as the authors of post-Biblical books related their religious pronouncements to the concrete situation of their day, so did Josephus express religious views which reflect considerably the political, power struggle of the day.

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THE POWER OF THE ROMANS

Throughout his life Josephus contended that the power of Rome was invincible, and that Jewish attempts to challenge Rome were foolhardy and wasteful. Josephus believed that the Jewish religion could still exist as a spiritual power, even if Rome was acknowledged as a secular power. The tie of religion to a political Jewish state seemed both unnecessary and impractical to Josephus. Faced with the overwhelming might of the Romans, Jewish insistence on political independence was draining all of the physical resources of the country. Since there was no real hope of victory, obliteration of both the political and religious life of the Jews would be the likely result.

Josephus had ample opportunity to observe the Romans. He visited Rome during his youth, he became an historian under Rome's sponsorship, and he accompanied Roman troops; he witnessed the Roman triumph after the siege of Jerusalem; and he was closely associated with two top Roman leaders; Vespasian and Titus. Thus he was in unique position to gain perspective which the average Jew could hardly gain.

All of these experiences convinced Josephus of Roman superiority in the military and strategic sense. Because of this evaluation, Josephus was on the side of appeasement and surrender to the Romans. It is interesting to note that he utilized Biblical history to justify his attitude to the Jews themselves. When he addresses them, he alludes to Babylonia and Assyria, to Egypt, and Philistia, to show comparisons of political situations in which the Israeli God was at a particular time acknowledged to be on the side of the enemies of the Jews, and the punishment that was brought was brought as a result of the sins of the Jewish people themselves. To Josephus, therefore, the Roman threat to the Jews was also a sign of God's discontent with the spiritual condition of the Jewish people, and God was indeed using Rome as an instrument of divine punishment upon those who had forsaken His religious laws.

Jeremiah and Isaiah had denied that Jerusalem and its temple were invincible. These great biblical prophets tried to dissuade the people from the comfortable notion

that God would not allow his great Temple to be destroyed. These first powerful prophets of universalism had preached a message which the contemporaries of Josephus were unlikely to accept. The fanatics and zealots of Josephus's time believed with religious fervor, that God and his temple were inextricable, and that God surely would not permit self-destruction.

In the Jewish War, book 6, this attitude of the zealots is clearly expressed by John, their leader. After Josephus had exhorted the fanatics to surrender, at a time when the strategic situation was utterly hopeless for the Jews, John, after delivering many invectives against Josephus, ended by saying: "He could never fear capture, since the city was God's."¹ The fanatics of the Jews were willing to wait until the Temple and the entire city was burned rather than surrender to the Romans.

And in a manner almost prophetic, Josephus replies: "Pure indeed have you kept it for God!"² Further on he mocks: "And do you hope to have God, whom you have bereft of his everlasting worship, for your Ally in this war."³ Finally Josephus expresses the conviction that: "God it is then, God himself, who with the Romans is bringing the fire to purge His temple, and exterminating a city so laden with pollutions."⁴

Josephus's predictions were accurate. Yet they were not formulated through prophetic inspiration or divine mystic contact. Rather were they the result of first-hand observation and genuine access to facts.

It was obvious to Josephus that Rome was all powerful. An objective analysis of the political situation revealed the overwhelming military superiority of the Romans. Unclouded by religious over-confidence, the facts were unmistakable in revealing the inferiority of the Jewish strategic position.

Rome had to its credit and distinction an impressive listing of conquests. She had conquered semitic Carthage, Antiochus III of Syria, was recognized by Egypt, and had eliminated Carthage. Macedonia and Spain were brought under Roman

rule. Corinth was destroyed. Rome took over Gaul, which included what is now France and Belgium. Rome afterwards conquered Britain. Rome also acquired territory in Asia Minor. Only the Parthians in the East remained as an unconquered group.⁵ Rome's position in the world, therefore, was such as to leave little doubt as to her majesty and power.

In addition, Josephus was a man of first hand knowledge of Rome. At the age of twenty-six or twenty seven, Josephus was sent on a diplomatic mission to Rome, where he met Poppaea, the Emperor Nero's consort. When Josephus arrived back in Judea, he noticed that the country was in readiness to revolt against the Romans. However Josephus's early impressions of the grandeur of Rome prompted him to make speeches advising against what appeared to him from the outset to be rash and futile actions.

Secondly, Josephus was a military general with actual experience in combat against the noted general, Vespasian. Sent to Galilee to take charge of military operations there, he encountered the Romans in direct battle, and surrendered to them.

After the surrender, Josephus went to live among the Romans, and became closely associated with them. He was commissioned to write history by the Romans; sustenance was provided for him by them; his life became a Roman life, and his knowledge of Roman affairs was considerable. Josephus was exposed to a perspective and view of the Romans far greater than the average Judean; yet he was a Jew, was thoroughly grounded in Jewish affairs, and continued to practice the Jewish religion. It can truly be said that he had an opportunity to assess both sides in the Roman-Jewish conflict, and that this dual perspective was not afforded to many, if any of his countrymen. This is not to say that Josephus was absolutely accurate or thoroughly honest in his assessments. It does assert that he was in a unique position to make a balanced judgment, if he chose to do so.

It does seem that Josephus was not unduly adverse to many of the national characteristics of Rome. It is here that we note the emergence of his religious viewpoint. That Josephus accepted many favors from the Romans, took for himself a

Roman name, and was willing to act as an interpreter for Roman generals scarcely implies a revulsion to the National existence and customs of the Roman people. It has been suggested by many writers that for a good part of his life, Josephus was indeed enamoured by Rome, and only at the time of the internal corruption of the Roman people and body politic, did Josephus change his views, and become disillusioned. His emotional attachment to Rome was great, and he undoubtedly desired to harmonize this emotional attachment with his desire to continue his practice of the Jewish religion. To the majority of Judeans, this split between country and religion was incongruous and disloyal. Josephus pleaded for this separation of religious and political loyalties all of his life.

It was not Josephus's desire to change the Jewish religion. Rather did he wish to adhere to the precepts that had already been set down. It is true that in his religious writings, Josephus offered interpretations which harmonized Judaism with an intellectual environment. Regarding Jewish practice, however, Josephus remained a loyal Jew, and adhered to the letter of the law.

Both the spectre of Roman power, and the attractiveness of Roman life appear to be influential factors which led to Josephus's religious views. Because of the dominance of Roman power, it seemed impossible that Judea could resist Rome and yet continue to exist. Because of the attractiveness of Roman living it seemed pitiable that Jews needed to be restricted to concepts of national existence that excluded such an outstanding world culture, the culture of Rome.

Josephus was convinced of Roman power just as soon as he had come back from his first trip to Rome. He explains in the "Life" how he felt about those preparing to revolt against Rome: "And now I perceived innovations were already begun, and that there were a great many very much elevated in hopes of a revolt from the Romans. I therefore endeavored to put a stop to these tumultuous persons, and exhorted them to change their minds; and laid before their eyes against whom it was that they were going to fight, and told them that they were inferior to the Romans not only in martial skill, but also in good fortune; and desired them not rashly, and after the most foolish manner, to bring the danger of the most terrible mischiefs, upon their country,

upon their families, and upon themselves. And this I said with a vehement exhortation, because I foresaw that the end of such a war would be most unfortunate to us. But I could not persuade them; for the madness of desperate men was quite too hard for me."⁶

Yet this initial feeling of the futility of resisting the Romans was not unconnected with his religious pronouncements. In his essay Against Apion, Josephus explained his position that there was nothing religiously wrong with showing political respect to the Romans, and that God had not decreed against it.

He states: "But our legislator forbade us to make images, not telling us as it were beforehand that the Roman authority was not to be honored, but as it were despising a thing that was useful neither to God nor man; and he forbade them, as I shall show hereafter, to make images of any part of the animal creation, and much less of God himself, who is inanimate. However our legislator has nowhere forbidden us to pay honors to worthy men, provided that they are of another kind, and inferior to those we pay to God, and with such honors we willingly show our respect to our emperors, and to the people of Rome."⁷

Josephus continues to explain how the Jews offer continual sacrifices to the Romans, and that all the Jews share in the expense. Thus Josephus elucidates a religious justification for his reaction and recommendations regarding the political realities which he evaluated during his lifetime of writing. He had recommended appeasement; he had counselled submission. His religious viewpoint suggests that this political policy of appeasement was also justified on religious grounds.

Josephus's strong fascination for the Roman way of life was not so great that Josephus wished to advocate a separation of church and state. His belief was not that religion and politics were two separate realms which do not coincide. Rather was it the contention that God was working in history, as indeed God had always been history's guiding force. Rome, claimed Josephus, was God's instrument, just as Babylon was originally an instrument of God against the Jews.⁸

In other words it was not an objective analysis of realpolitik, which Josephus presented in his speeches to the Jews to exhort them to surrender. He did warn them

of Roman power, it is true. He did not say as Christians had said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and render unto God the things that are God's." However he might have been personally convinced that the political balance of power lay decisively in Roman hands, he never in his speeches stressed to the Jewish minds the stark political facts alone. For undoubtedly the Jewish mind would not even conceive or entertain any proposition that suggested that God himself was not both the source and the master of all political facts.

Therefore the relation between religious and political view is clear. Although Josephus saw the abundant evidences of the power of Rome, and although Josephus was attracted by the many features of Roman life, Josephus neither imagined, nor stated in his appeals to the Jews that God was accepting and fortifying Rome on a permanent basis. Jewish religious conviction would not allow any such notion. It was for the purpose of punishing the Jews for their moral and spiritual sins that God was moved to bring Rome against them, and the assumption was that elimination of the sin would undoubtedly bring an end to foreign domination.

In the actual speeches of Josephus, Josephus asserts his belief that God really is the prime moving factor in history. We note that he does: In his speech to John and the Jews, he states explicitly: "God it is then: God himself, who with the Romans is bringing the fire to purge His temple, and exterminating a city so laden with pollutions."⁹ In an earlier speech, he states unmistakably: "For myself, I shudder to recount the works of God to unworthy ears; yet listen, that you may learn that you are warring not against the Romans only, but also against God."¹⁰

After recounting an impressive account of Biblical history he concludes with this strong religious-emotional plea: "My belief, therefore, is that the Deity has fled from the holy places, and has taken His stand on the side of those with whom you are now at war." II.

It was not that Josephus had not made the people aware subtly of what an earthly power threatened them. Throughout his exhortations he made frequent references to concrete inequities. However, whether through conviction or cleverness, he couched these military figures in religious terms. One can legitimately ask whether he believed

what he said. Nevertheless it seems likely that it is not accident that in his desire to persuade, he chose to devote the major part of speeches to convincing on the religious level.

The question is never answered, indeed it is never raised, at what specific time God began to be on the side of the Romans, and at what specific time God would cease to be on the side of the Romans. Above all, the people may have wondered as Josephus addressed them at whose authority it is deemed to be religiously true that God is on the side of the Romans at all. Lacking the religious authority claimed by the prophets of old, Josephus was making assertions which were bold indeed. It is of little surprise that the masses of the people were not altogether swayed by his statements.

If the masses were unimpressed by Josephus's exhortations, it may well have been that they could not regard Josephus as a valid religious interpreter of the situation which they faced. Speaking as he did with ample quotations from Biblical history, he faced the people with one major disadvantage. His personal image was scarcely that of a pious man. He was scarcely the picture of an exemplary prophet. His personal actions, his previous military activity, his commission to write for the Romans, all depicted him in ignoble terms. His loyalties were suspect. His actions appeared calculated and selfish, his demeanor smooth and glib, but disabellical and contrived.

To summarize the first section of this thesis, we note that that Josephus was fully aware of the political facts of the power situation which the Jews faced. He had a unique vantage point to observe both sides preparing for the impending struggle. He came to the conclusion that Rome was invincible, and tried through his actions and through his spoken words, to present this conclusion to the majority of the people.

However the vehicle that he used to express these conclusions was of necessity a religious one. To have presented the political facts to the people alone would not have persuaded them. The fanatics and zealots of Josephus's time would not have been impressed by the deterioration of the political situation. They could not be brought to believe that real political facts mattered at all. They waited in the assurance that

God was on their side.

Their attitude was similar to the complacency of the Jewish people in prophetic times. Josephus noticed this similarity, too, and made it a key point in his speeches. From his writings the reader is made aware that Josephus tried to persuade the people by appealing to their religious convictions. Whether his emphasis on the religious aspects were mere devices to persuade, or were expressions of sincere conviction, is beyond our power to judge. Yet the fact that he is aware of the political realities, and yet chooses to stress the religious implications, tempts one to conclude that his statements were calculated and designed to convey the exact same message to the Jewish people, which he himself had concluded from a mere non-religious observation of the political facts.

The problem of Josephus's sincerity is a difficult one. For as we have pointed out, Josephus remained a loyal practicing Jew all of his life. Later in his life he spent much energy defending the antiquity and worth of the Jewish religion. What is important, however is that we are made aware in Josephus's own speeches that in most ways he expressed in religious terms what he was already convinced of in political terms from personal observation and knowledge.

ch. 2

BEHIND THE JEWISH LINES

It is the contention of this writer that Josephus in treating the zealots and the decline and corruption of earlier Jewish kingdoms, follows an identical pattern. He expressed in religious terms what he was already convinced of in political terms from personal observation and knowledge.

Josephus was of the strong opinion that the misfortunes of Judea were brought on by herself. When she had the chance for independence, she abused it, and wasted it. Judea lacked the self-discipline to rule herself properly. Her short period of rule was marked by deterioration and corruption. In speaking of these events, Josephus was able to talk in purely political terms; - although God is alluded to as the final cause: Whence did our servitude arise? Was it not from party strife among our forefathers, when the madness of Aristobulus and Hyrcanus and their mutual dissensions brought

Pompey against the city, and God subjected to the Romans those who were unworthy of liberty?" 12.

The plain political reality which Josephus described was that the internal dissension and corruption of the Jewish people led to the downfall of the Jewish state and its subjection to foreign domination. Thus when Josephus speaks that God brought this servitude, Josephus translates this political reality into the religious terms of the day, the belief that God was the guiding force in history, and it was He who was punishing his children like an angry father.

(How incongruous it would indeed be for a modern secular historian to utilize these religious terms to express a similar political situation. It would be inconceivable for a modern historian to suggest that the Atomic Bomb was dropped on Hiroshima as a punishment to the Japanese by the American God. What Jewish historian of today would declare that the six million Jews of Germany were being punished by God for their internal corruption and spiritual impurity?)

In referring to the Zealots, Josephus is even more vocal in his denunciation of specific impieties and outrages which led to their disfavor with God. He enumerates: "Secret sins - I mean thefts, treacheries, adulteries - are not beneath your disdain, while in rapine and murder you vie with each other in opening up new and unheard of paths of vice; ay, and the temple has become the receptacle of all, and native hands have polluted those divine precincts, which even Romans revered from afar." 13.

After enumerating the exact violations, Josephus, prophet-like, preaches the folly of imploring and relying on a God whom they have insulted beyond redemption. God would not remain, implies Josephus, with such a wayward people. Thus Josephus, continuing in his religio-historic pattern of writing, expresses political reality, the reality that internal corruption and ethical weakness are instruments which bring about the downfall of a state. Whether stated in political or theological terms, the import is the same.

Especially deplorable to Josephus was the internal dissension and bitter strife which kept the Jewish people disunited during the Roman siege of Jerusalem, and which disorganized the Jewish efforts.

He gives ample expression to this strategic folly, of which the following is a

characteristic example.

"During a temporary lull in the war without the walls, faction renewed its hostilities within.... The purities of the sanctuary were instantly a scene of the utmost disorder and confusion, the people who had no connexion with the party strife regarding this is as an indiscriminate attack upon all, the Zealots as against themselves alone." 14.

What Josephus describes in these and similar passages is the disorganization and rivalry which in a plain political sense was a contributory factor to political defeat. The suggestion made was that the Jews were actually causing their own defeat by a disunited political stance.

Stated in his own words: "The (Judea) was destroyed by internal dissensions, and the Romans who so unwillingly set fire to the Temple, were brought in by the Jew's self-appointed rulers..." 15.

Repeatedly, Josephus asserts this theme of self-defeating disunity among the Jews, which disunity resulted in political suicide. Especially did he criticize the factions which perverted the will of the common people, and incited the populace to war against their own will. In all of Josephus's writing, Josephus expresses the conviction that the war's failure was a failure of Jewish unity to stand firm against the aggressor.

Speaking in strictly political terms, this is an exceptionally valid analysis of the situation. However subjective and biased Josephus's accounts of history may have been, modern political theory would coincide with an analysis which blamed military defeat on a disunited stance.

What Josephus specifically attributes as casual factors, therefore, were the inner corruption of the short-lived Jewish independent kingdom, the ethical and moral impieties of the people, and the internal dissension and bitter strife among the defenders of Jerusalem, which prevented the development of a successful defense.

As is his usual pattern, Josephus permeates his history with a religious interpretation. In dealing with these three areas, the period of Jewish independence, the ethical corruption, and the military factional dissensions, he girded all three of these

with religious thematic material.

The thesis which he states with reference to these three political realities is the same thesis which he stated with reference to the exceptional military superiority of Rome. The political actuality is what it is not because of the mere interplay of external forces alone. The cause of the political activity, its ebb and flow, advantage and disadvantage, rise and fall, is God himself. That this intrusion of God into the political realm might provide some inconsistencies which the facts themselves might refute might never have occurred to Josephus. Nor might the possibility that the external facts themselves would describe the situation most adequately. The ideological setting of his writing was such that God's influence on history was the accepted thing, and did not need to be proven.

Therefore, when he states the events causing the war, he does not do so without religious overtones. Let us note how he does this in the following statements: "Deeply as one must mourn for the most marvellous edifice which we have ever seen or heard of, whether we consider its structure, its magnitude, the richness of its every detail.... yet we may draw very great consolation from the thought that there is no escape from Fate, for works of art and places any more than for living beings. And one may well marvel at the exactness of the cycle of Destiny; for as I said, she waited until the very month, and the very day on which in bygone times the temple had been burnt by the Babylonians."¹⁶

The implication is altogether clear. God had a hand in all of this. Notwithstanding Josephus's elaborate and realistic delineation of the political external causes of the destruction, the very culmination of the war, Josephus, without explanation yields the entire historical theory to another over-riding cause, the fact that all these external events were part of God's plan, and that the plan was divinely inspired to manipulate the external forces to a divine conclusion. Thus again we have depicted the dual nature of Josephus's treatment of history.

This irreconcilable duality again is depicted when Josephus addresses John and the Jews in words suggesting that Fate, the overriding force of the passage above could be averted by repentant human action. He stresses the possibility that God might indeed

change his plans in response to human action, in direct contradiction to his attributing the cause to Fate alone.

"Yet to be sure, John, it is no disgrace to repent of your misdeeds, even at the last; and if you desire to save your country; you have a noble example set before you in Jecania, King of the Jews. He, when of old his conduct had brought the Babylonian's army upon him, of his own free will left the city before it was taken..."¹⁷ Josephus further exhorted the Jews that the Romans had great respect for the Jewish holy places, and did not wish to destroy them. It was the actions of the Jews themselves that were bringing about the Temple's destruction. Later on in the war, Josephus pointed to the disgraceful utilization which the Jews made of their own Holy Temple as a bastion of war. How could the Jews, who revered the Temple, defile it by using it as a battleground?

On the one hand, there is depicted by Josephus the interplay of human action which was influential in bringing about the crisis. Human action was the cause of the difficulty, and the difficulty could be averted by human action. Josephus does not bother to reconcile the problem that would arise as to whether divine action actually predestined the human action underlying the crisis.

A final example shows the duality specifically stated in Josephus's life. Telling the Jews that they ought not to revolt against the Romans at all Josephus says:

"I laid before their eyes against whom they were going to fight, and told them that they were inferior to the Romans, not only in martial skill, but in good fortune..."¹⁸ By good fortune, Josephus clearly suggests that it was more than the political facts which disfavored them. In fact Destiny herself was on the opposing side. Here destiny was placed in equivocal importance to the external political facts of the situation.

Josephus's own actions, portrayed as he describes his experiences as military General are themselves contradictory. When cornered and faced with death after military defeat, Josephus utilizes a foul stratagem to save his own life. He persuaded his soldiers to kill each other after drawing lots, and then surrendered to

the Romans with one companion. That this act lacks nobility of character and implies a certain hypocrisy seems clear. Afterwards, he gained favor with Vespasian by announcing that he had the prophetic gift, and that this prophetic gift had told him that Vespasian himself would become Emperor. If Josephus really felt that he was inspired with a prophetic gift, one must ask why this prophetic gift is never referred to again in his writings. These descriptions of Josephus's own character cannot be ignored in a thorough analysis of his writings. If his actions are hypocritical in that they include stratagems and tricks, it is possible that his oratory, his speeches to the Jews, his historical writings themselves were infused with slants and biases, and blemishes which mar their integrity.

How many, then of his pious exhortations to the destiny of God and Fate, how many of his self-righteous denunciations of the defilement of the Temple, and how many of his statements that God is the driving force in history can be reconciled with the cynical acts which he himself admits to? Josephus merely using religious utterances to communicate with a religious people, and more importantly, to influence them in his favor? Although answers to these questions cannot be fully known, it is well to point out the fact that Josephus as a person was neither consistent, nor thoroughly honest. When he wrote, vacillated between the most acute political analysis, and the most pious exhortations. His personal life also vacillated. Although he remained an observing Jew, he had some marked blemishes on his character. Furthermore, his actions were not those of a naive man; they were more akin to those of a smooth manipulator in the realm of both actions and words. His actions in the Galilee campaign, and all the words in his speeches in the later Roman siege of Jerusalem have a common denominator: they were designed to promote his particular point of view, and to save the Jews from the suicidal fate. (Yet if Fate was indeed in the hands of God, there is a question as to whether a man of Josephus's character would have been chosen to attempt to avert what was already predestined.)

It is relevant here to mention that Josephus was regarded as a traitor by the zealots and the revolutionary partisans. Although it is impossible to judge the truth of these accusations, it is nevertheless true that Josephus did very little to disguise the

image of traitor that his actions and words were building up. To be in the employ of the Romans to induce the Jews to surrender would be most naturally interpreted as treachery. For why would the Romans employ him if not to serve their own ends? And surely Roman self-interest could not be construed as identical with Jewish self-interest. The fact that he was employed to write history for the Romans, and that he accepted favors from them does little to remove the image of traitor. The fact that he quotes to the masses of Jews religious evidence for his arguments would seem scarcely to impress those who had considered him a traitor in the earlier years, when in Galilee the political loyalties of the General Josephus were suspect. When he appeared again, with a Roman name, a Roman historian, in the company, and under the protection of the entire Roman army present at the walls of Jerusalem, only two conclusions seem possible. Either he was so utterly sincere in his conviction that Roman self-interest was not opposed to Jewish self-interest, that the Romans themselves trusted him, or he was known to be an opportunist who enjoyed Roman life, and whom the Romans were using to fulfil Roman self-interest.

To summarize the second section of this thesis, it is the contention that Josephus followed an identical pattern in describing corruption, dissension, and Jewish decline, as he did in describing the superiority of the Romans in relation to the Jews. In both cases, he superimposed a religious theory over the existing political facts which he also described in detail.

This admixture of the political with the religious would appear strange to the modern historian, accustomed to let the facts speak for themselves. Although there are many theoreticians among modern historians, the modern historian would, in order to answer modern sceptics, find it necessary to take the pains to harmonize the religious theory with the political facts.

In the writings of Josephus, Josephus freely mixes the facts with the theory, and feels no compulsion to harmonize them. This leads one to suspect that the historians in Josephus's time did not write history with any view towards obtaining objectivity, but such is not the case. Josephus himself claims to be giving a most objective and impartial

view of history. In his own words: "Yet the writers I have in mind claim to be writing history, although besides getting all their facts wrong, they seem to me to miss their target altogether. For they wish to establish the greatness of the Romans, while all the time disparaging and deriding the actions of the Jews. However it is not my intention to counter the champions of the Romans by exaggerating the heroism of my own country. I will state the facts accurately and impartially, at the same time the language in which I record the events will reflect my own feelings and emotions, for I must permit myself to bewail my country's tragedy."¹⁹ Such a noble statement of introduction to his writing indicates that the historians of his time were sensitive to the problem of historical objectivity. It is difficult to understand, therefore, why no attempt is made to resolve the discrepancies between Josephus's historical statements, and the passionate religious theorizing which he used to persuade the Jews to lay down their arms.

Josephus's actions and character have done little to lift up his image either as a person or as an historian. His continuous vacillation in his writing between attributing religious causes and political causes to actual events leave the reader in confusion, and serve to destroy his own claim to historical objectivity.

ch 3.

A CHANGING WORLD

The political facts of Rome changed in Josephus's lifetime. The evidence points to the fact that Josephus became decidedly disillusioned with a Rome he once admired. Josephus' predictions had come true. The Roman side had emerged victorious. Josephus continued to live a Roman way of life, and continued to observe the Jewish religion. Yet he saw the pagan celebrations, and the barbarities of victorious Rome, and they perhaps fell short of his earlier expectations.

He did not become so disillusioned that he wanted to remove himself back into an exclusively Judean world, even if that were possible. He wished to remain in a non-Jewish environment, but he found to his chagrin that the non-Jewish world was becoming increasingly hostile both to him and the Jews. If he was sincere in believing in his earlier years that Rome would be decent in its treatment of the Jews, some of his beliefs must have been shattered when the internal corruption which had contributed so much to the Jewish downfall,

was influencing the Romans to become less tolerant, and more violent and barbaric.

Faced with this emerging situation, Josephus began a series of religious writings which reflected his concern for the status of the Jewish people, and his own status as well. For the Romans were growing cooler in their interest in him, and the non-Jewish world belittled and attacked the Jews. Josephus's "Against Apion," and "Antiquities," were expressions of religious content which grew out of a political need, a need to restore respectability and prestige to the Jews during this troubled time. Thus again we can see an external political situation which gave rise to a religious interpretation, in which the religious interpretation was superimposed to meet the needs of the external situation. Again the contradictions were not always harmonized.

Many of the statements which Josephus made in his strong attempt to lift the prestige of the Jewish people were subject to the challenge of future generations regarding their accuracy. Some of the assertions which Josephus has offered have seemed quite extravagant and excessive to critics and scholars.

It perhaps is understandable that Josephus was given to excesses of praise in his defence of Judaism, since he hoped through these writings to combat anti-semitism, and to raise the image of a defeated Israel in the eyes of her conquerors. In addition, Domitian, who succeeded his brother Titus in 81, had no interest in Josephus, and the comradeship which Josephus shared with Vespasian and Titus came to an end.

We note in his writings about Judaism and the Jews a very clear reflection of this new political situation that emerged. On the one hand he attempted to prove the superiority of the Jewish way of life; on the other hand he consciously attempted to assimilate Judaism to the secular culture, by attempting to prove the many similarities which the Jewish and the secular culture had in common. In both cases, there was a strong drive to prove in Roman terms, and by Roman standards that Judaism compared favorably to the products and the genius of the prevailing culture of the day.

Josephus carries through in the "Antiquities," and "Against Apion" his same notion of the role of God in history which he put forth in "The War."

Josephus's view on religious subjects does indeed reflect the changing political situation, the altered relation of Jerusalem to Rome after the war, the altered prestige that Judaism and the Jewish people were subject to all over the existing world. It was to meet this need that Josephus addressed himself, and it is this political need which is reflected in his writings.

In the first place the Roman world had a great respect for law, legal functions, and legal terms. A truly law-abiding civilization, which respected formal legal codes was deemed praiseworthy. Thus Josephus endeavored to show what a great respect for law the Jews had.

Not only does Josephus assign the appellation legislator to Moses; he attempts to prove the superiority of Jewish law codes to all others.

He states: "To begin with then a little back, I would say this first, that those who were lovers of order and common laws, and who first introduced them, when men were living without law and order, may well have this testimony, that they were better than other men in mildness and natural virtue. And certainly such persons endeavor to have everything they introduce believed to be very ancient, that they may not be thought to imitate others, but may rather seem themselves to have suggested a regular way of living to others. Since, then, this is the case, the excellency of a legislator is seen in seeing what is best, and in persuading those who are to use the laws he ordains to have a good opinion of them, and the excellency of the people is seen in their abiding by the laws, and by making no changes in them, whether in prosperity or adversity. Now I say that our legislator is the most ancient of all the legislators who are anywhere recorded."²⁰

The chauvinistic statements of Josephus are not without a reasonable degree of truth. Yet their emphasis and tone are clearly set to impress the Roman love of law. Furthermore the statements are charged in favor of the Jews and somewhat generalized.

His defense of the durability of Jewish law codes is especially romantic when he compares Biblical legislation to Platonic writings:

"For those who attempt to write something of the same kind as a polity

and a code of laws, are accused of composing monstrous things, and are said to have undertaken an impossible task -- Plato, who is admired by the Greeks as remarkable for his lofty life and force of language, and who in power of persuasion excelled all other philosophers, continues to be little better than laughed at and publicly ridiculed as on the stage by those that pretend to sagacity in political affairs...."²¹

At first Josephus's comparison does not seem especially specious. Yet it is not quite accurate to utilize this comparison for two reasons. On the one hand, Plato was a philosopher in a political environment. Moses was religious and secular leader of a group of slaves. Secondly Plato's political conception was conceived and envisioned as an ideal and a model. Moses's conception was a practical code, the framework of which was suited to immediate adoption. Finally, Moses's law had religious sanction to insure the obedience of it. Yet of course Josephus was either unaware or unmindful of the many occasions in Jewish history when the Jews broke their own laws.

What is important in this consideration is the legal emphasis of the discussion, the concerted attempt to stress the Jewish proficiency in that area in which the Greeks and the Romans most prided themselves.

Especially interesting is Josephus's effort to show how other nations which followed after Israel have in effect actually borrowed Jewish ways and followed Jewish legal precedent. This is noteworthy in that in Josephus's effort to show similarity with his present culture, he goes beyond similarity and claims both priority and leadership:

"Moreover, multitudes have had a great inclination now for a long time to follow our religious observances; nor is there any city of the Greeks, nor any barbarian city, nor any nation, where our custom of resting on the seventh day has not reached, and by whom our fasts, and burning of lamps, and many of our prohibitions as to food, are not observed."²²

Although modern scholars do assign Jewish influence to laws and customs of the Graeco-Roman world, modern scholars also challenge the concept of Jewish originality in many of these respects. Strictly speaking, therefore, one might just as easily assert that the Jews themselves were imitator, copiers, and borrowers, and that the Graeco-Roman world owes more of a debt to those who came before the Jews.

The above statements are not an attempt to deny the integrity or sincerity of Josephus's statements. Their zest, and definitiveness, however, can very largely be attributed to what he was attempting to prove, and the zeal with which he undertook the task. For it was necessary to prove what he proved in order to improve the political situation in which he was placed.

Josephus was most incisive and brilliant in interpreting the genius of Judaism for his world. For instance in the Preface to the Antiquities, he speaks with distinction on the genius of Jewish survival: "Now when Moses was desirous to teach this lesson to his countrymen, he did not begin the establishment of his laws after the same manner that other legislators did - I mean upon contracts and other rights between one man and another, but by raising their minds upward to regard God, and his creation of the world, and by persuading them that we men are the most excellent of the creatures of God upon earth. Now when once he had brought them to submit to religion, he easily persuaded them to submit in all other things: for as to other legislators, they followed fables, and by their discourses transferred the most reproachful of human vices unto the gods, and so afforded wicked men the most plausible excuses for their crimes."²³

Such ingenious arguments were likely to be persuasive indeed, because of their force of logic. Yet the interpretation of the Old Testament here is remarkably intellectual. Josephus regards Moses as the directing force of the giving of the law, rather than God himself. And he credits Moses with the genius of focusing the people's attention on God for the purpose of teaching a lesson to his countrymen. Thus, to Josephus, the entire occurrence at Sinai was wisely planned by a most wise human legislator, rather than directed and invented by God himself. Such an interpretation reflects, quite unconsciously, its environment. Such an interpretation was indeed necessary if it were to have any ultimate influence on its environment.

The fact that Josephus chose to devote so much praise and attention to Moses cannot be deemed an accident. Although he is surely the central figure in the Jewish religion, there are other prominent men whom he subordinates, and Moses, the lawgiver, is deemed of key importance.

When describing Moses, Josephus is prone to speak of Moses with a view towards his readership. Thus he speaks of allegory and philosophical problems. "I exhort therefore, my readers to examine this whole undertaking in that view, for thereby it will appear to them that there is nothing therein disagreeable either to the majesty of God, or to his love of mankind; for all things here correspond with the nature of the universe; while our legislator speaks some things wisely but enigmatically, and others under a decent allegory, but still explains such things as required a direct explication plainly and expressly. However, those that have a mind to know the reasons of everything may find here a very curious philosophical theory, which I now indeed shall waive the explication of,"²⁴

The world about him, the very nature of the population to whom Josephus's writings are addressed required a more sophisticated approach to the character and manner of the man Moses. He is characterized as a man who knew the devices and artifices of how to influence the people for good. He was not a simple man; he was a deep man. He was not a naive man; he was a shrewd man. The fact too, that he was wise and intelligent was an important quality for Josephus to stress. Much less stress is placed on religious piety for its own sake. The piety that Josephus stressed is the piety that has an ulterior purpose. Josephus's conception of religion was an ethical centered and highly efficacious one. The Jewish religion was outstanding, because it utilized a religious base as a foundation to maintain and uphold ethical action. This conception of Josephus is far removed from a God-centered conception. Yet it had both relation and persuasiveness in the world to which it was exposed.

The emphasis of a writer is not always discernable at first glance. Sometimes it is carefully concealed through subtlety. The language that Josephus uses to describe the activities of Moses, and the stress and emphasis placed on the legal elements of Judaism by Josephus ought not to be regarded as accidental.

In Against Apion, Josephus stresses another area for a very important purpose. A considerable amount of material is presented to prove the accuracy of Jewish historians. He cites evidences from early antiquity to prove the reliability of Jewish historians as compared to Greek historians.

It is obvious from the start of the treatise that Josephus is writing the treatise

in rebuttal to a Greek pseudo-historian whose allegations about Judaism were deemed by Josephus as being slanderous and unfair. It is to meet these specific, threatening charges, that Josephus focuses upon. Josephus was bringing evidence to meet this threat, and it was because of the threat that such an emphasis was necessary.

Josephus presents a lengthy argument which proved that neither the disposition of the Greek people, nor the instability of their governments, allowed for the writing of reputable histories. He concluded this argument by saying: "We must indeed yield to the Greek writers as to language and style of composition, but not as regards the truth of ancient history, and least of all as to the national customs of various countries." The Greeks, so far as history writing was concerned, were not reliable.

About the Jewish historians, however, Josephus has nothing but relentless praise. We note "For our forefathers not only appointed for that purpose from the beginning the best of men, and those that attended upon the divine worship, but also made provision that the stock of priests should continue unmixed and pure." Earlier Josephus had made this bold statement: "--that these records have been written all along down to our own times with the utmost accuracy, and that, if it be not too bold to say so, our history will be so written hereafter."²⁶

It was exceptionally bold of him to have said so, as the study of historiography has proven.

The discussion in "Against Apion" of Greek historians and Jewish historians was a prelude to a more personal battle. The conclusion that Josephus draws of the superiority of Jewish historians lends support to his thesis that he, Josephus was a superior historian, and Apion, the Greek, was not.

It is not surprising therefore that the particular begins to emerge from the general: "As for myself (Josephus), I have composed a true history of the whole war, and of all the particulars that occurred therein."²⁷ Later he disposes of his opponents in the following manner: "How impudent, then should those be esteemed who undertake to contradict me as to the truth of those affairs! for although they say they have perused the military notes of both Vespasian and Titus, they could not be acquainted with the state of things with us Jews who fought against them!"²⁸

Josephus has been concerned with what amounted to a very real problem to him; his own reputation as an historian, and the reputation of the Jews. Historical criticism does not credit Josephus with the sort of objectivity which he claims to possess. It was to meet this external threat to his reputation that prompted these writings. Whether accurate or inaccurate, the ideas that emerged about Judaism were published only to meet the needs of a particular external problem.

A final example from this area of Josephus's writing shows a similar relationship. He underscores Jewish loyalty to their laws and religion:

"Now as for ourselves, I venture to say, that no-one can tell of so many, nay of more than one or two that have abandoned our laws, or feared death, I do not mean that easiest of deaths which happens in battles, but that which comes with bodily tortures, and seems to be the hardest death of all. Indeed I think those that have conquered us have put us to such deaths, not from their hatred to us when they had got us in their power, but rather from their desire to see a wonderful sight, namely, that there are men in the world, who believe the only evil is being compelled to do or speak anything contrary to their laws!"²⁹

Although this statement is romanticized, it is nevertheless eloquent. It is a statement which serves to increase Jewish prestige in terms which would be impressive to the readers. Praiseworthy was the quality of courage and bravery to the Romans, who had deep respect for those undaunted by death. Praiseworthy, too, was the virtue of loyalty to established law. Roman law was the bulwark of the Empire, and one of its greatest sources of pride.

Josephus emphasises many more things in his effort to counter the external political reality of anti-semitism, and in an effort to re-inforce his own reputation as an historian. Many of the proofs that he brings are both ingenious and valid. A few unfortunately are invalid, though ingenious, and intricately devised.

Worthy of mention is Josephus's view of a religious society in which God, rather than a human being would be King. In the theocratic state which Josephus envisaged was a religious fellowship, or a perfect community of men.

This conception seems idealistic and unworkable. One important qualification, however, made it workable and practical. It was deemed possible by Josephus that this theocratic state could exist even if a political ruler like Caesar ruled the Jews. As long as the religious laws and the solidarity of the religious community was not interfered with, it was possible that the Jews could be governed by a foreign political ruler.

This conviction that politics and religion could reside in separate worlds that do not touch was never accepted by all the Jews. Christians were able to adopt it in many phases of their religious history. Multitudes of Jews broke with Josephus on this particular point; that they might show deference to Caesar; accept a Roman image in their Temple, or carry on their religion properly without political independence and autonomy. This religious and political problem has not ceased to be a problem today in the twentieth century: political scientists caution religionists of the danger of the invasion of religion into a quite objective political sphere; priests and moralists assert their right to persuade government to run their affairs in accordance with a prescribed set of religious principles. The battle goes on. To Josephus, the two realms could be completely separate, and ideally would not be forced to interfere with one another.

It is dangerous to speculate upon what gave rise to Josephus's special Jewish viewpoint on this subject. It seems likely however, that the knowledge of his political world, and his own experiences in it were influential factors. The Jews had failed ignominiously in their latest attempt at self-government. The more politically independent they became, the less pious, and the less scrupulous they acted. Foreign domination did not seem to weaken their religious ties. Their common plight and predicament kept them eager to maintain that religious individuality which kept them peculiarly Jewish.

It was understandable too, that Josephus was liable to undue belief in the perpetuity of Rome. Living in the midst of all the evidence of Roman invincibility, it would have been hard to prove otherwise to any well-schooled observer of Josephus's day. The religious fanaticism of the Jews could scarcely compensate for the definitive martial skill, and the penetrating political acuteness of the Romans. Josephus's contention was that the Jewish religion was superior, not the Jewish state. Josephus would not have applied the same adjective to the military or political potentialities of the Jewish

people, considering his past and present knowledge.

Therefore, Josephus, in a way contradicts himself. For although he applies the term legislator to Moses, and boasts of the devotion and loyalty of the Jews to legal form, the legal form of the Jews was really not at all akin to the legal form which Graeco-Roman world had come to admire. Moses was both a religious and political leader of a people. Josephus takes great pains to prove that Moses united the law which he gave to the people with the sanctity of religion. The people were disposed to obey precisely because religion and politics were interfused in the days of Moses; they were one and the same thing in Moses's time.

When Josephus recommends and envisages a theocratic state, he cannot really be pointing to anything that existed in the past, nor to anything in the Pentateuch. Moses brought the people out of bondage, and handed them to Joshua to bring them into a land of their own to rule themselves.

Josephus certainly appears to be correct in asserting that the Jewish religion has not ever gained in piety or observance by the establishment of Jewish independence.

The solution which he offered was not absorbed. The Jews continued to cling to a hope of a Jewish political-religious state. It is understandable why the political realities of the world of Josephus prompted the historian to conclude as he did. It was imperative to envision Jewish preservation amid the Roman colossus.

To summarize this section, it was noted first that the political situation which formed the backdrop of Josephus's writing changed considerably. The Jews were defeated. Rome had changed its character for the worse. Antisemitism was an impending danger. In addition, Josephus's own reputation as an historian was challenged. The military conquerors who had been patrons of Josephus were no longer the scene, and their successors were not as friendly to Josephus. Josephus needed to meet the necessities in his writings of assimilation, and of self-respect. His writings are eloquent, although not wholly accurate. In his enthusiasm he is prone to excessive statements. Josephus emphasized those elements of Judaism which would be most likely to impress the world which he addressed; the legal, philosophical, courageous elements of the faith. He asserts the

reliability of Jewish historians down through the ages in contrast to Greek historians, and includes himself in this reliable Jewish chain. He envisions a theocratic state as the best way of preserving the religion he loves.

He gropes and he searches for answers to the problems of religion which trouble him. And he looks to his world, and his own worldly experience to help himself to find the answers. His answers reflect that world.

Ch IV A SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE

Confronting our world, two great political scientists of the twentieth, envisaged contrary solutions:

The position of Mr. Hans Morganthau is as follows: The history of the affairs of nations indicate that the conduct of international relations is best undertaken without consideration of morality or religious factors. Those, therefore, who are responsible for the security of a particular country, and its safety vis-a-vis the other countries of the world must rely only on the consideration of self-interest.

Mr. William Fox, on the other hand takes a position quite modified from this extreme stand. Mr. Fox, an eminent political scientist in his own right, maintains that there should be "a reconciliation of the desirable and the possible" in international affairs. Morality and religious values have their place in determining the policy decisions of nations. Although at times it is possible to consider self-interest factors only, there are times when a nation has a choice of two actions, both of which actions would serve the self interest. Thus it is desirable for that nation to choose the ethical, moral, or religious course. No question is of greater relevance to the students of religion and government alike than the question of religious participation in determining government policy. Are the spheres exclusive, or do they interrelate?

The world of Josephus was faced with a perplexing dilemma. The Jewish people in the main desired a Jewish state which would be a reflection of the moral, ethical and spiritual world which they had come to believe in. It has always been a Jewish dream that the religious and political elements could be fused into a nation of dynamic ethics which would be a light to the world.

It does seem that Josephus was astute enough to see the dilemma which faced the Jews of his time. The recent past had shown that an independent Jewish state was destined to fail in its role of fusing politics and religion in an exemplary way. Rather the opposite occurred. The basest of corruption, the vilest of intrigue, the most vulgar of aberrations resulted instead from this merger.

The experience of the Jewish state at the time of David and Solomon also offered no convincing evidence that the depth and piety of the Jewish religion influenced the conduct of the state for the better. David and Solomon's exploits and experiences were not exceptionally pious, but the conduct of regal affairs after the death of Solomon corroborates that the most pious religion within a state is no safeguard against the internal decay and corruption of the political element of the state.

Josephus, it is certain was aware of this dynamic to the full. He reflected on the world about him, and he read into the history of the past. The notion of the necessity of a nation following its self-interest is difficult to reconcile with the ideal precepts of a religion. And perhaps Josephus, in his own mind, was convinced of these concepts, and their implication for the Jewish future.

When Josephus viewed the internal dissension and corruption which involvement in politics had caused among the zealots, Josephus commented critically about the low, and profane level to which the Jewish people sank. Their willingness to profane the Temple, their open violation of God's laws in their wild and disunited defense of the city disgusted Josephus.

Josephus's concept of religion was that religion has nothing to do with these political matters. As soon as it touches wars and political conflicts, it profanes itself. Josephus in many ways would agree with Mr. Morganthau of the 20th century that religion has nothing to do with the affairs of running a country. Josephus claimed that Judaism could exist even under foreign domination, and that foreign domination would not destroy Judaism, as long as the religious lives of the people were left free to develop into rich and lasting piety.

Of course there are important limitations to the view of Josephus. Firstly there is the factor of time. In the context in which Josephus lived, a foreign country

would leave the internal civil affairs of the captured nation to be administered by leaders of the captured people. Only tribute and taxes would be exacted. The great span of distance which separated countries allowed for greater freedom even for the country that was captured.

Today it is no longer possible for the political and religious affair of a nation to be effectively separated, and conflicts are continually cropping up. When Russia conquers a nation, she frequently adopts a deliberate plan to thwart religion, because it conflicts with her dogma. Secondly the world has become so small that a larger proportion of the citizenry of every country have become directly involved in the affairs of their country, and cannot divorce itself from the general stream of responsibility and decision making- thus the democratization of the world makes the concern of the nations the concern of every one of its citizens.

The theocratic state that Josephus conceived is still an ideal which has never been successfully realized. Few would doubt the desirability of its realization, but one might legitimately wonder how it could fit into the scheme of modern world patterns. For all nations are embroiled in conflicts in which their theologies are integral parts. Communist ethical ideals are very much apart of Communist political activities. Judeo-Christian ethical ideals have a strong relation to what purports to be Western World foreign policy. Behind the ethical pronouncements, the dirty business of politics continues. A theological state would serve only as a pawn in the international arena. In today's international arena, however, even pawns are subject to Atomic dangers.

Despite the above political analysis, Josephus's views were an exceptionally logical interpretation of the problems of his time. It was probably his desire to find an interpretation which would solve the problems of his times that led him to include the elaborate description of the Essenes in the midst of his description of the Jewish War. The Essenes were a Jewish sect which were the closest thing in existence to the projected theocratic state which Josephus envisaged. That he would present such a lengthy description of the Essenes, without giving correspondingly equal space to the Pharisees and Saducees could be very well indicative of his enormous interest in this

purely religious, pacifistic community. It is with admiration for them that Josephus speaks the following words describing the Essenes: "and indeed our war with the Romans gave abundantevidence what great souls they had in their trials, wherein, although they were tortured and distorted, burnt and torn to pieces, and went through all kinds of instruments of torment, that they might be forced either to blaspheme their legislator, or to eat what was forbidden them, yet could they not be made to do any of them, no nor once to flatter their tormentors, or to shed a tear."³⁰

If Josephus was looking for a model to suggest the outline of his later views, the existent reality of the Essenes might have provided the stimulus for his later ideas and theory of the ideal religious state.

It is noteworthy that in the War, Josephus makes scant mention of the Pharisees and the Saducees, and that he actually makes a disparaging remark about the Saducees. He makes no disparaging remarks about the Essenes, nor about the Pharisees, whom he later joined.

The fact that the balance of power was on the side of the Romans in the Roman-Jewish war was the determining factor which led to Josephus's viewpoint. He felt that the Jewish religion could still maintain itself under foreign domination.

Yet in his early writings of the Jewish War, there is abundant evidence of Roman attempts to take away some Jewish religious freedom. It seems that Josephus underestimated the implications of these incidents of intolerance, and did not see the direction to which they might lead when Rome might enforce their will more tyrannically. His interpretation of these incidents do not seem very realistic. In truth, the yoke of oppression was weighing heavily upon the Jews, for the Romans were invading their sphere of religion.

In Josephus's words: "After this Pilate raised another disturbance, by expending that sacred treasure, which is called corban upon aqueducts, whereby he brought water from the distance of four hundred furlongs. At this the multitude had indignation, and when Pilate was come to Jerusalem, they came about his tribunal, and made a clamor at it. Now when he was apprised beforehand of this disturbance, he mixed his own soldiers in their armour with the multitude... Now the Jews were so badly beaten that many of them

perished by the stripes they received, and many of them perished as trodden to death by each other."³³

We learn also from Josephus that Caius Caesar "sent Petronius with an army to Jerusalem, to place his statues in the temple, and commanded him that in case the Jews would not admit them, he should slay those that opposed it, and carry all the rest of the nation into captivity." Although on this occasion the Jews were successful in preventing the images from being installed, the Temple was not always left inviolate. We read: "at last some of the Jews being destroyed and others dispersed by the terror they were in, the soldiers fell upon the treasurers of God, which were now deserted, and plundered about four hundred talents, of which sum Sabinus got together all that was not stolen by the Romans."³²

It is true that the Jews reacted with violent opposition to any outrage upon their religious sanctuaries. Yet prior to the War, the Romans and their procurators made many attempts to violate the sacred precincts, and were only prevented from doing so by united opposition.

It was perhaps shortsighted of Josephus to have lost sight of an important implication behind these facts; that there is no guarantee that a foreign power which would dominate Judea would leave the Jewish religion alone, if that foreign power was gradually able to break down the force of the religious unity either by co-ercion or persuasion. Future generations of Jews found that a non-involvement in political affairs not at all prevented the intrusion of religious persecution from the political power which dominated them.

It is also possible that Josephus misinterprets and exaggerates the accounts of bitter factionalism of the zealots of the Roman-Jewish War. Indeed the pattern which emerged was not unlike the pattern which would be expected to emerge in a political revolution.

In the first place there was the Conservative-proRoman faction with which Josephus allied himself. This was a moneyed class of nobility who had benefited mostly from the Romans, and whom the Romans had honored. Second, there was a large group of uncommitted masses of people, who had unfixed loyalties, and were waiting to see how

unfixed loyalties, and were waiting to see how the events would turn. Among the fanatics, there was a struggle between the more extreme and more moderate factions. Also, as might be expected, there were continuous struggles for power to see who would lead each faction. Then it was necessary that there be a struggle for power to see which faction would predominate, for each faction had a great deal at stake, and felt that their opinion was best for the country. Once a faction did take the reins and was the predominating force, there were attempts to overthrow them, for they could not always hold on to the power which they had attained. It was also necessary for the faction in power to be cruel and barbaric in keeping down the other factions which were eager to overthrow the prevailing party.

The above description is an attempt to describe the mechanics of the normal revolutionary situation. All of these factors are described in Josephus's account. But Josephus does not regard these things as normal, nor accept them as the inevitable evils of the development of a revolution. Rather he points to the factionalism as impious and shameful:

"Having disposed of Ananus and Jesus, the Zealots and the Idumean hordes fell upon and butchered the people, as though they had been a herd of unclean animals. Ordinarily folk were slain on the spot where they were caught; but the young nobles they arrested and threw into prison in irons, postponing their execution in the hope that some would come over to their party. Not one, however listened to their overtures, all preferring to die rather than to side with these criminals against their country, notwithstanding the fearful agonies they underwent for their refusal."³³

What Josephus actually describes is the bitterness of the struggle among the factions. It is impossible to judge the extent to which Josephus exaggerates the cruelty of the extremists and the character of the hobility, and it is entirely possible that the factionalism had reached such a deplorable state as to render all efforts at constructive unity impossible. Nevertheless, the revolutionary situation followed a pattern which might typically be expected. For revolutions are not marked by restraint; neither are they characterized by unity in their formulative stages.

It was quite evident, however, that the depths of the bitter struggle were in many ways destructive to the religious atmosphere and spiritual ideals; for the war was

so protracted, that the levels descended to the very depths of human depravity. From these facts, Josephus might well have drawn his conviction of the uselessness of the war against Rome.

Conclusion:

As with every great figure in history, it is impossible to evaluate any of the works of Josephus without a careful look at the world in which he lived, and to study the events which gave rise to his writings. For although few writers will admit to a conscious bias, a very clear unconscious bias can usually be detected when one examines the context in which the writer lived.

Josephus's religious opinions and political convictions did not arise in a vacuum. They arose in his attempt to interpret his environment, and they were conceived in such a way that would be understandable to his environment.

The peculiar emphasis and slants of his writings, the conceptions of both Judaism and history that were unique were the result of unique experiences and a particular setting. It was the way Josephus tied the Judaism of past generations to the generation in which he lived that is deserving of our consideration.

Josephus equated Rome with Babylon and Egypt of old, and saw in Rome the hand of God punishing the Jews. This conception was in the line of the tradition of many of the prophets. But none of the prophets actually went over to the side of the enemy, and accepted favors from them. Nor did the prophets expect that the Jews would remain indefinitely under foreign domination. Rather they did not present as acceptable a Judaism which would be a theocratic state existing under permanent foreign domination as Josephus did. They had said that there would be a restoration as soon as the Jews mended their ways.

Josephus's personal history had a great deal to do with his conviction of the possibility that Judaism could exist under permanent foreign domination. He had ample opportunity to evaluate the strength of the enemy, the Romans, an experience which the prophets never had. He had visited Rome, and he had confronted many Romans personally in advance of the conflict.

in advance of the conflict.

In one special way, however he is like the prophets; that is his unswerving conviction that God is the driving and motivating force of all history. Despite the fact that he observed both sides from a unique strategic position. The array of political facts however imposing were not as important to Josephus as God's role as the determining factor in history.

Not only did Josephus have the opportunity to observe Rome, but it has strongly been suggested that Josephus developed a genuine attachment to the Roman way of life, and especially some of the cultural elements. This conviction that Rome had many desirable qualities brought to Josephus's mind the many advantages that could accrue from the exposure of Judaism to a foreign culture.

Josephus showed a respect for political realities which seemed inconsistent with his reliance on God as the over-powering force in history. He was greatly impressed by the external power threat which Rome posed for the Jews, and there is evidence that he examined the more practical side of these realities as carefully as he examined the religious.

When he spoke to the masses of the people, he always however addressed them prophet-like. He preached an argument which relied on religious evidence solely. We imagine that Josephus relied so much on these religious arguments because they were persuasive with the masses, because he had every reason to be appraised of political facts for more than the masses. The masses of the people were not swayed by Josephus's prophetic-type arguments, and we can envisage that they were bothered by doubts similar to those kept by the Jews from believing the ancient prophets.

Josephus's obvious lack of stature as a religious man must also have contributed to his lack of influence among the people. He was obviously a partisan, involved emotionally on a political side, and that fact could not have been unknown to his hearers.

Josephus decries the disunity of the Jewish stance against the Romans, and asserts that the Jews through their own impities decreased their chances of winning the war. He does not resolve the problems that arise from the contradictions which come when his religious and political theories are placed side by side. The great weakness

in Josephus's writing is the number of irreconcilable conflicts which result from religious and political interpretations which cannot logically meet.

He had many weaknesses of character, too. His actions in Galilee, and his currying of Roman favor was such that it is not surprising that the claims he makes to objectivity in his writing have been rejected by critics who judge Josephus to have been pro-Roman in sympathies.

The change in the status of the Roman world was reflected by a change in Josephus's writings. Rome was not living up to Josephus's ideal, and the Jews after defeat had begun to be looked down upon. Josephus tried to build up the image of the Jews in the eyes of the non-Jewish world. He wished to harmonize his religion with the world about him, and explain it to the rest of the world. Finally he wanted to restore his own challenged reputation as an historian.

The points that he emphasized about Judaism were those points which seemed most admirable to the people whom he was addressing. He conceived of Judaism as being as good or superior in those qualities which the people of his world admired above all. Other qualities of the Jewish religion Josephus omits entirely. He also becomes extravagant in many of his remarks, and in his zeal to prove his point.

From early childhood, Josephus envisaged a number of religious solutions to the Jewish problem. Among them was his belief in the possibility of existence of a spiritual or theological nation which was set apart, but which could be ruled by the domination of foreigners. This conception was not a very common one among Jewish thinkers, and thus it is worthy to discover what external factors led to this conception.

Josephus the man and historian is complicated enough to defy analysis. Even the most thorough going scrutiny fails to pin down his essence. It is a baffling task to determine those qualities of mind and character which never arrive on paper, but which are frequently the hidden motivations for action.

Aside from these considerations, it is true that Josephus's productivity and intellectual energy provided a body of work which gives enormous insight into the people of his time. Unfortunately, it is not with complete accuracy that he describes these people and situations. His writings are defined by the perspective that he sees and

the emotional commitment which he possesses. His works are limited according to the places where he has been and the things that he has done. The tone of his works is a reflection of all the emotional interplay that personal involvement can muster. When he is attacked verbally he defends himself with passion.

Thus as he reflects, he himself is a reflection. And especially his ideas about Judaism and the Jews are a reflection of the perspective of a political setting.

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