

Christian Emperors, Christian Church and the Jews of the Diaspora in the Greek East, CE 379–450

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Cessent igitur, quaeso, haec de cetero usque in finem per te et sapientiam tuam et sudores et labores singulorum dierum, qui semper ecclesiis prosunt, pro quibus constituat te nobis deus ecclesiae propugnatores in longa et pacifica tempora, ut paulum quidem ex his improvisis malis respirantes, quae propter maledictum Nestorium mundus expertus est, adversum gentiles Phoeniciae possimus obsistere et Palaestinae et Arabiae et adversum cuncta Iudaica et maxime quae sunt in Laodicia (subito enim impii Iudaei archidiaconum, mirabilem virum, in theatrum deducentes puniverunt), insuper et contra eos qui in Cilicia effrenate resistunt (E. Schwartz, *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* I.4, no. 287, pp. 208–10).

From now on, I beg you, let these (troubles) cease for good, through yourself and your wisdom and your everyday toils and efforts, which are ever for the good of the churches, and for which let God establish you on your behalf as the champion of the Church for a long and peaceful period. Thus, being able for a moment to catch our breath after these unexpected evils, which the world has experienced on account of the cursed Nestorius, we may stand up against the pagans of Phoenicia and Palaestina and Arabia, and against all the Jewish goings-on and above all those in Laodicea (for recently the impious Jews took an archdeacon, an excellent man, into the theatre and beat him), and beyond that also against those (bishops) who in Cilicia (still) insanely resist (reconciliation).

1. *Introduction*

This sudden side-light on Jewish–Christian relations in the fifth century comes from Iohannes, archbishop of Antioch, writing to Proclus, his counterpart in Constantinople, in 435. What we are reading is in fact a sixth-century Latin translation of a letter originally written in Greek, and referring to the long-drawn-out and acutely controversial process by which, after the Council of Ephesus in 431, most of the original supporters of the Nestorian, or ‘two-nature’, position had agreed to a formula of reconciliation with the victorious proponents of a ‘one nature’ understanding of Christ, led by Cyril of Alexandria. Iohannes himself, originally Nestorius’ main proponent, had yielded, and now found himself regarded as a traitor by those who still resisted, including the Cilician bishops to whom he refers.

Iohannes was writing fifty-six years after the accession of Theodosius I in 379, which it is entirely reasonable to see as the decisive moment in the adhesion of the Roman State to Christianity, in its commitment to the step-by-step suppression of paganism, and also in the proclamation by the Emperor,

a couple of years later, of the State's support for what we can label as either 'orthodox' or 'catholic' belief, in essence subscription to the doctrine of the consubstantiality of the Trinity.

Since that time, a division into twin Empires, ruled from Rome or Ravenna on the one hand and Constantinople on the other, had come about on the death of Theodosius in 395; while with the accession of Theodosius' very young grandson, Theodosius II, in 408 an absolute and much-advertised commitment to Christian piety had come to mark the Imperial court in Constantinople.

The position of the Church might then have been perceived as wholly secure. But, as Iohannes' words show, that was not how it felt to Christians at the time. The reverberations of the dispute over the nature, or natures, of Christ, which had led to the Council of Ephesus, had been felt all round the Late Roman world, in the Latin West as well as the Greek East. Even apart from that, an obsessive concern with the threat posed by long lists of named heretical groups marks both Christian writing and the laws issued by the Emperors. Similarly, pagans, though suffering repeated blows, and progressively deprived of positive rights and of protection under the law, still functioned in the Christian imagination as a hostile chorus, lamenting Christian success and rejoicing in disaster. But above all, and in a way which we ought to find noteworthy and surprising, the Jewish presence was also felt as a recurrent threat. 'Presence' in this sense means literal presence, in the remarkable range of evidence available to us for Jewish communities of this period in the cities of the Greek East. But it also means the presence in the minds of Christians of a perceived threat, or challenge. Both aspects are illustrated in Iohannes' letter, as is also the backdrop of the still flourishing, if rapidly Christianised, Greek city. It is perhaps important to stress this point. The rigorous and impressive collection of evidence by J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz for the eventual decline and fall of the Roman city, shows no systematic decline datable as early as the first half of the fifth century.¹ Moreover, as we will see, a quite high proportion of the (relatively few) Greek cities whose Late Roman phase has been analysed in detail also provide archaeological or epigraphic evidence for Jewish communities.

Laodicea, in the province of Syria Prima, is not such a case, and the episode reported by Iohannes is our only evidence for a Jewish presence there in the first half of the fifth century. We have no context to explain how or why the Jews there could have had the temerity to beat an archdeacon publicly in the city's theatre. But the report functions both as evidence that there indeed was a Jewish community there, and as a reflection of that general anxiety which I have already mentioned: the settlement (up to a point) of the Nestorian controversy was, in Iohannes' eyes, an opportunity to turn to confronting external enemies, namely pagans and Jews. As we will see, the idea that there was an ideological, or religious, challenge from Judaism was not purely fanciful; and, what is more, there were several occasions other than the episode in Laodicea when 'challenge' meant actual physical violence.

¹ See J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman City* (2001).

In this context of religious co-existence, competition, and on occasion violent communal strife, both paganism and those forms of Christianity currently judged to be heretical suffered from progressively more severe legal penalties. The practice of Judaism by Jews did not. As we will see, though restrictions were placed on Jews, above all as regards the conversion of Christians, the practice of Judaism enjoyed legal recognition, and even (against considerable pressures) legal protection.

This paper seeks to do no more than to sketch the main elements of religious co-existence, competition and conflict, as between Christianity and Judaism, in the Greek East in the late fourth and first half of the fifth century, and to do so as regards the Diaspora, ignoring Palestine (the official name of the Holy Land in the period in question). It does so for two reasons. One is that two major recent contributions by Seth Schwartz have both, implicitly, taken the Jewish history of this period as meaning the history of the Jewish people in Palestine.² But that is emphatically not the whole story. Secondly, the documentary and archaeological evidence for Jewish life in the Greek East outside Palestine has been significantly enriched by new discoveries, and by the re-dating of older evidence. Thirdly, as indicated already, the range of evidence for Jews and Jewish life in Christian sources is considerable, and requires re-examination. Though there is quite striking documentary and iconographic evidence for Jewish life in and around this period, we do however lack any Jewish literature written in the Greek Diaspora. So any conceptions which we have of beliefs or attitudes from the Jewish side, or of Jewish theological thought, have to come from inscriptions or iconography, or from the glimpses available between the lines of Christian sources.

This paper will therefore quickly review the legislation of 379–450 as it affected the Jewish communities of the Greek East; it will then analyse the main epigraphic and archaeological data, some very new, and others which have recently been re-evaluated and re-dated, to place them in this emphatically Christian wider context; and it will finally assess the evidence of Christian sources for the presence of Jews, and for Christian relations with them. The result, it is hoped, will stimulate a re-consideration of the scale and significance of the Jewish presence in the Christian Greek world, and of Christian awareness of Judaism as a rival.

The Jewish Diaspora under the pagan Empire of the first three centuries CE has been very fully studied in recent work.³ But we need to realise that a Jewish Diaspora in an emphatically Christian empire, particularly if the evidence seems to show it as numerous, active and confident (and even on occasion aggressive), represents a quite new and distinctive phase in religious history.

² S. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (2001), and 'Historiography on the Jews in the Talmudic Period', in M. Goodman (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* (2002), 36.

³ See for example J. M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from Alexander to Trajan (323 B.C.E.—117 C.E.)* (1996), the papers collected in T. Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction* (2001), and E. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst the Greek and Romans* (2002).

2. *Imperial Pronouncements*

Given the thorough treatment of this topic in Linder's excellent study of Roman Imperial enactments,⁴ all that is required here is a brief survey to remind ourselves of the essential features of Jewish legal status in the Christian empire, and to note any features of Imperial pronouncements which reflect either circumstances in any particular locality or region, or the general nature of Jewish-Christian relations. It should be stressed that the theme of this paper is the Jewish Diaspora of the Greek East, and it concerns neither the circumstances of Jews in Rome and the Latin West,⁵ nor the Jewish community of Palestine and its Patriarch (fully discussed in an excellent work by Martin Jacobs⁶). Given this restricted regional focus, it therefore needs to be stressed also that, with minimal exceptions, all the 'laws' issued by Late Roman Emperors were in fact letters written to officials holding office in particular regions. Especially after the division of 395, it also makes a fundamental difference whether the 'law', or letter, concerned was issued from Italy (Rome or Ravenna) or from Constantinople. The consolidation of these laws into a single series in the *Theodosian Code* of 437 created an illusion. In reality there were two separate, but loosely related, spheres of legislation.

The essentials of the legal status of Jews and Jewish communities in fact remained the same as they had been since Constantine: (1) Jewish worship conducted by Jews was legal; (2) the conversion of Christians, including Christian slaves owed by Jews, was illegal, and subject to penalties; the rulings varied as to whether Jewish ownership of Christian slaves was permitted at all; (3) attacks on synagogues were illegal, and subject to penalties; (4) intermarriage between Jews and Christians was forbidden; (5) decisions on membership of Jewish communities were a matter for Jewish authorities; (6) certain officials of Jewish communities were exempt from curial obligations; (7) Jewish law applied only to issues of Jewish religious rules, unless both parties in a civil suit agreed on arbitration under Jewish law.

Without it being necessary to enter into all the details here, a new context for Imperial rulings relating to Jews is perceptible in some of the pronouncements from the reigns of Arcadius (395–408) and of Theodosius II (408–50), namely an increased likelihood of communal violence and abuse, initiated by either Christians or Jews. One example comes from Arcadius' reign, in the form of a letter to the Praetorian Prefect of Illyricum, sent on 17 June 397, telling him to inform provincial governors that Jews must not be assaulted, and that their synagogues must be left in peace.⁷ On 29 May 408, a letter in the name of the seven-year-old Emperor Theodosius was sent to Anthemius,

⁴ A. Linder, *The Jews in Roman Imperial Legislation*, edited with Introduction, Translation and Commentary (1987).

⁵ See above all L. Rutgers, *The Jews in Late Ancient Rome: evidence of cultural interaction in the Roman diaspora* (2000); B. Blumenkranz, *Juifs et Chrétiens dans le monde occidental, 430–1096* (1960); D. Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe* I (Italy, Spain, Gaul) (1993), II: *City of Rome* (1995); S. Bradbury, *Severus of Minorca: Letter on the Conversion of the Jews* (1996); M. Williams, 'The Jews of Early Byzantine Venusia', *JJS* 50 (1999), 38.

⁶ M. Jacobs, *Die Institutionen des jüdischen Patriarchen* (1995).

⁷ *Cod. Theod.* XVI.8.12, Linder, no. 25.

Praetorian Prefect of Oriens, ordering Jews not to burn an effigy of Haman, evidently at Purim, and not to burn an image of the cross, 'so that they shall not associate the sign of our faith with their frivolities, but will keep the observation of their rituals free of contempt of the Christian law'.⁸ Twelve years later the Emperor writes to the Praetorian Prefect of Illyricum to say that no-one shall be oppressed for being a Jew, on the excuse of any religious pretext (provided that he is innocent), and that synagogues and Jewish homes shall not be burned down or damaged. But again the Emperor balances this admonition with an order that such provisions must not lead to Jews becoming insolent, or committing anti-Christian acts.⁹ A comparable balance is maintained in a ruling of 423 addressed to Asclepiodotus, the Praetorian Prefect of Oriens: synagogues may not be seized or set on fire; if they have been, or if synagogues have been taken for the benefit of churches, or even dedicated as churches (and if this has happened very recently), new buildings shall be provided; as regards objects dedicated in synagogues, if they have been taken they must be restored, or the price given in lieu. But then the order follows that no new synagogues shall be built, and that existing ones shall remain in their present form.¹⁰

Shortly after, there followed another ruling, addressed to the same Praetorian Prefect of Oriens. Preserved only in a series of separate fragments, it evidently legislated in relation to both pagans and heretics, as well as Jews, and again preserves a rhetorical balance as between protection on the one hand and restriction of rights on the other. The surviving section relating to Jews deserved to be quoted:¹¹

THE SAME TWO AUGUSTI TO ASCLEPIODOTUS, PRAEFECTUS PRAETORIO

Known and divulged to all are our decrees and those of our ancestors, in which we suppressed the arrogance and the audacity of the abominable pagans, as well as of the Jews and the heretics. We want the Jews to know, however, that we take with pleasure the occasion of the repetition of the law, and in answer to their pitiful supplications we have but legislated that those who usually commit wrong unadvisedly under cover of the venerable Christianity, shall abstain from injuring and persecuting them, and that from now on no one shall occupy their synagogues, and no one shall set them on fire. However, these Jews shall be condemned to confiscation of property as well so to perpetual exile, if it shall be established that they have circumcised a man of our Faith or ordered him to be circumcised. *And other matters.*

GIVEN ON THE FIFTH DAY BEFORE THE IDES OF APRIL AT CONSTANTINOPLE, IN THE CONSULATE OF ASCLEPIODOTUS AND MARIANUS.

As we will see later, there is clear evidence that this law, or one closely

⁸ *Cod. Theod.* XVI.8.18, trans. Linder no. 36.

⁹ *Cod. Theod.* XVI.8.21, *Cod. Just.* 1.9.14, Linder no. 46. The reading and meaning are by no means clear, and in particular it is uncertain what is signified by the word 'obteratur', translated above as 'be oppressed'.

¹⁰ *Cod. Theod.* XVI.8.25, Linder no. 47.

¹¹ *Cod. Theod.* XVI.9.5, Linder no. 48, whose translation is used above.

similar to it, was promulgated in Syria, and provoked strong hostile reactions among at least some Christians there. In accordance with that, this pronouncement itself reveals the competing pressures which the Emperor felt himself to be under, and is also unique (in the context of Jewish-Christian conflicts) in alluding to a petition (*preces*) presented by Jews; nothing is indicated as to their geographical location or any communal representative structure by which the petition was generated.

Imperial 'legislation'—issued, as stated above, in the form of letters to office-holders—was indeed the product of continuous pressures, resulting in what are often taken to be unavailing repetitions, when in fact they are responses, sometimes varying the terms of previous pronouncements, sometimes instigated by the need for more emphatic exposition of key points. Hence it was only two months later (8 June 423) that Theodosius wrote again to Asclepiodotus on the subject of pagans, heretics and Jews. Here again, only sections of the original law survive, but one of these contains a reassertion of the protection offered to Jews and their synagogues, while another attests very clearly to communal tensions and violence, in this case directed by Christians against pagans and Jews.¹²

THE SAME TWO AUGUSTI TO ASCLEPIODOTUS, PRAEFECTUS PRAETORIO

After other matters. The Manichaeans and those called Pepyzitae, as well as those worse than all the other heretics in this belief only that they differ from on all the venerable day of Easter, if they persist in the same madness we shall punish by the same punishment, confiscation of property and exile. But this we particularly enjoin on the Christians, genuine as well as false, that they shall not dare to raise their hands, abusing the authority of religion, against peaceful Jews and Pagans who are not attempting anything seditious or unlawful. For if they shall act violently against peaceful people or plunder their property, they shall be charged and compelled to restitute not only what they had plundered, but thrice and fourfold the value of their plunder. Let the governors of the provinces, their offices and the provincials [or, probably, the *principales*] know, that if they permit these to be done, they shall be punished like the perpetrators.

GIVEN ON THE SIXTH DAY BEFORE THE IDES OF JUNE AT CONSTANTINOPLE IN THE CONSULATE OF ASCLEPIODOTUS AND MARIANUS.

Finally, we may note the long pronouncement of Theodosius addressed in 438 to Florentius, the then Praetorian Prefect of Oriens, in which after abusive references to the blindness of Jews, Samaritans, pagans and heretics, the Emperor, for the first time in the East, proclaims that Jews and Samaritans are to be debarred from public office.¹³ It should be stressed that such a rule had not been promulgated in the East before (though comparable provisions are found earlier in the West),¹⁴ and that it in no way implies that Jewish observance was illegal. It does embody an intended, and very significant, limitation

¹² For the various fragments see Linder, no. 49. The re-assertion of protection comes from *Cod. Theod.* XVI.10.27, and the order to Christians, quoted above in Linder's translation, from *Cod. Theod.* XVI.10.24.

¹³ *Nov. Theod.* 3, Linder, no. 54.

¹⁴ For limitations on Jewish access to public office in Western legislation after 395, see (pos-

on the public roles open to Jews, and by its nature expresses an unquestioning hostility. But the Emperor's position remains that of formal maintenance of the law, and is in no way an example of overt persecution, or of forced conversion.

This brief survey of relevant Imperial pronouncements relating to the Greek East, often discussed,¹⁵ is intended to do two things: to illustrate Christian attitudes, as expressed by Emperors, whose pronouncements could not by their nature be divorced in tone and context from those of contemporary bishops. If anything, however, for all his proclaimed Christian piety, Theodosius' position was that of attempting to restrain Christian hostility to Jews (but also Jewish hostility to Christians). What needs to be stressed again is that, like Late Roman 'legislation' in general, these pronouncements, in the form of letters to senior office-holders, are visibly the results of continually conflicting and changing pressures. None of the pronouncements concerned happens to identify a region or locality more precise than the two major Prefectures of Illyricum and Oriens into which the Eastern empire was divided (as many other such pronouncements in fact did). But equally there is no specific reason to think of any of them as relating to the three provinces into which Palaestina was now divided. In a general way, they evoke a conception, which other evidence shows to be valid, of uneasy co-existence between Jews and Christians, occasionally breaking out into either ritualised expressions of hostility, or actual violence. As it happens, newly published, or newly re-examined, documentary and archaeological material, when taken together with other long-known evidence, some of which could profitably also be re-examined, gives a very powerful impression both of the number of Jewish communities attested in the cities of the Greek East, of the apparently flourishing state of their communal organisation, and, in some cases, of their capacity to attract 'God-fearers' (*theosebeis*) or (in one case) full converts (*prosēlutoi*). The number of late Roman Greek cities which have been subject to systematic excavation and analysis is small, so it is striking that at least four of those which have—Sardis, Aphrodisias, Apamea in Syria and Gerasa—provide very clear evidence of a Jewish presence in the heart of the city. Above all, however, we ought to be conscious, in looking at this evidence, of the vast gulf which separates the situation which obtained in the first three centuries, when both Jewish and Christian communities were minority elements in a predominantly pagan world, from one in which the institutions and rituals of paganism were under vigorous attack, and in which Judaism represented a (generally) tolerated rival

sibly) *Cod. Theod.* XVI.8.16, Linder, no. 33, whose precise scope is not at all clear; *Cod. Theod.* XVI.8.24, Linder, no. 45 (March 10, 418); Linder, no. 51, of July–August 425, combining *Const. Sirmond.* 6 with *Cod. Theod.* XVI.5.62 + XVI.2.46 + XVI.5.63 + XVI.2.47 + XVI.5.64. Issued at Aquileia immediately after the suppression by Eastern forces of a usurper, and the proclamation of the child Valentinian III as Emperor in the West (as 'Caesar' in October 424, and as 'Augustus' in Rome in October 425), this law can in fact be regarded as a product of the policy of Theodosius. All the same, there is no record of the promulgation of its provisions in the East at this moment.

¹⁵ See e.g. B. S. Bachrach, 'The Jewish Community of the Later Roman Empire as seen in the *Codex Theodosianus*', in J. Neusner and E. S. Frerichs (eds.), *'To see Ourselves as Others See Us': Christians, Jews and 'Others' in Late Antiquity* (1985), 399.

variant of monotheism, living in the threatening shadow of a Christianity which had the full backing of the State. It is precisely this new situation which makes the archaeological and epigraphic evidence for the Jewish communities of the Late Empire in the Greek East so striking. It is also in the light of this evidence that the air of hostility, insecurity and suspicion which pervades Christian writing of the period, as regards Jews, begins to be intelligible.

If the objective were, as in the third volume of Schürer's *History*,¹⁶ to produce a complete survey of the evidence, or possible evidence, for Jewish communities, the procedure would of course be to take the material place by place, and to combine all different types of evidence from different sources. The purpose in this case, however, is different: to look first at the most significant items of 'Jewish' evidence, archaeological and documentary, and then to survey the most salient examples of Christian reports which either attest the existence of a Jewish community, or communities, or illuminate the nature of Christian-Jewish contacts, or both. Neither survey sets out to be exhaustive.

The word 'Jewish' was placed just now in inverted commas, for two reasons. The first is the need to stress the inevitable limitations of the archaeological evidence for synagogues and their iconography, and of the brief epigraphic documents (and one papyrus) produced by or within Jewish communities. There is no Jewish literature which emanates from the Diaspora in the Greek East in the Late Roman period, and no basis whatsoever for deciding whether the Judaism practised there was or was not identical with that of the Late Roman synagogues of Palestine, as known from archaeological evidence, or for determining whether either was close to 'Rabbinic' Judaism, whatever that term may be held to mean. Hebrew and Aramaic are both much more evident in the documentation from Palestine, but (as we will see) are not absolutely unknown in the Greek-speaking Diaspora. 'Rabbis' as such do appear in the documentary evidence, none precisely dated, from Palestine, but (so far) in the Diaspora, paradoxically, only in the Latin West.¹⁷ But the long 'talmudic' inscription on mosaic from the synagogue at Rehov, near Scythopolis/Beth-Shean, where the excavations have scandalously never been the subject of a final report,¹⁸ shows that it is rash to assert a disjunction between 'synagogal' and 'Rabbinic' Judaism. We do not know.

The second reason for putting 'Jewish' in inverted commas is Martin Goodman's bold, and deliberately provocative, suggestion that what we normally identify, in particular at Sardis, as a community of Jews, with a meeting-place adorned with Jewish symbols, might in fact be a community of gentile 'God-

¹⁶ E. Schürer, *History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, ed. G. Vermes, F. Millar and M. D. Goodman, III.1 (1986), 1–86.

¹⁷ S. J. D. Cohen, 'Epigraphical Rabbis', *JQR* 72 (1981/2), 1. See Noy, *Jewish Inscriptions* I (n. 5 above), nos. 22, 36, 86, 183, 186.

¹⁸ For a (sadly typical) general interpretative description of the Rehov synagogue, not based on any detailed archaeological report or analysis, see E. Stern, A. Lewisohn-Gilboa and J. Aviram (eds.), *New Encyclopaedia of Archaeological Investigations in the Holy Land* IV (1993), 1272–74. In the absence of any properly established archaeological dating, it is not possible to say even in what century the main mosaic inscription was laid down. As a result, what should be the starting-point of all serious historical study of 'Palestinian' rabbinic Judaism is rendered useless.

fearers' (*theosebeis*).¹⁹ As such, the argument can hardly be refuted. For, short of DNA tests, it will always be systematically impossible to distinguish a community which has fully adopted Jewish customs and beliefs from one which is made up of people who are Jewish by biological descent. We can make this distinction only where they themselves do. Which is why it will be convenient to begin with the evidence from Aphrodisias, which does precisely distinguish *theosebeis* and *prosēlutoi* from the main body of a community which is marked by a high ratio of Hebrew names. Aphrodisias will be the first of a series of examples considered in the next section, taken in approximate order of their significance for this topic. As will be obvious, the evidence for different communities varies very drastically in both type and scale.

3. *Jewish Evidence for Diaspora Communities*

1. *Aphrodisias*

Our knowledge of the Jewish community of Aphrodisias in Caria depends essentially on a single inscribed block, with substantial texts in Greek on two of its four sides (the synagogue itself may lie under the museum constructed to house the magnificent statues produced in the city). Published originally in an illuminating pioneering study by Joyce Reynolds and Robert Tannenbaum, the two texts have now been re-studied, and a convincing date established, by Angelos Chaniotis.²⁰ It is in fact this re-dating, along with the recent publication of all the inscriptions from the synagogue at Sardis, which offers the occasion for a complete re-evaluation of the place of Judaism in the religious map of the Late Roman Christian empire in the East. Chaniotis argues that the earlier of the two inscriptions is that which occupies what Reynolds and Tannenbaum had designated as face *b* (and which he labels as face I), and that it is of the fourth century, perhaps between 311 and 379; while that on face *a* (now face II) is later, and will probably belong to the fifth century. The revolutionary implications of the new dating become clear only when we consider the content of the two inscriptions. What we may now call face I contains a list of the names of 54 persons in Greek, predominantly in the normal form 'x son of y', of which no less than 18 contain transliterated Hebrew elements (Iakōb, Ioudas, Zacharias, Iōsēph and so forth). There are also programmatic names indicating adherence to Judaism, such as 'Eusabbathios'. We can be certain that these are Jews both because of these names and because the next section has a heading indicating that the people listed in it are 'God-fearers': 'And such as are *theoseb(e)is*' (καὶ ὅσοι θεοσεβῆς, l. 34). There follows a list of 52 men, none with Hebrew names (though there is one 'Eusabbathios', l. 48), of whom the first 9 have the status-designation 'city-councillor', βουλευτής, and many of the others have their occupations described.

¹⁹ See M. Goodman, 'Jews and Judaism in the Mediterranean Diaspora in the Late-Roman Period: the Limitations of Evidence', *Journ. Med. Stud.* 4 (1994), 208.

²⁰ J. Reynolds and R. Tannenbaum, *Jews and Godfearers at Aphrodisias* (Cambridge Philological Society, Supplementary Volume 12, 1987); A. Chaniotis, 'The Jews of Aphrodisias: New Evidence and Old Problems', *SCI* 21 (2002), 209.

As soon as we read this document, not as a product of the period when both Christian and Jewish communities lived as tolerated or threatened minorities in an essentially pagan world, but as reflecting the first stage of Christian dominance, it appears in a wholly new light. What is not clear of course is whether the 52 gentile ‘God-fearers’ had come from paganism or Christianity (it was the conversion of *Christians* to Judaism which contemporary Emperors, at least primarily, sought to ban, and which was subject to penalties on the individual concerned).²¹ But, on any construction, it offers a sudden glimpse of religious fluidity in the fourth century, and of an attractive power of Judaism, for which earlier documentary evidence had not prepared us.

This impression is reinforced by the second inscription, now ‘face II’, and all the more so if, as Chaniotis clearly suggests, it dates after the affirmation of Christianity, and of ‘Catholic’, Trinitarian, belief, by Theodosius I. For here the contributors to some sort of foundation for the relief of the people are listed: of 18 (or 19) individuals,²² 11 have Hebrew names, including all three of those who are described as ‘prosēlutos’ (e.g. l. 22, *Εὐσηφ Εὐσεβίου προσή(λυτος)*), while two others appear as *theoseb(ēs)*. Once again we cannot tell whether either the *theosebeis* or the *prosēlytoi* have come from paganism or from Christianity. But in this phase full proselytes do appear, and give themselves Hebrew names, written in Greek, as they do so. The names (like those of the Jewish group) are written without Greek endings, as they are in the Greek OT, and are not equipped with Greek endings, as in Josephus. This choice implicitly expresses a commitment to Hebrew origins, without proving that knowledge of Hebrew was at all current at Aphrodisias.

Since we do not know where the *stèle* with the two inscriptions was originally placed, we cannot know how widely it served to advertise the truly remarkable composition of the Jewish community in Aphrodisias. But it is at any rate clear that no effort was made to conceal the adherence either of ‘God-fearers’ or of full proselytes. We may note also the brilliant survey by Chaniotis of the many other public signs of Judaism to be found at Aphrodisias—inscriptions, graffiti, representations of menorahs and so forth.²³ To repeat, the overall effect of the re-dating is to suggest the need for a radical reconsideration of the place of Judaism in the predominantly Christian Greek empire.

2. Sardis

The excavations of Sardis in Lydia, as is well-known, have revealed that at some point in the Late Empire a large basilical hall in the centre of the city—considerably larger than any known building originally constructed as

²¹ *Cod. Theod.* XVI.8.7 = *Cod. Just.* I.7.1, Linder no. 12 (CE 353); *Cod. Theod.* XVI.7.3, Linder no. 16 (CE 383), also penalising Christians who associated themselves with pagan rites or with Manichaeism. *Cod. Theod.* XVI.8.22, Linder no. 41 (CE 415), among other things penalises any Jew who converts (or circumcises?) a Christian, whether free or slave. Cf. also the enactments of CE 423 and 438 quoted on pp. 6–7 above.

²² The Samouēl, *presbeutēs*, listed on ll. 26–27, is presumably, but not certainly, the same man whose name is added in the margin.

²³ See A. Chaniotis, ‘Zwischen Konfrontation und Interaktion: Christen, Juden und Heiden im spätantiken Aphrodisias’, in A. Ackermann and K. E. Müller (eds.), *Patchwork: Dimensionen multikulturellen Gesellschaften* (2002), 83.

a synagogue—was converted for use by the Jewish community there. The precise date of this step is currently under debate, and it is a matter of choice whether one describes the resultant building as a synagogue, or more loosely as a hall with forecourt, now adapted for Jewish communal use.²⁴ Equally, as above (p. 9), we cannot prove whether these observers of Judaism were biologically Jewish or not. Doubts must still remain on the archaeological context, since much depends on the dating of the mosaic floor, on which the final report is yet to appear. So, given the uncertainties as to the date, it is not claimed here that the relevant evidence dates to the Theodosian period, though it belongs without question to the Late Empire. But the very important step which has very recently been taken is the publication, as two complete groups, of all of the seventy Greek inscriptions and five Hebrew ones from the site, plus one Hebrew one from elsewhere in Sardis. The Greek inscriptions offer an illuminating contrast and comparison to the two from Aphrodisias.²⁵ Firstly, while much more numerous, they are individually much shorter than the Aphrodisias ones. Secondly, they are all internal to the hall and its forecourt; some are mosaic inscriptions from the main floor and some come from decorative wall panels. Thirdly, our conception of the community has to be built up from a large number of small texts, some very fragmentary; there is no continuous list, as at Aphrodisias. The overall picture revealed, however, is very much in accordance with that from Aphrodisias. Firstly, individuals with the status-designation of βουλ(ευτής), ‘city councillor’, appear quite frequently (nos. 3, 13, 16, 17?, 24, 25, 26, 31, 37, 67). Secondly, several persons are identified by the term θεοσεβής, ‘God-fearer’ (nos. 8, 9, 22, 59, 66)—surely a conclusive demonstration that we can not characterise the *whole* community here (or of course at Aphrodisias) as ‘God-fearers’. Thirdly, we do encounter some Hebrew names written in Greek, though far fewer than at Aphrodisias (e.g. no. 34: Σαμουήλ, someone from the nearby city of Hypaipa; also no. 56: Σαμω[ήλ]).

More important, there are also a few inscriptions which give at least some explicit hints as to the nature of the Judaism practised there: for example no. 76, a dedicatory inscription ending ‘Lord, help this house’, inscribed in a circle enclosing also a representation of a menorah and an ethrog; also no. 66—‘Aurelius Hermogenes, a “God-fearer”, having taken a vow, made, from the gifts of Providence, the menorah (ἐπταμύχιον)’. Most significant of all is surely the mosaic inscription (no. 4) with ‘Vow of [S]amoe, priest and *sophodidaskalos*’ (Εὐχὴ [Σ]αμοῆ ἱερέως (sic) κὲ (sic) σοφοδιδασκάλου). It is a matter of speculation what, if any, were the special functions of a *cohen* in a Diaspora synagogue in this period. But the concept of a ‘sophodidaskalos’, even if we clearly cannot just translate it as ‘rabbi’, does hint strongly at an interpretative and expository function, which there is no reason to suppose to have been

²⁴ For the most systematic accounts so far available, see A. R. Seager, ‘The Building History of the Sardis Synagogue’, *Am. Journ. Arch.* 76 (1972), 425; A. R. Seager and A. T. Kraabel, ‘The Synagogue and the Jewish Community’, in G. M. A. Hanfmann (ed.), *Sardis from Prehistoric to Roman Times: Results of the Archaeological Exploration of Sardis 1958–1975* (1983), 169.

²⁵ See J. H. Kroll, ‘The Greek Inscriptions of the Sardis Synagogue’, *Harv. Th. Rev.* 94 (2001), 5.

wholly distinct from the communal functions performed by rabbis.

The feature which is most striking about the Jewish presence in Sardis, however, is the small scatter of Hebrew inscriptions. Of the six known texts, recently published by F. M. Cross,²⁶ five come from the synagogue itself and are very brief, consisting of a single word or name each; they thus hardly attest to the currency of any real literacy in Hebrew among the community. But the sixth, a stray find from near the temple of Artemis, is a grammatical sentence, using a verb in the perfect tense, 'I have written': **אני שמרה בן ליהו כתבתי**. Its possible implications are therefore quite considerable.

The potential significance of the Sardis synagogue is therefore very great, limited for the moment only by uncertainty as to when the basilical hall was acquired for Jewish use, and as to the timespan to which we should attribute the inscriptions. The presence of Hebrew might itself tend to suggest a late date.

3. Antinoopolis, Egypt

No such problem of dating attaches to the unique papyrus document now in Köln, which attests to the existence of a Jewish community at Antinoopolis, or Antinoe, in middle Egypt, situated on the Nile some 400 kilometres south of Alexandria. This is a marriage-contract (*ketuba*) written in Aramaic, and dated at the top (in Greek written in the Hebrew alphabet) to the year CE 417.²⁷ In it Samuel son of Sampati, resident at Antinoopolis, declares that he is taking Metra, daughter of L'ZR from Alexandria as his wife 'according to the law [of all the daughters] of Israel' (l. 8): **כנמוס [כל בנות] ישראל**.

This document has attracted far less comment than it ought to have, since its publication in 1986, perhaps precisely because of its unique character, which necessarily makes it difficult to put in context. The document is full of Greek loan-words (even beyond the transliterated Greek at the beginning), and gives the impression of representing the language of everyday use in a multilingual environment.²⁸ The editors suggest that the Aramaic used is close to Palestinian Aramaic—hardly surprising, above all in a Jewish context, since what other varieties of fifth-century Aramaic dialects (other than Syriac itself, written in a different script) are available for comparison? There is however nothing in the way that the parties to the contract are described to suggest that they are recent immigrants from Palestine.

The composition of a Jewish marriage contract in Aramaic suggests, against what would surely have been the general expectation, namely the use of Greek, that it was possible for there to be Diaspora communities where the knowledge of Aramaic (or Hebrew) had not been lost, and where Jewish law was consciously observed. The composition of such a marriage-contract, even though no explicit reference to a Jewish community or its institutions appears in the document, clearly implies that there was such a community.

²⁶ F. M. Cross, 'The Hebrew Inscriptions from Sardis', *Harv. Th. Rev.* 95 (2002), 3.

²⁷ C. Sirat, P. Caudeirier, M. Dukan and M. A. Friedmann, *La Ketuba de Cologne: un contrat de mariage juif à Antinoopolis* (1986).

²⁸ For a list of transliterated Greek words (the dating-formula, titles, names, place-names, weights and objects) see Sirat *et al.*, *op. cit.*, 71–72.

Once again presumptions as to a clear distinction between 'native' Palestinian Judaism and Diaspora Judaism may need to be re-thought.

4. Gerasa, province of Arabia

One of the most striking items to emerge from the major excavations at Gerasa (Jerash) in Jordan was the foundations and partially preserved mosaic floor of a synagogue, directly overlaid by a church which was built, as an inscription records, in CE 530/1.²⁹ This is one of several known cases of such overlying, as we will see. As regards the synagogue, situated on high ground to the west of the famous temple of Artemis, the excavators suggest that it may have been constructed in the late fourth or early fifth century. If we conceive of it as a Diaspora synagogue, it has very distinctive features: the mosaic floor contained a pictorial, or narrative, depiction of a Biblical scene, with the dove bringing an olive branch to two sons of Noah, who are named in Greek, Shem ($\Sigma\eta\mu$) and Yaphet ($\Upsilon\alpha\phi\acute{\epsilon}\theta$), and then a representation of the animals leaving the Ark. A further Greek inscription in mosaic reads 'To (the) holy place (*agios topos*). Amen. Sela. (The) peace of the synagogue'. A closely parallel text is offered by an Aramaic inscription in the mosaic floor, reading 'Peace on all Israel. Amen. Amen. Selah', and giving three names, presumably of benefactors: Phinehas son of Baruch, Yose son of Shmuel and Yudan son of Hezekiah.

There is of course a question as to whether this synagogue should be classified with other Diaspora ones or with those of Palestine. Scythopolis, in the province of Palestina Secunda, with several late Roman synagogues in the city and its territory, lay some 48 kilometres to the north-west, across the deep valley of the Jordan;³⁰ and Hammath-Gader, with both elaborate baths and another late Roman synagogue with extensive Aramaic inscriptions, was some 55 kilometres to the north-north-west, near the south-east corner of the Sea of Galilee.³¹ So Gerasa lay not far from the principal zone of Jewish settlement, though in this area it was a matter of mixed settlement, not Jewish alone. But that should not be enough to make us categorise it as a 'Palestinian' or 'Judaean' synagogue, which strictly it was not; instead, it should be taken as another sign that too rigid a distinction should not be presupposed. In any case, as we will see later (p. 23), a Christian writer of the early fifth

²⁹ See C. H. Kraeling (ed.), *Gerasa: City of the Decapolis* (1938). See pp. 234–41, 'The Synagogue Church', with inscription no. 323 (p. 483), giving the year 593 of the era of Gerasa. For the synagogue mosaic see pp. 318–23, with the mosaic inscriptions nos. 285–87 (p. 473). The mosaics of both synagogue and church are beautifully presented and discussed in M. Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan* (1992), 290–91. For a succinct and useful account, see L. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue* (2000), 239–40.

³⁰ For the synagogues of Scythopolis, see E. Stern *et al.* (eds.), *NEAEHL* I (1993) (see n. 17 above), 223–34. For a fine analysis of the evolution of the city in the Late Roman period see Y. Tsafir and G. Foerster, 'Urbanism at Scythopolis-Bet Shean in the Fourth to Seventh Centuries', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997), 85.

³¹ For the best introduction to the site of Hammat Gader see Y. Hirschfeld (ed.), *The Roman Baths of Hammat Gader* (1997). The synagogue is thought to date to the early fifth century, and reveals four quite substantial inscriptions in Aramaic, all recording the names of benefactors. As a famous place of resort, producing also extensive Greek inscriptions, Hammat Gader was plainly a place of mixed culture.

century can presume that Jewish and Samaritan synagogues might be found anywhere along the route which led through the Near Eastern provinces from Cilicia to Egypt.

5. *Apamea, Syria*

Just as Gerasa does, the major Greek city of Apamea on the Orontes reveals a Jewish synagogue of the late Roman period which was subsequently overlaid directly by a Christian church. Unlike almost all the other documents discussed here, two of the sixteen mosaic inscriptions from the synagogue at Apamea carry a precise date, year 703 of the Seleucid era, so CE 391/2.³² All the inscriptions are in Greek, and the mosaic floor exhibits only abstract designs, with only the most formal representational elements.³³ The function of the inscriptions is in essence to record the names of the benefactors who had paid for sections of the mosaic floor, but between them these texts are also notable for giving so full a list of synagogue officials: *archisynagogoi*, a *gerousiarchos*, *presbyteroi*, and a *hazzan* or *diakonos* (no. 805: ἐπὶ Νεμία Ἀζζανα καὶ τοῦ διάκονος). There seems no reason to posit any substantial gap in time in the laying of the various sections of the floor-mosaic, so we can take this as a snapshot of the community as it was at the end of the fourth century. 'Azzana' must surely be a transliteration of the Hebrew אַזְנָא, or more probably Aramaic ܐܙܢܐ. Naturally, this is no proof of the currency of either Hebrew or Aramaic in the community at Apamea. But neither the Hebrew nor the Aramaic form of the word is found in the Bible, so the word as transliterated into Greek must reflect the subsequent evolution of communal practice. The equivalence in meaning of the two terms, with the Greek in a slightly different form, is attested by Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.11: καὶ Ἀζανιτῶν τῶν παρ' αὐτοῖς διακόνων ἐρμηνευομένων ἢ ὑπηρετῶν.

6. *Antioch, Syria*

By accident, two of the mosaic inscriptions from Apamea (*CIJ* II, nos. 803–4) record that sections of the mosaic floor there had been paid for by Ila-sios son of Eisakios, *archisynagogos* of the Antiochenes. As we will see later, the Jewish community of Antioch was the source of considerable anxiety to one contemporary presbyter there, the later bishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom (see p. 16 below).

7. *Side, Pamphylia*

Two Greek inscriptions, which seem to date to the second half of the fourth century CE or the first half of the fifth century, clearly attest the existence of an organised Jewish community, and (it seems) of more than one synagogue,

³² The inscriptions are J.-B. Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum* II (1952), nos. 803–18; the dated texts are nos. 803 and 805. See also, for all these texts, *Ins. Gr. et Lat. de la Syrie* IV, nos. 1319–37, and for a selection B. Lifshitz, *Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives* (1967), nos. 30–36.

³³ Reproductions of the synagogue mosaics are extremely hard to find, but see V. Verhoogen, *Apamée de Syrie aux Musées royaux d'Art et d'Histoire* (1964), pls. 15–17. See also Levine, *op. cit.* (n. 29), 240–42.

since the second inscription speaks of 'the first synagogue'.³⁴ The first names Leontios, son of Iakob, and the second Isaki(os), who was curator 'of the most holy first synagogue', and who completed the marble paving from the *ambo* to the *sēmma* (*simma*, or *sigma*) and saw to the cleaning of the two seven-branched candlesticks (ἑπταμύξους, approximately as in Sardis). Even without further data, we catch a glimpse of the context of communal Jewish religious life in the Theodosian age.

This survey has been concerned only to highlight some particularly significant concentrations of evidence, revealing either the physical character of Diaspora synagogues or their communal organisation, or features of religious life. It has left aside a large range of other evidence which may or may not date to the Theodosian period, or which merely attests the presence of individual Jews (e.g. the Oxyrhynchus papyrus of CE 400 which shows the lease of a house by two nuns there from a man named Aurelios Iosē son of Ioudas, identified as a Jew, *Ιουδαῖος*).³⁵ But the evidence listed above, scattered as it is, is perhaps sufficient to suggest why the presence of Jewish communities, exhibiting a form of monotheism involving a different form of attachment to the Old Testament, and a rejection of the New, played so large a part in the consciousness of their Christian contemporaries, who apparently enjoyed an unchallenged dominance. The evidence of Christian sources will show that communal aggression was not confined to the Christian side, though it is more fully attested there, and that on the whole the Emperors and the secular authorities, rather than promoting anything which came close to persecution, tried to impose restraint, on both sides.

4. *Jews and Jewish communities as represented in Christian writers*

Christian evidence reveals very clearly why restraint by the civil or military authorities might well be necessary. For instance the Syriac *acta* of the second Council of Ephesus in 449 record an element in the accusations brought against Sophronius, the bishop of Tella (Constantina) in Osrhoene. His son was alleged to have taken a Jew with him into the bishop's house there, and to have eaten with him 'in the manner of the Jews'. During the Lenten fast he had continued to eat with the same Jew, and had even brought him into the church. But he had then been driven out by a Christian mob, and had appealed for protection to the commander (*dux*) of the *praetorium* there, who called out his troops, leading to the death and injury of many Christians. This was one of the causes of complaint brought against various bishops who were thought to be followers of Nestorius.³⁶ On the other hand, the sixth-century *Chronicle of Edessa*, also in Syriac, claims both that Rabbula, as soon as he

³⁴ For the fullest treatment see J. Nollé, *Side im Altertum: Geschichte und Zeugnisse (Inschriften Griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 44, 2001) II*, nos. 190–1 (pp. 511–19).

³⁵ *P. Oxy.* XLIV, no. 3203.

³⁶ For the Syriac *acta* see J. P. G. Flemming, *Akten der Ephesinischen Synode vom Jahre 449 (Abh. d. Kön. Ges. der Wiss. zu Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Kl., N.F. XV, 1917)*. For this episode see pp. 82–5. The text had been translated into English by S. W. F. Perry, *The Second Synod of Ephesus* (1881), pp. 196–97.

was elected bishop of Edessa in 412, had built a church on the site of a former synagogue, and that this had been by Imperial command.³⁷ The brief entry in the *Chronicle* does not make clear whether the synagogue had still been in use up to the point when the church was built. An independent source, the Syriac *Life* of Rabbula, probably of the fifth century, and not later than the sixth, claims that the bishop converted ‘thousands’ of Jews and heretics, and destroyed the churches of the latter.³⁸ We need not accept that there were literally thousands of Jews to convert, but all the evidence supports the conception of Osrhoene in this period as the scene of much variation and conflict both within Christianity and as between Christians and other groups.

If we could have confidence in the historicity of the picture offered by the Syriac *Life* of the famous archimandrite (in effect, abbot of a monastery), Bar Sauma, also partially edited by F. Nau—and perhaps, following E. Honigmann, dating from about CE 550–650—we would gain an even more powerful impression than from other sources both of Christian anxiety and of violent communal conflict.³⁹ Looking back to the period around CE 400, the author envisages a world which seems extremely strange in the light of the majority of our evidence: a Near East (Palestine, Phoenicia, Arabia) where pagans were numerous and Christians few, and where Jews and Samaritans were dominant, and persecuted the Christians. Accordingly, the hero of the biography set out with his followers to destroy the synagogues of the Jews, the meeting-places of the Samaritans, and pagan temples. In particular, a vivid account is provided of a pitched battle over the grand Jewish synagogue of Rabbath-Moab (Areopolis), which is finally occupied and burnt. A judgement on whether any of this really happened must await a full edition and study of the text.

We are on firmer ground when we come to the eight homilies of John Chrysostom ‘Against the Jews’ which he delivered while he was a presbyter at Antioch in CE 388–397/8.⁴⁰ It will be recalled that this is exactly the moment at which Ilasios, ‘archisynagogos of the Antiochenes’, was commemorated at Apamea as donor of part of the mosaic floor of the synagogue there. In fact, in delivering his homilies ‘Against the Jews’ Chrysostom was not, strictly speaking, denouncing Jews, or ‘Jewish-Christians’ or even ‘Judaizing Christians’ as

³⁷ For the *Chronicle* see L. Hallier, *Untersuchungen über die Edessenische Chronik* (Texte u. Untersuchungen IX, 1892), para. LI (text and German translation); also ed. I. Guidi, *CSCO*, *Scriptores Syri* III.4 (1903), 1–11.

³⁸ For the *Life* of Rabbula see the extracts published and translated by F. Nau in *Rev. Hist. Relig.* 103 (1931), 97, and the fine analysis by G. W. Bowersock, ‘The Syriac Life of Rabbula and Syrian Hellenism’, in T. Hägg and Ph. Rousseau (eds.), *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (2000), 255.

³⁹ See the extracts edited by F. Nau in *Rev. Or. Chr.* 18 (1913), 272 and 379; 19 (1914), 113 and 278, also *Rev. Et. Juives* 83 (1927), 184. For a discussion, in essence sceptical, of the authenticity of the *Life* as a source for events in the Theodosian period, see E. Honigmann, *Le couvent de Barsauma et le Patriarchat jacobite d’Antioche et de Syrie* (1954), ch. 2.

⁴⁰ See above all R. L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century* (1983). Note also W. A. Meeks and R. L. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era* (1978), with translations of *Discourses* I and VIII, and P. W. Harkins, *Saint John Chrysostom, Discourses against Judaizing Christians* (Fathers of the Church 68, 1979).

a coherent group, but normal members of the Christian congregation of Antioch, whom he observed to be attracted to the service of the synagogue, and in particular to the observance of Passover and of the Autumnal High Festivals: New Year (marked by trumpets), the Day of Atonement (and a fast which is apparently that covering the 10-day period between them), and Tabernacles. Addressed directly to members of the main Christian congregation of Antioch, John's discourses also represent violent theological diatribes against any claim that the Bible provided material which offered a justification for continued observation of Judaism.

From just the same period, CE 388, we catch another glimpse of communal conflicts in the Near East in the famous letter of Ambrose (*Ep.* I.40) to Theodosius I about the affair of the synagogue at Callinicum on the Euphrates. The pattern of communal relations matches exactly that which we can read between the lines of the Imperial pronouncements of the 420s. The synagogue had been burnt down on the initiative of the local bishop; a report had been sent to the Emperor by an official whom Ambrose describes as 'comes Orientis militarium partium' (in fact *either* the civilian Comes Orientis *or* the Magister militum per Orientem); the Emperor had ordered the punishment of others involved, while the bishop was to be responsible for re-building the synagogue. Ambrose protests violently, just as Symeon Stylites is alleged to have done in similar circumstances (p. 19 below). Moreover, he recalls instances of Jewish violence against Christians, unleashed in the reign of Julian the Apostate (40.15), as well as Julian's plan to rebuild the Temple (40.12).

Paulinus' *Vita* of Ambrose (22.3) adds some clarification. The Christian assault, which was also directed against a meeting-place of the heretical group known as Valentinians, was occasioned by abuse of some monks by either the Jews or the Valentinians. Moreover, Ambrose's protest was backed up by his refusal to admit the Emperor to communion until the orders given had been reversed.

This notorious episode has inevitably been discussed many times, and we need do no more here than note that it adds another small city in the Near East where there was a Jewish community and a synagogue, and acutely hostile relations between different religious groups living side-by-side; it also shows that the Imperial state attempted at least to deal justly as between them.

A similar impression of communal religious rivalry at Antioch is provided by Theodoret, who had been born there in 393, and was bishop of Cyrrhus from 423 onwards. As regards both cities, he sees Christianity as functioning within a hostile and contested environment, in which Jews play a significant part. For instance, speaking of the successful tenure of the See of Antioch by bishop Alexander (CE 414/24), he says that the Arians and Jews were crippled, and the remnants of the pagans groaned, 'seeing the other rivers pouring into the sea of the Church' (*HE* V.35.5). In his conception of his own tenure of the See of Cyrrhus, it too had been an endless battle against heresy, Judaism and paganism (*Ep.* II.81, written in 448). A year later, writing to Pope Leo in Rome, he speaks more generally of the contests (*agōnes*) in the cities of the secular diocese of Oriens, against pagans, Jews and heretics, as well as the Persian magi (*Ep.* III.113). It was probably about this time, when deposed

from his See by the second Council of Ephesus of 449, that he wrote in another letter that while pagans, Jews and heretics of all sorts were at peace, the Church was buffeted by storms (*Ep.* III.129). Even before that, when he had merely been ordered, by Imperial command, not to leave his own city, he had written to the Magister Militum, Anatolius, that he could not refrain from weeping on seeing the Jews 'raising their horn on high', at the sight of dissension in the Church (*Ep.* II.79). We shall encounter again this sense of the Jews as an ever-present hostile chorus, despairing at Christian success and rejoicing at difficulties. And beyond that we need to recall the very specific report from Iohannes of Antioch with which we began, of Jews publicly beating an archdeacon in Laodicea in the city's theatre.

Theodoret's writings reveal two other important aspects of the Christian conceptualisation of contemporary Judaism. One is the shock which had been caused by the abortive attempt of the Emperor Julian (CE 361/3) to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, and thus re-establish a bond between Judaism and paganism, namely animal sacrifice, which necessarily excluded Christians. As we have seen, this topic had been a significant theme also for John Chrysostom. Theodoret comes to it, for instance in the course of his *Commentary on Ezekiel*, referring to a Christian theologian, Apollinarius, who had predicted the re-building of Jerusalem and the reinstatement of sacrifice under Jewish Law, and had said that there would be two parallel Churches, one observing the Jewish Law, and the other not. But what then of the churches in Jerusalem if the Temple were to be rebuilt?⁴¹

Perhaps more striking still is Theodoret's observation in his *Questions on Genesis* that Jewish boys are distinctive in not growing up from infancy using their native language, Hebrew, but rather the language of those among whom they live. Learning the Hebrew alphabet comes when they are adolescent: 'through these letters they read Holy Scripture, which is written in Hebrew'.⁴² He cannot be basing this observation on the Jewish community of Palestine, with which he had in any case little or no known contact. So it must be a reference to the Diaspora of Syria and Euphratesia, with which he was familiar. What is striking is the assumption that Hebrew instruction did exist among Jewish communities there, and that its object was the study of the Bible in Hebrew. He does not make clear whether he thinks of the normal language of the wider environment as being Greek or Aramaic/Syriac, but the former is by far the most likely. As regards the presumed contrast between Palestinian and Diaspora Judaism, it is quite clear that Greek was current also among Jews in Palestine, and was used regularly, along with Hebrew and Aramaic, in the mosaic inscriptions of synagogues.⁴³ Moreover, it is quite clear from a letter of Jerome, written from Bethlehem in about the first year of the reign

⁴¹ *Com. Ezek.* 48:35 (*PG* LXXXI, cols. 1248 and 1253).

⁴² *Qu. in Gen.* 10, *Qu.* 61 (*PG* LXXX, col. 165).

⁴³ There is to my knowledge no serious study of the Greek used in Palestinian synagogue-inscriptions. For a collection of one category of the evidence see A. Ovadiah, *Hellenistic, Roman and Early Byzantine Mosaic Pavements in Israel* (1987), and for the mixture of languages among all the religious communities of Palestine see F. Millar, 'Ethnic Identity in the Roman Near East, AD 325–450: Language, Religion and Culture', *Mediterranean Archaeology* 11 (1998), 159.

of Theodosius II (*Ep.* 121.10.19–21), that the informants who talked to him about ‘rabbinic’ Judaism had spoken to him about it in Greek.

As regards the range of Theodoret’s knowledge and attitudes, it might be noted that he would deserve re-consideration in the light of Alison Salvesen’s brilliant recent survey of Christian attitudes to the Hebrew Bible, and the two conspicuous cases of a return to it, by Origen and Jerome.⁴⁴ For it is a noteworthy feature of his Biblical commentaries that he on occasion refers to readings current ‘among the Hebrews and among the Syrians’ (παρ’ Ἑβραίοις καὶ παρὰ Σύροις). So he is aware of both Hebrew and Syriac texts of the Bible.⁴⁵

Once again, though there clearly was a significant contrast between Holy Land and Diaspora, the difference was one of degrees, and there is no basis for the assumption of a fundamental division. We do not know what level of knowledge of the Hebrew Bible lay behind the very modest epigraphic traces of Hebrew in the Diaspora. But it is worth noting that, long before he settled in Bethlehem, Jerome, while following an ascetic life on the fringes of the desert near Chalcis in Syria in the 370s, had studied Hebrew with a converted Jew, presumably coming from that area (*Ep.* 125.12). Equally, we cannot claim to know that no compositions of a ‘rabbinic’ type circulated in the diaspora. Nor indeed do we know that none were written there. What is clear, as we will see, is that views on the interpretation of the Bible could be formed and expressed there, and also expressed to Christians with whom Diaspora Jews had contact.

Returning to Theodoret’s real-life observations, in his *Historia Religiosa*, recording the major examples of asceticism in Syria, he notes for instance the conversion of some Jews who had got lost in the Syrian desert, by a fourth-century holy man who lived the life of a solitary there, Symeon the Elder (*HR* VI). He also describes in more detail the influential role played by the most famous of his holy men, his own contemporary, Symeon Stylites, in confronting pagan impiety and Jewish audacity, as well as dispersing bands of heretics; sometimes Symeon wrote to the Emperor (Theodosius II) on these topics, and sometimes he stimulated lower officials into action (*HR* XXVI.27). This latter theme is taken up in much more detail in the Syriac *Life* of Symeon, written in the mid-fifth century, which quotes, naturally in Syriac translation, what is claimed to be a vigorously phrased letter from Symeon to the Emperor, complaining of undue favour to the Jews. According to this account, which is later followed by Evagrius in his *Ecclesiastical History*, the Emperor at once countermanded his orders and dismissed the official concerned.⁴⁶ These or

⁴⁴ A. Salvesen, ‘A Convergence of the Ways? The Judaizing of Christian Scripture by Origen and Jerome’, in A. H. Becker and A. Y. Reed (eds.), *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (2002), 233.

⁴⁵ This question cannot be pursued here. But note e.g. *Praef. in Libros Regnorum* (PG LXXX, col. 1447); 11:13 (col. 1512); *Com. in Osee* 2:15 (LXXXI, col. 1564): τὸ δὲ Ἀχάρι παρὰ τῶν Σύρων Ἀχάρι εἶπον.

⁴⁶ Syriac *Life*, ch. 130–2 Hilgenfeld/121–3 Doran. For a German translation see H. Lietzmann *et al.*, *Das Leben des Heiligen Symeon Stylites* (Texte u. Untersuchungen XXXII.4, 1908), 79f. (trans. H. Hilgenfeld). English trans. by R. Doran, *The Lives of Symeon Stylites* (Cistercian Studies 112, 1992). Cf. Evagrius, *HE* I.13.

comparable exchanges lie behind the awkward balancing act which we saw earlier being performed in the Imperial pronouncements of the 420s (pp. 5–6).

A different, but very significant, set of viewpoints on Jewish–Christian relations is provided by the *Ecclesiastical History* of Theodoret's direct contemporary, Socrates. He was a layman, not a bishop, and seems to have written in Constantinople. Alone of the major Church Historians of Theodosius' time, he carried on his narrative up to the second-last decade of the reign, stopping in 439, and thus continued long enough to cover the first stage of the Nestorian controversy.⁴⁷

As regards his contribution to 'the Jewish question', as seen by Christians, we may note in passing his long excursus, beginning from the issue of the date of Easter, concerned with the influence of Judaism on the practices of the Church (*EH* V.22). More specific are his three detailed reports of episodes from the reign of Theodosius II, all, obviously enough, presented from a Christian point of view. First in time comes the well-known account of major Jewish–Christian communal conflicts in Alexandria in 415 (*EH* VII.13–14). To abbreviate drastically, conflicts arose over the presence of Jews, at leisure during the Sabbath, at a public show of dancers, attended by the Praefectus Augustalis, Orestes. When a confidant of the Patriarch, the famous theologian Cyril, was publicly abused by the Jews present, Orestes responded by having him beaten. Cyril then summoned the leaders of the Jewish community and threatened them.

In response, so Socrates' account runs, the Jews formed a plot to burn down a church in Alexandria, and, when Christians rushed to save it, assaulted them and killed some. In his turn Cyril assembled a large force of Christian supporters, attacked the synagogues, killed some Jews and drove out the others. We have very little background against which to set this narrative, and can only stress that it presupposes both a substantial (if quite unquantifiable) Jewish presence in the city, with more than one synagogue, and with sufficient confidence to involve the support of the Praefectus, and to plan violent action against the Christian majority.⁴⁸ Of the religious character of 'Alexandrian Judaism' in this period we know nothing more; but it is very clear from the writings of Cyril that the confrontation with Judaism (which in itself did not require or imply any direct contact with Jews) was a significant element in his thought, explored long since in a major early work by R. L. Wilken.⁴⁹

Before we move on to the second two episodes recorded by Socrates, it will be relevant to note that two other Christian writers provide quite vivid sidelights, if not on Alexandrian Judaism as such, at any rate on the Jewish presence in the secular diocese of Egypt (the sphere of responsibility of the Praefectus Augustalis), covering both the various provinces into which Egypt

⁴⁷ On Socrates see Th. Urbainczyk, *Socrates of Constantinople: Historian of Church and State* (1997).

⁴⁸ See however C. Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict* (1997), ch. 4 and 9.

⁴⁹ R. L. Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind: a Study of Cyril of Alexandria's Exegesis and Theology* (1971).

was divided, and the two provinces of Libya. One such sidelight is provided by the well-known letter of Synesius (*Ep.* 5), dating to CE 407, before his election as bishop of Ptolemais, and describing a sea-voyage from Alexandria along the coast to Libya. Of the crew of 13, including the pilot, more than half were Jews, ‘a treacherous race, and deeply convinced that piety consisted in causing the death of as many Greeks as possible’. During the voyage, a storm broke out, and the Jewish crewmen were not available to lend a hand. For it was the day before the Sabbath (*Paraskeuē*), ‘and they count the night as belonging to the day which follows, during which they do not think it right to engage in any physical activity’. It then appeared that the pilot was himself an observant Jew, and Synesius expostulates on the hopelessness of a situation where the pilot himself was a ‘teacher of the law’ (*nomodidaskalos*—we may recall the *sophodidaskalos* from Sardis, p. 11 above), who instead of steering took to reading the Bible. Eventually, under threat of force, the pilot remembered the rule that the preservation of life took precedence over the observation of the Sabbath.

Synesius’ tone is satirical—the voyage is represented as a succession of disasters—so we need not take it that the Jewish pilot literally occupied some religious office. The implication is rather that he perversely adopted a role of this sort to the neglect of his immediate duties. All the same, the word *nomodidaskalos* indicates an awareness on the part of the gentile outsider that the teaching of the Law was a characteristic function of a Jewish community.

As in almost all of our Christian evidence, a consciousness of the presence of Jews in the social and religious spectrum goes together here with an unabashed hostility. We see this conjunction in a different light again in a number of letters from the vast surviving correspondence of Isidorus of Pelusium in the Egyptian delta. He was apparently a presbyter and monk there, writing in the first half of the fifth century.⁵⁰ What is striking in this context is the number of allusions to explicit Christian–Jewish argument, and theological dispute. On occasion, the allusions are unspecific—possible disputes over the doctrine of the Trinity against Sabellians, or Jews on the one hand, and Arians or Eunomians or pagans on the other (*Ep.* III.27); or he advises a *scholasticus* named Theodosius to use his sharp tongue against the madness of the heretics, the superstition of the pagans or the ignorance of the Jews (V.119; Evieux, no. 1386). But most of the relevant letters envisage, or respond to, specific disputes conducted by named individuals. One Adamantius is told to refute the Jew who has been claiming that the notion of the Incarnation has no Biblical foundation, by pointing to the creation of Eve from Adam’s rib, and of Adam from the earth (I.141). Isidorus also writes directly to a Jew named Benjamin who claims that sacrifice requires blood, and hence that the use of bread for communion is improper, pointing to the table of Shewbread

⁵⁰ For the correspondence, in five books, with 2102 letters in all, see *PG LXXVIII*, cols. 177–1046. For a modern study see P. Evieux, *Isidore de Péluse* (1995), and for an edition and translation of (so far) nearly 500 of the letters P. Evieux, *Isidore de Péluse, Lettres I, nos. 1214–1413*, and II, nos. 1414–1700 (*Sources Chrétiennes* 422, 1997, and 454, 2000). Note that Migne, as cited above, uses a division by book and number, while Evieux’s edition deploys the continuous numeration found in some mss.

in the Temple (I.401). To Athanasius, a presbyter, to whom a Jew has claimed that one must keep only to the literal text of the Bible, Isidorus points to the re-telling of the Biblical narrative by Philo and Josephus, with the one's use of allegory and the other's of extended exposition (III.19). Another correspondent is a *grammaticus*, Ophelius, who is in dispute with a Jew over the interpretation of Deuteronomy 18:15, 'God will raise up a prophet for you' (III.22); and yet another is a bishop, also called Isidorus, who is involved in an argument with a Jew on the still extremely acute problem mentioned above: did the Bible offer any justification for the view that the Temple would be restored, or was the situation of Jews on earth in irrevocable decline? Haggai 2:7–8, at any rate, could be shown to offer no comfort to the Jews: it referred to the coming building of the Second Temple (IV.17).

There is nothing to indicate, and no reason to believe, that these exchanges took place in any language other than Greek. Nor, though we can assume that Isidorus himself remained always in Pelusium (and many of his letters duly refer to affairs in the Egyptian province of Augustamnica I) can we locate any of these correspondents; it is however a reasonable working assumption that the Jews addressed or referred to will have been in Egypt. What emerges is that Christian belief and Biblical interpretation were known to be under challenge, and not merely in an abstract sense, relating to different written, or traditional, interpretations, but in the concrete sense of specific personal disputes. Once again we see how the contemporary religious scene was marked by overt rivalries.

If we return from this excursus, related to Socrates' account of violent Jewish-Christian clashes in Alexandria, we come to his equally well-known, if brief and enigmatic, report of an episode which he places shortly after that at Alexandria, hence in the middle of the second decade of the century, which took place at a locality apparently called 'Immonmestar' or 'Inmestar' (surely in fact Immae?), situated between Chalcis and Antioch in Syria. The context must at any rate be a village or small town. The Jews there were alleged to have drunkenly abused both the Cross and the Christians who rested their hopes on the crucified one. They had then taken a Christian boy and crucified him, and subsequently tortured him to death. Clashes between them and the local Christians then resulted, the authorities were informed, and the Jews were tried and condemned (EH VII.16).

It would be futile to speculate on the truth of this episode, just as it is with the last of the narratives concerning Jews which Socrates presents. According to this story, set in the 430s, a deceiver, or false prophet, named Moses persuaded the Jews of Crete that he was a reincarnation of the Biblical Moses, sent from Heaven to lead them across the sea, just as he had over the Red Sea. He preached this message for a whole year in the cities of the island, and persuaded the Jews to believe him, urged them to abandon their wealth and possessions, and promised to lead them dry across the sea to the Promised Land. On the appointed day he led them to the shore, and urged them to enter the water. Many died, and more would have done so, if Christian fishermen and traders had not rescued them. The false Moses vanished, and many of the Jews of Crete abandoned Judaism and converted to Christianity (EH

VII.38).

The prejudicial nature of this outsider's narrative is obvious; but it could not have been told if there had been no Jews on Crete, and if their attachment to the Bible and hope of the Promised Land were not known. It also reflects the universal assumption that the conversion of Jews was desirable, neither obligatory on the one hand nor ruled out on racial grounds on the other. There we must leave the story.

Given profound uncertainties about authenticity and attribution,⁵¹ we may merely note a letter attributed to Nilus of Ancyra, addressed to a Samaritan, on Biblical interpretation (*Ep.* III.116) and another group of letters, to a different Samaritan, on the Resurrection (I.109–13), and as well as a further one to a Jew named Benjamin on the Sabbath (I.124). Another refers to the claim being made by a Jew that the loss of Palestine had been due to crimes other than the Crucifixion itself (I.57).

Finally, we may note that the perception of Jewish onlookers as a hostile chorus, rejoicing in Christian misfortunes or divisions, is applied also to Constantinople. Palladius, in his *Dialogue on the Life of John Chrysostom* (10), records how Jews and pagans jeered at John's expulsion in 404;⁵² while Nestorius, writing his autobiographical polemic, *The Book (or Bazaar) of Heracleides*, from his exile in Egypt, recalls that Jews, pagans and heretics had been roused against him in 431.⁵³ But perhaps no passing allusion catches the tone and assumptions of the time better than Palladius' report in his *Dialogue* on John Chrysostom (20) of how John's supporters, after condemnation, were escorted from Constantinople round by land to exile in Egypt, and were deliberately housed overnight by their military escorts in Samaritan or Jewish synagogues, especially after they had passed through Tarsus in Cilicia. Such synagogues could be assumed to be there, and being given lodging in them was intended as a deliberate humiliation.

5. Conclusion

The scattered evidence, of various types, at which we have looked is obviously insufficient to allow definite conclusions. But it is coherent, and tends in the same direction. In essence what has been offered here is a return to the implications of older collections of Christian evidence relating to Jews, by Jean Juster, or by Marcel Simon, focussing on the Jews viewed as a hostile, or rival, element in the Christian period.⁵⁴ But this material is reinforced here by documentary and archaeological evidence, much of which had not been available

⁵¹ See Alan Cameron, 'The Authenticity of the Letters of St Nilus of Ancyra', *Gr. Rom. and Byz. St.* 17 (1976), 181. The Letters are printed in *PG* LXXXIX, cols. 81–581.

⁵² See A.-M. Malingrey (ed.), *Palladius, Dialogue sur la vie de Jean Chrysostome* I (Sources Chrétiennes 341, 1988).

⁵³ Nestorius, *Book of Heracleides* II.1, trans. G. R. Driver and L. Hodgson (1925), 322, and trans. F. Nau, *Nestorius, Le livre d'Héraclide de Damas* (1910), 240.

⁵⁴ J. Juster, *Les Juifs dans l'Empire romain: leur condition juridique, économique et sociale*, esp. vol. I (1914), 43–76; M. Simon, *Verus Israel: étude sur les relations entre Chrétiens et Juifs dans l'Empire romain*² (1964), esp. ch. iv–vi, viii.

to earlier scholars. What is deliberately omitted here is 'Judaean-Christians', or Ebionites, for whom we are entirely dependent on Christian reports.

The religious spectrum of the period around CE 400 was in any case complex enough. All that is asserted here is that the history of Judaism in Late Antiquity cannot be confined to Palestine, for we can see that there was a very significant Jewish life in the Diaspora: predominantly Greek-speaking, but with strong hints that Hebrew and Aramaic might be studied and used here too; a 'synagogal' Judaism certainly, but not one in regard to which we can either assert or deny the title 'rabbinic' (the *sophodidaskalos* from Sardis, and Synesius' *nomodidaskalos* should give us pause for thought); a Judaism based on the Bible, from which anyone was free to escape by the simple step of converting to Christianity, as some certainly did; and a communal Judaism which was assertive, might attract 'God-fearers' or full proselytes, could be argumentative, and might on occasion turn to abuse and violence. This chapter in the history of Judaism has yet to be written.

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