

Alan James Beagley

The 'Sitz im Leben'
of the Apocalypse
with Particular Reference
to the Role
of the Church's Enemies



Walter de Gruyter · Berlin · New York

1987

Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
und die Kunde der älteren Kirche

Herausgegeben von Erich Gräßer

50

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Beagley, Alan James, 1940—

The "Sitz im Leben" of the Apocalypse with particular reference to the role of the Church's enemies.

(Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche ; 50)

Revision of thesis (Ph. D.)—Fuller Theological Seminary, 1983.

Bibliography: p.

Includes indexes.

1. Bible. N. T. Revelation—Criticism, interpretation, etc.

I. Title. II. Series: Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche ; Beiheft 50.

BS2825.2.B4 1987

228'.06

87-6894

ISBN 0-89925-404-7 (U.S.)

CIP-Kurztitelaufnahme der Deutschen Bibliothek

Beagley, Alan James:

The "Sitz im Leben" of the Apocalypse with particular reference to the role of the church's enemies / Alan James Beagley. — Berlin ; New York : de Gruyter, 1987.

(Beiheft zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche ; 50)

ISBN 3-11-010830-5

NE: Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche / Beiheft

Printed on acid free paper (pH 7, neutral)

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Printed in Germany.

Druck: Werner Hildebrand, Berlin 65

Bindearbeiten: Lüderitz & Bauer, Berlin 61

To
Jan and Jeanette

FOREWORD

This work was accepted by the School of Theology of Fuller Theological Seminary as a Ph.D. dissertation in 1983. Minor revisions have been carried out in preparation for publication in its present form.

My thanks are due to Professors Ralph P. Martin and Donald A. Hagner of Fuller Theological Seminary for their helpful suggestions and comments; to Dr. Michael Lattke, of the Department of Studies in Religion, University of Queensland, Australia, for encouraging me seek publication of this work; and to Professor Dr. Erich Grässer, for accepting this study as part of the series "Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft."

Tamsui, Taiwan, Republic of China, December 1986

Alan James Beagley

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ABBREVIATIONS

As far as possible, I have followed the style of citation adopted by the *Journal of Biblical Literature*. I.e., the full title and publication details of a work are given the first time it is referred to; in subsequent references to that work, only the author's name and an abbreviated title are given.

AB	Anchor Bible
<i>Adv. Haer.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Against Heresies</i>
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
Ant.	Josephus, <i>Antiquities of the Jews</i>
As. Mos.	<i>The Assumption of Moses</i>
AUSS	Andrews University Seminary Studies
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensis
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
BR	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	<i>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
BZNW	<i>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>c. Ap.</i>	Josephus, <i>Against Apion</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
EKKNT	Evangelischkatholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
EvQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>The Expository Times</i>
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
<i>Hist. Nat.</i>	The Elder Pliny, <i>Natural History</i>
HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentaries
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
IB	<i>The Interpreter's Bible</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>J.W.</i>	Josephus, <i>The Jewish War</i>
KNT	Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
LXX	Septuagint
MNTC	Moffatt New Testament Commentary
MT	Masoretic Text
NCB	New Century Bible

NEB	New English Bible
n. F.	neue Forschung
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIV	New International Version
NKZ	<i>Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift</i>
NRT	<i>Nouvelle Revue Theologique</i>
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSupp	Supplements to <i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NT	New Testament
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OT	Old Testament
OTL	Old Testament Library
RevExp	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
Sib. Or.	<i>Sybilline Oracles</i>
TDNT	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
TNTC	Tyndale Commentary on the New Testament
TOTC	Tyndale Commentary on the Old Testament
TS	<i>Theological Studies</i>
VT	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

INTRODUCTION

This study has grown out of a long-standing interest in the Book of Revelation. More than twenty years ago I became a member of a church where this book was a major focus of attention, and in fact my earliest involvement in any regular and systematic study of the Bible was as a member of a Bible Class which was painstakingly dissecting the Revelation. It was some years before I discovered that there were other Christians who read it differently. Over the years I became convinced that a satisfactory understanding of this last book of the Bible would have to take into consideration the use made of the Old Testament, and this investigation was, in fact, originally intended to deal specifically with that topic.

There has been, over the last few decades, a great revival of interest in apocalyptic in general and in the New Testament Apocalypse in particular. There has been a flurry of commentaries of many different kinds, from the popular writings of Hal Lindsey to more technically-oriented commentaries, such as those of George Beasley-Murray, Robert Mounce and Josephine Massyngberde Ford. Other commentaries are in preparation. With very few exceptions, the commentaries which have appeared so far have sought to understand the Book of Revelation against the background of the supposed violent persecution of Christians by Rome, in the person of Domitian. Our aim here is to show that this is not the primary focus of the book. That is not to say that the Seer is not concerned with the Roman Empire at all, but, rather, that his main concern lies elsewhere.

We will commence by investigating how suffering and martyrdom were understood in Judaism. Then, with this as a background, Chapter 2 will deal in some detail with the Johannine Apocalypse itself. In this chapter we will be paying close attention to the use the Seer makes of the Old Testament and, in particular, we aim to show that the way he uses this material leaves little doubt that he has in mind above all judgments which are to come (or which have come) upon the nation of Israel, and especially upon the city of Jerusalem.

The following chapters will then show that the Seer's perspective on Judaism is not greatly different from that found elsewhere in the Bible. Chapter 3 will deal with the Old Testament and will demonstrate the predominantly negative stance of the prophets towards the nation of Israel and its capital city. Chapter 4 will then consider the New Testament evidence and will show that Christian writers

are also, for the most part, hostile towards the unbelieving Jewish nation and the city of Jerusalem because of the Jew's refusal to accept Jesus as the promised Messiah.

CHAPTER 1

MARTYRDOM AND SUFFERING

A. Introduction

In this opening chapter we purpose to investigate the Jewish concepts of suffering and martyrdom, particularly in relation to the conflict between Judaism and Hellenism. This study will provide background material against which to examine the *Sitz im Leben* of the Book of Revelation, particularly in relation to the conflicts between the Church and Judaism.

Our aim in this chapter is twofold. First, we want to show that martyrdom and suffering were experienced by the pious Jews, to a large extent, at the hands of their own fellow-countrymen, and not solely, nor even primarily, at the hands of non-Jews. Our second aim is to show that the conflict with Hellenism did much to shape the future direction of Judaism, both in its thought and in its practices.

1. A Note Concerning Terminology

Although we will be using the term "martyr" throughout this chapter in its now-common sense, i.e., one who dies for his or her faith, it must be borne in mind that it is anachronistic to do so. The Greek words μάρτυς, μαρτυρεῖν and διαμαρτυρεῖν did not acquire this signification until after the New Testament period.¹ These words are not used of the Maccabean "martyrs" in the Books of Maccabees, except in 4 Macc 12:16; 16:16, and even there have simply the original sense of "witness."² And although Epictetus does use μάρτυς for the "philosopher-

1 R. C. Casey, "μάρτυς" in *The Beginnings of Christianity* (ed. F. J. Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake; London: Macmillan, 1920) Part 1, vol. V., 36; Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 35.

2 H. Strathmann, "μάρτυς," *TDNT* 4.513; cf. Norbert Brox, *Zeuge und Märtyrer; Untersuchungen zur frühchristlichen Zeugnis-Terminologie* (Münich: Kösel, 1961) 173.

martyrs," an examination of the work shows that they are called μάρτυρες not because they suffer or die for their convictions--although some do indeed do so--but because they bear witness to their beliefs.³

B. The Doctrine of Suffering in the Pre-Hellenistic Era

Several different views concerning suffering may be discerned in the Old Testament. One prominent view is that the righteous may expect to enjoy health and prosperity, while suffering and adversity are the lot of the ungodly. This may be seen in the account of the punishment of Adam and Eve and Cain for their disobedience. The Flood also is attributed to the wickedness of humanity, while Noah and his family are preserved because of his uprightness. Similarly, Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed because of the wickedness of their inhabitants, while Lot is preserved. This same relationship between righteousness and blessing, on the one hand, and between sin and suffering, on the other hand, may be seen in the prescriptive sections of the Pentateuch also, e.g., Exod 20:5-6; 23:25-26.⁴ This view of misfortune as the punishment for sin was also maintained strongly by the pre-Exilic prophets, and was confirmed in the minds of the people through the fall, first of the Northern Kingdom, and then of the Southern Kingdom. The same view is found in the Wisdom Literature, particularly in Proverbs.⁵ This idea is also found in Chronicles and, in Williams's words, "colors the Chronicler's view to such a degree that he finds it necessary to explain every historical misfortune by some underlying sin (cf., e.g., 2 Chron. 35:20ff. and compare 2 Kings 23:29)." He goes on to describe Chronicles as "the high water mark for the retributive view of suffering and misfortune."⁶

This view of rewards and punishments did not go unquestioned, however. There were many instances in which the one who had suffered had done no wrong,

³ Brox, *Zeuge*, 178.

⁴ E. Balla, "Das Problem des Leides in der israelitisch-jüdischen Religion," *ETXARIETHRION. Studien zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments. Hermann Gunkel zum 60. Geburtstage, dem 23. Mai 1922 dargebracht* (ed. H. Schmidt; Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1923) 21.

⁵ Sam K. Williams, *Jesus' Death as Saving Event; The Background and Origin of a Concept* (HDR 2; Missoula: Scholars, for Harvard Theological Review, c1975) 91-92.

⁶ Williams, *Jesus' Death*, 92-93.

whether in the opinion of an onlooker or as judged by his or her own conscience. This latter situation is found not only in Job but also in several of the Psalms. In many Psalms, one who is suffering despite his innocence cries out to the righteous God not to withhold justice and prosperity from him any longer (e.g. Ps 17). Yet, despite all his sufferings, he retains his confidence in God and has an assurance that his appeal for help will not go unanswered and that his present sufferings will not persist for ever.⁷ Although he acknowledges that suffering is normally the punishment for sin, he is confident that it is not so in his case, as he is unconscious of any sin. Yet even this does not lead him to doubt God's just control of all things; he still trusts in God alone.⁸ A further significant exception to the idea of suffering as retribution is found in the suffering experienced by a true prophet. Jeremiah, for example, sometimes suffers with his people (Jer 4:19-22; 8:18-23; 13:17-19), but at other times suffers at the hands of his own people (Jer 11:19, 21; 20:1-2, 10; 36:26; 37:15; 38:6). In neither case, then, is the prophet suffering because of his own wrong-doing.⁹

Sometimes appeal was made to the idea of corporate solidarity to explain adversity, as was done in the time of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, with the recital of the proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jer 31:29; Ezek 18:2). There is a sense of "mutual responsibility and the punishment of one generation for the sins of its predecessors."¹⁰ While Jeremiah seems to accept the validity of the popular proverb (at least for the time being, cf. 31:30), Ezekiel sharply criticizes the use of this principle to avoid facing up to one's own failures (18:19-20). But Ezekiel still acknowledges that some of the wicked will be preserved and brought to Babylon--in order that their wickedness may testify to the justice of Yahweh's judgment on Jerusalem (14:22-23).¹¹

The outstanding example of the righteous sufferer was, of course, the "martyr," the person who was suffering specifically because of his or her fidelity to God and his commandments. This situation arose especially during the confrontation between Judaism and Hellenism, to a consideration of which we now turn.

7 Balla, "Problem des Leides," 242.

8 Balla, "Problem des Leides," 242-243.

9 Williams, *Jesus' Death*, 92.

10 A. S. Peake, *The Problem of Suffering in the Old Testament* (London: Bryant, 1904) 19-20.

11 E. F. Sutcliffe, *Providence and Suffering in the Old and New Testaments* (London: Nelson, 1953) 94.

C. Judaism vs. Hellenism

1. Alexander the Great

We must not make the mistake of assuming that contacts between Judaism and Hellenism resulted in immediate mutual hostility. The Hellenistic period commenced, as far as Israel is concerned, with the invasion of the land of Judea by Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. In fact, there had been contacts between Jews and Greeks outside the land of Judea earlier than this, and there is no evidence that they met on unfriendly terms as far as the Greeks were concerned. The Greeks seem to have had a certain respect for the Jewish religion and its ethic. Alexander even visited Jerusalem and, according to Josephus, improbable as it seems to us, prostrated himself before the High Priest and offered sacrifices in the Temple in accordance with the latter's instructions (*Ant.* xi.329-336).

Hellenism did make some impact on Judaism during Alexander's reign, since many, particularly among the upper classes, saw Alexander's military successes as evidence of the superiority of the culture he represented. Many therefore adopted Greek ways.¹² Nevertheless, the inroads of Hellenism were mainly in such external matters as language, but without, in most cases, any significant effect on essential matters such as religion. The Greek Olympian religion itself was in a state of decline at that period, and although in the newly-conquered territories gods were given Greek names and the Greek architectural style was adopted for temples, "the tendency," Gowan contends, "was for westerners to adopt oriental religions, rather than vice versa."¹³ Whatever the attitudes of the conquered peoples may have been, there was little expressed hostility, except among the Jews, for whom culture was so intimately bound up with religion that even cultural syncretism was a crucial issue.¹⁴ But the Jews were quite free to resist Hellenization, as there was no official attempt at this stage to coerce them into adopting alien ways. Nevertheless, although the conflicts between Judaism and Hellenism may not have been unduly serious at this period, it was Alexander's conquests which prepared the way for the much more intense conflicts which were to develop later. It was through Alexander's victories, Frensdorff writes, that "Jew and Greek eventually became

12 D. E. Gowan, *Bridge Between the Testaments. A Reappraisal of Judaism from the Exile to the Birth of Christianity* (Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series 14; Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1976) 71.

13 Gowan, *Bridge*, 71.

14 Gowan, *Bridge*, 72.

as much neighbours and adversaries as Jew and Philistine had been in the era of Saul and David."¹⁵

2. The Ptolemies

During the third century B.C., under the Ptolemies, there does not yet seem to have been any serious conflict between Jews and Hellenists. The Ptolemies did not interfere in Jewish religious matters. There were economic pressures on the country because of the heavy taxation, and there were problems arising from the political unrest in the region, but there was freedom from coercion in religious matters.¹⁶ On the other hand, however, it was during this period that there was some manifestation of anti-Jewish feeling in Alexandria, although this may have been due, as Frend suggests, to the Jewish observance of the Passover, which may well--and understandably--have aroused the hostility of the Egyptians.¹⁷ There is in 3 Maccabees a purported description of a persecution of Jews by Ptolemy IV Philopater, during which they were compelled to offer sacrifice to Dionysius (although in exchange they would receive full citizenship rights); those who refused would be denied admission to their own Temple.¹⁸ Gowan, although referring to "some picaresque and obviously fictitious stories," nevertheless thinks that the work may reflect an actual situation during the third century B.C., or may, alternatively, reflect a conflict between Egyptian Jews and the Ptolemaic dynasty during the first century B.C., much closer to the time when the book was written.¹⁹

3. The Seleucids

It was during the Seleucid period that the enmity between Judaism and Hellenism became far more severe. But still the conflict did not commence as soon as the Seleucids came to power in 198 B.C. through the victory at Panium. Josephus records that the Jews received Antiochus III gladly when he marched into Judea

15 W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church; A Study of Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965) 36.

16 Gowan, *Bridge*, 81.

17 Frend, *Martyrdom*, 36.

18 M. Hadas, *The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees* (New York: Harper, 1953) 17-18.

19 Gowan, *Bridge*, 81.

and that the conqueror in turn even reaffirmed the privileges which the Ptolemies had granted the Jews, including the right to live "according to their ancestral laws" (Ant. xii.3). Antiochus also provided help for the reconstruction of Jerusalem and granted several tax-concessions. Gowan is of the opinion that

This probably formalized what had been the practice since the Persians sent Ezra to administer the Law of Moses; that is, the custom of allowing subject peoples to govern their own internal affairs according to their traditional laws and by means of their own courts. The same practice was followed later by the Romans; . . . in the next generation . . . Antiochus IV will represent the conspicuous exception to this tolerant and convenient way of dealing with subject peoples.²⁰

Even the following Seleucid ruler, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, during whose reign a serious confrontation occurred between the Jews and the Hellenizers, did not immediately set out to stamp out Judaism. His coins show that he did not pursue a thorough Hellenization of the various religions within his domain: even though all the coins have the ruler's head on the front, the coins of the various territories have different designs on the reverse, including the representations of their various gods.²¹ Moreover, he seems not to have harassed the Jews living outside Judea,²² and did not interfere with the Jewish religion within Judea until 169 B.C., some six years after his accession. All this suggests that Antiochus was not motivated by any driving force to elevate Hellenistic religion to a position of supremacy.

When Antiochus IV came to the throne, some of the Jewish leaders sought to have the then High Priest, Onias, removed from office--by bribing Antiochus--and the ruler obliged by appointing Jason, Onias' brother, as High Priest instead. Onias was later killed in exile at Antioch (2 Macc 4:33) by Menelaus, who had replaced Jason as High Priest by paying Antiochus an even larger bribe. Frend comments: "The roll of martyrs for the Law had been opened."²³ But this is no evidence of particular hostility by the ruler towards the Jews or their religion. This was not at all an unusual sequence of events, since the Hellenistic kings already claimed the power to appoint and depose priests in their own territories, but it was a radical departure from Jewish custom and therefore aroused hostility by the more strict Jews.²⁴ For the first part of his reign Antiochus was far more concerned with military than with religious matters. He sought to conquer Egypt and Bactria, and he also had to be on his guard against possible invasion

20 Gowan, *Bridge*, 85-86.

21 Elias Bickermann, *Der Gott der Makkabäer: Untersuchungen über Sinn und Ursprung der makkabäischen Erhebung* (Berlin: Schocken/Jüdischer Buchverlag, 1937) 47.

22 Frend, *Martyrdom*, 43.

23 Frend, *Martyrdom*, 41.

24 Gowan, *Bridge*, 93.

by the Parthians. It was during his second foray into Egypt that Rome intervened, and Antiochus was ordered, in no uncertain manner, to leave Egypt alone. Antiochus came to the conclusion that he needed to unify his own kingdom and that this necessitated a unified culture and religion.²⁵ To make matters worse (for the Jews, at least), while Antiochus had been conducting his abortive campaign in Egypt, a rumor had swept throughout Judea to the effect that he had met his death. Thereupon, Jason invaded Jerusalem, so that Menelaus was forced to beat a retreat to the citadel. So Antiochus returned to Judea to find Jerusalem in a state of rebellion. This, coming so soon after his humiliating defeat by the Romans, would hardly have induced in him a favorable disposition towards the Jews. He crushed the revolt, killing many Jews, reduced Jerusalem's status to that of a village, and reinstated Menelaus as High Priest. A further revolt took place a short while afterwards, but this was also put down, and Syrian troops were garrisoned in the city. These Syrian occupiers not only plundered and raped, but also brought with them their religious objects and practices and apparently even carried out their idolatrous rites in the Temple precincts, which then became unclean and unfit for use by any pious Jew. Opposition to Antiochus' policies thus took on a specifically religious form and was probably often led by those who were learned in the Law of Moses and who had formerly held positions of authority in the Jewish community until their ejection by Antiochus.²⁶

Thus Antiochus' motivation for suppressing the Jewish religion was primarily political. Even his plundering of the Temple, which struck horror into the hearts of the Jews, was not religiously motivated and was not unique, since he plundered other shrines also, spurred on by economic necessity.²⁷ Judea, moreover, lay on an important route to the East, so Antiochus needed to have firm control over this area. Further, those who opposed his policies were suspected of sympathizing with the Ptolemies and so fell into even greater disfavor.²⁸ For the Jews, on the other hand, the struggle was of a fundamentally religious nature; there is no indication that any of the religious leaders at this stage was concerned about political freedom. Gowan's comment is correct insofar as it reflects the Jews' own perspective: "And so, for the first time in recorded history a people was

25 W. W. Tarn and G. T. Griffith, *Hellenistic Civilization* (3rd ed.; London: Arnold, 1952) 215.

26 Gowan, *Bridge*, 97-99; Frend, *Martyrdom*, 42-43.

27 Frend, *Martyrdom*, 40; Solomon Zeitlin, *The Rise and Fall of the Jewish State. A Political, Social and Religious History of the Second Commonwealth* (3 vols.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1978) 1.88-89.

28 Zeitlin, *Rise and Fall*, 1.89-90.

persecuted because of its religion and a concerted effort was made to stamp out a faith by means of torture and death."²⁹

4. Persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes

As has been noted already, since the Jewish opposition to Hellenization was based on the Jewish religion, and especially on strict observance of the Torah, Antiochus' efforts to enforce unity concentrated on this issue. Approximately one year after the Syrian garrison had been stationed in Jerusalem, Antiochus "proscribed the standards which those who called themselves 'the faithful' (the *Hasidim*) had raised: the Scriptures, sacrifice to Yahweh, circumcision, observance of the Sabbath and the other festivals."³⁰ Anyone found with a copy of the book of the covenant in his or her possession or found living in accordance with the Law was required to be killed (1 Macc 1:57), and the books of the Law themselves were torn to pieces and burned (1 Macc 1:56). The traditional sacrifices and offerings were prohibited (1 Macc 1:45) and the Jews were compelled to participate in idolatry and in offering unclean animals such as pigs (1 Macc 1:47). On at least one occasion, Jews were forced to partake of heathen sacrifices (2 Macc 6:7). They were also "compelled to walk in the procession in honor of Dionysius, wearing wreaths of ivy" (2 Macc 6:7; cf. *As. Mos.* 8:4). These laws seem to have been enforced initially in Jerusalem, but were later extended to other cities as well (2 Macc 6:8).

Orders were given that children were to remain uncircumcised (1 Macc 1:48), and parents who continued to observe the Jewish custom in this regard were dealt with severely. Mothers who had their sons circumcised were put to death, together with their families and those who had carried out the circumcision, and the infants were hung around their necks (1 Macc 1:60-61). According to 2 Macc 6:10, two women who had had their children circumcised were paraded publicly through the city with their infants hanging at their breasts and then were hurled headlong down from the city wall. According to *As. Mos.*, those who confessed to having been circumcised were crucified (8:1) while those who had carried out the circumcision were tortured and imprisoned (8:2), while male children were sometimes operated on to reverse the circumcision (8:4).

²⁹ Gowan, *Bridge*, 100; cf. Frend, *Martyrdom*, 43.

³⁰ Gowan, *Bridge*, 99.

The observance of the Sabbath was prohibited (1 Macc 1:45). On one occasion, one of Antiochus' commanders, after feigning good will towards the Jews, put to death large numbers of the inhabitants of Jerusalem who came out to see his army on parade on the Sabbath; their offense was that they were absent from their work (2 Macc 5:24-26). One group of pious Jews went out into the wilderness to dwell in caves in an attempt to escape the restrictions imposed by Antiochus, but even there they were not secure; they were pursued by Antiochus' troops who attacked them on the Sabbath day. These pious Jews, numbering one thousand, refused to defend themselves or even to barricade their hiding places, and so they perished rather than profane the Sabbath (1 Macc 2:29-38). 2 Macc 6:11 records another incident concerning a group of Jews who had gathered together in caves near Jerusalem to observe the Sabbath secretly; they were discovered, and were burned alive because they refused to defend themselves.

A further line of attack on Jewish customs and principles was the attempt to force Jews to eat foods which they considered unclean, notably swine's flesh. 1 Macc 1:62-63 records that many of the Jews chose to die rather than eat unclean foods. It was his refusal to eat swine's flesh, or even to pretend to do so, which cost the life of Eleazar, the aged scribe (2 Macc 6:18-31). Similarly, the seven brothers and their mother were prepared to suffer great torments, then death, in preference to defiling themselves by eating swine's flesh (2 Macc 7:1-42). Bickermann notes that the pig was unclean not only for the Jews, but also for the Syrians, Phoenicians and Arabians. Yet the Greeks, for whom the pig was sacred, had never tried to force their view on these other peoples; only the Jews were forced to eat swine's flesh.³¹ This is additional evidence that Antiochus' policy was not primarily religiously motivated, but was pursued simply for political ends.

Yet another move towards the Hellenization of the Jews, although not strictly speaking an act of persecution, was the abolition of the daily Temple-sacrifices in 168 B.C. Then towards the end of that year a pagan altar was set up on the site of the Jewish altar, a pig was sacrificed there, and the Temple was consecrated to Zeus Olympus.³² This may have been simply a manifestation of the Hellenistic syncretistic belief that all peoples really worshiped the same god, but under different names. But now perhaps Antiochus wished "to identify each of the provincial gods with the deity of his House."³³ Although the Jews themselves believed that there was in reality only one God, they could not accept the view that their God

31 Bickermann, *Gott der Makkabäer*, 134.

32 Zeitlin, *Rise and Fall*, 1.89.

33 Frend, *Martyrdom*, 40.