Jewish Opposition to Christians in Asia Minor in the First Century

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This study examines the reasons for the opposition of the Jews of Roman Asia Minor to the Jewish Christian missionaries and their teaching. It will be seen that while theological convictions played a significant role, the opposition in the local synagogues cannot be explained only with reference to the Jews’ zeal for the law and for the purity of the Jewish community. The available evidence, particularly of Josephus, suggests that the Jews of Asia Minor were concerned to preserve the social and political rights and privileges that they had enjoyed since Julius Caesar, which had come under pressure in different places at different times and which would be threatened if pagans joined the community without being asked to submit to circumcision and to other Jewish traditions such as the food laws. Concerns about the financial viability of the local Jewish community and about the relationship with the Jewish commonwealth in Judea may have played a role as well.

Key Words: mission, evangelism, Jews, synagogues, opposition, Rome, imperial edicts, politics, Asia Minor, Paul, Acts, Revelation

Luke reports in the book of Acts that, whereas Paul and his missionary team were initially received cordially in the synagogues of the cities they visited, opposition by members of the local Jewish community was a regular occurrence, an opposition that on some occasions culminated in outright persecution. This opposition is usually explained with reference to Paul’s message that salvation comes not through obedience to Torah, including the practice of circumcision and the food laws, but through Jesus, the crucified and risen Messiah.1 Some scholars have suggested

that political considerations need to be taken into account as well when we seek to understand the opposition of Jewish diaspora communities to Paul. The following observations will explore the validity of this suggestion. Because there are few sustained discussions of these issues in the scholarly literature, the focus will be on the primary source material, notably Luke’s book of Acts and Josephus’s historical works. Questions regarding the historical reliability of Luke’s account in the book of Acts and of Josephus’s reporting will not be discussed. Despite the obvious significance of the editorial decisions of both Luke and Josephus, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that their narratives can be compared to the historiographical standards of the Hellenistic-Roman period.

OPPOSITION OF JEWS TO CHRISTIANS IN ASIA MINOR

Luke relates that Jewish residents of the cities in Asia Minor opposed both the Jewish Christian missionaries and the new Christian communities.

The Evidence in the New Testament

1. Pisidian Antioch (Colonia Caesarea Antiocheia) is the first city in Asia Minor for which Christian missionary work and Jewish opposition is reported

Notes:


in the New Testament. When Paul and Barnabas arrived in the city in the summer of A.D. 46, their encounter with the Jewish community was initially positive (Acts 13:14–16, 42–43). Luke asserts in his account of the events on the second sabbath that “the Jews” (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι) were “filled with jealousy” (NRSV; ἐπλήσθησαν ζῆλος) when they saw the crowds (οἱ ὄχλοι) that turned out to hear Paul and Barnabas speak (Acts 13:45). Luke adds that “blaspheming, they contradicted what was spoken by Paul” (13:45). After he notes the conversion of Gentiles both in the city and in the towns and villages controlled by Antioch (13:48–49), he points out that “the Jews” (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι) “incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city (τὰς σεβομένας γυναῖκας τὰς εὐσεβής καὶ τῶν πρῶτος τῆς πόλεως), and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their region” (13:50). The verb παροτρύνειν, which is generally translated “to incite,” means “to stir up strong emotion against somebody” or “to stir up hostility against somebody.” The phrase “leading men of the city” (οἱ πρῶτοι τῆς πόλεως), though not a technical term for the duoviri, the highest municipal magistrates, certainly refers to influential members of the local aristocracy. The subject of ἐξαγάγαν “they stirred up persecution,” i.e., “caused persecution to happen”) may be either the Jews or the aristocratic women and their husbands or both. The result of the “persecution” was the expulsion of the Christian preachers from the city (ἐξέβαλον αὐτούς ἀπὸ τῶν ὀρίων αὐτῶν).

2. This pattern is repeated in Iconium (Colonia Iulia Augusta Iconium), the next stop of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:1–6). After preaching in the local synagogue and after “a great number (πολὺ πλῆθος) of both Jews and Greeks became believers” (Acts 14:1), members of the Jewish community “stirred up (ἐπήγαγαν) the Gentiles and poisoned their minds (ἐκάσωσαν τὰς ψυχὰς) against the brothers” (Acts 14:2). The verb κακοῦν here means not “to cause harm, mistreat” but “to cause someone to think badly about someone, to make angry, to embitter.” The Jews who rejected Paul’s preaching incited the Gentiles to oppose both the new converts. It was

6. TTV reads “the Jewish leaders.”
10. BDAG 502 s.v. κακοῦ; Barrett (Acts, 1:668) interprets the term to mean that the Jews caused the Gentiles “to be disaffected towards the brothers.”
possible, however, for Paul and Barnabas to stay in Iconium “for a long
time” (ὡς κάποιον γρόνον) and preach the gospel (Acts 14:3). Luke relates that
at some point an “attempt” (ὁπομήν) was made by pagans and by Jews, “to-
gather with their leaders” (ὅπως τοῖς ἄρχοντεσιν αὐτῶν) to mistreat and to kill
the apostles (Acts 14:5). The term ἄρχοντες presumably refers to the Gentile magistrates,11 possibly to both the synagogue rulers and the leading magistrates of the city.12 The aim of their “attempt” against the missionaries is formulated with two infinitives: ὑβρίσασιν καὶ λυθοβολήσαν αὐτοῖς (“to mistreat them and to stone them,” Acts 14:5). It is unclear how Luke wants his readers to understand the attempt to stone the missionaries. On the one hand, he seems to report a concerted attack organized not only by opposing Jews and Gentiles but also by leading magistrates, which seems to suggest official action. However, even though stoning was known as a legal form of punishment among both Jews and Greeks, it had no place in the Roman legal system, which we should assume was used in Iconium.13 On the other hand, Luke does not report a spontaneous outburst of violence; instead, the missionaries manage to slip away to cities in Lycaonia (Acts 14:6). The “plot” (τνίνος) of the opposing Jews and Gentiles, which included members of the local elites, is most plausibly understood as a deliberate attempt to provoke lynching.14

3. The third city in which we have evidence of Jewish opposition against Christian missionary work is Lystra (Colonia Iulia Felix Gemina Lys-
stra; Acts 14:8–20).15 Luke focuses on the encounter with the Gentile citi-
zens who link Barnabas with Zeus and Paul with Hermes and who want
to offer sacrifices to honor the missionaries. The presence of a Jewish com-

11. Barrett (Acts, 1:672) argues that αὐτῶν refers to both ἰδίων and ἰουσάριον “so that these will not be rulers of the synagogue”; see also Josef Zmijewski, Die Apostelgeschichte (RNT; Regensburg, Germany: Pustet, 1994), 526. CIG 4001 attests to the existence in Iconium of a πρώτος ἄρχων; cf. Stephen Mitchell, “Iconium and Ninica: Two Double Communities in Roman Asia Minor,” Historia 28 (1979): 409–38, esp. 413, 415.
12. Ben Witherington III, The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 420 n. 265. Frederik J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, eds. (The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I: The Acts of the Apostles, vol. 4: English Translation and Commentary [London: Macmillan, 1933], 162) and Gerhard Schneider (Die Apostelgeschichte [HThK 5; Freiburg: Herder, 1980–82], 152 n. 32) think that the term may refer to either Jewish leaders or to the leaders of both the Jews and Gentiles. Because Iconium was a double community, i.e., both a Roman colony and a Greek polis (Mitchell, “Iconium and Ninica,” 414–16), the term ἄρχοντες might refer to the leaders of the Greek city rather than to the Roman magistrates of the colony.
geschichte, 526 (“Mordkomplott”). Ernst Haenchen (Die Apostelgeschichte [KEK 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977], 404) interprets in terms of the mental state that precedes the onrush of a lynching mob; see Schneider, Apostelgeschichte, 2:152 n. 31.
munity is attested by the reference in Acts 16:1–2 to the Jewish mother of Timothy who came from Lystra, and it is suggested by the successful attempt of Jews from Antioch and Iconium to stir up the crowd in the city (Acts 14:19). The lame man who heard Paul preach and who was healed (Acts 14:8–9) may have been a Jewish man who listened to Paul in the local synagogue, but Luke’s report does not specify the location of Paul’s missionary preaching on this occasion. The arrival of Jews from Antioch and Iconium (ἀπὸ Ἀντιόχειας καὶ Ἰκώνιον Ἰουδαίων) suggests, in the context of their “persuasion activity” (Acts 14:19), that they pursued the missionaries from a distance of several days’ travel—Lystra is ca. 35 km south of Iconium, which is ca. 160 km east southeast of Antioch. This level of animosity is less surprising when we take into account the fact that Lystra was called the “sister city” (αδελφή) of Pisidian Antioch, indicating or claiming mutual relationships. The “persuasion” (πειθόν) of the people of Lystra by the Jews from Antioch and Iconium resulted in the stoning of Paul, who is left for dead outside the city walls (Acts 14:19).

4. The fourth city for which we have evidence of missionary work and of Jewish opposition to the Christian missionaries and the new converts is Ephesus (Acts 19:1–20:1). The fact that Paul is able to teach in the local synagogue for three months (Acts 19:8) suggests a tolerant attitude of the Ephesian Jews concerning Paul’s preaching of the gospel and concerning listeners being persuaded by his arguments. The only negative reaction by Jews in Ephesus is formulated with three verbs: “some stubbornly refused to believe and spoke evil of the Way” (τινὲς ἐσκληρύνοντο καὶ ἠπείθουν κακολογοῦντες τὴν ὁδὸν)—σκληρύνειν means “to cause to be unyielding in resisting information, harden” (pass. “to be hardened, to


17. Schneider (Apostelgeschichte, 2:157 n. 12, 162) interprets Acts 14:8–9, 19 as indication that there was no Jewish community in Lystra. He fails to link Acts 14:8–9, 19 with Acts 16:1–2; similarly, Zmijewski, Apostelgeschichte, 533.


become hardened”); ἁπειθεῖν means “to disobey, to be disobedient”; κακολογεῖν means “to speak evil of, to revile, to insult, to slander.” The evidence of the papyri does not suggest, as Moulton and Milligan have maintained, that the New Testament uses the verb in the weaker sense of “to speak evil of.”22 The papyrus evidence indicates that the verb often describes verbal abuse, suggesting that the meaning “to abuse, revile, slander” is appropriate, particularly in Acts 19:9.23 Verbal slander involves the spreading of false rumors about Christians.24 Even though the Ephesian Jews contradicted Paul’s teaching and initiated a controversy, the context in Acts 19:9 does not indicate how “evil” were the words with which they spoke about Paul in the course of this controversy. It is unclear whether the phrase ἐν τῷ πλῆθῳ refers to the new Christian converts in the synagogue, to the synagogue community as a whole, or to the general public of the city.25 The riot in the city is traced back not to the Jews of Ephesus, who come under attack themselves (Acts 19:33–34),26 but to local silversmiths (Acts 19:24–27, 38).

5. John states in his message to the church in Smyrna (Rev 2:8–11) that he knows about the “slander” (blasphemia) that the Christians have to endure from the local Jews (ἐκ τῶν λεγόντων Ἰουδαίων ἔναν ἱερατικός) whom he calls “synagogue of Satan” (συναγωγή τοῦ σάτανα, Rev 2:9). The name Satan means literally “adversary” or “opponent.” The term blasphemia refers here either to verbal slander or to the “denunciation of Christians before Roman or civic authorities.”27 John reminds the Christians in Asia Minor of the fact that Antipas, a Christian in Pergamum (Rev 2:13), has been killed, and he expects Christians to be imprisoned and executed in Smyrna as well (Rev 2:10). David Aune comments that “if Christians had suffered legal penalties at the hands of Roman authorities in Smyrna, such actions were probably initiated by local citizens, and this passage strongly suggests that the Jews actively participated in the process.”28

26. It remains unclear who Alexander was, why the Jews of Ephesus put him forward in the theater, and what he sought to achieve by his “defense”; Barrett, Acts, 2:932–33.
28. Ibid., 163. Aune notes that “the author is not condemning Jews generally but only those associated with synagogues in Smyrna and Philadelphia” (ibid., 162).
6. The Christians in Philadelphia (Rev 3:7–13) evidently also experienced opposition from local Jews; this is suggested by the fact that John refers to the Jews of Philadelphia as belonging to “the synagogue of Satan” (ἐκ τῆς συναγωγῆς τοῦ σατανᾶ, Rev 3:9), just as the Jews of Smyrna.

7. For several cities in which missionaries were active and established Christian communities in the first century, there is no evidence of Jewish opposition (which does not mean that there was none): Derbe (Acts 14:20–21), Perge (Acts 14:25), Alexandria Troas (2 Cor 2:12, Acts 20:6–12), Laodicea (Col 2:1; 4:13; 15; Rev 1:11, 3:14), Hierapolis (Col 4:12–13), Colossae (Col 1:1, 7; 4:12–13), Sardes (Rev 3:1–6), Pergamon (Rev 2:12–17), Thyatira (Rev 2:18–29), Magnesia (Ignatius, Magn., prol.), Tralles (Ignatius, Trall., prol.), and possibly in Attalia (Acts 14:25) and Miletus (Acts 20:15, 17–38).

8. A final passage that needs to be mentioned is Acts 21:27–28 (cf. 24:19). Luke reports that Paul’s arrest in the Jerusalem temple in a.d. 57 was caused by “Jews from Asia” (οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς ἀσίας Ἰουδαίοι) who had seen Paul in the city in the company of Trophimus from Ephesus and, when they saw Paul in the temple, assumed that he had brought a Gentile into the temple and thus violated the prohibition for non-Jews to enter the temple beyond the Court of the Gentiles.29 They seized Paul and vociferously informed the crowds in the temple court that “this is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against our people, our law, and this place (οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ ἀνθρώπος ὁ κατὰ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τοῦ τόπου τούτου πάντας πανταχῇ διώκει); more than that, he has actually brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place” (Acts 21:28). The attempt to kill Paul (21:31) for profaning the temple was thwarted by the Roman commander (tribunus) of the cohort (21:32–33), which was stationed in the Antonia fortress (Josephus, B.J. 5.242).

Explanations

Luke’s account of the missionary work of Paul and Barnabas in Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13:13–52 is the longest account of Paul’s missionary work in Asia Minor.30 The focused observations on the Jewish opposition in 13:45, 46–47, 50 (14:19) explain why many commentators concentrate their comments on the Jewish opposition to the Christian missionaries on

29. It is a well-known fact that inscriptions warning Gentiles not to proceed beyond the Court of the Gentiles were placed on the wall surrounding the inner precincts. See OGIS 2: 598.

30. Compared with 94 lines of text in NA27, Luke’s account of missionary work in Iconium (14 lines), Lystra (33 lines), Derbe (3 lines), and Perge (2 lines) is much shorter, as are the accounts concerning Philippi (72 lines), Thessalonica (24 lines), Beroea (13 lines), Athens (50
this passage. The ζηλος of the Jews, to which Luke refers in Acts 13:45, is a key term in the discussion. It has been interpreted in terms of the Jews’ “zeal” for the law or in terms of their “envy” regarding the missionary success of Paul and Barnabas. Some interpreters combine these two explanations.

R. Pesch argues that the “jealousy” of the Jews derives from their “zeal” for the law, which Paul had declared to be powerless. J. Roloff suggests that the “jealousy” of the Jews is to be seen in their conviction that “the purity, indeed the very existence of Israel was jeopardized if Gentiles are admitted into Israel on the basis of faith in Christ alone.” J. Zmijewski argues that the term jealousy describes a theological position of the Jews in Antioch who are convinced that the purity of Israel is at stake: they regard the new teaching about salvation as an offense against the Mosaic law, particularly against circumcision and the cultic commandments.

Others interpret in terms of the envy of the Jewish community with regard to the missionary success of Paul and Barnabas. G. Schneider argues that “in view of the presupposed historical situation, the jealousy of the Jews is unwarranted: the Jews should have been rejoicing in the popularity of their religion among the pagans in the city; their jealousy becomes plausible, however, when one works with the notion that Paul, the Christian convert, draws off Gentile sympathizers from the synagogue for his own project.” J. Jervell argues for the same position: the jealousy of the Jews becomes plausible when one takes into account the outcome of Paul’s missionary work: the Gentiles of the city join the missionaries, rather than the Gentile sympathizers in the synagogue. C. K. Barrett argues that the phrase ἐξελθών Ἰούδα “implies that they would have been glad to make an equal impression on their Gentile neighbors.” Ben Witherington similarly surmises that the Jews’ reaction involved jealousy “presumably because Paul and Barnabas were attracting a large Gentile audience while apparently the local Jews themselves had been less successful in attracting Gentiles.”

Some scholars combine the theological and the psychological interpretations. I. H. Marshall writes, “The effect of the crowds, however, was to make the Jews envious of the missionaries; presumably their own mission-
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ary efforts had been much less successful. At the same time, they probably disagreed with the message that was being preached, and so they argued against the missionaries and defamed them.”

J. D. G. Dunn suggests a social and theological explanation for the jealousy and the opposition of the Jews in Antioch to Paul and Barnabas. After describing the Jewish community in Antioch as “substantial and influential,” he suggests that

it was not so much Paul’s message which caused the offence to the bulk of Antioch’s Jews as its surprising appeal to Antioch’s wider citizenry. The fear would be of an untried and untested new sect upsetting and undermining the good standing and good relations which the Jewish community had established for itself within the city. . . . We may also deduce that there would be a theological dimension in the local Jewish hostility.

Similarly, Brian Rapske writes in a footnote,

The jealousy of the Jews in the Diaspora (Acts 13:45; 17:5; cf. 5:17) was not solely on account of the numbers of converts but what those numbers represented. They raised serious questions regarding the acceptable terms for inclusion and constituted a diminution of power for the ruling elites in the Jewish community. Significant numbers of conversions from among the God-fearers would have diminished Jewish standing and protection within the Gentile community, particularly when converts were, or had connections with, the Gentile ruling elites.

Some leave the Jewish opposition to the early Christian missionaries unexplained. Judith Lieu regards the New Testament material as “ambiguous” because it is unclear “when and whether it is appropriate there

40. Brian Rapske, “Opposition to the Plan of God and Persecution,” in Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts (ed. I. H. Marshall and D. Peterson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 235–56, 247 n. 32. Note also the very brief remark of Skarsaune, Jewish Influences, 171: “The sometimes violent measures taken by the latter [i.e., the Jews] are proof that they considered Paul a real threat to their community”; Skarsaune does not explain why and in what sense the local Jewish communities felt threatened by Paul’s activities.
to speak of 'internal' or 'external' action or perception." 42 This position is hardly convincing, because the question is not who regarded whom as "insider" and "outsider" but whether Jews who did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah opposed and persecuted fellow Jews—missionaries such as Paul and Barnabas—because of their beliefs and because of their dissemination of their beliefs. Lieu argues with regard to Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho and the Martyrdom of Polycarp that Christian accusations of Jewish persecution are generally found in nonhistorical contexts. 43 In a discussion of the evidence of the book of Acts, this argument works only if one is willing to assume that the self-definition of Christians included the conviction that followers of Jesus share in the experience of Jesus Christ, an experience that demands a negative role for the Jews. This then implies a rhetoric in which persecution, in particular Jewish persecution, "is but the necessary condition and foil for a Christian response which defines their new identity and values." 44 Neither an assumption of this sort nor its inference is convincing. E. Bammel points out that "the data of persecution are merely mentioned in Acts. Hardly any attempt is made to embellish the details and to work out a martyrological history or a hagiographical portrait of nascent Christendom." 45

This is not the place to engage scholars who argue that Luke's comments regarding Jewish opposition and hostility to the Christian missionaries are "anti-Semitic" or "anti-Jewish," 46 or that "in Luke's presentation of Paul's 'mission' he was little concerned with historical precision." 47 These positions are the result of a prejudiced reading of a few select passages, a reading that gives less than a full account of the historical situation that pertained in the first century. 48 J. D. G. Dunn refutes J. T. Sanders's

43. Lieu, "Jewish Persecution," 280.
44. Ibid., 290.
47. Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 342. Slingerland ("The Jews," 314) believes that "Acts has carefully created the false impression that Paul saw his own people as the focus of his apostleship."
accusation that Luke’s narration is distorted by anti-Semitic rhetoric, concluding that “even the most negative of Luke’s statements regarding the Jews may be best explained by a combination of historical fact, rhetorical effect, stylistic variation, and awareness of current tensions between the different groups claiming the heritage of second Temple Judaism.”

In order to clarify the reasons for the Jewish opposition to the Christian missionaries, it will be necessary to review the political status of the Jewish diaspora communities in Asia Minor and their contact with Jerusalem before attempting an explanation for the hostility of the Jewish communities.

THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL STATUS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN ASIA MINOR

The Legal Status of the Jews

The legal status of the Jews in the Roman Empire can be described in the context of a three-tiered system of laws: the common law, which governed the life of every person living in the empire, Jewry law (a later term), which granted the Jews of a city or of a province certain privileges, and legal traditions that were developed from the injunctions of the Hebrew Bible and from scribal and rabbinic discussions and decisions. Paul is a good example:

as a citizen of both Rome and Tarsus he was subject to the Roman law as well as to the law of his home town; as a Tarsic Jew he shared in Jewry-law privileges based on custom and on legal dispositions enacted by Hellenistic and Roman magistrates; and as an observant Jew he recognized the authority of the halachah and endeavored to act according to its precepts within the limits allowed by the other two laws.

The Jews who lived in cities outside of the Holy Land were regarded as a distinct entity. They were allowed, in principle, to live according to their


national “law,” as the “laws” of Solon were recognized as typical of the Athenians.52

Julius Caesar allowed the Jews to live according to their ancestral laws, according to a letter that he wrote in the second half of June, 47 B.C., to the magistrates, the council, and the people of Sidon, a letter that accompanied an alleged decree that he issued concerning Hyrcanus II, the ethnarch of the Jews (Josephus, A.J. 14.190–95).53

Gaius Julius Caesar, Imperator and Pontifex Maximus, Dictator for the second time, to the magistrates, council and people of Sidon, greeting. If you are in good health, it is well; I also and the army are in good health. I am sending you a copy of the decree, inscribed on a tablet, concerning Hyrcanus, son of Alexander, high priest and ethnarch of the Jews, in order that it may be deposited among your public records. It is my wish that this be set up on a bronze tablet in both Greek and Latin (βούλομαι δὲ καὶ ἐλληνιστὶ καὶ ῥωμαίστὶ ἐν δίδακτῳ χάλκῃ τοῦτο ἀναπαθήναι). . . . it is my wish that Hyrcanus, son of Alexander, and his children shall be ethnarchs of the Jews and shall hold the office of high priest of the Jews for all time in accordance with their national customs, and that he and his sons shall be our allies and also be numbered among our particular friends; and whatever high-priestly prerogatives or privileges exist in accordance with their laws, these he and his children shall possess by my command. And if, during this period, any question shall arise concerning the Jews’ manner of life, it is my pleasure that they shall have the decisions (ἀν τε μεταξῷ γένηται τις ᾠδὴς περὶ τῆς Ἰουδαϊκῆς ἁγιωτης, ἀρέσκει μοι κρίσιν γίνεσθαι παρ’ αὐτοῖς). (A.J. 14.190–91, 194–95)

According to Josephus, Caesar’s decree concerning the Jews was confirmed six times by a senatus consultum in October, 47 B.C. (A.J. 14.196–99, 202–10), in February, 44 B.C. (A.J. 14.200–201), on February 9, 44 B.C. (A.J. 14.211–12), and on April 11, 44 B.C. (A.J. 14.219–22).54 The decree that Augustus sent to the magistrates, the council, and the people of Paros concerning the Jews of Delos (A.J. 14.213–16) guaranteed the Jews the right to assemble, to engage in cultic activity in the synagogue, and to collect the tribute for the Jerusalem temple.55 This policy was not devised for the benefit of the Jews, however. Caesar granted the right to use their own laws to the citizens of Pergamon, Mytilene, and Thessalia as well.56 Augustus adopted Julius Caesar’s policies and granted the same religious freedom to

52. Ibid., 140.
54. Pucci Ben Zeev, Jewish Rights, 55–106, 121–36 (nos. 2–6, 8).
55. Ibid., 107–18 (no. 7); Jürgen Malitz, “Mommsen, Caesar und die Juden,” in Geschichte, Tradition, Reflexion, vol. 2: Griechische und Römische Religion (ed. H. Cancik; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 371–87, esp. 384; he comments that these stipulations “provided the Jews of the Diaspora with a precise definition of their status which was absolutely vital.”
the Jews of Rome (A.J. 14.214), Delos (A.J. 14.213–16), Alexandria (CPJ 2: 153),57 and the province of Asia (A.J. 16.162–66).58 Even though there was no “Magna Carta” of Jewish rights,59 Caesar’s formal recognition of the traditional rights of the Jews “allowed the Jews in later times to recall it and to request that it be applied whenever the need was felt.”60

The confirmation of Jewish rights was often made necessary on account of tensions that arose in the cities in which Jews lived. This was the case in Republican times as well as during the principate.61 During Republican times, there is evidence for Greeks trying to prevent the Jews from living according to their traditional laws in Asia Minor, Delos (A.J. 14.213–16), Sardis (A.J. 14.235), Laodicea and Tralles (A.J. 14.241–43), Miletus (A.J. 14.244–46), and Ephesus (A.J. 14.252–54). During the principate of Augustus, Jews were prevented from following their traditional laws and customs in Asia Minor (A.J. 16.162–68; 171–73) and in Cyrene (A.J. 16.169–70), necessitating the confirmation of the traditional Jewish rights. During the principate of Caligula, the cruel pogrom in Alexandria in A.D. 38 (A.J. 18.257–60) prompted both the Greeks and the Jews of the city to send an embassy to the emperor Gaius Caligula.62 The five-member delegation of the Jewish community, which was led by Philo, presented their demands for the reestablishment and the conformation of their civil rights in the spring and autumn of A.D. 40. Philo writes,

Surely it was a cruel situation that the fate of all the Jews everywhere should rest precariously on us five envoys (ἐν ἡμίν δὲ πέντε προσβευτέοις σαλέσατε τὰ τῶν πανταχῶς πάντων Ἰουδαίων οὐ χαλεπῶν). For if he should decide in favour of our enemies, what other city will keep tranquil or refrain from attacking its fellow inhabitants (τίς ἑτέρα πόλις ἑρμήνευσε; τίς οὐκ ἐπιθῆρεται τοῖς συνοικοσύναις), what house of prayer will be left unscathed (τὶς ἀπαθῆς καταλείφθησαι προσευχή), what kind of civic rights will not be upset for those whose lot is cast under the ancient institutions of the Jews? (ποῖον πολιτικὸν οὐκ ἀνατραπήσει δίκαιον τοῖς

58. Pucci Ben Zeev, Jewish Rights, 342, 443–44; cf. ibid., no. 7 (Delos, Rome), 22–23 (Asia).
60. Pucci Ben Zeev, Jewish Rights, 419.
61. Ibid., 420 with n. 38.
First upset, then shipwrecked, then sunk to the very bottom will be both their peculiar laws and the rights which they enjoy in common in every city (ἀναπτράπησαν, ναυσικήσαν, κατα βυθὸν χωρήσαν καὶ τὰ ἐξαίρετα νόμιμα καὶ τὰ κοινὰ πρὸς ἑκάστας τῶν πόλεων αὐτοῖς δίκαια). (Legat. 370–71)

The first lines of this quotation indicate that the Jewish delegates from Alexandria evidently "assume that their compatriots in other centres of the Diaspora are as unpopular with their gentle neighbours as their own community is in Alexandria." 63 In his depiction of the coexistence of Jews and Greeks in Alexandria and in the Jewish diaspora in general at the time of the accession of Gaius Caligula in March, A.D. 37, Philo describes both the ideal situation and the potential areas of conflict:

For who that saw Gaius when after the death of Tiberius he succeeded to the sovereignty of the whole earth and sea, gained not by faction (ἀστασιστὸν) but established by law (ἐθνομον), with all parts, east, west, south, north, harmoniously adjusted (πάσι τοῖς μέρεσιν ἡμισμένην εἰς τὸ σύμφωνον), the Greek in full agreement with the barbarian (τοῦ μὲν βαρβαροῦ γένους τῷ Ἑλληνικῷ, τοῦ δὲ Ἐλληνικοῦ τῷ βαρβαρικῷ), the civil with the military (καὶ τοῦ μὲν στρατιωτικοῦ τῷ κατὰ πόλεως, τοῦ δὲ πολιτικοῦ τῷ στρατευμένῳ), to enjoy and participate in peace (συμφωνοῦσαντος εἰς μετασφαίραν καὶ ἀπόλαυσιν εἰρήνης)—who I say was not filled with admiration and astonishment at his prodigious and indescribable prosperity? (Legat. 8)

The Jewish embassy to Caligula seeks to assure the emperor that it is not the fault of the Jewish community that factional uprisings disturbed the order and the peace of civic life, arguing that the confirmation of the established rights of the Jews would guarantee the harmonious coexistence of Greeks and non-Greeks and of civil service and the military authorities and thus the "prodigious and indescribable prosperity" of the cities. 64 After Claudius acceded to the throne on January 24, 41, the delegation led by Philo presented their case to the new emperor, who then issued an edict in the spring of A.D. 41 (A.J. 19.280–85) 65 in which, after commenting on the antiquity of the Jewish community in Alexandria, on the earlier privileges and the religious liberty granted by Augustus, and on the "great folly and madness" of Gaius Caligula, who had humiliated the Jews when they refused to address him as a god, he writes:

I desire that none of their rights should be lost to the Jews on account of the madness of Gaius, but that their former privileges also be preserved to them, while they abide by their own customs; and I enjoin upon both parties to take the greatest precaution to prevent any dis-

63. Smallwood, Legatio ad Gaium, 342.
65. Pucci Ben Zeev, Jewish Rights, 295–326 (no. 28).
turbance arising after the posting of my edict (βούλομαι μηδὲν διὰ τὴν
Γαίος παραφθορήσῃν τῶν δικαίων τῷ Ἑβραίου ἐδὲν παραπέπεσκενα,
φυλάσσεσθαι δ’ αὐτοῖς καὶ τὰ πρῶτον δικαίωμα ἐμένοις τῶν ἰδίως
ἐθέλαι, ἀμφοτέρως τε διακεκλύσαι τῶν μέρεσι πλείστην ποτήρασθα
πρόνοιαν, ὅπως μηδείμα ταραχὴ γένηται μετὰ τὸ προτεθήκα τοῦ τὸ

It appears that after this edict was posted, there was a Jewish uprising in
Alexandria which led to renewed disorders, prompting Claudius, at the
request of Agrippa I (king of Judea from a.D. 41 to 44) and Herod II (king
of Chalcis from a.D. 41 to 48), to issue an edict addressing the Jews in gen-

Tiberius Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus, of tribunician power,
elected consul for the second time, proclaims: Kings Agrippa and
Herod, my dearest friends, having petitioned me to permit the same
privileges (τὰ αὐτὰ δίκαια) to be maintained for the Jews throughout
the empire under the Romans as those in Alexandria enjoy, I very
gladly consented, not merely in order to please those who petitioned
me, but also because in my opinion the Jews deserve to obtain their
request on account of their loyalty and friendship to the Romans
(ὅστα συνειχόρσα οὐ μόνον τοῦτο τίς αὑτοῖς ἐμείκαμεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτῶς ὑπὲρ ἀν
παρεκλήσθην ἄξιος κρίνας διὰ τὴν πρὸς θελα-
μαν ψήναι καὶ φιλάν). In particular, I did so because I hold it right
that not even Greek cities should be deprived of these privileges, see-
ing that they were in fact guaranteed for them in the time of the di-
vine Augustus. It is right, therefore, that the Jews throughout the
whole world under our sway (ἐν παντὶ τῷ οὐροθέο κόσμῳ) should also
observe the customs of their fathers (τὰ πάτρων ἐθνῆς) without let or hin-
drance. (A.J. 19.288–90)67

The phrase τὰ δίκαια refers to the traditional rights of the Jews, i.e., the
“rights related to the exercise of the Jewish πάτριον νόμον.”68 Claudius goes
on to warn the Jews against causing further disturbances and ends the
edict with an order of publication:

I enjoin upon them also by these presents to avail themselves of this
kindness in a more reasonable spirit, and not to set at nought the be-
liefs about the gods held by other peoples, but to keep their own laws
(οἷς καὶ αὐτοῖς ἢδη νῦν παραγέλλω μου τοῦτη τῇ φιλανθρωπίᾳ ἐπεικέ-
στερον χρῆσθαι καὶ μὴ τὰς τῶν ἄλλων ἐθνῶν δεσποτικῖς ἐξουθενίζεις,
tῶν ἰδίως ἐν νόμοις φιλάσειν). It is my will that the ruling bodies of
the cities and colonies and municipia in Italy and outside Italy, and
the kings and other authorities through their own ambassadors, shall

66. Ibid., 328–42 (no. 29); regarding the historical background and the relationship with
the edict reported by Josephus in A.J. 280–85, cf. ibid., 305–13; also, Gruen, Diaspora, 98–100.
67. For bibliography, text, and commentary, see Pucci Ben Zeev, Jewish Rights, 328–
44 (no. 29).
68. Ibid., 331; cf. ibid., 301.
cause this edict of mine to be inscribed, and keep it posted for not less than thirty days in a place where it can plainly be read from the ground. (A.J. 19.290–91)

In October of A.D. 41, in the same year in which he had already issued two edicts confirming the rights of the Alexandrian Jews, Claudius sent a letter to Aemilius Rectus, the Roman prefect in Alexandria (P.Lond. VI 1912 = CPJ 2: 153), dealing among other matters with the Jewish question (lines 73–104).

With regard to the responsibility for the disturbances and rioting, or rather, to speak the truth, the war, against the Jews, although your ambassadors, particularly Dionysios the son of Theon, argued vigorously and at length in the disputation, I have not wished to make an exact inquiry, but I harbor within me a store of immutable indignation against those who renewed the conflict. . . . I conjure the Alexandrians to behave gently and kindly toward the Jews who have inhabited the same city for many years (πρα生活质量 καὶ φιλανθρώπος προσφέροντα Ἰουδαίος τοῖς τὴν αὐτήν πόλιν ἐκ πολλῶν χρόνων, lines 83–84), and not to dishonor any of their customs in their worship of their god, but to allow them to keep their own ways (οἰκοδομεῖ καὶ μηδέν τῶν πρὸς θρησκείαν αὐτῶν νεομιμημένων τοῦ θεοῦ λυμαίνονται ἄλλα ἑώρακαν αὐτοῖς τοῖς ἔθεσι χρήσις, lines 84–87), as they did in the time of the god Augustus and as I too, having heard both sides, have confirmed. The Jews, on the other hand, I order not to aim at more than they have previously had and not in the future to send two embassies as if they lived in two cities, a thing which has never been done before, and not to intrude themselves into the games presided over by the gymnasiarchoi and the kosmetai, since they enjoy what is their own, and in a city which is not their own they possess an abundance of all good things. Nor are they to bring in or invite Jews coming from Syria or Egypt, or I shall be forced to conceive graver suspicions. If they disobey, I shall proceed against them in every way as fomenting a common plague for the whole world (εἰ δὲ μὴ πάντα τρόπον αὐτοῖς εἰπέτοντο καθάπερ κοινήν τινα τῆς οἰκουμένης νόσον ἐξεγείροντος; lines 98–100). If you both give up your present ways and are willing to live in gentleness and kindness with one another, I for my part will care for the city as much as I can.

Amnon Linder comments on the edicts and the letter of Claudius which reestablish and confirm the rights of the Jews: “thus embraced by the government, the principle could legitimize a range of social activities and institutions, but in practice it resulted in very few social, non-religious

dispositions. Its main effect can be seen in the recognition of Jewish legal autonomy in some leading communities.\textsuperscript{70} In Alexandria, the Greeks occupied the summit of the social pyramid, and the native population formed the base, while, as Linder points out,

the Jews, both as individuals and in their organized community, were in between, on a rather unstable and mutable level. They struggled to climb and acquire the legal status of the upper ranks, and at the same time to preserve their autonomous institutions and traditional status against hostile pressure emanating both from the Greeks and the provincial government. Ultimately they failed: Claudius finally denied the Jews of Alexandria the citizenship of that city, which he defined in his edict as “a city not their own,” thus effectively excluding them from the Greek institutions and the way of life typical of that Greek politeuma.\textsuperscript{71}

Regarding the unstable nature, on principle, of the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in diaspora cities, we should note that the letters written by Roman magistrates to the magistrates and the council of the Greek cities seem to have been deposited in the archives of the individual cities to which the letters were sent.\textsuperscript{72} The edicts issued by emperors may have been published in the capitol or at the imperial residence in Rome; some edicts were published in the imperial temple of a province, e.g., Augustus’s edict sent to the Jews of the province of Asia and “set up in the most conspicuous [part of the temple] assigned to me by the federation (\textit{koinon}) of Asia in Ancyra” (\textit{A.J.} 16.165).\textsuperscript{73}

The evidence for the confirmation of Jewish rights to autonomous internal administration is as follows (in chronological order).\textsuperscript{74}


70. Linder, “Legal Status,” 140.

71. Ibid., 141. Linder refers to the letter that the emperor Claudius sent to the Jews of Alexandria in A.D. 41: PLond. 1912; Tcherikover et al., \textit{CPJ} no. 153; cf. Feldman and Meyer, \textit{Jewish Life}, 91–92 no. 4.19. The Greek phrase is \textit{αὐλοτριὰς πόλεως}.

72. Pucci Ben Zeev, \textit{Jewish Rights}, 428; for the following comment, see p. 429.

73. On the temple of Rome and Augustus in Ancyra, see Daniel M. Krencker and Martin Schede, \textit{Der Tempel in Ankara} (Denkmäler antiker Architektur 3; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1936); Mitchell, \textit{Anatolia}, 1:103 and passim.

74. See the summary of Pucci Ben Zeev, \textit{Jewish Rights}, 376–77; the numbers refer to the text, translation, and analysis in this book.

75. See the discussion in ibid., 114–15.


7. Province of Asia: mandatum sent by Augustus in 12 B.C. to Gaius Norbanus Flaccus, consul in 24 B.C. and later proconsul in Asia (A.J. 16.166, no. 23): permission to send Jewish sacred monies to Jerusalem.


Political, Social, and Religious Factors

The tension between Jews and Gentiles in Asia Minor was linked with several political, social, and religious aspects of Jewish life. There were repeated disputes concerning the rights of local Jews to assemble, to observe the Sabbath, to perform their cult, to hold common meals, to own “sacred” property, and to have a measure of self-government. Lucius Antonius, proquaestor and propraetor in the province of Asia, writes to the city of Sardis in 49 B.C. to confirm the right of the Jewish citizens:

Lucius Antonius, son of Marcus, proquaestor and propraetor, to the magistrates, council and people of Sardis, greeting. Jewish citizens of ours have come to me and pointed out that from the earliest times they have had an association of their own in accordance with their native laws and a place of their own, in which they decide their affairs and controversies with one another (Ἰουδαίοι πολίται ἡμέτεροι Τοιοῦ ἱμέτερον

76. See the summary of ibid., 430.
The city of Sardis issued a decree, sometime after October 47 B.C., formally recognizing three specific rights for which the Jews had asked:

Decree of the people of Sardis. The following decree was passed by the council and people on the motion of the magistrates. Whereas the Jewish citizens living in our city have continually received many great privileges from the people and have now come before the council and the people and have pleaded that as their laws and freedom have been restored to them by the Roman Senate and people, they may, in accordance with their accepted customs, come together and have a communal life and adjudicate suits among themselves, and that a place be given them in which they may gather together with their wives and children and offer their ancestral prayers and sacrifices to God, it has therefore been decreed by the council and people (διεξόθαι τῇ βουλῇ καὶ τῷ δήμῳ) that permission shall be given them to come together on stated days to do those things which are in accordance with their laws (συγκεκριμέναι αὐτοῖς συνεργόμεναι εἰς ταῖς ἀποδείγμασις ἡμέρασι πράσειν τὰ κατὰ τοὺς αὐτῶν νόμους), and also that a place shall be set apart by the magistrates for them to build and inhabit, such as they may consider suitable for this purpose (ἀφορισθέναι δ’ αὐτοῖς καὶ τόπον ὕπὸ τῶν στρατηγῶν εἰς ῥυκοδομίαν καὶ σύκημα αὐτῶν, ὧν ἄν ὑπολάβωσιν πρὸς τοὺς ἐπιτήδειοι εἶναι), and that the market-officials of the city shall be charged with the duty of having suitable food for them brought in (ὅπως τε τοῖς τῆς πόλεως ἀγορανόμοις ἐπιμέλεις ἔτη καὶ τὰ ἐκεῖνος πρὸς τροφὴν ἐπιτήδεια ποιεῖν εἰσάγεονται). (A.J. 14.259–61) 78

A decree by the city of Halicarnassus permits Jewish festivals, feasts and gatherings to take place (A.J. 14.256–58). The peculiar calendar of the Jews, with the weekly observance of the Sabbath and with the observance of other specifically Jewish festivals, provoked not only protests but legal disputes, as Jews refused to appear before court or take place in other public events on their holy days. There is evidence for disputes of this sort in Miletus (A.J. 14.244–46), Laodicea (A.J. 14.241–43), Tralles (A.J. 14.242), Ephesus (A.J. 14.262–64), Halicarnassus (A.J. 14.256–58), and the cities of Ionia (A.J. 16.27, 45).

Josephus’s report of decrees in which he details the intervention of Roman authorities on behalf of Jewish rights ends at the beginning of the first century. The reason for Josephus’s silence concerning the legal rights of Jews in Asia Minor might be the fact that the pax romana brought social

77. Ibid., 176–81 (no. 14).
78. Ibid., 216–25 (no. 20).
peace and economic prosperity to the region, which would have relaxed the pressure on the Jewish community.\textsuperscript{79} Another reason seems to have been the influence that local Jewish communities enjoyed in the cities of Asia Minor. A major indicator of the respect which the Jewish community enjoyed in some cities is the presence of Gentile “Godfearers” in local synagogues.\textsuperscript{80} An inscription from Akmonia dating to A.D. 50–70 honors Iulia Severa for donating funds to erect a synagogue.\textsuperscript{81}

Iulia Severa, a Gentile woman, belonged to a leading family of the city of Akmonia, related to “a Galatian dynasty which could trace its line back to the tetrarchs and kings of the Hellenistic period.”\textsuperscript{82} She is depicted on coins of the city, she was a member of the city council, a priestess of the imperial cult in Akmonia, and agonothete of the games of the city.\textsuperscript{83} P. Turronius

Cladus, who is named as *archisynagogos*, was a member of an emigrant Italian family. Another member of the Turronii, a certain Turronius Rapo, a priest of the imperial cult, appears alongside Iulia Severa on coins issued by the city. Iulia Severa was connected by marriage to another Italian emigrant family, the Servenii; the son, L. Servenius Cornutus, became a senator in Rome. Stephen Mitchell comments that this is the familiar milieu of aristocratic civic life of early imperial Asia Minor, with the striking modification that the Jewish synagogue, and some at least of its leading supporters, were completely assimilated within it. The synagogue had been endowed by Iulia Severa, a gentile, just as any other temple might be; closely related persons associated with her held and advertised positions, on the one hand in the synagogue, on the other hand in the hierarchy of emperor worship.

Even though the inscription from Aphrodisias, which dates to the fourth century, is too late to be directly relevant for our discussion, the fact that it lists eight members of the city council (\(\betaουλευται\); B lines 34–38) as benefactors of the synagogue illustrates the support that some local Jewish communities enjoyed in the cities of Asia Minor.

**Financial Factors**

The tension between Jews and Gentiles in the diaspora was intricately linked with the economic conditions. Jewish communities were repeatedly...
challenged as a result of their acquisition and use of funds. The earliest reference to the collection of monies for the Jerusalem temple in the Jewish diaspora communities comes from 88 B.C., when Mithridates attacked Cos and seized, according to Josephus, 800 talents belonging to the Jews of the province of Asia (Josephus, *A.J.* 14.112–13). In a famous case dating to 62 B.C., the Jews of Asia Minor took L. Valerius Flaccus, the proconsul of the province of Asia, to court for prohibiting the transfer of monies to the temple in Jerusalem, having confiscated 20 pounds of gold from Laodicea and 100 pounds from Apamea. Cicero defends Flaccus with the following words.

As gold, under pretence of being given to the Jews, was accustomed every year to be exported out of Italy and all the provinces to Jerusalem (*cum aurum Iudaeorum nomine quotannis ex Italia et ex omnibus nostris provinciis Hierosolymam exportari soleret*), Flaccus issued an edict establishing a law that it should not be lawful for gold to be exported out of Asia. And who is there, O judges, who cannot honestly praise this measure? The senate had often decided, and when I was consul it came to a most solemn resolution that gold ought not to be exported. But to resist this barbarous superstition were an act of dignity, to despise the multitude of Jews, which at times was most unruly in the assemblies in defence of the interests of the republic, was an act of the greatest wisdom. . . . There was a hundredweight of gold, more or less openly seized at Apamea, and weighed out in the forum at the feet of the praetor, by Sextus Caesius, a Roman knight, a most excellent and upright man; twenty pounds weight or a little more were seized at Laodicea, by Lucius Peducaeus, who is here in court, one of our judges; some was seized also at Adramyttium, by Cnaeus Domitius, the lieutenant, and a small quantity at Pergamus. (Cicero, *Flacc.* 67–68)

Cicero’s narration constitutes evidence that the contributions in gold, which the Jews sent annually to Jerusalem, were collected in the centers of the assize districts (*conventus, διοικήσεις*), into which Roman Asia had been divided and which continued to be a key element of the provincial administration. The inscription I. Didyma 140, dating to A.D. 40, lists 12 assize districts: Cyzicus, Adramyttium, Pergamum, Sardis, Ephesus, Miletus, Alabanda, Halicarnassus, Laodicea, Apamea, Synnada, and Philomelium. Apameia is ca. 120 km (75 miles) from Pisidian Antioch, as is

89. Smallwood (*Jews under Roman Rule*, 125) surmises that the figure of 800 might be an error for 80, “or large voluntary gifts for the Temple may have been included.”

Synnada, and Philomelium, the assize center of the Lycaonian district of Asia,\footnote{Mitchell, “Administration of Roman Asia,” 20.} is 30 km (19 miles) east of Antioch.

Around 46 B.C.,\footnote{For the following survey, cf. Barclay, Mediterranean Diaspora, 268–69.} the proconsul of the province of Asia directed the city of Miletus not to interfere with the way in which the Jewish community manages its funds (A.J. 14.245). The city of Parium was instructed by Caesar to allow the local Jews “to contribute money to common meals and sacred rites” (A.J. 14.214). The city of Ephesus was told by P. Dolabella, the governor of the province of Asia, to allow the Jewish community “to make offerings for their sacrifices” (A.J. 14.227). Augustus issued an edict in 12 B.C. that includes the provision that the Jews’ “sacred monies shall be inviolable and may be sent up to Jerusalem and delivered to the treasurers in Jerusalem” (A.J. 16.163). The edict reads:

Caesar Augustus, Pontifex Maximus with tribunician power, decrees as follows. Since the Jewish nation has been found well disposed to the Roman people not only at the present time but also in time past, and especially in the time of my father the emperor Caesar, as has their high priest Hyrcanus, it has been decided by me and my council under oath, with the consent of the Roman people, that the Jews may follow their own customs in accordance with the law of their fathers, just as they followed them in the time of Hyrcanus, high priest of the Most High God, and that their sacred monies shall be inviolable and may be sent up to Jerusalem and delivered to the treasurers in Jerusalem (τὰ τε ιερὰ εἰναὶ ἐν ἁσυλίᾳ καὶ ἀνάπτυσσάθα εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα καὶ ἀποδίδοσθα τοῖς ἀποδόχεσθαι Ἱεροσόλυμον), and that they need not give bond [to appear in court] on the Sabbath or on the day of preparation for it [Sabbath Eve] after the ninth hour. And if anyone is caught stealing their sacred books or their sacred monies from a synagogue or an ark [of the Law], he shall be regarded as sacrilegious, and his property shall be confiscated to the public treasury of the Romans. As for the resolution which was offered by them in my honour concerning the piety which I show to all men, and on behalf of Gaius Marcius Censorinus,\footnote{C. Marcius Censorinus was consul in 8 B.C. and proconsul of the province of Asia in A.D. 2–3.} I order that it and the present edict be set up in the most conspicuous [part of the temple] assigned to me by the federation of Asia in Ancyræ. If anyone transgresses any of the above ordinances, he shall suffer severe punishment. (A.J. 16.162–65)\footnote{Pucci Ben Zeev, Jewish Rights, 235–56 (no. 22).}

Marcus Vipsanius Agrippa, Roman general, friend and son-in-law of Augustus, governor of the eastern provinces in 23–21 B.C. and in 16–13 B.C., writes in the summer of 14 B.C. a letter to Ephesus:

Agrippa to the magistrates, council and people of Ephesus, greeting. It is my will that the care and custody of the sacred monies belonging
to the account of the temple in Jerusalem (τῶν εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν τὸ ἐν Ἱερο-
σολύμων ἀναφερομένων ἱερῶν χρημάτων) shall be given to the Jews in
Asia in accordance with their ancestral customs. And if any men steal
the sacred monies of the Jews and take refuge in places of asylum, it
is my will that they be dragged away from them and turned over to
the Jews under the same law by which temple-robbers are dragged
away from asylum. I have also written to the praetor Silanus that no
one shall compel the Jews to give bond [to appear in court] on the
Sabbath. (A.J. 16.167–68)95

Gaius Norbanus Flaccus, the proconsul of the province of Asia during the
principate of Augustus between 31 and 27 B.C., received a letter from the
emperor informing him of the following decree:

Caesar to Norbanus Flaccus, greeting. The Jews, however numerous
they may be, who have been wont, according to their ancient cus-
tom, to bring sacred monies to send up to Jerusalem, may do this
without interference (Ἰουδαίων ὁσιὸν ποτ’ ὀν εἰσίν, [ὅ] ἀρχαῖαν
συνήθειαν εἰδοθεὶσαν χρήματά τε ἱερὰ φέροντες ἀναπέμπειν ἀκελάντως
tότῳ ποιεῖτοσαν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα. (A.J. 16.166) 96

Philo emphasizes, in his report of the same occasion in Legat. 311–16, that
Augustus, when he had discovered that the sacred “firstfruits” being
neglected,

he instructed the governors of the provinces in Asia to grant the Jews
alone the right of assembly (ἐπέστειλε τοῖς ἑπιτρόποις τῶν κατὰ τὴν
Ἀσίαν ἐπικρατεῖσιν, πυθόμενος ὁλογρεῖσθαι τὰς ἱερὰς ἀπαρχὰς, ἵνα ἐπι-
τρέψωσι τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις μόνοις εἰς τὸ συναγώγια συνέρχεσθαι. (Legat. 311)

Both Julius Caesar and Augustus exempted the synagogues in Italy and in
the eastern provinces from the general ban on collegia, a fact that “safe-
guarded the collection of the ἀπαρχαί, since the right to form collegia
carried with it the right to have a common fund.” 97 Gaius Norbanus Flaccus
writes to the magistrates of Ephesus in order to remind them of the em-
peror’s decision that

the Jews, wherever they may be, regularly according to their old pe-
culiar custom, make a rule of meeting together and subscribing
money which they send to Jerusalem. He does not wish them to be
hindered from doing this (Ἰουδαίως, οὐ ἂν ὄντι, ἰδιῶ ἀρχαῖο ἐθνικῷ
νομίζειν συναγομένους χρήματα φέρειν, ὡς πέμποσιν εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα·
τούτους οὐκ ἡθέλησε καλλιέργησαι τοῦτο ποιεῖν). (Philo, Legat. 315)

The economic aspect of the tension between Jews and Gentiles comes to
the surface in the complaints of the Jews of Ionia before Marcus Agrippa
in 14 B.C.:

95. Ibid., 262–72 (no. 24).
96. Ibid., 258–61 (no. 23).
It was also at this time, when they [Marcus Agrippa and Herod] were in Ionia, that a great multitude of Jews, who lived in its cities, took advantage of their opportunity to speak out freely, and came to them and told them of the mistreatment which they had suffered in not being allowed to observe their own laws and in being forced to appear in court on their holy days because of the inconsiderateness of the examining judges. And they told how they had been deprived of the monies sent as offering to Jerusalem (τῶν εἰς Ἰεροσόλυμα χρημάτων ἀναπαύμενον ἀφοροῦντο) and of being forced to participate in military service and civic duties (στρατευμών καὶ λειτουργίων ἀναγκαζόμενοι κοινωνεῖν) and to spend their sacred monies for these things, although they had been exempted from these duties because the Romans had always permitted them to live in accordance with their own laws. (A.J. 16.27–28)

Nicolaus of Damascus, who addresses Agrippa on behalf of the Ionian Jews (A.J. 16.31–57), asserts,

Although we have done splendidly, our circumstances should not arouse envy (τὰ δὲ ἡμέρα καὶ λαμπρῶς πρατόντων οὐκ ἐστιν ἐπίθεσιν), for it is through you that we, in common with all men, prosper, and he argues that the enemies of the Jews in the Ionian cities deprive them of their sacred traditions and customs

by laying hands on the money which we contribute in the name of God and by openly stealing it from our temple (χρήματα μὲν ἀ τὸ θεό συμφέρομεν ἐπώνυμα διαφθέροντες καὶ φανερῶς ἱεροσυλωμείες), by imposing taxes upon us, and by taking us to court and other public places of business even on holy days. (A.J. 16.41, 45)

The proconsul Gaius Norbanus Flaccus directed the city of Sardis in 12 B.C. to permit the Jews to send their sacred monies to Jerusalem, implementing Augustus’s order:

Gaius Norbanus Flaccus, proconsul, to the magistrates and council of Sardis, greeting. Caesar has written to me, ordering that the Jews shall not be prevented from collecting sums of money, however great they may be, in accordance with their ancestral custom, and sending them up to Jerusalem (κελεύων μὴ κολῶθειν τούς Ἰουδαίος ὡς ἄν ὀσιὰ κατὰ τὸ πάτρων αὐτοῖς ἐδός συναγαγόντες χρήματα ἀναπέμπειν εἰς Ἴεροσόλυμα). I have therefore written to you in order that you may know that Caesar and I wish this to be done. (A.J. 16.171)98

Julius Antonius, also proconsul of the province of Asia, wrote on February 13, 4 B.C. to Ephesus to confirm the right of the Jews, in agreement with the decrees of Augustus and Agrippa, to follow their own laws and to send their offerings to Jerusalem:

98. Pucci Ben Zeev, Jewish Rights, 280–83 (no. 26).
To the magistrates, the council and the people of Ephesus, greeting. When I was administering justice in Ephesus on the Ides of February, the Jews dwelling in Asia (οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ κατοικοῦντες Ἰουδαῖοι) pointed out to me that Caesar Augustus and Agrippa have permitted them to follow their own laws and customs, and to bring the offerings, which each of them makes of his own free will and out of piety toward the Deity, travelling together under escort to Jerusalem without being impeded in any way (συγκεκριμέναι αὐτοῖς χρήσην τοῖς ἰδίοις νόμοις καὶ ἔθεσιν, ἁπάρχας τε, αὐς ἑκάστος αὐτῶν ἐκ τῆς ἰδίας προαιρέσεως εὐσεβείας ἔνεκα τῆς πρὸς τὸ θεῖον ἀνυκομιδῆς συμπαρειμένους ποιεῖν ἀνεμοπόδιστος). And they asked that I confirm by my own decision the rights granted by Augustus and Agrippa, I therefore wish you to know that in agreement with the will of Augustus and Agrippa I permit them to live and act in accordance with their ancestral customs without interference (ὡς ὁμοίως ὅν ποιομαι εἰδέναι ἐν τοῖς τοῦ Σεβαστοῦ καὶ Ἀγρίππα βουλήμασι συνεπερρέπεται αὐτοῖς χρήσθαι καὶ ποιεῖν κατὰ τὰ πάρια χωρίς ἐμποδισμοῦ). (A.J. 16.172–73)\(^{99}\)

John Barclay comments that it was evidently extremely irksome to the citizens of the Greek cities to witness a large and evidently prosperous Jewish community sending large amounts of money to the temple in Jerusalem while at the same time refusing to meet the traditional local liturgy (λειτουργία) obligations by which wealthy citizens contributed to the welfare and honor of the city and its temples.\(^{100}\)

**Conclusions**

The lack of specific evidence for the middle of the first century A.D. for many of the cities in which Luke reports Jewish opposition and hostility toward Christian missionaries should not prevent us from attempting to formulate conclusions based on evidence that is slightly earlier.

1. Even though the relationship between Jews and non-Jews in the cities of Asia Minor was generally stable and respectful in the mid-first century, there were no guarantees that this could not change suddenly. As we have seen, disturbances that involved local Jewish communities repeatedly necessitated the confirmation of existing rights by imperial, provincial, or local authorities.\(^{101}\) The unrest in Alexandria in Egypt and in

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99. Ibid., 285–90 (no. 27).
Antioch in Syria in the years A.D. 38–41—only about five years before Paul and Barnabas began to engage in missionary work in the cities of Roman Asia—demonstrates the tenuous nature of the status of the local Jewish communities, arguably not only for cities in Syria and Egypt but also for cities in other Roman provinces.

2. The religious freedom and the social autonomy of a local Jewish community, granted and (re)confirmed by Roman officials, would be threatened if the laws and customs that Jews were allowed by the authorities to follow and practice were to change. If a local Jewish community abandoned the traditional definition of being “Israelite” or “Jewish,” for example, by discarding the distinction between Jews (and proselytes) and non-Jews, the local magistrates might no longer be willing to grant the members of this community privileges (e.g., assembling once a week), which the other citizens did not have.

3. Financial matters, in particular the yearly collection of the “consecrated money” and its transfer to Jerusalem, were a recurrent point of contention between Jews and non-Jews. If Jews and Jewish sympathizers set up alternative ways to collect and distribute monies, the local magistrate might easily modify or even revoke the customary permission that the diaspora synagogues had been granted with regard to the management of their revenues.

4. The Jewish communities of the Ionian cities were willing and able to vigorously defend their rights before the highest representatives of the emperor (A.J. 16.27–28). Even though this was an extraordinary case, which involved huge sums of money, it demonstrates that Jews were not shy about engaging the Roman authorities on the highest level. It is to be expected that local Jewish communities, eager to at least maintain the political and social status quo, would be willing to move against anyone who threatened to endanger the existing rights and privileges in their city.

THE CONTACTS OF THE JEWISH DIASPORA COMMUNITIES WITH JERUSALEM

The Evidence

It is well known that Jews who lived in cities outside the Holy Land visited Jerusalem during pilgrimage festivals and on other occasions. Philo writes:

Countless multitudes from countless cities come, some over land, others over sea, from west and east and north and south at every feast (μυρίων γὰρ ἀπὸ μυρίων όσων πόλεων, οἱ μὲν διὰ γῆς, ὁ δὲ διὰ θάλαττάς, ἐξ ἀνατολῆς καὶ δύσεως καὶ ἀρκτοῦ καὶ μεσημβρίας καθ’ ἐκάστην ἱερότη). They take the Temple for their port as a general haven and safe refuge from the bustle and great turmoil of life, and there they seek to find calm weather. (Philo, Spec. 1:69)

In fact, practically in every city there are banking places for the holy money (ταμεία τῶν ἱερῶν χρημάτων) where people regularly come and give their offerings. And at stated times there are appointed to carry the sacred tribute envoys (ἱεροσομοιοί τῶν χρημάτων) selected on their merits, from every city those of the highest repute (ἐξ ἐκάστης οἱ δοκιμασταί), under whose conduct the hopes of each and all will travel safely. For it is on these firstfruits, as prescribed by the law, that the hopes of the pious rest. (Philo, Spec. 1:78)

In 1983, Benjamin Isaac published an inscription discovered by Benjamin Mazar in excavations south of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, “found among some debris which filled a pool in a palace of the Herodian period which was destroyed in 70 A.D.”

The stone on which the words are inscribed measures 20 by 26 cm, suggesting that it was a plaque inserted in a wall, recording a contribution for financing the pavement of the temple complex. B. Isaac suggests that, because the findspot is only 90 m from the southern retaining wall of the Temple Mount, it is “quite possible that the inscription derives from the superstructure, perhaps from the Royal Stoa.” He points to Josephus’s comment that the southern court of the temple was “completely paved with a variety of all kinds of stones” (τὸ δ’ ὑπάρθρον ὑπὸν πεποικλω παντοδαιμόνι λίθῳ κατεστρωμένον; B.J. 5.192). A “20th year” is attested only for Herod; according to the “civil” calendar, Herod’s 20th year was 18/17 B.C., according to the “ecclesiastical calendar” the year 17/16 B.C. The High Priest at this time would have been Simon or Boethos.

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to the Roman province of Asia. The son of Akeson was either a Jew or a sympathizer, presumably a Godfearer, who made a donation in support of Herod's renovation of the temple.108 This inscription is important, as Benjamin Isaac points out, “as one of the few extant epigraphical documents related to the Temple in Jerusalem.”109 It is all the more significant that this inscription documents financial donations made for the building of the temple complex by Jews or Godfearers from the diaspora, clearly demonstrating an interest in the metropolis of all the Jews in a diaspora community. The size of the inscription suggests the possibility that there were numerous further donations that were made public through inscriptions.110 This inscription does not prove, but certainly suggests, that other wealthy individuals from the Jewish diaspora made contributions to the temple.

This is confirmed by Josephus, who knows that the gold and silver covering of several gates of the temple had been donated by Alexander, the alabarch (chief of customs) of Alexandria (B.J. 5.205):

Of the gates nine were completely overlaid with gold and silver, as were also their door-posts and lintels. . . . The nine gates were thus plated by Alexander the father of Tiberius (τῶν δὲ πύλων αὐτὸς μὲν ἐννέα χρυσᾶ καὶ ἀργύρω κεκάλυμ μένα πανταχῶθεν ἦσαν ὁμοία τις τις παραστάσεις καὶ τὰ ύπαρ. . . . τούτων δὲ ταῖς ἐννέας πύλαις ἐπέχειν ὁ Τιβέριος πατὴρ Ἀλέξανδρος; Josephus, B.J. 5.201, 205). Alexander, the father of Tiberius, was the alabarch Alexander of Alexandria, brother of the philosopher Philo. (A.J. 18.259)111

The inscription found on an ossuary from Jerusalem provides the information that the bronze gate called “Nicanor Gate” was donated by an Alexandrian man named Nicanor:

Nicanor of Alexandria who made the gates. (ὁστας τῶν τοῦ Νεκάνωρος Ἀλέξανδριος παρήγαγας τὰς θύρας; OGIS 599; CIJ 2: 1256; Jewish Inscriptions of Greco-Roman Egypt, 153)

Both these texts clearly reveal, as Margaret Williams points out, “the attachment of Diasporan Jews to both the Temple and the ‘Holy Land.’”112 Erich Gruen asserts that “Jerusalem as concept and reality remained a powerful emblem of Jewish identity—not supplanted by the Book or disavowed by those who dwelled afar.”113 The regular collections of monies for the temple in Jerusalem in the Jewish diaspora communities and the

110. Ameling, IJuda 2, 62.
112. Williams, “Contribution,” 84.
113. Gruen, Diaspora, 240.
transfer of these collections to the Holy Land, which have already been mentioned, demonstrate the close connection between the Jewish communities in the diaspora and Jerusalem.

Conclusions

When the Jewish diaspora communities vigorously defended their rights and customs, they defended, among other matters, the measure of autonomous internal administration that Julius Caesar and Augustus had granted. The freedom to manage their own internal affairs included the permission to collect contributions of money for the Jerusalem temple. The struggle to protect these rights permits at least two conclusions.

1. The fact that the diaspora Jews defended the permission to collect contributions of this sort and to send them to Jerusalem demonstrates that they regarded it as essential to maintain connections with the metropolis of all Jews.

2. Any new developments that would jeopardize the traditional relationship with Jerusalem, expressed in collections of money and in pilgrimages, would be viewed with suspicion.

THE JEWISH OPPOSITION TO THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS: AN EXPLANATION

Concerns for Compromising Jewish Identity

The self-understanding of the early Christians and of their missionaries implied a conflict that was unavoidable. The Christian missionaries taught the same God—the God who created the world and who had revealed himself in Israel—whom the Jewish communities in the cities of Asia Minor worshiped. They also taught, however, that God had sent Jesus, the promised messiah, and offered through his death and resurrection universal salvation and forgiveness—not only for the Jewish people, but for Gentiles as well. The principle "there is no longer Jew or Greek" (Gal 3:28; cf. Rom 3:9, 23, 29) signifies that Paul, and arguably other early Christian missionaries, programmatically disregarded the connection between ethnic and religious identity, a nexus that was essential both for the self-understanding and for the political status of the local Jewish communities. Because the Christian missionaries regularly began their preaching and teaching in the local synagogues, as a matter of course, conflict was inevitable unless the Jewish community accepted their message of Jesus the crucified and risen messiah who had inaugurated the last days in which

the nations would be converted, leading to a drastic transformation of their community. Because the local Jewish communities of Roman Asia (and Greece) were evidently not willing to accept the message of the followers of Jesus and thus the need for transformation, the establishment of new communities outside of the synagogue community was the result.

The consequences of the self-understanding of these new communities of believers in Jesus Christ should not be underestimated. The emerging Christian communities did not understand themselves as a new Jewish community alongside the existing Jewish community but as a new entity, albeit fundamentally linked with God’s revelation in and through Israel. It is surely no coincidence that the followers of Jesus called themselves not “synagogue of the christianoi,” analogous to the “synagogue of the Cyre- nians” or the “synagogue of the Alexandrians” (Acts 6:9) but “church of God” (ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ), a term that is not attested for a synagogue community.

These consequences amplified the conflict between Jews and Jewish Christians in a twofold manner. First, as individual members of the Jewish community—both Jews and proselytes—accepted the Christian message and joined the new community of the followers of Jesus Christ, the synagogue community was weakened once they left. How much the synagogue community was weakened and whether the departure of members and sympathizers would have been felt to be a threat depends on which and how many members joined the followers of Jesus. The persecution of Paul and Barnabas and of other Christians by Jews in Asia Minor indicates that the new movement was not regarded as a quantité négligeable but as an entity that required robust suppressing action. Second, as God-fearers and other sympathizers accepted the Christian message and joined the emerging new community, the standing of the Jewish community in the city, already a minority, was further diminished. When this matrix of Jewish and Jewish-Christian self-understanding is placed in the historical context of the realities of the early Roman Empire in the first century, the following considerations appear to be relevant.

Concerns for the Preservation of the Social and Political Status Quo

The social context of the Jewish communities in Roman Asia is a major factor in understanding the forceful reaction of the leaders of the Jewish communities in cities such as Pisidian Antioch. If Paul indeed had letters of recommendation from L. Sergius Paullus for his relatives in Pisidian Antioch, he would have directed his missionary efforts among Gentiles not at

115. 1 Cor 1:2; 10:32; 11:16, 22; 15:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:13; 1 Thess 2:14; 2 Thess 4:1; Acts 20:28.
116. 1 Cor 1:2; 10:32; 11:16, 22; 15:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:13; 1 Thess 2:14; 2 Thess 4:1; Acts 20:28.
117. 1 Cor 1:2; 10:32; 11:16, 22; 15:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:13; 1 Thess 2:14; 2 Thess 4:1; Acts 20:28.


117. Does Paul continue to try to be part of diaspora Jewish communities? The fact that he received on five occasions the synagogue punishment of being flogged (2 Cor 11:24) seems to suggest this, although these incidents could have happened with new locations of missionary work; see Trebilco, Jewish Communities, 20.
the margins of colonial society but at its very center. The benefaction of Iulia Severa for the Jewish community in Akmonia demonstrates that, as Stephen Mitchell argues, “it would not have been unnatural for important families, perhaps even pre-eminently that of the Sergii Paulli, to have taken an active interest in Jewish worship.”118 If members of the local elites119 who had been benefactors of the Jewish community, together with larger numbers of Gentiles, accepted Paul’s teaching and joined the emerging new communities of the followers of Jesus, this could be expected to have serious repercussions for the Jewish community. They would lose Jewish families, proselytes, and pagan sympathizers to the new group, accompanied by financial losses and damage to the status of the Jewish community in the political landscape of the city.120

When Paul and Barnabas engaged in missionary work in A.D. 46 in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe, the Jews of Asia Minor were certainly aware of the anti-Jewish pogrom in Alexandria in A.D. 38, during which synagogues were profaned and destroyed (Philo, Flacc. 11.86–91; Josephus, B.J. 2.385). They were also aware of the unrest in Alexandria in A.D. 40/41 (Josephus, A.J. 19.279) and of the unrest in Antioch in Syria between Jews and Gentiles in A.D. 39/40 and in A.D. 41 (Malalas, 244.15–245.20). Even though these events evidently had no direct repercussions for the Jewish communities in Asia Minor, they certainly indicated that the imperial edicts concerning their privileges did not guarantee their safety. As the Christian missionaries focused their teaching on the death of Jesus Christ (Acts 13:27–29), their Gentile sympathizers and converts might easily have turned against the local Jews as representatives of those who had killed the savior of the world, despite the involvement of the Roman prefect in Judea (Acts 13:28). There is no evidence in the first century for this kind of Christian anti-Judaism, which proved so lethal for Jews in later centuries. It is conceivable, however, that the local Jews might be afraid of repercussions of the missionaries’ focus on the culpability of the Jews of Jerusalem for the death of the Messiah.

When Augustus abolished the collegia, he authorized at the same time the organizations of the old associations that Julius Caesar had exempted, “provided they received the necessary permit from the Senate. This permit was to be granted only to those associations that were not likely to disturb the peace of the state, but would definitely serve the public interest.”121 The leaders of the Jewish communities in Roman Asia could

119. On the local elites in Roman Asia, see Eckhard Stephan, Honoratioren, Griechen, Polisbürger: Kollektive Identitäten innerhalb der Oberschicht des kaiserzeitlichen Kleinasien (Hypomnemata 143; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002).
121. Suetonius, Augustus 32.1: “And he disbanded all collegia, except such as were of long standing and formed for legitimate purposes.” K. R. Bradley translates the term collegia as “guild” (Suetonius: Lives of the Caesars [LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913; repr. 1998], 201), which is misleading. Quotation from Pucci Ben Zeev, Jewish Rights, 460. On the
not be sure whether the debates provoked by the novel missionary activity of Paul and Barnabas with their message of a crucified savior might not lead to disturbances that might jeopardize their legal status. As we have seen, the fear of disturbances is vividly expressed by Philo on the occasion of the embassy of the Alexandrian Jews to Gaius Caligula in A.D. 40. From both a Jewish and a Greek-Roman perspective, the public interest is certainly not served if citizens listen to orations about claims concerning a crucified savior who is proclaimed as the lord of the world. After all, the Roman authorities of Palestine had seen fit to eliminate Jesus of Nazareth with the ultimate punishment of crucifixion, in the context of public disturbances in Jerusalem (Mark 15:11–15). Assuming that the Jewish communities in Asia had heard that in Syria, followers of Jesus Christ had established themselves since A.D. 32 or 35 as separate communities, they may have wanted to prevent the establishment of similar communities in their cities in order to avoid the unrest that the activities of the Christians had caused.

There might also be a connection with the information that Luke provides in Acts 11:26, to the effect that believers in Jesus Messiah were called “Christians” for the first time in Antioch (χρηστοί τε πρώτος ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ τοῖς μαθηταῖς Χριστιανοῖς). The term Χριστιανοὶ occurs only here and in 1 Pet 4:16 in the context of Christians in Asia Minor who face the possibility of having to give an account of their beliefs before the magistrates in the cities in which they lived. The term christianoi is best explained as an official designation coined by the Roman authorities in Antioch for the new religious group of the followers of Jesus whom they believed to be the Christ. G. Schneider comments that “the designation was probably applied to the Christians by outsiders . . . when, not least as a result of their missionary activity to the Greeks, they began to separate themselves from the synagogue congregations and acquire an identity as diaspora synagogues as associations, see Peter Richardson, Building Jewish in the Roman East (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004), 207–21.

122. For the connection between Syrian Antioch and Jewish communities in Asia Minor, note, e.g., the inscription from Apollonia in Phrygia that mentions a certain Debbora from “Antioch,” who was “born of renowned parents” and who had married a certain Eumelos from Sillyum in Pamphylia (MAMA 4:202; Ameling, JjudO 2, 384–86, no. 180; Mitchell, Anatolia, 2:8–9 n. 60). Mitchell and Ameling accept the identification of Debbora as a Jewish woman, which had been suggested by W. M. Ramsay, The Cities of St. Paul (New York: Armstrong, 1908), 255; and Juster, Les juifs, 192 n. 7. Ameling argues for the identification of Antioch with Syrian Antioch and for a date of the inscription in the 1st and 2nd centuries A.D. Barbara Levick (Roman Colonies in Southern Asia Minor [Oxford: Clarendon, 1967], 128) and Schürer (History, 3:32) argue for Antioch on the Maeander. Ameling highlights “the close connection which had always existed between Pamphylia and the Syrian Tetrapolis” (JjudO 2,385).


a separate group.” Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer suggest that “perhaps the new church had to register in the provincial capital with the magistrates of the city or of the Province of Syria as a Jewish ‘special synagogue’ or ‘religious association,’ i.e. as collegium, συναγωγή or ἔκκλησια,” Rainer Riesner surmises with reference to the unrest between the Jews and the Greeks in Antioch in A.D. 39/40 that “in connection with this newly emerging anti-Semitism, especially the Gentile Christians in Antioch probably saw the value in not being viewed as a Jewish group, a circumstance which then might have led to their special designation as Χριστιανοί.” If the Jewish leaders of the synagogue community in Pisidian Antioch were aware of these developments in the capital of the Province of Syria, they might have made the decision, once they rejected the teaching of the Jewish Christian missionaries as misguided, to prevent similar developments in their city.

Developments that transpired at roughly the same time in Rome might be relevant for the forceful reaction of the Jews in Roman Asia as well. According to Cassius Dio, the emperor Claudius issued an edict, to be dated in the year A.D. 41, in which he commanded the Jews to adhere to their ancestral way of life and not to conduct meetings: “he did not drive them out, but ordered them, while continuing their traditional mode of life (ὡς δὲ δὴ πατρὶδι βίον χρημάδως ἐκέλευσε), not to hold meetings (μὴ συνεκαίρισθή)” (Cassius Dio 60.6.6). This measure, which denied the Jews in the city of Rome the right of assembly, suggests disturbances among the Roman Jews provoked by the missionary activity of Jewish Christians. Helga Botermann surmises that leading representatives of the synagogues might have complained at the imperial court about the Jewish Christian missionaries, hoping to get rid of them as the result of official charges before the Roman authorities, or that king Herod Agrippa I, a friend of Claudius, or one of his advisers, might have played a role: “Any member of the Jewish upper class who knew both the Jews and the Romans and who was interested in the maintenance of a good relationship with the emperor, could easily foresee serious political conflicts if the supporters of Jesus who had

128. Feldman and Meyer, Jewish Life, 332 (no. 10.32).
129. The edict of A.D. 41 (Cassius Dio 60.6.6) is to be distinguished from the edict of A.D. 49 (Suetonius, Claud. 25.4).
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been executed ten years earlier as ‘king of the Jews’ assembled and spoke of him as Messiah.” 131 If the Jews in Roman Asia had knowledge of this edict of A.D. 41 and its background, which is again a plausible possibility, they might have been easily emboldened to recruit the help of the local authorities, e.g., in Pisidian Antioch, and to move against the Jewish Christian missionaries. The right to live according to Jewish laws that the emperor had granted was not necessarily permanent. In the event that a specific point of the Jewish law or the provocative behavior of Jews (or of groups perceived to be Jewish) “would for any reason be felt as contrary to the Roman law or interests, in Rome or wherever else in the provinces, the right to use them, which they had had in Caesar’s times, could be immediately revoked for a certain period of time or forever.” 132

Another factor that affected the concerns for the preservation of the social and political status quo of the local Jewish community might have been financial. Neither Luke in the book of Acts nor Paul in his letters written either to churches in Asia Minor (Galatians) or from churches in Asia Minor (1 Corinthians) provides statistical evidence for the number of Jewish Christians in the churches. Because most if not all churches began with the conversion of Jews, proselytes, and Godfearers, it would have been natural for the leadership of the local synagogue to fear the loss of financial contributions. Paul’s later collection for the Christians in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1–4, 2 Cor 8–9, Rom 15:25–28; cf. Acts 20:16, 24:17) does not explain the Jewish opposition to his missionary work in southern Galatia. Is it possible that Jews in Roman Asia would think that a rival “Jewish” group might—eventually—upset their right to send the temple tax to Jerusalem? 133

Concerns for the Relationship with Jerusalem

Another facet of the explanation for the intense opposition of Jews to Jewish Christians may be found in the fear of a deteriorating relationship with Jerusalem. When Paul engaged in missionary work in southern Galatia in A.D. 46, several events had taken place in Jerusalem that can hardly have escaped the attention of the Jewish communities in Asia Minor. Jesus’ ministry, which had attracted thousands of sympathizers in Galilee and beyond (Matt 4:25, 14:21, 15:38; Mark 6:44, 8:9; Luke 12:1) must have been

131. Botermann, Judenedikt, 132.
132. Pucci Ben Zeev, Jewish Rights, 448, which goes on to argue that “the Jews who lived in Josephus’ time, too, must have known this well. This explains the vein of anxiety we find in Josephus’ remarks when he explains to his public the reasons why he decided to quote the Roman and the Greek documents concerning the Jewish rights” (p. 449).
133. I thank Paul Trebilco for this suggestion (private communication). On the church in Ephesus and Paul’s collection, see idem, The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius (WUNT 166; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 63–64. On the collection, see more recently Burkhard Beckheuer, Paulus und Jerusalem: Kollekte und Mission im theologischen Denken des Heidenapostels (EHS 23/611; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1997); Stephan Joubert, Paul as Benefactor: Reciprocity, Strategy and Theological Reflection in Paul’s Collection (WUNT 2/124; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).
common knowledge, as was his execution in A.D. 30 by Pontius Pilatus, the Roman prefect of Judea, initiated by the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem. In A.D. 31/32, Stephen, a leading member of the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem, had been killed. In A.D. 41, Herod Agrippa I had organized a persecution against the leadership of the followers of Jesus, executing James, son of Zebedee, and planning the execution of Simon Peter (Acts 12:1–4). Only two years before Paul’s mission in southern Galatia, Herod Agrippa I had suddenly died in A.D. 44, and control had returned again to a Roman governor, a development that evidently reawakened the earlier conflicts. The first Roman procurator, Cuspius Fadus (A.D. 44–46), tried to bring the priestly vestments under Roman control, and he was forced to crush the movement of the self-proclaimed prophet Theudas (Josephus, B.J. 20.97–99; cf. Acts 5:36), who evidently “hoped to reunite the divided religious factions of Judaism and to overthrow the Roman occupation in Palestine.”

When Jewish communities in Roman Asia moved decisively and forcefully against Christian missionaries in A.D. 46, they could easily justify their actions by appealing to the actions of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem in A.D. 30 and of king Herod Agrippa I in A.D. 41. If the Jewish authorities in Jerusalem had regarded it as necessary to terminate the activities of Jesus of Nazareth and his followers with targeted force in Roman Judea, the Jewish communities in Roman Asia were arguably justified in seeking to nip the emerging Christian presence in the bud, forcing the Jewish Christian missionaries to leave their cities.

We should not forget that only 20 years after the establishment of the churches in Roman Asia, the Jewish revolt in Palestine in A.D. 66–70 had repercussions for the Jewish communities in the diaspora. Their position vis-à-vis their Greek neighbors became more precarious. In Antioch, the Greek citizens asked Titus to expel the Jews from the city (Josephus, B.J. 7.100–103). When Vespasian ordered in A.D. 71/72 that all Jews throughout the Roman Empire—men and women between the ages of 3 and 70—

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contribute to the *fiscus Judaicus* (B.J. 7.218; Cassius Dio 66.7), the traditional right of diaspora Jews to send offerings to Jerusalem was revoked. This tax, valued originally at two denarii (*didrachmon*) and increased almost immediately by the addition of the “firstfruits” (*aparchai*), which was consolidated toward the end of the first century into the *Ioudaikon telesma*, initially forced the Jews of the Empire to contribute to the rebuilding of the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome. This tax “was designed to proclaim in a particularly oppressive manner their national and religious subservience to Rome and the Roman state cult,” and “it made clear that Rome held the entire Jewish people responsible for the war waged and lost in Judaea.” These later developments, though not immediately relevant to the 40s, demonstrate that events in Palestine could have major repercussions for the Jewish diaspora communities.

Because Jesus was accused, convicted, and executed as a blasphemer and a deceiver of the people, and he claimed to possess comprehensive authority independent of the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem, the leadership of the Jewish community in Pisidian Antioch and in other cities of Roman Asia would have thought that inactivity in this matter could further undermine the status of the Jews in Palestine who had just lost the Jewish monarchy, coming once again under direct Roman administration. Responsible Jewish leaders in the local synagogues would certainly have been warranted to conclude that members of the synagogue community should be strongly discouraged to accept faith in Jesus as savior and lord, that the Jewish preachers who proclaim Jesus as Messiah and who admit Gentiles into God’s covenant with Israel without requiring them to submit to circumcision and to other cultic stipulations must be expelled, and that the establishment of new communities in which Jews and Gentiles meet and worship together must be prevented.

*The Charge of ἔχος in Acts 13:45*

Once we take the historical, political, and social situation of Jewish diaspora communities into account, it becomes evident that the ἔχος of the leaders of the Jewish community in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:45) cannot be reduced to a single factor. The same is surely true of the Jews in Iconium,

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The reason for the opposition of the Jews of Roman Asia to the Jewish Christian missionaries and to their teaching is not jealousy regarding the greater missionary success of Paul and his colleagues. This is true in view of the fact that there was no organized missionary outreach of Jews to pagans during the Second Temple period. The term ζηλος in Acts 13:45 should thus not be translated “jealousy” or “envy,” but “zeal.”

Even though theological convictions clearly played a significant role (see Acts 21:27–28), the reason for the Jewish opposition cannot be explained only with reference to their zeal for the law and for the purity of the Jewish community, which is threatened if a large number of pagans join the community without being asked to submit to circumcision and other Jewish laws and customs such as the food laws. As the history of Second Temple and later rabbinic Judaism demonstrates, Jewish leaders accepted debate and controversy: the Jewish commonwealth was not a monolithic society in which everybody shared the same theological, cultural, or political convictions. However, belief in and commitment to a crucified Messiah who had been opposed by the Jewish leadership was regarded as unacceptable by most Jews.

The motivations that prompt people to take drastic action are usually complex. It is unwise to reduce the concerns of the Jews of Roman Asia who persecuted Paul and Barnabas and other Christians to a single motive. They certainly opposed the Christian missionaries because they disagreed with their teaching. However, there are reasons to believe that the significance of maintaining their religious and ethnic identity also played an important role in their forceful and sometimes violent reaction. The Jews of Asia Minor were surely concerned to preserve the social and political rights and privileges that they had enjoyed since Julius Caesar and that had come under pressure in different places at different times—rights and privileges that might be jeopardized if the movement of the followers of Jesus was ignored. Also, the Jews of Asia Minor might have been motivated by concerns regarding the financial strength of their community, and they were probably also concerned to avoid actions or tolerate developments that contravened decisions made by the leadership of the Jewish commonwealth in Judea.