Emperor-worship: Josephus and Revelation compared

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EMPEROR-WORSHIP: JOSEPHUS AND REVELATION COMPARED

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INTRODUCTION

To appreciate adequately the conflicts which the Jews encountered with the other nations of the world as they associated with these nations or became subject to them we must recall their background in religious faith. The faith in and devotion to their national god Jehovah (Jahweh) came through the teachings of the prophets of the eighth to the fifth centuries B.C., to be for them the One and only God of the universe. The religious system comes through Ezekiel and later jurists a well defined religious system characterized by strict monotheism, laws, and an elaborate ritual.

To this system the postexilic Jews gave themselves with all the abandon and consecration of religious enthusiasts. It was their religion in the fullest sense of loyalty and devotion. It was far dearer to them than life. It was the basis of all their ambitions and fondest hopes. As much as they coveted political liberty, they were willing to sacrifice that if they might only be granted absolute freedom to adhere to and practice their religious faith and ritual and be governed by their own religious laws. It was this spirit of consecration and fidelity that weathered the destruction of Jerusalem, the Babylonian exile, and the many trials and disappointments of the immediately succeeding years, and welded them into a church - a community in which their religious uniqueness was ever maintained.
Aside from monotheism the chief characteristic of this religious group was an uncompromising hatred of all that savored of idolatry. Beginning with the prophets of the eighth century B. C. a hostility to all forms of images was burned into the very souls of the Jews. Prophet, priest and jurist, all united their efforts for the purpose of indelibly impressing upon the hearts and minds of Israel the seriousness of this great evil. The measure of their success is indicated in the many incidents where, under foreign rule, the Jews chose death rather than bow the knee to an image. The books of Daniel and the Maccabees bear witness to their uncompromising attitude. No better illustration can be found, however, than the incident related by Josephus where the Jews met the demand of Caius, that they erect his statue in their temple, with the reply to Petronius, the Roman general, "We will not by any means make war with him; but still we will die before we will see our laws transgressed." So they threw themselves down upon their faces, and stretched out their throats, and said they were ready to be slain; and this they did for forty days together, and, in the meantime, left off the tilling of their ground, and that while the season required them to sow it. Thus they continued firm in their resolution, and proposed to themselves to die willingly, rather than to see the dedication of the statue."

1. Antiquities XVIII, 8, 2 & 3
JUDAISM IN CONTACT WITH HELLENISM.

THE GREEK PERIOD

With this very short sketch of the background of the Jews we must briefly trace their relations with the other nations through the Greek and Roman periods of their history. It was through the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus that the Jews were given their release from the exile and permitted to return to their homes. They were also granted the privileges of observing their religious customs and laws, even to the rebuilding of their temple, and in a large measure they were given the power of self-government.

In 333 B.C. Alexander defeated Darius III at the battle of Issus. That victory brought to the Jews a change from the Persian to the Greek rule. Alexander continued his conquest through Syria and Tyre and finally besieged Gaza. During this siege, according to Josephus, Alexander paid a visit to Jerusalem. The Jews were terrified at his approach but he treated them very generously, granting them religious freedom, remission of tribute during the Sabbatical year and other favors. The Jews were so gratified at this generous treatment that many of them were induced to join his army.

Upon the death of Alexander his empire was divided among his generals, but the division proved unsatisfactory and there was continual conflict between the Seleucids of Syria and the Ptolemies of Egypt. Judea was a part of the district belonging to Seleucus I. The Jews were

1. Antiquities XI, 8: 4-7
compelled to pay tribute, but aside from that they were graciously treated. They were given religious freedom and the authority to administer their own government. But in 320 Jerusalem was captured by Ptolemy I who made the attack on the Sabbath day when the Jews would not fight.  
Josephus gives the impression that the Jews were desirable citizens and that the rival rulers thus sought to bring them into their respective districts. In Egypt the Jews were granted the same privileges which they had enjoyed from Seleucus I. Under Ptolemy IV, however, conditions changed. He was losing his grip on Syria and seemed to seek vengeance on the Jews. He wholly disregarded their religious customs, and, according to Third Maccabees, he attempted to enter the Holy of Holies of the temple at Jerusalem but was prevented by divine intervention. Later he attempted to slay all the Jews of Alexandria but was again prevented by God.

From this time on, whether under the control of Ptolemies or of the Seleucids, the Jews received no favors. Their religious faith and customs were disregarded or openly violated. The loss of privileges, religious and otherwise, gradually ripened into persecution, and with the conquest of Jerusalem by Antiochus Epiphanes the Jews fall into the hands of a bitter enemy of their religion. He not only plundered the rich treasures of their temple but he determined to abolish their religion completely. The three outstanding features of Judaism, aside from a strict monotheism and hatred of idolatry, were circumcision, observance of

1. Antiquities XII, 1
the Sabbath, and abstinence from eating swine's flesh. All these were prohibited on the pains of death. Antiochus Epiphanes attacked these very prohibitions. He commanded that Jerusalem be made a Greek city. Those who insisted on maintaining the Jewish customs were killed, imprisoned or sold as slaves. The climax of the program was reached when an altar of the Olympic Zeus was placed on the spot of the Hebrew altar in the temple and swine's flesh was sacrificed within the sacred precincts of the temple.

This sacrilege was more than those who were zealous Jews could stand. Mattathias, a priest of Modein, with his five sons, in spite of the overwhelming odds against them, started a revolt. The revolt soon gained considerable proportions and with the announcement of Mattathias that self-defense on the Sabbath day was lawful, the rebels began to be effective.

Upon the death of Mattathias his son Judas became leader of the revolt. His defeat of the Syrians under Appolonius was the beginning of a series of victories culminating in the battles of Emmaus and Bethzur which brought complete victory to the Jews and with it restoration of their temple service and the establishment of religious liberty.

A change of kings in Syria brought to the Jews renewed conflict. Judas realizing the need of outside help, sought and obtained an alliance with Rome. With this alliance began the relationship with that growing empire which was to last for centuries and was designed to have a great
significance for the Jews as well as for Rome. It was with high hopes of aid from Rome which would enable him not only to maintain religious liberty but also gain political freedom that he dispatched an embassy to the Roman Senate with instructions to enter into a league with Rome which would break the yoke of Syrian oppression.

Josephus tells the story as follows: "He therefore sent to Rome some of his friends, Eupolemus, the son of John, and Jason, the son of Eleazar, and by them desired the Romans that they would assist them, and be their friends, and would write to Demetrius that he would not fight against the Jews. So the Senate received the ambassadors that came from Judas to Rome, and discoursed with them about the errand on which they came, and then granted them a league of assistance. They also made a decree concerning it, and sent a copy of it to Judæa. It was also laid up in the capital, and engraven in brass. The decree itself was this: 'The decree of the Senate concerning a league of assistance and friendship with the nation of the Jews. It shall not be lawful for any that are subject to the Romans to make war with the nation of the Jews, nor to assist those that do so, either by sending them corn, or ships, or money. And if any attack be made upon the Jews, the Romans shall assist them, as far as they are able; and again, if any attack be made upon the Romans, the Jews shall assist them. And if the Jews have a mind to add to, or to take away any thing from this league of assistance, that shall be done
with the common consent of the Romans. And whatsoever additions shall thus be made, it shall be of force.' This decree was made by Hupolemus, the son of John, and by Jason, the son of Eleazar, when Judas was high priest of the nation, and Simon his brother was general of the army. And this was the first league that the Romans made with the Jews, and was managed after this manner. 2 If Judas could have foreseen what this appeal to Rome would mean for his nation he would have opposed it with his whole heart. But he never dreamed of the coming degeneracy of his own family nor the internal strife and dissensions which would bring the Roman emperors and procurators into closest and undesirable relations with the nation of Jews.

The direct help from Rome did not greatly further the Jews on their road to political independence, but through interference with Syria, who was Judea’s greatest antagonist, Rome did render valuable aid. 3 As soon as the treaty with the Jews had been concluded, Rome sent word to Demetrius to stop his maltreatment of Judea, and the suggestion was added that further complaint against him would bring upon him the combined forces of the Roman power. But it was long journey from Rome to Jerusalem and before the report of the treaty reached Judea, many of the Jews had become discouraged, and not a few of them had deserted Judas. In a fierce battle at Eleasa Judas with a remaining handful of men was defeated and Judas was killed. 4

1. Antiquities XII, 10
2. I Maccabees 8: 31 – 32
For about seven years the Jews suffered constant persecution. The attempt to Hellenize them was renewed with increased vigor and determination. Bacchides, the general of the army, chose "the ungodly men," and made them lords over the Jews. These men searched out the friends of Judas and brought them before Bacchides who sought vengeance by using them despitefully. The horrors of the persecution aroused the Jews to another attempt for freedom. Again they turned to the Hasmoneans and selected Jonathan, a brother of Judas, to be their captain and leader.

Jonathan carried on a sort of fruitless guerrilla warfare for a time and then resorted to a strategy in which he was more proficient, politics and diplomacy. In the struggle for the Syrian throne between Alexander Balas and the pretender, Demetrius, Jonathan sided with Alexander, because of the two rivals Alexander promised the greater favors. He appointed Jonathan high priest and later made him civil and military governor of Judea. What Judas had given his life for in vain, Jonathan thus had granted him by special favor. During the subsequent struggle for the Syrian throne Jonathan continued to use his diplomatic skill to advance the cause of the Jews, until by siding with Tryphon and Antiochus, he was appointed civil and ecclesiastical leader of an enlarged Judea and his brother Simon was made military governor of the country from the Ladder or Tyre to the borders of Egypt.
With the appearance of Demetrius II on the Syrian coast as a rival of the king, Jonathan found himself the only supporter of Alexander. In a battle with Apollonius at Jamnia Jonathan was victorious, and with his army he chased Apollonius to Azotus, burned that city and destroyed a large part of the Syrian army. With this victory Jonathan set about to remove the citadel from Jerusalem. When Demetrius heard of the siege he summoned Jonathan to Ptolemais to explain his actions. Jonathan, without raising the siege, obeyed taking with him a small embassy and rich gifts. Through his efficient diplomacy he won the good will of Demetrius and with it the addition of Ephraim, Lydda, and Ramathaim, and exemption from tribute.

In spite of Jonathan’s loyalty and friendship Demetrius proved unfaithful and repudiated all the promises he had made. Next Antiochus, the son of Balas, appeared on the scene and offered Jonathan all that Demetrius had promised and more. Jonathan willingly espoused his cause and turned against the unfaithful Demetrius. With enthusiasm and determination he launched a successful campaign to bring all Palestine and Syria, as far as Damascus, under his control.

At this juncture Jonathan renewed his friendship with Rome. He sought no material aid, but simply a confirmation of the good will of former days and through this a recognition of his dignity as ruler of Israel. Rome cordially responded, but before the embassy had returned Jonathan was intrigued by the treacherous Tryphon, taken captive, and his
troup massacred. Simon succeeded Jonathan and his reign was distinguished by another treaty with Rome. The religious independence which had been accomplished by Jonathan was extended to political independence by Simon. But the new glory was shortlived, for Simon and two of his sons were slain by Ptolemy, Simon's own son-in-law, who sought to make himself ruler. Only one son of Simon, John Hyrcanus, succeeded in making his escape.

The rule of John Hyrcanus was long, and from the material standpoint, highly prosperous. His alliance with the Romans aided him in asserting Jewish independence. He subdued the Samaritans and forced the Idumeans to accept Judaism. He extended the borders of the Jewish state to the boundary limits of the most prosperous days of Solomon. But internal struggle between the Sadducees and Pharisees contained the seeds of division which was to bring about the decay and ruin of the nation.

Aristobulus I succeeded his father, John Hyrcanus, and ruled but one year. His Hebrew name was Judah, but he changed it into the Greek Aristobulus indicating his Greek sympathies. With him the nation took a decided trend downward. This downward trend continued with increasing rapidity till the struggle between the brothers, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, for the throne brought the loss of political independence and Roman rule.

It was in the year of 63 B.C. that Pompey came to Damascus in
his conquest of Syria. Both Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II appeared before him and pleaded their respective cases. Pompey finally, because of the warlike aggressiveness of Aristobulus II, decided to endorse Hyrcanus II and accordingly made him high priest over the much reduced Jewish state, while Judea was made tributary to Rome and her independence was forever lost. The friendly relationship that had been sought and obtained by Judas Maccabaeus and cultivated by his successors thus resulted in the subjection of Judea to that growing world empire to whom they had looked as a friend.

ROMAN RULE.

As we enter upon this period of Roman rule we come into a study of that relationship between the Jews and Rome which constitutes the basis of our discussion. While it is evident that our authority, Josephus, in the "Jewish Wars" and to some extent in the "Antiquities" seeks to present the Jewish side in such way as to impress the Romans favorably and to secure special concessions for his people in the period of stress which they face toward the close of the first century A. D., it may certainly be said that there are some foundations for his contentions of friendly relationships between the Jews and the Roman government, and that the Jews were granted certain favors by the Roman authorities.

The conflict between Pompey and Julius Caesar resulted in victory
for Caesar. Antipater, who had been placed over the Jewish affairs, had sought to keep on the side and in the favor of Pompey. With the victory of Caesar, however, he shifted his allegiance to Caesar and in the following years proved his fidelity by furnishing armies, valiant military prowess, and by influencing the Jews in Egypt to espouse the cause of Caesar. This service was rewarded by Caesar by the gift to Antipater of Roman citizenship, the remission of tribute from Judea, and the confirmation of Hyrcanus as high priest. Political authority was given back to Hyrcanus and his office as ethnarch and high priest was made hereditary. Jerusalem was made the center of the land and the Jews were given control of all matters relating to their own customs. They were also granted religious liberty not only in Judea but in all sections of the empire, and were permitted to rebuild the walls of their cities. Josephus says: "He" (Caesar) "also gave Hyrcanus leave to raise up the walls of his own city, upon his asking that favor of him, for they had been demolished by Pompey. And this grant he sent to the consul of Rome, to be engraved in the capital."

Josephus further witnesses to the friendly relationship between the Jews and Rome and to the favors and honors granted to the Jews, and as evidence quotes many of the treaties made between Caesar and the Jews. Josephus includes a considerable list of these decrees. Since they serve as the basis for the Jewish contentions in the reign of Domitian we shall
include some of the more significant ones here.

"Julius Caius, praetor (consul) of Rome, to the magistrates, senate, and people of Parinae, sendeth greeting. The Jews of Belesa, and some other Jews that sojourn there, in the presence of your ambassadors, signify to us, that, by a decree of yours, you forbid them to make use of the customs of their forefathers, and their way of sacred worship. Now it does not please me that such decrees should be made against our friends and confederates, whereby they are forbidden to live according to their own customs, or to bring in contributions for common suppers and holy festivals, while they are not forbidden so to do even at Rome itself; for even Caius Caesar, our imperator and consul, in that decree wherein he forbade the Bacchanal rioters to meet in the city, did yet permit these Jews, and these only, both to bring in their contributions, and to make their common suppers. Accordingly, when I forbade other Bacchanal rioters, I permit these Jews to gather themselves together, according to the customs and laws of their forefathers and to persist therein. It will be therefore good for you, that if you have made any decree against these our friends and confederates, to abrogate the same, by reason of their virtue, and kind disposition toward us."

"Hyrcanus sent also one of these ambassadors to Desalbe, who was then prefect of Asia, and desired him to dismiss the Jews from military services, and to preserve to them the customs of their forefathers, and to permit them to live according to them. And when Desalbe had received

1. Antiquities XIV, 16, 2
Hyrcanus's letter, without any further deliberation, he sent an epistle to
the Asiatics, and particularly to the city of the Ephesians, the metropolis
of Asia, about the Jews; a copy of which epistle here follows:

"When Artemon was prytanis, on the first day of the month
Lunison, Solaballa, imperator to the senate and magistrates, and people of
the Ephesians, sendeth greeting. Alexander, the son of Theodorus, the
ambassador of Hyrcanus, the son of Alexander, the high priest and ethmarch
of the Jews, appeared before me, to show that his countrymen could not go
into their armies, because they are not allowed to bear arms or to travel
on the Sabbath-days, nor there to procure themselves those sorts of food
which they have been used to eat from the times of their forefathers, I
do therefore grant them a freedom from going into the army, as the former
prefects have done, and permit to use the customs of their forefathers, in
assembling together for sacred and religious purposes, as their law requires
and for collecting oblations necessary for sacrifices; and my will is, that
you write this to the several cities under your jurisdiction."

"Lucius's decree ran thus: - 'I have at my tribunal set these
Jews, who are citizens of Rome, and follow the Jewish religious rites, and
yet live at Ephesus, free from going into the army, and on account of the
superstition they are under.......Lucius Lentulus the consul freed the
Jews that are in Asia from going into the armies, at my intercession for
them; and when I had made the same petition some time afterward to Phanias
the emperor, and to Lucius Antonius, the vicerequies sor, I obtained the privilege of them also; and my will is, that you take care that no one give them any disturbance."

"Lucius Antonius, the son of Marcus, vicerequies sor, and vice-præstor to the magistrates, senate, and people of the Sardians, sendeth greetings. These Jews that are our fellow citizens at Rome, came to me and demonstrated that they had an assembly of their own, according to the laws of their forefathers, and this from the beginning, as also a place of their own, wherein they determine their suits and controversies with one another. Upon their petition therefore to me, that these might be lawful for them, I give order, that these their privileges be preserved, and they be permitted to do accordingly."

"The decree of these of Halicarnassus: " 'Since we have ever a great regard to piety toward God, and to holiness; and since we aim to follow the people of the Romans, who are the benefactors of all men, and what they have written to us about a league of friendship and mutual assistance between the Jews and our city, and that their sacred offices and accustomed festivals and assemblies may be observed by them; we have decided, that as many men and women of the Jews as are willing so to do, may celebrate their Sabbaths, and perform their holy offices, according to the Jewish laws; and may make their prosseucha at the seaside, according to the customs of their forefathers; and if any one, whether he be a
magistrate or a private person, hindereth them from so doing, he shall be liable to a fine, to be applied to the uses of the city."

"The decree of the Sardians: - 'This decree was made by the senate and people, upon the representation of the praetors: - Whereas, those Jews who are our fellow citizens, and live with us in the city have ever had great benefits heaped upon them by the people, and have come now into the senate, and desired of the people, that upon the restitution of their law and their liberty, by the senate and people of Rome, they may assemble together, according to their ancient legal custom, and that we will not bring any suit against them about it; and that a place may be given them where they may have their congregations, and their wives and children, and may offer, as did their forefathers, their prayers and sacrifices to God. Now the senate and people have decreed to permit them to assemble together, on the days formerly appointed, and to act according to their own laws; and that such a place be set apart for them by the praetors, for the building and inhabiting the same, as they shall esteem fit for that purpose; and that those that take care of the provisions for the city, shall take care that such sorts of food as they esteem fit for their eating, may be imported into the city."  

While it is possible that Josephus has exaggerated the favors granted to the Jews in trying to make a favorable impression upon the

1. Antiquities XIV, 10.
Romans and especially upon the Emperor, it seems evident that the attitude of Rome at this time was friendly and that special favors were accorded the Jews. And "It was with good reason that the Jews, above all the other foreign peoples, mourned a few years later the death of Caesar. Their lamentation was heard not only in Judea, but in Egypt, where he had confirmed all the much-prized privileges of the nation; in Asia Minor where he had guaranteed them full religious freedom, and in Rome itself, where his memory was held by them in high honor."

The assassination of Caesar brought confusion, rivalry and intrigue to the whole Roman world. No one suffered greater from this turmoil than did the Jews. Cassius, who had been made governor of Syria by Caesar, returned to Syria where he induced a large army to follow him in his quest for the crown. To get money for the support of this army he laid a heavy tax upon all the cities and provinces, but his greatest demand was upon Judea from which he demanded the enormous sum of seven hundred talents. When some of the cities failed to raise their apportionment he sold their inhabitants as slaves, and robbed the Jewish temple of its treasures. Herod, who had been made governor of Galilee, gave his support to Cassius and for his loyalty was promised the kingship of Judea if fortune favored the plans of Cassius. No sooner had Herod received the news of the defeat of Cassius by Antony, than he switched his allegiance to Antony and through a well designed scheme with Hyrcanus won with

1. History of the Jewish People. Riggs P. 163
Pharaoh the joint rulership of Judea.

The following struggle with the Barthians in Syria provided the opportunity for Antigonus to make a final attempt to regain the throne. He had made tremendous progress toward that end when Antony and Octavian, who had been reconciled to Antony, so presented Herod's case that the Senate declared him king of Judea, and through the assistance of Antony and Sosius defeated Antigonus at Jerusalem and took him bound to Antony at Antioch where he was ignominiously put to death.

When Antigonus was thus removed from the struggle, Herod became king in truth as well as in title of a nation that hated him with extreme bitterness. Herod entered upon his long reign with two principles guiding his every action; the maintenance of his own supremacy and the strengthening of the favor of the Romans. He had no concern for the Jews only as he could use them for his own interests and subject them to his own will. He had attained success in realizing his ambition to be king at the expense of the unity of the people, the aristocracy in Jerusalem, and the survivors of the Hasmonan House. He was wisely suspicious of every move on the part of the people whom he governed. The first years of his reign were characterized by plots and counterplots growing out of this bitter hatred between him and the people. Riggs characterizes his reign as "A complex of brilliant achievements and fearful crimes." So far as the religious demands of the people were concerned he acted with consideration
for he had no interest in religion of any form, and he felt that consi-

deration here might tend to his own interest, but he dealt with all

resistance to his authority with the utmost rigor, and to any possible

tender for leadership among the Jews he meted out a quick and

barbarous death.

The Jews were able to endure all sorts of hardship, however,

so long as their faith and religious customs were not violated. Then

once an assault was made at this point stern resentment followed. How

vigorously they protested against such encroachment is indicated in the

account given by Josephus of Herod's institution of the games and con-
tests in the theater which he had built at Jerusalem. "Herod revolted

from the laws of his country, and corrupted their ancient constitution, by

the introduction of foreign practices, which constitution yet ought to

have been preserved inviolable; by which means we became guilty of great

vicedness afterward, while those religious observances which used to

lead the multitude to piety were now neglected; for, in the first place,

he appointed solemn games to be celebrated every fifth year, in honor of

Caesar, and built a theater at Jerusalem, as also a very great amphite-
thater in the plain........Inscriptions also of the greatest actions of

Caesar, and trophies of those nations which he had conquered in his wars,

and all made of the purest gold and silver, encompassed the theater

itself........He had also made great preparation of wild beasts, and lions

1. Antiquities XV, 7
themselves in great abundance, and of such other beasts as were either of uncommon strength, or of such sort as were rarely seen. These were prepared to fight with one another, or that men who were condemned to death were to fight with them. And truly foreigners were greatly surprised and delighted at the vastness of the expenses here exhibited, and at the great dangers that were here seen; but to natural Jews, this was no better than a dissolution of those customs for which they had so great a veneration. It appeared also no better than a barefaced impiety to throw men to wild beasts to afford delight to spectators; and it appeared an instance of no less impiety to change their own laws for such foreign exercises; but, above all the rest, the trophies gave most distaste to the Jews; for as they imagined them to be images, enclosed within the armor that hung round about them, they were sorely displeased at them, because it was not the custom of their country to pay honors to such images.

"Nor was Herod unacquainted with the disturbances they were under; and, as he thought it unseasonable to use violence with them, so he spake to some of them by way of consolation, and in order to free them from that superstitious fear they were under; yet could not he satisfy them but they cried out with one accord, out of their great uneasiness for the offenses they thought he had been guilty of, that although they should think of bearing all the rest, yet would they never bear images of men in their city, meaning the trophies, because this was disagreeable to the laws of
their country." Their clamor continued on this point until Herod satisfied them by granting their requests.

This record is of great interest to us for it clearly shows the beginning of the attempt to Romanize the Jews and shows how tenaciously they held to their religious convictions. It also shows their uncompromising aversion to images or anything that savored of images. This is to be remembered when we come to the great conflicts later in which a strenuous campaign is inaugurated to Hellenize the Jews and Christians. The fact that their requests were granted in this case shows the attitude not only of Herod but of the Roman government toward the religion of the Jews in the empire and serves as a forceful precedent for the Jews in their later conflicts. It is very evident from this statement of Josephus that although the Jews were not content with their lot as subjects of Rome and especially with the reign of Herod, yet they were willing to endure all this provided their religious customs and convictions were not infringed upon. In the following years revolts were frequent but Josephus attributes them either to some innovators among the Jews or to the enormities of the local rulers. Never does he intimate in the book of the "Wars" that the Jews are opposed to Roman rule nor that they have any reason for complaint against Rome.

But it is also evident that certain difficulties were actually developing. Herod was by education a Greek and this made it very easy for

1. Antiquities XV, 8
2. Antiquities XV, 8, 2
him to adopt the policy of Augustus Caesar who had become an absolute monarch and who sought to enlarge the borders of Hellenic culture. Of course Herod’s primary aim was to keep the favor of Caesar but he felt that that could best be done by being known among the Romans as a popular sovereign. To win this popularity and to appease the hostility of the most orthodox Jews he made an eloquent speech before them in which he proposed the building of a new temple to Jehovah to crown the building enterprise that had been sponsored by Augustus. The work was immediately begun and after almost ten years, on the anniversary of Herod’s accession, the temple was consecrated to the worship of Jehovah with imposing ritual and great rejoicing.

The succeeding decades brought to the Jews varied experiences of good fortune and persecution. The frequent uprisings in Palestine finally brought the Roman army and with it the burning of the city of Jerusalem. Josephus intimates that in the years succeeding both Titus and Vespasian were tolerant toward the Jews and granted them the religious privileges which had formerly been granted by Roman emperors. But the Imperial cult, which we shall study in the next chapter, was rapidly spreading in the Empire and its advocates were becoming more aggressive and exclusive, reaching its climax, as we shall see, toward the end of the first century.
Chapter II

EMPEROR WORSHIP

The emperor worship which characterized the Roman empire from the time of Augustus down to and including the reign of Domitian, and probably later, developed from many sources. The identity of religion and rule in the Greek City-State was carried over into Rome with the conquest of the Greek civilization by Rome. Religion and patriotism were one and inseparable. The citizens were bound to worship and to serve the gods of the State. To refuse the gods their due was treason, and liable to punishment just as refusal to serve the State in times of danger.

The religions of Republican Rome were in a state of decay. The worship of Janus and some other Latin and Sabine deities still existed but with little interest or enthusiasm. Attention was turned to foreign gods and the Roman gods were being identified with the more lively gods of Greece and Egypt. With the continued conquests of Rome and the expansion of the empire these limited gods were inadequate. "What had seemed sufficient when Rome was simply a city State among other Italian States, or even when she had brought all Italy under her sway, had become clearly inadequate when her dominion extended from Persia to Britain, and from the Rhine to the great desert." Rome had attained world power and in a large degree had accomplished world unity, but there was for her subjects no unity in the realm of the gods to match her visible unity or world rule. This very unity of power drove the people from the many gods of approximately equal, though perhaps different, powers to some divine center of

unity in a god that was greater than these. The passion of Rome was for a religion more inclusive and unifying. She wanted one simple god—a god approachable, placable, able and ready to help. With the throne of the gods thus vacant, no more likely candidate was to be found than the emperor who was the visible holder of the greatest power known to man.

The tendency of primitive civilization to apotheosize their great heroes and to identify the ruler of the State with the god of the State provided a favorable means for exaltation of the emperor to this throne.

Emperor worship was by no means a new thing nor did it originate in the Roman empire. In some form it is as old as the most ancient civilization. In China we find the ruler more or less identified with Heaven—the supreme god of the nation. While alive the emperor was accepted as the "son of Heaven" or the "representative of Heaven," and at his death he was worshiped by the succeeding emperors, an honor given only to Heaven and the emperors. In Egypt the Pharaohs were adored as the sons of Re, the incarnation of God upon earth, though the worship of them is not thoroughly established. Among the Babylonians and the Syrians the ruler was accorded a unique position. The term "ilu" is connected with the name of Sargon I which indicates that he bore a divine name, and his son, Naramsin, is expressly designated "god." "Gudea of Lagash refers to himself as a child of the goddess Gatumdug and prays to her; 'I have no mother, you are my mother. I have no father, you are my father......in
the sanctuary you bore me," and, while in Babylonia there is some question as to whether the ruler was ever deified outright, a unique relation between the monarch and the gods was generally implied. Even Hammurabi recognizes a unique relation between Amu, king of Anumzki, and Bel, lord of heaven and earth, who jointly commit the rule of mankind to Marduk who is a descendant of the god Sin. "Egypt and Persia transmitted to Alexander and the Diadochi the adoration of kings in their lifetime. Phillip associated himself with the immortals. Alexander was adored as an earthly deity by the Persians: he was proclaimed 'son of Zeus' by the oracle of Ammon, though his countrymen reluctantly acknowledged his divinity. The Ptolemies succeeded to the divinity of the Pharaohs, whereby double allegiance was due them. The Seleucids styled themselves 'saviour and god,' and appointed one priest to honor the dead kings, and another to honor the living kings who would one day join the Celestials. The kings of Pergamum and Commagene made themselves divine. The Greeks had for long practised a hero-worship, in which men of distinguished merit were regarded as quasi-divine." 2

The numerous myths of Greek literature manifest the common conceptions of the interrelations between the gods and great men, and the heroes were often crowned with divinity. In all early civilizations the idea of rulership had a decided religious significance. The political destiny of the nation was of primary concern to the particular god of that

2. The Environment of Early Christianity, S. Angus, P. 86
nation and the king exercised a divinely delegated authority as the representative of the god. Even in Israel, it was Jehovah who chose the king and directed his policies. The ruler was generally looked upon as the protector of his people and in cases of great crisis was acknowledged as the saviour. Among peoples whose religion was polytheistic it was a small matter to add one more god to their pantheon, and thus it was very easy to step from the common reverence of the ruler as such to the worship of him as a god, especially when he was highly esteemed by his subjects.

In the Roman world it was Julius Caesar who paved the way for the admission of rulers into the Roman pantheon. When he returned from the battle of Pharsalus, where he had defeated Pompey in 48 B.C., he was hailed by the Greeks as a saviour and a god. An Ephesian inscription states that the Greek cities of Asia honored him as "god manifest, son of Ares and Aphrodite, and common saviour of human life," and in another inscription he is designated "the god and dictator and saviour of the world." On his return to Rome his chariot was placed before the statue of Jupiter, and was set up in the temple of Quirinus and it bore the inscription "to the invincible god." But while these and many other similar honors were heaped upon him, no official cult of Caesar was established in Rome until after his death.

Soon after the death of Julius Caesar, Octavian (Augustus) erected a statue to Caesar in the temple of Venus and in September 44 B.C.

1. Case, op. cit. P. 212
Antony implored the Senate to set apart a day for making supplication to the new god. The deification of Caesar, as well as the name "Divus Julius," was fixed by law January 1st, 42 B.C. From this time on worship of the ruler, deified after death by decree of the Senate, became a legal institution even at Rome itself. While the institution of the cult of the living emperor did not readily gain recognition in Rome, it was widespread in the provinces. Josephus refers to Pilate bringing the effigies of Caesar into the city of Jerusalem and the ensuing struggle between Pilate and the Jews until he commanded that the images be carried back to Caesarea. Even Antony was hailed as a god in Athens and Alexandria. After the battle of Actium, Augustus was hailed as god and worshipped as the saviour of the Greek world. Only a god could give the world such peace and order. Horace and Virgil refer to him as a "son of Venus" and in many inscriptions he is addressed as "Zeus" or "son of Zeus." As a safeguard against the democratic spirit of the Roman people he refused to be worshipped as a god in Rome but he imposed no such restriction on the Greeks or the provincials. In fact, in the provinces he sanctioned temples to himself in conjunction with the goddess Roma, and he accepted from the Senate the title "Augustus the Revered," hitherto an Epithet belonging only to the gods. In Asia his worship spread rapidly. Temples were raised to the divinity of the emperor and statues of Augustus were erected in every town of importance, even in Rome his modesty in refusing worship while
living did not serve to dampen the ardour of his followers. Angus says: "Of all the Caesars Augustus received the most genuine adoration, partly because of his unique position, it being the first time in human history that one man was so necessary to all, partly out of the gratitude for the 'Pax Romana,' partly because the cult had not yet been sullied by the elevation of unworthy rulers, and the honor was not yet lessened by a crowd of similar divinities. Philo says that 'the whole world regarded Augustus as equal to the Olympians.'" 1

"Augustus' long and prosperous rule was particularly conducive to the growth of emperor worship which was in reality popular appreciation expressed in terms of religion. Josephus says the temple Herod built to Augustus at Caesarea was remarkable for its size and beauty. These temples with their official priests and stated ceremonies existed in relative abundance, especially in eastern lands, during the lifetime of Augustus." The popular appreciation of Augustus is manifest in the decree making his birthday the official beginning of the year, and in insisting, in the provinces, that worship of him was the very essence of patriotism.

With the accession of Tiberius the urge toward emperor worship waned. There were two reasons for this. First, Tiberius seemed somewhat modest and did not take favorably to the idea of being worshipped while living. No doubt he hoped that after death he might find a place in the Pantheon and be worshipped as were his predecessors. But while he was

alive he preferred to be classed with men rather than gods. In the second place he became enamored with the study of astrology, and religion for him became a deification of the heavenly bodies, and the elements fire, air, water and earth, - as well as the phenomena time, seasons, months, weeks, days and hours. The precedent had been established, however, and he did not insist on abandoning the practice. Rather did he insist on the worship of Julius and Augustus as essential to patriotic loyalty.

With the coming of Caligula a new era dawned in the history of Roman politics and religion. A new chapter is written in the development of the Imperial cult. The earlier emperors had been content with the voluntary worship which the people, especially in the Asian provinces, were zealous to offer. Caligula, however, proclaimed himself a god and demanded universal homage to his statue. This was an impossible demand for the Jews of the Roman Empire, but was warmly welcomed by the Greek populace. In Alexandria the Greeks took advantage of the decree to wreak vengeance on the hated Jews and a terrible persecution resulted. In Javania and other cities the heathen inhabitants followed the example of Alexandria and attempted to force the worship of the emperor's statue on the Jews. When the Jews stoutly refused such homage, their rebellious attitude was reported to Caligula. He determined to take vengeance by setting up his statue in the temple at Jerusalem, and sent a large army under Petronius to enforce the decree. The Jews refused to comply with the
demand. Josephus reports the incident and the Jews' resistance in a very interesting manner.

"Hereupon Caius, taking it very heinously that he should be thus despised by the Jews alone, sent Petronius to be president of Syria, and gave him orders to make an invasion into Judea with a great body of troops and if they would not admit of his statue willingly to erect it in the temple of God; but if they were obstinate to conquer them by war and then do it. Accordingly, Petronius took the government of Syria and made haste to obey Caesar's epistle.....He also wrote word to Caius what he had resolved to do; who commanded him for his alacrity, and ordered him to go on, and to make war with them, in case they should not obey his commands. But there came many ten thousands of the Jews to Petronius, to offer their petitions to him, that he would not compel them to transgress and violate the law of their forefathers; 'but if,' said they, 'thou art entirely resolved to bring this statue and erect it, do thou first kill us, and then do what thou hast resolved on; for, while we are alive, we cannot permit such things as are forbidden us to be done by the authority of our legislator, and by our forefathers' determination that such prohibitions are instances of virtue.' But Petronius was angry at them and said, 'Caesar hath sent to me, I am under the necessity of being subservient to his decrees, because a disobedience to them will bring upon me inevitable destruction.' Then the Jews replied, 'Since, therefore, thou art so
disposed, O Petronius! that thou wilt not disobey Caius's epistles, neither will we transgress the commands of our law; and we depend upon the excellency of our laws, and by the labors of our ancestors, who have continued hitherto without suffering them to be transgressed, we dare not by any means suffer ourselves to be so timorous as to transgress these laws out of the fear of death, which God hath determined are for our advantage; and, if we fall into misfortunes, we will bear them, in order to preserve our laws, as knowing that those who expose themselves to dangers have good hope of escaping them, because God will stand on our side when, out of regard for him, we undergo afflictions, and sustain the uncertain turns of fortune. But, if we should submit to thee, we would be greatly reproached for our cowardice, as thereby showing ourselves ready to transgress our law; and we should incur the great anger of God also, who, even thyself being judged, is superior to Caius.'......Then Petronius said to them, 'Will you then make war with Caesar, without considering his great preparations for war, and your own weakness?' They replied, 'We will not by any means make war with him; but still we will die before we will see our laws transgressed.' So they threw themselves down upon their faces, and stretched out their throats, and said they were ready to be slain; and this they did for forty days together, and, in the meantime, left off the tilling of their ground, and that while the season required them to sow it. Thus they continued firm in their resolution, and proposed to themselves
to die willingly, rather than to see the dedication of the statue." ¹

When the Jews had thus faithfully presented their plea to Petronius he was moved with sympathy for them and refused to execute Caligula's decree. His refusal so angered Caligula that he was the more thoroughly determined that the Jews should worship his statue and that Petronius should pay for his disobedience with his life. But before his commands could be executed he died, as the Jews believed, by the hand of God. With his death the religious liberty that had been granted the Jews was restored "and they were not afterwards disturbed for failure to join in the Emperor-worship." No mention is here made of the Christians as fellow-sufferers with the Jews in their persecutions. The reason is obvious. At this early date there would not be a sufficient number of Christians to attract attention, and, furthermore, no distinction between the Jew and the Christian had yet been drawn by the Roman world, if indeed, the distinction was clear to the sects themselves.

Under Nero and his successors, however the Emperor cult continued to develop and very soon became the established State religion with an ever increasing political significance. While its progress was not, as yet, signalized by edicts enforcing it, or by persecutions arising from it, it was rapidly coming to be recognized as the basis of patriotism and loyalty to the State. Nero donned the "Corona Radiata," assumed the role of a god, as had Caligula, and insisted on loyalty from his subjects in the

¹. Antiquities XVIII, 8, 2 & 3
worship of his statue. The Jews were exempt because their religion was authorized and they were granted special privileges. By this time the distinctions were already beginning to be drawn between Jews and Christians and the Christians, while as fully bound by the convictions against worship of the Emperor or his statue as were the Jews, could no longer claim the protection of Judaism. Their refusal to worship the Emperor was interpreted as disloyalty. Hence it was easy for Nero, when he had set fire to Rome, to accuse the Christians and find whole-hearted support from the populace.

McGiffert says: "There is no reason to doubt the statement of Tacitus, that he (Nero) inflicted tortures and death upon the Christians of Rome simply in order to relieve himself from the suspicion of being the author of the conflagration and to turn the rage of the people upon another object. That the Christians should have been thus selected as the scapegoat was not in the least strange. The Emperor was entirely under the influence of his wife, Poppaea, who was a Jewish proselyte, and it is quite possible that his attention was called to the Christians by her. Once brought to his attention their notorious lack of patriotism, their reputed atheism, their unsociability, their alleged devotion to the black arts, and their general unpopularity might well lead him to see in them the best possible persons to accuse of the crime which he had himself committed." 1

The Neronian persecution, however, was limited primarily to Rome for in the provinces the distinction between Jew and Christian would not

1. The Apostolic Age. A.C. McGiffert P. 628 f
yet be clearly defined. But when the distinction had been made it is not
improbable that the enemies of the Christians used this opportunity to in-
flict persecution on the hated Christians. It seems perfectly evident,
however, that as yet no decree had been issued proscribing Christianity or
compelling worship of the Emperor. The most that can be said is that
failure to worship the image of the Emperor was interpreted as disloyalty
to the State. Ramsay says: "Disrespect to the Emperor had indeed already
been treated in Rome as treason; but there is no evidence that as yet
this charge had been brought against the Christians, or that compliance
with the rites of the Imperial religion was formally proposed to them as
a test of their faith."\(^1\)

During the period from Nero to Domitian little is known of the
actions or developments of the Emperor-cult in the Roman Empire or of the
attitude of the Emperors toward Emperor-worship. The persecutions arising
during the reigns of Vespasian and Titus were probably a continuation of
the policy inaugurated by Nero - the punishment of Christians as social
inventors, atheists, adherents of a religion that was not recognized by
the Empire. It seems evident, however, that the Imperial cult was con-
tinuing to grow and was beginning to be considered necessary to the well
being of the Empire. To bind the heterogeneous population together a
universal religion was necessary. The governors of the Empire could
clearly see that there could be no satisfactory unity of the State without

\(^1\) The Church in the Roman Empire, W. M. Ramsay, P. 250
without a corresponding unity in religion. The policy of Rome had been religious toleration to all her subject races so long as they did not interfere with the proper ends of government. But with the development of the Empire the need for a common religion became increasingly manifest. "In order to unify the Empire, there was needed not only the outward power of military supremacy; there was needed a moral and especially a religious bond; there was needed a common oath whereby every one in the service of the Empire could profess his fidelity to the Empire......This was found in the sacramentum, the oath of allegiance by which they swore fidelity to the Empire. This oath was made sacred and universal, for it was sworn by the genius of Augustus, which was made one with the genius of the Roman people. A common bond was required for the preservation and the consolidation of the common interests of the Empire, and this was found in the worship of the Emperor as the visible symbol of Roman strength." 1

To provide for this worship the Senate instituted a new order of priests and adopted a series of religious rites for use in the worship of the Emperor. "As if to give solat to the new departure, names to the number of twenty-one, from the most prominent citizens, were chosen, and the names of Tiberius, Drusus, Claudia, and Germanicus were added to the number. Repeated references are made in the Annals of Tacitus to the existence of the Roman priesthood." 2

With the increasing pressure from the enthusiasts of the

1. E.R.E., Vol. 3, 1, 54
2. Annals of Tacitus, I, 54
provinces together with the conviction of the Roman rulers that a common religion was essential to the best interests of the Empire the new worship soon became imperative. It became a crime not to perform the ritual of the Imperial religion. Tacitus reports that the citizens of Cyzicus were deprived of their privileges because they had suffered the ceremonies in honor of Augustus to fall into contempt. In most of the cities, however, there was no objection to accepting the new religion. Rather was there keen competition among the cities for the honor or privilege of building temples and organizing priesthoods. Tacitus reports that: "Eleven cities rivaled each other not in power and opulence, but with equal zeal contending for the preference of building a temple to the reigning Emperor." In this competition Smyrna was granted the privilege but the competition continued among other cities. "The Senate of Rome was beset by the cities of the Empire for the privilege of styling themselves 'neocori,' servants of the Caesar-gea, and for the privilege of inscribing that title on their coins."  

The rapid rise of the cult was due: First, to the peace and order which the Emperor had brought to the Empire. The period of Republican Rome had been characterized by rivalry, rebellion, and continual disorder. The Emperor had succeeded in putting down all rebellions and bringing peace and order to the entire Empire. Second, to the increasing claims of the Emperors to divine power and the insistence upon the

1. Annals of Tacitus, IV, 36
2. E.R.E. Vol. 3 P. 54
3. E.R.E. Vol. 3 P. 54
recognition of these claims. And third, to the anxiety of the people in
scribing to the Emperors all the attributes recognized as divine by them.
James Iverach says: "Behind the visible majesty of the Emperor there lay
all the prestige of the unrivalled history of Rome. The might of possession
belonged to it, and all the visible forces of the world were at his command.
Nor can we forget that the deification of the ruling power seemed the ful-
fillment of a hope which had been cherished for a long time by all the
peoples of the East. There was a hope, there were prophecies, of a coming
deliverer, and there are evidences extant of the widespread character of
such a hope. The hope of the Individual races was colored by their history
and by their idiosyncrasy. It took one form in Judæa, another in Asia
Minor, and another in Greece, but the ferment caused by such an expecta-
tion can be traced over all the known world. It is very marked in the in-
scriptions which still remain. A quotation from one inscription may be
made because it illustrates the universal expectation, and describes what
it was. The date of the inscription seems to be about 9 B. C. 'This day
has given the earth an entirely new aspect. The world would have gone to
destruction had there not streamed forth from him who is now born a common
blessing. Rightly does he judge who recognizes in this birthday the begin-
ing of life and of all the powers of life; now is that ended when men
pity themselves for being born......from no other day does the individual
or the community receive such benefit as from this natal day, full of
blessing to all. The providence that rules over all has filled this man
with such gifts for the salvation of the world as designate him the
Saviour for us and for the coming generations: of wers all he make an
end, and establish all things worthily. By his appearing are the hopes
of our forefathers fulfilled: not only has he surpassed the good deeds
of men of earlier time, but it is impossible that one greater than he can
ever appear. The birthday of God has brought to the world glad tidings
that are bound up in him. From his birthday a new era begins.' Speaking
of this inscription, Ramsay says that it records 'the decree of the Commune
of Asia instituting the new Augustan year, and ordered to be put in all
the leading cities.' This shows the enthusiasm of the Asian Commune
toward the Imperial cult and at the same time shows their anxiety to im-
press the people with a feeling of the majesty and worth of the Roman
Emperor.

The Imperial religion, however, did not depend for its propaga-
tion on the influence of inscriptions through which the worth and majesty
of the Emperor would inspire loyalty and devotion. Neither did they rely
on evangelistic methods. They sought to make it the religion of the Empire
by the power of Imperial sanction. To accomplish this an effective organ-
ization, a powerful priesthood, was instituted which was endowed with many
privileges, great power and functions of a large order. These organiza-
tions were under the direction of the Commune whose duty it was to erect

temples, establish priesthoods and maintain the Imperial religion. The
presiding officer in these Communae was called 'Asiaarch' 'Bithyniarh' or
'Giliaiarh' according to the name of the province. He had control over
the Imperial priesthood. The office was much coveted because of the honor
attached to it. "These priests, appointed from the provinciales of mark
out of the province, were by their traditions and by their official duties
far more called and inclined than were the Imperial magistrates to aim-
advert on neglect of the recognized worship, and, when discussion did not
avail, as they had not themselves the power of punishment, to bring the
acts punishable by the civil law to the notice of the local or Imperial
authorities, and to invoke the aid of the secular arm - above all, to
force the Christians to comply with the demands of the Imperial cultus." 2

The Imperial religion became more and more eager, militant and
oppressive. It was filled with the spirit of aggressive persecution. It
was in the reign of Domitian that this persecution reached its climax.
Beckwith suggests that, "this Emperor, who because of his infamous career
failed to receive the honor of apotheosis from the Senate at his death, was
strenuous in claiming divinity in his life." 2 The extreme hostility of
Domitian toward both Jews and Christians is a well recognized fact. This
hostility may have been due, in part, to the attempt on the part of the
Jews and of Jewish Christians, to evade payment of the "tax to Capitoline
Jupiter which was levied upon all the Jews after the destruction of

1. E.R.E. Vol. 3, P. 56 Quoted from Kosman English Tr. 1886
P. 348 f.
2. Apocalypse of John, I. T. Beckwith, P. 200
Jerusalem, as a substitute for the ancient temple tax which they had been accustomed to send to the latter city. But this refusal was insignificant compared with their refusal to pay him such divine honors as he demanded from all his subjects. He assumed the title "Domitus et Deus," and commanded that his subjects worship him as their lord and god. His mad craze for worship of himself aggravated his already jealous and suspicious disposition and brought suffering and death not only to Christians and Jews but even to his own near relatives among whom were Flavius Clement and Domitilla. So determined was he upon this one thing that he made no limits to the persecutions necessary to bring all subjects to render worship to his statue.

For the purpose of carrying out the edicts, the priests of the Imperial cult or the Imperial cults who had fostered Emperor-worship from its inception in the Roman Empire were armed with authority from the Emperor to seek out all suspicious subjects and force them to worship the Emperor or command them to death. They were required to prove their loyalty by performing an act of religious worship of the statue of the Emperor which was brought into the court ready for the test. If they performed the ritual they were acquitted and dismissed, if they refused to perform it they were condemned to death. In Revelation there is the suggestion that a boycott was effected by which only those who possessed a number or a ticket proving that they had performed the ritual of the

1. E.R.E. Vol. 3, p. 56
Imperial cult could buy or sell provisions. In this reign the worship of the Emperor clearly becomes the test of patriotism and all who refused were classed as outlaws and traitors. "It was the refusal of Christians to perform the ritual of the Imperial cult that lead to the declaration that they were outlaws, with no rights and no legal standing before the rulers. The test of their standing was whether they were willing to burn incense or to offer worship to Caesar."  

1. Revelation, XXII, 15 f.  
CHAPTER III

THE CONFLICT OF EMPEROR-WORSHIP WITH JUDAISM AS DEPICTED
IN THE ANTIQUITIES OF JOSEPHUS.

In the previous chapter we have traced the rise and development of the Imperial cult in the Roman Empire. We have seen how it grew from a little handful of enthusiastic admirers of Augustus to be the State religion of the Empire, demanding adherence by all subjects of the Empire. Most of the subject peoples together with the Roman citizenry enthusiastically accepted it and even sponsored the movement. There were, however, two outstanding exceptions - the Jews of the Empire and the Christians. Between these particular religious groups and the Emperor cult conflict was inevitable.

Perhaps the outstanding characteristic of the Jew, whether in Palestine or in the Greek cities of Asia, was his fidelity to his unique religious convictions. We have already pointed out that he could endure the destruction of his nation - even the beloved city of Jerusalem and its temple, he could endure hardship and oppression, he could submit, though unwillingly, to the loss of political independence and subjection to some great world power, he could even tolerate the transfer of his temple tax to the Capitoline Jupiter, but one thing he could not and would not do, that was to violate the fundamental laws and principles of his religion. We have already seen how, according to Josephus, multitudes of Jews when they felt that it was hopeless to rebel against the army of Petronius which had come to force the erection of the statue of Caligula in the temple, deliberately offered their lives rather than suffer the desecration of the
temple and the violation of their laws. Numerous similar incidents could be cited.

From the time of Deutero-Isaiah the religion of the Jews rapidly developed into a strict monotheism. For them, from the time of Moses, there had been but one God, Jehovah (Jahweh), but they recognized the gods of other nations. After Deutero-Isaiah, however, Jehovah became the One God of the universe, and the outstanding emphasis of Judaism was upon monotheism. The teachings of the literary prophets of the eighth to the fourth century B. C. were characterized by a ferocious battle against idolatry. Some scholars might date the beginning of this battle back to the time of Elijah, but certainly it is manifest in the literary prophets. The condemnation and hatred of all that savored idolatry was burned into the very soul of every Jew. In prophecy, in law, and in ritual the abomination of idolatry was held up as the vilest of sins.

It was the Jew with this background, with decided religious convictions, who had written back into the very origin of his race and religion "the Eternal our God is One," who had been so thoroughly imbued with the spirit of hatred for all idolatry that in the latter half of the first century A. D. faced a compulsory State religion, the main requirement of which was to worship the Emperor or his statue. At certain other periods of his history he had had to fight and suffer for his religious convictions. He had seen his temple desecrated, he had sacrificed his life rather than

1. Antiquities XVIII, 8
take up arms on the Sabbath day, but now he faced something even worse, he was asked to worship another god, a man-made god at that. Every fibre of his being revolted at the very thought. He faced the greatest of all conflicts. So long as worship of the Emperor had been voluntary he had no serious grievance but when, in the reign of Domitian, it was made compulsory on all subjects of the Roman Empire the conflict was on.

The sad lot of the Jews was greatly aggravated by the antagonism of the Hellenists. The relation between the Jews and the Greeks had been far from friendly. The Greeks abominated the strict religious convictions and moral standards of the Jews quite as much as their exclusiveness. On the other hand the Jews scornfully ridiculed the idols and religious customs of the heathens. The Jew could find nothing good or even tolerable in his heathen neighbor. The bitterness increased with the years until a state of perpetual hostility prevailed. Josephus often refers to the plans of the Greeks to bring the Jews into disrepute with the Emperor and to stir up trouble between them.

The establishment of Emperor-worship as the State religion gave the Greeks chance to wreak vengeance on the Jews, and it seems that they made much of this opportunity. The Greeks, if not, indeed, the originators of the Imperial cult, were its most enthusiastic propagandists and loyal advocates from its very inception in the Roman world. The reasons are not far to seek. Greek religion recognized numerous gods. Their heroes were
not infrequently raised to the rank of gods. The addition of one more god to their pantheon was an easy matter. Moreover, Augustus was looked upon by them as their saviour, indeed, the saviour of civilization. It was he who brought peace to the Empire. Only a god could do that. So very early they insisted on building temples and erecting altars to Augustus and the succeeding Emperors, and they always took the lead in attempting to universalize this worship. Josephus relates frequent attempts on the part of the Hellenists to impose worship of the Emperor upon the Jews, even before the time of Domitian. A few excerpts from the Antiquities will give us some idea of this aggressive policy of the Greeks.

"Now the cities ill-treated the Jews in Asia, and all those also of the same nation who lived in Libya, which joins to Cyrene, while the former kings had given them equal privileges with other citizens: but the Greeks affronted them at this time, and that so far as to take away their sacred money, and to do them mischief on other particular occasions, when, therefore, they were thus afflicted, and found no end of the barbarous treatment they met with among the Greeks, they sent ambassadors to Caesar on those accounts; who gave them the same privileges as they had had before and sent letters to the same purpose to the governors of the provinces." 1

The burning of the market-place at Antioch called forth another accusation of the Jews. "Antiochus accused the Jews as the occasion of the mischief that was thus done. Now this induced the people of Antioch,

1. Josephus XVI, 6
who were now under the immediate persuasion, by reason of the disorder they were in that this calumny was true. . . . They all fell violently upon those that were accused; and this, like madmen, in a very furious rage as even as if they had seen the Jews in a manner setting fire themselves to the city." 1

"The people of Antioch earnestly entreated him," Titus, "and continually begged of him, that he would eject the Jews out of their city.... However Titus would not grant their requests but permitted the Jews of Antioch to continue to enjoy the very same privileges in that city which they had before." 2

The stout resistance of the Jews, and the value of their friendship to the Empire and their perpetual reliance upon precedence maintained for them, with minor local persecutions, their religious freedom and with it exemption from worshipping the Emperor. Josephus tells of an attempt to force pagan religion upon the Jews at Antioch and to deprive them of their former rights in the city and how the attempt was frustrated by Titus. This too was just at the close of the Jewish war. 3 With the accession of Domitian, however, there was a decided change in the Imperial policy. The Roman Senate refused to apotheosize him. Recognizing the fact that at death he would not be granted a place among the gods, as had his predecessors, he became the more insistent that he should be worshipped while living. To accomplish this and to make Emperor-worship universal he issued edicts

1. Wars VII, 4
2. Wars VIII, 5
3. Wars VIII, 5
to the effect that all subjects of the Empire should worship his statue as a testimony of loyalty to the State; and to execute these orders he commissioned the Communes of the provinces with the power to condemn to death any who refused to perform the ritual of the Imperial cult. The Communes gladly accepted the order and enthusiastically set forth to execute them with the center of their attack aimed at the Jews and Christians.

Domitian himself assumed a hostile attitude toward the Jews. The Jewish war was still fresh in the minds of the Romans and the super-suspicious spirit of Domitian feared lest a revolt might be organized at any time. His suspicions were heightened with the attempt of the Jews to evade the payment of the "tax to Capitoline Jupiter which was levied on all Jews after the destruction of Jerusalem, as a substitute for the ancient temple tax which they had been accustomed to send to the latter city. But the chief cause of the hostility which was fanned into a flame toward the close of his reign was the refusal of these Jews to worship his statue. His purpose, as has been stated, was to universalize the Emperor-worship and to crush all other religions in the Empire with which it conflicted.

The Jews and Christians refused to submit to the worship of the Emperor. They could not and would not render divine honors to any pagan deities, much less to the Roman Emperor. The storm clouds thickened. A crisis seemed inevitable. The Jews had a defense. They had made numerous treaties with Rome which guaranteed to them special privileges. Theirs
was a legal religion and could not be violated. They had been granted the
right to follow their own religious customs and had not been compelled to
accept or perform any practices of other religions. They had been exempt
from the army and to them had been permitted the administration of justice
in their own affairs. But in spite of all this the Jews were facing a
great crisis in the mad policy of Domitian. Persecution and extinction
seemed probable if not inevitable.

Josephus at this time lived comfortably at Rome where he had
spent most of the time since the close of the Jewish war reviewing the
history of the Jewish people and writing his history of the Jewish wars.
With the continued aggressiveness and hostility of the Imperial cult there
was a decline in the status of Judaism in the Empire. Domitian very early
in his reign showed that his sympathies were with the Hellenists. Disre-
garding treaties and a long record of friendship he assumed a hostile at-
titude toward the Jews. "Suetonius says the tax upon the Jews was levied
with extreme rigor, even on those persons who had adopted Judaism without
publicly professing themselves to be proselytes, and also on those who en-
deavored to conceal their Jewish ancestry in order to avoid paying the
poll-tax. Suetonius adds from his own experience an incident, which must
have occurred early in the reign of Domitian, where an old man was examined
in public by the Emperor's steward to determine whether or not he belonged
to the Jewish race. According to Cassius Dio, by the year 91 A. D.
personal vanity of Domitian had reached so high a pitch as to bring it about that all over his realm were to be seen images and statues of the Emperor in both silver and gold. When an accused individual would avert the Imperial displeasure he had only to do obeisance before Domitian and address him as lord and god. In the immediate context Cassius Dio also mentions Domitian's hostile actions against certain persons on account of 'atheism,' and their disposition to drift into 'Jewish ways.' Clearly the implication here is that the emperor was displeased with those who, following Jewish customs, were unwilling to call him a god."

With the adoption of this policy by Domitian Josephus faced a delicate and critical situation. He was a member of the Imperial court, but he also retained a strong attachment for his kinmen and was interested in the perpetuation of the Jewish religion. His racial blood was stirred by the threatened encroachment of the religious customs of his people. He rallied to their defense notwithstanding his connection with the Roman court. He had been willing to condone the destruction of the Jewish State but he could not tolerate any interference with the religion of his kinmen. Accordingly he set himself to the task of writing what he called the "Jewish Antiquities" which was in fact a defense of his countrymen and a warning to the Emperor Domitian. Though written less than two decades after the "Jewish Wars" there is a decided change in attitude toward the Roman government.

The "Antiquities" manifest a state of unrest and uneasiness on the part of the Jews during the reign of Domitian that is not found even in the years immediately following the subjugation by Titus. Throughout the last half dozen books of the "Antiquities" the author betrays a feeling of insecurity and nervous anxiety. That the threatening peril is none other than a determined attempt to enforce Emperor-worship on the Jews is indicated by a comparison of the "Antiquities" with the "Wars" written only a short time previous by the same author.

In the "Wars" Josephus assumes an open and friendly attitude toward the Roman government and feels that his task is to bridge any chasms between the Jews and Romans that may have resulted from the Jewish war and the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome. Throughout this history Josephus maintains that the Romans were the friends of the Jews and likewise that the Jews in general were loyal to Rome. The trouble that occasionally arose and finally culminated in the war and the destruction of Jerusalem he attributes to certain innovators among the Jews or to unfaithful and inefficient procurators or governors. He emphasises the generous attitude of Rome by reporting Titus' fidelity to the Jews when just at the close of the war the Antiochians sought to eject the Jews from their city or at least to revoke their privileges. He tells the story as follows:

"And when the Senate and people of Antioch earnestly entreated him to come upon their theater, where their whole multitude was assembled, and expected

1. Wars II, 6, 8, 13.
him he complied with great humanity; but when they pressed him with much earnestness, and continually begged of him that he would eject the Jews out of their city, he gave them this very pertinent answer: - 'How can this be done, since that country of theirs, whether the Jews must be obliged then to retire, is destroyed, and no place will receive them besides.' Whereupon the people of Antioch, when they had failed of success in their first request, made him a second; for they desired that he would order those tables of brass to be removed on which the Jews' privileges were engraved. However, Titus would not grant that either, but permitted the Jews at Antioch to continue to enjoy the very same privileges in that city which they had before, and then departed for Egypt; and as he came to Jerusalem in his progress and compared the melancholy condition he saw it then in, with the ancient glory of the city, and called to mind the greatness of its present ruins, as well as its ancient splendor, he could not but pity the destruction of the city, so far was he from boasting that so great and godly a city as that was had been by him taken by force; nay, he frequently cursed those that had been the authors of their revolt, and had brought such a punishment upon the city; insomuch that it only appeared that he did not desire that such a calamity as this punishment of theirs amounted to should be a demonstration of his courage. 1

Another example of this commendation is found in the story concerning Herod recorded in the "Wars." In this account Josephus praises

1. Wars VIII, 5.
Herod for his favorable disposition toward the Romans and his liberal, generous policy toward foreigners. He even points with pride to the building enterprise of Herod including temples to Caesar, the amphitheater and theater. Again and again he praises the character of this great Jewish prince and offers no criticism of his introduction of the Roman games into Jerusalem. 1

In the "Antiquities," however, we find a very different attitude expressed. Throughout this extensive work there is reflected a spirit of anxiety and even suppressed protest, and the last six books indicate clearly that the Jews were facing a critical situation. Josephus' position at court would have prevented an open protest if he had even thought it advisable, but it is very probable that he felt that there was a better way to cope with the situation. Accordingly he assumed the role of a didactic historian, and set himself to the task of telling the story of the relations between the Jews and the Romans in such a way that it could save his kinsmen from the crisis which they were facing. He selected and emphasized such material as would forcibly remind the Roman government that the Jews had never been deprived of their religious liberty and that it would be utter folly for any government to assume that it could violate the customs and rights of the Jews without protest by the Jews and intervention by God.

To stay the policy of the Roman government, as expressed in Domitian, which was threatening the Jews, he cites a great number of ancient

1. Wars I, 21
decrees to remind the emperor that certain privileges had been granted the Jews and that those decrees had been kept inviolate by all successful emperors. He quotes from many emperors and governors and from the Senate all to the same effect. From Augustus he quotes: "Caesar Augustus, high priest and tribune of the people, ordains thus: - Since the Nation of the Jews has been found grateful to the Roman people, not only at this time, but in times past also, and chiefly by Hyrcanus, the high priest, under my father, Caesar the Emperor, it seemed good to me and my counsellors, according to the sentence and oath of the people of Rome, that the Jews have liberty to make use of their own customs, according to the laws of their forefathers, as they made use of them under Hyrcanus, the high priest of almighty God; and that their sacred money be not touched, but be sent to Jerusalem, and that it be committed to the care of the receivers at Jerusalem; and that they be not obliged to go before any judge on the Sabbath day, nor on the day of the preparation to it, after the ninth hour, but if any be caught stealing their holy books, or their sacred money, whether it be out of the synagogue or public school, he shall be deemed a sacrilegious person, and his goods shall be brought into the public treasury of the Romans. And I give order, that the testimonial which they have given me, on account of my regards to that piety which I exercise toward all mankind, and out of regard to Marcus Marcus Censorinus, together with the present decree be proposed in that most eminent place which hath been
consecrated to me by the community of Asia at Ancyra. And if any one transgress any part of what is above the decree, he shall be severely punished."

From Caius Norbanus Flaccus he quotes: "Caesar hath written to me and commanded me not to forbid the Jews, how many soever they be, from assembling together, according to the custom of their forefathers, nor from sending their money to Jerusalem: I have therefore written to you that you may know that both Caesar and I would have you act accordingly."

Again he quotes: "Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, high priest and tribune of the people, ordains thus: Since I am assured that the Jews at Alexandria, called Alexandrians, have been joint inhabitants in the earliest times with the Alexandrians, and have obtained equal privileges with them, as is evident by the public records that are in their possession, and the edicts themselves; and that after Alexandria had been subjected to our Empire by Augustus, the rights and privileges have been preserved by those presidents who have at divers times been sent thither; and that no dispute had been raised about these rights and privileges, even when Aquila was governor of Alexandria; and that when the Jewish ethnarch was dead, Augustus did not prohibit the making of such ethnarchs as willing that all men should be so subject (to the Romans) as to continue in the observation of their own customs, and not to be forced to transgress the ancient rules of their own country religion; but that,

1. Antiquities XVI, 6
2. Antiquities XVI, 6
in the time of Caius, the Alexandrians became insolent toward the Jews that were among them, which Caius, out of his great madness and want of understanding, reduced the nation of the Jews very low, because they would not transgress the religious worship of their country, and call him a god: I will, therefore, that the nation of the Jews be not deprived of their rights and privileges, on account of the madness of Caius; but that those rights and privileges, which they formerly enjoyed, be preserved to them, and that they may continue in their own customs. And I charge both parties to take very great care that no troubles may arise after the promulgation of this edict."

These decrees together with many others of similar nature confirmed the rights and privileges of the Jews and served as precedents to show that the Jews had always been protected by Rome in the practice of their religious customs. By these means Josephus hoped to avert "the hatred of irrational men." With both significance and pride he pointed to the fact that the decree of Augustus in favor of the Jews at Ancyra had been inscribed on a pillar in the very temple of the Emperor. With equal pride and satisfaction he cited the letter of Petronius to the officials of Dora demanding the punishment of those offenders who had insolently set up an image of Caesar in the synagogue contrary to a decree of the Emperor granting full permission to the Jews to practice their religious customs undisturbed.

1. Antiquities XIX, 5
Another significant feature of the "Antiquities" is the very
different characterization of Herod found here from that found in the "Wars." As we have already pointed out, in the "Wars" Herod is highly commended for his liberal policies and for his generous treatment of foreigners. 1 There he is praised as the soul of greatness and as a model Jewish prince. 2 In the "Antiquities" the halo is gone from his brow and he is portrayed as an enemy of his people, a transgressor of the religious customs of the Jews and is severely censured for his liberal policy. From the "soul of greatness" he is here reduced to a demon who was "brutish, a stranger to all humanity, and a robber of David's aspulcher." 3 Josephus severely criticises him for introducing practices that violate the customs of the Jews. 4 And the kingdom was entirely in Herod's own power, and there was nobody remaining of such dignity as could put a stop to what he did against the Jewish laws. On this account it was that Herod revolted from the laws of his country and corrupted their ancient constitution, by the introduction of foreign practices, which constitution yet ought to have been preserved inviolable by which means we became guilty of great wickedness afterward, while those religious observances which used to lead the multitude to pious were now neglected." 5

Josephus very pertinently adds the portrayal of Herod as one who was dominated by a passion for honor and reverence. 6 Here the author most clearly discloses his purpose. It would be a peculiar thing for

1. Wars I, 21
2. Wars I, 18
3. Antiquities XVI, 7
4. Antiquities XV, 7, 8
5. Antiquities XVI, 1
Hered to worship Caesar or to demand worship of him by his subjects. But Josephus here makes him an example of warning to Domitian against the evil and futile demand that the Jews should worship a ruler. And he takes time to add the suggestion that paying "honor to statues and images" is a thing intolerable to the Jews. And he does not forget to remind Domitian that even cruel punishments did not lessen the firmness of the people's disposition and their undaunted fidelity to their laws.

The two accounts dealing with the attempt of Caligula to set up his statue in the temple at Jerusalem are equally significant. In the "Wars" the incident is treated briefly and with little comment save to give a statement that the Jews bravely resisted. But in the "Antiquities" a long and detailed discussion is given showing not only the resistance of the whole Jewish race but the activity of God against him. Here we find that Caligula's doom had been determined because he had already started a war with God. God's care for his people and His intervention in this affair is further manifest in His revelations to Petronius, the general of the army, who has been commissioned to execute the decree of the Emperor. While on his way to Jerusalem Petronius was startled by a heavy shower of rain out of a clear sky in a season of drought. This was interpreted by him as an evidence that God was on the side of the Jews and would not suffer them to be molested by the decree of the Emperor. Moreover, the good fortune of Petronius in escaping execution because of his failure to enforce

1. Wars II, 9
2. Antiquities XVIII, 8
3. Antiquities XVIII, 9
the decree is interpreted as an omen of Divine favor because he had protected the Jews. Josephus even goes further and explains that God was responsible for the removal of this impious Emperor.¹

Case says: "When introducing his long description of events attending the assassination of Galus, Josephus almost drops his mask. Openly he declared that his purpose in recounting the incidents is (1) to furnish persons in affliction great comfort and assurances of the power of God, and (2) to hold up Galus as an example of misfortune to those who suppose their happiness to be unending and who imagine that they will be able permanently to escape miseries even though they do not order their lives according to the principles of virtue. Considering the circumstances under which Josephus was living at Rome, his words of assurance to his fellow-Jews in their new anxieties under the growing assertiveness of the Imperial cult could hardly be more explicit, nor could he well venture to express more pointedly his warning to Domitian against treading in the footsteps of Galus whose fatal blunder had been the violation of Jewish religious liberty."²

It seems evident from this changed attitude toward the Roman government on the part of Josephus that Judaism was becoming endangered and that the source of that danger was to be found in the increasingly menacing Emperor-cult that was spreading over the Empire and was constantly becoming more aggressive in its demands that all people should worship the

¹ Antiquities XIX, 1
² Journal of Biblical Literature, op. cit. P. 18 f
Josephus already recognized the danger, if indeed, he was not already witnessing the struggle, and he could foresee a great crisis. His purpose, therefore, in the "Antiquities" was to (1) strengthen the Jews in "faith in the power of God" and to provide "consolation for those who are the victims of misfortune;" and (2) to warn the Emperor that the Jews would resist, even unto death, the demands of the Imperial cult and that God would not only protect his people from such intolerable encroachments upon their religious convictions but would also visit destruction upon any ruler who made such demands.

From this it seems evident that the situation depicted by Josephus in the "Antiquities" clearly coincides with the situation depicted in the Apocalypse of John. Just as John there anticipates a terrible struggle for the Christians because of their refusal to worship the Emperor as in the "Antiquities" Josephus anticipates a struggle for the Jews. And Josephus, though using a different method, has in mind the same purpose — to encourage his people and to avert the crisis.

1. Antiquities XIX, 1
Chapter IV

THE CONFLICT OF IMPERIAL-WORSHIP WITH CHRISTIANITY AS DEPICTED
IN THE APOCALYPSE OF JOHN.

As compared with Judaism Christianity was much less favorably
situated. Christianity had as its religious background the whole system
of Judaism. Its monotheism, its fidelity to Jewish ideals, its hatred for
idolatry and its high moral standards of living were identical with
Judaism. The Jews had no reason for refusing the demands of the Imperial
cult which the Christians did not have. Every encroachment upon Judaism,
in its fundamental principles, applied equally to Christianity; but the
civil status of the two religions was quite different. Judaism was a legal
religion. From the beginning of the Jews' relationship with Rome special
privileges had been granted them, the greatest of which was religious
liberty. The many decrees referred to in the previous chapters served as
precedents on which Judaism could build a defense. Many Jews had attained
to high position in the Roman government. Their influence, as in the case
of Agrippa and Josephus, served the Jews well.

Christianity had no such defense - not even any grounds for de-
defense. While it was the policy of Rome to grant religious freedom to all
the races whom she conquered and to protect them in their religious cus-
toms, she looked with disfavor upon all new religions. Christianity was
not an ancient national faith entitled to recognition among the long-
established religions. On the contrary it was a new sect, wholly lacking
in prestige, and of even more recent origin than the worship of the emperors.
From its very inception it was, if not illegal, a religion that had not
received the \textsuperscript{61} of approval from the Roman Empire. The only reason that it was permitted to grow and expand in the Empire was because of its relatively scanty following and its close genetic relationship to Judaism. For several years Christianity was not differentiated from Judaism by the Roman people. The reason is perfectly evident. The government had little concern for the religion of its subjects unless it interfered with the government policy. The adherents of Christianity were principally Jews. They kept the law and performed the ritual as other good Jews. Indeed, it was not until the problem of Gentile converts arose that it began to dawn upon the Christians and Jews themselves that there was a very great distinction. Hitherto the Christians had been considered a sect pledging allegiance to a particular leader. Acquilla and Priscilla were among those who were expelled from Rome after 50 A. D. because of certain contentions arising over "One Christus." This is but one of many cases indicating that for the Roman government there was no distinction between Christians and Jews and that the government neither understood the nature of Christianity nor was much concerned about it.

In the provinces, however, especially in the Asian provinces there was continual war by the Greeks upon the Jews and Christians. As we have seen the Greeks hated the Jews because of their customs and standards of life but principally because of their exclusiveness. They were continually attempting to bring the Jews into ill-repute with the government.
But the status of the Jews was too firmly fixed for the Hellenists to accomplish their purpose.

The same hostility, however, was directed against the Christians with greater success. When the Jews began to recognize the growth of Christianity and to see whether it was tending they too assumed a hostile attitude toward it. Even in the years following Pentecost a campaign was launched by the Sanhedrin under Saul of Tarsus to suppress the new movement. And with the passing years that hostility never abated. From the Jewish point of view there was ample ground to justify such enmity. The new faith had already caused certain of their people to apostasize and it had been especially successful in swaying the large number of Gentile proselytes or prospective candidates for Judaism, and most provoking of all it claimed to be the true interpreter of Scripture and the perfect revelation of Jehovah. The Jews were, therefore, not only unwilling that the Christians should profit by the protection and privileges granted to Judaism, but they were very anxious that the Christian movement be completely suppressed and its followers annihilated.

The popular Gentile feeling was likewise antagonistic. The Greeks hated the Christians for all the reasons they hated the Jews. But after Christianity was recognised as a separate and distinct movement Gentile hostility increased rather than abated. The reasons for this antagonism are concisely stated by Cane as follows: "Wherever it entered
Pagan society its influence was utterly disturbing and divisive. A convert to this new faith could no longer participate whole-heartedly in the established conventions of Pagan family life. He became a negligible, if not indeed an actually disturbing, factor in the customary activities of the Gentile community. If he were a zealous Christian of the primitive type, he withdrew his patronage from the public festivals, he ceased to be a customer of the image-maker, he no longer purchased victims for the sacrifice, and in general he made himself a voluntary outcast from Pagan society.

"This negative attitude toward established customs was frequently supplemented by a vigorous polemic against the existing social and religious order. The gods of the heathens were declared to be no gods, but only evil demons and their beautiful images everywhere in evidence were denounced as dead and worthless idols of wood or metal or stone, owing their existence to no higher authority than the creative skill of human hands. Christian invective was usually not content with merely denouncing heathen religion. The whole course of Pagan life was included in its condemnation. Enthusiasts of John's temper, and doubtless there were many such in the early days, regarded the entire range of Gentile life as fundamentally a product of Satanic activity. Religion, culture, commerce, and all pleasures of Pagan society were uniformly declared to be works of Satan which every true Christian would eschew while patiently awaiting the
early return of Christ to destroy utterly the present evil world and inaug-
urate a new heavenly regime in which none save Christians would participate. 1

With the rift between Judaism and Christianity the Christians
were exposed to the attacks from the heathens. The Jews were even anxious
to discover the Christians to their enemies. Immediately the Hellenists
seized the opportunity thus afforded and launched a fresh and more vigoro-
ous attack upon the Christians. It is not probable that the initial move
was made against them by the Senate, the Emperor, or even from the govern-
ors of the provinces. It is far more likely that the persecution began
with zealous devotees or priests of the provincial Emperor-cults in those
cities where Emperor-worship was most popular. The city of Pergamum in
Asia seems to have been the first to establish a cult and build a temple
to the Emperor, but Smyrna and other Asiatic cities soon followed her ex-
ample. With the temples were associated a large number of priests, keepers,
guards, singers and other attendants, who administered the cult with fit-
ting ceremonies, designed to impress the public. A part of the duty of
this corps of religious dignitaries was to foster the Imperial religion
and, in the time of Domitian, to enforce worship of the Emperor.

This movement received momentum from the precedent set by Nero
in the persecution of the Christians at Rome which had become known in the
distant provinces. The accusation which Nero had brought against the
Christians (the burning of Rome) laid them open to the suspicion of

1. The Revelation of John, S. J. Case, P. 36 f
disloyalty. This was the point that was seized and used most effectively against them. Already, as we have seen, Emperor-worship had become the State religion of the Empire. Religion and patriotism were identified. To refuse divine honors to the Emperor was treason. The situation was made more critical by the mad demands of Domitian that all people should worship his image. Armed with these powerful weapons the Hellenists and the priests of the Imperial cult launched a horrible and relentless warfare upon the Christians who were weaponless and helpless to defend themselves. They were hunted out and dragged into court where a statue of the Emperor had been prepared and they were commanded to perform the ritual of the Imperial cult. If they performed the ritual they were acquitted and dismissed: if they refused to perform it they were condemned to death.

Ramsay says: "It is difficult to devise a more effective and conclusive declaration that the religion of Christ and the religion of the Emperor were now explicitly and professedly arrayed against one another, and that the alternative presented to every individual Christian was to 'worship the image of the beast' or death." 1

It was this crucial situation that confronted the author or Revelation. The aggressive hostility of the Imperial cult was continually growing. Already some Christians had given their lives but the real crisis was yet to come. John intimates that the time is at hand when, throughout the Roman Empire, all Christians are to be put to this crucial test.

1. Letters to the Seven Churches, P. 108
whether they will worship the Emperor or die the death of the martyr. He sees in the near future the Empire crimsoned with the blood of Christians because they refuse to render divine honors to the Emperor or his image.

Facing this situation without any protection as a religion, with no hope for mercy, with death or apostacy facing every Christian, John wrote the Apocalypse to prepare the Christians for the ordeal. Unlike Josephus who hopes to avert persecution of his people by appeal to the Emperor, John condemns the Emperor as a "beast" and the Roman Empire as an agent of Satan. He expects no relief for the Christians in Asia and he does not seek to flatter the "beast" who has forced this persecution upon them. His only hope is to encourage the Christians to face the issue and lay down their lives, if needs be, rather than bow to the Emperor, assuring them that the glory of the martyr is supreme and that Christ will soon come with a power that shall overthrow both the "beast" and the Empire which he rules. McGiffert states the purpose of John as follows:

"The author of the Apocalypse took up his pen to depict, for the comfort and inspiration of his suffering brethren, the good time coming, when their enemies should be trampled under foot and they should enjoy blessedness and joy unspeakable. The aim of the work was to quicken and arouse Christian courage and zeal and to nerve the followers of Christ to continued faithfulness and endurance." 1

A few excerpts from the book will show us the attitude of the

1. The Apostolic Age, McGiffert, 633
author in this critical situation. In 13: 1 f, he says: "And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns ten diadems, and upon his heads names of blasphemy." The "beast" here represents the Roman Empire which is personified in the Emperor and who is at the same time the agent or personification of Satan. The ten horns stand for the rulers or kings of the kingdoms.

"And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like unto a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the authority of the first beast in his sight. And he maketh the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast." Clearly this "second beast," elsewhere designated the "false prophet," is the Imperial priesthood of the province of Asia whose duty it was to perform the ritual of the Imperial cult and to enforce the worship of the Emperor. Bicknell says: "He is merely the servant of the "first beast," from whom he derives all his power and his office is the institution and enforcement of the worship of his master.....The distinct character and work which are assigned to him, as what is most essential in him, and his corresponding designation as the "false prophet," is one special Roman functionaries charged with the maintenance and the extension of the Emperor-worship throughout the Empire." 3

"And he causeth all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free and the bond, that there be given them a mark on

1. Revelation XIII, 13 f
2. Revelation XIII, 16 f
3. The Apocalypse of John, Bicknell, P. 406 f
their right hand or upon their forehead; and that no man should be able to buy or to sell, save he that hath the mark, even the name of the "beast" or the number of his name." Commentators are generally agreed that this passage refers to a sort of "boycott" proposed by the Asian Commune to force the Christians and the Jews to worship the Emperor. Ramsay says:

"This refers to some unknown but not in itself improbable attempt either through official regulation or informal 'boycott,' to injure the Asian Christians by preventing dealings with traders and shopkeepers who had not proved their loyalty to the Emperor. That such an attempt may have been made in the Flavian persecution seems quite possible." This indicates the extreme situation which the Christians faced. The suggestion here is that lest some one escape the priest and officers who were enforcing the Imperial decree this plan was devised so that such an one would starve. If this be a correct interpretation of this passage it seems evident that the policy was complete extermination of all who refused divine honors to the Emperor.

"And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." Here is another indication of the extent and cruelty of the persecution. "The woman" is the personification of the city of Rome whither many Christians were carried to pour out their blood in struggle with wild beasts in the amphitheater, for the amusement of the people or to be burned to light the streets of the city.

"And I saw the souls of them that had been beheaded for the

1. Letters to the Seven Churches. P. 105
2. Revelations XVII, 6 f
testimony of Jesus, and for the word of God, and such as worshipped not the beast neither his image, and received not the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years."

"And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where are also the beast and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

"He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death."

"And I heard a voice from Heaven saying; write, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth; yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow them."

These and numerous similar passages show clearly that John had no hope for relief from the Domitian persecution. He felt that the policy meant ultimate extinction of all Christians unless God intervened. His hope and purpose, therefore, was to comfort those in tribulation and tosteen them for even greater sufferings. To do this he assured them that righteousness and God would ultimately triumph but he was not sure how or when. He assures them that those who die for the faith will have a more

1. Revelation XX, 4 f
2. Revelation XX, 10
3. Revelation XXI, 7 f
4. Revelation XIV, 13
blessed reward than those, who, though faithful, have not suffered. He is neither hesitant nor charitable in his condemnation of the Roman Empire and its Emperors. For him they are the vice-gerents of Satan. Mad with power and ambition and vanity they dare war with God in their attack on righteousness and God's people. Against such a power with such a policy only God can prevail. And the author asks his readers to go to death, if needs be, for their faith resting their destiny in the hands of that God.

"Life both for the individual Christian and for the Christian community was at such a time essentially a struggle, a struggle of great intensity and paths to maintain purity and faith and life, with the ever impending possibility of being called to a life and death struggle in the grasp of merciless cruelty. The situation, therefore, was one which called for such a book as this, to the faithful a summons to endurance and promise of early release, to the unfaithful a reproach and a warning, tender or stern according to the degree of their unfaithfulness, and upon the unbelieving and hostile world a denunciation of Divine wrath to come, which became in turn an assurance of speedy succour and deliverance who kept the testimony of Jesus." 1

1. The Century Bible: Revelation. C. A. Scott, P. 66
The situation depicted by Josephus in the "Antiquities" clearly coincides with the situation depicted in the "Apocalypse." Both authors anticipate a crisis for their respective sects. The difference in anxiety may be explained by the difference in the status of the two religions. The difference in the methods of approach may be explained by the difference in the status of the two religions and different relationships which the authors sustained toward the Roman government and by the purposes for which they wrote.

Judaism was a legal religion sanctioned and protected by the Roman government. It had a long list of precedents and a number of Roman officials, who were Jews, upon which to base its defense. For this reason Josephus hopes to avert the crisis by appealing to precedent and offering a gentle warning to the Roman Emperor. Moreover, Josephus is a member of the Imperial court. For this reason he must be more cautious in his criticism of the Imperial policy. To attack the government directly would not only bring him into disfavor but would increase the antagonism of the government toward his people. Rather than bringing redress such a method would more likely bring greater hostility and a more determined policy on the part of the Emperor.

His method of presenting his message is that of a didactic historian. Recounting the history of his people, their customs and religious principles, he selects such material and emphasizes such incidents as
will impress upon the mind of the Emperor and the Roman officials the duties and responsibilities of the Roman government to the Jews. He also stresses the point that God is on the side of his people to deliver them from any encroachment upon their religion and to bring beasty judgment upon any one who dares encroach upon their religious customs.

On the other hand the Apocalyptist sustains a very different relationship to the Empire. Probably he has been banished for his religious fidelity. Certainly he belongs to the group who are classed by the Roman government as outlaws, having no rights and no protection within the Empire. His religion too is much less favorably situated. It has no legal status, no friends with power or influence with the Roman courts. It has no precedents on which to base a defense. As a new religion it has no civil status nor national prestige to plead for it. In a word it has neither civil right nor defense as a religion in the Roman world. John, then, had not the slightest hope that the crisis which faced the Christians could be averted. There was no reason to flatter or even patronize the Emperor. With no ray of hope, with the storm clouds darkening, as leader of a small but faithful religious group, it is not surprising that he assumes a more desperate attitude toward the power who is about to bring destruction upon his people.

His method of treatment is that of Apocalypse. In varied series of weird pictures he couches his message of condemnation of the Roman
government and hope and encouragement to the persecuted Christians. Though his message is somewhat veiled in strange figures and visions it is sufficiently clear to be understood by the Christians and even by the Roman authorities. Whether John used this type of literature in which to present his message because he desired that the message should be veiled to the Roman government is a question which we cannot answer, but since his purpose is not to influence the Emperor but to encourage the Christians it is not likely that he would aggravate the antagonism of the Roman Emperor by making an open and direct attack upon his policy. It may then be said that both Josephus and John have presented their messages in somewhat veiled form but discernable to all those who seek to know them.

The purposes of Josephus and John are in the main identical. Josephus confesses his purpose to be to “afford great assurance of the power of God, and great comfort to those that are under affliction; and wise caution to those who think their happiness will never end, nor bring them at length to the most lasting misery if they do not conduct their lives by the principles of virtue.” 2 This statement perfectly characterizes the purpose of John. Backwith briefly summarizes the Apocalypse of John as “A message designed on the one hand to forewarn the church of its peril and arouse it to a purified, vigorous life; on the other, to fortify its courage and hope by revealing the ultimate destruction of the powers of evil, and the perfect consumation of the Christian hope in the establishment of the kingdom of God.”

1. Antiquities XIX, 1
2. The Apocalypse of John, Backwith, P. 209.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


