

considering the persistent influence of Roman private law in territories that once formed part of the Eastern Roman Empire.

Medias, Romania

Betinio Diamant

The Jews Between Pagans and Christians After Bar-Kokhba.¹

The War of Bar-Kokhba has been very much in the forefront of scholarly research for some time — and more is expected from different quarters, notably S. Applebaum's new synthesis in *The World History of the Jewish People*. Yet the emphasis has been mostly on particular aspects rather than the general significance of the rebellion. Even the most ambitious recent treatment² openly admits that its aims were mainly destructive — a result, it is stated, of the nature of our sources and the present state of our knowledge.

Nevertheless the revolt of Bar-Kokhba has been perceived for a long time as a major watershed in Jewish history. While traditional Judaism has always seen the destruction of Jerusalem and of the Second Temple as the most important turning point in its history, modern historians have insisted both on the continuity of Palestinian history in the two generations following the fall of Jerusalem and on the break after the rebellion: it was certainly most influential that Schürer continued his *History* to that point rather than to the former alternative — even though the latter may have better fitted his theological vantage point.

One subject of major importance where the Bar-Kokhba rebellion undoubtedly marks the end of an old and the beginning of a new era is the relations between Jews, Pagans and Christians. The rift between orthodox Judaism and the various Judeo-Christian sects had been clearly demarcated by ca. 100 C.E. with the addition of the Benediction concerning Heretics to the Eighteen Benedictions; the Hadrianic interdict on Jews residing in Jerusalem surely did not differentiate between orthodox Jews and circumcised Christians; accordingly the first Bishop of Jerusalem from the Church of the Gentiles appears with the repression of the rebellion (Eus. *HE* 4.6).

The counterpart to that rift was the growth of Christianity and the increasing danger it presented to the Pagan world. What was the exact nature of the shift in the ideological positions and relations between Jews, Pagans and Christians? David

- 1 Review of D. Rokeah, *Jews, Pagans and Christians in Conflict*, (Jerusalem–Leiden 1982).
- 2 P. Schaefer, *Der Bar Kokhba-Aufstand. Studien zum zweiten jüdischen Krieg gegen Rom* (Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum I), (Tübingen 1981).

Rokeah, while examining the positions of the various religions as expressed in their mutual polemics, arrives at a clear and unambiguous definition of the change that appears to coincide with the time of the Bar-Kokhba rebellion. The flow of Pagan polemical treatises directed against the Jews, and of Jewish apologetics replying to these ceases, it is contended, at about this time. Nor stands the *argumentum e silentio* isolated, vulnerable to attack. The counterpart of the cessation of the Jewish-Pagan polemic is the rise of the Christian-Pagan confrontation: Rokeah's main concern is in the part of the Jews in that confrontation. It is in the context of the Christian-Pagan polemic, according to Rokeah, that we have to view even Christian writings *adversus Iudaeos*: not least because they apparently neither responded to Jewish provocation nor called forth Jewish reaction. With the severance of the links between Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity on the one hand, and the total ascendancy of the Church of the Gentiles over the Church of the Circumcision on the other hand, the ways of Church and Synagogue were set for ever in different directions. The ebb of Jewish proselytism and the growing tide of conversion to Christianity spared the two creeds the battle over the Pagan soul. What role, then, did the Jews have in this new Pagan-Christian polemic? Adherence to the beliefs and practices of the fathers was the saving feature of Judaism in the eyes of even its most hostile critics;³ *καινοτομία*, apostasy from their ancestral faith, the sin of the new religion. Thus Judaism was to stand at the focal point of the argument: Christianity could prove its roots and legitimacy only by the exposition of the Biblical truth as pertaining to itself — *Verus Israel*; Paganism denied this by way of pointing to the Jews. It was only once that this role of the Jews revealed itself in a practical way. Julianus' attempt to rebuild the Temple was, as Hans Levy has taught us, but the result of his theological confrontation with Christianity. The restoration of Jewish worship was to disprove Jesus' prophecy and to serve as an eternal reminder of its falsehood, thus bringing the Pagan position in the polemic to its logical conclusion.

Rokeah arrives at his results through a critical reading and analysis of some well-known authors and texts: the Pagans Celsus, Porphyry, Julianus and Symmachus; the Christians Justin Martyr, Tatian, Origen, Eusebius, Tertullian, Minucius Felix, Arnobius, Orosius and Augustine; and some Talmudic texts as well as passages from Philo and Josephus. All these are examined with regard to their attitudes on a number of subjects: Recognition of God, Revelation and Religious Myth (ch. 2); Divine Providence, the Daemons and the Election of Israel (ch. 3) and Culture and Enslavement: the Religious Inference of Human History (ch. 4). Though the method is strictly philological the reader can not always accept the conclusions without reservations. One example, pertaining to a broader and more important issue, may suffice.

The sparsity and triviality of the mutual references of Jews and Pagans raises the obvious question whether or not this was simply due to ignorance. The question is

3 E.g. Tac. *Hist.* 5.5,1 and parallels adduced by Stern ad loc. II 39.

most easily answered in relation to the Pagans: Stern's exhaustive collection has proved once again how ignorant the Greeks and Romans were about most aspects of Judaism. The nature of the sources renders it much more difficult to assess the degree of Hellenisation of Palestinian Jewry. For the Hellenistic period the battle has been joined between those who, like Hengel, take a maximalistic approach and stress the degree of Hellenisation of all aspects of Palestinian Jewish life and those who, following in the footsteps of Schürer, emphasize the uniqueness, rather than the conformity, of the Jewish people.⁴ The question is not less hotly disputed for the period here under consideration. How much Greek in Jewish Palestine? The late lamented Saul Lieberman has argued for an Academy of the Rabbis for Greek studies and for their thorough acquaintance with Greek culture. G. Alon held a much more restricted view and believed in a minimal knowledge of Greek among the Jews of Palestine. Rokeah tends towards the latter interpretation (pp. 200 ff) though his argumentation is hardly convincing. It rests on an analysis of the crucial phrase *hochmath yevanith*, usually taken as meaning Greek wisdom. Rokeah argues that the *status constructus* must be understood as referring to 'Greek language' and nothing else. Even if that were so,⁵ it is difficult to see how such far-reaching conclusions could follow. Surely the Patriarch did not set up a proto-Berlitz? Instruction in Greek was never and could not have been separated from Greek literature and thought. Whatever our final verdict on the depth and breadth of the knowledge of Greek, by no means can it rest upon such a narrow interpretation of one particular phrase.

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4 A recent, and lucid, exposition of the controversy is to be found in F. Millar, *The Background to the Maccabean Revolution: Reflection on Martin Hengel's "Judaism and Hellenism"*, *JJS* 29(1978)1 ff.

5 Consulting Talmudist and Hebraist colleagues I found that neither were the former convinced that the correct tradition is *hochmath* rather than *hochmah*, nor the latter that in Mishnaic Hebrew the *status constructus* necessarily bears a different meaning from that of the *status absolutus*. The Hebrewless reader should note that, according to modern usage, the difference between the *status absolutus* (*hochmah yevanith*) and the *status constructus* (*hochmath yevanith*) is roughly that between 'Greek knowledge' and 'knowledge of Greek'.