

This thesis is concerned with the history of Jewish Christianity in the early Roman Empire, from 30 to 135 A.D. In this work I point out that the Jewish Christians were never recognized by Rome as an entity, separate either from Judaism or from Gentile Christianity; that consequently the Jewish Christians suffered along with the Gentile Christians following the fire in Rome in 64, and were persecuted with the Jews of Judea during the two Jewish wars, 66-70 and 133-35; but that the collapse of the Jewish branch of Christianity resulted not from these periods of persecution, but ultimately, from its own nature, which was one of stagnation.

The subject of this paper is a historical and classical, and not a theological one. Disputed theological issues have been avoided whenever possible.

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CLASSICS

THE HISTORY OF JEWISH CHRISTIANITY
IN THE EARLY ROMAN EMPIRE
(30 - 135 A.D.)

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PREFACE

The subject of this work is a historical, and not a theological one; controversial theological matters have been avoided whenever possible. Whenever reference has been made to the Christian Church as a whole, or to either of the two main branches of the Church, Jewish and Gentile Christianity, the word, 'Church' has been capitalized; otherwise, it has been spelt with a minuscule 'c'.

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THE HISTORY OF JEWISH CHRISTIANITY
IN THE EARLY ROMAN EMPIRE (30 - 135)

INTRODUCTION

The history of Jewish Christianity is a very tragic one. During the first few years of its existence, it enjoyed an enormous growth in numbers, both in Jerusalem¹ and in the rest of Judaea and Samaria.² The early Jewish Christians of the Jerusalem Church were respected both by their countrymen and by the Gentiles of the churches founded by Paul in Asia Minor, Cyprus and Greece.³

The respect shown the Jewish Christians by the Jews may have been rather grudging, but was all the same forthcoming, since the Jewish Christians of Palestine were essentially orthodox in their observance of the requirements of the Jewish Law.⁴ The feelings of high esteem which the Gentile Christians felt at first for the Jerusalem Church were probably due to the fact that, in this city could be found the original centre of the religion which developed from Jesus of Nazareth, and the spot where most of the striking events immediately following his death occurred.

Towards the end of the first century, however, particularly following the destruction of Jerusalem in 70, the Jewish Christians began to experience feelings of contempt, directed towards them both by the Jews and by the Gentile Christians.⁵ Rejected by Gentile Christianity, in spite of their belief that Jesus was the Messiah, and by Judaism, in spite of their adherence to the Law, the Jewish Christians quickly faded from a position of any importance.⁶ Following the suppression of the Jewish revolt in 135, Jewish Christianity as an orthodox branch⁷ of the Christian religion, disappeared.

Some Jewish Christians rejoined Judaism, others united with the larger and faster growing Gentile Church, and a third group separated itself both from Judaism and from Christianity, and developed into a sect called the Ebionites, which itself disappeared at the time of the reign of Constantine.⁸

In dealing with the history of Jewish Christianity in the early Roman Empire, it is first necessary to define the term, 'Jewish Christian', and to see in what sense various groups which might be called Jewish Christian differed from one another. The Jewish Christians with which this paper is primarily concerned formed that branch of orthodox Christianity which was centred in Jerusalem. The members of the Christian community at Jerusalem were called Nazarenes⁹ by the Jews. It is they who are usually thought of when Jewish Christians are mentioned.¹⁰ The Nazarenes remained attached to Jewish forms of life without imposing them on proselytes.¹¹ They continued to exist as a community until 135; in which year, the line of 15 successive Jewish Christian bishops of Jerusalem was ended with the election of a Gentile to fill the post.¹²

Following the appointment of a Gentile bishop of Jerusalem, a number of the members of the Christian community in the city, who refused to follow a non-Jewish bishop, left the Jerusalem Church, and went to Pella, Damascus and Beroea in Syria.¹³ Irenaeus refers to them as Ebionites, the Hebrew expression for 'the poor'.¹⁴ The Ebionites, along with the Gnostics¹⁵ and Elxaites,¹⁶ were not a part of orthodox Christianity, but were considered members of Jewish Christian sects, which eventually faded out of existence. The Ebionites are claimed to have eventually blended either with Christianity or with Judaism by the fourth century.¹⁷

A third group which can be termed 'Jewish Christian', was comprised of those people in the churches throughout the Empire, who adhered to the requirements of the Jewish Law in varying degrees.¹⁸ One might conjecture from the fact that the preaching of the apostles was carried out firstly to the Jew and secondly to the Gentile, as their Master had commanded, that a great number of the early members of the churches founded throughout the Empire were converts

from Judaism; of these, some had been Jews by birth, others had been previously converted to Judaism from paganism. The churches, whose membership rapidly became predominantly Gentile, permitted the converts from Judaism full participation in church activity, although irritated somewhat by their Jewish customs.¹⁹ However, the second generation of these Jewish Christians discontinued the practice of circumcision, and quickly became assimilated to their Gentile brethren.

In this paper, I shall show that Jewish Christianity stagnated and collapsed because of its very nature, and not as a result of outside pressures from Rome, although these pressures had an indirect effect on the different stages of the history of Jewish Christianity. In dealing with this question, I am primarily interested in analyzing the history of the Jewish Christians who belonged to the orthodox Jewish Christian church centred at Jerusalem; of secondary interest are the Jewish Christians throughout the Empire. Although discussions of the Jewish Christian sects will naturally come in from time to time, this branch of Jewish Christianity lies outside the

purpose of this paper.²⁰ In dealing with the contact which the Jewish Christians had with the Roman Government, it soon becomes obvious that virtually all this contact took place with that part of Jewish Christianity which is considered orthodox. The history of the Jewish Christian sects evolved quite independently of the policy of the Roman State towards Jews, and later, towards Christians. The growth and eventual collapse of this branch of Jewish Christianity occurred for reasons which were purely non-political.

In dealing with the history of orthodox Jewish Christianity, I shall show that this branch of the Christian Church was never recognized by Rome as being an entity, quite apart from Judaism, and, in many ways, from the Gentile Church, as well; that the adherents of the Jerusalem Church were always considered by Rome to be Jews, and were treated as such, enjoying at first the protection which the Jews enjoyed in the Empire, and later, suffering along with the Jews during the two Jewish wars; and that the members of the Jewish Christian community at Rome²¹ were considered as part of the larger Gentile Christian community of

the city, and were treated with the same contempt as were the Gentile Christians, thought of as members of a 'mischievous superstition'.²²

In concluding, I shall show that, in spite of the suffering which Jewish Christianity endured, as a result of the persecution of the Christians in Rome, and particularly as a result of the Jewish wars (66 - 70, and 133 - 135), its extinction was not simply the indirect result of the harsh Roman treatment of Judaism and of Gentile Christianity, but rather, the natural outcome of the nature of Jewish Christianity itself; that its nature was not one conducive to expansion, but to stagnation; and that it would have eventually disappeared, even if it had experienced absolutely no contact whatsoever, directly or indirectly, with the Roman Government. This question has never been discussed, as far as I know, and is being set forward as the theme of this work.

The paper will be divided into three sections. The first will deal with the Jewish Christians in Judaea, analyzing their relationship with their Jewish neighbours and

the treatment they received at the hands of the local Roman government. The second section will deal with the persecution of the Christians in Rome, following the fire of 64, analyzing the question of the suffering of the Jewish Christians in the city, and the effect which this suffering had upon the Jewish Christian community in Rome and throughout the Empire. The third and final section will deal with the effect which the two Jewish wars had upon Jewish Christianity in Palestine. In concluding, I shall provide the reason for the disappearance of the Jewish branch of Christianity.

REFERENCES

1. Acts 2:41.
2. Ibid., 9:31.
3. Hans Lietzmann, The Beginnings of the Christian Church (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1937); p. 235.
4. S.G.F. Brandon, The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church (London: S.P.C.K., 1951); p. 29.
It is thought by James Parkes that the Jewish Christian Church existed within the synagogue until the end of the first century.
See James Parkes, The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961); p. 78.

5. See Parkes; pp. 77-79.

Hugh J. Schonfield, in regard to the Gentile Christian attitude towards the Jewish Christians, writes: "The political crisis in Jewish affairs engendered among the churches of the Empire a coldness and aloofness towards the Jewish Christians." The History of Jewish Christianity (London: Duckworth, 1936); p. 54.

6. Parkes; p. 92.

Lietzmann; p. 243.

Two letters in the New Testament canon, sent to Jewish Christians, 1 Peter and James, were both written before 70.

7. The definition of what constitutes a Christian sect, and what constitutes orthodox Christianity can be understood in the light of the Nicene Creed issued in 325 by the Council of Nicaea. This creed was drawn up at the Council to defend the Orthodox Faith against the Arians, the principal heresy which denied the true divinity of Jesus Christ.

See The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (London: Oxford University Press, 1957); p. 80 and p. 952.

8. Lietzmann; pp. 252-253.

9. Acts 24:5.

They were so named after their Lord, Jesus of Nazareth.

10. Marcel Simon, Verus Israel: Etude sur les relations entre Juifs et Chrétiens dans l'Empire Romain (Paris: Boccard Ed., 1948); pp. 278-279.

11. The decision concerning the regulations which the Gentile Christians were to follow was reached at Jerusalem, during the Apostolic Council. A letter was made up by the Bishop of Jerusalem, James the Just, which concludes:

"For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well."

Acts, 15:28-29.

12. Eusebius, Historia Ecclesiastica, iv, 5.
13. Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1960); p. 149 (an abridgement by D.M. Low).
14. Simon; p. 277.
For further information on the Ebionites, see Jean Daniélou, Théologie du Judaeo-christianisme (Paris: Desclée, 1958); pp. 68-76.
See also Marsden, Dictionary of Christian Churches and Sects (London: Bentley, 1854); p. 485.
15. See Marsden; p. 479.
16. See Lietzmann; p. 247.
Also see Daniélou; pp. 76-80.
17. Gibbon; p. 150.
18. Simon; pp. 279-280.
Frequently in this paper, I refer to these Jewish Christians as Hellenistic Christians. They were Greek-speaking Jews, either of the Diaspora, or Jews, converted from paganism, who later converted to Christianity.
19. Simon; p. 279.

20. See Daniélou; pp. 67-98, where the theology and history of these sects are discussed at length.
21. The existence of a separate Jewish Christian community in Rome, I shall attempt to establish in the second chapter of this paper.
22. Tacitus, Annales, xv, 44;
see also Suetonius, Vita Neronis, xvi.

1. THE HISTORY OF JEWISH CHRISTIANITY (A.D. 30 - 64)

It comes as a rather interesting surprise to learn that all the first Christians were Jewish, and the majority of them from Palestine.¹ This was a natural outcome of the fact that most of Jesus' ministry work had been carried out in Judaea and Galilee. His original instruction to the 12 apostles was to avoid the pagans and the cities of Samaria,² and to preach to the lost sheep of the House of Israel that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand.³ The apostle Peter told

the Jews in Jerusalem that it was for them firstly that God had sent His Son as a blessing.⁴

Paul frequently stated that God's attention was fixed on the Jew first, and on the Greek second.⁵

Following Christ's death, a number of his disciples began to preach in his name in Jerusalem: a phenomenal growth in numbers was experienced, particularly as a result of the preaching of Peter.⁶ In fact, almost all the early preaching was focused on Jerusalem; Eusebius even claims that Apollonius quoted Jesus as saying that the apostles should not leave the Holy City for 12 years.⁷

Now that it has been realized that the first Christian community was comprised almost entirely of Palestinian Jews, the interesting question poses itself as to the nature of the relationship between the Jewish Christians of Palestine and their Jewish neighbours. Were the Jewish Christians observant of all the requirements of the Jewish Law? Were these Jewish Christians still accepted as Jews by the Jewish world, in spite of their recognition of Jesus as the Messiah? How did the Roman Government view the Palestinian

church, and to what extent did their attitude towards this church affect its early development?

Certainly the first question can be answered emphatically in the affirmative. All the manifestations of obedience to the Jewish Law were clearly to be seen in the Jewish Christians of Palestine. Jesus was circumcized on the eighth day of His life,⁸ as had been John the Baptist.⁹ All the first apostles were circumcized Jews, including Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, who remained proud of his nationality.¹⁰ Nor was circumcision an act which had been performed on the Jewish Christian males by their Jewish parents, but then, discontinued in Jerusalem by the first generation of Christians as an unnecessary part of their Christian faith.¹¹ We know, in fact, that the first 15 bishops of the Jerusalem church were all circumcized Christians, which would lead one to believe that the majority of Christians in Jerusalem had been circumcized,¹² until the time of Hadrian's edict in 135, which forbade all circumcized males to approach the site of Jerusalem.¹³

The early Christian respect for the holiness of the Temple in Jerusalem can be seen in Luke's Gospel, where it is written that the early Christians were continually to be found in the Temple, praising God.¹⁴ Jesus had shown His own feelings on the holiness of the Temple in driving the money-changers out of the place in a brief moment of anger.¹⁵ This attitude of Jesus' seems perhaps to be contradicted by His words concerning the Temple: "There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."¹⁶ However, we know today that He was prophesying here, the eventual destruction of Jerusalem, which included the destruction of the Temple, and was not expressing any negative feelings against the Temple itself.¹⁷ The same respect which Jesus had for the Temple, existed among the first members of the Jerusalem church. This can be seen in their desire for Paul, on returning to Jerusalem following his third missionary journey, to purify himself with four others in the Temple.¹⁸

The holiness of the Scriptures was strongly upheld by the Jewish Christians, who were again following the example of their Master.¹⁹ Reference was made by Him to many of the Jewish patriarchs and prophets.²⁰ Similarly, Paul made frequent use of the Scriptures in his letters,²¹ and Peter, in his speech to the Jews of Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.²²

Where the Jewish Christians differed from the Jews in respect to the Law, was not in their obedience of the details of it, but rather in their attitude to the importance of these details. Jesus said that He had come, not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it.²³ To Him, the spirit of the Law was more important than the letter, and the spirit of the Law could be summarized in two commandments: "Love God", and "Love your neighbour".²⁴ Jesus was opposed to many of the traditions of the Pharisees, which changed with time to accomodate the believer, and which often hindered rather than helped a man in his search for a deeper relationship with God.²⁵

The followers of Christ obeyed the Law in the same manner as their Jewish neighbours. However, they saw it in the light of its being fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. It was on this point alone, that the first Jewish Christians differed from the Jews. Yet, this difference was obscured by the fact that the Jews of the first century after Christ were strongly anticipating the coming of the Messiah, whom the Christians believed had already come, and was soon to return. Thus, the Christians and the Jews were united in their expectation of the immediate arrival of the Messiah. The difference was to be found in the acceptance of Jesus by some of the Jews as that Messiah.²⁶

To judge from the Jewish orthodoxy of the Jewish Christian church in Palestine regarding the Law, and from the close touch which the early church enjoyed with the Jews, one might readily conclude that the Jewish Christians lived on a friendly basis with their Jewish neighbours, and were closely associated with them.²⁷ We know that the Jewish Christians continued to worship

within the Jewish synagogues until after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70,²⁸ and that no great animosity or feeling of antagonism was felt at first, between the Jews and the Jewish Christians. Indeed, the entire concept of the new faith was based essentially upon already existing Jewish concepts; this is reflected even in the letters of Paul, where examples and ideas are put forward, which are thoroughly Jewish in character.²⁹ The Temple continued to be the place of worship;³⁰ the laws of purity were strictly adhered to;³¹ many priests and Pharisees were included in the Christian ranks.³² To sum up, the Jewish Christians were thoroughly "zealous for the Law".³³ They remained strictly loyal to the cherished institutions of their people, and felt in no way obligated to renounce them.³⁴ In fact, the new faith of the Jewish Christians was only intelligible to them within the framework of Judaism. The concessions made to the Gentile believers were only incidental; the Jewish Christians themselves remained devout Jews, and were keenly opposed to any secession from Judaism.³⁵

One might conclude that the infant Church stood well in the estimation of the Jewish

populace, and that the relations between the two were on a friendly basis.³⁶ Initial hostility coming from the Sadducean aristocracy³⁷ soon ceased, when the well-known Pharisaic teacher, Gamaliel, advised that the Jewish Christians be left in peace,³⁸ and when a number of Pharisees joined the new movement, because of its zeal for the Law.³⁹

However, before arriving at this conclusion, the problem of the persecution of the early Jewish Christians, as recorded in the Acts of the apostles, must be looked into. A number of Church historians have referred to the sufferings of the Jewish Christians at the hands of the Jews as being violent and terrible in nature.⁴⁰ Certainly what has been said up to this point would seem to indicate that the persecution of the Jewish Christians was, in fact, not as serious as it has been made out; if each period of persecution is analyzed closely, it will be seen that, by and large, it was not the Jewish Christians of Palestine who were persecuted, but rather, those adherents to Christianity who advocated discontinuing the observance of the requirements of the Law; and that the persecutors were not the Jews of Judaea, but foreign Jews from outside the Holy Land.

The first persecution of the Christians mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles began with the stoning of Stephen,⁴¹ and was followed by a great persecution of the church of Jerusalem.⁴² To find an explanation of these events, one must go back to the day of Pentecost, and the conversion of the three thousand. Many of those who were converted were Hellenistic Jews from outside Judaea.⁴³ On arriving in Jerusalem, they must have found the outlook of the Palestinian Jews a bit stifling and narrow-minded, in comparison with their own broad outlook, which resulted from the Greek-speaking environment in which they lived.⁴⁴ These Hellenistic Jews were attracted to Christianity, because it seemed to be on a higher plain than Judaism; it preserved the Law, but added more to it.

When a cleavage took place between the Jewish and Hellenistic Christians over the matter of adherence to the requirements of the Law,⁴⁵ it was decided that the Hellenistic Christians should form a separate community, electing seven deacons to look after the distribution of aims.⁴⁶ Among them was Stephen, who, along with the other six deacons, had a name, definitely Greek.

These must have been the leaders of the new Hellenistic Christian church, and not of the original Jerusalem church.⁴⁷ It was because of Stephen's attitude towards the letter of the Law and the sanctity of the Temple that he was stoned,⁴⁸ and not because of his belief in Jesus as the Messiah.⁴⁹

The subsequent persecution of the Jerusalem church⁵⁰ must have been aimed at the Hellenistic Christians. Since Luke states that the apostles were exempted from this persecution, it would be ridiculous to assume that the general body of Jewish Christians in Jerusalem were expelled from the city, and that their leaders were left untouched.⁵¹ Those scattered throughout Judaea and Samaria were probably the Hellenistic Christians; forced to return home, they consequently spread the Gospel message to Antioch and Damascus, where churches were founded.⁵²

In regard to this incident, it is interesting to note that it was not the Palestinian Jews whom Stephen primarily offended, and by whom he was put to death, but the Cilician, Cyrenian

and Alexandrian Jews of the diaspora.⁵³ It is they, more than the Palestinian Jews, who would have been angered by any attack aimed at the Law, since they were more able to see the disastrous results that any menace to the Law might bring.⁵⁴ The Jews of Palestine were less concerned, since observance of the Law in Judaea was universal. Thus, in this first incident of friction between Christianity and Judaism, it can be seen that the animosity on both sides was felt by non-Palestinian Jews and Christians. This brief period of suffering does not indicate any antagonism between the original Jewish Christian church and their Jewish neighbours.

The question of Saul now remains to be discussed, regarding both his role as a persecutor of the Christians, and later, as one of the persecuted Christians. It will be interesting to see which of the Christians he did in fact persecute, before the time of his conversion, and then to see by which of the Jews he was later persecuted himself, and on what grounds.

Luke states in the Acts of the Apostles, that Saul was persecuting the Church,

having men and women dragged out of their homes and cast into prison.⁵⁵ In the passage immediately preceding this one, the persecution of the church of Jerusalem is mentioned, which would lead one to assume that the same church is naturally being referred to a few verses later. If, indeed, it was the Jerusalem church which suffered at the hands of Saul, most probably it was the Hellenistic branch of the church, and not the original community of Jewish Christians, which endured this suffering.⁵⁶

However, the theory that Saul persecuted the Hellenistic branch of the Jerusalem church cannot be set forward with strong conviction, especially when one considers Paul's⁵⁷ letters, in which he mentions his activities as persecutor, before his conversion. Twice, in referring to his role as persecutor, he mentions that he attacked the Church of God;⁵⁸ no mention is made anywhere of a specific persecution of the Jerusalem church.⁵⁹ It seems likely, then, that Saul may have persecuted Christians, either in Samaria and Judaea,⁶⁰ or, even farther away, in Damascus or Syria.⁶¹ Whether, in fact, Saul's victims were within or without Palestine, it is almost certain that they were not members of the

original Jerusalem church, but rather, Hellenists, who had a more relaxed attitude to the Law.

Following Paul's conversion from Pharisaic Judaism to Christianity, the persecutor became the persecuted. However, the sufferings of Paul as a missionary, resulted, not from his recognition of Jesus as the Messiah,⁶² but rather, from his preaching, which seemed directed against the sanctity of the Law.⁶³ Paul's attitude to the Law is expressed in many of his letters;⁶⁴ in analyzing it very carefully, one begins to realize Paul's extreme view on the importance of the Law. Basically, he feels that the Law has been a good school-master,⁶⁵ but, now that that which is perfect has come - namely, Christ - the Law is of no more use; that the Law makes us aware of our sin, but cannot free us from it; that, with the coming of Christ, the Law has been abolished. Parkes feels, as well, that it was Paul's attitude to the Law which antagonized the Jews, and not his belief in Christ.⁶⁶ While adhering to the requirements of the Law himself, and remaining proud of his Jewish heritage, Paul preached freedom from the Law for the Gentiles.⁶⁷

Most of Paul's sufferings as an apostle were experienced far from Palestine, in Asia Minor and Greece. The two occasions on which Paul came in conflict with Jews in Jerusalem were both in connection with non-Palestinian Jews. The first time was three years after his conversion, when he came up to Jerusalem from Damascus.⁶⁸ He soon became entangled in disputes with Hellenistic Jews, who plotted to take his life, forcing his departure from the Holy City.⁶⁹ The second occasion was following his missionary travels, when certain Asiatic Jews in Jerusalem claimed that Paul had introduced a Gentile into the Temple.⁷⁰ No antagonism is ever reported to have been directed towards Paul by the Jews of Palestine; we have no evidence of any discord existing at this time between Jews and Jewish Christians of Palestine. The reason for the intermittent periods of persecution endured by the Hellenistic Christians, was its rather lax attitude towards the Law, and not their belief in Jesus as the Messiah.⁷¹ The Jewish Christians of Judaea lived in harmony with their Jewish neighbours because of the fact that they adhered strictly to all the requirements of the Jewish Law.⁷²

This point plays a great part in understanding the Roman attitude to the Jerusalem church, during the early years of its existence.

Before we can go on to discuss the benefits which the Jewish Christian Church enjoyed as a result of its amicable relationship with the Jews of Palestine, there remains one more incident of persecution to be looked at. Josephus writes that the death of James, bishop of the Jerusalem church, was at the instigation of the High Priest, Ananus, in 61 or 62.⁷³ Josephus describes Ananus as being head-strong, audacious and cruel in judging the offenders of the Law.⁷⁴ Taking advantage of the death of the Roman Governor, Festus, before the next governor had arrived, Ananus assembled a council of judges, and had James condemned to death on the charge of breaking the Law. However, it seems that this action was the result of the personal animosity of the High Priest and of the Sadducean Party, to which he belonged. The action was condemned by the majority of the Jews, in particular by the Pharisees. Some of the Jews were so indignant

at the unfair treatment of James, that they secretly sent a letter to the king,⁷⁵ asking him to write Ananus, and tell him to refrain from similar actions. Others attempted to inform the newly-appointed governor, Albinus, on his way to Alexandria, that such actions of the High Priest and the council were illegal, without his consent. James is even reported to have been verbally defended by one of the members of the priestly family just before his death by stoning.⁷⁶ Thus, in the case of the martyrdom of James, as well, it can be seen that animosity against the Jerusalem church was not felt by the vast majority of the Palestinian Jews, but only by particular individuals, or by a particular group.⁷⁷

It has been determined, then, that the Jewish Christians of the Jerusalem church adhered to all the requirements of the Jewish Law and lived in peaceful harmony with their Jewish neighbours in Palestine, and that all persecution aimed at the Church was directed only against those Christians, mostly Hellenistic, who advocated a turning away from the Law. With this understanding of the Jewish - Jewish Christian relationship

in Palestine, drawn directly from the Acts of the Apostles, we can now look at the question of the treatment of these first Jewish Christians at the hands of the local Roman Government, and see in what way this treatment affected the early part of their history.

Rome was very lenient at this time, in its general policy towards foreign religions.⁷⁸ It absorbed into its own State cult, various deities and beliefs from outside,⁷⁹ and showed a feeling of tolerance towards their subject peoples in the Empire on the matter of the traditional religions observed by them. This tolerance was a matter of necessity, when one considers the vast diversity of subject peoples in the Empire and the need for a peaceful co-existence. Rome only insisted that ultimate allegiance be granted the emperor;⁸⁰ the personal religious beliefs of the individual were of no importance to the government.

This policy of Rome's applied to the Jews of Judaea, as well. They were permitted to follow their own religious beliefs, without interference from the government.

Since the Palestinian Jewish Christians considered themselves to be Jews, they were treated as Jews by their neighbours; the same Roman policy which applied to the Jews, applied to the Jewish Christians, as well. No different attitude was taken by Rome in regard to the Christians, because these very Christians did not consider themselves to be different from the Jews. All squabbling about adherence to the Law was strictly an internal matter, and left to the discretion of the Jewish leaders, to be settled as they saw fit.⁸¹

This reluctance on the part of the various Roman governors of Jewish-inhabited provinces to meddle in the internal religious problems of the Jewish people can be observed repeatedly throughout the New Testament.

Pontius Pilate⁸² at first, told the Jews to judge Jesus of Nazareth according to their own Law.⁸³ On questioning the man himself, Pilate found him guilty of no crime,⁸⁴ and repeatedly sought to release him, with the consent of the Jews.⁸⁵

This same attitude is shown by the Roman governors towards the Jews, in their

attempts to have the apostle Paul punished.

Gallio,⁸⁶ Proconsul of Achaia, refused to judge Paul because of religious accusations against him. He told the Jews who were accusing Paul:

If it were a matter of wrong-doing or of vicious crime, I should have reason to bear with you, O Jews; but since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own Law, see to it yourselves; I refuse to be a judge of these things.⁸⁷

The respect continually shown Paul by the Roman governors, because of his Roman citizenship, does not seem to have been any less because Paul was a Jew, and a Christian apostle, as well. On numerous occasions, Paul was afforded the opportunity to speak before a Roman commander; often, with a very telling effect. On the island of Cyprus, during his first missionary journey, Paul silenced a certain magician, Bar-Jesus by name, at the court of the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, who "believed when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord."⁸⁸ Following Paul's arrest in Jerusalem, he was able to preach to the Governor of Judaea, Felix, who is reported to have been alarmed on hearing about

justice, self-control and future judgment.⁸⁹

Paul's self-defense before King Agrippa II, and new governor, Festus, was so convincing, that the Roman commanders agreed that the man was in no way deserving of death or imprisonment.⁹⁰

On various other occasions, Paul was either spared punishment, or offered special privileges, because of his Roman citizenship. The fact that he was a Jewish Christian never seems to have deprived him of his rights as a Roman citizen.⁹¹ While at Philippi, during his second missionary journey, Paul and Silas⁹² were beaten and imprisoned by the Roman magistrates. When Paul made it known that they were Roman citizens, and that, therefore, it had been unlawful for them to have been punished uncondemned,⁹³ the Roman magistrates of the city "were afraid when they heard that they were Roman citizens; so they came and apologized to them. And they took them and asked them to leave the city."⁹⁴

Following his arrest in Jerusalem, Paul was brought to the Roman barracks, where he was tied up, in order to be scourged.

When it was discovered that he was a Roman citizen, who could not be scourged uncondemned, it is reported that:

. . . those who were about to examine him, withdrew from him instantly; and the tribune (Lysias) also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.⁹⁵

Finally, on realizing that his chances for a just trial in Judaea were hopeless, Paul exercised the full power of his citizenship by appealing to Caesar, in the presence of the governor, Festus.⁹⁶

Certainly, from these examples, provided by the Acts of the Apostles, one might conclude that the Roman rulers of Judaea, as well as of Greece and Cyprus, did not have a particular policy regarding the Jewish Christians, different from that regarding the Jews. They seem to have had no desire to meddle in the internal religious problems of the Jews.

However, there is one incident, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, of persecution, which was directed by a Roman ruler against the Church. Luke writes that:

Herod the king⁹⁷ laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the Church. He killed James, the brother of John, with the sword; and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.

This is the only incident of persecution we know of, aimed at Christians by a Roman commander.

Herod Agrippa was not acting, however, according to any sort of general policy of the Roman Government towards Christianity, but rather, according to his own personal desire to please his Hellenistic Jewish subjects.⁹⁸

By and large, then, the first Jewish Christians of Judaea were treated as Jews by the Roman Government; they did not suffer because of any restrictive measures, aimed particularly at them. They were free to grow and develop in maturity and in numbers, without any outside influence opposing them. However, up to this point, we have only looked at the negative aspects of the question; namely, that Rome did not make a distinction between Jewish Christians and Jews, so that the Church was able to expand without opposition. However, from a positive aspect, when one realizes the special

privileges which the Palestinian Jews enjoyed in the first century⁹⁹ - privileges, which the Jewish Christians enjoyed, as well - one can see even more, how, in fact, the early history of Jewish Christianity was given a boost towards growth through its contact with Rome.

In return for their support in the war against Pompey, the Jewish people were permitted by Caesar to live according to their own laws and customs, with justice being administered by their tribunals. They were made exempt from paying the tribute imposed on them by Pompey, from military service in the legions, and from supporting the Roman garrisons. In addition, the important sea-port of Joppa, as well as the villages in the great plain, were restored to Jewish control. These privileges were confirmed by Augustus, Tiberius and Claudius.¹⁰⁰

The Jewish Christians drew equal benefit from these privileges, for, as has been shown, the Jewish Christians of Palestine were considered as Jews by their Palestinian neighbours, and consequently, by Rome, as well.¹⁰¹

As a result, the Jewish Christian Church matured, both in stability and in growth, as is reflected by Luke's words: "The Church was at peace throughout all of Judaea, Galilee and Samaria, being edified and growing in the fear of the Lord."¹⁰²

However, it must be kept in mind that the great freedom granted by Rome to the Jewish Christians to expand naturally, was provided in an indirect way. As we have seen, the Romans did not identify the first Jewish Christians of Judaea as being any different from their Jewish neighbours, and, as a result, the religious freedom which the Jews enjoyed, was accorded to the Jewish Christians, as well, without any conscious feeling on the part of Rome that two separate religious groups existed side-by-side, and were together enjoying a special status.¹⁰³

The expansion and development of the early Jewish Christian Church, then, was greatly aided by the fact that it functioned within a part of the Roman Empire. Yet, this assistance to its growth, provided on the part of Rome, was purely unintentional, and merely the indirect

result of the fact that the Jewish Christians were still functioning, during the first few decades of their existence, within the Jewish framework of the Temple and synagogues as worship centres, and were, therefore, considered and treated as Jews.

It will be interesting to see whether the subsequent history of the Jewish Christian Church was either directly or indirectly influenced by the Roman State; that is, whether Rome later identified the Jewish Christians as being separate from the Jews, and developed a particular policy towards them - and, to see to what extent this influence had a bearing on their later history.

REFERENCES

1. In Acts 2, we learn of the first conversion of non-Palestinian Jews to Christianity.
2. Matthew 10:5.
3. Luke 6:13.
4. Acts 3:26.
5. Romans 2:9, 10.
See Fenton John Antony Hort, Judaistic Christianity (London: Macmillan and Co., 1904); p. 37.
6. Acts 2, 3 and 4, where 3,000, and then 5,000 are reported to have been converted by Peter.

7. Eusebius, v, 18.
8. Luke 2:21.
9. Ibid. 1:59.
10. 2 Corinthians 11:22.
11. Shirley Jackson Case, The Evolution of Early Christianity (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1914); p. 99.
12. Gibbon; p. 200.
13. Ibid.; p. 149.
14. Luke 24:53.
15. Ibid. 19:45-46.
16. Mark 13:2.
17. Christ's statement that, if the Temple were destroyed, he would raise it up in three days, is explained by John as a reference to His own body.
(John 2:19-21).
18. Acts 21:26.
19. It is interesting to note that Jesus quoted Scripture almost exclusively in His confrontations with those who pretended to understand the Law of the Torah, but whose comprehension of it seemed to him twisted.
20. To Noah (Matthew 24:38); Abraham (John 8:56-59); David (Luke 20:42-44); Jonah (Matthew 12:40); Isaiah (John 12:38-40).

21. e.g. Romans and Galatians.
22. Acts 2.
23. Matthew 5:17.
24. Ibid. 22:37-39.
However, Jesus' focusing on the spirit
of the Law did not mean his disrespect
for the letter;
cf. Matthew 5:18-20.
25. Parkes; p. 37.
26. Case; pp. 103-105.
27. See Case; p. 84 and p. 95;
Brandon; p. 29.
28. Parkes; pp. 77-78.
In The Apostle, a novel by Sholem Asch,
in which the life story of the apostle
Paul is recounted, it is interesting
to note how the author portrays the
religious life of the early Christians
as being peacefully in union with that
of their Jewish neighbours.
29. Brandon; p. 21.
30. Acts 2:46; 3:1; etc.
31. Ibid. 10:14.
32. Ibid. 6:7; 15:5.
33. Ibid. 21:20.
34. Brandon; p. 40.

35. Brandon; p. 87.
Case; p. 95.
36. Brandon; p. 88.
37. Acts 2:37-47.
38. Ibid. 4 and 5.
39. Brandon; p. 88.
40. Lebreton and Zeiller, The History of the Primitive Church (New York: MacMillan Co., 1944), vol. 1; pp. 196-197.
Lietzmann; pp. 236-237.
Herbert B. Workman, Persecution in the Early Church (London: Kelly, 1906); pp. 10-48.
41. Acts 7.
42. Ibid. 8:1.
43. Hort; p. 48.
Brandon; pp. 88-89.
The Interpreter's Bible (New York: Abingdon and Cokesbury Press, 1951), vol. 7; p. 181.
44. Ibid.; p. 181.
45. Acts 6:1.
See Parkes; p. 49.
46. Acts 6:5.
47. Brandon; p. 89.

48. Acts 7.
49. Hort; p. 51.
50. Acts 8:1.
51. Ibid. 7:2, 3.
Brandon; p. 89.
52. Interpreter's Bible; p. 183.
53. Acts 6:9.
See Parkes; p. 48.
54. It is curious to realize that Jews from outside Palestine were very liberal in their views to the Law, or very conservative; much more so than the Palestinian Jews.
55. Acts 8:3.
It should be kept in mind, that Paul was a Hellenistic Jew, which, no doubt, had some bearing on his eventual attitude to the Law. Paul, in fact, seems to provide the perfect example of the Hellenistic Jew, being either very liberal or very rigid in adherence to the requirements of the Law.
56. The early Hellenistic branch of the Church was made up of Greek-speaking Jews from outside Palestine, who consequently were converted by the apostles; they are to be differentiated from the Jewish Christians of Palestine, who lived in a completely Jewish environment. This conclusion has already been reached in discussing the persecution of the Church following Stephen's death, and is equally valid in dealing with the period of persecution which followed.

57. Saul changed his name to Paul in order to better relate to the Roman world in which he travelled. The claim that he was a member of the family of Aemilianus Paulus is unfounded.
58. Galatians 1:13.
1 Corinthians 15:9.
59. Galatians 1:22.
60. Acts 8:1.
61. Ibid. 9:2.
62. Ibid. 12:7.
63. Ibid. 18:3; 21:28.
64. Romans 2.
2 Corinthians 3.
Galatians 3.
65. Galatians 3.
66. See Parkes; pp. 67-68.
67. Acts 18:13.
Twice (Acts 15 and Galatians 1), we learn of the opposition which Paul met from the Jerusalem church on this matter, and of his decided victory on both occasions.
68. Galatians 1:18.
69. Acts 9:29-30.

70.

Ibid. 21:28-29.

Again, it is to be noted that, in Paul's apologetic speech to the Jews in Acts 22, the crowd listened attentively, until Paul said: "And He (Jesus) said to me, 'Depart; for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'" At mention of Gentiles, "they lifted up their voices and said, 'away with such a fellow!'" (Acts 22:21-22).

71.

Parkes; p. 61.

72.

Acts 21:26.

73.

Lebreton and Zeiller, vol. 1; p. 305.

74.

Josephus, Antiquities, XX, ix, 1.

See Acts 24:1-8.

75.

Brandon (p. 96) thinks that the king referred to is, in fact, the Emperor Nero, although it seems more likely to presume that it was, in fact, King Agrippa II, who had already demonstrated a sympathetic attitude to the Christians on hearing the defense of Paul, recorded in Acts 26:30-32.

76.

Hegessipus, Hypomenmata, V;
taken from Eusebius, ii, 23.

77.

Regarding the disputed passage of 1 Thessalonians 2:14-16, where Jerish persecution of the Jewish Christians is mentioned, see Brandon; pp. 92-93, and Parkes; p. 52, note iii. Again, it is probable that the Jewish Christians persecuted were Hellenistic Jews from outside Palestine.

78. Workman; p. 73.
79. Lebreton and Zeiller, vol. 1; p. 31.
80. The worship of the emperor did not become mandatory until the third century.
See Moreau, La Persécution du Christianisme (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956); p. 22.
81. Parkes; p. 63.
82. Regarding Pontius Pilate, see the Oxford Classical Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949); p. 717.
83. John 18:31.
84. Ibid. 18:38.
85. Ibid. 19:12.
86. Re. Gallio, see O.C.D.; p. 379.
87. Acts 18:14-16.
88. Ibid. 13:4-12.
89. Ibid. 24:24-25.
90. Ibid. 26:30-31.
91. Professor Woloch believes that Paul acquired citizenship of Tarsus from his own ancestors, who may have been liberal Jews; consequently, from this citizenship, Paul obtained Roman citizenship.
92. Silas was a Jewish prophet in Antioch, first mentioned in Acts 15:32.

93. Re. Lex Porcia, see O.C.D.; p. 501.
94. Acts 16:19-24; 35-39.
95. Ibid. 21:22-25; 29.
96. Ibid. 25:11.
Re. the right of 'Appellatio',
see O.C.D.; p. 72.
cf. Pliny the Younger's letter to the
Emperor Trajan, Epistulo X, 96.
97. Brandon writes:
"It is generally accepted that this
monarch is to be identified with
Agrippa I, who received the
addition of Judaea and Samaria to
his kingdom from Claudius, after
that emperor's accession in 41 A.D."
pp. 89-90; quoting from Schurer,
The Jewish People in the Time of
Jesus Christ, I; p. 553.
98. For further information, see Brandon; p. 90.
99. The Jews had long enjoyed special status
in the Roman Empire. An alliance between
the Jews and Rome was first made in 162,
when Judas Maccabeus arrived in Rome
to gain the support of the Roman state
in the Judaean revolt against Demetrius
from Syria.
(Parkes; p. 7.)
(cf. 1 Macc. 8:22.)
However, little concrete support was
given by Rome to the Jews; indeed, in
subsequent years, both Pompey, in 63 B.C.,
and Crassus, Proconsul of Syria, overran
Palestine. However, following the defeat
of Caesar by Pompey at Pharsalia in 48 B.C.,

Hyrcanus and his friend, Antipater, both Jewish rulers, came over to Caesar's side. When Caesar arrived in Alexandria, to put a final end to the civil war, Antipater came to his aid with 3,000 Jewish troops, and, as well, with a force of Syrians and Arabians, whom he had convinced to support Caesar.

(Dora Askowith, Toleration of the Jews under Julius Caesar and Augustus (New York, 1915); pp. 111-119.)

100. E.H. Hudson, History of the Jews in Rome (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1884); pp. 37-96.
101. This conclusion is reached by Brandon (pp. 90-91) and by Gibbon (pp. 200-201).
102. Acts 9:31.
103. cf. Gibbon; p. 200.

2. THE JEWISH CHRISTIANS IN ROME (40 - 64)

We have just seen how the growth of Jewish Christianity in Palestine was greatly helped because of the fact that the new faith was still considered as being a part of Judaism. Because the Palestinian Jews lived peacefully with their Christian neighbours, the Roman Government had no reason to adopt a policy toward the Jewish Christians different from that which applied to the Jews. This policy provided the Jews with a great deal of religious and administrative freedom,

and acted as a protective umbrella, as it were, under which the Jewish Christian Church was able to grow and expand unrestricted.

However, did this protective umbrella exist outside of Palestine, and, if it did, were the Jewish Christians able to take advantage of it? The answers to both these questions can be given in the affirmative. The civic and religious liberties accorded the Hellenistic Jews throughout the Empire were just as generous as those granted the Jews of Palestine.¹

Jerusalem remained the spiritual centre of the Jewish people, who were permitted to transport the annual two-drachma Temple tax to the Holy City. Not only were Jews in the Empire free to exercise civil and criminal jurisdiction over the members of their own community; but also the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem remained the final court of appeal for the Jewish people, with the authority to make decisions in criminal cases. The official judges of the courts were not dominated by Roman authorities, but worked in agreement with Rome as the political leaders of the Jewish people.

In several cities, the rights of citizenship were granted the Jews. Numerous Jews were also accorded Roman citizenship, and later, the right of holding office. During the time of Julius and of Augustus Caesar, Jews attained some of the highest positions and distinctions in the Empire, including important offices in the private administrations of the Empire.²

The Jewish Christian church of Jerusalem, having grown in stability and numbers,³ rapidly expanded outside the Holy City, and found itself enjoying all the same privileges accorded Judaism throughout the Empire. The Acts of the Apostles by means of two incidents, shows that Jewish Christians outside Palestine were considered as Jews by the Romans, and that any squabbling over matters pertaining to the Law was considered an internal problem for the Jewish authorities to deal with. Mention has been made in the first chapter regarding the beating and imprisonment of Paul and Silas, suffered at the hands of the Roman magistrates in Philippi. They were dragged before the magistrates by citizens of the city, who referred to them as Jews who were disturbing

the city by advocating customs which it was not lawful for them as Romans to accept or practise.⁴ Then, when Paul had descended to Corinth, he was brought before the Proconsul of Achaia, Gallio, by the Jews, on the charge of persuading men to worship God contrary to the Law; the proconsul, however, refused to pay any attention to this charge, considering the matter to be strictly an internal Jewish problem, to be judged by the Jewish authorities.⁵

Enjoying this anonymity in the eyes of Rome, and taking advantage of the many privileges granted the Jews, the Jewish Christian Church rapidly expanded in all directions. The first preaching outside Jerusalem followed the stoning of Stephen and the expulsion of the Hellenists from the Holy City. Philip, the second on the list of seven deacons,⁶ preached in Samaria,⁷ and at Azotus and Caesarea on the coast.⁸ Peter strengthened the churches at Lydda and Joppa, before being summoned by Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian cohort at Caesarea, who was anxious to hear the Gospel message.⁹ Paul, following his conversion, preached for several days in the

synagogues of Damascus, proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God, "proving that Jesus was the Christ."¹⁰ Jewish Christian missionaries are reported to have travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch.¹¹ Christian churches were founded in Persia and Osroene,¹² as well as in Egypt; Christians reached Alexandria at an early date, coming from the Mother Church in Jerusalem, to which they remained loyal.¹³

However, it is to be noted that the missionary activity which emanated from Jerusalem under the leadership of Peter was directed to the Jews,¹⁴ and only on rare occasions were Gentiles preached to.¹⁵ It seems that all the newly founded churches had an original nucleus of Jewish Christians, with the number of Gentiles who later joined gradually growing as time passed.¹⁶ A great deal of Paul's time was spent preaching in synagogues,¹⁷ in spite of the fact that Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles; in fact, before Paul would allow Timothy to accompany him on his travels, he had the young man circumcized, so that the Jews in those places would not be scandalized.¹⁸ A deliberate decision on Paul's part to turn to the Gentiles did not occur until he reached Antioch in Pisidia, during his first missionary journey.¹⁹

Because of this inevitable decision on the part of Paul, the growth of the Jewish Christian Church suffered. Paul - dynamic in his preaching, and aided by the facts that he spoke Aramaic²⁰ and Greek,²¹ and possessed Roman citizenship, as well as being a Pharisaic Jew,²² - spear-headed the growth of the Gentile branch of Christianity. He brought with him on his travels, the simple Gospel message, without forcing his own Jewish customs upon those non-Jews whom he converted.²³ The Jewish Christian Church, however, still practising what the Jewish Law required, appealed only to certain Jews in and outside Palestine.²⁴ Jewish Christianity gradually began to find itself being stifled by the Gentile Church with its greater attraction.

Outside of Palestine, the Jewish Christian Church under the missionary guidance of Peter had established Jewish Christian communities in some of the larger cities. At the time of the incident reported by Paul in his letter to the Galatians,²⁵ Peter was at Antioch, where he is believed to have either founded the church there, or at least confirmed its foundation.²⁶ It is also suspected that Peter came to Corinth, to judge from

two references to Cephas in Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church.²⁷

Of all the Jewish Christian communities outside Palestine, however, why was the one at Rome probably that one on which most rested the future history of Jewish Christianity outside Palestine?²⁸

Firstly, Rome was the capital city of the Empire, to which flocked foreigners from all parts of the known world, and where Christians are believed to have arrived as early as 40.²⁹ It was here, that Christians, both Jewish and Gentile, were for the first time persecuted as members of a 'mischievous superstition',³⁰ separated from the protection which they had enjoyed as part of Judaism. Finally, included in the number of those martyred for the faith following the fire were the two great apostles of the Church, Peter and Paul.³¹ There never arose a Jewish Christian missionary to replace Peter in the work that he was doing; following his death, we have no record of any Jewish Christian community founded outside Palestine.

However, before we can tackle the interesting question of what influence the Roman

persecution of the Christians in Rome had upon the history of Jewish Christianity outside Palestine, it is necessary to first discover whether at the time of the fire in 64, there were, in fact, Jewish Christians in the Capital City, and if so, whether these Jewish Christians existed in a separate community of their own.

We do know that there had been a Christian community in Rome, long before the fire in 64, although the exact date of its foundation has not been determined. Janne's estimation that the community was founded in 40 is backed up by Leon, who speculates that the expulsion of the Jews from Rome by Claudius at the instigation of 'Chrestos'³² took place in 41,³³ and that Aquila and Priscilla,³⁴ who were among those expelled from Rome, spent a number of years elsewhere before meeting Paul at Corinth in 51 or 52.³⁵

We also know that from Paul's own letter to the Roman church, written from Corinth in 56,³⁶ this community in the Capital City had existed for a number of years before the apostle finally wrote to it;³⁷ this fact can be readily

deduced from his own words: "I have longed for many years to come to you."³⁸ The size and importance of this community can also be partly deduced from the length of the letter itself and the great care with which the logic of the argument is set forward throughout it.

Having determined the relatively early founding of a Christian community in Rome, one must try to discover whether this community had been originally Jewish Christian, and whether, at the time of the fire, there still remained a Jewish Christian community, or whether the Jewish Christians had completely blended in with their more numerous Gentile brethren.

Most of the general information at our disposal seems to point towards the fact that the first Christian community in Rome was Jewish. Certainly, the great size of the Jewish population in Rome would have provided the early disciples with many potential converts to whom they might speak of the Messiah. After the death of King Herod of Judaea, some 8,000 Roman Jews are reported to have supported a Jewish embassy from Palestine, seeking the annexation of Palestine to the province of Syria,

and the subsequent end of disputes over leadership,
occurring between members of Herod's family.³⁹

In subsequent years, the Jewish population of the city rose to at least 40,000,⁴⁰ with some estimates putting the figure at closer to 60,000. When one considers Jesus' first instruction to His disciples to go first "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel",⁴¹ one might readily conclude that it was the Jews of Rome who were first exposed to the Gospel, a number of whom formed the first Christian community.⁴² The fact that Aquila and Priscilla, mentioned above, were among the Jews⁴³ expelled from Rome "at the instigation of Chrestos", would seem to indicate that there were Jewish Christians in Rome at the time, and that the reason for the conflict was friction existing, not between Gentiles and Jews, but between Jews and Jewish Christians, with the Gentiles in no way coming into the picture. Certainly, the fact that, until 64, the Christians were confused with the Jews would support the theory that the church of Rome remained basically Jewish in membership during the early years of its existence. This becomes all the more plausible when one realizes that, until 70, the Jerusalem church

remained the Mother Church and spiritual centre of Christianity,⁴⁴ from which came virtually all the first apostles, and that the presence of Jewish Christians in Rome would have been respected by the Gentile brethren.

Paul's letter to the Roman church provides us with a great deal of indirect information concerning the existence of Jewish Christians in the city at the time of his writing. The greater part of the letter is devoted to discussing the question of the importance of adherence to the Law for righteousness. If a number of the Christians of Rome had not come from a Jewish background, and if there had not been, as a result, some doubt over the relevance of the Law for a Christian, there would have been no need for Paul to have delved into this problem in such detail and with such care. Certainly, in many of his other letters, Paul treats very briefly, or ignores entirely the question of the importance of the Law for a Christian.⁴⁵ The fact that the major part of the letter to the Romans is devoted to this question would seem to indicate that a number of Roman Christians were still in doubt on the matter of their fidelity to the Law,

because of their Jewish upbringing. The letter was intended, however, not to confute the beliefs and teachings of these Jewish Christians, but to warn the church in general to be prepared for any Judaizing Christians, who might arrive in the future, insisting that converts adhere to the requirements of the Law.⁴⁶

Thus, it would seem that, at the time of Paul's writing to the Roman church, there existed a strong wing of Jewish Christians in the church, who had originally founded it,⁴⁷ but who, by 56, were no doubt outnumbered by converts from paganism.⁴⁸ Did, however, this Jewish Christian wing or community of the Christian church in Rome still exist at the time of the fire?

The presence of Peter, the apostle to the Jews, is the strongest proof for the presence of a Jewish Christian community in Rome as late as 64.⁴⁹ Eusebius states the approximate time of Peter's coming to Rome, and the reason for his presence there:

In the same reign of Claudius, the all gracious and kindly providence of the universe brought to Rome to deal with this terrible threat to the world (i.e. Simon), the strong and great apostle. . . . Peter himself.⁵⁰

If there had been only Gentile Christians, with a few converted Jews, in the Roman church, Peter would not have come to the Capital City, so as not to interfere in the activity of the missionary work of Paul. Peter's negative influence on the Gentile Church at Antioch had greatly angered Paul;⁵¹ the apostle to the Jews would have had no desire to repeat his blunder. As Paul himself writes:

I have carefully preached the Gospel of Christ, thus making it my ambition to preach the Gospel, not where Christianity has already been named, lest I build on another man's foundation.⁵²

There was a mutual agreement between the two branches of Christian missionary activity not to interfere in the other's work. Peter's presence in Rome came about because of the presence in the church of Jewish Christians.

Peter remained in Rome until his death soon after the fire in 64.

So it came about that this man (i.e. Nero) was led on to murder the apostles. It is recorded that in his reign Paul was beheaded in Rome itself, and that Peter likewise was crucified. . . . That they were both martyred at the same time, bishop Dionysius of Corinth informs us in a letter written to the Romans:

"In this way by your precious admonition you have bound together all that has grown from the seed which Peter and Paul sowed in Rome and Corinth alike. For both of them sowed in our Corinth and taught us jointly: in Italy too they taught jointly in the same city, and were martyred at the same time."⁵³

It has been determined then that not only was the Roman church founded by Jewish Christians, but also, a strong wing of the church remained Jewish Christian until 64. It would be interesting to discuss the fire in Rome during Nero's reign, and to see not only what effect this fire had upon the Jewish Christian group in Rome, in particular, but also to discuss what effect the persecution of the Gentile and Jewish Christians following the fire had upon the history of Jewish Christianity outside Palestine.

Our knowledge of the fire in Rome comes chiefly from Tacitus, whose description of it is so vivid, and of such importance to this study, that it is worth quoting in full.

A disaster followed (whether accidental or treacherously contrived by the emperor was uncertain, as authors have given both accounts), worse, however, and more dreadful than any which had ever happened to this city by the violence of fire. It had its beginning in that part of the circus which adjoins the Palatine and Caelian hills, where amid the shops containing inflammable wares the conflagration broke out and instantly became so fierce and so rapid from the wind that it seized in its grasp the entire length of the circus. From here there were no houses fenced by solid masonry, or temples surrounded by walls, or any other obstacle to interpose delay. The blaze in its fury ran first through the level portions of the city, then rising to the hills, while it again devastated every place below them, it outstripped all preventive measures; so rapid was the mischief and so completely at its mercy the city, with those narrow winding passages and irregular streets, which characterized old Rome. . . . No one dared to stop the mischief because of incessant menaces from a number of persons who forbade the extinguishing of the flames, because others again openly hurled brands and kept shouting that there

was no one who gave them authority, either seeking to plunder more freely or obeying orders.

Nero at this time was at Antium and did not return to Rome until the fire approached his house which he had built to connect the palace with the gardens of Maecenas. It could not, however, be stopped from devouring the palace, the house and everything around it. However, to relieve the people, driven out homeless as they were, he threw open to them the Campus Martius and the public buildings of Agrippa, and even his own gardens, and raised temporary structures to receive the destitute multitude. Supplies of food were brought up from Ostia and the neighbouring towns, and the price of corn was reduced to three sesterces a peak. These acts, though popular, produced no effect, since a rumour had gone forth everywhere that, at the very time when the city was in flames, the emperor appeared on a private stage and sang of the destruction of Troy, comparing present misfortunes with the calamities of antiquity.

At last after five days an end was put to the conflagration at the foot of the Esquiline hill, by the destruction of all buildings on a vast space, so that the violence of the fire was met by clear ground and an open sky. But before people had laid aside their fears, the flames returned, with no less fury this second time, and especially in the spacious districts of the city. Consequently, though there was less loss of life, the temples of the gods and the porticoes, which were devoted to enjoyment, fell in a yet

more widespread ruin. And to this conflagration there attached the greater infamy, because it broke out on the Aemilian property of Tigellinus and it seemed that Nero was aiming at the glory of founding a new city and calling it by his name. Rome indeed is divided into fourteen districts four of which remained uninjured, three were levelled to the ground while in the other seven were left only a few shattered, half-burnt relics of houses.⁵⁴

The natural tendency of the Roman people was to immediately seek the person or the party responsible for the fire. How did it come about, then, that the Christians of Rome were made the scapegoats, and why they, and not the Jews, or the followers of some other cult from the east?

From Tacitus, we learn that the blame had originally been placed on Nero. This was understandable enough, when one considers the fact that Nero was already suspected of having murdered his mother and his wife, and that he had lost the respect of the Roman populace by his indecent performances on the stage and in the arena.⁵⁶ Tacitus then goes on to explain how Nero shifted the blame from himself onto the Christians.

But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor and the propitiations of the gods did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and the most exquisite tortures on a class, hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from which the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilate, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out, not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted not so much of the crime of firing the city as of hatred against mankind.⁵⁷

However, in his desire to find a suitable scapegoat for the fire, Nero would not have turned so readily against the Christians, if there were not strong anti-Christian feelings already existing at this time, which had been growing in intensity over a number of years. Because of the fact that the church in Rome had been founded by Jewish Christians, and still contained, as late as 64,

a strong Jewish Christian wing, the Christian community had remained until that year, a part of the Jewish population in the eyes of Rome. Consequently, the Christians enjoyed many of the special privileges bestowed upon the Jews by Julius Caesar and the early emperors. However, the Christians also began to suffer as a result of the feelings of prejudice aimed against the Jewish population by the Roman people, which grew over the years, in spite of the official decrees of the emperors regarding the special status of the Jews.⁵⁸

The fire in 64 provided the spark for an outbreak of persecution, resulting from the growing feelings of hatred. The small Christian community of 2,500⁵⁹ in the Capital City suffered the brunt of these hostile feelings. The question immediately poses itself, then; why were the Christians the ones who suffered?

There are many reasons why the Christians were falsely accused of having caused the fire, and subsequently were persecuted. To set forward one simple explanation does not do true justice to the complexity of the problem of the persecution.

Georges-Roux holds to the view that the Christians suffered at the instigation of the Jews, who desired to divert the anti-Semitic feelings of the Romans away from themselves. They were able to do so, he claims, through the strong influence which they exercised at the Roman court, particularly with Nero's wife, Poppaea. Leon rightly points out that Poppaea was not a Jewish convert, but rather, a 'god-fearer'; that is, a sympathizer with the Jewish faith, but not actually a part of it.⁶⁰

In any case, it is difficult to understand what motivation the Jewish people had for directing the feelings of anti-Semitism towards the Christians. There is no indication, either in Christian or in Jewish literature, of antagonism between the two faiths, until the end of the first century. In Talmudic literature, there are no references to antagonism between Jews and Christians until that time.⁶¹ In the first Christian Gospel, that of Mark, the blame for Christ's death is not placed entirely on the Jews, but partly on the Romans, as well; in Peter's first two speeches, little emphasis is placed on the Jews for having crucified Christ.⁶² The Jews could hardly have been

greatly opposed to a sect which contained so many who remained faithful to the requirements of the Jewish Law.⁶³ In fact, the Jews of the Diaspora continued to have dealings on a friendly basis with Christians, until the close of the first century.⁶⁴ There is no reason to believe that, in 64, the Jews of Rome had strong enough feelings about the Christians to seek to direct the hostile sentiments of the Roman people against them. As Leon bluntly puts it, there is not one bit of concrete evidence for placing the blame for the Neronian persecution of the Christians on the Jews.⁶⁵

What, then, was the cause of the suffering of the Christians? It was probably the very nature of the Christians themselves, which had caused the build-up of hostility on the part of the Roman populace, resulting in this brief persecution.

Until the time of the fire, the Roman Christians had been confused with the Jews, because of the fact that a number of Jewish Christians still existed within the Christian community, giving it a definite Jewish appearance to outsiders.⁶⁶ The excessive zeal of the Christians, which soon

outstripped that of the Jews, provided a jarring effect on the generally calm religious atmosphere which the State was trying to foster by uniting all peoples in their common worship of the emperor. When one considers the bitter feelings of animosity which Rome harboured for any Eastern religion which attempted to proselytize, and the fact that peace between Judaism and Rome was greatly shaken because of the former's proselytizing activities,⁶⁷ it becomes easier to understand how it came about that the Christians were soon the victims of a strong hatred on the part of Rome.⁶⁸ Just as numerous Eastern cults throughout the history of Rome had been quickly driven from the city when they began to take advantage of the gullibility of the native population, so, for basically the same reasons, were the Christians persecuted in 64.⁶⁹

The charge of incendiarism against the Christians was soon changed, however, to one of hostility to society and hatred of the human race.⁷⁰ This hatred arose from mistrust of the Christians, because of the secrecy of their meetings, their avoidance of the common pleasures of life, and the rumours which sprung from this aloofness.⁷¹

In spite of their small numbers, then, and small political influence at this time, the Christians in Rome were strongly disliked, because of their religious zeal, and this dislike was greatly increased by the false rumours about them, which resulted from the secrecy of the true nature of their religion.

The Jews were generally exempted from this persecution, because of the respect, often rather grudging, which they had won in the eyes of the Roman Government. Theirs was an ancient religion, in which they followed the beliefs of their ancestors. Besides, the Jews were considered a nation, with the right of 'collegium', rather than members of a religion, in the strict sense of the word.⁷² They had long enjoyed the privilege of being considered adherents of a 'religio licita'. The influence which the Jews did exercise at the Roman court, was great enough to provide them with exemption from any blatant outbreak of persecution aimed against them.

The Christians were regarded, however, as members of a sect, rather than as of a nation - a sect, which, in 64, in Rome, was growing fast enough

to stimulate antagonism from the State, and yet, still weak enough in numerical strength to suffer persecution. Georges-Roux estimates that 400 - 500 of the 2,500 Roman Christians at this time suffered martyrdom;⁷³ Roman citizens were beheaded, while non-citizens suffered the ignominy of crucifixion.

The purpose of this analysis of the fire in Rome, and the subsequent persecution of the Christians, has been to show that the Jewish Christians of the city were victimized, along with their Gentile brethren, and that the consequences of their brief suffering proved fatal to the existence of Jewish Christian communities outside Jerusalem. We know that the Jewish Christian community in Rome had had for a long time, a strong enough influence on the rest of the Christian community, that the Roman State looked upon Christianity in the Capital City as a part of Judaism. However, with the rapid increase in the number of Gentile believers, who, by 56,⁷⁴ outnumbered their Jewish brethren, Christianity began to take on less and less of a Jewish character, resulting in its being recognized as a separate cult in Rome in 64.

The Jewish Christian community, which, until that time, had enjoyed the many special privileges bestowed on the Jews, now was persecuted as a part of a 'mischievous superstition',⁷⁵ which had arisen in Judaea, and spread later to Rome.

From the deaths of the two great apostles of the Church, Paul and Peter,⁷⁶ we know that the Jewish Christians of the city suffered as a result of the fire. Peter, apostle to the Jews,⁷⁷ suffered the same fate as Paul, being martyred at the same time;⁷⁸ if he suffered the same treatment as the apostle to the Gentiles, we have no reason to suspect that the branch of the Church which Peter represented was in any way exempt from the same persecution inflicted on the larger Gentile community.

This period of persecution, although brief, was a serious blow to Christianity, because it was the first of a series of persecutions to follow, setting the tone for anti-Christian feeling in the future, and because, as a result of it, the two great pillars of the Church perished. The Gentile Church continued to function in spite of the persecution, because of the strong appeal which

it naturally had for people from all backgrounds and walks of life. However, following the death of Peter, we have no record of the appointment of a missionary of the Jewish Christian Church, who took Peter's place, and carried out the enormous task and responsibility of preaching to the Jewish population of the Empire. Peter's death was, in fact, a deadly blow to Jewish Christianity outside Palestine. Whereas Gentile Christianity could continue on after Paul with the impetus which he had given to it, and because of its very nature of attractiveness to the Gentile world, Jewish Christianity had no such momentum of growth. Its appeal was restricted virtually to the Jew, at a time when Christianity was beginning to develop into a faith of the Gentiles. The great appeal which the Gentile Church enjoyed, took away from the attraction of the Jewish branch of the faith. Once the great leader of the Jewish Christian had lost his life, Jewish Christianity in the Empire no longer had someone upon whom it might depend for strength and guidance. Because Christianity now became known as a new sect, with strong appeal to the masses, and no longer as part of Judaism,

from which it had sprung, it was treated as such by Rome, with the same intolerance for new sects from the East which the State had always shown. The intermittent periods of persecution which followed that of 64, had no great influence on the growth of Gentile Christianity, but they proved fatal to Jewish Christianity, which remained Jewish in the external manifestations of obedience to the requirements of the Law, and yet, was still united with the larger Gentile Church, because of their common faith in the Messiah, already come in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

After Peter's death, the Jewish Christian churches outside the Holy Land continued to look to Jerusalem for spiritual guidance; the church in the Holy City continued to provide the Jewish Christians with a means of holding respectability in the eyes of the Gentile Christians. Yet, a few years later, Jerusalem was utterly destroyed by Titus; Jewish Christianity was left exposed, disconnected from its source of spiritual strength. With its growth checked, Jewish Christianity outside Palestine quickly died.

REFERENCES

1. In the Eastern cities, the Jews were granted specific quarters in which to live, and were free to establish synagogues and cemeteries under the protection of the Law. The Jews of Alexandria and Cyrene were permitted to form independent organizations within these cities, and were exempt from taxes and outside administration.
Josephus, Antiquities, xiv, 7, 2.
2. Askowith; p. 166 ff.
3. Acts 9:31.
4. Ibid. 16:20.
5. Ibid. 18:12-17.

6. Ibid. 6:5.
7. Ibid. 8:5.
8. Ibid. 8:40.
9. Ibid. 9:32 - 10:48.
10. Ibid. 9:19-22.
11. Ibid. 11:19.
12. Lebreton and Zeiller; p. 26.
13. Brandon; p. 225.
14. Acts 11:19.
15. Ibid. 10:48; 8:13; etc.
16. Brandon; p. 28.
17. e.g. Acts 9:20; 13:5; 13:14; 14:1;
 17:1; 17:40; 18:19; 19:8.
18. Ibid. 16:3.
 See Hort; pp. 84-87.
19. Acts 13:46.
20. Ibid. 21:40.
21. Ibid. 26:1.
22. Ibid. 23:6.

23. Paul repeatedly adapted the tone of his message to suit the environment in which he found himself, showing the Gentiles that God could be recognized as part of their own environment, and not as something external to it.
24. The Jewish population of the Empire has been estimated at eight per cent of the total population; all the other people of the Empire who were attracted to Christianity joined one of the Gentile churches which Paul had founded in Asia Minor, Cyprus and Greece, or which had already been founded before his time.
Simon; p. 53.
25. Galatians 2:11.
26. Oscar Cullman, Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953); pp. 52-53.
27. 1 Corinthians 1:12; 9:5.
cf. Eusebius, II, 25.
28. The presence of a Jewish Christian community in Rome will be shown later.
29. Harry J. Leon, The Jews of Ancient Rome (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1960); p. 24; quoting from H. Janne, Mélanges de Bidez; p. 540.
30. Tacitus, Annales, xv, 44.
31. Eusebius, ii, 25.

32. Leon (pp. 25-27) quotes Radin's assertion, The Jews among the Christians and the Romans, that 'Chrestos' was a Jewish agitator, his name being a fairly common one at that time. However, as Simon points out, this name does not appear among hundreds of known names of Roman Jews in the catacombs. Janne (pp. 540-541) asserts that, if some unknown person were being referred to, the qualifying word, 'quodam' would have been used. Most scholars agree that 'Chrestos' was simply an alternate reading for 'Christos', referring to Jesus of Nazareth.
33. Leon; pp. 24-27.
Most scholars place the date at 49, which is determined from Crosius' statement that the Jews were expelled in the ninth year of Claudius' reign.
34. Acts 18:12.
35. The dates for Paul's travels are taken from Benjamin W. Robinson, The Life of Paul (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1918); pp. 221-222.
36. Robinson; p. 177.
37. M.-J Lagrange, Saint Paul, Epitre aux Romains (Paris: Gabalda et Cie., Editeurs, 1950); pp. xx-xxiv.
38. Romans 15:23.
39. Askowith; p. 141.
40. Leon; p. 135.
41. Matthew 10:6.
cf. Romans 2:9, 10.

42. M.J. Lagrange, Saint Paul, Epitre aux Romains, p. xx.
43. Acts 8:1, 2.
See Suetonius, Vita Claudii, 25.
44. Brandon; p. 26.
45. e.g. his letters to the Ephesians and to Timothy.
46. Hort; pp. 100-102.
See Acts 15:9; Galatians 1 regarding Judaizing Christians, who attempted to impose Jewish customs on members of the Gentile branch of Christianity, as a higher form of justice, although not considering them to be absolutely necessary.
See Lagrange, Saint Paul, Epitre aux Galates (Paris: Gabalda et Cie., Editeurs, 1950); p. xxxiii.
47. Romans 15:20.
48. Lagrange, Epitre aux Romains; pp. xx-xxiv.
49. Whether or not ^{Peter} Paul ever came to Rome is a much debated point. Certainly, the Roman Catholic Church claims to be the true Christian Church, descended from Peter, who is believed to have been in Rome. However, as Cullman points out (pp. 71-72), there is no passage in Scripture which confirms the presence of Peter in the Capital City. Cullman believes (pp. 77-86), that, to judge from Paul's letter to the Romans written in 56 or 57, Peter could not have been in the city at the time, since no mention is made of him in the letter. The claim that Paul omitted any mention of Peter because of rivalry between the two branches of Christian missionary work is ridiculous,

since Peter and Paul were closer theologically, than any other two leaders of the different branches of Christianity (cf. Acts 15). However, Cullman (p. 113) does believe that Peter did come to Rome. Paul admits to not having founded the Roman Church, leaving one to assume that it was the Jewish Christian mission which founded it. The fact that there were 30,000 - 40,000 Jews in Rome at this time would support the theory that the original Roman church had a strong membership of Jewish Christians. Peter alludes to his presence in Rome in his reference to Babylon in his first letter (5:13), and the witnesses in Rome referred to by John (Revelation 11:3) could very well be applying to Peter and Paul. Outside the Bible, we have Clement's first letter to the Corinthians, written in 96, which makes mention of Peter's death as a result of jealousy (ch. 5).

50. Eusebius, ii, 14.
51. Galatians 1 and 2.
52. Romans 15:19, 20.
53. Eusebius, ii, 25.
54. Tacitus, Annales, xv, 38-40.
55. Georges-Roux believes that the fire in Rome began accidentally. Although Suetonius claims that Nero started it, he is known to have lived during the Flavian dynasty, which was very anti-Neronian. It is hard to understand why Nero would cause a fire, which destroyed works of art which the emperor loved; if he were a pyromaniac, why did he not originate other fires? If he desired to build a new city, why did he have the most beautiful part of the old one destroyed?

The claim that the Christians started it can be disproved by the spirit of the letters of Peter and Paul for peace and humility among believers, and by their small numbers, which would have prevented them from accomplishing such an act on such a grand scale.

Georges-Roux, Neron (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1962); pp. 167-182.

56. Gibbon; pp. 201-202.
57. Tacitus, xv, 44.
cf. Suetonius, Vita Neronis, 16.
- Georges-Roux (pp. 159-162) believes that the claim that the Romans immediately sought the Christians as scapegoats is unfounded, considering that religious tolerance had been generally practised by the Romans until this point. However, his conclusion that the Christians suffered at the instigation of the Jews is equally unfounded. Leon (p. 28) states that the claim that the Jews were responsible for the Neronian persecution of the Christians exists without one bit of concrete evidence. Gibbon introduces an interesting personal thought concerning the Christians, to whom Tacitus refers, which is probably based, in part, on Acts 5:37. He states that in Rome at this time, there were two groups which fell under the name of Christian - the followers of Jesus of Nazareth, and the zealots, who supported Judas the Gaulonite. Gibbon feels that it was the latter group which actually suffered as a result of the fire, but that Tacitus emphasized the former because it was the Christians who were quite infamous at the time of his writing, during the reign of Hadrian. The followers of the Gaulonite had disappeared by the time that Tacitus' work appeared, so that, for the benefit of the reader who would have been very familiar with the Christians, Tacitus

chose them as the victims of the persecution. However, this interpretation of Tacitus' account of the fire is generally unsupported by later scholars, who believe that the account is perfectly accurate as it stands.

See Elmer Truesdell Merrill, Essays in Early Christian History (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1924); p. 113.

See also W.M. Ramsay, The Church in the Roman Empire (London: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1892); pp. 227-229.

58. From a legal standpoint, three accusations were laid against the Jews: firstly, their contempt of the Roman gods; secondly, their refusal to take part in the imperial cultus; finally, their refusal to participate in the popular festivals.
(Askowith; p. 162).

Although, officially, from the time of Julius Caesar, the Jews were not obligated to worship the emperors, and were exempted from State worship, a feeling of animosity naturally arose against the Jews because of their apparent aloofness from society.

(Ibid.; p. 165 ff).

The aristocracy was very antagonistic to the Jews, fearful that, through them, new ideas might enter the mind of the common people. Public games were being used to amuse the city population, and help it forget the internal corruption of the structure of the Empire. When the Jews showed their disapproval of these games by refusing to take part in them, they came to be despised by the upper class as a disruptive influence.

(Ibid.; p. 176 ff). The Jews also suffered anti-Semitic feelings aimed at them by the Roman aristocracy, because they supported the opposing party of the 'Populares', led by Julius Caesar, which ran against

the more conservative 'Optimates', to which Cicero belonged, and which represented the aristocratic class.).

In Latin literature, anti-Jewish feelings can be found expressed in the speeches of Cicero (Pro Flacco, 66-69), and in the writings of Tacitus (Histories, v, 1-13), to name but two. Much of this prejudice arose from ignorance or from false rumours, which quickly took on an exaggerated significance.

The Jewish abstention from pork, the act of circumcision, and the abstention from work on the Sabbath, were all misunderstood; this misunderstanding was aggravated by the aloofness and secrecy of the Jews themselves.

(See Askowith; p. 178. The Jews of Rome lived in the Trastevere, on the other side of the Tiber.).

We have no way of knowing to what extent the lower classes in Rome shared this suspicion and contempt. Apparently, the situation was not so bad at Rome itself as in other cities of the Empire, such as at Alexandria, where the Jews formed a privileged class, which antagonized the native population of the city.

(See Ralph Marcus, "Antisemitism in the Hellenistic - Roman World", Essays on Antisemitism; pp. 15-18.).

However, the strong anti-Semitic feelings in the Hellenistic parts of the Empire had an influence on the situation of the Jews in Rome.

60. Quoting Josephus, Antiquities, 20, 8, 11, 195.
It is hard to understand how the Jews were able to manipulate Poppaea for their own ends, when one considers the case of Fulvia, wife of the Senator Saturninus, a friend of the Emperor Tiberius. When she had been swindled by four Jewish charlatans who had tried to take advantage of her by trying to convince her to contribute money and draperies for the Temple of Jerusalem, Tiberius reacted by drafting 4,000 Jews into the army, and sending them to Sardinia.
- See Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, 18, 3, 5, 81-84.
61. A. Cohen, "Jewish History in the First Century", Judaism and the Beginnings of Christianity (London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1923); p. 41.
62. Acts 2:14-36; 3:12-26.
cf. Parkes; pp. 45-47.
63. Parkes; p. 69.
64. Ibid.; p. 79.
65. Leon; p. 28.
66. However, the percentage of Gentile believers in the community was rapidly growing, causing it to lose its Jewish appearance. When the Roman church suffered in 64, the Jewish Christians were then considered as part of the larger Gentile group of Christianity, and were treated as such by Rome.

See Lagrange, Epitre aux Romains; p. xxii.

The question as to whether the Romans did, in fact, identify the Christians as being separate from the Jews as early as 64, has been a debatable point. Ramsay believes that the Christians were first recognized by the Roman State at this time, because of the evidence in Tacitus (xv, 44), supported by Suetonius (Vita Neronis, 16). Tacitus is an historian whom he considers to be reliable in matters of fact (pp. 227-229).

67. Parkes; p. 25.
cf. Cohen; p. 35.
68. An interesting analogy can be drawn here, between the situation of the Christians in Rome and that of the Jehovah's Witnesses in Montreal. The latter group have been known world-wide under this name for less than 40 years, and have a membership of about 3,500 in Montreal. Yet, in spite of their small numbers and short time of existence, they are generally well-known for their zealous evangelizing, so that virtually everyone knows that they are a sect, separate from orthodox Christianity. We live in an age, generally distrustful of religious proselytism, somewhat similar to the period in Rome under discussion, when the State was attempting to stabilize the known world under one generally accepted religion.
69. See J.B. Carter, The Religious Life of Ancient Rome (Boston: Houghton and Mifflin Co., 1911); pp. 33-94.
A brief account of the persecution of Eastern sects can be found in Carter. In 213, the senate put a special praetor in charge of suppressing foreign cults. In 186, 7,000 members of the Bacchic Society were arrested, of whom some were executed, the rest imprisoned for life.

Two Epicurean philosophers were banished in 173. In 139, Jews and Chaldeans were expelled from Rome for spreading the cult of Sabazios. Magicians and astrologers were expelled from Rome by Agrippa in 33, followed in 19 by a banishment of Jews and Isaics.

See also Moreau; pp. 12-22.

70. Ramsay; pp. 233-234.

71. Gibbon; p. 197.

See also Workman; pp. 107-196.

The claim of the early Church that its leaders possessed supernatural powers led the Christians to be thought of as exorcists, a charge which had always been laid against the Jews. The Christians' convictions that demons and the devil were to be clearly seen as realities in pagan idols and emperor worship, and could only be surmounted by constant vigilance, increased the suspicion of magic held against them. Furthermore, misunderstandings about the Christian ideas of marriage, slavery, military service and holding public office aggravated the hostile feelings against them.

72. Parkes; p. 8.

73. Georges-Roux; p. 164.

74. Lagrange, Epitre aux Romains; p. xxii.

75. Tacitus, Annales, xv, 44.

76. Eusebius, ii, 25.

77. Galatians 2:7.

78. Dionysius of Corinth, Letter to Soter; quoted from Eusebius.

3. THE HISTORY OF JEWISH CHRISTIANITY IN PALESTINE
(A.D. 66 - 135)

The persecution of the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome following the fire of 64, occurred but briefly, and caused the death of only a small part of the Christian community in the city; yet, it had a paralyzing effect on the subsequent history of Jewish Christianity. The Roman Government, by 64, had begun to regard Christianity no longer a part of Judaism as a 'religio licita',

but rather, as a new and mischievous superstition, spreading from Judaea throughout the Empire.

The Jewish Christians outside Palestine now became classified by Rome as part of Christianity, which was quickly taking on a strictly Gentile character, and suffered accordingly. When Peter perished, Jewish Christianity no longer had one individual upon whom it might rely for the founding of further Jewish Christian churches, and consequently, its growth was permanently checked.

However, the question must be asked: Were some Jewish Christian churches founded after Peter's death? We do hear of the existence of Jewish Christians in the Empire after the fire of 64; both of communities of Jewish Christians, and of their individual church leaders and authors.

Eusebius, quoting from Hegesippus, mentions the story of two grandsons of Jude, who were descended of David's line. Brought before Domitian, who had ordered the execution of all such men, as being threats to the Roman Government, these grandsons of Jude showed the emperor how harmless were, in fact, their claims about Christ and His Kingdom.

Domitian considered them unworthy of his attention, and set them free, bringing to an end the persecution of the Church. Both men are reported to have then become leaders of Jewish Christian churches.¹ The apostle John, freed from the island of Patmos after Domitian's death in 96,² went to Ephesus, where he remained, until his death during the reign of Trajan.³ Eusebius, quoting Clement, writes that John travelled throughout Asia Minor, organizing whole churches, and strengthening those which already existed.⁴ However, specific mention is made of the fact that he visited the Gentile peoples of the neighbouring districts. Judging from Peter's first letter, written in 65,⁵ and addressed "to the exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,"⁶ we know that Jewish Christian communities existed in Asia Minor. Yet, we have no evidence anywhere that any new Jewish Christian community was founded after the death of the apostle to the Jews.

No Jewish Christian was more respected, following the death of Peter, than the apostle John; yet, this man, who was more capable than any other

Jewish Christian of strengthening Jewish Christianity, devoted his efforts to founding and strengthening Gentile churches. It seems, then, that the taking of Peter's life was a death blow to Jewish Christianity outside Palestine, considering that its progress was now checked, although the Jewish Christian church of Jerusalem remained the spiritual centre of Christianity until 70.

This leaves us with the necessity of turning our attention back to Palestine, and studying the history of Jewish Christianity in the land of its origin, to see what effect the subsequent Roman management of the Jewish province had upon the fate of the Jewish branch of Christianity. We do know that the Jerusalem church ceased appointing Jewish bishops in 135, following the second Jewish War, after which Hadrian set forward an edict, forbidding any circumcized male near the site of what had been Jerusalem;⁷ following this date, Jewish Christianity, as a part of orthodox Christianity, virtually ceased to exist. Was, however, 135 the year of the sudden end of Jewish Christianity?

What effect did the first Jewish War have upon Jewish Christianity in Palestine, and as well, the period of time between the wars? Did the Romans ever come to identify the Jewish Christians in Palestine as being separate from the Jews, and to what extent did Jewish Christianity suffer because of the wars between the Jews and the Romans?

In discussing the history of Jewish Christianity in its dying years, one wonders to what extent the Jewish Christians of the Jerusalem church were directly involved in the Jewish revolt of 66 - 70, and what subsequent effect the destruction of the Holy City had upon Jewish Christianity. The evidence at our disposal seems to point towards the fact that the sudden collapse of Jewish Christianity in Palestine resulted from this Jewish revolt, not only because of the tragic involvement of the Jerusalem church in the revolt, but also, because of the destruction of the Temple and of most of the city itself, resulting in the turning of the attention of Christianity away from the Jerusalem church as the Mother Church of the new faith. Following 70, Jewish Christianity continued on, struggling to exist in the face of the disrespect

felt towards it by Gentile Christianity and by Judaism, until its final disappearance in 135.

What proof do we have that the Jewish Christians of Palestine were personally involved in the Jewish revolt of 66 - 70, and that they suffered horribly as a result of it?

The Jewish Christians of Palestine had always been strongly attached to their Jewish heritage, and remained respectful of the sanctity of the Temple.⁸ When one looks at the Gospel records to seek historical evidence of the nationalistic threat which the early Jewish Christians, along with the Jews, posed to the Roman Government, one notices a number of interesting points. When Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane, all the Gospel writers state that his disciples were armed, that the Roman or Jewish officials sent to arrest them were heavily armed, anticipating opposition, and that resistance was offered.⁹ Then, when Jesus was executed, although the Jewish leaders were partly the cause of his death, yet it must be admitted that the sentence of death was given by the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate, and that the execution

was carried out by Roman officials, indicating that the Christian movement did pose a certain political threat from the Roman standpoint.

Also, it should be noted that one of Jesus' twelve disciples, Simon, is mentioned, with the epithet, 'the Zealot',¹⁰ indicating that one of the supporters of Jesus of Nazareth was a member of the extreme nationalistic party of contemporary Jewish life.¹¹ Jesus frequently attacked the Pharisees and the Sadducees, but makes no mention of his feelings about the Zealots, leaving one to suspect that he was sympathetic to the nationalistic desires of this group.¹²

Indications of Jewish Christian nationalism can also be seen reflected in the thirteenth chapter of Mark, frequently termed the Little Apocalypse, where can be found an expression of the feelings of the Jewish Christians in Palestine when the sanctity of the Temple was threatened by the attempt of the Emperor Gaius to erect his statue in it in 39.¹³ In addition to these implications in Scripture of the strong nationalistic feelings of the Jewish Christians

in Palestine against the Roman Government, Brandon has reason to think, as well, "that Josephus regarded Christianity primarily as a revolutionary movement against the Roman domination of Palestine."¹⁴

On realizing the strong involvement which the Jewish Christians had with the cause of the Jewish Zealots against Rome, one wonders what was their fate during the course of the first Jewish War, ended by the siege and capture of Jerusalem. Eusebius writes:

The members of the Jerusalem church, by means of an oracle given by revelation to acceptable persons there, were ordered to leave the city before the war began and settle in a town in Peraea called Pella. To Pella those who believed in Christ migrated from Jerusalem.¹⁵

However, Brandon cannot accept this statement; he quotes Josephus who writes that Pella was sacked by the Jews in revenge for the massacre of their countrymen by the Gentile inhabitants of Caesarea.¹⁶ There is no reason to believe, he feels, that the Jerusalem church moved en masse to Pella, which, at this time, could not have provided them with asylum, not only because it had been mostly destroyed,

but also, because of the anti-Semitic feelings which existed there after the attack against it by the Jews in the course of the revolt.¹⁷ It is also very difficult to see how the Jerusalem church could have fled 60 miles through country ravaged by war, crossing the Jordan River with all their goods. Brandon does believe, however, that Eusebius is not totally incorrect in his account, and that some Jewish Christians of Judaea did settle in Pella,¹⁸ although their means and time of arrival cannot be determined. He does not believe that it was the church of Jerusalem which fled there en bloc, since Eusebius treats the Jewish Christian group at Pella as being rather insignificant; not enjoying the respect which had always been accorded the Jerusalem church.¹⁹ Nor does he believe that a group of Jewish Christians travelled to Pella before the outbreak of the war in 66, since Pella suffered terribly after this date in the course of the war. The Jewish Christians who, at some time, had travelled to Pella, there began to claim that they were, in fact, descendants of the famous Mother Church at Jerusalem, and in 135, returned to the site of Jerusalem to re-establish the church there, although this time as a Gentile community.²⁰

What, then, was the fate of the original church of Jerusalem? Because the Jerusalem church was one in nationalistic spirit with the Jewish nation, it can be concluded that it fell, together with the Jewish nation, in the catastrophe of 70.²¹ Of course, not all the Jewish Christians of Palestine were wiped out; however, those who did survive the war shared in the great economic hardships which the Jews endured after their defeat.²²

Thus, it can be seen how, as a result of this war, Jewish Christianity in Palestine was not only greatly thinned in numbers, but also, virtually disappeared as a part of the Christian Church, eventually breaking up into a number of sects.²³ The church of Jerusalem no longer was respected by the Gentile branch of Christianity, nor did it play an important role in the life of the Christian faith.

Because of the close involvement of Jewish Christianity with the nationalistic aspirations of the Jewish people of Judaea, we can know that, even at this time, Jewish Christians and Jews in Palestine still lived at peace with

one another because of common aspirations.²⁴

Certainly, Rome had no reason to know that there existed two religions in Palestine at this time, and that, therefore, Jewish Christians were to be distinguished and treated any differently from Jews in the war. Parkes states that, when Titus held a council before Jerusalem, concerning the destruction of the city, he did not recognize the involvement of two religions fighting against the Roman Army, but still considered Jewish Christianity to be a Jewish sect.²⁵

Consequently, as has already been described, Jewish Christianity in Palestine suffered terribly as a result of the war, never, in fact, to recover, as did their Jewish countrymen.

Still considered as part of Judaism by Rome, Jewish Christianity in Palestine, in an indirect way, shared the tribulations of the Jews. Although Jewish Christianity as a part of orthodox Christianity, still continued to exist for another 65 years, its subsequent history was, in fact, no more than a steady collapse, as a result of the direct involvement of the Jewish Christians in the disastrous war which ended in 70.

As a result of this war, Jewish Christianity suffered, because of the deterioration in its relationships with both the Gentile Church and with the Jews of Palestine. The small group of Jewish Christians who fled to Pella under the leadership of Symeon, son of Cleopas,²⁶ arrived there sometime between 68 and 70.²⁷ From this time on, the gulf begins to widen between Jewish Christianity and Judaism in Judaea, and simultaneously, a separation occurred between Jewish and Gentile Christianity, which eventually isolated Jewish Christianity, and caused it to disintegrate; eventually, it either fell in with Judaism or Gentile Christianity, or developed into a series of fragmentary sects.

The first Jewish War placed a chasm between Judaism and Jewish Christianity, which was widened by a further insurrection of the Jews during the reign of Trajan,²⁸ with which the Jewish Christians had no desire to involve themselves. There now appeared in Jewish literature, attacks aimed at the Christians, particularly at a certain James of Caphar Secania.²⁹ Into the daily Blessings, which were uttered in the Temple, was placed the

declaration against heretics, called the **Birkath-ha-Minim**, composed by Samuel the Small, between 80 and 90.³⁰ Up to this point, it seems that the Jewish Christians of Palestine still considered themselves to be Jews. The reason for the rejection of the Jewish Christians by the Jews at the close of the first century was twofold. First, the Jewish Christians had always maintained contact with the Gentile Christians, who had little respect for the Jewish Law. As has been shown in Chapter One, the Jews and Jewish Christians had lived on fairly peaceful terms during the first century, in spite of the acceptance by the latter of Jesus as the Messiah, due to the fact that the Jewish Christians of Palestine adhered rigidly to the requirements of the Law. It was the association of the Judaean Church with the ever-growing Gentile branch of Christianity which eventually set a barrier between Judaism and Jewish Christianity.³¹ A second reason for the split was the refusal of the Jewish Christians to support the Messianic claims of different Jewish leaders, including Bar-cochba.

The inclusion into the eighteen
Blessings of the attack against the Christians
was sent out to all Jews in the Empire, along with
stories in the "Sepher Toldoth Jesu", with
derogatory accounts of Jesus and of Christianity.³²
Christian literature reflects the bitterness which
was beginning to arise at the end of the
first century; in the Gospel of Matthew,
written between 80 and 90,³³ the Jews are quoted
as having cried, concerning the crucifixion of Jesus:
"His blood be on us and on all our children!"³⁴

What is even more tragic than the
antagonism felt between Jewish Christianity and
Judaism at the end of the first century, was the
rejection by Gentile Christianity of Jewish
Christianity as a part of the orthodox Church.³⁵
Until 70, the Jewish Christians had still been
considered with a measure of respect by the Gentile
Church, because the Jerusalem church remained the
Mother Church of Christianity. After the destruction
of Jerusalem, and the disappearance of a Jewish
Christian community in that city, this cause for
respect was removed, and the Jewish Christian Church ceased
to exercise great influence upon Gentile Christianity.³⁶

This loss in respectability resulted not only because of the destruction of Jerusalem and the departure of the Jewish Christian community in the city, but also, because many Jewish Christians either were drifting back into Judaism, or were becoming sectaries, no longer clinging theologically to the orthodox Christian faith.³⁷ Numerous Jewish Christian sects arose at the close of the first century and on into the second; Cerinthus founded a sect in the lifetime of the apostle John,³⁸ and another sprang up at the same time under Nicolaus.³⁹ During the reign of Trajan, the theology of the Ebionites was set forth by their prophet, Elxai, who fully maintained the Jewish basis of religion, while introducing a second baptism for a second forgiveness of sins.⁴⁰

Even those Jewish Christians who remained within orthodox Christianity were treated with disrespect by the Gentile Christians, both because of the instability of the Jewish Christian Church in Palestine, and because of its theology, which contained the basic beliefs of the Church, but had many other beliefs added, too, so that the theological system of Jewish Christianity was virtually unique.⁴¹

In 106 or 107,⁴² Symeon, the second bishop of the Jerusalem church, now existing at Pella, was executed, after having been informed against "by the heretical sects".⁴³ Following his death, there were 13 bishops of the Jerusalem church within a span of about 28 years,⁴⁴ with no strong leader, capable of bestowing upon the Jewish Christian church at Pella an appearance of importance and stability. Although we have indications of a gradual return of Jewish Christians to Jerusalem, who are mentioned by Akila, translator of the Bible, in the Holy City in 120,⁴⁵ the Christian community of Jerusalem never again attained any degree of importance.

In 133, during the reign of Hadrian,⁴⁶ a second Jewish revolt broke out against the Roman Government, caused by Roman persecution of the Jewish people. The Jews fought under the leadership of Bar-cochba, who was supported by Rabbi Akilain, with his claim to be the Jewish Messiah.⁴⁷ The Jewish Christians, who had shared the nationalistic aspirations of the Jews in the first revolt, which broke out in 66, were unsympathetic with this second one, because of Bar-cochba's Messianic claims.

As a result, the Jewish Christians were tortured and slain by the Jewish leader for their unwillingness to participate in the revolt. Bar-cochba, described as a brave, but ruthless man,⁴⁸ was eventually defeated, and his army destroyed at Bethar by Hadrian's ablest general, Julius Severus.⁴⁹

Yet, in spite of the fact that Jews and Jewish Christians had definitely separated themselves from one another by 133, the Romans had still not yet learned to distinguish between the two, both because their split was just recent, dating from 80 or 90,⁵⁰ and because of the insignificance of the Jewish Christians themselves, in numbers and in importance. Schonfield tells us that the Jewish Christians of Palestine suffered as much as the Jews because of the Roman persecutions during the reign of Hadrian, which led up to the Jewish revolt in 133,⁵¹ and that, following the conclusion of the war in 135, the Jewish Christians were forced to flee, along with the Jews, from Roman vengeance, and endure the same banishment, although they had taken no active part in the revolt. The edict that no Jews were to approach the site of Jerusalem applied to the Jewish Christians as

well, who consequently were compelled for the first time, to elect a Gentile bishop, Marcus.⁵² The church of Jerusalem was now composed of Gentiles;⁵³ the remaining Jewish Christians, who refused to join the Gentile Church, came to be considered as sectaries,⁵⁴ who, "while they were both Jews and Christians, are neither Jews nor Christians."⁵⁵

The Jewish Church as an orthodox branch of Christianity, ceased to exist in 135, when Marcus was elected bishop of the Jerusalem church. The two Jewish revolts had a disastrous effect upon Jewish Christianity in Palestine, since, in their harsh treatment of the Jews, the Romans in no way made any distinction between the Jews and the Jewish Christians, but treated the members of both religions alike. This is understandable in the case of the first war (66 - 70), in which the Jewish Christians took an active part, since they still identified themselves readily with the nationalistic aspirations of their Jewish countrymen. In subsequent years, although Jews and Jewish Christians were separated, both because of the inclusion of a curse against apostates in the eighteen Blessings, uttered daily in the Temple, and because of

the declaration of Bar-cochba as the Messiah, nevertheless, the Romans did not distinguish between the two. The intensity of the fighting in the second revolt was so great, that Hadrian, in reporting to the Senate the cessation of hostilities, omitted 'the army' in the customary phrase, "The army and I are well."⁵⁶ The feelings of the Romans had been too hardened against the Jews to care to make any distinction between the Jews themselves, and a small, insignificant group of Jewish Christians, who still remained Jewish in all the external manifestations of obedience to the Law. Consequently, as has been described, the Jewish Christians suffered the same persecution, both before and after the revolt of 133 - 135, as did the Jews. While Judaism was capable of continuing on because of its strength outside Palestine, the history of Jewish Christianity came to an end with the decree of Hadrian that no circumcized male would henceforth be permitted near the site of Jerusalem. The destruction of Jerusalem in 135 proved the final, decisive blow against the Jewish Christian community of Palestine.

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1. Eusebius, iii, 20.
2. Gibbon; p. 905.
3. Eusebius, iii, 23;
quoting from Irenaeus' Heresies Answered
II and III.
4. Ibid., iii, 23.
5. Scofield Bible (New York: Oxford University
Press, 1967); p. 1332.
6. 1 Peter 1:1.
7. Eusebius, iv, 6.

8. Brandon; p. 100.
9. Mark 14:43, 47, 48.
Matthew 26:47, 51-55.
Luke 22:49-52.
John 18:3, 10.
10. Luke 6:15.
Acts 1:13.
11. Brandon; p. 105.
12. cf. Acts 21:20, where the early Christians are described as having been zealous for the Law.
13. Brandon; p. 107.
14. Ibid.; pp. 111-119.
15. Eusebius, iii, 5.
16. Josephus, Jewish War, ii, 18, 1.
17. Ibid., v, 10, 1 tells of the attitude of the patriots to Jewish deserters.
18. Brandon; p. 172.
19. Ibid.; p. 172.
20. Ibid.; p. 173.
21. Ibid.; p. 180.
22. Ibid.; p. 181.
23. Ibid.; p. 182.

24. cf. Schonfield; p. 31; where Eisler, The Messiah Jesus, is quoted as saying that James, Bishop of Jerusalem, was the Jewish High Priest in 66, elected by the Jewish people to this holy office, in opposition to the official High Priest.
25. Parkes; p. 91.
26. Eusebius, iii, 11.
27. Hort; p. 175.
28. Hort; p. 178.
cf. Parkes; p. 93.
29. Hort; p. 178.
30. Parkes; pp. 77-78.
31. Ibid.; p. 77.
32. Ibid.; p. 80.
33. Ibid.; p. 74.
34. Matthew 22:25.
35. Parkes; p. 92.
36. cf. Jean Daniélou and Henri Marrou, Une Nouvelle Histoire de l'Eglise (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1963); p. 59.
37. Ibid.; p. 182.
38. Eusebius, iii, 28;
quoting from Dionysius' Promises, II.

39. Eusebius, iii, 29.
40. Lietzman, pp. 247-251.
cf. Daniélou, Theologie du judaeo-christianisme;
pp. 378-386.
41. See Daniélou.
The theology of Jewish Christianity, which began to develop towards the close of the first century, included many features which were unique to it. Among them was the great importance placed on the existence of angels, by whom the world was created, and among whom was the Christ. Baptism took on added importance. The symbolism of the cross was very involved, since the cross was not simply the means of Christ's death, but, in fact, a theological concept itself, in which the four directions in which the beams point represent the cosmic extension of His redemption. The doctrines of the millenium and of the existence of two spirits - one, the source of good, and the other of evil - were basically Jewish Christian in origin. Daniélou concludes his study on the history of Jewish Christian theology with the statement that, although Jewish Christian theology contained within itself the basic orthodox beliefs of the Christian Church, it possessed so many unique features of its own, that it could, in fact, be considered as an entirely separate theology.
42. G.A. Williamson, trans. of Eusebius' Historia Ecclesiastica (Bangay, Suffolk: Richard Clay and Co., 1965); p. 142.
Schonfield sets the date at 110 (p. 60).
43. Eusebius, iii, 33.
44. Ibid., iv, 5.

45. Daniélou and Marrou; p. 78.
46. Schonfield; p. 60.
47. Ibid.; p. 61.
48. Ibid.; p. 61.
49. Ibid.; pp. 60-61.
50. Parkes; pp. 77-78.
51. Schonfield; p. 60.
52. Eusebius, iv, 6.
53. Ibid.; iv, 6.
54. Schonfield; p. 62.
55. Ibid.; p. 62;
quoting from Jerome's Epistula ad Augustinum.
56. Schonfield; p. 61.
57. See Simon; p. 89; and Lietzman.
 The Jewish Christians who did not join with Judaism or with Gentile Christianity following the defeat of Bar-cochba, came to be called Ebionites (ebionim); the Hebrew expression for 'the poor'. They were generally regarded as a sect, and no longer a part of the Christian Church. About 150, the apologist Justin brings up the question of whether or not a Christian who still adhered to the requirements of the Jewish Law could be saved (Lietzman; pp. 243-244; quoting from Justin, dia., 47, 1-3). He was inclined to believe so, although others were not.

Irenaeus did not consider the Jewish Christians a part of orthodox Christianity (p. 244; quoting from i, 26, 2). After Irenaeus, little mention is made of the Ebionites, until the end of the fourth century, when, in 370, Epiphanius collected all the available material on the Ebionites (p. 245; quoting from haer., lii, 1, 81). At about the same time, Jerome was staying in the wilderness of Chalcis, east of Antioch, and here, found traces of Nazarenes. The Ebionite sect had virtually disappeared by the fourth century (see Lebreton and Zeiller, vol. 1; p. 503).

CONCLUSION

Because Jewish Christianity never attained the strength in numbers of the Gentile branch of the Church, nor possessed the wealth of tradition which the Jews could claim directly from the time of the ancient patriarchs, it never was granted the honour of being identified by the Government of Rome as an entity, but was always confused either with Judaism in Judaea, or with the larger Gentile Church outside the Holy Land.

As a result, in studying the effect which Roman policies concerning foreign religions had upon Jewish Christianity, one must first realize that there was no particular policy which applied solely and specifically to Jewish Christianity, and had a direct bearing or influence on its history. It is necessary, rather, to look at the policies of the Roman Government concerning the Jews and concerning the Gentile Christians, and try to discover what indirect effect these policies had upon Jewish Christianity.

Certainly, the attitude which Rome had both towards Judaism and towards Gentile Christianity had an influence on the various stages of the history of the Jewish Christians, even if this influence was indirect. We have seen how the special status granted the Jews by Julius Caesar, and renewed by subsequent emperors, applied to the early Jewish Christians, as well, who, for the most part, were to be found in Palestine. Through their peaceful co-existence with their Jewish neighbours, due to the fact that the Jewish Christians adhered to all the requirements of the Jewish Law, they were considered as Jews by the Roman Government,

and were free to expand, unrestricted, because of the protective umbrella, as it were, which this special status provided them.

Then, as Jewish Christianity expanded, it spread to many parts of the Empire, where it enjoyed the same privileges accorded the Jews of the Diaspora, which had been granted the Jews of Palestine. However, as Christianity grew numerically, it took on more and more of a non-Jewish appearance, because of its strong appeal to the Gentiles, and finally, following the fire in Rome in 64, Christianity was, for the first time, distinguished from Judaism by the Roman State, removed from under the protective umbrella of a 'religio licita', and persecuted. The Jewish Christians were persecuted along with the Gentile Christians, both in 64 by Nero, and later, by Domitian, and suffered horribly as a result, primarily because of the martyrdom of Peter, the apostle to the Jews, for whom no replacement was found.

Concerning the situation of the Jewish Christians in Palestine, we saw how the church in Palestine, which, at first, had been able to expand,

because of the protection it enjoyed as part of Judaism in the eyes of Rome, later suffered along with their Jewish countrymen. Because of the similarity in the nationalistic aspirations of Jews and Jewish Christians in Palestine in the first century, the Jerusalem church was equally involved in the first Jewish revolt, which broke out in 66, and suffered greatly as a result of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70. Even though a split finally took place between Jews and Jewish Christians of Judaea around the close of the first century, Jewish Christianity was so small and inconspicuous, that it continued to be confused as a part of Judaism by the Roman Government, and consequently, was equally persecuted, before and after the second Jewish revolt, which broke out in 133 under the leadership of Bar-cochba. The history of Jewish Christianity as a part of the orthodox Christian faith, came to an end in 135, with the edict of Hadrian, forbidding the presence of any circumcized male near the site of Jerusalem.

The various stages in the history of Jewish Christianity, both within and without Palestine, were indirectly influenced by the Roman

policies towards Gentile Christianity and towards Judaism; yet, the eventual collapse of Jewish Christianity cannot simply be attributed to the effects which it suffered indirectly because of the persecution of the Christians from 64 onward, and because of the Roman-Jewish conflicts in Palestine, but rather, was the inevitable result of the very nature of Jewish Christianity, which would have collapsed, even if it had had no contact whatsoever with the Roman Government. Lacking the universal appeal of Gentile Christianity, and deprived of participation in the ancient traditions of Judaism, Jewish Christianity was doomed from the start. Its appeal was basically to the Jews, who comprised a small percentage of the population of the Empire, and its progress was consequently stifled by the rapid growth of the Gentile branch of the Church. Once the Gentile Church had found its champion in Paul, Jewish Christianity was quickly overshadowed. The death of Peter, and the destruction of Jerusalem were mere external happenings, which had a superficial effect upon the Jewish Church. Its collapse resulted, not from these events, but from its very nature, which was one of stagnation.

Gentile Christianity and Judaism suffered terribly because of the periods of persecution and war, yet, continued to exist, due to their great numerical strength. The momentum of growth of the Gentile Church could not be checked by intermittent periods of persecution.

Judaism, besides being stable because of its numerical strength, was able to continue on after 70 and 135, resting upon the great traditions which originated from the ancient patriarchs. Jewish Christianity, weak in numbers, and separated ~~by their Palestinian countrymen~~ from participation in the ancient Jewish faith, was vulnerable to the disastrous results which sprang from the hardships which it was forced to endure, and to which it succumbed. Lacking internal stability, Jewish Christianity quickly and easily collapsed by the end of the first century of its brief existence.

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