

Judaism respectively.<sup>1</sup> After initially accepting Judaism without circumcision under Ananias, a merchant of the Dispersion, King Izates was persuaded to accept circumcision by a Palestinian Jew called El'azar, who argued that the king not only had to read the Law but to observe it, including circumcision and the cultic requirements.

So too, in Rabbinic Judaism, a distinction was made between גרי צדק "true proselytes"<sup>2</sup> and a גר תושב a non-Jew who merely kept the seven Noachic commandments. Among the גרי תושב were reckoned the יראי שמים - φοβούμενοι τὸν Θεόν - God-fearers, which later in free translation and better Greek became σεβόμενοι τὸν Θεόν. Now it is important to note that Talmudic Judaism with its roots in the Palestinian tradition would only recognise גרי צדק - true proselytes. Such persons were no longer Gentiles but would be regarded as Israelites in every respect.<sup>3</sup> Any person not accepting full conversion twelve months after becoming a גר תושב would revert to the status of a גוי - a Gentile.<sup>4</sup>

A careful reading of Acts reveals that in its attitude to σεβόμενοι τὸν Θεόν, the primitive Palestinian church also differed from the synagogues of Hellenistic Judaism on which Paul based his missionary strategy. According to the Jewish Christians of Palestine, the only non-Jew to have a part in the salvation wrought by Jesus, was one who had become a proselyte through circumcision and observance of the Torah. This attitude may be seen in the charge which was brought against Peter in Acts xi:3, because of his acceptance of

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1. Jos. Ant. 20:ii:3-4.

2. See the 13th Beraka in both the Babylonian and Palestinian recensions of שמנה עשרה (Shemoneh 'Esreh) in E. Schürer, The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ, Revised ed. Edinburgh: Clark, 1979, Vol. 2, pp. 456-461.

3. Yeb. 47b: בישראל הוא לכל דבריו. M. Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, London: SCM, 1974, Vol. 2, p. 204.

4. See The Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. X, pp. 220-224; Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 13, Col. 1183ff.

the Roman Centurion Cornelius, who was a φοβούμενος τὸν Θεόν.<sup>1</sup> Involuntarily, "their" missionaries preached only to refugees - Greek speaking Jews - Ἰουδαῖοι - according to Acts xi:19. In the following verse there is the tantalising remark about men from Cyprus and Cyrene preaching Jesus to Greeks - Ἕλληνες - as well. A most interesting explanation of this remark is given by W. Michaelis,<sup>2</sup> who argues that it represents a second stage in the development of the Christian Mission directed to Gentiles, which up to that stage included circumcision as a requirement for becoming a Christian. He even goes as far as to say that at first Barnabas and Paul preached circumcision.<sup>3</sup> It was only in the course of the First Missionary Journey that a new approach, which discarded the need for circumcision, was adopted,<sup>4</sup> and afterwards introduced into the church at Antioch. There the problem really came to a head and Peter was in the thick of it. He had arrived from Jerusalem and, as was normal for Christian Jews in Antioch, he "ate with the Gentiles",<sup>5</sup> meaning uncircumcised Gentile Christians. But with the arrival of "certain men from James", he withdrew from these Gentile Christians. Dom Gregory Dix has given a thought-provoking explanation of the events at Antioch when these messengers from James and the church at Jerusalem arrived there.<sup>6</sup>

What the messengers "from James" brought to S. Peter was not an ultimatum from a suddenly overwhelming Jewish-Christian faction of extremists, but an urgent warning that the increasing rumours of Jewish-Christian fraternising with uncircumcised Gentiles in Antioch and Galatia are now putting all the Jewish-Christian Churches in Judea in considerable jeopardy from non-Christian Jews. In such circumstances S. Peter might well feel bound to do all he could to reduce the provocation.

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1. Acts x:2,22.
  2. "Judaistische Heidenchristen", ZNW 30:83-89, 1931.
  3. "Auch Barnabas und Paulus haben zunächst die Beschneidung gepredigt." Ibid. p. 88.
  4. See Acts xiii:46. Cf. M. Goguel, Les premiers temps de l'Eglise, Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1949, pp. 79-88.
  5. Gal.ii:12.
  6. G. Dix, Jew and Greek. A Study in the Primitive Church, Westminster: Dacre, 1955, p.43.

Without engaging in the very complicated questions of the relationship between the accounts in Galatians and Acts,<sup>1</sup> it would appear that in Paul's meeting with "the pillars" at Jerusalem in about 48 AD, a practical division of the work was arranged. Paul for his part relinquished an organised mission to those of the circumcision, while the Jerusalem church renounced the mission amongst the Gentiles.<sup>2</sup> Thus according to Galatians ii:7-9, Paul was able to draw a parallel between himself, with his missionary work amongst the Gentiles, and Peter, with his Jewish mission to the circumcised.<sup>3</sup> Most recently

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1. For further discussions of this vexed question see :-

- H.D. Betz, Galatians, Philadelphia:Fortress, 1979, pp. 81-83.  
 J. Bligh, Galatians, London:St. Paul, 1970, pp. 144-193.  
 P. Bonnard, L'épître de Saint Paul aux Galates, 2nd ed. CNT IX, Paris:Delachaux & Niestlé, 1972, pp. 44-48.  
 J. Eckert, Die urchristliche Verkündigung im Streit zwischen Paulus und seine Gegnern nach dem Galaterbrief, Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1971, pp. 163-228.  
 A.S. Geyser, "Paul, The Apostolic Decree and the Liberals in Corinth", Studia Paulina, Haarlem:Bohn, 1953, pp. 124-138.  
 G. Howard, Paul: Crisis in Galatia, NTSMS 35, Cambridge:CUP, 1979, pp. 20-45.  
 M-J. Lagrange, Saint Paul. Épître aux Galates, 2nd ed. EBib, Paris:Gabalda, 1925, pp. XIII-LXXXIII.  
 H. Schlier, Der Brief an die Galater, 2nd ed. Meyer, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1951, pp. 66-77.  
 J. van Bruggen, "Na Veertien Jaren": De datering van het in Galaten 2 genoemde overleg te Jeruzalem, Kampen:Kok, 1973.

2. E. Earle Ellis, in his description of the Circumcision Party and the early Christian Mission, suggests that the mission in the diaspora had a two-pronged thrust - to ritually strict congregations and less strict Jewish groups which would include Gentiles. See his Prophecy and Hermeneutic, Tübingen: Mohr, 1978, pp. 116-128.
3. See W. Schmithals, Paul and James, London: SCM, 1965, pp. 46-48 and G. Kittel, "Die Stellung des Jakobus zu Judentum und Heidenchristentum", ZNW 30:145-157, 1931, who also draw attention to the dual approach in the early Christian Mission.

R.E. Brown has argued that "during most of the first century a theological distinction signaled by 'Jewish Christianity' and 'Gentile Christianity' is imprecise and poorly designated. Rather one can discern from the N.T. at least four different types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity, stemming from the fact that Jewish Christians of different persuasions converted Gentiles who shared the respective theology of their missionaries".<sup>1</sup> A striking analogy may be found among Black Christians in Africa who similarly reflect the theology and practice of their respective missionaries. While such a view is helpful, it is still not the final explanation of the missionary practice of the early church as described in Acts. The investigation is further complicated by the evidence that neither Peter nor Paul appear to have stuck rigidly to the agreement outlined in Galatians ii:7-9. Consequently, there was a certain amount of overlapping. From Acts xv:7 and hints of a Peter party in Corinth<sup>2</sup> as well as the reference to his wife accompanying him in his missionary work,<sup>3</sup> it may be inferred that Peter did not restrict himself solely to preaching to the circumcised and their associates as agreed at Jerusalem according to Gal.ii:7-9. Similarly, Paul definitely preached to Jews<sup>4</sup> and, as might be expected, was always concerned about their faith.<sup>5</sup>

A close scrutiny of the various missionary endeavours of the primitive church suggests that despite his public attack on Peter at Antioch,<sup>6</sup> Paul acknowledged the pressure which was brought to bear upon Peter and the Jerusalem church by the non-Christian Jews. This may be seen in the fact that Paul circumcised Timothy

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1. R.E. Brown, "Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity but Types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity", *CBQ* 45:74-79, 1983.

2. 1 Cor.i:12.

3. 1 Cor.ix:5.

4. Acts xvii:17; xviii:4,19; xix:8.

5. Rom.i:16; ii:9,10; ix-xi.

6. Gal.ii:11-21.

"because of the Jews that were in those places".<sup>1</sup> He also shaved his head and took a vow when he set out for Jerusalem from Cenchreae,<sup>2</sup> while on his last visit to Jerusalem, he sponsored four men in a ritual cleansing in the Temple to counter the accusations which had been made against him that he had taught all the Jews among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and not to circumcise their children.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, therefore, Paul's actions reveal that the mission to the circumcised was much stronger and widespread throughout the diaspora than is credited to it by the general picture of Acts.

In view of this preponderance of the mission to the circumcised, another interesting point in the record of Acts becomes far more significant. The localities of the addressees in I Peter i:1 are well represented in the list of Acts ii:9-10, which probably reflects the places evangelised by the Jerusalem mission to the circumcised, under the direction of Peter, James and John.<sup>4</sup> It suggests, therefore, that the addressees of I Peter had originally been evangelised by that mission to the circumcised, so that any Gentiles who were converted would have accepted circumcision either as proselytes or as Christians in conformity with the practices of the group into which they were received. This would be all the more likely if a large part of the Jewish population in those areas were descendants of the ten "lost tribes" of Israel.<sup>5</sup> In their

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1. Acts xvi:3. Because Timothy's mother was a Jewess, he would automatically be regarded as a Jew in rabbinic law.
  2. Acts xviii:18.
  3. Acts xxi:20-26. In these matters Paul's behaviour reflects the view that a Jew who adopted the Christian faith had to remain a practising Jew, while the Gentiles had to remain *Gentile* in order that the Jews might be saved once "the full number of the Gentiles" had come in. (Rom.xi:25.)
  4. This would also explain why according to Acts xvi:6 & 7 the Holy Spirit prevented Paul and Timothy from visiting the provinces of Asia and Bithynia, for they constituted part of the Jerusalem church's mission field, as did the seven churches in Asia referred to in Rev.i:11, of which only Ephesus and Laodicea are known from Acts or Paul's letters.
  5. See A.S. Geyser, "Some Salient New Testament Passages on the Restoration of the Twelve Tribes of Israel", L'Apocalypse johannique et l'Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament, BETL LIII, Leuven: LUP, 1980, p. 305.

eschatological fervour, converts to the church from such a background would want to be equal in everything to their distant cousins in the Jerusalem church as they eagerly awaited the restoration of the Kingdom at the imminent return of their new found Lord and Saviour.<sup>1</sup> Such a situation would also explain why Paul had been "forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia" and "Bithynia",<sup>2</sup> since preaching in those areas would have been tantamount to trespassing on Peter, James and John's missionary territory. In view of the large Jewish population in that region, it would undoubtedly have been the prerogative of the Jerusalem church to pursue its mission to the circumcised there.

Thus L. Goppelt could describe the address of I Peter as reflecting the "horizontal" Christian existence of the readers in contrast to the "vertical" ascription in the Pauline epistles,<sup>3</sup> since it refers to the actual geographical situation of the readers rather than their spiritual state. In his paper to the Association Catholique Française pour l'Étude de la Bible, at their conference at Orsay in 1979, E. Cothenet could concur with this view and state that the circumstances of the addressees as described in I Peter, "ne représente pas un beau thème de spiritualité, mais une dure réalité sociologique qu'il faut affronter en esprit de foi, les yeux fixés sur le Christ".<sup>4</sup>

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1. See J. Holdsworth, "The sufferings in I Peter and 'Missionary Apocalyptic'", *Studia Biblica* 3:225-232, 1978; W. Fairweather, *The Background of the Epistles*, Minneapolis: Klock, 1977, pp. 146-148.

2. Acts xvi:6,7.

3. L. Goppelt, "Prinzipien neutestamentlicher Sozialethik nach den 1. Petrusbrief", *Neues Testament und Geschichte*, Festschrift O. Cullmann, Zurich: TVZ, 1972, pp. 285-286.

4. E. Cothenet, "Les orientations actuelles de l'exégèse de la première Lettre de Pierre", *Études sur la Première Lettre de Pierre*, C. Perrot, ed. LD 102, Paris: Cerf, 1980, p. 21.

Long ago, F.J.A. Hort<sup>1</sup> argued most convincingly that the sequence of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia represented the most likely route which the bearer of the letter would follow. This view has generally been accepted by successive commentators on I Peter.<sup>2</sup> Josephus gives a fascinating account of precisely such a journey which was undertaken by Herod the Great and Marcus Agrippa, Augustus' son-in-law.<sup>3</sup> This probably took place in the spring of 14 B.C. and reveals a most intriguing incident. More than half of the account is taken up by a description of a deputation of Jews to Marcus Agrippa. These Jews lived in the cities in that area and came to ask for protection of their religious freedom so that they could observe the Sabbath and other customs, a request which was readily granted. Once again it suggests a strong Jewish component in the population of those areas. If the titles in the address refer to the provinces of the Roman Empire in the first and second centuries, the communities addressed are scattered over an enormous area covering the whole of Anatolia between the Taurus range and the Black Sea. If, however, these names are used in an ethnic rather than a political sense, the area would be considerably reduced, as it would exclude those parts of Southern Galatia, which had been evangelised by Paul, as well as much of the Western part of Asia including Ephesus.<sup>4</sup> In a recent discussion of the address of I

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1. F.J.A. Hort, *The First Epistle of St. Peter I.1-II.17*, London: MacMillan, 1898, Additional Note III, pp. 157-184.
  2. See E.G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter*, 2nd ed. London: MacMillan, 1947, pp. 45-47, 119; A.M. Stibbs & A.F. Wallis, *The First Epistle General of Peter*, Leicester: IVF, 1959, p. 64; C. Spicq, *Les Epîtres de Saint Pierre*, Paris: Gabalda, 1966, p. 12; L. Goppelt, *Der Erste Petrusbrief*, Meyer Bd 12/1, 8th ed. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978, pp. 27-28.  
The argument is criticized by E. Best, *1 Peter*, London: Oliphants, 1971, pp. 15-16 and F.W. Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 3rd ed. Oxford: Blackwell, 1970, pp. 41-43.
  3. Jos. Ant. 16:ii:2-3.
  4. See E. Best, op. cit. pp. 14-16; A.F. Wallis, op. cit. pp. 63-64.



Peter, C.J. Hermer favours the view that the Roman Provincial names are used and freely includes Pauline churches in the route he proposes for the bearer of the letter.<sup>1</sup> He suggests that the full sequence of provinces entered by the messenger must have been Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Galatia again, Asia, Bithynia. In his view it was not necessary for the traveller to visit all the centres in each province. It would have been enough to visit one accessible town or city in each province. From there, other messengers could carry back copies of the letter to their own local churches in each territory.

The population of the area to which the letter is addressed was by no means homogeneous. As part of a process of Hellenization, several migrations took place, with the result that different races, cultures and religions had been introduced into Anatolia.<sup>2</sup> Descendants of the "Lost Tribes" of Israel would also be amongst them, for Josephus recounts how Antiochus the Great resettled 2,000 Jewish families from Mesopotamia and Babylon into the Anatolian areas of Phrygia and Lydia.<sup>3</sup> This is most probably the "Arzêreth" of II Esdras xiii:40, or "Eretz acheret" ארץ אחרת, as well as the "other place" to which Peter went after Acts xii:17, undoubtedly to missionize the descendants of those tribes. The Hellenizing process was particularly strong in the coastal cities in the provinces of Asia, Pontus and Bithynia, while in the remoter areas like Galatia and Cappadocia, it became more of an Hellenistic veneer over the local culture and native language.

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1. C.J. Hermer, "The Address of I Peter", *ExpT* 89:239-243, 1977.

2. See W.M. Calder, "Asia Minor", *Companion to the Bible*, T.W. Manson, ed. Edinburgh: Clark, 1950, pp. 157-171.

3. See Jos. Ant. 12:iii:4. Cf. J. Straban, "Antioch", *HDAC* I, p. 71; W.M. Ramsay, "Antioch", *HDB* I, p. 104; "Antioch (Pisid)", *PW Sup.* XI, pp. 49-61; E. Le Camus, "Antioch", *DB* I, pp. 674-676.



Consequently, a strange conglomeration of cults and religions claimed the devotion of this mixed population. Very often the names of the deities were changed from region to region, but their character remained the same. Each region would boast its own spectrum of religious activity, ranging from the primitive Cappadocian moon-goddess, Ma, or the Phrygian Cybele or Artemis, right up to forms of monotheism associated with Attis. These religious cults were so important that even the administration of the provinces was based on the "diets" of such native religious associations. In return for the recognition the Roman administration gave them, they introduced the worship of the Roman Emperor into their ceremonies.<sup>1</sup>

Amidst the welter of cults and religions in each community, there would be Jews, worshipping in their Synagogue and enjoying special privileges granted to them as a "religio licita" under the Roman rule.<sup>2</sup> According to A.M. Ramsay,<sup>3</sup> it would be quite simple for Jews to reside in one of these cities as resident aliens, but when they acquired citizenship some special provision would be needed. From the time of the Seleucid kings, the Jews formed one of the "tribes" or φυλαί which made up the city. Yet there was still a great difficulty to be overcome. The bond of patriotism between those "tribes" was really a religious bond, and it was an outrage to the mind of that age that people could be fellow citizens without sharing in the worship of the city gods. This difficulty was simply trampled under foot by the Seleucid kings, who declared the Jews to be citizens and yet left them free to disregard the common city cultus. This outrage rankled in the mind of the citizens, so that time after time, whenever a favourable opportunity presented itself, they asked their Greek or Roman masters to deprive the Jews of their citizenship, on the ground

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1. See T. Mommsen, The Provinces of the Roman Empire from Caesar to Diocletian, London: MacMillan, 1909, Vol. I, pp. 345ff.

2. See Philo, Leg. ad Gai. 245; 281; Josephus, Ant. 14, x:17 & 24; G.Kittel, "Das kleinasiatische Judentum in der hellenistisch-römischen Zeit", TLZ 69:9-20, 1944.

3. "The Jews in the Graeco-Asiatic Cities", Expositor 5:19-33, 1902.

that fellow citizens ought to reverence the same gods.<sup>1</sup> As long as the ancient notion prevailed that citizenship could not be severed from the worship of the city gods, local conflicts would be inevitable.<sup>2</sup> It was from such a suspect group that the Christian mission to the circumcised drew its first converts. Hence the addressees of I Peter were most likely a doubly ostracised group in society, where they would be regarded with suspicion by ordinary citizens and Jews alike. They refused to conform to the norms of society and they had broken away from the traditional Jewish faith. It is not surprising, therefore, that they were described as *παροῖκοι καὶ παρεπιδήμοι*<sup>3</sup> and urged to become an *οἶκος πνευματικὸς*<sup>4</sup> or *οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ*<sup>5</sup> in order to maintain their particular identity in society.

J.H. Elliott is correct in drawing attention to the social implications of this terminology. He argues very forcefully that these terms "identify the addressees as a combination of displaced persons who are currently *aliens permanently residing in* (*paroikia, paroikoi*) or *strangers temporarily visiting or passing through* (*parepidēmoi*) the four provinces of Asia Minor".<sup>6</sup> In his view the address of I Peter refers not merely to their geographical dislocation, but accurately describes the estrangement which their political, legal, social and religious status involved. This is further confirmation that the terms in the address are not to be understood exclusively in a spiritual or a figurative sense. Just like Israel long ago, the addressees experienced actual social and religious estrangement. Their situation in Asia Minor was no less real than Israel's alien sojourn in Egypt or Babylon. As Elliott maintains, such an interpretation is far

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1. See Jos. Ant. 12:iii:2.

2. See Jerry L. Daniel, "Anti-Semitism in the Hellenistic-Roman Period", *JBL* 98:45-65, 1979.

3. I Pet.ii:11. 4. I Pet.ii:5. 5. I Pet.iv:17.

6. See J.H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless. A Sociological Exegesis of I Peter, Its Situation and Strategy*, London: SCM, 1982, p. 48. (Hereafter referred to as HFH.)

more appropriate to the central focus of I Peter which concentrates on the readers' interaction as Christians with the society around them, rather than on a theological spiritualization of their exile on earth in the light of their permanent abode in heaven.<sup>1</sup>

It will be most useful, therefore, to view the social, economic and legal conditions of the addressees from the point of view of their *πρόσωπος* status. In principle the term denotes persons who are different from the local population in terms of ethnic origin, customs, language and religion. Such a distinction meant that they were neither full citizens nor complete strangers (*ξένοι*).<sup>2</sup> According to Rostovtzeff, the *πρόσωποι* formed the economic backbone of the empire. "Together with the slaves and artisans of the cities they constituted the working-class of the Roman Empire, the class which, under the direction of the city bourgeoisie, produced the goods required by the cities and by the imperial army, which were the chief consumers."<sup>3</sup> In contrast to full citizens, who could own land, the *πρόσωποι* were denied such a right and were, therefore, restricted to either working on the lands or earning a living through local crafts, commerce and trade. In this way their power and status within the community was effectively curbed. From Broughton's description of the land, industry, labour and commerce,<sup>4</sup> the *πρόσωποι* were mostly involved in agriculture which was the main industry of the whole area. Associated with this would be the production of foodstuffs and textiles such as wool and linen which would in turn lead to the accompanying skills of dyeing and the manufacture of leather goods and parchments. The utilisation of other natural resources such as timber, stone, silver,

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1. As is found in Hebrews xi:13-16.

2. See K.L. and M.A. Schmidt, *TDNT* V, p. 842.

3. M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1926, Vol. I, pp. 345-346. (Hereafter referred to as SEHRE.)

4. T.R.S. Broughton, "Roman Asia Minor", *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, T. Frank, ed. Baltimore: Hopkins, 1938, Vol. 4, pp. 599-695 & 817-881.

gold, emeralds and iron inevitably led to many other trades such as stone cutting, building, metalurgy, glass making, pottery, arts and crafts and the general commerce associated with them. Such occupations would have involved many of them in the industrial guilds and associations of commerce which flourished in Asia Minor.<sup>1</sup>

When I Peter is read within the context of such a social framework, a number of correlative details fall into place. The addressees' ambivalent social and legal position as *παῖδες οἴκου* is emphasised by the author's acknowledgement of their distinctive socio-religious position,<sup>2</sup> while simultaneously stressing their civic responsibility.<sup>3</sup> In ii:18-20 he makes a specific appeal to *οἰκέται*, "household servants" rather than to *δοῦλοι*, slaves in general. While this is primarily due to the author's Jewish tradition of reserving *δοῦλος* for their relationship to God,<sup>4</sup> Broughton<sup>5</sup> has also noted that the majority of the slaves and freedmen in the inscriptions from Pergamum belonged to the domestic servant class, many of whom might have been well educated and held responsible positions. In the rural areas they would be part of the manor or estate personnel, whereas in the cities they would serve chiefly in households, forming a very important element in the ancient economic organization of "oikos management".<sup>6</sup> The instruction in I Peter ii:18-20 was most probably

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1. See T.R.S. Broughton, op. cit. pp. 841-849, who lists such guilds in Asia Minor. See also D. Maggie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor to the end of the Third Century after Christ*, Princeton: PUP, 1950, Vol. 2, pp. 1029-1032 and Index, q.v. "guilds", "collegia", "gerousia", "neoi", "Community".
  2. I Pet. i:14-19; ii:4-10,11; iv:2-4.
  3. I Pet. ii:12,13-17; iii:15-16; iv:15-16.
  4. For a discussion of this use of *δοῦλος* in I Pet. ii:16-20 and Jas. i:1, see pp. 83-84 supra.
  5. Op. cit. p. 840.
  6. See M. Rostovtzeff, *SEHRE* Vol. 2, Index q.v. "house economy", "House-industry", "home production". For a general description of *οἴκος* management of pre-industrial societies see Max Weber, *General Economic History*, (trans. F.M. Knight), London: Allen & Unwin, (no date given), pp. 48,58,124-131,146,162.

addressed to such "household servants" (οἰκέται) and would have been a most appropriate reminder of their household responsibilities. Moreover, the fact that, unlike the letters of Paul and the Jerusalem Catechism, which include references to slaves *and* masters, I Peter only addresses οἰκέται and omits any reciprocal exhortation to owners, appears to confirm the generally inferior economic and social position of the πρόικοι.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the admonition to wives of non-Christian husbands not to base their married life on outward adornment, with braiding of hair, decorations of gold and fashionable clothes,<sup>2</sup> reveals that some of them may have been more wealthy. They may even have been Jewesses who had married their erstwhile employers. Moreover, we must not lose sight of the fact that their designation as ἐλεύθεροι in I Peter ii:16 need not be restricted to the Pauline sense of "freed by Christ",<sup>3</sup> but may also refer to the political status of some of them as freedmen or "libertini".<sup>4</sup>

The "drunkenness, revels and carousing" which I Peter iv:3 decries, were typical of the celebrations of industrial guilds and associations and suggests that many of the addressees had been involved in these guilds and had taken part in the hectic celebrations of the local bacchanalia. Some of them may even have continued such participation as Christians, because of social and civic pressure. Yet to Christians such drunken behaviour should have constituted "lawless idolatry" and "wild profligacy"<sup>5</sup> from which they were obliged to disassociate themselves. Such action would inevitably lead to alienation from their former associates in the guilds as well as from their employers, and could easily lead to all kinds of abuse and false accusations being levelled against them.<sup>6</sup> It has also been suggested that such guilds

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1. See p. 85 supra.

2. I Pet.iii:3.

3. Rom.vi:18; Gal.v:1,13.

4. From the time of Alexander the Great until the Roman Empire, many Jews in the diaspora, including Paul's parents, had been made freedmen. See p. 30, note 2 supra.

5. I Pet.iv:3.

6. I Pet. iv:4,15.

and associations, including those with Jewish membership,<sup>1</sup> were sources of social and political ferment,<sup>2</sup> which could lead to further complications and strife for Christian converts, who adopted a new law-abiding stance because of the admonition of I Pet. ii:13-17. Moreover, in times of economic depression or political upheaval, they would be the first to suffer. As "outsiders" they would be viewed with suspicion and this would, from time to time, lead to harassment of various kinds.

The reason for such social unrest and political ferment was to be found in the depressed economic circumstances of the πόλεις in Asia Minor at the time. According to a theory put forward by Samuel Dickey,<sup>3</sup> Roman exploitation had reduced the position of the πόλεις to such a low level, that the situation was beyond redress by ordinary political or economic action. Conditions like that provoked an "apocalyptic mood" which became an important factor in the rapid spread of Christianity. It is not surprising, therefore, that "when Christianity entered with its promises of a 'new age' of righteousness inaugurated by divine power, which included 'feeding the hungry with good things,' and 'exalting those of low degree,' it

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1. See E. Schürer, *Geschichte des Jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, 4th ed. Leipzig: Hinrich, 1901-1911, 2:501-506; 3:97-105. Cf. S. Applebaum, "The Organization of the Jewish Communities in the Diaspora", *Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*, S. Safrai & M. Stern eds. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1974, Section I, Vol. 1, pp. 476, 480-483.
  2. See Bo Reicke, "Exkurs über die Agitation in den Hellenistischen Korruptionen", *Diakonie, Festfreude und Zelos in Verbindung mit der altchristlichen Agapenfeier*, UUA V, 1951, pp. 320-338. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest and Revolution in the Empire*, Cambridge Mass.: Harvard UP, 1966, pp. 173-179, 341-344, n. 24; C. Spicq, "La place ou le rôle des Jeunes dans certaines communautés Néotestamentaires", *RB* 76:508-527, 1969.
  3. S. Dickey, "Some Economic and Social Conditions Affecting the Expansion of Christianity", *Studies in Early Christianity: Frank Chamberlin Porter and Benjamin Wiener Bacon FS*, Shirley Jackson Case ed. New York/London: Century, 1928, pp. 393-416.

could not help get a hearing".<sup>1</sup> Such an apocalyptic mood is also reflected in I Peter<sup>2</sup> and became very pronounced in later Christian literature from Asia Minor, especially the Apocalypse of John. The vision of the black horse bearing a rider with a balance in his hand may be regarded as a concrete indication of the debilitating economic conditions in which the Christian message brought new hope. The cry, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius..."<sup>3</sup> underlines the economic plight of the populace.

On this theory, the reason why many of the addressees of I Peter had originally converted to Christianity was not only their faith in Christ, but also their hope that it would provide an answer to their poor economic circumstances. Commenting on the religion of underprivileged classes, Max Weber put it this way: "Since every need for salvation is an experience of some distress, social or economic oppression is an effective source of salvation beliefs, though by no means the exclusive source".<sup>4</sup>

An even more important factor affecting the legal and social condition of the Christians in Asia Minor was their relationship to Judaism. "As long as the Christian movement remained an inner-Jewish phenomenon, adherents to the messianic sect would continue to enjoy the privileges and protection which Rome had long guaranteed Judaism as a special type of *paroikia*."<sup>5</sup> But the more it separated itself and became distinguishable from Judaism, the more it sacrificed the protective cover of its parent body. I Pet. iv:16 testifies to the fact that the addressees were already known as "Christians" to those around them and suggests that they were regarded as a separate group and no longer treated as a branch of Judaism which followed a

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1. S. Dickey, op. cit. p. 411.

2. I Pet. i:3,5,9,13,21; iii:15,21.

3. Rev. vi:6.

4. Max Weber, "Religion of Non-privileged Classes", The Sociology of Religion, (trans. E. Fischoff) London: Social Science Paperbacks, 1966, p. 107.

5. J.H. Elliott, HFH, op. cit. p. 72.



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particular teaching. Consequently, their legal status would be questioned and their practices of worship would arouse suspicion. As has already been noted,<sup>1</sup> such suspicion would be aggravated by their exclusivism and their renunciation of all previous alliances and social practices. They would, therefore, become very vulnerable to harassment from Jewish as well as pagan elements of society, who would regard them as a new fanatical cult.<sup>2</sup>

The manner in which the term *Χριστιανός* originated reflects a similar social condition. According to H.B. Mattingly,<sup>3</sup> it was invented as an opprobrious label by the Greco-Syrians of Antioch in order to ridicule those who by their profession of faith and in their hymns had given their allegiance to a person called Christ.<sup>4</sup> Like the term *Augustiani*, the label was meant to imply that the followers of Christ were as ludicrous as the partisans of Nero, who devoted themselves to the praise of that Emperor who saw himself as Augustus' spiritual heir. Another possibility, closely akin to the former, is that *Χριστιανός* was an official designation by the Roman provincial administration to distinguish them from the regular Jewish community. The term most aptly described a group consisting of Jews and Gentiles, circumcised and uncircumcised, united in their common faith in Jesus as the *Χριστός*. That is why King Agrippa, in an official Roman court at Caesarea could call Paul a *Χριστιανός*.<sup>5</sup> The use of this label to identify believers soon spread throughout the Empire and was well established by 60 AD. The important point to notice is that it was chosen, not by the believers themselves, but by others as a distinguishing term.

Another important result of this separation from Judaism was the sociological pressure that it brought to bear upon the addressees as a group within themselves. In a pioneering study on this subject,

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1. See p. 213 supra.

2. I Pet.iii:13-16.

3. H.B. Mattingly, "The Origin of the Name Christiani", *JTS* n.s. 9:26-37, 1958.

4. See Acts xi:26.

5. Acts xxvi:28.

Robin Scroggs set out to show "that the community called into existence by Jesus fulfills the essential characteristics of the religious sect, as defined by recent sociological analyses".<sup>1</sup> He set out seven typical sectarian characteristics as a basis for comparison, showing how, like a sect, the earliest Christian community (1) emerged out of protest; (2) rejected the view of reality claimed or taken for granted by the establishment; (3) was egalitarian; (4) offered its adherents love and acceptance within the community; (5) was a voluntary organisation; (6) demanded total commitment from its members and (7) like some sects, was adventist (apocalyptic) in its temporal orientation. This procedure enabled him to reconstruct a more concrete social picture of the early Palestinian church.

A great deal of I Peter's admonition corresponds to such a model and reveals the sectarian character of the communities addressed. They are the elect and holy people of God,<sup>2</sup> brought into being by the activity of God the Father, the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> The

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1. R. Scroggs, "The Earliest Christian Communities as Sectarian Movement", *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman Cults: Morton Smith ES, Part Two, Early Christianity*, Jacob Neusner ed. Leiden: Brill, 1975, p. 2. Cf. J. Daniélou, "Christianity as a Jewish Sect", *The Crucible of Christianity: Judaism, Hellenism and the Historical Background to the Christian Faith*, Arnold Toynbee ed. London: Thames & Hudson, 1969, pp. 275-282. Bryan R. Wilson in "An Analysis of Sect Development", *American Sociological Review* 24:3-15, 1959, similarly characterized a sect. "It is a voluntary association; membership is by proof to sect authorities of some claim to personal merit - such as knowledge of doctrine, affirmation of a conversion experience, or recommendation of members in good standing; exclusiveness is emphasized, and expulsion exercised against those who contravene doctrinal, moral, or organizational precepts; its self-conception is of an elect, a gathered remnant, possessing special enlightenment; personal perfection is the expected standard of aspiration, in whatever terms this is judged; it accepts, at least as an ideal, the priesthood of all believers; there is a high level of lay participation; there is opportunity for the member spontaneously to express his commitment; the sect is hostile or indifferent to the secular society and to the state." p. 4.

2. I Pet.i:3-ii:10.

3. I Pet.i:1-2.

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public know them as "Christians".<sup>1</sup> Their conversion led to a break from past social, religious and even family ties and relationships,<sup>2</sup> while the new community became a family-like brotherhood,<sup>3</sup> in which they were bound together by a unique faith in Jesus as the Christ who was the agent of their expected salvation.<sup>4</sup> Their religious allegiance demands "fear"<sup>5</sup> and "obedience"<sup>6</sup> to the will of God.<sup>7</sup> It is anticipated that the salvation and divine grace,<sup>8</sup> in which they share, will be bestowed in full measure at the imminent second coming of Christ.<sup>9</sup> In the interim the community must maintain strict internal discipline<sup>10</sup> and vigorously oppose any encroachment from, or assimilation to, outside pressures.<sup>11</sup>

As in modern day sects, the framework for much of the exhortation in I Peter is eschatological. According to Selwyn, "there is no book in the New Testament where the eschatology is more closely integrated with the teaching of the document as a whole".<sup>12</sup> Schatteman even suggests that I Peter is a commentary on the authentic eschatological material of Mark xiii.<sup>13</sup> Both "realized" and "futuristic" elements appear in the Petrine eschatology. I Pet. i:5 looks forward to the

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1. I Pet. iv:16.
  2. I Pet. i:3-5, 10-12, 18-21; ii:4-10 etc.
  3. I Pet. i:22; ii:5, 17; v:9.
  4. I Pet. i:2, 3, 6-8, 13, 18-21; ii:3, 4-10.
  5. I Pet. i:17; ii:17. cf. iii:6, 14.
  6. I Pet. ii:8; iii:20; iv:17
  7. I Pet. ii:15; iii:17; iv:2, 19.
  8. I Pet. i:2, 5, 9, 10, 13; ii:2; iii:21; iv:18.
  9. I Pet. i:5, 7, 13; iv:13; v:1.
  10. I Pet. i:22; ii:1; iii:8; iv:7-11; v:1-5.
  11. I Pet. i:14-16, 18-21; ii:11; iii:9, 13-17; iv:1-6, 12-19; v:8-9.
  12. E.G. Selwyn, "Eschatology in I Peter", *The Background of the New Testament and its Eschatology*, W.D. Davies & D. Daube eds. Cambridge: CUP, 1956, p. 394.
  13. J. Schatteman, "The Little Apocalypse of the Synoptics and the First Epistle of Peter", *Theology Today* 11:193-198, 1954.

"last time" when final salvation is revealed, while i;20 affirms that the foreordained servant (of Isaiah liii) has been manifested in the crucifixion of Christ "in these last times". Nevertheless, it would seem in general that the experience of real suffering necessitated the appeal to realized eschatology as a basis of hope. As C.F.D. Moule has pointed out, circumstances may be more important in New Testament eschatological variation than reasoned development.<sup>1</sup> The moral teaching of I Peter may, therefore, be regarded as "eschatological in so far as it is based on the 'new situation', the eschatological 'now' when the promised Messiah has come to bring salvation to man to institute the Kingdom of God, and to begin His domination over hostile spiritual forces".<sup>2</sup>

On the basis of this framework for its ethics, I Peter corresponds most closely to the "conversionist response" which certain groups in the sectarian movement present to the world in our own times. Wilson describes such a response as follows :-<sup>3</sup>

The world is corrupt because men are corrupt; if men can be changed then the world will be changed. Salvation is seen not as available through objective agencies but only by a profoundly felt, supernaturally wrought transformation of the self. The objective world will not change but the acquisition of a new subjective orientation to it will itself be salvation.

Clearly this subjective conversion will be possible only on the promise of a change in external reality at some future time, or the prospect of the individual's transfer to another sphere. This is the ideological or doctrinal aspect of the matter, but the essential sociological fact is that what men must do to be saved is to undergo emotional transformation - a conversion experience. This is the proof of having transcended the evil of the world. Since it is a permanent and timelessly valid trans-

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1. "The influence of Circumstances on the Use of Eschatological Terms", *JTS* ns 15:1-15, 1964.
  2. R. Russell, "Eschatology and Ethics in I Peter", *EvQ* 47, p. 83, 1975.
  3. B.R. Wilson, Magic and the Millennium: A Sociological study of Religious Movements of Protest among Tribal and Third World Peoples, London:Heinemann, 1973, p. 22.

cendence, some future condition of salvation is often posited in which objective circumstances come to correspond to the subjective sense of salvation, but the believer also knows, from the subjective change, that he is saved *now*. Thus he can face the evil of the world, the processes of change that threaten men with decay and death, because he is assured of an unchanging condition *and feels this*. This response is the *conversionist* response to the world.

For the conversionist sect other responses such as "destruction", "manipulation" and "reform" of the world, or "Withdrawal" from it are not available options. The basis of its confident engagement with the world lies in its belief in the supernaturally wrought transformation of its individual members, which allows them a foretaste of the objective change of all things in the future.

In view of the close resemblance between the communities addressed in I Peter and sects which promote such a conversionist type of sectarian response to the world, it is most illuminating to consider the social conditions in which such sects emerge and develop. To quote Wilson again,<sup>1</sup>

Conversionist sects appear to arise most readily in circumstances... in which more stable social structures are impaired or destroyed, communities are disrupted, and individuals are forcibly detached from their kinsfolk in enforced or induced migration by conquerors or invaders. Thus, many individuals may find need of spiritual and social accommodation in an alien social context... The obvious accommodation is to reunite himself with a group - a group which cannot be a natural grouping, but must be one which capitalizes the commonality of circumstance of detached individuals and which draws them into a new synthetic community of love.

Such a description is amazingly close to the earlier analysis of the displaced *παροικιοι* addressed in I Peter. As a sectarian movement, the church offered such *παροικιοι* a communal experience of salvation in a brotherhood of love which was denied them in the unstable and alien social environment of their daily life. For them, as the

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1. Ibid. pp. 38-39.



displaced and disenfranchised, it offered an alternative and self-sufficient society in which to pursue their own ideals and at the same time, strengthened them to live with the tensions of society around them. The church's stress on "rebirth",<sup>1</sup> "sanctification"<sup>2</sup> and "purification"<sup>3</sup> emphasised the need for total conversion and distinction from their ambient society.<sup>4</sup>

In all this they were not so much concerned with changing the structures of society as with a change of heart.<sup>5</sup> Yet by its very nature, such a community constituted an implicit form of organised social protest, which would inevitably provoke counter protest. Former friends and associates would feel left out of things and estranged (ξενίζονται) in the wake of severed ties and broken bonds. Worse still, dissassociation from former practices could be interpreted as civic disloyalty and a repudiation of public responsibilities.<sup>6</sup> It made opponents so angry that they blasphemed God<sup>7</sup> and treated the Christians with reproach.<sup>8</sup>

Such behaviour caused sorrow,<sup>9</sup> fear<sup>10</sup> and suffering<sup>11</sup> among the Christians. J.H. Elliott<sup>12</sup> argues very cogently that these terms refer to social pressure, religious discrimination and local hostility against an alien religious sect. He does not believe that they were the result of official policy on the part of the Roman Emperors, but were reactions to the exclusivism of the Christians, since the

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1. I Pet.i:3,22f; ii:2.

2. I Pet.i:2,14-16.

3. I Pet.i:22.

4. See B.R. Wilson, *op. cit.* pp. 41f. Cf. A.D. Nock, *Conversion*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1933, pp. 134-137, 207-211, 227-229.

5. I Pet.ii:19f; iii:3f,15f,21.

6. I Pet.ii:13-17.

7. βλασφηημοῦντες iv:4.

8. ὄνειδος iv:14.

9. λυπηθέντες i:6; ii:19.

10. φόβος iii:14.

11. πᾶσχειν ii:19,20; iii:14,17; iv:1,15,19; v:10; παθημάτων v:9.

12. *Op. cit.* p. 97 n. 64.

terms pertinent to the Christians' suffering refer to verbal rather than physical abuse or legal action.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, as E.C. Colwell pointed out, such incidents were typical of popular reaction to exotic religious sects.<sup>2</sup> The situation, as it pertained to the addressees of I Peter, has been most admirably summarized by C.F.D. Moule,<sup>3</sup>

All the requirements of these passages are equally met by postulating 'unofficial' persecution - harrying by Jews and pagans. The fact that *ὡς χριστιανός* is parallel to *ὡς φονεὺς ἢ κλέπτης* (whatever the other words in that list may mean - which is obscure) does not in the least compel the conclusion that to be a Christian was officially a crime in the same category as the indictable offences. Even if all the other words mean indubitable crimes, all that the Greek says is If you have to suffer, suffer as a Christian, not as a criminal...It was possible to suffer *ὡς χριστιανός* from the moment that the name was given (Acts xi.26): the Christians did not escape that sort of suffering even before it was an officially recognized offence. And it seems as natural to postulate 'private' persecutions here ('pogroms', so to speak) as it is in I Thess. ii.14-16, Heb. x. 32-9, xiii. 7...In I Pet. iv. 4 there is a reference to precisely such social ostracism and unpopularity as might lead to open persecution of this sort, without any state intervention.

Sixteen other New Testament passages<sup>4</sup> suggest that such harassment of Christians by local opponents was a general occurrence. Thus, according to Acts xxviii:22 when Paul arrived at Rome (ca. 58-60 A.D.), the Jews there could say to him: "...with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against".<sup>5</sup>

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1. καταλαλοῦν ii:12; iii:16; ἐπιπράττειν iii:16; δνειδίζειν iv:14; and similarly κακῶν iii:13.

2. E.C. Colwell, "Popular Reactions against Christianity in the Roman Empire", *Environmental Factors in Christian History: S. J. Case FS*, Chicago: CUP, 1939, pp. 53-71.

3. "The Nature and Purpose of I Peter", *NTS* 3:1-11, 1956, p. 8.

4. Matt.x:16ff; John xv:18ff; Acts iv.31; v:41; I Cor.xii:3; Gal.iv:29; I Thess.i:6; ii.14-16; iii:3; II Thess.iii:5; Tit.ii:8; Heb.ii:18; iv:15; vi:6,9-11; x:26-31; 32-39.

5. See also Tacitus (Annals XV.44:2-8) who, writing some 50 years later (c. 112), describes the Christians as "a class hated for their abominations" and guilty of "hatred of the human race", in his account of the Neronian persecution of 64 AD.

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I Peter does not identify the opponents specifically, but there were, probably, two groups of agitators. I Pet. ii:4,7-8 testifies that opposition to the sect and rejection of its Lord first began with the Jews.<sup>1</sup> Both Acts and the letters of Paul affirm that opposition from this quarter was experienced at almost every stage of the sect's expansion within the diaspora. Not only did the Christian missionary zeal<sup>2</sup> compete with Judaism in winning over proselytes,<sup>3</sup> it also constituted a dangerous threat to the already tenuous social and political relations between the Jews and the Imperial rulers. Just as in Palestine the Jewish leaders had been perturbed about Jesus, saying, "If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation",<sup>4</sup> so in the diaspora, they accused his followers of turning the world "upside down".<sup>5</sup> Worse still, the members of this Christian sect appeared to have the audacity to call themselves the exclusive representatives of the true Israel.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, I Peter also reveals that the Gentiles opposed the Christians for virtually the same reasons that they opposed the Jews. Jerry L. Daniel, in a recent survey of antisemitism in the Hel-

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1. See J.H. Elliott, The Elect and the Holy, op. cit. pp. 26-33.

2. I Pet. ii:12; iii:1f.

3. Matt.xxiii:15. See also Acts xiii:44f; xiv:1-7,19 for Jewish resentment at Christian success in competition in Asia Minor, Acts xvii:1-9 in Thessalonica, Acts xviii:1-11 in Corinth, and Acts xix:11-20; xx:19; xxi:21-28 in Ephesus.

4. John xi:48.

5. Acts xvii:6.

6. Such a view is implied in Paul's argument in Rom. ix-xi, particularly Rom.ix:25 = I Pet.ii:10 and Rom.ix:25-33 = I Pet.ii:7-10. Cf. 2 Cor.iii:7-18; Gal.iii:23-29; Eph.ii:11-22; Heb.x:1-11.

For detailed accounts of competition between Christianity and Judaism see J. Parkes, Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism, Cleveland/New York: World Publishing Co. and Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961, pp.71-147; I Abrahams, Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels, Cambridge: CUP, 1924, pp. 56-71; R.L. Wilken, "Judaism in Roman and Christian Society", *JR* 47: 313-330, 1967.

lenistic Roman period, has set out the major areas of Jewish life which caused such resentment among the pagans. Regarding Jews as inferior and strange, pagans poured scorn on them. Jewish religious customs seemed primitive and superstitious, while their exclusiveness in their worship of the one God made them appear to be a very snobbish race. Their success in converting people to their strange religion was most alarming.<sup>1</sup> In evaluating this reaction, Daniel states that the evidence of pagan opposition to Judaism reflects "a benign dislike rather than an active hatred of the sort that leads to persecution".<sup>2</sup> "It was not necessarily a virulent anti-semitism; certainly not (except of occasion) persecution, but rather an enduring contempt, coupled with distrust."<sup>3</sup> The addressees of I Peter appear to have experienced similar opposition from pagans, which in practice led to social polarization rather than violent persecution.

One of the dangers of such a situation was that it could also foster divisions within the communities addressed. Elliott<sup>4</sup> has suggested, therefore, that it is very likely that I Peter not only *proscribed* current practice amongst the addressees, but also *prescribed* standards which had not yet been attained. Possible continuation of social ties with "outsiders" elicited the author's admonitions to cast off all pre-Christian associations and behaviour,<sup>5</sup> while all internal dissension had to be countered by brotherly love, mutual humility, affection and concord.<sup>6</sup> For the sake of internal order and authority, they had to be subordinate<sup>7</sup> and beware of "malice, guile, insincerity, envy and slander".<sup>8</sup> Collectively, these passages in-

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1. See Jerry L. Daniel, "Anti-Semitism in the Hellenistic-Roman Period", *JBL* 98:45-65, 1979.

2. Ibid. p. 47.

3. Ibid. p. 65.

4. J.H. Elliott, *HFH*, op. cit. p. 83.

5. As lapsed Jews who had adopted Gentile customs - I Pet.i: 14,18;ii:11;iv:1-4.

6. I Pet.i:22; iii:7ff; iv:8; v:5b-7,14.

7. I Pet.ii:18-iii:7; v:1-5a.

8. I Pet.ii:1.

lenistic Roman period, has set out the major areas of Jewish life which caused such resentment among the pagans. Regarding Jews as inferior and strange, pagans poured scorn on them. Jewish religious customs seemed primitive and superstitious, while their exclusiveness in their worship of the one God made them appear to be a very snobbish race. Their success in converting people to their strange religion was most alarming.<sup>1</sup> In evaluating this reaction, Daniel states that the evidence of pagan opposition to Judaism reflects "a benign dislike rather than an active hatred of the sort that leads to persecution".<sup>2</sup> "It was not necessarily a virulent anti-semitism; certainly not (except of occasion) persecution, but rather an enduring contempt, coupled with distrust."<sup>3</sup> The addressees of I Peter appear to have experienced similar opposition from pagans, which in practice led to social polarization rather than violent persecution.

One of the dangers of such a situation was that it could also foster divisions within the communities addressed. Elliott<sup>4</sup> has suggested, therefore, that it is very likely that I Peter not only *proscribed* current practice amongst the addressees, but also *prescribed* standards which had not yet been attained. Possible continuation of social ties with "outsiders" elicited the author's admonitions to cast off all pre-Christian associations and behaviour,<sup>5</sup> while all internal dissension had to be countered by brotherly love, mutual humility, affection and concord.<sup>6</sup> For the sake of internal order and authority, they had to be subordinate<sup>7</sup> and beware of "malice, guile, insincerity, envy and slander".<sup>8</sup> Collectively, these passages in-

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1. See Jerry L. Daniel, "Anti-Semitism in the Hellenistic-Roman Period", *JBL* 98:45-65, 1979.

2. Ibid. p. 47.

3. Ibid. p. 65.

4. J.H. Elliott, *HFH*, op. cit. p. 83.

5. As lapsed Jews who had adopted Gentile customs - I Pet.i: 14,18;ii:11;iv:1-4.

6. I Pet.i:22; iii:7ff; iv:8; v:5b-7,14.

7. I Pet.ii:18-iii:7; v:1-5a.

8. I Pet.ii:1.

dicade that the communities addressed had to cope with internal tensions which had been caused by differing reactions to the hostility facing them from the outside.

The situation in which the addressees found themselves at the time of the composition of I Peter may, therefore, be briefly summarized as follows. The Christian movement had spread rapidly throughout Asia Minor as a result of the labours of the "mission to the circumcised" emanating from Jerusalem. It had attracted Jews and Proselytes (i.e. Gentiles who had accepted circumcision) to itself from both rural as well as urban elements of the population. Although drawn from both *πάροικοι* as well as *ἐλεύθεροι*,<sup>1</sup> the group as a whole were classed as strangers and resident aliens who lived as a suspect group on the edge of the political and social life of the larger community. Their very Jewishness also attracted the popular opposition to Judaism of the time. Such opposition was further abetted by their intense eschatological expectation and consequent "otherworldliness" which led to the severance of their civic and social relations. Over and above the religious aspects, these *πάροικοι* were also attracted to Christianity by its offer of fraternal assistance and social acceptance which, they hoped, would lead to an improvement of their economic lot. This, alas, was not to be. As the movement parted from Judaism and grew visibly as a distinct socio-religious entity, both Jews and pagans in the local communities reacted to it with fear, suspicion, disdain or animosity. Instead of enjoying security, the Christians had to endure local outbursts of slander and abuse. This resulted not only in hardship to individual Christians, but also threatened to undermine the sect's social cohesion and its communal life. Its social distinctiveness, which was so essential to the communal life of its members, intensified the severity of their polarization with outsiders and increased their suffering, which in turn threatened to undermine their group cohesion. I Peter provided the very "encouragement" and "witness" required to break such a vicious circle, and to build them up into a "spiritual house" and "a royal priesthood".<sup>2</sup>

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1. See p. 212 *supra*.

2. I Pet.ii:5,9



What occasion prompted the composition and despatch of such a letter? The discussion of this question has deliberately been left to the end of this study in the belief that this matter can only be properly discussed once the social, political and religious conditions of the recipients has been established. As stated in the introduction, attempts to study the conditions of the readers by making the official persecutions under Nero, Domitian or Trajan the occasion for this letter appear to be pre-empting the very question at issue.

The study of the social, political and religious conditions set out above, has shown very clearly that the suffering and even the "fiery trials" of the recipients for the "name", are most adequately accounted for by the general reaction of society to them as a religious sect among the *πολιται*. While the Christians were regarded as a peculiar extension of Judaism, they were still afforded the protection of the *religio licita* status of that faith. In the light of the predominating Jewish element in the Jerusalem based "mission to the circumcised" to which the communities of I Peter belonged, their bond with Judaism must have been very strong indeed, and much closer than it was to the "mission to the Gentiles". When, therefore, the distinction between Christianity and Judaism became public knowledge, it must have sent shock waves through all the communities founded by the Jerusalem mission, for in addition to being laid open to attack by society in general as a separate sect without a *religio licita* status to protect them, they were also cast off from their spiritual home and faced open hostility from their former spiritual peers.

From this it is clear that the occasion for the composition of I Peter must be sought in the development of some situation, or in some event which clarified the distinction between Judaism and Christianity for the world at large. The socio-religious conditions outlined in the present study cannot have been caused by official persecutions by Roman rulers as has sometimes been suggested. The details of such persecutions merely help us to narrow down the period in which the Roman authorities began to make a distinction between Jews and Christians. In 49 AD when the Emperor Claudius expelled the

Jews from Rome since they "were in a constant state of turmoil at the instigation of Chrestus", he made no distinction between Jews and Christians, even though the disturbances may have been caused by the preaching of Christianity among the Jews of Rome.<sup>1</sup> From the time of Nero onwards, however, it appears that the authorities instituting and executing persecutions were well aware of the distinction between Judaism and the Christian sect. Indeed, Nero was already able to single out the Christians at Rome and make them the scapegoats for the fire in his capital city.<sup>2</sup>

In the light of later apocalyptic outbursts against the rulers from Rome, it is very doubtful whether any Christian could have presented teaching on the Christian duty to the civil powers as serenely as in I Peter ii:13-17 at any time after the Neronian persecution of August 64 A.D. This would be all the more so if Sulpicius Severus' account<sup>3</sup> is correct, and repressive laws were enacted specifically against the Christians following Nero's initial outburst. After that the Imperial power could hardly be described as existing simply "to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right".<sup>4</sup> We therefore need to look for some other development in history between these two Imperial actions, which publicised the distinction between Christianity and Judaism.

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1. See Suetonius, *Life of Claudius*, xxv.4.

2. See Tacitus, *Annals*, xv.44.2-8, who claims that later an immense multitude was convicted, not on a charge of arson, but for "hatred of the human race" - *odium humani generis*. Suetonius, *Life of Nero*, xvi.2, also recounts that amongst other criminals, the Christians were punished for their wicked superstition, but he does not connect this punishment with the arson of the fire of Rome.

3. See J. Stevenson, *A New Eusebius*, London: SPCK, 1957, p. 6. Sulpicius Severus, *Chronica*, 29.3, "Afterwards also laws were enacted and the religion was forbidden. Edicts were publicly published: 'No one must profess Christianity'."

4. I Pet.ii:14.

The death of James, the Lord's brother, in Jerusalem at the instigation of Ananus the High Priest in 62 AD, is an excellent example of the sort of incident which might have prompted Peter to write the letter. The fact that he does not mention James by name, precludes his martyrdom from being the incentive for the letter and suggests instead that he is writing prior to that event.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the martyrdom of James appears to be the culmination of developments reflected in I Peter. Two accounts about James have come down to us; one from Josephus<sup>2</sup> and the other from Hegesippus.<sup>3</sup> James had been the leader of the church at Jerusalem since Peter's departure to "another place".<sup>4</sup> He was heavily involved in the "mission to the circumcision", and from the earliest times had been regarded as one of the "pillars" of the church with Peter and John.<sup>5</sup> Tradition clearly stresses his reverence for his Jewish heritage, his piety and his favour with the population of Jerusalem.<sup>6</sup> This would make him very important as a representative of the link between Christianity and Judaism. It might even be said that because of his witness, many Christians of Jewish origin saw themselves as a kind of Jewish sect - a view which was probably shared by many non-Christian Jews as well. Paul's life and letters suggest that at first the officials of the Roman Empire took the same view, and were generally prepared "to extend to the Christians the privileges which the Empire had long ago given to the Jews".<sup>7</sup>

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1. Other reasons for dating the epistle in the fifties are summarized on pp. 164, 177-178 supra.

2. Jos. Ant. 20:ix:1.

3. Eusebius, H.E. II.23. For a discussion of the validity of these accounts see J.B. Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James*, 2nd ed. London: MacMillan, 1897, pp. lvii-lix, quoting J. B. Lightfoot's discussion in his essay, "St. Paul and the Three", *Galatians*, pp. 366-367.

4. Acts xii:17.

5. Gal.ii:9.

6. Eusebius, H.E. II.23:6-9.

7. E.G. Selwyn, op. cit. p. 58.

James' death at the hands of a Jewish leader would inevitably have drawn the attention of the world at large to the differences between Jews and Christians. No longer would their arguments be treated as religious disagreements within Judaism. Instead they would be seen as disputes between two distinct religious entities, with the result that *Χριστιανοί* would be clearly distinguished from Judaism and would lose their *religio licita* status.

Earlier developments along similar lines may be traced in the use of *Χριστιανοί* as a descriptive term for the followers of Christ.<sup>1</sup> When it was first coined to describe the disciples in Antioch,<sup>2</sup> the process of distinguishing between Christianity and Judaism in the eyes of the public had already begun.<sup>3</sup> The process is well established by the time the term *Χριστιανοί* next occurs in the account of Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea, when King Agrippa mockingly exclaims: "In a short time you think to make me a Christian".<sup>4</sup>

During the same period a significant change also occurred in the treatment Paul received from various Roman Governors. At first he could depend on his Roman citizenship and the *Pax Romana* as an aid in settling his disputes with the Jews and to extricate himself from prison.<sup>5</sup> But by the time of his imprisonment in Caesarea, things had changed. Felix was not another Gallio, who dismissed Paul's dispute with the Jews as a religious matter within Judaism which was beyond his jurisdiction.<sup>6</sup> Instead, Felix kept Paul in detention. Moreover, he was far more aware of the distinction between Christianity and Judaism, for he had "a rather accurate knowledge of the Way"<sup>7</sup> and was married to a Jewess named Drusilla.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, when he and his

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1. See W. Grundmann, *TDNT* IX, p. 537; H.B. Mattigly, "The Origin of the Name Christiani", *JTS* ns 9:26-37, 1958; P. Renard, "Chrétien", *DB* II, pp. 716f; S.C. Gayford, "Christian", *HDB* I, pp. 384-386; J.S. Banks, *HDAC* I, pp. 199-200.

2. Acts xi:26.

3. See pp. 125 and 215 *supra*.

4. Acts xxvi:28. The only other NT occurrence is in I Pet. iv:16.

5. Acts xvi:35-39.

6. Acts xviii:12-17.

7. Acts xxiv:22.

8. Acts xxiv:24.

wife listened to Paul speaking about the Cristian faith, Felix became alarmed at what he had to say about "justice and self-control and future judgement".<sup>1</sup> Most likely the Christian teaching about the imminent end of the world and the establishment of the Kingdom of God with its attendant judgement and punishment of wrongdoers in hellfire, sounded like sedition to the Roman Governor. Things got no better under Porcius Festus who succeeded Felix, and Paul had to resort to an appeal to Caesar in a final attempt to extricate himself from the situation.

Appealing to Caesar meant that the distinction between Judaism and Christianity would become public knowledge throughout the Empire. All local governors would follow the precedent which the Emperor would set in his judgement in the case of Paul against the leaders of the Jewish faith. They would be made very conscious of the fact that the Christian Church was a separate society and not a section of the Jewish Synagogue.

This did not augur well for the Christian communities which had been founded by the mission to the circumcised and had remained closely associated with Judaism, despite internal disputes over the Messiah. No longer would they be able to appear before Roman Governors as members of a Jewish sect with *religio licita* status. Instead they would have to appear as *Χριστιανοί*,<sup>2</sup> a group about whom no one had a good word to say.<sup>3</sup>

In effect a clear distinction between Jews and Christians in the public mind by the late fifties and early sixties of the First Century, would unleash such a wave of fear and polarization in the Christian communities, that an Apostolic response from Peter was urgently required to give them the hope and encouragement to live as a "royal priesthood"<sup>4</sup> in the midst of exasperating trials and tribulations affecting their "brotherhood throughout the world".<sup>5</sup>

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1. Acts xxiv:24-25.

2. I Pet.iv:16.

3. Acts xxviii:22. Cf. I Pet.iv:4,14. See also p. 221 supra.

4. I Pet.ii:14.

5. I Pet.v:9.

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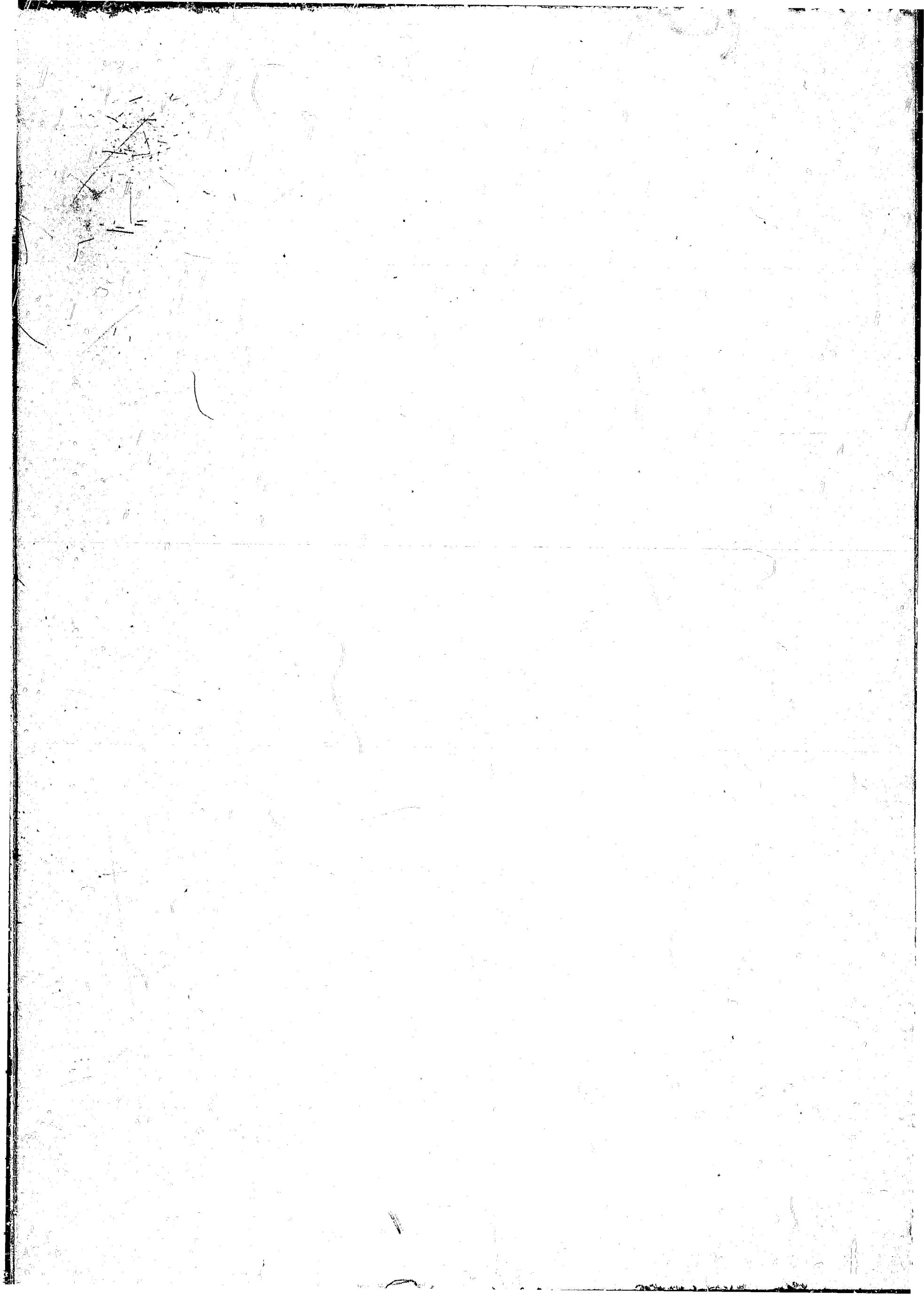
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