1

THE CULTURAL DIMENSION
JUDAISM & HELLENISM

This is a book about the history of the early church. So why do we begin our story in 167/166 B.C.? That may seem all too early.

The reason is simple: Modern Christians in general assume that the Judaism that was the mother soil of Jesus, the apostles and the earliest Christian communities was the Judaism Christians know from the Bible. And Protestant Bibles do not include the Old Testament Apocrypha (roughly 200 B.C.-A.D. 1). The common assumption is therefore that the Judaism of, let's say, A.D. 30 was more or less the same as the Judaism of the Mosaic books, the Prophets, the Psalms and the Wisdom books.

This assumption is fundamentally misleading, and many phenomena in the New Testament and the early church are not properly understood unless this assumption is corrected. To put it briefly: Some very important things happened to Judaism and the Jewish people in the period "between the Testaments," and these are essential for understanding the origin of the Jesus movement and the early church. That is why our story begins in the middle of the great historical drama that unfolded in the 160s B.C.

After the Babylonian exile (587-538 B.C.) the Jews in Judea lived under foreign rule for almost four centuries. Persian, Greek and Egyptian rulers generally left the Jews to themselves with regard to their religion. Jewish customs and traditions which centered around the temple and the high priest were respected. Thus the Jews in some

respects enjoyed a limited autonomy, usually with the high priest as the official representative of the people. This continued into the first decades after 200 B.C. when the Syrians were the reigning power in the region. The ruling dynasty in Syria, the Seleucids, had Greek origins from the time of Alexander the Great. Their capital was Antioch. From the beginning, they continued the policy of cultural and religious tolerance.

Things changed with Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the Syrian king who ruled from 175 B.C.

Introduction: The Maccabean Revolt

We begin with a story. The year is 167 or 166 B.C. and we are in the little village of Modein, situated on a hill near Lydda (now Lod). There is great turmoil in the village. One of King Antiochus's officers is carrying a royal decree ordering every inhabitant to offer a sacrifice upon the altar of an idol that has been erected in the marketplace. The Jews of the village are prepared for this. They heard what happened in Jerusalem some months ago: an idolatrous altar was erected on top of the altar in the temple itself, and sacrifices to the heathen gods were now being offered on it—even pigs! And not only was the God of Israel blasphemed and his temple profaned, but his people were brutally persecuted. All the scrolls of the law were sought out and burned. Any who were found in possession of Torah scrolls were killed. Mothers who had their sons circumcised were also put to death (1 Macc 1:44-64). Thus the inhabitants of Modein knew what awaited them if they did not obey the royal decree and offer the required sacrifices. As the author of 1 Maccabees soberly records: "Many Israelites in Modein went over to the king's officers" (1 Macc 2:15).

In a group by themselves in the marketplace stood the elderly priest Mattathias and his sons, Johanan, Simon, Judas (called Maccabee), Eliezer and Jonathan, their faces tense with sorrow and anger at what was about to take place. The tension increased as the king's officers turned their attention toward Mattathias:

> "You are a leader, honored and great in this town, and supported by sons and brothers. Now be the first to come and do what the king commands, as all the Gentiles and the people of Judah and those that are left in Jerusalem have done. Then you and your sons will be numbered among the Friends of the king, and you and your sons will be honoured with silver and gold and many gifts."
>
> But Mattathias answered and said in a loud voice: "Even if all the nations that live under the rule of the king obey him, and have chosen to obey his commandments, everyone of them abandoning the religion of their ancestors, I and my sons and my brothers will continue to live by the covenant of our ancestors. Far be it from us to desert the law and the ordinances. We will not obey the king's words by turning aside from our religion to the right hand or to the left."
>
> When he had finished speaking these words, a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer a sacrifice on the altar in Modein, according to the king's command. When Mattathias saw it, he burned with zeal and his heart was stirred. He gave vent to righteous anger; he ran and killed him on the altar. At the same time he killed the king's officer who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar. Thus he burned with zeal for the law, just as Phinehas did against Zimri son of Salu.
>
> Then Mattathias cried out in the town with a loud voice, saying: "Let everyone who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come with me!" Then he and his sons fled to the hills and left all that they had in the town. (1 Macc 2:17-28)

In this way began the Maccabean revolt, a revolt which resulted in the rededication of the temple in 164 B.C. (later celebrated in the festival of Hanukkah), in the establishment of a partially autonomous Judean state recognized by the Syrians, and later in an independent Jewish state which lasted until the Roman conquest in 63 B.C.

What was at stake in this revolt? The answer seems rather obvious: The Maccabean uprising represented Judaism's self-defense against the enforced "Hellenization" carried out by Antiochus. The Maccabean uprising made evident the incompatibility of Judaism and Hellenism. The Maccabean fighters and martyrs should be seen as prominent members in the long chain of Jewish martyrs, who throughout the ages have preferred to give up their lives rather than deny their God and his law. In fact, the martyrs of the Maccabean uprising are probably included in the chain of witnesses to faith in God in Hebrews 11:

> Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection.[1] . . . [T]hey went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented—of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.[2] (Heb 11:35-38)[3]

[1]Cf. 2 Macc 6—7: the martyrdom of Eleazar and the seven brothers.
[2]Cf. 1 Macc 2:29-41: pious Jews fleeing to the wilderness and hiding in caves.
[3]On the popularity of the Maccabean martyrs in Christian tradition, cf. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution*, pp. 19-22. Cf. also on Heb 11 Pamela Michelle Eisenbaum, *The Jewish Heroes of Christian History: Hebrews 11 in Literary Context*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series 156 (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1997).

Nevertheless, if we look at the background and consequences of the Maccabean revolt, it cannot escape us that the encounter between Judaism and Hellenism was a far more complex phenomenon than suggested above.

In a now classic study[4] on the Maccabean uprising, the German Jewish scholar Elias Bickerman made two main points. First, the Jews of Israel were exposed to massive influence from Hellenistic culture long before the attempted "Hellenization" by Antiochus. The violent Hellenization of Jerusalem was instigated not by Antiochus but by influential circles within the political and religious leadership of Jerusalem itself.

> "Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles around us, for since we separated from them many disasters have come upon us." This proposal pleased them, and *some of the people eagerly went to the king, who authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles.* So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, and removed the marks of circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil. (1 Macc 1:11-15, italics added)[5]

Thus, the whole question of "Hellenization" was to a great extent an intra-Jewish conflict, and in the beginning the Maccabees turned their weapons mostly against fellow Jews, not against the representatives of the Seleucid king (1 Macc 2:43-46; 3:5-9).[6]

[4]Elias J. Bickerman, *Der Gott der Makkabäer* (Berlin: Schocken, 1937); English ed.: *The God of the Maccabees: Studies on the Meaning and Origin of the Maccabean Revolt*, Studies in Judaism in late Antiquity 32 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979).

[5]Cf. also the more extensive presentation of the Jewish Hellenizers' program in 2 Macc 4:7-16.

[6]Bickerman's interpretation of the events—that King Antiochus was more or less used by rival factions within the Jewish elite at Jerusalem—has not gone uncontested. Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization*, pp. 187-203, has argued that the aim of the Jewish Hellenizing party was only to make Jerusalem a Greek city in a political sense, and that the religious persecution was not instigated by them, but by Antiochus, as a punitive action in response to a pro-Torah Jewish rebellion against the king and his Jewish allies. Martin Hengel in *Judaism and Hellenism*, however, has defended the main lines of Bickerman's theory and brought more nuance to it (1:267-309). Cf. also the instructive review of recent discussion in P. Schäfer, *Geschichte der Juden in der Antike: Die Juden Palästinas von Alexander dem Grossen bis zur arabischen Eroberung* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1983), pp. 52-62. Cf. also the full treatment of the whole question in J. Goldstein's commentaries on 1 and 2 Maccabees in the Anchor Bible series; and in his essays "The Hasmonean Revolt and the Hasmonean Dynasty," in Davies/Finkelstein, *Judaism*, pp. 292-351; "Jewish Acceptance and Rejection of Hellenism," in Sanders, *Self-Definition* 2:64-87. Further: K. Bringmann, *Hellenistische Reform und Religionsverfolgung in Judäa: Eine Untersuchung zur jüdisch-hellenistischen Geschichte (175-163 v. Chr.)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983). Probably one should not think of a strict either/or with regard to the initiation of the Hellenizing process; there was likely a measure of mutual understanding and collaboration between the Seleucid king and the Hellenizing circles within Jerusalem right from the beginning. But the king went further in his measures during the persecution period than any Jew could defend.

Bickerman's second point is that the Maccabean fighters, who eventually established the Hasmonean Kingdom,[7] were themselves deeply influenced by Hellenism. But theirs was a Hellenism of a different sort—a Hellenism adjusted so as not to contradict the fundamental truths of Judaism. At the same time, as the Maccabees secured political freedom for Judea, their religious supporters—the forerunners of the Pharisees—were able to integrate important elements of Hellenistic culture into Judaism in such a way that it was no longer felt as a threat, but as an enrichment. It is this process we are going to study a little later in this chapter.

In this way, the story of the Maccabean uprising against violent Hellenization is seen to represent only one side of the coin, one aspect of the rather complex story of Judaism's encounter with Hellenism. And it is to this more constructive encounter and its effect upon the Judaism of our period that we now turn.

Alexander the Great and the Triumph of Hellenism

In order to understand the issues at stake in the Maccabean revolt, we should do as the author of 1 Maccabees does: place the whole process in a wider framework:

> After Alexander, son of Philip, the Macedonian, who came from the land of Kittim [Macedonia and Greece], had defeated King Darius of the Persians and the Medes [at the battles of Issos, 333 B.C., and Gaugamela, 331 B.C.], he succeeded him as king. (He had previously become king of Greece.) He fought many battles, conquered strongholds, and put to death the kings of the earth. He advanced to the ends of the earth, and plundered many nations. When the earth became quiet before him, he was exalted, and his heart was lifted up. He gathered a very strong army and ruled over countries, nations, and princes, and they became tributary to him. (1 Macc 1:1-4)

When Alexander the Great died in 323 B.C. he had succeeded not only in conquering all the important lands around the eastern half of the Mediterranean, but had also laid the foundation of a cultural revolution that would change the character of the ancient world for centuries to come. Alexander

[7]The first generation of Mattathias's sons is usually referred to as "the Maccabees," while the later dynasty is called "the Hasmoneans," probably after one of their forefathers.

Box 1.1. From Alexander the Great to Herod the Great: Main Events

Greek period:	
332 B.C.	Alexander conquers the Persian Empire, including the land of Israel.
323	Death of Alexander, his empire divided among four generals.
Egyptian (Ptolemaic) period:	
320-198 B.C.	Judea ruled by Ptolemies.
Syrian (Seleucid) period:	
198-143 B.C.	Judea ruled by Seleucids.
175-163	Antiochus IV Epiphanes
From 175	"Hellenization" of Jerusalem, led by the High Priest Jason. Gymnasium built.
167	Temple desecrated (followed by persecution for 3 [or 3.5] years).
166	Mattathias's uprising; Mattathias's son, Judah the Maccabee, leads the revolt.
164	Temple rededicated, 25 Kislev.
160	Major defeat for Maccabees; death of Judah. Seleucids regain control in Judea. Jonathan succeeds his brother Judah.
152	Jonathan occupies Jerusalem and is proclaimed high priest.
Jewish independence:	
143-63 B.C.	Judea ruled by Hasmoneans; Galilee colonized.
143	Death of Jonathan; his brother Simon succeeds him.
142	Simon established as high priest and prince of the people.
134	Death of Simon; his descendants rule as princes and high priests (the Hasmonean Dynasty).
Roman period:	
67 B.C.	Romans defeat the Seleucid Kingdom.
63	The Roman general Pompey conquers Jerusalem.
40-37	Herod made Roman vassal king over Judea and after three years gains control.
27	Theater and amphitheater built in Jerusalem.
20/19	Rebuilding of the temple started.
4	Death of Herod the Great.

himself had envisaged a synthesis between the classical Greek culture and the old cultures of the Orient, and although his empire split apart soon after his death, his visions concerning this cultural synthesis were to a large extent fulfilled. But it should be emphasized that the two elements involved—Greece and the Orient—were not equally balanced. Greek culture was the culture of the conquerors, the rulers, the armies and the new business elite. Greek was the language of government and administration, business and commerce. And Greek literature was taken as the supreme model for all kinds of literary production. In other words, Greek culture was the culture of the new era, and anyone who would belong to the new elite had to adopt it.

The languages and the old cultures of Persia, Syria, Judea and Egypt did not enjoy the same prestige because they were the cultures of peoples who

had been conquered, peoples who had not been able to withstand the superior power of Alexander and his successors. It was therefore natural that the representatives of the conquerors should regard these native oriental cultures as inferior. And—as often happens in similar circumstances—this attitude was also adopted by the most socially ambitious elements within the conquered societies. We shall see the relevance of this phenomenon when we turn to the history of the Jews in the last two centuries B.C.

There is, however, another aspect of the picture that somewhat balances the above description. The Greeks may have despised much of the culture of the Orient—the "barbaric" culture—but at the same time they had a great deal of secret admiration for it. Plato told a well-known story in which an Egyptian priest says to the Greek sage Solon, "O Solon, Solon, you Greeks are always children: there is not such a thing as an old Greek. . . . You are young in soul, every one of you. For therein you possess not a single belief that is ancient and derives from old tradition, nor yet one science that is hoary with age."[8] Plato seems to accept this statement, and in fact many Greeks seem to have felt that their culture was inferior to that of the Orient precisely due to its lack of ancient tradition. The Greeks were conscious of having created something new concerning democracy, science, philosophy, the theater and other innovations. They were proud of this, but at the same time felt like newcomers, inferior to those peoples who could boast ancient traditions as the basis of their institutions and cultic rites. A profound respect and admiration of "oriental wisdom" gradually developed among the representatives of Greek culture—not least among the philosophers. To take just one illustrative example, in the second century A.D. one of the leading Platonic philosophers, Numenius, claimed that Plato inherited his most profound teachings from the Semites, and that Plato was, quite simply, a "Moses speaking in Greek."[9]

There were, in fact, two respects in which classical Greek culture was quite incapable of filling the role of the new common culture of the Alexandrian empire:

[8]Plato, *Timaeus* 22B (Loeb ed., 9:33).

[9]As Martin Hengel remarks, many of the leading philosophers of the last two centuries B.C. were themselves Semites (Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* 1:86-88). One of the founders of the very influential "New Academy" (or, in a more modern term, Middle Platonism), was Antiochus of Ashkelon (ca. 130-68 B.C.). Numenius himself was from Apamea in Syria. Cf. M. J. Edwards, "Atticizing Moses? Numenius, the Fathers and the Jews," *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 (1990): 64-75. In a scholarly tour de force Martin Bernal has argued, quite convincingly, that the ancient writers who claimed Greek culture was in large measure derivative from Semitic and Egyptian cultures were in fact right. See his multivolume work *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization* (London: Free Association Books, 1987-1991).

1. The traditional Greek religion could not fill the role of religion for a world empire. Wisely, Alexander and his successors did not try to suppress local deities and their worship. As time went by, this resulted in a large degree of religious syncretism. Oriental religions were Hellenized, but Greek religion was also orientalized.

2. The democratic system of the ancient Greek city-state, the *polis*,[10] could not serve as a working model for the centralized authoritarian government that was required by the new Alexandrian empires, since they were ruling conquered peoples who had no democratic tradition. To maintain their rule, the Ptolemies of Egypt and the Seleucids of Syria established centralized authoritarian governments, which they conducted along traditional Near Eastern lines as "divinely appointed kings."

In two respects, therefore, the Orient had cultural elements to offer that Greek culture could not be without if it was to serve as a common cultural framework for the newly created empires: The Orient had religion, cults, age-old wisdom traditions and the idea of divine kingship.

We can see that a complex process took place in the last three centuries B.C. At the same time as the Orient was Hellenized, Greek culture was to a considerable degree orientalized. It is the resultant mixed and complex culture that we call Hellenism. This became the common cultural heritage of all "civilized" people around the Mediterranean for centuries. This statement holds true even for the land of Israel and the population there—although some unique problems were involved, which created conflicts as well as attempts at compromise and adjustment. Before we return to Jerusalem and the conflict there, we must add a few words on the main strategy followed by the promoters of Hellenistic culture: the founding of Hellenistic cities, the *poleis*.[11]

The Hellenistic City: The *Polis*

One scholar has remarked that Aristotle's famous definition of man as *zoon politikon* should not be translated as "a political being," but "a being living in a *polis*."[12] To the Greek mind, the *polis* was the only framework within which a full human life could be realized. In the Hellenistic period, Greek culture was

[10]The Greek *polis* (city) was a state in miniature, and had full independence in conducting its internal affairs. Its residents were divided into two classes: citizens with full rights and foreigners who paid a tax in order to reside in the polis. In time slaves were added to make up a third group.

[11]On the classical Greek polis, see especially H. D. F. Kitto, *The Greeks* (Harmondsworth, U.K.: Penguin, 1951 [several reprints], chap. 5: "The Polis," pp. 64-79.

[12]Kitto, p. 78.

propagated first and foremost by the establishment of new Hellenistic *poleis* in the captured territories. Such cities were either founded in places where no previous city existed—for example Caesarea by the sea in Israel, founded by Herod[13]—or else existing cities were converted into poleis. A polis contained some obligatory institutions: a public town center and marketplace (the square *agora*); a hall for the city council (the *bouleuterion*); baths; temples to the Greek (later Roman) gods; a theater; a gymnasium (a combined higher school and sports training ground); preferably a library and a sports stadium; and if a big city, also a hippodrome.

Of greater importance than the buildings were the activities going on in these institutions. The theater and the gymnasium were, so to speak, mission stations for propagating Hellenistic culture. The same can be said for the entire polis in relationship to its surroundings.

In the Roman period the Hellenistic poleis became interconnected by an excellent network of Roman roads—built so solidly that many of them remain to this day, together with the equally solid aqueducts. The Hellenistic cities and the Roman roads that connected them were the nerve system of the Roman Empire and its spread of Hellenistic culture (see figures 1.1, 1.3 and 1.4). Within this nerve system commerce thrived, armies were transferred and new ideas flowed from city to city. In the cities, a cosmopolitan outlook developed, and what Luke says about the Athenians was no doubt typical of Hellenistic city-dwellers in general: "All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas" (Acts 17:21 NIV). We can think of the typical citizen of a Hellenistic city as an intellectual, with considerable interest in religion and philosophy, who was at the same time profoundly conservative in his political opinions so long as his personal welfare or the prosperity of his city were not involved. If the latter were threatened, he would react violently against any disturbance of the public order—as Paul experienced in Ephesus (Acts 19).

When we speak of Hellenistic civilization, we mainly have in mind this urban culture of the Greek and later Roman empires. It has been estimated that approximately ten percent of the population of these empires lived in Hellenistic cities. These ten percent were the main bearers of Hellenistic culture. The degree to which this culture penetrated into the countryside surrounding the cities no doubt varied from region to region. Language barriers

[13]See Kenneth G. Holum and Robert L. Hohlfelder, eds., *King Herod's Dream: Caesarea on the Sea* (New York/London: W. W. Norton, 1988).

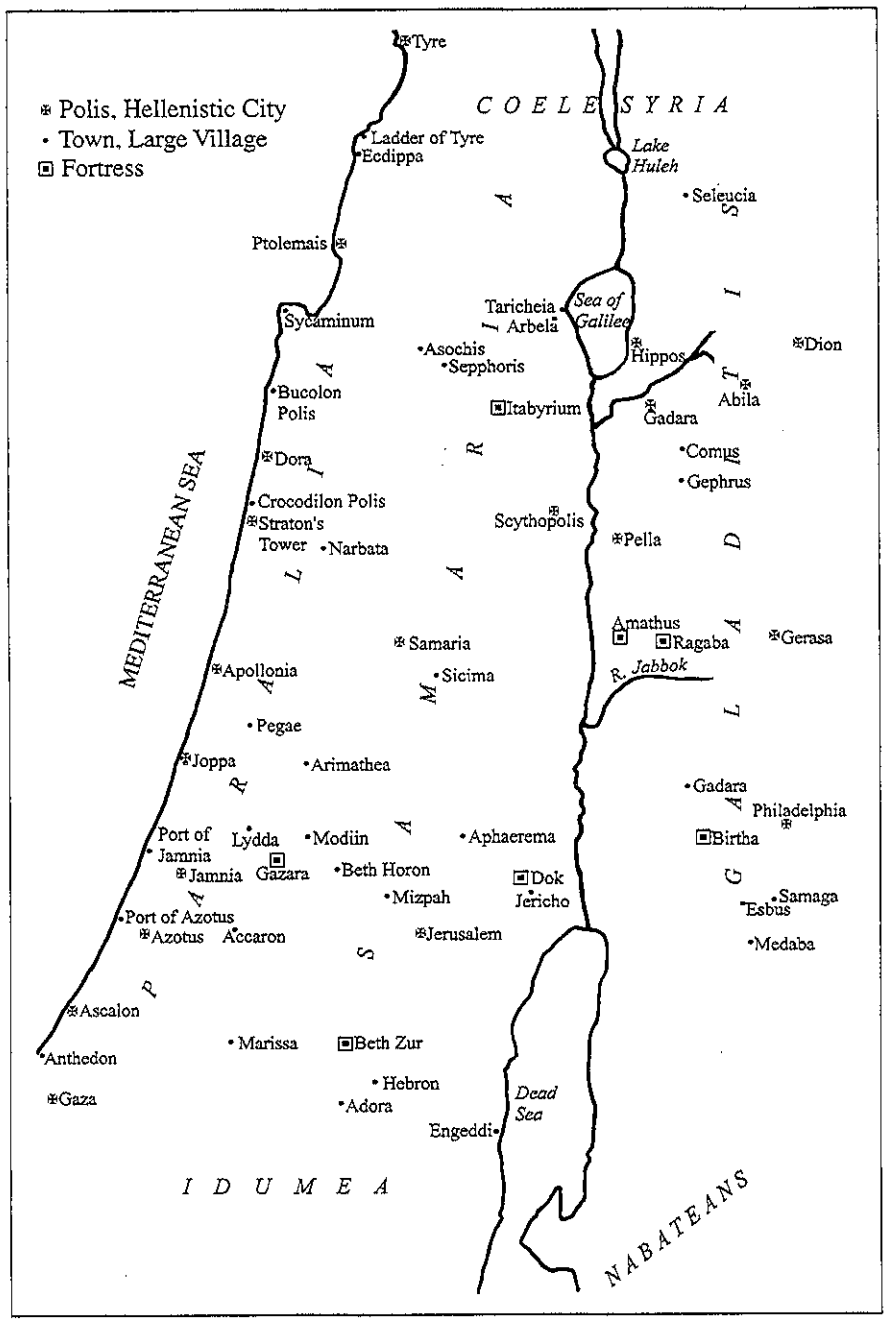

Figure 1.1. Hellenistic Cities in the Land of Israel

may have determined this to a great extent. In Greece and Rome there were no linguistic barriers between the cities and countryside, and the cities had close cultural links to their surroundings. The same may be said of the coastal areas of Asia Minor and even the coastal plains further south: Syria, Israel, Egypt. In other regions, as in the interior of Asia Minor or Syria, in Egypt or the inland of the north coast of Africa, the Hellenistic cities may have been more like islands in a sea of "barbaric" people in the country, who were hardly affected by the culture of the empire.

What was the situation in the land of Israel?

Hellenism in Israel

Let us first notice the great number of Hellenistic cities that were founded or converted in the Ptolemaic and Seleucid periods (marked on figure 1.1, p. 32). They are concentrated along the coastline and in the Transjordan, but also note the large Hellenistic cities in Lower Galilee (Sepphoris and Tiberias), in the Jezreel Valley and in Samaria.[14] Ten of these cities in the Jordan Valley and the Transjordan were later made independent city-states; together they constituted the Decapolis, "the [league of] ten poleis," and the area was named after them (Mk 5:20; Mt 4:25).[15]

This process of Hellenization through Hellenistic cities was carried on, it seems, rather peacefully during the Ptolemaic and Seleucid periods. One region, however, remained unaffected by this process: the central hilly area of Judea, around Jerusalem. Here there were no Hellenistic cities. This was only natural: the only way to Hellenize Judea would have been to convert Jerusalem itself into a Hellenistic city. Jerusalem was the unrivaled capital, the spiritual center and the dominant cultural focus of its region. What happened in Jerusalem would greatly influence life in Judea. Consequently, the Hellenization of Judea depended on the Hellenization of Jerusalem. To this burning problem in the years leading up to the Maccabean revolt the Jews of Jerusalem gave two contradictory answers: support the process of Hellenization or reject it outright.

In order to understand the motives of the extreme "Hellenizers" among

[14]Cf. the complete survey of Hellenistic cities in the land of Israel in *New Schürer* 2:85-183. Cf. also the fine essay by M. Avi-Yonah, "Historical Geography of Palestine," in *Compendia 1:1*: 78-116. For a very full discussion of the issue, cf. Aryeh Kasher, *Jews and Hellenistic Cities in Eretz-Israel: Relations of the Jews in Eretz-Israel with the Hellenistic Cities During the Second Temple Period (332 BCE-70 CE)*, Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum 21 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1990).

[15]Cf. esp. Iain Browning, *Jerash and the Decapolis* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1982).

the ruling class in Jerusalem, one must keep in mind what a formidable challenge Hellenistic culture was. It represented, quite simply, "civilization," and Hellenistic rule had brought prosperity and better living conditions to thousands of citizens throughout the known world. To be cut off from this common civilization would be a serious matter indeed: "disaster upon disaster has overtaken us since we segregated ourselves from the Gentiles" (1 Macc 1:11-15, quoted in full above, p. 26). The Hellenizers in Jerusalem wanted to prevent such disaster, but there was one serious obstacle: the Torah. Many commandments in the Torah made closer contact with the Gentiles difficult if not impossible. The naked young men training in the gymnasium were a flagrant contradiction of the Torah commandments prescribing decency; on the other hand circumcision violated all Greek ideals—the Greeks thought it a mutilation of the body.[16] The Sabbath rest and its reasons were unfathomable to the Greeks, and even more so the dietary laws, which to the Greek mind seemed entirely irrational. The Hellenizers thought that in order to become a part of the new world civilization, they would have to accommodate the Torah to the new situation. In plain words, this meant abrogating those parts of the Torah which made the Jews a people apart.[17]

If this Hellenization program had succeeded, Judaism would no doubt have become part and parcel of Hellenistic culture and would gradually have ceased to exist. The Jewish nation would have slowly been assimilated and vanished from world history, as did many of its closest neighbors. The Maccabean fighters were hardly aware of the historical dimensions of their revolt, but in any case their action saved Judaism from extinction at a crucial time. But this is not only due to the repression of the extreme Hellenizers in Jerusalem. Perhaps more important is the constructive way the Maccabees and their religious supporters dealt with the Hellenistic challenge. One should not make the mistake of thinking that the Maccabean period was one of wholesale rejection of Hellenism. For us, who can view the whole period from a

[16]Cf. the Greek and Roman sayings on this issue collected in Molly Whittaker, *Jews and Christians: Graeco-Roman Views*, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 80-85. The words of the Roman author Petronius are rather funny: he quotes a slave-owner who praises one of his slaves for his many talents, yet adds: "He has two blemishes; without these he would be incomparable. He is circumcised and he snores" (*Satyricon* 68.8; Whittaker, 81). Cf. also the survey of pagan attitudes toward circumcision in J. N. Sevenster, *The Roots of Pagan Anti-Semitism in the Ancient World*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 41 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), pp. 132-36.

[17]On the Jews being "a people keeping themselves apart," practicing *amixia* (Greek, "not mixing with others"), see the excellent survey in Sevenster, op. cit., pp. 89-144.

bird's-eye perspective, it is easy to see that precisely the period inaugurated by the Maccabean revolt and extending into the first century A.D. was marked by a close encounter between Judaism and Hellenism that profoundly influenced Judaism.

This influence did not, however, destroy Judaism. On the contrary, it introduced a new vitality into the old heritage. Instead of a question of incorporating Judaism into Hellenistic culture on Greek terms, the strategy was now to incorporate elements from Hellenistic culture into Judaism—on the terms of the Torah. This was not a conscious, deliberate strategy; in fact, the Hasmoneans and the religious leaders of their time were hardly aware of the extent they were influenced by Hellenism in their very efforts to defend and express Judaism. Let us look a little closer at two central concepts where we can see this influence at work.

A New Conception of the Torah

In the Hebrew Bible, the Torah is conceived within the framework of salvation history. It is proclaimed at Sinai, at a specific moment in history. And it is given with a specific historic situation in mind: national existence in the promised land. This perspective is eloquently expressed in the speeches of Moses in Deuteronomy. The Bible gives no hint that the Torah existed before it was proclaimed on earth, or that it existed prior to the creation of the world.

Hellenism, however, explained the existence of the world along these lines: the hidden law governing the whole universe is divine reason, *logos*, and the moral task of humanity is to live a life of conformity to this divine reason, which is the law of ethics as well as the law of nature.[18] How did the Jewish sages react to this concept?

They adopted the idea—but applied it to the law of Moses! The Torah is the hidden pattern according to which the world was created, and a life according to the law of nature is therefore a life according to the Torah. The first Jewish writer to apply this idea of pre-existence and cosmic significance to the Torah is the author of Sirach (ca. 190 B.C.). He was helped in this under-

[18]This line of thought was especially developed by the Stoic philosophers, cf. the recent study by Maximilian Forschner, *Die stoische Ethik: Über den Zusammenhang von Natur-, Sprach- und Moralphilosophie im altstoischen System* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995). In the period with which we are concerned, this Stoic concept was synthesized with the Platonic heritage by the so-called Middle Platonists. On this influential synthesis, the modern classic is John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists, 80 B.C. to A.D. 220*, rev. ed. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996 [orig. ed. London, 1977].

standing by the identification of the Torah with *God's preexistent wisdom*, by whom God created the world (Prov 8:22-31). Sirach 24 contains a beautiful hymn in which wisdom praises herself as the preexistent law of creation. The author of Sirach adds, "all this is the covenant of the Most High God, the law that Moses commanded us as an inheritance for the congregations of Jacob" (Sir 24:23).[19]

Later the rabbis elaborated further on this idea by identifying the "beginning" (Hebrew, *reshit*) of Genesis 1:1 with the *reshit* of Proverbs 8:22, which refers to wisdom (= Torah), so that Genesis 1:1 could be read: "By wisdom God created," wisdom being identical to the Torah. A rabbinic midrash on Genesis 1:1 reads:

> As a rule, when a king builds a palace, he does not build it by himself, but calls in an architect, and the architect does not plan the building in his head, but makes use of rolls and tablets. . . . Even so the Holy One, blessed be He, looked in the Torah and created the world. And the Torah declares: "With *Reshit* God created" (Gen. 1:1), and Reshit means none other than Torah, as it is said: "The Lord made me *Reshit* of His way" (Prov. 8:22). (*Gen. Rab.* 1:1)[20]

This is an entirely Jewish concept: The pattern according to which the world was created is the Torah of Moses! At the same time it is entirely Hellenistic. As the Jewish philosopher Maimonides recognized later, this midrash speaks of the Torah in much the same way as Plato spoke about what he called the Ideas, the intellectual pattern behind the material world.[21]

The concept of God's Torah as the preexistent mediator at the creation of the world—the rabbis called it "God's daughter"[22]—is of paramount importance when we come to discuss how the earliest Jewish believers in Jesus conceived of his divinity in relation to that of the Father (see chapter sixteen below).

Though not the only Hellenistic element incorporated into the new con-

[19]Cf. the instructive analysis of this important chapter in Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Law and Wisdom from Ben Sira to Paul: A Tradition Historical Enquiry into the Relation of Law, Wisdom, and Ethics*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2. Reihe, 16 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1985); and the critical comments by Boccaccini, "The Problem of Knowledge: Wisdom and Law," in *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought, 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), pp. 81-99.

[20]Soncino translation, p. 1. This midrash was possibly written in the fifth century A.D., but the idea has precedents in the third century and perhaps even earlier (*M Avot* 3:8 and Targums). See further below, chapter sixteen.

[21]Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed* 2:6; cf. the valuable comments in Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1979 [1st ed. 1975]), p. 199.

[22]*TB Sanhedrin* 101a; *Lev. Rab.* 20; *Num. Rab.* 2 and others. Cf. Strack/Billerbeck 2:355-56.

ception of the Torah, it may be the most important. The following concepts are also significant, especially since many think of them as very typical of rabbinic Judaism.

1. The famous Hillel (a little earlier than Jesus) is credited with seven rules for interpreting biblical texts. David Daube has shown that all of them correspond to Greek methods of exegesis taught in Greek schools of law and rhetoric and applied to codes of law.[23] In the Bible itself, this technical way of interpreting the law does not yet appear.

2. Similarly, the "tradition of the elders," from which the concept of the oral Torah later developed (see chapter five on this subject), has roots in the Greek schools of philosophy. These schools had developed a strong sense of tradition, and it became customary to substantiate the doctrine of the school by citing the chain of famous teachers who had transmitted this doctrine all the way from its authoritative beginning. This way of giving authority to a doctrine was later adopted by the rabbis.[24] A classic text is *M Pirke Avot* 1:1:

> Moses received the Law from Sinai and committed it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the men of the Great Synagogue. . . . Simon the Just was of the remnant of the Great Synagogue. . . . Antigonus of Soko received [the Law] from Simon the Just. . . . Jose b. Joezer of Zeredah and Jose b. Johanan of Jerusalem received [the Law] from them, [and so on]. (*M Avot* 1:1-4)[25]

The documentation in rabbinic texts, "Rabbi X said in the name of Rabbi Y, who had it as a tradition from Rabbi Z," is a Hellenistic way of substantiating a statement; it is never used in the Bible. Even if we have no certain literary evidence of this way of speaking before the third century A.D., the older concept of the "tradition of the elders" betrays the same Hellenistic model.

3. Another Hellenistic notion resembling the Greek ideal that everyone should study philosophy is the Pharisaic-rabbinic ideal that all Jews should become students of the Torah. Three sayings attributed to the "Great Synagogue" (in the text quoted above) express the prevalent new concept of piety,

[23]See David Daube, "Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation and Hellenistic Rhetoric," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 22 (1949): 239-64. In this article Daube very lucidly demonstrates that Hillel's rules—whether or not they actually derive from him—correspond to the way ancient rhetoricians handled codes of law, in order to extract decisions from them in legal conflicts.

[24]Cf. Elias J. Bickerman, "La chaine de la tradition pharisienne," in *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, vol. 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), pp. 256-79.

[25]Danby, p. 446.

which attains its zenith in the scholar, the student and the scribe: "Raise up many disciples [of the Torah]" (*M Avot* 1:1); "Provide yourself with a teacher and get a fellow disciple" (*M Avot* 1:6); "The more study of the Law, the more life" (Hillel, *M Avot* 2:7).

In these and other ways, Judaism was able to absorb Hellenistic ideas without losing its own identity or compromising its essential principles. These new ideas were used, in the words of *M Avot* 1:1, "to make a fence around the Torah," to glorify it, not to destroy it. It is not the world of Ideas conceived by Plato that is the hidden pattern according to which the world was created—it is the Torah!

Thus, once the exclusiveness of Israel's God and the absolute validity of his Law were recognized, the sages could be quite liberal in applying Greek ideas and concepts to their work with the Torah.

A striking confirmation of this interpretation comes from the Jewish acceptance of Herod the Great's efforts to make Jerusalem a model Hellenistic city, more than 150 years after the failure of the Hellenizers in the Maccabean era. Herod even ventured to Hellenize the exterior of the temple itself—and met with minimal opposition. In the words of Elias Bickerman:

> At the time of Epiphanes, the gymnasium in Jerusalem was enormously dangerous to Judaism. In the time of Philo, the Jews of Alexandria thronged the games without sacrificing any part of Judaism, and the theater, amphitheater, and hippodrome erected in Jerusalem by Herod, were later visited by the Orthodox Jews as well.[26]

The Jerusalem of Jesus was a Hellenistic-Herodian city. To a Greek visitor, the city must have looked familiar: a typical Hellenistic city with regular streets at right angles.[27] The most impressive sight would have been the temple itself, which, except for its enormous size, looked much like other Hellenistic temples. (Herod's temple complex was probably modeled after the "Caesaraeon" erected by Julius Caesar in 48 B.C. in Alexandria.)[28] But if the visitor had been able—which in fact he was not—to visit the interior of the

[26]Elias J. Bickerman, *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees: Foundations of Post-Biblical Judaism* (New York: Schocken, 1962), p. 181.

[27]Generally on the Hellenistic character of Herod's Jerusalem and the Hellenistic city plan in particular, see John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It: Archaeology as Evidence* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1978) pp. 43-65.

[28]On Herod's expansion of the temple area and its architectonic models, see now Jostein Ådna, *Jerusalemer Tempel und Tempelmarkt im 1. Jahrhundert n. Chr.*, Abhandlungen des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins 25 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999), pp. 36-71.

sanctuary itself, he would have seen the interior of the old Israelite sanctuary left almost completely intact. This fact may serve as a symbol of the relationship between Judaism and Hellenism in the days of Jesus.[29]

The Concept of Judaism

Before Alexander the Great and his program of "cultural conquest," there hardly existed any "ism" in the old world.[30] People defined themselves and their identities mainly by place of origin and ethnic descent: Greeks were the people inhabiting Greece, the Aegean islands and Asia Minor's western coast; Israelites were the people descending from Jacob's sons and living in parts of the land of Israel and scattered in the Diaspora. Peoples were defined by territory and descent.

After the Babylonian exile and in the Diaspora, the question of *descent* became the crucial one for deciding who did or did not belong to the Jewish nation. We see this principle applied in a paradigmatic way in the famous dissolving of mixed marriages in the time of Ezra: the non-Jewish wives were sent away so as to hinder the "mixing" of "the holy seed" (Ezra 9:2). Either you were born a Jew or you were not, and nothing could change that.

In the wake of Alexander's conquests, a new way of defining identity appeared. People who were not Greeks by descent, began to talk like Greeks, dress like Greeks, live like Greeks, in Greek-style cities. This new way of life was called, in Greek, *hellenismos*—probably the first "ism" on record in history. As a response, Jews began to define themselves in the same way: they had their own way of life, *iudaismos*. This is a term used, probably for the first time, by the author of 2 Maccabees: Judas Maccabee and his brothers "fought bravely for Judaism" (2 Macc 2:21); Judas and his men entered villages "and summoned their kindred and enlisted those who had continued with Judaism" (2 Macc 8:1). "A certain Razis, one of the elders of Jerusalem . . . was accused [before the representative of the Syrian king] of Judaism, and he had most zealously risked body and life for Judaism" (2 Macc 14:38). It is obvious that "Judaism" in these examples does not mean Jewishness in a biological

[29]For a fascinating analysis of the long-term encounter and conflict between the Orient and Hellenism, cf. the first chapter in Dix, *Jew and Greek*, "The Conflict of the Syriac and Greek Cultures," pp. 1-18.

[30]For what follows, I am deeply indebted to Daniel R. Schwartz's essay, "Introduction: On the Jewish Background of Christianity," in Schwartz, *Studies*, pp. 1-26. Cf. also Shaye J. D. Cohen, "From *Ethnos* to Ethno-Religion," in *Jewishness*, pp. 109-39.

sense: some born Jews abandoned "Judaism," others fought for it and were faithful. Obviously, the word describes a life according to the Torah; in other words, a certain lifestyle, just like the contrasting concept: "There was such an extreme of *Hellenism* and increase in the adoption of *foreign ways*" by faithless Jews in Jerusalem (2 Macc 4:13).

But just as non-Greeks could become "Hellenists" by turning to and practicing "Hellenism," so too non-Jews could probably become adherents of "Judaism" by adopting the Jewish lifestyle. In fact, we encounter the first known examples of conversion to Judaism in the days of the Hasmoneans. They even forcefully converted non-Jews in order to secure a Jewish population majority in traditional Israelite territory.

In contrast to the episode of the mixed marriages in the days of Ezra, this was a great change in the perception of Jewish identity. Ezra knew no way of making non-Jews Jews; the Hasmoneans did. Ezra did not know the concept of conversion to an "ism"; the Jews of the Hasmonean era did. And if Hellenism had succeeded in becoming a worldwide "ism", why should not Judaism aspire to the same? It takes no great imagination to realize the importance of this new development as a precondition for early Christian self-understanding and mission.

But was not Judaism too bound to a specific culture, and to a language incomprehensible to most non-Jews, for it ever to become a serious competitor of Hellenism?

Greek in Israel

Perhaps the most impressive evidence for the extent to which Judaism and Hellenism were exposed to each other during the crucial centuries around the birth of Christ comes from the study of the languages used in Israel. A Greek visitor would have had no problem being understood in the streets and shops of Jerusalem.

Originally, Greek was a mixture of different local dialects spoken in Greece. After the Alexandrian conquests, Greek became an international language, and the local dialects were worn down and melted into a "common" *(koinē)* Greek used by everyone and understood everywhere. In short, Greek was the English of the ancient Mediterranean world.

Most users of this new *koinē* Greek were not Greek speakers from birth; for them Greek was an acquired language. Judged by classical standards, this new *koinē* Greek seemed inelegant and "barbaric." But it was a rich, nuanced and effective means of communication that was raised to a high literary level

by many gifted authors who used it to develop new literary forms in keeping with the spirit of the age.

This is the language employed by several Jewish authors of that time and by the authors of the New Testament. It is the language of the educated elite in all provinces of Alexander's empire, and even became the preferred language of the cultural upper class in Rome itself. Even more remarkable, perhaps, is that Greek gained a certain foothold as a spoken and written language in Israel among the native Jewish population. It did not replace Hebrew or Aramaic, but seems to have been used in addition to these two languages.[31]

Archaeology provides some telling illustrations. Many inscriptions have been found on ossuaries,[32] dating roughly from the 200 years prior to A.D. 135. These inscriptions were intended to be read by family members, and one must presume they were written in the language most familiar to the family. Of a total of 194 known inscriptions, 26 percent are in Hebrew or Aramaic and 64 percent are inscribed in Greek alone. Other Jewish inscriptions have also been found, written in Greek, which were obviously meant to be understood by the majority of literate people. Among the finds in the Cave of Letters in the Judean Desert, which are ascribed to Bar Kokhba and his men, are some letters written in Greek. In the ancient Galilean city of Bet Shearim, many catacombs with burial inscriptions have been found, dating from the first to the sixth century A.D. The oldest catacombs date from the first or second century, and all the inscriptions in them are in Greek. The other catacombs also contain several Greek inscriptions.[33]

It is thus evident that Greek was much in use in Israel during the time that Jesus lived and the early church was established—probably mostly a "pidgin Greek" used in the way and circumstances English is used in Israel today. This should be no surprise to a reader familiar with the New Testament. Two

[31]In addition to the works listed in the Suggestions below, one should consult the following: Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Did Jesus speak Greek?" *Biblical Archaeology Review* 18, no. 5 (1992): 58-63; Pieter W. van der Horst, "Jewish Funerary Inscriptions—Most Are in Greek," ibid., pp. 46-57; G. Mussies, "Greek in Palestine and the Diaspora," in *Compendia 1:2:* 1040-64; Richard A. Horsley, *Archaeology, History and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis* (Valley Forge, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 1996), pp. 154-75.

[32]Small coffins for reburial of the bones after the body had completely decayed in the tomb. These were used by Jews in the period ca. 200 B.C.-A.D. 135.

[33]On all of this paragraph, cf. the instructive display of the epigraphic evidence in Meyers/Strange, *Archaeology*, pp. 62-91; but see also the cautions about the Bet Shearim cemetery as not typical for Galilee at large, in Horsley, *Archaeology*, pp. 169-70.

of Jesus' disciples have Greek names—Philip and Andrew—and precisely these two disciples wanted to introduce some "Greeks" (possibly Gentile God-fearers or Greek-speaking proselytes) to Jesus (Jn 12:20-22). The remark made about Philip in this context ("who was from Bethsaida in Galilee"), seems at first sight rather irrelevant, but may indicate that it was well known that Greek was spoken in Bethsaida. The fact that Peter's parents chose to give his brother Andrew a Greek name may indicate that Greek was a familiar language in their family.

If we turn to the rabbinic literature, some of the most famous of the early rabbis are pictured conversing with Roman emperors and other high-ranking Gentiles. However legendary these stories may be, they clearly demonstrate that the rabbinic tradition conceived of these early rabbis as literate men who—when need be—could use the common language of the era without difficulty. It seems that in the first and early second century A.D. the rabbis even favored the use of the Greek translation of the Bible in synagogues, where this would make the Bible better understood.

Active Dissemination of Judaism and Christianity

Why do we emphasize this bi- or trilingual situation among the Jewish population of the land of Israel in this period? Because it has to do with a fundamental characteristic of Judaism in the period of Jesus and the apostles. At this time Judaism was very much on the offensive. The Maccabean era had created new self-confidence among the Jews, and there seems to have been an increasing flow of converts to Judaism, partly as the result of active Jewish mission.[34] Jesus says to the Pharisees, "you cross sea and land to make a single convert" (Mt 23:15), and rabbinic sources confirm this picture of active mission among Gentiles.[35] In the first century A.D.

[34]The most ambitious and comprehensive study to push this thesis is Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). On active outreach among Gentiles, cf. also Scot McKnight, *A Light Among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), and the important comments upon and supplements to this book in Peder Borgen, "Militant and Peaceful Proselytism and Christian Mission," in *Early Christianity*, pp. 45-69.

[35]The classic study is Bernard J. Bamberger, *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Hebrew Union College Press, 1939 [paperback reprint, New York: Ktav, 1968]), esp. pp. 20-24; 275-99. More recently, the active dissemination of Judaism is affirmed persuasively by Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 1993; but cf. the cautions in Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994 [paperback ed. Clarendon Paperbacks, 1995]).

many Jews seem to have been convinced that their religion was ultimately to become the religion of all people, and this in a not-too-distant future.[36] Accordingly Judaism had to make itself known in the language of all people: Greek.[37]

The earliest Christians shared this conviction, and for them the time of fulfillment had come: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Mt 28:19). In Jesus, the Messiah, the biblical promises were fulfilled or brought near their fulfillment; now the time had come to gather in "a people for his name" (Acts 15:14) among the Gentiles. Thus, there is nothing un-Jewish about the fact that the New Testament was written in Greek. On the contrary, to write the message of Jesus in Hebrew or Aramaic would have meant to restrict it to a rather narrow audience consisting of native speakers of these languages, which would have been contrary to the spirit of Judaism in this age.

Postscript

In a beautiful passage, Rabbi Leo Baeck has emphasized the "Jewishness" of Paul's reaction to the vision of the risen Christ outside Damascus. In going out to the Gentiles Paul was not un-Jewish; on the contrary, he was true to the deepest Jewish instincts:

> A Greek who had experienced such a vision would have reflected, talked, and mused, or spoken and written about it; he would not have heard the Jewish command: "Go"—"Thou shalt go." The Greek had no God who laid a claim on him and sent him to be his messenger. Only the Jew would be always aware that the revelation entailed the mission, that a prompt readiness to follow the way was the first sign and testimony to the faith. Paul knew now that to him had fallen the apostolate in the name of the Messiah.[38]

[36]In Philo this hope seems very clear, cf. *De Vita Mosis* 2.43-44, and the comments in Borgen, "Militant," pp. 56-59. Cf. also Martin Hengel, "Messianische Hoffnung und politischer 'Radikalismus' in der jüdischen Diaspora" in *Apocalypticism in the Ancient Near East and the Hellenistic World*, ed. David Hellholm, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1989), pp. 655-86.

[37]There has been a lively scholarly debate on the question of whether missionary motives were in part behind the translation of the Bible into Greek by Alexandrian Jews in the third and second centuries B.C. There is hardly any doubt, however, that some non-biblical works within the large body of Jewish Greek literature of the late Second Temple period are rightly called "missionary literature." On this, cf. further below, chapter 3.

[38]Leo Baeck, *Judaism and Christianity* (New York: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1958), p. 142.

Temple Square

We have emphasized how the Jewish religion, the Jewish way of life, through the encounter with Hellenism redefined itself and became, itself, an "ism": Judaism. The Jewish way of life became an option for non-Jews by birth. The option of conversion to Judaism became a reality. But, unlike Hellenism, Judaism could not sever its links to something that was not an "ism" and never could be. At the heart of Judaism was something local and concrete, not movable: the temple. On the Temple Mount, and there only, was the God of Israel present in a special way. In the temple—and there only—were the sacrifices brought which repaired and restored purity and holiness to Israel whenever these had been lost. It was the pollution of this heart of holiness and purity (the two concepts are mutually inseparable, if not identical) which triggered the Maccabean revolt. The triumph of the revolt was the rededication of the temple. Second Maccabees is a book not about the Maccabees but about the God of Israel defending his temple. The lasting heritage in the Jewish calendar from the Hellenistic period is the festival of Hanukkah, the rededication of the temple—the only Jewish festival in which the temple itself is the *object*, not only the setting, of the festival.

Access to the temple, the sphere of holiness, was only for Jews. That is why adherence to Judaism was something much more serious than adopting Hellenism. You were not qualified to enter the temple simply by adopting a Jewish way of life. You had to be made a Jew formally, you had to become a member of the chosen people, and you had to be cleansed. That is why the ritual of conversion naturally climaxed in the new convert bringing his or her first sacrifice in the temple. In a sense, that was the goal of the whole process. It speaks volumes for what Jewish identity was all about.

This seems like a severe restriction on Judaism's ever becoming a universal "ism", and it was. There is a built-in tension here, with which Judaism had to struggle long and hard, and it goes a long way toward explaining why there arose dissent, disagreements and different schools of thought. At the heart of the disagreements was always the question of purity and holiness. And at the heart of that question was the temple.

Suggestions for Further Reading

An excellent anthology of primary sources in English translation is Feldman/Reinhold, *Jewish Life*. For Gentile views on Jews and Judaism (original texts and translations), see Menachem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 3 vols. (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Letters, 1976, 1980, 1984). Cf. also the same author's summary, "The Jews in Greek and Latin Literature," in *Compendia 1:2:* 1101-59. The most important texts among pagan authors on Jews and Christians are gathered in English translation, with short comments, in Molly Whittaker, *Jews and Christians: Graeco-Roman Views*, Cambridge Commentaries on Writings of the Jewish and Christian World 200 BC to AD 200, vol. 6. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

For a comprehensive survey of the period covered in this chapter, see *New Schürer* 1:125-242. Cf. also Murphy, *Religious World*, pp. 135-62; Schiffman, *Text to Tradition*, pp. 60-119.

There are three classical studies on the encounter between Judaism and Hellenism in the last three centuries B.C.:

1. Elias J. Bickerman, *Der Gott der Makkabäer* (Berlin: Schocken, 1937). This significant study of the Maccabean revolt is now available in an English translation: *The God of the Maccabees: Studies on the Meaning and Origin of the Maccabean Revolt*, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 32 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1979). Bickerman treated the whole issue once more, and on a broader basis, in his posthumous *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 1988). A short and very readable account of his thesis is to be found in Bickerman, *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees: Foundations of Post-Biblical Judaism* (New York: Schocken, 1962 [several reprints]), pp. 93-165.

2. Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (Philadelphia/Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961 [paperback reprint, New York: Atheneum, 1977]). Main emphasis on political, cultural, economical and social aspects.

3. Martin Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 10, 2nd ed. (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1973). Hengel is placing the theological developments within a framework of political and cultural history. This work is now also available in an English translation: *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period* (London: SCM Press, 1981 [2nd impression in one vol.; reprint, 1991]). This study has since been supplemented by the same author: *Jews, Greeks and Barbarians: Aspects of the Hellenization of Judaism in the Pre-Christian Period* (London: SCM Press, 1980 [German orig., *Juden, Griechen und Barbaren: Aspekte der Hellenisierung des Judentums in vorchristlicher Zeit*, Stuttgarter Bibelstudien 76 (Stuttgart: KBW Verlag, 1976]); and *The 'Hellenization' of Judaea in the First Century After Christ* (London: SCM Press/Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1989). Cf. also the same author's succinct summary "The Interpenetration of Judaism and Hellenism in the Pre-Maccabean Period," in Davies/Finkelstein, *Judaism*, pp. 167-228.

These major studies, among others, have triggered some more recent large-scale studies of the problem: Jonathan A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 41 (New York: Doubleday, 1976); idem, *II Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible 41A (New York: Doubleday, 1983); Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). Emphasizes the vitality and vigor of Judaism faced with the Hellenistic challenges. Cf. also Gabriele Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought, 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

For concise archaeological updates on the period, see Andrea M. Berlin, "Between Large Forces: Palestine in the Hellenistic Period," *Biblical Archaeologist* 60 (1997): 2-51; Eric M. Meyers, "The Challenge of Hellenism for Early Judaism and Christianity," *Biblical Archaeologist* 55 (1992): 84-93.

Two classic studies on the diffusion of Greek language and culture in Israel, with main emphasis on rabbinical sources, are Saul Lieberman's *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1942); and *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1950).