

**A CRITIQUE OF ERWIN R. GOODENOUGH'S
JEWISH SYMBOLS IN THE GRECO-ROMAN PERIOD**

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ABSTRACT

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Erwin R. Goodenough postulated the existence of an unrecognized sect of Judaism immediately prior to the advent of Christianity. It is his belief that there was a mystic sect of Judaism that paralleled the Pharasaic movement, and subsequently formed the basis of Christianity, although there is no direct reference to it in either rabbinic or church sources. In accordance with his thinking, Christianity assimilated much of the beliefs and practices of this sect, and rabbinic censorship obliterated any mention thereof, in this way leading to its total effacement.

These suppositions sparked Goodenough's investigation into the archeological remains unearthed in the Ancient Near East and around the Mediterranean from the Hellenistic era. This scholarship resulted in his magnum opus, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, a thirteen volume work wherein he has organized and classified much of the material into categories of pagan and Jewish symbols. The last three volumes deal with the art of the murals of the Dura Europos Synagogue, which he interprets in terms of symbolic analysis, rallying support for his theory of the existence of a practicing Jewish mystic sect.

In this paper the opinions of other scholars of the Hellenistic period are discussed offering different possibilities for interpretation of these symbols. Criticism of Goodenough is leveled largely against the scientific foundation of his methodology, the subjectivity of his literary style and the selectivity of his basic assumptions.

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INTRODUCTION

The present thesis is based on the works of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough because he opens up a whole world of art and artifacts in the Greco-Roman period, which have not previously been accounted for in literary sources. He thereby forces us to re-evaluate this period in the history of religion, focusing on the relationship of the rabbis and the masses they led.

We will be dealing mainly with his major work, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, (1953-68) to which he devoted the greater part of his life. Here he states at the very outset, "The problem in the origin of Christianity to which this study hopes to contribute is that of its rapid hellenization."¹ This is mentioned because all the next twelve volumes are dedicated to the amassing, assorting and analysing of art symbols, although this work appears to be secondary to his main purpose. His chief interest is to show that Christianity arose from an already well-established Hellenized Judaism, and not directly from pagan sources.

When looking through his magnum opus, a fifteen volume work, beautifully illustrated with magnificent photographs, the eye is astonished at the tremendously vast collection, and the mind boggles at the painstaking detailed effort in amassing these artifacts and then dividing them into categories of pagan, Christian and Jewish symbols. The whole of the populated area of the Jewish world in the Near East and the shores of the Mediterranean of that time are turning out to be store-houses containing treasures of Jewish artifacts.

For purposes of cult and religious observances, as well as household and personal adornment, Jews have constantly produced and made use of objects which appealed in some fashion to their aesthetic sense. A problem exists, however, regarding the Jewish attitude toward figurative and representational art.² The Pentateuchal code in many places (Ex 20:4, Deut. 5:8 and in great detail in Deut. 4:16-18) ostensibly prohibits, in the strictest terms, the making of any image or likeness of man or beast, and consequently there are no figurative images today in present-day synagogues, and what elaboration of detail there is we dismiss as decoration -- meriting various aesthetic standards.

However, this was not always the case. The vast amount of recent archeological findings, particularly from synagogues and burial places, as well as Jewish coins, from the 2nd century B.C.E. to the 3rd century C.E., have displayed treasures of great beauty and design and there is little in our literary sources to account for this wealth of material. The art of the Greco-Roman period is technically known as Hellenistic, as compared to the classical Greek, and these material remains by and large are of this 'genre'. Many have Greek designs and motifs, and are often found in combination with very specifically Jewish symbols.

In view of these new findings, how are we now to determine just what was the Jewish attitude to art? What does this new material evidence of the past say in terms of what it meant to the people of the time? As the literary evidence that even makes mention of the problem, is scanty -- fragments in the Talmud,

Josephus and Dead Sea Scrolls -- this brings in the question of the rabbinic attitude at the time this 'fashioning of images' was evolving. Further, what were in the minds of the artists, or those who commissioned the artisans initially? As a logical development from that question, what was the relationship of the masses to the rabbis?

Goodenough states categorically that he is not an art historian. He writes in the field of the history of religion, and deals with the meaning of Jewish art.³ Goodenough's biases are not difficult to ascertain; he states them blatantly at the outset. He is a Christian and a mystic and from this perspective fashions his highly original thesis, whether one looks at it from the viewpoint of either a historian of religion or historian of art.

He claims in his monumental work, Jewish Symbols, and in a number of minor studies that much of the archeological remains with representational art, in defiance of apparent rabbinic proscription, was the manifestation of a Jewish synthetic mystic religion. He contends, moreover, that this Jewish mystic religion stood side by side, equal in size and importance to what we now know as rabbinic Judaism. He further asserts that what we know as rabbinic Judaism, and what George Foot Moore in his Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim calls 'normative' was not normative at all for that period, but only evolved so many centuries later.

For Goodenough, this mystic sect, that he holds responsible for the creation of Jewish art, developed from the Jewish tradition itself. It absorbed pagan mystery religions and their symbols, adapting them to their own meaning. This, then, was the practice of a large and widespread group, counting in great numbers the Jews through the Greco-Roman world. The groundwork laid by this sect accounted for the curiously rapid and widespread development of Christianity in the early centuries of the Common Era; this, indeed, was the missing link between Judaism and Christianity.

Paralleling this theory, Goodenough presents a counterpart -- that early church art developed from a widespread productive and fruitful Jewish art tradition. The frescoed murals of the Dura Europos synagogue, a third century building in Babylonia, testify to this theory of art, serving substantial evidence in accordance to his hypothesis.

Every scholar should have some daring and imagination, but for someone acquainted with Jews and their ethos, tradition and history, such controversial manipulation is very provocative, demanding further investigation. The basic suppositions that Goodenough assumes, of necessity, must be questioned. Because his work is tremendously fascinating, the range and scope of his scholarship impressive, the style of his writing highly individual, with very subjective opinion, it engages the reader's involvement. As is usually the case with pioneer thinkers, Goodenough is in reaction against current mentality, and consequently provokes a response. Part of what one reacts to is his literary style which

is redundant and repetitive. Reduplication in a slightly different context is a tricky affair. After stating the same assumption often enough, the effect is for the reader to accept the originally unproven as a fact.

In this thesis criticism will be leveled against some very personal bases of his opinions. The aim will be to indicate some fundamental points that appear questionable, as well as investigate some areas of his methodology which might bear scrutiny.

Who is this man? Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough was born in 1893 in Brooklyn, and in 1923 began teaching history at Yale. While preparing his doctoral thesis, published as "The Theology of Justin Martyr", Goodenough came to the conclusion that many Hellenistic elements of early Christianity were derived not from the pagan world directly, but from the already hellenized Judaism through which Christianity was first disseminated. Most of his later work was devoted to the study of this hellenized Judaism. This he expounded in his published works, The Jurisprudence of the Jewish Courts in Egypt (1929), By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism (1935), The Politics of Philo Judaeus (1938), An Introduction to Philo Judaeus (1940), and his magnum opus, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period (13 volumes, 1953-68).⁴

He was active in many scholarly organizations, and edited The Journal of Biblical Literature from 1934-42. He left a legacy of being a very exciting and stimulating personality. Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of Erwin Ramsdell Goodenough,

edited by Jacob Neusner, was published in 1968 after his death by many of his friends, admirers and even his critics, who seem to have been captivated by his quixotic personality and remember him with fondness.

That was the scholar who in his later years of his career, when he came to interpret the Greco-Roman art, had already formulated some very definite opinions. He was engaged in using art as a proof-text, and one can justifiably inquire as to the legitimacy of his method. "The line we are tracing, however, is that by which Greek mystic philosophy of symbols came into usage for Jewish piety."⁵ The fundamental point in Goodenough's argument is his concept of the value of a symbol as distinct from its interpretation.⁶ He defines the value as "simply emotional impact" but he also equated value with meaning and discovered as the meaning of his symbols a complex mystical theology. Before we concern ourselves, however, with his theory of symbolic transference -- something he picked up from the Jungian school of psychology -- we should start with his early work to get an insight into his manner of thinking. According to his reasoning:

It was in the Greco-Roman period that Jews seem to have gone farthest in adopting rituals with a blessed cup that was drunk, and blessed bread that was broken and eaten. If the major premise of this entire study is sound -- that borrowed symbols may be given new interpretations but will keep their old values -- we should expect to find Jewish ritualistic wine associated with sacred matters in general, with birth, marriage, and death especially, and conspicuous at sacred meals.

.....
The thesis of these volumes is that hellenized Jews did more than carry into their Judaism from the hellenistic world certain philosophic ideas of God, and mystical

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aspirations for escape into his Being. The amazing omnipresence of hellenistic art forms and symbols on their graves and synagogues presents a clear dilemma; either these were brought in as 'pure decoration' with all meaning carefully screened out of them, or they came in with real purpose, in which case they must reveal another way in which Jews accepted something from paganism in their religion.⁸

Thus we see his intent is to demonstrate the existence of a mystic Jewish sect, out of which arose a mystic Christian sect, and hence the very laborious work which occupied the greater part of his years in collecting Jewish art. Is it not orthodox practice for a historian to amass data and then deduce a conclusion? True, many scientists formulate a theory and then construct experiments to determine the validity of the theory. In history, albeit the history of religion, the facts should present themselves firstly leading to some deductive conclusion, instead of forcing evidence to fit into desired results. Hence, it is to his methodology in general that this inquiry will address itself rather than the individual component details which may stand up very well when extracted from its position in the argument.

In the course of this analysis, it will be pointed out that there are other approaches, and other criteria, for assessing Goodenough's collection of symbols, and it is to highlight some of the differing attitudes -- rabbinic, socio-political, artistic analysis -- that will be the main endeavour in this critique.

NOTES - INTRODUCTION

1. Erwin R. Goodenough, Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, 13 vols. (New York: Pantheon Books, Bollinger Series XXXVII, 1953-68), 1:3.
2. Joseph Guttman, ed., No. Graven Images (New York: Ktav Publishing House 1971), J. Guttman, "The Second Commandment and the image in Judaism", pp. 3-14.
Jean Ouellette, "Le Deuxieme Commandement et le Rôle de L'Image dans la Symbolique Religieuse de l'Ancien Testament: Essai d'Interpretation", RB 74 (1967) pp. 504-16.
3. J.S. 1:30.
4. Encyclopedia Judaica under Goodenough, E.R.
5. J.S. 12:5.
6. J.S. 4, Chapter 2, Method in Evaluating Symbols, pp. 25-62.
7. J.S. 12:123.
8. J.S. 1:58.

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Goodenough's Theory

Thirty years before his work on Jewish Symbols, while writing his doctorate on Justin Martyr, Goodenough was occupied with the problem of the Jewish and Hellenistic components in Christianity. Justin's Old Testament allegory was in large part an adaptation for Christian purposes of allegories known to have been Jewish because they appear in Philo. Accordingly, Goodenough envisages a large number of Jews who practiced their Judaism in a way consistent with the classic thought and writings of Philo. Other evidence of the existence of such a mystic sect is reflected in the apocalyptic and apocryphal books such as the Wisdom of Solomon, The Maccabees, the Jewish Sibylline Books, to name only a few.¹

That the rabbis censored other writings, and did not include them in the canon, is in itself a clue to the existence of a cleavage as to what the rabbis understood as acceptable practice and that of other Hellenistic authors. "It has arisen by the accident that the most important literature we have from the Jews of this period is that of the rabbis and the writings of Philo, and so scholars have tended to regard these as antithetical categories into one or the other of which we must force all other evidence."² Consequently Goodenough has to resort to other literary evidence for the religion of Jews in the Roman world:

We have taken two approaches to the Jews of the period. One was the testimony of the pagans, which brought out essentially the Jews' loyalty to their observances, and their sense of exclusiveness as a group. The other was the testimony of Christians, which added to this picture of Jewish loyalty the suggestion that many Jews adopted the best that was current in their pagan environment, and justified themselves in doing so by allegorical interpretations of their Bible.³

We are led to believe by Goodenough that Philo was not unique in his thinking. "He speaks to and of a group of mystic Jews, and contrasts their point of view frequently with that of the ordinary Jew, who could not 'cross the Jordan', as he called it, that is, get beyond (while still observing) the legal requirements, to come into metaphysical reality that Philo found implicit in the Torah."⁴ In By Light, Light written in 1935, these ideas of mysticism based on Philo are developed and coalesced. The Jewish Sibylline Books, the three last Books of the Maccabees, especially Fourth Maccabees, the fragments quoted by Eusebius, the pseudo-Justinian Oratio ad Graecos, the Mystic Liturgy, and the little Jewish apology in the Clementine Homilies are examples of writings that could be ascribed to this "mystic" sect according to Goodenough.⁵

These and many other writings were later rejected by the rabbis, and therefore lost to the Jewish world of religious thought. Goodenough assumes that strict censorship was in existence, but the possible reason and meaning of this supposed expurgation is not at all an issue for consideration. That mysticism always existed but was never part of the mainstream of Jewish tradition is the position held by many scholars today.⁶ What Goodenough attempts is to scrape up every fragment and bit of evidence from texts to support the hypothesis that in the Greco-Roman times, mysticism

was the predominating factor for a large majority of Jews.

Goodenough quotes Solomon Grayzel that "many of these books advocated religious law which differed from the legislation favoured by the Pharisees and the rabbis" to fortify his beliefs. He searches hard for scant references to a lost literature and points to a discussion of Sirach in the Talmud where Akiba was referring to the "books of the Sadducees."⁷ That this is the only known mention of the "books of the Sadducees" is indicative for Goodenough of the existence of some sort of censorship. Based largely on the foregoing evidence, he proposes that there is a wide discrepancy between what we now know from rabbinic writing in the Talmud of how the Jews of that period were supposedly practicing and observing, and what in actuality was the real situation.

One of the basic arguments is that Hebrew was an unknown language for the populace of the Greco-Roman era, and Greek the spoken, written and praying vernacular.

"The Mishnah became a companion to the Bible" only for scholarly rabbis who could read Hebrew. Those who could not read Hebrew got along, as Philo's group had done, without a Mishnah. We cannot a priori fill with rabbinism the silence of the Judaism of the Roman diaspora in this period.⁸

Goodenough's assessment of the rabbinic position in Palestine is one of low influence, and the scantiness of the Jerusalem Talmud as compared to the Babylonian version is evidence of a weak position.⁹

To furnish more detail in this picture of a preponderance of Jews being unilingual and Greek speaking, the frequency of Greek names on Jewish tombs is pointed out as being highly significant.

By the third century Greek was predominantly the language of Jews in Palestine itself, and we shall see that the invasion of Jewish art by hellenistic ornament was no less striking in Palestine than in Rome or Dura. Even in the time of Christ, Greek names are nearly as common as Hebrew and Aramaic together on Jewish tombs of Palestine, while by the third century Greek overwhelmingly predominates.¹⁰

Goodenough's theory is based on his assessment of rabbinic power and influence during the first centuries of the common era. It is Goodenough's belief that during the time of Philo the extent of rabbinic influence was hardly appreciable. Even though they eventually won popular prestige, support and respect, this, he asserts, was accomplished through a hard struggle.¹¹ "All we have learned thus far is that there is no evidence to show that the Jews of the imperial diaspora were led by rabbinic thinkers, or were normative or halachic Jews."¹²

He sees a sharp distinction between what has been called normative or halachic Judaism and the Hellenistic Jews who embraced mysticism in their belief and practice.¹³ This cleavage would not be evident today as it would at the time of Philo because the rabbis have caused its disappearance through intertwining and interweaving the mystic element in their construction of the legal code. It is so assimilated into the halacha that today it is not even apparent. Goodenough admits that he has had difficulties in making this point understood to modern day Jews.¹⁴ He points to the fact that the later developments of Merkabah mysticism and Kabbalah were built on this mystic strain, which, never having been completely eradicated, has been in existence continually.

Goodenough turns to several of the recognized historians of religion like Moore, Finkelstein or Grayzel, seeking in their works any factual evidence for the existence of such a deviant sect.

But the most he could glean from their historiography was a concession that there was no complete uniformity in Jewish thought or practice in the Greco-Roman period. Thus, agreement on a negative point is the extent of their acknowledgement. He singles out Salo Baron as one of the authorities who admits that there is indeed a problem in this area, if we try to give meaning to all the material remains with Jewish and pagan symbols that have come to light.¹⁵ Because of the very recentness of his theory, Goodenough admits to difficulty in encountering the 'establishment', both Christian and Jewish, with their traditional outlook.

HISTORICAL EVIDENCE.

Bases Structure on Philo

The problem is one of positing a sect of Judaism which started to exist about three centuries before the common era, amazingly like Christianity as we now know it, and at the same time resembling paganism in many of its beliefs and practices. Goodenough believes that it was the customs of this sect that Philo describes and it was to this that Philo addressed his works.

In reviewing Philo's sketchy biography in An Introduction to Philo Judaeus (1940), he mentions the fact that this philosopher came from a very prosperous well-connected family in Alexandria, and lived at a time when this variegated metropolis was at the height of its glory. Philo was very involved politically, and had a veritable obsession with the ideas of the Greek civilization. In estimating his Jewish education, Goodenough asserts that he got his knowledge of Torah through the Greek translation of this work made from the Hebrew two centuries before his time. It seems that he had a guide to the Hebrew proper names but otherwise followed closely the text of the Septuagint.¹⁶ This profound grasp of Torah, acquired in translation, coupled with his extensive knowledge of Greek philosophy and ethics, resulted in his reading "Plato in terms of Moses and Moses in terms of Plato."¹⁷

As he is presented in Goodenough's biography, Philo knew no Hebrew and nothing of the oral tradition upon which later Talmudic law was founded, but simply the practices of the Jews of his community. The Pentateuch he interpreted in terms of Greek science. From Heinemann's conclusion, Goodenough asserts

". . . that Torah ceased to be Jewish in character and became a cryptogram of Greek thought."¹⁸

According to the particular beliefs of this alleged form of Judaism, God revealed himself to be the source of the great stream of being as the sun is of light. For this sect, then, Goodenough explains, God was a light which was discerned by the light rays that he shot forth. This relationship is similar to our seeing the sun, itself a light, by means of the rays that reach us. "But to the ancient world," he writes, "the sun was the source of life, human, animal, vegetable and divine; it was the vivid symbol of God to the philosophers, God himself in popular religion; it was the symbol of thought and perception, and, in Philo and the Mystery Religions alike, of revelation and mystic illumination."¹⁹

As a by-way between man and God, this stream of light was very important and served as a path of ascent. The true Judaism, accordingly, is fulfilled only when men recognize the essential nature of this deity, and ascend into higher and higher contact with the Being of God.²⁰ This, in brief, is what Goodenough terms Philonic Judaism, characterized by having successfully assimilated from the mystery religions the idea of the mystic ascent as a possible access to God.

The term logos is Philo's designation for this stream of God's radiation. Goodenough expounds this theory of light and mystic ascent in By Light, Light: The Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism (1935). In this book he develops the whole of the ideas of Philo in accordance with this conceptual framework of God's light radiating out to man and it is in this work that he organizes the

elements that give rise to this mystic sect. By assessing Philo as holding a leading influential position in the Jewish community at large, and by postulating this mystic sect for whom he wrote, the scenario begins to take shape. He then attributes to Philonic Judaism a capital importance for the re-writing of Jewish history in Greco-Roman times.

It is only in later centuries Goodenough asserts that the rabbinic powers succeeded in wholly stamping out any mention of this sect or their practices.²¹ Contrary to our common understanding of normative Judaism as legalistic, Philo wrote:

The highest achievement in life was not obedience to God's detailed laws, good as that still was but the going out of bodily defilement and confusion, out of this world itself into something which was not of this world. . . . Symbolized in sacred meals and rites, the new Judaism found its reality in the Logos and Sophia, which men took into themselves to produce in this life or the next, a second or immaterial birth.²²

The idea of escape from this worldly reality to a higher metaphysical state, and the symbols which were embodied in these rites characterized this mystic sect. Because Goodenough perceives allusions to mystic practices in Philo's writings, the terms mystic sect and Philonic Judaism are used in the same sense.²³

Because he predicates his thesis on the authority of Philo's writings, it is imperative to assess them for their importance both in value and authority. In order to buttress his position and reinforce his views, Goodenough asserts that Philo's place in Judaism was by no means unique. "He impresses me as a man with a long tradition behind him."²⁴ It is important to understand Goodenough on his own terms; his language reveals his very personal understanding of Philo, and it is precisely this special conception of the philosopher that serves as a major premise upon which he

bases his theory. By getting a flavour of his literary style, the reader can sense how often his statements are highly subjective. One can judge whether personal intuition can be equated with scientific scholarship. What emerges predominantly in Philo Judaeus is a reliance on impression. "These (impressions of Philo's personality) are first an impression of a man who never tired of infinite ramifications in expounding and defending a central idea, the idea that the deeper content of Judaism was a revelation of the concepts of Platonic and Pythagorean philosophy, Stoic and Platonic ethics, and of the way to reach the reality behind those conceptions in mystic ascent."²⁵

The main burden of our thesis is a critical look at Goodenough's methodology, not necessarily a counter-attack on his accumulation of facts. It is therefore incumbent on the critic to analyse Goodenough's style of writing and procedure. Firstly, he admits that he reads Philo as a Greek mystic.²⁶ Secondly, he asserts that it is necessary to understand the man before understanding his works. In the first instance, to read Philo as Goodenough does imposes upon the reader the necessity of also being mystically inclined. It is only in this way that a similar common understanding can be achieved. Secondly, as Philo is chiefly known through his literature and not autobiographically, this procedural tactic is puzzling. Knowing the man before his works, when he is only knowable through his works, is an example of circular reasoning.

The search for the Judaic influence in Christianity is the momentum for Goodenough's investigation. The desire to establish a linking continuity from Judaism to Christianity

influences Goodenough and has bearing upon his estimate of Philonic Judaism. As mentioned before, he contends that Philo's were the representative writings of a practicing sect, and that it was this literature that was eventually rejected by Jews and taken up by Christians to form the basis of a new religion and civilization. For him this sect is the missing link connecting Christianity with its Judaic elements.²⁷

Thus our criticism, which is directed at style of writing and personal attitude, has as a result been a judgment not so much of inaccuracy but rather of distortion of evidence. It would seem, then, that although Goodenough is interested in tracing a direct path to Christianity through this deviant sect, his efforts tend to misrepresent Judaism with the view to making his theory viable. What evolves is a formula of Judaism that looks like a myopic distortion. He writes:

The point of Jewish monotheism in the ancient world was not the refusal to recognize that the sun and stars, for example, are animate beings of an order far superior to man, or that the air is filled with angels and demons. The strict Jew was distinctive in the East because, thinking such superhuman entities to be servants and helpers of God, he refused them any rites or cultus, and addressed his prayers only to the supreme principle behind them.²⁸

It seems that in reading Philo he is so enthusiastic about tailoring Jewish history to dovetail into Philo's structures that he highlights the idea of the 'supreme principle', neglecting to account for the developmental idea behind the Jewish God, and his relationship to Israel. As shown by the statement in the above paragraph, he ignores the constant dynamism in operation in this concept from the time of the personal God of Abraham to the universal God of the prophets, nor does he refer to the important

aspects of the close personal contractual relationship the Hebrews always enjoyed with their deity. A theory should break new ground but to ignore basic traditional material alters the reader's suspicions.

In summary, then, Goodenough's particular focus on the interpretation of Philo provides him with the bases for the beliefs and rites of this mystic sect, referred to by him as Philonic Judaism, and the proof of which is substantiated by the material remains of the Greco-Roman period.

Assumes Greek the Language of the Jews

In his evaluation of this Hellenistic period culturally, the judgment that Greek was the prevailing language amongst the Jews is germane to Goodenough's argument.²⁹ The corollary of this proposition is that Hellenistic civilization was more familiar than the Hebrew tradition for the Jewish populace. Pioneering new territory, Goodenough refrains from relying on recognized Jewish or Christian literature, wary of their intrinsic biases. In clearing a new path, he directs his scrutiny to the material evidence of what the populace itself must have written or at least accepted.

As there is a paucity of literary material, it is on the inscriptions on grave stones that Goodenough centers his attention. Here he finds, apart from the word 'shalom', which is in Hebrew, a preponderance of Greek and Latin, both in nomenclature and main inscription. It is Goodenough's assertion that Greek predominated over Hebrew as the language of the people, and as a consequence all influential writings had to be in that language. The Mishnah was not translated from Hebrew into any other language until the Middle Ages. This absence was not a mere oversight, according to Goodenough, but rather a decision of deliberate political action. By this seclusion very few outside the academies could read the Mishnah, and the powers it held were securely tied within.

We can now understand why R. Simeon ben Gamaliel, in the middle of the second century, and R. Johanan, a century later, allowed (and other rabbis provided for) translation of the Pentateuch into Greek, although they forbade translation into any other language. The rabbis were quite aware that Jews could not remain Jews without access to the Pentateuch, and so let them have it in Greek, but to all appearances the rabbis kept the Mishnah to themselves.

From this evidence, Goodenough concludes that the language spoken and understood by the vast majority of Jews was Greek, with Hebrew remaining secluded and reserved for scholars.

Presumes Minimal Rabbinic Influence

The real thrust of the argument is to examine the question of the rabbis' influence and power in the face of the vast amount of art and artifacts, symbols both pagan and Jewish, as well as magical charms and amulets that have been unearthed. That there was no centralized coordinated rabbinic system emanating from Palestine might give the impression that rabbinic influence was ineffectual on the community. Goodenough concedes that there was a certain amount of political control of the Jews in the diaspora by the delegates sent out from the Patriarch in Palestine to collect money, appraise synagogue heads and fight heresy.³¹ "That they effected a sense of loyal cohesion throughout world Jewry seems quite likely. But the supervision of the contents and range of Jewish thought would have required a tremendous organization indeed."³² Lacking the set-up of a political organization, Goodenough concludes there was no exercise of control over thought and behaviour; our reaction is that he seeks the negative as positive evidence. Rabbinic control operated in a different manner; the rabbis were the local teachers who had persuasive influence, and the local legal arbitrators, whose decision affected action.³³ Religious control can be exercised apart from a central political-secular organization, as is witnessed in the development of the Talmud.³⁴

Just how effective were the rabbis and their public influence, and how did they reconcile their supposedly anti-iconic attitude with all the archeological evidence in graveyards and synagogues?

Goodenough attacks this problem by opening up some pertinent and fundamental questions. Firstly, how reliable was the tradition that the rabbinical centres did supervise world Jewry at this time? What does the record of rabbinic response indicate? What were the Jews actually representing in their art and inscriptions? And of deeper import, when fashioning this art what were their motives and practices?³⁵ The real inquiry, in fact, is what was the impetus that demanded and produced the art, within or without rabbinic tradition? Thus, after bringing up the question of rabbinic influence, Goodenough then ignores the whole issue, by concentrating on the archeological evidence and insisting it speak for itself. He thereby cancels out this pertinent inquiry, and disregards whatever response may ensue.

The next chapter, dealing with a criticism of Goodenough's ideas, will detail how the rabbis handled the problem. Here only passing reference is made to the fact that both in the writings of Josephus and Philo, as well as Talmudic discussion, concern for the Second Commandment was as evident for the Jews of the Hellenistic period as it was in Biblical times. Close attention was always paid to the two parts of the injunction. The first forbade the making 'unto thee' of any graven image etc., which somehow allowed the Jews to make art for Gentiles, and the second part of the commandment forbade the worship of such images, which was the issue that the rabbis scrutinized with great seriousness.³⁶

E.E. Urbach quotes many Talmudic incidents illustrating how the rabbis treated the problem of art, often sanctioning it when it was not being used for worship, and even tolerating it

where its value was debated. The guiding principle for decision-making was complete satisfaction that the art served no threat to the worship of God.³⁷ This argument is mentioned here because of Goodenough's response that throws his methodology into sharp relief.³⁸ Throughout his study his unique search leads him to his own individual questions and his theories to different corollaries. Using Urbach's phrase in rebuttal, he writes, "The problem is not whether a few rabbis can be shown to have bowed before [underlining mine] the situation, but what prompted Jews to introduce the forms at all."³⁹

Here then is a new arrangement of facts. He marshalls his data and then constructs a new situation. A new order is arrived at, but that does not necessarily negate evidence brought forward by other scholars. He ignores classic literary testimony and follows the paths of psychology in formulating his ideas. With rabbinic influence minimal, and surrounding cultural pressure maximal, he then uses the theory of symbolic transference to account for the inspiration of the art of this period.

Psychological Evidence

Uses Theory of Symbolic Transference

The many symbols and art forms that appear amongst and imprinted on the material remains can be shown to have been deeply meaningful in pagan religious thinking and feeling. In Goodenough's understanding, then, it follows that some Jews who were in close contact with Greco-Roman civilization hoped that their religion, too, would be enriched by the conceptions in which these art forms had a place. "They thought so with such conviction that they took the forms even into their graves and synagogues, and mingled them with their cult objects and the heroes from Holy Writ."⁴⁰

Goodenough's working hypothesis is based on his theory of symbolic transference. The principle in operation is that if the symbols borrowed from paganism were at that time alive, they would have been alive for Jews as well. As a meaning or value in a symbol is measured simply by emotional impact, the evaluation of symbols in Judaism would have the same effect and touch the same sympathetic chord, but instead of possessing pagan meaning would denote something of Jewish significance.⁴¹ "First, a live symbol when borrowed by a new religion will presumably get new explanations, but will be borrowed for its value."⁴² If, then, the argument follows, the value serves Jewish purposes, we must be alerted to 'new' aspects in Judaism. These symbols found in unexpected places not only denote a change has occurred, but is telling us something about a shift in Judaism. This 'other Judaism' is that aspect implying a dimension of mysticism.

In amassing and classifying all the pagan and Jewish symbols engraved on archeological remains in the Middle East and around the Mediterranean, Goodenough noted particularly the locale in which they were found. The fact that the sites in which they were unearthed were burial places and synagogues was indicative that they were used in a religious context. By interpreting these symbols as representing a mystic ascent to God, or a reaching-out for a life in the afterworld, he deduces that these Jews had a different psychological approach to God, and to the problem of man's security,⁴³ -- different, that is, from what he understands of rabbinic law.

Our business is to follow the symbols themselves, not with the illusion that they will teach us all that Judaism meant in those days, but with the conviction that in them we have genuine data, which must be allowed to speak their own evidence as directly as the data from the rabbinic schools.⁴⁴

The meaning of these symbols, for him, was the 'lingua franca' of the Hellenistic Jews in the Mediterranean area, and as far as Babylonia. This non-verbal form of communication is as telling as any written documents, and hence the stature of this mystic Judaism is parallel and equal to that which we learn about in rabbinic literature. Because of the appearance of many of these symbols in the paintings in the Dura Europos synagogue, these famous frescoes are then viewed as the representative pictorial art of this mystic sect of Jews.⁴⁵ Because of the similarity of art conventions and themes, he proposes that this Jewish art is the precursor of Christian art, in the similar fashion that this mystic sect of Judaism was the basis for the early Christians.

In summary, then, these are the basic elements that combined to give shape to this hypothesized mystic sect of Hellenized Jews.

It is useless to try to understand my interpretation of the Dura paintings, which reflect so much of this symbolism, without clearly understanding the writings of Philo and their implications. He opens up a strange new world, incredible both to Christians and to Jews of traditional background. Out of this world came not only his writings but the Greco-Roman symbols on Jewish archeological remains, and the great Jewish tradition of Old Testament art preserved directly as Jewish at Dura and reproduced copiously in early Christian catacombs and mosaics. It was a world, not a sect with narrow definitions, and I see no reason to suppose that it centered in a formal theology any more than did the thinking of Philo himself....⁴⁶

Only the originator of this theory can tie up all the separate parts into so neat a parcel.

NOTES - CHAPTER I

1. J.S. 1:7.
2. J.S. 1:53.
3. *ibid.*
4. J.S. 1:7.
5. *ibid.*
6. This subject is dealt with in the works of G. Scholem, chiefly Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism (1941, 1954, and reprinted in English 1965). Goodenough refers to his works but criticizes Scholem for not connecting later Merkabah Mysticism with such a sect of practicing Jews in the Greco-Roman period. See J.S. 1:8.
7. J.S. 1:8, footnote 8, in which he refers to BT Sanhedrin, 90a, 100b.
8. J.S. 1:12.
9. J.S. 1:13.
10. *ibid.*
11. J.S. 1:16, 17.
12. J.S. 1:17.
13. Goodenough states on page 18, volume 1, (that for him the terms halachic, rabbinic, talmudic or Pharisaic Judaism have equivalent value and that he uses them synonymously. For the remainder of this paper we will similarly consider the different nomenclature as representing the same meaning.
14. J.S. 1:21.
15. J.S. 1:22.
16. Some scholars, based on etymological reasons, believe Philo even had an earlier Greek translation of the Pentateuch. There is a consensus, in any event, that it was Greek and not Hebrew from which he worked.
17. Erwin R. Goodenough, An Introduction to Philo Judaeus (New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc. 1940) p. 10.

18. *ibid.*, p. 12.
19. *ibid.*, p. 23.
20. *ibid.*, p. 13.
21. See J.S. 12:9. cf. with the comment of A.D. Nock. "How could such a complicated scheme have enjoyed so wide a dissemination and then have passed away without leaving any clear trace?" Arthur Darby Nock, Essays on Religion and the Ancient World, ed. Zeph Steward (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973) p. 889.
22. Philo Judaeus, p. 158.
23. See A.D. Nock above, p. 900. "It is not to be doubted that Philo and countless other Jews found overtones in what they thus did; but there is no evidence that Philo found the overtones which G. suggests."
24. Philo Judaeus, p. 27, underlining mine.
25. *ibid.*, p. 52, underlining mine.
26. *ibid.*, p. 28-29.
27. J.S. 7:6.
28. Philo Judaeus, p. 80.
29. J.S. 12:4.
30. J.S. 12:51.
31. J.S. 1:12.
32. *ibid.*
33. See work of G.F. Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, 2 vols (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), Vol. 1, Ch. 8 'Consolidation of Judaism'.
34. Prof. R. Goldenberg has pointed out to us that the Talmud reflects a highly political rabbinate in firm control of the legal and judicial profession. Their influence was more than local from the evidence of the rabbis' involvement in the Roman diaspora.
35. See Erwin R. Goodenough, "The Rabbis and Jewish Art in the Greco-Roman Period", HUCA, 32, (1961), p. 273.

36. Joseph Guttmann, ed., No Graven Images - Studies in Art (and the Hebrew Bible, (New York: Ktav Publishing House Inc., 1971), pp. 3-14.
37. See E.E. Urbach, "The Rabbinic Laws of Idolatry in the Second and Third Centuries in the Light of Archeological and Historical Facts." IEJ 9 (1959) p. 273.
38. E.R. Goodenough, "Rabbis and Jewish Art", p. 273.
39. *ibid*, p. 277.
40. *ibid*, p. 278.
41. J.S. 12:70-71.
42. J.S. 12:73.
43. J.S. 12:76.
44. *ibid*.
45. Upon learning about the Yale Expedition, under Prof. Rostovtzeff, excavating the Synagogue in Dura Europos in 1933, Goodenough's reaction was that this only confirmed the theory he was working out, and even took credit for having been able to predict the existence of such Jewish art. See J.S. 1:29.
46. J.S. 12:19.


CHAPTER II

CRITICAL EVALUATION

I. Other Interpretations of Philo

As we have seen before, Goodenough portrays Philo as philosopher and spokesman representing a large sectarian group of Alexandrian Jews operating apart from rabbinic influence. It is our intention to ascertain just where Philo himself stood in the spectrum of thought from Jewish to Judeo-Christian belief. Was he really representative of a large group, as Goodenough asserts, or was he an isolated intellect, sensitive to the varying philosophies and religious thoughts of his highly exciting time, and responding in a most creative way?

Very little factual material is known about Philo, the only firm date being 40 C.E. That was the year he represented the Jewish community of Alexandria at the court of the Roman Emperor Gaius Caligula, protesting the erection of statues in synagogues, and it is recorded that he was an elderly man at that time.¹ He belonged to one of the noblest Jewish Alexandrian families, which had the distinction of having Roman citizenship. There is some opinion that his family was connected with Herod, and possibly that this is the reason Philo's father had the coveted Roman citizenship. He must have had it prior to coming to Alexandria as Roman citizenship was impossible for the Jews of that city to attain.² This cleavage is certainly illustrative of the vast difference in social scale that existed in that community, and although politically he may have been



the official representative, his aristocratic standing must have led him to a variance in thinking with the vast majority of the Jewish community of Alexandria.³

Because his writings lack any traditional source material, George Foot Moore also questions whether Philo was representative of Alexandrian Jewry in totality.⁴ Samuel Belkin is in accordance with this opinion. "It would be a great mistake to assume that Philo represents the religious belief of the Alexandrian community as a whole."⁵ Although Philo is not representative of traditional Judaism, Belkin does believe he is writing from Jewish sources.

As for his educational background, Goodenough assessed Philo's Jewish learning as a matter of his knowing the Greek translation of the Torah.⁶ It is certain that he must have obtained a Greek education; the existence of Jewish schools in the diaspora at that time is not yet-proven, so we cannot automatically conclude that he studied at any of the academies. However, he relates that he sometimes consulted the elders of the community about aggadic traditions.⁷ In any event, for some scholars the fact that he wrote in Greek is no basis for inferring that he knew no Hebrew. On the contrary, because of the way he handled certain interpretations more like the original Hebrew than the Septuagint, and for other etymological considerations, Wolfson believes that he, like other learned Alexandrians, studied Hebrew.⁸

The fact that Philo's exposition seldom looks outside the Pentateuch, even for illustration, is for Moore indicative of how removed he was from Jewish sources, even if he did know the Hebrew language. "The abundance of apposite citation from the Prophets

and the Psalms in the Tannaite Midrash has no counterpart in Philo, even when the quotation would seem almost to force itself on the attention."⁹ For this scholar, there is a difference between Philo's outlook and traditional Judaism.

In this sense the spirituality of God is a philosophical theory derived from the Greeks, not a doctrine of Judaism in Biblical times or thereafter, any more than Jewish monotheism is a doctrine of the unity of God in the metaphysical sense. Philo has both conceptions from Plato, and reads them into the Bible with the rest of his philosophy; but he did not get them from the Bible nor from Judaism at all."¹⁰

Philo and Language

There seems to be a diversity of opinion concerning Philo's knowledge of Hebrew and his reference to traditional Jewish sources in trying to ascertain whether he wrote as a Jew. The intricacies of translation shed some light on this problem. For instance, 'Elohim' became *θεοι*, even though the Greek term had already various connotations in the Greek religion. 'Adonai' and 'Jehovah' are translated *κύριος*, even though that epithet was used to denote various gods. Another example, 'El Elyon' became *ὁ θεὸς ὁ ὑψίστος* an expression used for Zeus.¹¹ The designated differences denote different worlds of thought. The application of Greek religious terms by Hellenistic Jewish writers for their own religion did not obliterate the basic difference between these two religions. Wolfson states that this Hellenization in language gave to the Jews a wider knowledge of other religions, but it did not cause them to change their conceptions of their own religion. Goodenough, on the other hand, believes that a Greek-speaking Jew who thought of God as *Theos* would have quite a different conception from a Hebrew

who thought of God as Adonai, Elohim or Yahweh, again confirming his idea that there was a group of Jews whose thinking about God was at variance from that of the rabbis.¹²

Hence, Wolfson believes that Jews thought as traditional Jews whether they used *θεός* theos or not. Goodenough agrees but insists, nonetheless that there were some Jews who used *θεός* theos and conceptualized their God in terms of their Greek compatriots. From this mode of analysis Moore concludes that Philo does not rest the obligation to the law on the authority of revelation as do the Jewish traditional sources but commends it to Greek concepts like intelligence and conscience. Another is that he makes no place for tradition beside exegesis, often being at variance with Tannaite Halakah. This Moore attributes to the fact that Philo operated exclusively with the Greek translation of the Pentateuch, which from his understanding was semantically different.¹³

On the other hand, Wolfson by concentrating on other pertinent aspects of Philo places him in with the typical Hellenistic Jewish writers of his time. Using the very vocabulary of the Greeks, Philo denounces polytheism, its mythologies and its mysteries.¹⁴ Philo himself takes great pains to interpret the special sense in which he uses these terms borrowed from polytheism and mythology, and carefully explains the special sense in which he compares the covenant with God to an initiation into mysteries.¹⁵

Philo and Mysteries

Goodenough depicts this mystic sect of Judaism and uses the term synonymously with Philonic Judaism.¹⁶ In the context of the foregoing, the question remains what was Philo's intent when he used the word 'mysteries.' "From all this we may gather by those who have been initiated into mysteries he means men of good native abilities and proper education who have succeeded in mastering their passions and in acquiring a true knowledge of the existence and nature of God."¹⁷ Philo challenges the heathen mysteries by asserting that communion with God is not by sacred rites but by obedience to the teachings and practices of the law.¹⁸

By the time of Philo, Biblical exegesis was an already established practice, and even within the various methods, allegory had a sound rabbinic tradition. The inner spiritual meaning of the Biblical text was the main concern of the allegorist, and within the allegorical method itself there were expositors who found meaning in different ways. There were those who interpreted symbolically *מורה* 'מורה', and those who analysed the very wording for metaphorical meaning, *מורה* 'מורה'. The first was derived from the word *מורה* meaning 'whatever joins, ethical principle, a symbol', and the second *מורה* meaning 'mark, character'.¹⁹ The Hellenistic Jews used this method to prove that the teachings of the Bible were consonant with Greek wisdom, and of all the writers, Philo, whose exegetical practices were in accord with rabbinic method, was the most successful of them.

But, even as an allegorist, whatever importance Philo gave to spiritual meaning, or whatever his allusions to mysteries, such as Goodenough suggests, he always adhered to the principle

that practice of the law was essential. As for the extreme allegorists, we get the impression from Philo that they were a group of well-meaning though rather misguided people. In any event they never consciously separated themselves from the body of Alexandrian Judaism.²⁰ The three tendencies in Alexandrian Judaism, the traditional, the allegorical and the extremely allegorical, did not constitute sects -- they merely represented a conflict of ideas.²¹

If we are right in our analysis of Philo's description of this group of extreme allegorists whose interpretation pointed out the mysteries then, to quote Wolfson, ". . . we may dismiss as historically unfounded the view that they [the extreme allegorists] constituted a distinct sect within Hellenistic Judaism and that they were militantly engaged, in anticipation of Paul, in the struggle for the abrogation of the Law, and that as such, therefore, they had placed themselves outside the Jewish community."²²

Philo and Rabbinic Viewpoints

Influences of Palestinian Oral Law are found in Philo's halakah. That they may appear to differ on certain points is due to the fact that later Talmudic halakah was not the same as that of rudimentary pre-mishnaic times before it was fixed. Alexandrian Jewry did not differ significantly from the prevailing Judaic practices of the times, and the local courts in Egypt followed Palestinian Law.²³ Moreover, Belkin believes "it would be a great mistake to assume Philo represents the religious beliefs of the Alexandrian community as a whole."²⁴ Philo came into conflict with the allegorists who abrogated practical law, as well as the

literalists who refused to accept any symbolic interpretation, to speak of only the educated sector of the community. From what we know, Philo was influenced by Jewish sources, although he did not write in a Jewish idiom, nor for a mass Jewish audience. The question still remains -- not whether Judaism influenced Philo, but whether Philo influenced the Jews.

If Philo were writing for a special sect of Jews, such as Goodenough proposes, there is no literary evidence in either Jewish or Christian literature to this effect. The Mishnah makes no allusion to such rites as this alleged sect practiced.²⁵

In Alexandria where there was a close intermingling of community life, Eusebius, one of the early Christian writers, made this observation about the Jews.²⁶

The whole Jewish nation is divided into two sections; the Logos was forcing the majority to accept the prescriptions of the laws according to their literal sense, but the other class he [Celsus] exempted from this . . . that they might pay heed to a philosophy which was more divine and too elevated for the multitude, and that they might be able to grasp those things which were signified spiritually in the Laws.²⁷

This description by a contemporary on-looker corroborates the opinion that Hellenized Judaism appealed to a better educated upper class, very small in number, of the Jewish community. As Philo belonged to an aristocratic intellectual minority, his writings could not have been understood by nor have influenced the masses of lower class Jews, albeit he was their political representative.

According to Samuel Sandmel, the Philonic and rabbinic traditions do indeed overlap. He does not see any value in asking the question, "Is Philo Hellenized?"²⁸ Goodenough, in his recreation of the history of the Jews in Greco-Roman times, sets up

two opposing camps -- Philo versus the rabbis. However, Sandmel feels that this debate is hardly valid; where Philo represents a single writer, the rabbis constituted a large group subscribing to numerous schools of thought. Nor is Sandmel concerned with whether the Palestinian or Alexandrian halacha was the dominant influence. He is not convinced of any hard compelling argument that Philo knew Hebrew, but only that there is abundant reference to his Greek education and none to his Jewish. The pertinent point is the extent of his Hebrew. The Hellenistic and Hebrew civilization had many parallels in semantics, use of allegory and points of law. Hence for Sandmel, the whole of the discussion of Philo centering on qualitative and quantitative diagnosis of his Hellenistic or Hebrew components is futile.²⁹ It is on this basis that he proposes a completely different methodology for evaluating Philo.

Sandmel believes that the only way significant differences can be discerned is by noting the variant use of a common idea, or dissimilar inferences from a common Biblical base. To illustrate his methodology, Sandmel deals with the allegorical material pertaining to the Abraham cycle of stories. It is by the following that he detects the difference in thinking:

1. For the rabbis, Abraham began observing the heavenly bodies and discovered the existence of God. He was the creator of the universe, including the stars.
2. Josephus, writing for a wider audience, portrays Abraham as a mathematician and philosopher. In the same way, it was the aberrations in the movement of the constellations that led Abraham on his road to discovery of God.

3. Philo's interpretation does not have Abraham continue in the direction from the heavenly bodies to God. He turned away from the stars and inwards to himself. God for him is more in the nature of a subjective spiritual reality. Hence it is not the halachic or haggadic structure, both traditional, that is significant, but the attitude and viewpoint of what it all means. "The issue is what one or the other sees in the practices, in the Bible, and the nature of man, and the nature of God."³⁰ For Sandmel, Philo diverges in that he interprets even the same traditional haggadah significantly different from the rabbis.

The very purpose of Philo's writings was not the preservation of Jewish concepts, but their sublimation and adaptation to Greek philosophy. What he endeavoured was to show that the morality taught and exemplified in the scriptures was in complete accord with what the philosophers taught in more abstract form on the authority of right reason. Right reason for the Greeks was another mode of divine revelation.³¹

Because of the sociological mixture in Alexandria at that time, the Jews found themselves surrounded by hostility and anti-semitism.³² Philo had to make his Judaism understandable to the Greeks and Egyptians and his work turned out to be in the nature of an apology.³³ Philo can be placed among other Hellenistic apologists of Judaism who followed in the footsteps of Old Testament writers by refraining from direct polemics against specific gods, or the customs of surrounding nations. Instead they preferred to speak in a general way without pointed references of the weaknesses of idolatry and heathen mores, always dwelling on the superiority of Judaism. Even when directed at Jewish audiences, apologetic and

propogandist elements always broke through. Philo may well have thought that the Egyptian Jewry did need a Greek translation of the Torah, nonetheless he asserted in De Vita Mosis, 11, 6:36 that the Septuagint translation was made to enlighten the Gentile world.³⁴

Moreover, because it was comparatively easy for some Jews to assimilate, like his own nephew Tiberius Julius Alexander, he attempted to stem this influence by writing his explanation of Judaism in a seemingly palatable manner.³⁵ It is the uprooted Jewish intellectuals of the time and the apostates that Philo describes as 'malicious critics of the Law, who are impudently bold in inventing objections against it.'³⁶ It is to this group of upper class assimilationists that he addresses his apologetics, while leaving the masses of Diaspora Jewry untouched.

2. Analysis of "Hellenization"

It appears from the foregoing that these Hellenized Jews of an upper wealthy class had to rationalize their religious beliefs when confronted with the surrounding culture. For expediency and practical reasons they were conscious of the advantages of Hellenism over Judaism. In Jerusalem, for instance, it is known that the adaptation to Hellenization among the Jews was not evenly distributed throughout society but was limited to the more knowledgeable sophisticates confined to the ruling aristocracy of that city.³⁷

A major unifying factor in keeping the Jewish people together was tenacity in their appreciation of law. During the period of Antiochus III, there was a feud between Hyrcanus, son of Tobiah, and his elder brothers. Most of the people backed the latter, and the High Priest Simon followed suit.³⁸ This split among the people has generally been interpreted as a Hellenizing party against a religious faction, but in reality, this break in the Jewish community in the years 201-198 with the rise of the Hellenizing party was not cultural, nor was it based on theoretical differences, as Josephus would have us believe. The main issue arose from political and practical considerations. The Jewish aristocracy grew fearful of the weakness of the Ptolemies, and turned to the new power under Antiochus III that appeared in the country.³⁹ When Antiochus III assumed power, he allowed the Jews to live according to their 'ancestral laws'. It was not the ruler, however, who determined the nature of this body of law, but the Jews themselves who

comprehended and interpreted them in a living practical context, and implemented them accordingly.⁴⁰ This idea that the Jews during these Hellenistic times were always bound to their 'ancestral laws' in the political structure of the community is important in trying to recreate the last centuries before the Common Era. Tcherikover believes that these laws were the whole of the written as well as the developing oral tradition.⁴¹ If we accept this analysis, then the Jews were unified in their communal structure, for the greater part by their adherence to Jewish law. Hence, despite Hellenistic overrule, the Jews as a whole tenaciously lived according to Mosaic law.

Goodenough asserts that this alleged mystic sect existed not only in Jerusalem but had ramifications throughout the Hellenized diaspora. Because of this proposition, an understanding about the very syncretic nature of Hellenism itself is imperative. As a matter of fact, even though they were known as 'Hellenizers' it is an error to describe the Jewish Hellenists of Jerusalem as the bearers of Greek philosophical ideas.⁴² The simplistic concept of bracketing together all essentials called 'Hellenistic' does not take into account the superficial 'levantine' character of Hellenist culture in the oriental countries generally, and especially in Palestine, ". . . for what was natural to Philo, a pupil of Greek philosophers and a citizen of the most highly civilized and Hellenized city of the entire Hellenistic dispersion, was in no sense natural to the political and public leaders of an oriental town, whose Hellenism had not yet emerged from the first phase of the superficial aping of foreign customs."⁴³

Further, the cultural value of the Greek towns of Palestine and their influence on the local people must not be overestimated. This is the practice of many modern historians, but they are at fault in emphasizing Palestinian cities as points radiating the light of Greek culture, because this view does not fit the historical reality.⁴⁴ Tcherikover does not believe that Greek names always represent evidence that their bearer was deeply involved in Greek culture.

Even where the Greek influence was felt most strongly, and the confrontation most directly met, the Hebrew 'Weltanschauung' was never subsumed in the dominant culture. For instance, in the second century, the idea of personal immortality, and the question of resurrection became part of the belief of the Pharisaic sect. However, even in the very basic issue of life after death, it is erroneous to attribute the Jewish belief in immortality as evolving from the Greek, common as that idea is, since the Jew and the Hellenistic Greek did not hold identical views.⁴⁵ For the Greeks, special people might attain to immortality, but special people only, whereas the ordinary reward of a virtuous man was only everlasting remembrance.⁴⁶

In actuality, the more 'Hellenism' is dissected the more careful one becomes about simple generalizations. The 'Hellenistic' societies were complex in themselves and differed from one region to another. The ideational and geographical differences must be discerned and analysed before trying to assess the intellectual 'spin-off' of Hellenism, such as Goodenough refers to so freely throughout his work. For example, that Greek was the predominant

language is the widespread opinion. Yet, even though Greek was the official and spoken tongue among the upper levels of the community at large, it was only one among many, and it is important to remember that it was not the only language spoken in the towns.⁴⁷ In Palestine, as in other ancient lands from Egypt to India, there was a fusion of Oriental and Greek elements, with the former taking ascendancy over the latter. Speech, nomenclature and architecture -- the external garb in this hybrid culture was generally Greek, but the essence and inner content -- religious customs, art, opinion and thought remained Oriental in origin.⁴⁸

Tarn agrees with this assessment of Hellenistic culture. He asserts that what the Jews took was only the outward forms and that few learned anything of the spirit. Although the Jew may have adopted and reflected Greek manner and fashion, his ideals were not that of the Greek even if expressed in the same terms. The word 'freedom' is used by Tarn as a classic example. For the Greek, 'freedom' was an end in itself; the expression of which allowed an unconfined self-worshipping community, forming independent laws and worshipping what gods it pleased. For the Jew, the concept of 'freedom' conjured up a concept of means, preventing interference with his devotion to a divinely given law, unchangeable by man. It was freedom to worship a God, beside Whom there could be no other object of worship. 'Wisdom' likewise was a term common to both, but for the Greeks, 'wisdom' was a thing which grew from the toil of many brains while to the Jew, 'wisdom' was 'the fear of the Lord', unchangeable forever.⁴⁹ Once more, we have an illustration which serves to caution against superficiality and oversimplification. Verbal idiom may represent concepts semantically quite at odds.

Even in some of the smaller centers in Babylonia, particularly Dura, where Hellenism had made a considerable impact on the Jewish community, most Jews did not speak Greek. As an example of the many cultures that are subsumed under the term 'Hellenistic', the following is illustrative: in Babylonia, the language of the army, politics and government was chiefly Iranian; of urban life, commerce and culture, primarily Greek; and of the massive agricultural population, varieties of Aramaic.⁵⁰ That Aramaic was the spoken language of the Jews is inferred from Josephus' writings and from the later literature, which was produced in Hebrew and Aramaic. Salo Baron believes that through the Hellenizing influence, more and more Jews adopted Greek as the tongue of communication, their command of that language, however, remained superficial.⁵¹ Even in Egypt, where Hebrew was becoming a lost language by the beginning of the Common Era, in the first pre-Christian century they still prayed in Hebrew, according to an indication in the Nash papyrus, which contained the Decalogue and Shema intended for liturgical use.⁵² In Babylonia, on the whole, the Jews formed a separate cultural-ethnic group.⁵³

Not only did the Jews remain somewhat apart from the surrounding civilization, but their lines of communication reached out for closer contact with other Jewish communities. It is known that the Jews in Babylonia carried on a lively intercourse with Palestine. There is a record of many exchanges of teachers which solidified the contact and contributed to the development of a homogeneous cultural tradition.⁵⁴ This is further testified to by the similarity of accounts found in the Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds.⁵⁵

The Jews of Babylonia, a province of the Parthian Empire, had local autonomy over their communal affairs. This political power over their own people is indicated by their tax collecting activities, their legal authority to appoint their own judges, and even the permission to inflict the death penalty on members of their own community. Contact with their kinsmen in Palestine has already been noted.⁵⁶ The synagogue community had an important self-regulating status that was not necessarily a private affair, but one that had official recognition, so that private law became public law, and the synagogue became a political forum in which the Jewish body acted.⁵⁷

One of the criticisms of Goodenough's hypothesis is that it rests on the sociological position of the Jews in Greco-Roman times, from the Parthian Empire to the surrounding shores of the Mediterranean. He creates this mystic sect with their practicing rites, and presumed they existed over a vast geographical area, under various political regimes. Yet there were significant differences in the social and political position of the Jews under different rule. Even under so wide an umbrella as 'Hellenistic rule' there is a difference of opinion as to community relationship. Tcherikover, Tarn and Colledge all uphold the view that there was an independent Jewish community that had its legal rights safeguarded as a matter of due accord. Goodenough's portrayal of political relations of the Jews with the Romans was that it was always precarious, consisting in the Jews' dealing largely in "flattery, obsequiousness and insinuation."⁵⁸

As for the internal workings of the Jewish community, Tarn points out that the realities of custom, folkways and legalism were the guidelines for behaviour, and what was disapproved and scorned was any action that might lead to alien belief or faith. If any foreign powers did creep into the tradition, it was the occult influences of the east -- astrology, demonology and magic. For the rabbis had hoped to make of them rivalling handmaids for their own spirit, while the Greek spirit could be no handmaid. Tarn notes that Judaism by the first century, oddly enough, was offering a strange spectacle of a system which refused to accept Greek thought, but might at the same time experiment with these lower influences of mysticism.⁵⁹ Hence to draw the line of development for this 'mystic' sect from the Platonic rationalism of Philo's philosophy to the mysteries of the Orient is a contrived argument.

Rabbinic influence could not have been as ineffectual or deficient, allowing the widespread practice of mysticism, hardly distinguishable from its pagan origin, as Goodenough likes to portray. The great triumph of Judaism is in maintaining their society and not being completely assimilated into the surrounding cultures and religions. Focusing on Babylonia, which was only one part of the Greco-Roman world, the Jews could have readily apostasized to the dominant faith, the Sassanians' Zoroastrianism, or to another Biblical faith like Mandaeanism or Christianity, or even Manichaeism. Although a few did convert to the Sasanian faith, and some did become Christians, there is no evidence of apostasy to other cults or religions.⁶⁰ As a matter of fact, of all the

religions that flourished at the beginning of the Christian era in the Roman and Parthian empires, Judaism alone has survived, with the exception of Zoroastrianism, numbering some 110,000 persons. Moore believes that this victory was due to the Pharisaic authority carried forth under the rabbinic influence. This was the force that brought about unity and universality, not necessarily based on orthodoxy in theology, but on uniformity of observance. The rabbis were triumphant in bringing about a unity of belief and observance in their wide dispersion, and bridged the gulf between Aramaic and Greek speaking Jews whatever their numbers were.⁶¹

The rabbinic influence was not inconsiderable, although we would agree it was not necessarily 'normative' at that time. As for their eschatological views, they saw Torah and the commandments as a way of shielding them in this world and promised the blessings of the world to come. In this they were powerful and influential.⁶² The majority of the Jews kept the law because they believed it was their obligation to God to do so.⁶³ Not only did the rabbis have the support and consent of the populace, but their special knowledge or gnosis was an effective basis for public activities, and they could authenticate this knowledge by a wide variety of impressive proofs. The weight of genealogy of the Davidic line of Exilarch, and the political fact of the Sassanian government did not measure up to the authoritative power of God's Torah. It was Torah in its broadest scope -- based as much upon holiness as upon knowledge of facts. Even the idea of mysteries was part of the rabbinic domain.⁶⁴

Because the exilarch was charged with the administration of the Jewish community in Babylonia, the rabbis were employed in adjudicating matters of a civil nature. Court records show concern with such matters as Sabbath limits, gifts to priests, taboos against sexual relations, etc. It was Samuel, the leading rabbi, at the time of Shapur I who declared "The law of the land is the law."

At that time there is no evidence that the rabbis were involved in private matters, like burying the dead, keeping the festivals, or resorting to amulets to guard houses against demons.⁶⁵ Involvement in these affairs was a later development. To note the presence of amulets or decorations on burial places at this time is not to conclude the absence of rabbinic influence. We do know there was an 'erub (Sabbath limitation) in the area of the Dura Synagogue. This was a matter of public law and testifies to the fact that rabbinical supervision was a force in that community.⁶⁶

What does emerge from a study of developing law in Babylonia is a process of creative symbiosis between a few active patient rabbis, and the passive preoccupied many of the masses.⁶⁷ The court was the instrument of action and the schools developed into an instrument of support. The rabbis were able to shape a society based on the Pentateuch, using the force of tradition. How strong they were is hard to determine accurately, but their influence cannot be underestimated, judging by later history.

3. Rabbinic Involvement in Magic and Mysticism

That the rabbis were involved in magic and mysticism is beyond dispute, but just how these same rabbis functioned in the reality of the situation is the purpose of this commentary. Although some of them had their own adventures in the occult, cosmological and theosophical, they did not see themselves as magicians or seers, nor did they profess to reveal the secrets of the hereafter. Eschatology, though very evident in the religious belief of the day, never did completely displace the national hope of redemption and the rebuilding of Zion.⁶⁸ Moreover, for the rabbis, redemption was something to be earned and gained through a legal reformation of Israel.

The Jews of Babylonia, too, it must be remembered, not only had an independent exegetical tradition, and an autonomous legal tradition, they also had their own mystical lore, based on the vision of the Babylonian prophet, Ezekiel.⁶⁹ There is some evidence, furthermore, to suggest that mysticism in all its Tannaitic forms did exist and was cultivated in the Babylonian academies.⁷⁰

The magic that was widespread in the ancient Near East was international and universal in character, transcending ethnic and political borders with such things as common belief in demons, angels, holy men, miracles, incantation, fantasies, etc. However, while "the chief concerns of the international myth were commonplace, yet personal; universal, yet individual, those of the rabbis were primarily particular to the Jews, communal and collective."⁷¹ The

distinctive difference between what the rabbis indulged in and that of other eastern religions, is that in the latter magic was employed only as a personal self-saving method with emphasis on the individual person. For the rabbis, the end result was aimed at a larger totality -- a betterment of society.⁷²

Although it is true that the rabbis performed many of the functions and claimed the powers characteristic of magicians, they did not apply the term to themselves, nor approve its application by others. Indeed they would not have regarded their power as magical nor the Torah as a source of magic. The dividing line between true religion and magic was clearly drawn and widely recognized by both rabbis and community.⁷³

Hence, although the Jews often used the same magical practices as pagans, a strong distinction was inherent in their own attitudes. They were always mindful that the performance of power was due to their supreme God, and certainly not the pagan gods, who were often regarded as demons and impure spirits. The rabbis were adamant about the fact that their miracles, supernatural graces and magical actions were derived from the Torah, rather than from some other source of supernatural power.⁷⁴ It was Torah learning that gave them their authority as wonder workers and consequently where a rabbi was accorded the reputation for performing wonders, he was generally a well established authority in one of the schools. Faith, wisdom and unusual ability were thought of as one piece, and thus, the holy man embodied virtue, great knowledge and divine power, as a complete package. In this context, too, 'knowing' and 'doing' were inseparable, and as the rabbi's wisdom was derived from Torah, his supernatural talent or magical skills similarly was due to his knowledge of Torah.⁷⁵

For the most part, supernatural influence was used as a means of coercion where legal power was unavailable, and especially in those matters of law which almost never produced cases and court action.⁷⁶ The influence of the rabbis, then, it must be stressed again, was based on knowledge of Torah, of the facts, and even of the mysteries.⁷⁷

The Greek word *μυστήριον* frequently occurs in rabbinic literature, and though it often means 'mystery' in its religious connotation, it may also stand for 'a secret'. The rabbis used it also as a technical term. For example, circumcision is the 'mystery of God', and the oral law 'the mystery of the Lord.'⁷⁸ The 'mysteries' of pagan religions represented no danger. The rabbis did not stigmatize the heathen mystery cults, although they certainly knew something about them.⁷⁹ As we noted above, the term 'mystery' was employed by the rabbis to represent their own esoteric knowledge. The rabbis did not seem to be struggling against any "rites of Jewish mystery" such as Goodenough implies were in existence.⁸⁰

It is for the above reasons that we are dubious about Goodenough's biased statements concerning magic as it manifests itself in other Near Eastern religions, as being part of the Jewish religion in this period.⁸¹ The differences in what the word magic implied both in concept and application were fundamentally dissimilar. So, when Goodenough writes, "that while the rabbis condemned magic, they respected its power", he fails to make the subtle, yet fundamental and tremendous difference in the essential components and how they function.

Although some rabbis mention obscure rites of idolatry or shameless practices of the heathens, the rabbis never directly and explicitly assailed the heathen rites of mysteries. This was not necessarily a conscious form of censorship, as Goodenough implies often enough, rather they simply had no reason to engage in such attacks. Unlike the earlier Hellenistic Jews, by the first century C.E., the rabbis were no longer struggling with gentile paganism. They mostly preached to Jews, and to Judaism.⁸² The connotation in the word 'mysteries' implied no threat. We have already seen how the rabbis even applied that term to their own esoteric knowledge. A Jew had to become an idol worshipper before he could be 'initiated into the mysteries' such as the rites Goodenough refers to and by the first century C.E. the Jews were so far removed from clear-cut idolatry, there was not the need to argue and preach against it.⁸³

By the emphasis on the talismatic powers of the mezuzah or tefillin, and by not concerning himself with the constant struggle that the rabbis had to accommodate its use for religious purposes, Goodenough oversimplifies their use as amulets.⁸⁴ Trachtenberg treats these two ritual objects as having ambiguous character, and thinks they did play a part in superstitious usage as well as religious.⁸⁵ He believes the mezuzah was descended from a primitive charm, but the rabbinic leaders gave it religious content by insisting on the inscription on a piece of parchment with the Biblical verses Deut. 6: 4 - 19, and 11: 13 - 20.⁸⁶ In this way the rabbis emphasized its function as a reminder of the principle of monotheism. The tefillin were similarly adapted for religious purposes.

Morton Smith suggests that Goodenough's desire to break away from his New England Protestant puritanical background is the impetus for his seeking out the mystical non-rational elements in the Judaic component of Christianity.⁸⁷ The Christian roots of Goodenough's mystic Judaism have also been noted by Nock.⁸⁸ In his piecing together of scattered evidence, Goodenough imagines a Jewish religious ceremony similar to those of the mystery religions, which were later incorporated into the Christian sacraments.

However, even if there was a similarity in appearance, there is a very important and essential difference in the nature of the act. In the mystery religions, the rite was used as a vehicle to salvation by a personal union with a saviour god who had himself died and risen again.⁸⁹ The cult image, for the pagan religions was the vessel of the divine spirit itself, the object of worship and the recipient of prayers.⁹⁰ It may look, to all appearances, that the Torah was venerated in the same manner by keeping it in a sacred shrine. For the Jews, though, the scrolls which were central to their service were sacred only for the words they contained.

The attitude in the social setting is another mark of difference noted by Tacitus, in his description of Jewish practice:

They have no fear of death since they regard the souls of those who die in battle or by execution as eternal. They imitate the Egyptian custom of burying their dead . . . the rites of Liber (Bacchus) are festive and gay, while those of the Jews are absurd and mean.⁹¹

Although there is a certain amount of truth in Goodenough's assertion that religion at the time we are investigating contained a great deal of magic, the essential difference in the function of

magic and religion must not be obscured. Malinowski defines magic as a practical art consisting of acts which are only means to a definite end, while religion consists in a body of self-contained acts, being themselves the fulfillment of their purpose.⁹² In other words, magic was limited to circumscribed technique, while religion must be seen as a total system of beliefs and ritual.

As their approach was one of practicality, the rabbis' attitude toward the problem of idolatry was focused on how they affected the social and commercial contact of the Jew with the gentile. Though they stressed that idolatry was one of the gravest abominations, their main concern was deterring the Jews from falling victims to it under duress or for lucrative reasons. The rabbis in the second century did not fight against superstition when it was possible to subordinate it to their religion. They were more concerned with the practical rites of idolatry inasmuch as they might affect the behaviour of the Jews.⁹³

According to the Mishnah, the 'books of Homer' were referred to as unclean.⁹⁴ Lieberman points out, however, that the rabbis were well acquainted with this literature. They never referred to them, though, not because it was a matter of censorship as Goodenough would have us believe, but rather because they were addressing a Jewish audience, and not writing theoretical treatises on idolatry for gentiles.⁹⁵ How the actual rites of idolatry might affect the conduct of the Jews was their chief concern, and they wrote a whole tractate, 'Abodah Zarah' dealing with the subject. Only biblical sources are used as reference, while they

do not refer to the existing Greek or other literatures. The composition of this tractate is based on material gathered from experiential sources -- that is, records from personal context.⁹⁶

It is for the above reasons that we find no theoretical discussion about alien worship. That the rabbis were familiar with a variety of rites of idolatry prevalent in and around the Near East is evidenced by numerous references in the Talmud, but their overriding interest was how to accommodate them, making sure that any act similar to that in the heathen cult, was in no way paying homage to the idols, or the spirit represented by these symbols.⁹⁷

4. Rabbinic Attitude Toward Art

We have seen in what manner the rabbis indulged in magic and mysticism in the foregoing, and here we will endeavour to show something of how the rabbis dealt with the obvious growth of artistic expression in the Greco-Roman times. The Jewish home and the synagogue could not always be denied of art, and Talmudic response to the situation has been recorded. There is a hypothesis that models for the Dura paintings came from house decoration, though the possibility that Old Testament iconography was derived from decoration in Jewish homes has not found favour. A study of the mosaics at Antioch from this period has revealed many examples of the same philosophical and religious concepts that were used in homes, and very similar to the Dura paintings.⁹⁸

We learn from the tale of Rabbi Jochanan (3rd cent. C.E.) that people began to have paintings on the wall and the rabbis did not hinder them. (JT Abodah Zarah, 3.3). In the fourth century we hear of mosaics which do not provoke any prohibitions from Rabbi Abuna. (JT Abodah Zarah, 41 d. 1.37-42a, 1.7). Another Talmudic story is told of Rav and a synagogue, possibly in Sura, that had a mosaic in the floor, and since he could not force the removal of this art from the stone floor, he nonetheless showed his disapproval only by not prostrating himself. Another instance tells of Rab, Samuel and Samuel's father who prayed in a synagogue in which there was a statue (andarta).⁹⁹

Another Mishnaic story illustrating the artistic milieu in which they lived is that of Rabban Gamaliel. When attending the

Bath of Aphrodite at Acre in which there stood a statue of Venus, he accounted for his seemingly irreligious action by a quip, "I did not come into her domain; she came into mine." In Danby's translation of the Mishnah, Abodah Zarah 4:3, there is a passage: "They do not say, 'Let us make a bath for Aphrodite', but 'Let us make an Aphrodite as an adornment for the bath.'" In other words, his retort underscored the fact that the bathhouse was not made as a temple for Aphrodite, but the statue of Aphrodite was made as an adornment for the bath. (BT Abodah Zarah, 44b). The ultimate concern was always the worshipping of the idol and not the setting, except where the physical surroundings had potential for idolatrous misuse. In this context, a story is told of Rabbah, a Babylonian teacher of the third century, who made a decision that a statue, if set in a large city for decorative purposes is permissible, but forbidden in a small village where its importance is magnified, and the populace might likely worship that image. (BT Abodah Zarah, 41a)¹⁰⁰ A sharp distinction always existed between purpose and function, that is, whether a statue represented a cult-image, or was set in a non-cultic environment and would therefore be considered ornamental.¹⁰¹

Not only is there reference in rabbinic literature as to how the rabbis interpreted the second commandment, but both Philo and Josephus make mention of the existence of the problem during the Second Temple period.

Josephus was committed to writing history in the manner of the Greek and Roman historians, directing his work to a Roman audience, and the resultant effect was a history greatly

conditioned by apologia. This is most obvious in his remarks regarding art. The episode of Herod erecting the golden eagle in the Temple, later to be torn down by 'radicals', is illustrative of his attitude.¹⁰² Josephus attributed this act of destroying the golden eagle to an insistence by Jews on the strict observance of the anti-iconic Second Commandment, rather than to hatred of Rome, which was inflamed by the prominence of the emblematic eagle. Since the eagle was not an image intended for idolatrous purposes, King Herod, when erecting it undoubtedly had the sanction of important religious authorities.¹⁰³ Goodenough relies heavily on Josephus and does not make allowances for his political biases.¹⁰⁴

Similarly Philo by imposing Platonic thought patterns on those existent in the Bible, ends up with writings of an apologetic nature as we have noted before.¹⁰⁵ His attitude towards art appears to agree with the anti-iconic attitude found in Biblical passages, but in actuality has echoed the Platonic concept of banning the 'amusement' and 'imitative' arts because they might arouse false emotion and passion. He was more concerned with Plato's ideal state, where representation of objects is unworthy for the earnest seeker of philosophic truth, than with the Temple cult of his own day, which was known far and wide for its artistically wrought appurtenances.¹⁰⁶

In his attitude toward art, Philo voiced the philosophic sentiments and aspirations of a highly select group, and in a similar manner, Josephus, as a sophisticated cosmopolite,

catered to Roman favour. However, the apologetics of both Philo and Josephus, regardless of their literary biases, still adhered to the principle of traditional interpretation and function as enunciated in the Second Commandment.

In summary, then, artistic expression abounded in Jewish life in the Second Temple period. The rise of Hellenism and the ensuing Greek polis changed the society from agriculturally based to a more urban existence. This brought with it a populace of artisans and merchants, and the Pentateuchal laws made for a society which was largely agricultural underwent a period of re-examination and re-interpretation.¹⁰⁷

5. Comments on Theory of Symbols

Symbolic interpretation is the very woof and warp upon which Goodenough rests his main hypothesis. Basic as is the psychological theory of the transfer of symbols to his work, it is not its viability that is being assessed here, even though some scholars have raised their doubts about the soundness of the theory.¹⁰⁸ Our criticism is levelled at the value assigned to each device, the conclusion about its significance, or the overestimation of its importance.

For instance, many of the symbols with which he deals in his study come from the burial places in Rome. There is certainly evidence that life after death was of deep concern for the Jews of Rome, as no doubt it was for other co-religionists at that time. It is very possible, moreover, that the abundance of menorahs or other Jewish emblems on the tomb may have signified an effort at that time to assure salvation. Granted this is a true picture, it is still a sweeping conclusion that fails to take account of the fact that 46% of the epitaphs from the Monteverde catacomb, and 62% from Via Appia show no symbols whatever.¹⁰⁹ For a people whose religious faith was supposedly directed to a life in the hereafter, there is very little in sepulchral inscriptions to indicate the importance of that belief. In fact, most inscriptions are limited simply to "peace" or "Shalom". Rarely does one find expression in their sepulchral inscriptions beyond some implied sort of continued existence with a standard formula "In peace be his (her) sleep", which appears on a large number of them.¹¹⁰

It is in the very assessment of these symbolic values that a difference of judgment arises. In interpreting Jewish symbols the menorah for instance, comes to represent light and hope of eternal life in the world to come. Goodenough even stretches this meaning to symbolize God Himself.¹¹¹ Granting the supreme importance of the menorah among symbols, it is noteworthy that on less than one-third of the inscriptions, the menorah appears. What becomes apparent in this case is the overimportance attached to the symbol of the menorah with universal meaning if frequency of its appearance is to be of significance.

There is an interesting discussion in BT Avobah Zarah 43b which sheds light on symbolic interpretation and illustrates the possibilities of the misreading of symbols. The sage Gamaliel had a chart with celestial signs, which in itself is suggestive of a violation of the second commandment. Yet it was proved permissible on the assumption that "When it is for the purpose of study, the matter is different . . . thou mayest learn in order to understand and teach." In other words, Gamaliel's employment of this symbol was in no way connected with worship. Wherever a zodiac appears in Goodenough's findings, he readily assumes it had meaning only for mystical purposes.¹¹² Thus the zodiac in the Beth Alpha synagogue unquestionably attests to the practices of mysticism in that congregation. "Helios and the chariot symbolizes", he states, "the divine charioteer of Hellenized Judaism, God himself."¹¹³

The above comparison serves as a clear example that the fundamentals of symbolic value are established by the attitude of the outside observer. Where are the measurements for objectivity?

In summary then, the differentiation as to what elements constitute magic and what components religion is not rigidly defined, and the line of distinction is difficult to determine. For Goodenough every higher religion has in it some component of magic, while for Malinowski, the categorical difference is emphasis on their function. For the latter, magic is to cause something to happen, whereas religion is a system of beliefs.¹¹⁴

For the historian of religion, dealing in symbolism is fraught with pitfalls. Theoretically he is attracted to the meaning of a religious phenomenon and to its history, trying to describe the situation as well as place it in its proper perspective. The question that arises is whether Goodenough can decipher in a "fact", the existential situation that serves as its cause, since the so-called "fact" for a historian of religion is conditioned by the historical moment and the cultural style of the epoch.¹¹⁵ On the function of the historian of religion, Eliade writes, "He is attracted to the meaning of a religious phenomenon and to its history; he tries to do justice to both and not to sacrifice either of them."¹¹⁶ Basing so much of his evidence on the theory of symbolic transference is tantamount to building on quicksand, especially where the very meaning of the symbol itself is open to question. "Depth psychology has taught us that the symbol delivers its message and fulfills its function even when its meaning escapes awareness."¹¹⁷ If the meaning of a symbol, the basic unit in the structure, cannot as yet be determined as having universal significance, it appears that the foundation of Goodenough's theory rests on "shifting sands".

In summing up, we conclude that Goodenough renders an injustice to local detail by grouping together so vast a geographical area. In the same way, he bracketed together the very sophisticated philosophy of Philo with folk elements of superstition and magic to constitute the binding faith of this mystic sect. He attempts to explain a large body of varied material by a single formula. As we have noted, he draws from an enormous variety of political and cultural divergencies, and singles out a specific anti-rabbinic sect.

NOTES - CHAPTER II

1. Encyclopedia Judaica Jerusalem, 1972 ed. s.v. "Philo"
2. Jean Daniélou, Philon d'Alexandrie, (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1957), p. 15.
3. *ibid*, cf. with Goodenough above p. 14.
4. G.F. Moore, Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, 2 vols. (New York: Schocken Books, 1971) vol. 1:214.
5. Samuel Belkin, Philo and the Oral Law, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), p. 25.
6. cf. Goodenough above p.14 on Philo's knowledge of Hebrew.
7. Encyclopedia Judaica s.v. "Philo"
8. H.A. Wolfson, Philo Judaeus, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), p. 88 ff.
9. Moore, 1:214, footnote 1.
10. *ibid*, p. 223.
11. Wolfson, Philo, 1:12-13.
12. J.S. 12:184.
13. Moore, 1:214.
14. Wolfson, 1:13-38.
15. *ibid*, p. 46.
16. This term is used synonymously because Goodenough bases this sect on the writings of Philo, see above p. 19.
17. Wolfson, 1:49.
18. *ibid*.
19. Encyclopedia Judaica, s.v. "Bible -- Allegorical Interpretations" also for etymology, Jastrow's Dictionary of Targumim, Bab. and Jer. Talmudim, Midrashic Literature.
20. Wolfson, 1:70.
21. *ibid*, p. 71.
22. *ibid*, p. 70.

23. Belkin, pp. 5-6.
24. *ibid*, p. 25.
25. Cf. with comment by A.D. Nock above in note 21 of Chapter 1.
26. Robert L. Wilken, Judaism and the Early Christian Mind, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 44.
27. Eusebius, Praeparatio Evangelii 81.10.18, underlining mine.
28. Samuel Sandmel, Philo's Place in Judaism, (New York: Ktav Publishing House Inc., 1971), p. 5.
29. *ibid*, p. 26.
30. *ibid*, p. 29.
31. Moore, 2:81.
32. Daniélou, p. 22.
33. *ibid*.
34. S.W. Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews, 19 vols., 2nd ed. (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1952), Vol. 1:177-8.
35. Daniélou, p. 23.
36. Wolfson, pp. 81-85 Tcherikover also mentions that the bearers of Hellenizing ideas were confined to the ruling aristocracy in Jerusalem. Victor Tcherikover, Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews, (New York: Atheneum, A Temple Book, 1970), p. 118.
37. Tcherikover, p. 118.
38. Josephus, Antiquities, XII: 228-230.
39. Tcherikover, p. 81.
40. *ibid*, p. 84.
41. *ibid*.
42. *ibid*, p. 185.
43. *ibid*, p. 184.
44. *ibid*, p. 116.

45. Compare the following:

Sanhedrin 10.1 (Mishnah)

All Israelites have a share in the world to come, for it is written, Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands that I may be glorified.

N.B. (nationalistic redemption)

Josephus

J.B. II : 163

Every soul, they [the Pharisees] maintain, is imperishable, but the soul of the good alone passes into another body, while the souls of the wicked suffer eternal punishment.

Josephus

J.B. III : 372-74

All of us, it is true, have mortal bodies, composed of perishable matter, but the soul lives forever, immortal . . . that their soul, remaining spotless and obedient . . . whence in the revolution of the ages, they return to find in chaste bodies a new habitation.

Plato

Phaedo, Phaedrus 7. (Modern Library p. 290)

Re-Incarnation of the Soul

There comes into my mind an ancient doctrine which affirms that they go from hence into the other world, and returning better, and born again from the dead.

The soul of a man may pass into the life of a beast, or from the beast return again into the man.

46. W.W. Tarn, Hellenistic Civilization, 3rd ed. revised by W.W. Tarn and G.I. Griffith, (London: E. Arnold, 1952), p. 227.
47. Tcherikover, p. 35.
48. *ibid*, p. 116.
49. Tarn, p. 226.
50. Jacob Neusner, There We Sat Down, (New York and Nashville, Abingdo Press, 1972), p. 27.
51. Baron, 1:185.
52. *ibid*.
53. Jacob Neusner, A History of the Jews in Babylonia, 5 vols. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966-70), vol. 1 : 10-11. cf. above p.20 where Goodenough assesses Greek as the language of the Jews.

54. See Jewish Encyclopedia s.v. "Babylonia" (Parthian Period, vol. 4:38-9)
 Hillel and Nahum "the Median" were Babylonian rabbis in Palestine. Judah b. Bathyra, Pharisaic authority was stationed in Nisbis, and was in charge of collecting and transmitting the contributions of the Jews of Mesopotamia to the Temple in Jerusalem. Nehemiah of Bet Deli lived in Nehardea and was originally a Palestinian Pharisee.
 Some students of Akiva went to Nisbis.
 Nathan, son of the Exilarch, was sent to Palestine to study with Akiva.
 Jews of Babylonia accepted the Jerusalem Calendar.
55. Rachel Wischnitzer, The Messianic Theme in the Paintings of Dura-Europos, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 5.
56. Malcolm A.R. Colledge, The Parthians, (New York: Praeger, 1967) On page 87, Colledge also makes mention of this close association.
57. Tarn, p. 220.
58. Goodenough, Philo Judaeus, pp. 52-55.
59. Tarn, p. 226.
60. Neusner, There We Sat Down, p. 114.
61. Moore, 1:109.
62. Neusner, There We Sat Down, p. 97.
63. *ibid*, p. 114.
64. *ibid*, p. 102.
65. *ibid*, p. 123.
66. Neusner, History in Babylonia, 3:244.
67. Neusner, There We Sat Down, p. 128.
68. Moore, 1:121.
69. Neusner, History in Babylonia, 1:161.
70. *ibid*, p. 158.
71. Neusner, There We Sat Down, p. 73.

72. As this paper is being written, there comes to notice an article in the New York Times, May 29th, 1973, p. 39, announcing the publication of a new work by Professor Morton Smith, who concluded that Jesus worked magic. It was for this reason that the Romans tried to stamp out the early Christians, because magic was a criminal act.

See also, Neusner, There We Sat Down, p. 80, where the author reports on a lecture of Morton Smith's concerning magic. Although politically a criminal offense, and for the Jews religiously limited by the dogma that there was no god except 'Adonai', some Jews, nonetheless, were famous as magicians. The more scrupulous of them, however, always attributed their marvels as performed by the power of the Supreme God.

73. Neusner, There We Sat Down, p. 79.
74. *ibid*, p. 81.
75. *ibid*, p. 85.
76. *ibid*, p. 108.
77. *ibid*, p. 102.
78. Saul Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine, (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1960), p. 119.
79. *ibid*, p. 118.
80. J.S. 12:20-21.
81. J.S. 12:58.
82. Lieberman, p. 119.
83. *ibid*, p. 120-1.
84. J.S. 12:61.
85. Joshua Trachtenberg, Jewish Magic and Superstition, A Study in Folk Religion, (New York: Atheneum, A Temple Book, 1970), p. 145.
86. *ibid*, p. 146.
87. Morton Smith, "Goodenough's Jewish Symbols in Retrospect", JBL 86, 1 (March 1967), p. 63.
88. *ibid*, p. 63, note 50.
89. Tarn, p. 353.

90. Bernard Goldman, The Sacred Portal, A Primary Symbol in Ancient Judaic Art, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966); p. 38.
91. Harry J. Leon, The Jews of Ancient Rome, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1960), p. 40.
92. Bronislaw Malinowski, Magic, Science and Religion, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1954), p. 88.
93. Elias J. Bickermann, "Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue", HTR 58, 1 (January 1965), p. 141.
94. Yadaim 4:6 (Mishnah).
95. Lieberman, pp. 118-9.
96. *ibid*, p. 127.
97. Lieberman deals with this interesting relationship and how idolatrous practices were accommodated by the rabbis in pp. 115-27, a chapter entitled "Rabbinic Polemics Against Idolatry."
98. Joseph Guttman, ed., The Dura Europos Synagogue: A Re-evaluation (1932-1972), (Missoula, Montana: American Academy of Religion, Society of Biblical Literature, 1973), Mary Lee Thompson, "Hypothetical Models of Dura Paintings", pp. 36-38.
99. These excerpted stories are from Neusner, History in Babylonia, 2:78.
100. Above two tales from Wischnitzer, Messianic Theme, pp. 9-10.
101. Carl H. Kraeling, The Synagogue, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), p. 344.
102. Josephus, Jewish Wars, 1:650-55.
103. Joseph Guttman, ed., No Graven Images, Studies in Art and the Hebrew Bible; (New York: Ktav Publishing House Inc., 1971), J. Guttman, "The 'Second Commandment' and the Image in Judaism", pp. 12-13.
104. J.S. 12:28.
105. See above p.33ff dealing with how Philo adapts Biblical concepts in accordance with Plato's philosophy.
106. Guttman, Images, p. 13.

107. *ibid.*, p. 10.
108. See below, Conclusions p.103 regarding comments of Morton Smith JBL 86, (March, 1967), p. 55 ff.
109. Leon, Jews of Rome, p. 227.
110. *ibid.*, p. 248.
111. J.S. 4:96.
112. For a fuller discussion, see J.S. 8:201, 214 ff.
113. Goldman, Sacred Portal, p. 64.
In this connection, Avi Yonah mentions the excavation of the synagogue at Hammath Tiberias with signs of the Zodiac, and Apollo-Herlios appearing in the center riding his chariot. "Yet among the dedicants is one who describes himself as the trephos of the most illustrious patriarchs, at the time residing at Tiberias, only a mile away." He questions whether the patriarchs, the heads of rabbinical Jewry could be at the same time unorthodox 'mystics'. Avi-Yonah in Dura-Europos Synagogue, ed. Guttman, p. 132.
114. See Malinowski, Magic and Religion, pp. 87-90 for a full treatment of this subject and its origin in primitive society.
115. See Mircea Eliade, "Methodological Remarks on the Study of Religious Symbolism" in The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology, ed. by Eliade and Kitagawa, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959, p. 87.
116. *ibid.*, p. 88.
117. *ibid.*, p. 106.
For a further discussion see pp. 98-102.

CHAPTER III

DURA ART

1. Goodenough's Symbols as Part of the Larger Part of Art History

Goodenough has a specialized way of looking at the art of the Dura Europos Synagogue, and this he discusses in the last three volumes of his work. He does not concern himself with the broader aspects of art history but devotes his attention to the symbolic and iconographic components of the pictures. In interpreting the paintings, he is looking particularly for the symbols that he has already isolated in the early part of his work, and then searches for parallels in pagan and Christian environments. "The only such vantage point [for examining the pictures] I know is still in the history of art, in the history of the symbolic conventions used in the paintings, and in the way in which the decorations on the walls were planned to go together."¹

As in the former chapters, our criticism of Goodenough is not with his search for the symbols, nor his erudite manner with which on the whole he presents his findings; rather it is that in selecting his information for a special perspective, he purposely omits some very relevant scholarship. When he approaches the art of Dura, he goes directly to the study of iconography and symbolism. He starts from the premise that the paintings at Dura, "through allegorized biblical incidents, expressed in Jewish terms" contains "ideas similar to those expressed by the pagan symbols."² In his

circular method of working, his conclusions are already contained in the basic premise. " . . . we are here dealing with Jews who felt that they needed precisely these figures to express values they found in, or projected into, their Judaism. On no other basis does it seem possible to explain the wide use of these symbols, the kind of symbols selected from paganism, and the places they were used."³

It would seem, then, that Goodenough's appreciation of art history is limited to the history of symbolic conventions, but a serious study of art encompasses many more disciplines. He admits that historians of art are concerned with other developments in technique, style, and compositions of paintings, as well as origin.⁴ The purpose for Goodenough, it seems, is not to discuss the art of Dura in its historical aspect, and explore the possibilities of meaning, but, rather, his intention is to isolate and discuss the symbolism of the paintings that would be compatible with his theory. His taking this position brings about the question whether such biased manipulation can do full justice to the basic intention of the art. Goodenough makes a special plea that when viewing the pictures the approach ought to be made with a "tabula rasa ready for any impressions."⁵ Yet, by setting his own special limitations, it makes us critical that his methodology is not universally applicable but unbalanced in favour of Goodenough. Carl Kraeling, who wrote the final report on the excavations of the synagogue, warns against "the attempt to exploit the material for the benefit of extraneous hypotheses."⁶

There was indeed a tremendous international hybrid culture in Hellenistic times. This was a result of a compromise between national cultures, mainly Greek and Oriental, as well as between social classes, with a rising proletariat, and an ever-increasing concentration of capital.⁷ Arnold Hauser claims that prior to this Hellenistic development, the traditional form of art was that of the classic Greek, which was identified by being largely ceremonial in character. In this classic art, the predominantly individual figure very often represented not a specific person, but rather an abstract idea of timeless reality.⁸ Hauser further states that the Hellenistic style which began as a matter of copying classic Greek sculpture, gave way to a genre known as Roman art, with painting foremost as the medium of expression.

Painting is the popular art of the Romans, speaking to all in a language they understood. In late Roman and early Christian art painting was the art par excellence, and used for didactic and propagandistic purposes.⁹ For the most part this Roman style was illustrative, epic and dramatic. The main purpose was to relate a story, and Hauser likens the use of these paintings to that of the modern motion film.¹⁰ The paintings at Pompeii and Dura remain for art critics the best examples today of this type of Roman painting. Many of these pictures were set in scenes, with the intention of conveying the continuity of the event.¹¹ Hauser terms this method, the depiction of successive scenes, as "continuous", with its aim to bring out the action of the subject. This he contrasts to "isolating", which is the opposite, -- art which renders the instant impression.

Kraeling uses the same distinction in analysing the pictures at Dura, and states that setting and function are the determining factors.¹² From the remains, we can see that there were four large walls completely covered with a number of large impressive scenes of action. The overall effect is precisely that of being "impressive, epic, and dramatic." For most scholars the juxtaposition of the paintings strongly suggest some thematic pattern, and most hold to the idea of a time-sequence, and the evidence of a story being unfolded.¹³

It is Goodenough's contention that the biblical scenes were not representational but, rather, only allegorical, and that the inspiration was derived from the Greek-speaking west, and not from Aramaic and Hebrew speaking Babylonia.¹⁴ He further maintains that the artist borrowed much from the surrounding art -- tree-vine, banqueting couch, zodiac, white and black horsemen, etc. "The Greek conventions which the artists used to represent the biblical texts indicated that the texts were being read with a Greek mystical understanding."¹⁵ Kraeling, on the other hand, assumes the artists used pattern books, and traditional iconographic and stylistic elements to provide the visual details they required.¹⁶ If the possibility exists that the outward forms of art were borrowed from the wealth of stock art conventions, the claim that they have identical meaning when used in different circumstances is debatable.

At Dura we see hellenistic motifs mingled with Iranian costume and traditional forms.¹⁷ We accept that this mixture in art conventions reflect a mingling of ideas.¹⁸ It is the extent

of the domination of foreign ideas upon Judaism that is questioned. According to Goodenough, the religious beliefs of the congregation at Dura were an Iranian-Hellenistic Judaism, and it is the same Judaism as that of the Jews of the west, who thought along the lines that Philo indicated. With all these cultural and religious forces exerting their local influence, we wonder what countervailing powers kept the Jews together as an identifiable group. In other words, if outside influences were so powerful as Goodenough indicates by his selection of symbols and their use in the Dura paintings, how did rabbinic Judaism maintain its position at all?

A possible answer to the question is Wischnitzer's belief that the material evidence of artistic creativity we find in Jewish houses of worship as well as burial places, is a reflection of a changing viewpoint. The paintings of the synagogue at Dura are evidence of a relaxation of the ancient Deuteronomic prohibitions, reflecting new attitudes regarding artistic endeavour.¹⁹ She points out that in these Hellenistic times, art was dissociating itself from mythology, as well as freeing itself from shrines. Portrait landscape, idyllic animal scenes, topics of current history and of political events became increasingly important.²⁰ Her opinion of the function of art in the 3rd century C.E. is in accord with Hauser's described above. "An art which much less, or no longer, was dedicated to glorifying heathen cults could not possibly be attacked with the intransigence of ancient biblical prophets."²¹ It was during Hellenistic times that art was taken out of the pagan shrines and holy places and enjoyed a larger function, particularly in urban centres like Rome, Alexandria and Antioch. This development inevitably influenced the Jewish point of view with a new understanding of the Second Commandment.²²

2. The Dura Synagogue

History of the Jewish Community

The last three volumes of Goodenough's magnum opus are devoted to the art of Dura, which he presents as the ultimate "proof" of his basic thesis. When the synagogue of Dura Europos was excavated in 1923, the uncovering of the painted frescoes decorating a place of worship forced traditional attitudes into a re-evaluation.²³ Further search into the period, place and people of Dura for some clues explaining this unexpected manifestation now became mandatory.

The Jews of Dura originally formed a poor humble community living in a caravan tour stop on the Euphrates. The city grew in size and wealth as it became an expanding military post, and it is thought that the Jewish community developed accordingly as purveyors to the expanding army requirements.²⁴ There is reason to believe that this real growth and expansion appeared in the few years just before the whole community was destroyed in 256 C.E. with the victory of the Persians. Many of the later newcomers to this provincial town must have moved in from Edessa and Nisibis where they had closer contact with sophisticated Hellenistic civilization, and brought the influences of the dominant culture into the small remote Jewish community.²⁵ The community enjoyed the possession and use of its newly decorated house of assembly only for a brief period with the irony that the last and most elaborate stage of the synagogue was being built on newly acquired wealth just when the Romans were losing battle.

However, the elaborate art and archeological remains that give the impression of assimilation to the surrounding society, or at least a larger measure of Jewish outreach toward contemporary culture, are for Kraeling significant of just the opposite. The development of Judaism during the first centuries of the Common Era, when Rome was holding sway, has always been regarded by most historians of this period as turning away from the outside world and backing itself into a corner, more concerned with the vast body of tradition and learning of its scholars. Yet it is in this period that we have the most elaborate monuments of Jewish architecture and art.²⁶ Kraeling regards this phenomenon not as indicative of assimilation of faith but as a result of greater economic competence and communal strength. Being more self-confident of its religious foundations, art was being employed as a further expression of the importance of Jewish religious observance.²⁷ In essence, Greek art impressed more than Greek philosophy.²⁸ At the time of Dura, then, the Jews may have outwardly become wealthier and urbanized, but Roman restrictions tended to halt their expansive religious relations to their social environment. This was brought about after considerable proselytizing on the part of the Jews, which was threatening. Philonic theology, based as it was on Greek philosophy, and mysticism were disappearing from the sphere of interest.²⁹ The forces in operation are the restrictions of Judaism to its own religious beliefs, and at the same time the freedom to use art to depict the basis of this faith. As we have noted above, Wischnitzer regards the paintings of the Dura synagogue as a manifestation of this growing sense of freedom of artistic expression in the whole Jewish world.³⁰

It is in this setting, therefore, that Kraeling believes that those who commissioned the paintings at Dura had an intense and well informed devotion to the established traditions of Judaism.³¹ What is more, this art served to reinforce observance of the law and traditional practices for a community living in a strongly competitive religious environment and exposed political position.³² Other documents of this period greatly support the evidence that Jews participated in local, political and economic life, and had absorbed an intense knowledge of the surrounding culture.³³ Whether this social intercourse was co-operative or competitive has not yet been established.

Art Interpretation

Before attempting to give meaning to the art of Dura, the very basis for some broad measure of identification must be secured. Kraeling, who wrote the final report of the excavation of the Dura synagogue, accepts the working hypothesis of two traditions in ancient Jewish art.³⁴ Interpreting the pictures, he follows a similar classification to Hauser's. He terms one "narrative" and the other "symbolic". He believes that at Dura these two traditions are employed, with the determining factor being setting and function.³⁵

The placing of the Akedah scene is a fine example to show what distinguishes the "narrative" (or what Hauser calls "continuous") from the "symbolic" (equivalent to Hauser's "isolating"). On the wall space above the Torah niche there is a menorah, lulov and ethrog, a facade of temple entrance, as well as the scene of Abraham offering Isaac.³⁶ This seems like an odd arrangement.

However, when a scene appears separately as it does here, it may be symbolic, taking the place of another cult object, a shofar, or as in the case of the Akedah which is all by itself in the Beth Alpha mosaics, it may represent a concept, divine forgiveness. By contrast, when scenes appear in large cycles, they usually represent the traditional way of illustrating a narrative tale. This assumption is based upon the similarity to manuscript decoration, from which these frescoes could have developed: In the manuscript tradition, the relationship between the scenes was formed by the sequence of historic events.³⁷ Accordingly, the Akedah scene above the Torah shrine, while telling a story in a time sequence, is used in this case symbolically, most likely representing the shofar amongst other simple cult objects. Hence, while the subject matter is narrative, its function is symbolic.³⁸

The study of the four individual figures shown in the Wing Panels above the Torah Shrine on the West Wall furnishes us with another example of scholarly disagreement on interpretation -- whether narrative or symbolic. For Kraeling, although each picture has a large central individual figure, these are still associated with enough detail in background setting to identify the story being told. In his opinion, the individual figure does not represent a single concept or conjure up a specific idea.³⁹

It is not only the large scenes that are open to differing meanings, in considering a single item like the vine trellis, there exists an interpretative variance. Goodenough assigns importance to the symbolic value of the grapevine-wine, while for

Kraeling the vine trellis is merely an accepted art convention in wall decoration. It simply functions as a frame to delineate spatial limitation, creating the illusion of distant prospects and open vistas.⁴⁰

It then becomes apparent, when looked at from Kraeling's point of view, that the style used points to a close following of Biblical narrative.⁴¹ Analytical approach to the background treatment, the setting of the scene so to speak, indicates that the artist paid attention to significant detail in an effort to illustrate salient facts of historical tale.⁴² "Our conclusion has been that the body of the register compositions is in fact not symbolic or allegorical but narrative and historical in interest."⁴³ This impression is further substantiated by the cumulative effect of the narrative sequence from the Promise to its fulfilment in the days of the Messianic King.⁴⁴

If the supposition that the decorations are narrative is accepted, it may be assumed that the "substance of the faith for that congregation can best be understood by a record of events that gives testimony to that faith."⁴⁵ It also appears that such a selection of themes must have been closely associated with the religious life and observance of the Judaism of the Bible and Mishnah.⁴⁶ Moreover, the size and importance of the panel on the north wall, representing Ezekiel 37 and 38, points to a messianic interest in the national redemption in the land of Israel.

For Rachel Wischnitzer, it is precisely this theme that unifies all the frescoes into one continuous narrative. The organizing formative factor in the iconography of the synagogue

paintings is the messianic concept which pervades the rabbinical literature of Palestine and Babylonia.⁴⁷ Evidence of rabbinical exegesis is substantiated in many of the scenes and particular details in the synagogue decorations.⁴⁸

Not only the details of the paintings but the very juxtaposition of the panels indicate this messianic theme is being underscored.⁴⁹ Rabbinical circles gave Moses his place in the salvation plan, and this is attested by the schematic placement of the Biblical scenes. The west wall contains scenes of the birth of Moses, his leading Israel out of Egypt, temple sacrifice of Moses and Aaron, as well as what is taken for divine intervention in the Purim drama.⁵⁰ In addition, the sacrifice of Isaac was associated in ancient tradition with the site of the Temple to be reconstructed and this connection too is demonstrated in the general layout of the scenes in the frescoes.⁵¹ "Thus, tradition, general Jewish and regional beliefs, appear blended together in the Messianic cycle of the synagogue."⁵² The connecting ideas between the reconstruction of the temple and the prominent treatment of Moses was also noted by Neusner as a special theme of rabbinic eschatology.⁵³ The stories in the Bible of the early years of Moses, and the salvation of Israel were important texts for the Babylonian Jewry of this time.⁵⁴

In actuality, there is no single method with which to compare the interpretations of the foregoing scholars with Goodenough because where the former used a "wide-angle lens", Goodenough zeroes in on a narrow focal point. In discussing his

methodology above, we noted that he does not seek out any background evidence that might offer compatible source material for understanding the frescoes. Indeed, just the complete opposite: he concentrates solely on the details of the pictures, and from this special angle of vision gives meaning to the whole by piecing together particular items. Moreover, by seeking resemblances, either exact or dubious, to other designs appearing on archeological remains, he backs up his argument for their similarity. Yet upon close examination many of these likenesses seem contrived, and worked over. Hence there is no narrative continuity for Goodenough. The stories of Moses and Ezekiel have no ideational (in this case messianic) connection whatever.⁵⁵ It is the mystic symbolism, extracted and accumulated from Philo's writings, rather than the juxtaposition of the scenes, that he employs as a measuring rod in evaluating the paintings.

In this context it is important to note that aside from Jacob's dream, only the west wall of the synagogue contains scenes from the Pentateuch. And yet Philo's allegories are based solely on these five books. There is no trace of the creation story nor of any Biblical passages before the sacrifice of Isaac, portions of the Bible to which Philo paid major attention. Albeit, this major discrepancy is of no hindrance to Goodenough and he assumes the artists continued to use the same symbolic vocabulary, and the interpreter can presume the same sort of allegorization of Biblical incidents on the other walls.⁵⁶

Philo was allegorical and although rabbinic sources were similarly inclined, the difference is of crucial importance. The Midrash with which the rabbis expounded was always based on the Tanach as a chronicle of history. For Goodenough, however, the pictorial message on the remaining frescoes all is meaningful only in terms of Philonic allegory, and the details are symbolic of the prevailing mysticism of the area.⁵⁷ The theme of the synagogue, as he understands it, is the power and glory of Judaism, but not that historical aspect as understood by the rabbis. Hence, in Goodenough's understanding the artists chose not to represent but to allegorize.⁵⁸ The difference in interpretation between "narrative-continuous" and "symbolic-isolating" can be best discerned by a closer study of different approaches. This distinction is highlighted by considering only three of the many divergent points.

Numerology:

When Goodenough looks at a painting, his eye selects items in terms of numbers. In this way, his analysis of a picture is not the primary impression of the eye, but rather determined selection of numerical groupings. -- 7 branches of the menorah with Aaron on one Temple, and the 7 walls in the closed Temple. In the scene of Samuel anointing David, that which the 'unskilled' eye might have overlooked in the whole design, Goodenough draws our attention to the fact that there are 7 men (6 hieratical figures and Samuel). In the pictorial drama of the Philistines and the Ark, the significance of the low railing bars has

importance and value as marking off 7 spaces. As for the men walking beside the ark, the question is not who or what they are, but rather that they number 3. In the panel containing the Esther story, the 4 men represent heavenly intervention.⁵⁹

In his discussion of three drawings of the ark (by de Mesnil), Goodenough notes that there are 8 panels on the doors of the first but makes no comment. The second one has 6 panels, which he notes are two sets of the mystic number 3, and it also has 3 laurel wreaths, which supports his theory. Whereas since the drawing of the third ark has only two laurel wreaths, there is no mention made of this fact.⁶⁰ "This way lies madness, my readers, may well cry" is his own admission about this involved discussion.⁶¹ We would agree that there was a tradition of number mysticism from the pythagoreans as well as Mesopotamian astrology, but some of Goodenough's search into numerology seems desperately contrived.

It is in this way that we see the very special attention paid to the pictorial art. It is not the balance of design, colour or figure interpretation that is used as an artistic gauge, but an assessment based on division of lines, spaces, persons, articles into groups of 3, 5, 7(4 3), 10(5 5) -- all the mystic numbers. Even if this is a valid way to analyse his picture, according to his own set premise, the question still remains whether the artist consciously chose these numbers, or a matter of balance of design.

Clothing:

Another focus for attention is the great significance given to the detail of clothing.⁶² In keeping with his general hypothesis of symbolic transference, it follows that costume and dress which were used in a specific context in pagan and Christian art had similar value for Jewish art.⁶³ Kraeling, on the other hand, believes that clothing had little significance for mystic interpretation, as they were probably copies of Greek statuary or else portrayed the type of robes officials wore. Dress could have been that of the local populace or could have been copies from works of art imported or fashioned by imported artists in honour of distinguished citizens of the Greek cities of the Orient.⁶⁴ Distinction about dress, then, could possibly indicate social status, with long gowns for patriarchs and men of distinction; tunic and trousers for kings; and less elaborate outfits for common people.⁶⁵

The important question remains for the art historian is whether these types were handled according to patterns of style or whether their dress had any symbolic meaning. It must also be determined whether the same treatment is homogeneous throughout or differs with the different models.⁶⁶ It is very possible that the artists drew their inspiration for dress from the surrounding mixed population.⁶⁷ As we have noted above, the Jewish community greatly participated in the local political and economic life, and most likely wore Parthian dress like their neighbours.⁶⁸

Figures:

Further illustration of the interpretative values of different scholars is how they regard isolated figures that appear in the decorations. For Goodenough, many of the figures are not a real historical character, but merely the personification of mystic allegory. "We have seen Elijah, Samuel and Jacob in great prominence as mystic leaders and shall see others on the side walls, so that the 'philosophers' of the synagogue, like Philo, used almost interchangeably any of the incidents of great personalities of the Bible for mystic allegory."⁶⁹ Other scholars look at the figures, particularly those four in the Wing Panels, and identify them by the background setting, which illustrates the historical circumstances.⁷⁰ For Goodenough, they are all different portraits of Moses, whereas for Kraeling, two are different stories of Moses, while the others are Ezra and Abraham.⁷¹ If one accepts the argument that the art of Dura is historical and narrative, the figures are then seen as representing characters in action. They cannot be mystic and symbolic images whose individual characteristics are subsumed in transcendence.

Goldman too asserts that the artists had a keen interest for narration since they showed such vigor and clarity in delineating the figures. He suggested that they must have used common formats for costume design which were standard for that type of dress. These patterns for choice of costumes formed stock units. However they were re-adapted, the results were visual cliches and idiomatic expression that made any new arrangement look so familiar.⁷²

Differing Points of View on Detail

Of course, concern with details in the picture is valid, whether one disagrees with the selection, or even if in accord with Goodenough's special purposes. However, the choice of dissimilar grounds for evidence to substantiate these points of relevance, illustrate the decisive difference in interpretation. Where some scholars may consider Jewish material for documentation of a scheme, Goodenough consistently turns toward pagan in Christian sources for confirmation of his analysis. By the following scheme of comparing the same issue, the particular biases of Goodenough's methodology become exposed.

1. Completely Ignores Jewish Sources Esther and Mordechai - WC 2

In this scene Esther is portrayed with a crown on her head. There is a description of a headdress from ancient times that fits this visual image -- being a turretted crown, similar to the walls around a city. Consequently this expensive headdress was known as a 'city of gold' ^{אֶרֶץ זָהָב} and in rabbinic Aramaic ^{אֶרֶץ זָהָב} .73 This luxurious article of jewellery was worn by women of wealth or high status. There is also reference to this crown in Hittite as well as in Greek and Roman sources and texts from Ugarit mention that queens of that country were known to wear such adornment on their heads.74

Goodenough, however, notes that Esther wears a golden mural crown commonly associated with Tyche, and mentions that this turreted crown was part of the dress on heads of gods, goddesses and royalty.⁷⁵ He relates it chiefly to the crown worn by Atargatis-Astarte, paredros of Adonis, also seen on Gê, and was noted on a coin of Alagabalus of Bostra where it was worn by the Tyche of the city.⁷⁶

Although this ornamental headdress, known as a 'Jerusalem of Gold' is attested to in several Jewish sources, Goodenough is chiefly concerned to relate this mural crown to that of Tyche. It seems a gross negligence on the part of serious scholarship to overlook important texts. The overwhelming evidence that he amasses for Latin and Greek sources at the expense of this serious omission depreciates the value of the argument.

2. Where Agreement on Rabbinic Sources, Dismisses its Importance
Elijah and the Prophets of Baal SC 3

The acceptance of the main figure in this panel as being that of Elijah is agreed upon by all the major scholars. The picture showing a figure about to light a fire on an altar, under which there is a snake, has been established as that of Hiel.⁷⁷ Kraeling cites this as a test case that indicates the artists' reliance on known folk-tales of the rabbis for their inspiration. This pictorial interpretation stands out as the clearest and most vivid manifestation of the existence of a living popular heritage.⁷⁸

Goodenough acknowledges the possibility of a rabbinic basis, but then ignores its possible significance. He emphasizes instead the prominent stance of eight men in Greek robe, the importance of dress, and then dwells at length on the history of snake mythology.⁷⁹

3. Where Existing Literary Texts Counter Hypothesis, Postulate Lost Document
Exodus From Egypt WA 3.

The Israelites in this picture are portrayed going out of Egypt with battle armament of various shields and helmets, bows, and arrows. Ex 13:18 "And the children of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt." The crucial word is *peph*, and for this the LXX reads "to the fifth generation." Jewish Hellenistic writers deplored the utter defenselessness of the departing Israelites, there being no reference to their being provided with weapons in the Septuagint, nor in non-Jewish Hellenistic sources. However, "armed Israelites" turns up in various forms in rabbinic tradition.⁸⁰ Hence, this is for Kraeling an indisputable example that the artists' information rested on passages of ancient authority.⁸¹

It is characteristic of Goodenough to acknowledge opposing viewpoints, but the following retort hardly merits scholarly consideration. "Since some lost thoroughly hellenized literary document might have mentioned the arms of the Israelites, this single detail no more offers a 'test case' which established the

painting's rabbinical background for everything than does the presence of Ares (though a more startling variant) make the painting purely hellenistic." [underlining mine]⁸²

4. Where Image Differs from Both Pentateuch and Philo; Ignores Birth of Moses WC 4

In the scene of the birth of Moses there is a young girl in the water holding a baby with outstretched arm, although the writings in the Pentateuch and Philo show no reason for such a rendition. In the scene of Pharaoh's daughter retrieving Moses from the ark, a reading of Exodus 2:5, Philo and the LXX, as well as Josephus, would require that the act be performed by others.

וַיִּשְׁלַח יְהוָה אֱמֶתֶת אֵל פַּרְעֹה וְהִיא שֵׁלְחָה אֵת יָדָהּ וְלָקְחָה אֶת הַיֶּלֶד וְהִיא שֵׁלְחָה אֵת יָדָהּ וְלָקְחָה אֶת הַיֶּלֶד. "...she sent her handmaid to fetch it."

Targum Onkelos and the Hellenistic author Ezekiel read that she stretched out her own arm to grasp the baby.⁸³

However, there is a second century midrash, referred to in BT. Sotah 12b indicating that the rabbis were already at this time disputing the reading of this phrase. Some regarded it to mean that "she stretched out her arm", as is shown in the picture. This serves as evidence that the artists who drew the portrayal are in accordance with rabbinic tradition and the Targum, and that they must have known about this version of the story.

Once more, Goodenough does not recognize any connection with other Jewish source material. His single-viewed approach loses force by the omission of this evidence from rabbinic

literature. Instead he treats the whole episode in the category of the birth of "Miracle Babies" in Roman and Greek mythology, and from the mythological viewpoint. For him, the woman who finds the baby is the goddess Anahita, the most popular deity of Iran during the Sassanian period.⁸⁴

5. Emphasizes Detail Out of Proportion to the Whole
Birth of Moses WC 4

Goodenough derives his view of Moses primarily as a mystagogue from Philo in Vita Mosis. Accordingly, the description of his exceptional birth is placed under "Miracle Babies", and it follows that the picture of the nude girl in the water then takes on special significance. The delineation of her pudendum is to indicate that she is indeed Anahita-Aphrodite-Venus, the goddess of love. The other detail that he magnifies in importance is her being jewelled with a necklace, which often appears on the images of Anahita.⁸⁵

We would agree with Bickermann's remark that neither Jewish nor Christian art excluded nudity when it was required by the theme, and that in ancient art it was common for goddesses to wear the same jewellery as their votaries. There may be an obvious reason, he observes, for the artistic rendition -- she is naked because she is in the water, "at the river's bank" (Ex. 2:3)⁸⁶

6. Builds Argument on Dubious Artistic Rendition
Moses and the Rod of Heracles . WA 3

Although Goodenough admits that the ideas expressed at Dura were planned by 'philosophers', the craftsmen who executed the traditional forms and designs were clearly unskilled.⁸⁷ It is possible that what was found in the synagogue was an inferior provincial representation of what might have been a great Jewish tradition of Biblical art. Having taken this position, he then substantiates his theory of the great mythical character of Moses from this picture and maintains that his rod is definitely shown as the knotted club of Heracles. "There can be no doubt, however," he writes, "that this identification of Moses' rod with the club of Theseus and Heracles was intentional, and so strange an identification seems to indicate that Moses was the Jewish Theseus-Heracles, or that the miracle in opening and closing the Red Sea was comparable to their labors."⁸⁸

In actuality there are three pictures of Moses -- what he held in one case being a thin line, another a smudge of indefinite width, and further along on the panel an outline of what may well have been intended as a rod or wand.⁸⁹ There is also a portrait of Moses at the Well of the Wilderness, which he does not mention in this discussion. Here the loose manner with which the hand holds the rod, and the arrow at the end suggests a pointer. In any case, the identification with a knotted club is a great stretch of the imagination. To connect this with other pictures of rods, sticks, wands, and staffs, such as he does in figs. 272, 273 and 276 in volume XI is a visual experience similar to the finding

psychological Rorschach test. To look for positive evidence in these early paintings it must be ascertained how successfully the craftsmanship carried out the intention of the art.

The artistic style of the Dura synagogue has much in common with early Christian art of this period. The pictures of the catacombs, as an example, were entirely works of simple artisans and amateurs, whose qualification consisted in their religious zeal rather than any positive talent.⁹⁰ There is always the possibility of a gap between the artist's intention and his power of execution. The noted art historian, Arnold Hauser, warns those scholars who are determined to find the metaphysical world-view of the Middle Ages in the earliest Christian art of looking too hard. He cautions them about the absurdity of interpreting all the obvious defects in early art as against classical art as being simply due to conscious and deliberate choice.⁹¹

In summary, then, we note that in dealing with the question of the art of Dura, Goodenough's methodology of focusing on details rather than on the wider aspects of art history sets up conditions for a possible distortion in interpreting the paintings. One of the important concerns of the art historian in the Hellenistic era is the changing function of art. During this time, art ceased to be used for purposes of mythological worship as in former years and was harnessed for reasons of practical didactic service.

The history of the Dura community was that of rapid development from a small isolated caravan town in Babylonia to a large wealthy community. The immigrants into Dura from the larger

Hellenistic centers, who brought in the influence of the dominant cultures, came in this period of growing prosperity just before the destruction of the city in 245 C.E. This raises the question of whether the material remains found in Jewish milieu, similar to those of the surrounding pagan culture, reflect an assimilation of religious ideas, or merely an expression of material wealth employed for the positive expression of their developing faith.

In a discussion of art, the procedure of analysis demands a criterion of judgment. The hypothesis which distinguishes paintings that are in sequence, relating a continuous narrative, from those that evoke an instant isolated concept or spiritual experience, proves valuable in approaching the murals of the Dura synagogue. The consensus of most scholars is that there is a scheme to the placement of the pictures. The evidence for a theme of messianism with a revival of national life in Israel stands in contrast to Goodenough's interpretation of the paintings being an expression of hope for personal salvation with ritual enactments by a mystic sect that constituted the congregation at Dura. This proposal is based on the significance of detail in the area of numerology, clothing and the isolation of the individual figure. The former analytical method is complimented by a descriptive examination of the paintings, highlighting details in the paintings suggesting possibilities of being symbolic. Pagan and Christian sources, rather than rabbinic, furnish the proof of endorsement. The unevenness of the artistic rendition leaves open the possibility of reading too much into visual impression, which may or may not have been successful copies of stock models.

NOTES - CHAPTER III

1. Jewish Symbols 9:16.
2. ibid.
3. ibid, p. 17.
4. J.S. 10:197.
5. ibid.
6. Carl H. Kraeling, The Synagogue, Final Report VIII, Part I, The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956), p. 340.
7. Arnold Hauser, The Social History of Art, 4 vols., (New York: Random House, Vintage Books), p. 101.
8. ibid, p. 110.
9. ibid, p. 109.
10. ibid, p. 110.
11. Hauser, commenting on Roman art, likens the scenic pictures as pages out of a picture book for adults. . . "Sometimes as in the case of the climbing spirals of Trajan's Column, an 'unrolling picture book' . . ." See Hauser, p. 110.
12. Kraeling, p. 362.
13. ibid, p. 347.
14. J.S. 9:18 and 9:17.
15. J.S. 10:208.
16. Kraeling, p. 380.
17. J.S. 10:200.
18. ibid, 208-9.
19. Rachel Wischnitzer, The Messianic Theme in the Paintings of Dura-Europos, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 8.

20. *ibid*, p. 8!
21. *ibid*.
22. *ibid*.
23. The Synagogue at Dura Europos was excavated during the winter campaigns of 1932-33, 1933-34, and 1934-35 by an expedition of Yale University and the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres under the supervision of Professor Clark Hopkins, Professor M.I. Rostovtzeff, and Count de Mesnil du Buisson.
24. Kraeling, p. 334.
25. *ibid*, p. 335.
26. *ibid*, p. 325.
27. See before p. 76 where art as an expression of a new social status is discussed.
28. Salo W. Baron, A Religious and Social History of the Jews, 15 vols., 2nd ed. (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1952), vol. 1, p. 209.
29. Kraeling, p. 324.
30. Wischnitzer, p. 11.
31. Kraeling, p. 325.
32. *ibid*, p. 335.
33. Jacob Neusner, "Judaism at Dura Europos", History of Religions, 4, 1, (1964), pp. 81-102, see p. 95 ff.
34. Kraeling, p. 362.
35. *ibid*.
36. See J.S. 11, plate I, West Wall
37. Kraeling, p. 363.
38. *ibid*, p. 362.
See as well Joseph Guttman, "Programmatic Painting in the Dura Synagogue", in The Dura Europos Synagogue: A Re-examination (1932-1972), ed. J. Guttman, by American Academy of Religion (Missoula, Montana, 1973). Here he deals with other analyses and patterns of meaning of these wall paintings.

39. Kraeling, p. 400.
40. *ibid*, p. 367.
41. *ibid*, p. 368.
42. *ibid*, p. 369-70.
43. *ibid*, p. 362.
44. *ibid*, p. 363.
45. *ibid*, p. 349.
46. *ibid*, p. 357.
47. Mischnitzer, p. 100.
48. *ibid*, p. 30 and p. 90.
49. *ibid*, p. 48.
50. J.S. 10:137-8.
51. Mischnitzer, p. 88.
52. *ibid*, p. 52.
53. Jacob Neusner, A History of the Jews in Babylonia, 5 vols.
(Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966-70), vol. 1, p. 194.
54. *ibid*, vol. 1, p. 59.
55. J.S. 10:143.
56. J.S. 10:206.
57. *ibid*.
58. *ibid*.
59. For a fuller discussion see J.S. 10:62-70, 81, 158 ff and
J.S. 9:194-5.
60. J.S. 10:84.
61. J.S. 10:64.
62. J.S. 9:165 ff.
63. See below p. 25 on the theory of symbolic transference.

64. Kraeling, p. 372.
65. Wischnitzer, p. 31.
66. Kraeling, p. 373.
67. Concerning dress and how one scholar's opinion is that garb simply indicates profession, see Bernard Goldman, "Dura Costumes and Parthian Art", in The D - E Synagogue Re-Evaluation, ed. J. Guttmann, p. 67. Goldman holds that the figures are clothed with classical robes to signify them as teachers. The frontal position and attitudes mark them as preceptors, regardless of their identity. Goodenough, by contrast, assigns hieratical status to the white garb.
68. See Neusner, "Judaism at Dura", p. 96.
69. J.S. -10:137.
70. Kraeling, p. 400.
71. *ibid*, p. 227 ff.
72. See Goldman article, pp. 71-2, in D-E Synagogue, ed. Guttmann.
73. S.M. Paul, "Jerusalem -- A City of Gold," IEJ, 17, 3 (1967), pp. 259-263. Mention is made in the Talmud of this mural crown in TB Shabbot 59a - 59b and TB Nedarim 50a. Midrash Tanhuma נח "n", p. 31 makes reference to this headpiece.
74. H.A. Hoffner, Jr., "The 'City of Gold' and the 'City of Silver'," IEJ, 19 (1969), pp. 178-80.
75. J.S. 9:179.
76. *ibid*.
77. The story of Hiel and the snake is based on Midrash-Yalkut Shimoni, Ginzberg Legends IV, 198, VI, 319, N. 15 and found as well in Pirke Eliezer, Midrash Debarim Rabbah.
78. Kraeling, p. 140.
79. J.S. 10:152 ff.
80. Kraeling, pp. 80-81, footnote 237.
81. *ibid*, p. 353.
82. J.S. 10:119.

83. Kraeling, p. 177 and footnote 681.
84. J.S. 9:199 ff.
85. J.S. 9:200.
86. Elias J. Bickermann, "Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue," HTR, 58 (1965), pp. 127-151.
87. J.S. 10:207-8.
88. J.S. 10-121.
89. In the discussion before on numerology, we came upon another interpretation by Goodenough which differs from the description of a wide bumpy rod. In J.S. volume 10, p. 68, the rod of Moses is here likened to the Iota -- 'a single stroke of the pen downwards'. "The Iota with its single stroke was also the rod of Moses producing the ten plagues." For the sake of consistency in symbolic representation, Goodenough cannot hold to both a single-stroked line and a knotted club for the rod of Moses.
90. Hauser, p. 124.
91. Hauser, pp. 123-125.

CONCLUSION

As was stated at the outset, the main burden of this thesis was to review Erwin Goodenough's major work on Greco-Roman symbols with the main emphasis in evaluating his methodology and style. Utmost admiration and gratitude to him has at all times been reserved for his enormous work in gathering and organizing the tremendous wealth of material that appears in these fifteen volumes.

The grounds upon which he bases his theory -- the authority of Philo, the assimilation into the surrounding culture as witnessed by the prevalence of the Greek language, the ineffectuality of the rabbis, the excavated material remains on which there is an abundance of symbols, and the theory of symbolic transference, finally all culminating in the Dura frescoes -- have been assessed and criticised in the foregoing chapters.

In this last section we shall deal with the character of the author himself. This entails judgment on the persistent domination of his personal views and how they make themselves manifest not only in statements of "fact" but intrinsically in his literary style. The very subjective manner of his writing is apparent on just about any page taken at random throughout the work; an impressive number of sentences are all in the first person singular. He is highly repetitive and the effect of this repetition is that an idea stated initially as a hypothesis, by constant re-statement becomes "a fact". He suggests in volume IX,

page 202, "I see no possibility, therefore, that a contemporary observer could have missed the resemblance, or have failed to recognize that the artist painted Aphrodite-Anahita as the one who finds the baby Moses" -- a supposition. [underlining mine] By volume XII on page 37, with the presumed agreement of the reader, he builds his argument, "If Aphrodite could take Moses from the ark in the Nile . . ." a fact.

Not only is the postulation of the mystic sect his own, but the very foundations of his theory rests on his personal formulation of religious psychology. "The psychology of religion which is emerging here," he writes, "is as a whole my own."¹ It is, of course, statements like the above that alert one's critical faculties.

The greatest admirers of his work are still skeptical about the soundness of his methodology, chiefly because of the selectivity of his material. Salo Baron questions the principles of selection which must necessarily be subjective. He also raises the basic problems of methodological limits.² Can an investigation of ancient art and archeology interpret every decoration found in a synagogue or tomb to be a meaningful symbol with some ritualistic or mystic basis? He feels that Goodenough presses too hard as undoubtedly many decorations were unconscious imitations of environmental practices.³

Since there were other Jewish symbols in biblical literature not appropriated for Hellenistic Jewish purposes, we would agree with Neusner that the reasons for this exclusion ought to be

investigated as a form of scientific control. The converse, too -- those symbols that appear in pagan religions and never appear in Jewish remains -- must also come under scrutiny.⁴

The very argument for the theory of symbolic transference is doubted by Morton Smith.⁵ Even were the theory acceptable, the abundance of Greek and Latin iconography causes Smith to be critical of Goodenough's selectivity in this area. He faults him for representing only a 'purposeful' few. "He picked out a scattering of examples, that his thesis required, and passes over the bulk of Greco-Roman material."⁶ Avi-Yonah concurs with this opinion taking his position from Jewish sources, and notes that Goodenough draws convenient conclusions on the bases² of selected evidence, disregarding inconvenient facts.⁷

The variations in important concepts, basic for coherence and integrity, are of considerable consequence. For instance, the word philosophi, those hypothetical persons who must have master-minded the whole design and layout of the Dura synagogue, is a case in point. Goodenough articulates this concept as containing the essential qualities of mysticism. In this way the philosophi were masters of "symbols and ceremonies", and although technical planners, this class of designers understood meanings beyond ordinary craftsmen and were presented as "creative religious thinkers."⁸ Bickermann, on the other hand, takes this word and traces its contextual meaning to stand for 'engineer' in its most prosaic matter-of-fact sense.⁹ It follows, then, that the interpretation of the art is contingent upon how one evaluates this word.

Another common criticism is Goodenough's portrayal of the group of rabbis as being of one monolithic block. Neusner regrets that Goodenough understands the Talmud as embracing only a single set of ideas.¹⁰ Avi-Yonah is in agreement with Neusner, admitting to the existence of a Jewish mystic trend, but is adamant that this was not a distinctly separate element. It was part and parcel, he insists, of what as a whole made up a rich religious life, thereby disavowing Goodenough's sharp groupings.¹¹

Goodenough's approach as to how artists worked in ancient times is also a matter on which he differs from other scholars in the field of art history. For Goodenough all the creativity was inspired from mystical concepts and modeled on the symbols of mysticism, whereas some art historians believe that because pattern books, panel paintings and cartoons were standard equipment of ancient artists, the technique of copying existing models no doubt was used at Dura as well.¹² There is a serious complaint against Goodenough that he overlooks the importance of archetypes, and of even graver concern is his repudiation of the method of much art historical research.¹³

Indeed, Bickermann's judgment is that he mixes up two disciplines -- art vocabulary and theology.¹⁴ It is precisely these theological impressions and biases that weaken the greatness of Goodenough's enormous work in our opinion.

One of the difficulties faced by a historian of religion is in making a valid distinction between 'true religion', 'magic' and 'superstition'. To be able to distinguish the line of

demarcation is in itself an important contribution of the scholar in religious studies. The historian of religion ought to be critical in the matter of describing phenomena only, and should not evaluate data on the basis of unexamined principles of theological judgment.¹⁵ This is particularly relevant because it is the opinion of Jacob Neusner whose work focuses specifically on the social and religious history of the Jews in these Greco-Roman times. However, where his work is confined to detecting the social realities behind the religious creativity, Goodenough is culpable, by contrast, in his attempting to ascribe a belief and practice to Jews in another era. This is accomplished by presenting their own material evidence, the assessment of which is yet to be determined, and by empathizing his own feelings of mysticism.

Nock says that the abiding importance of the work is as a 'material sammlung'.¹⁶ In a friendly encounter, Merton Smith lauded Goodenough with the praise that scholars will forever be indebted to him for his tremendous work in collecting and categorizing the many symbols in the Greco-Roman age. Goodenough's reply was that he did not spend thirty years to be remembered as a mere collector; he had a point to make. In that case, Smith's retort was, he failed. "But so did Columbus."¹⁷

After the audacious effort of criticizing Goodenough, we have to conclude with a note of great respect and admiration. One can only laud the dedication of his scholarship, with his painstaking effort in detecting symbols, and tracking down parallels.

seeking in every conceivable historical and literary source their meaning and use. We almost forgive him his ulterior motive, and the fact that each of the disciplines he embraces shows up to be faulty.

The reader is not only awed by Goodenough's dedication throughout the 13 volumes of his work, but is equally delighted by the vastness of his erudition, as well as intrigued by his fruitful and creative imagination. This is not only reflected in his extravagant language but his very concepts carry us along -- soaring out of this world, literally, to his other-world of mysticism. The art work is a treasure-trove to behold. What might have resulted in a dry-as-dust archeological record by any other mortal becomes literary passion with Goodenough's enthusiasm jumping out of the print on each and every page, and visual excitement with the thrill of discovery of each and every picture.

Most importantly, though, because it is attractive, scholarly, serious and yet provocative, it will always have an intriguing fascination for other 'historians of religion', and who can foretell what new discoveries this work will stimulate? Goodenough has indeed opened up a new world for both Christian and Jewish scholars; the history of western religion in Greco-Roman times can never again revert to accepted clichés. This crucially important period in history will have to be re-assessed with this 'new awareness', for which we must all be gratefully indebted.

NOTES - CONCLUSION

1. Jewish Symbols, 4:48.
2. Salo W. Baron, "Review of Goodenough's Symbols", JBL 74 (1955), pp. 196-99.
3. ibid, p. 198.
4. Jacob Neusner, "Judaism at Dura Europos", History of Religions, 4,1 (1966), pp. 81-102, p. 84.
5. Morton Smith, "Goodenough's Jewish Symbols in Retrospect", JBL, 86, 1 (March 1967), pp. 53-68, p. 57.
6. ibid, p. 57.
7. Michael Avi-Yonah, "Goodenough's Evaluation of the Dura Paintings: a Critique", in The Dura-Europos Synagogue: A Re-Evaluation (1932-1972), J. Guttman, ed., (Missoula, Montana, 1973), p. 121.
8. Jewish Symbols, 9:22.
9. Elias J. Bickermann, "Symbolism in the Dura Synagogue", HTR 58 (1965), pp. 127-151, p. 142, Note 57.
10. Jacob Neusner, "Notes on Goodenough's Jewish Symbols", Conservative Judaism, 17, 3-4, (Spring-Summer) 1963, pp. 77 ff.
11. Avi-Yonah, D-E Synagogue, J. Guttman, ed., p. 133.
12. Joseph Guttman, "Hypothetical Models of Dura Paintings", in D-E Synagogue, J. Guttman, ed., p. 46.
13. ibid, p. 34.
14. Bickermann, HTR, 58, p. 135 and pp. 147-8.
15. Jacob Neusner, A History of the Jews in Babylonia, 5 vols., (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966-70), vol. 4, p. 129.
16. Arthur Darby Nock, Essays on Religion and the Ancient World, Zeph Steward, ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 907.
17. Morton Smith, JBL, 86, pp. 65-66.

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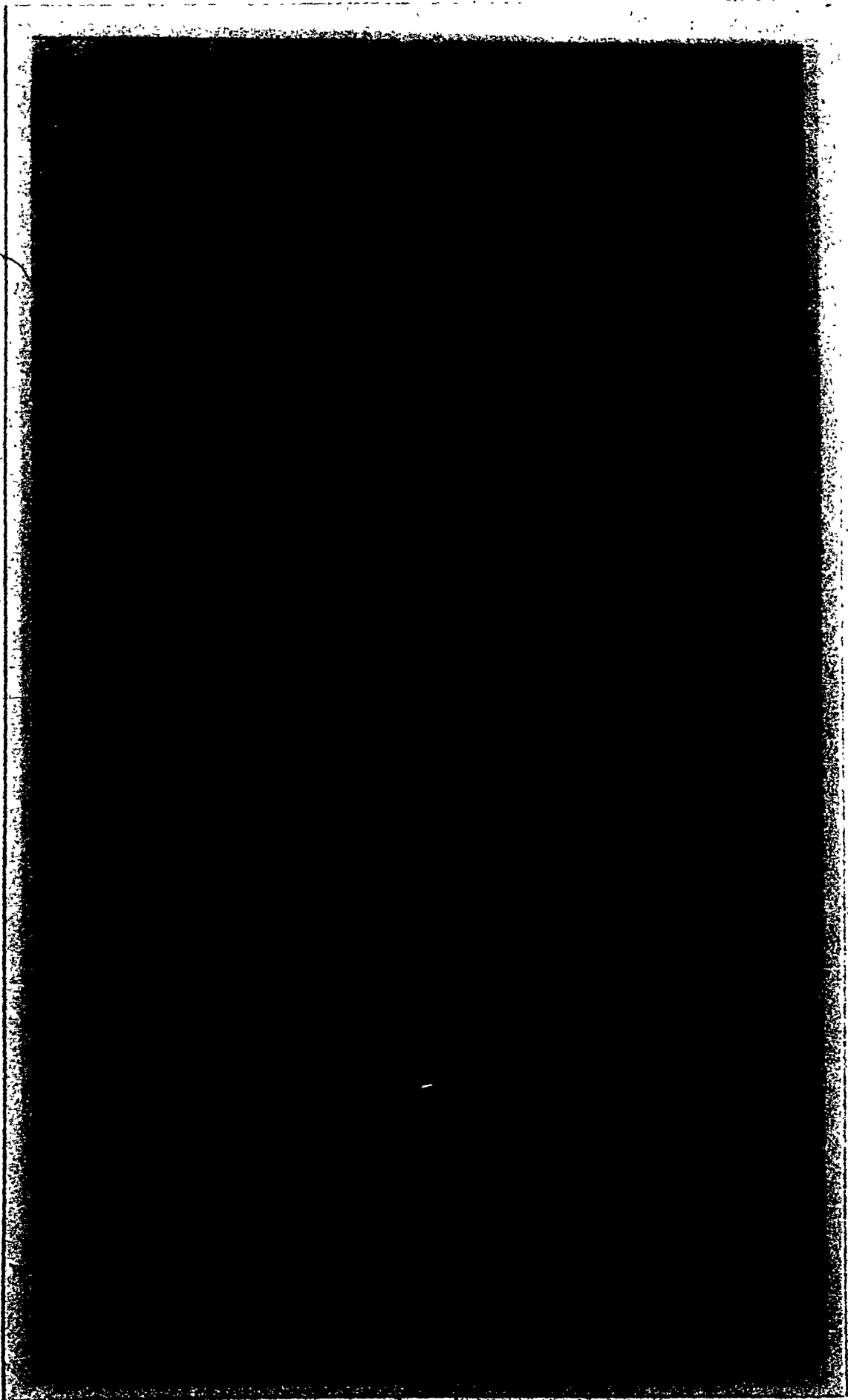
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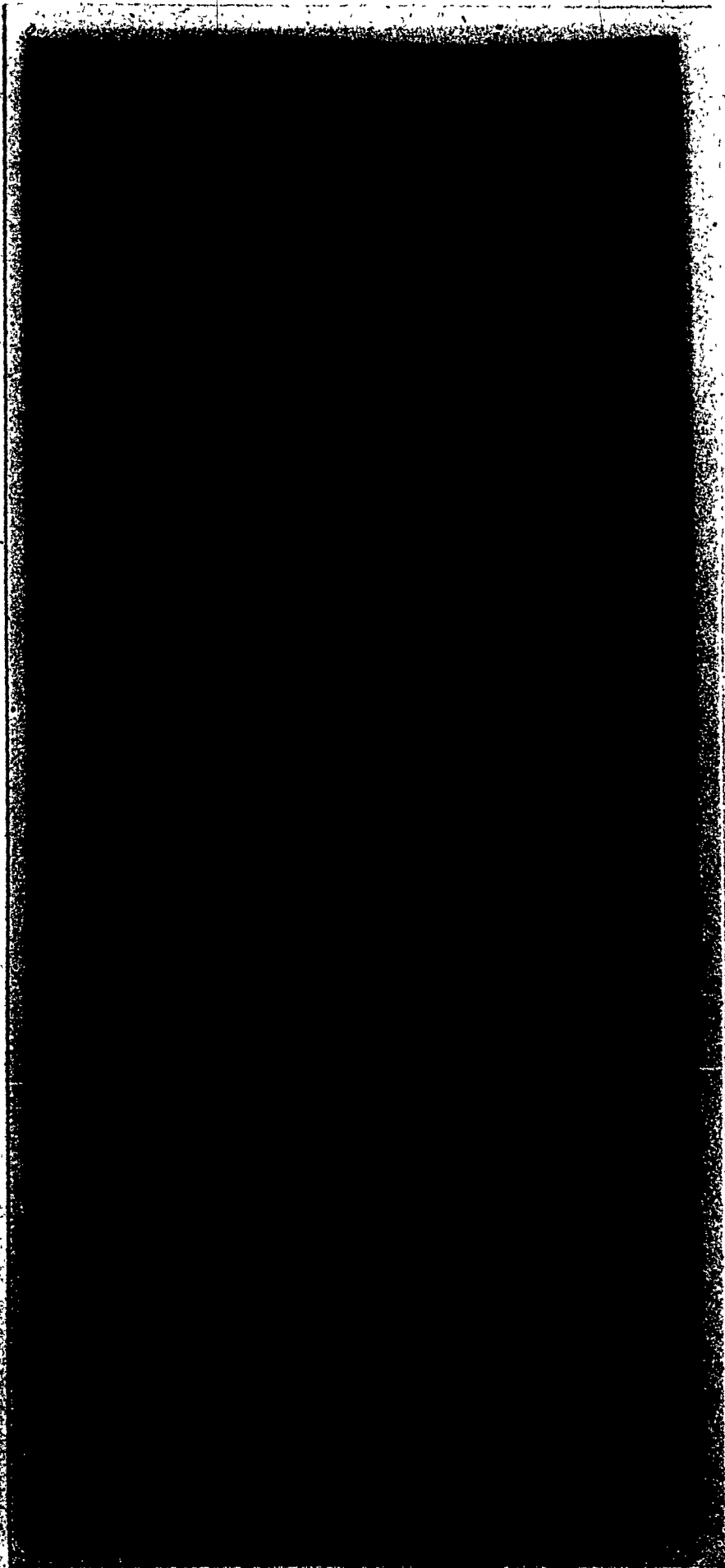
Panel WA 3

EXODUS AND THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA
scene 1



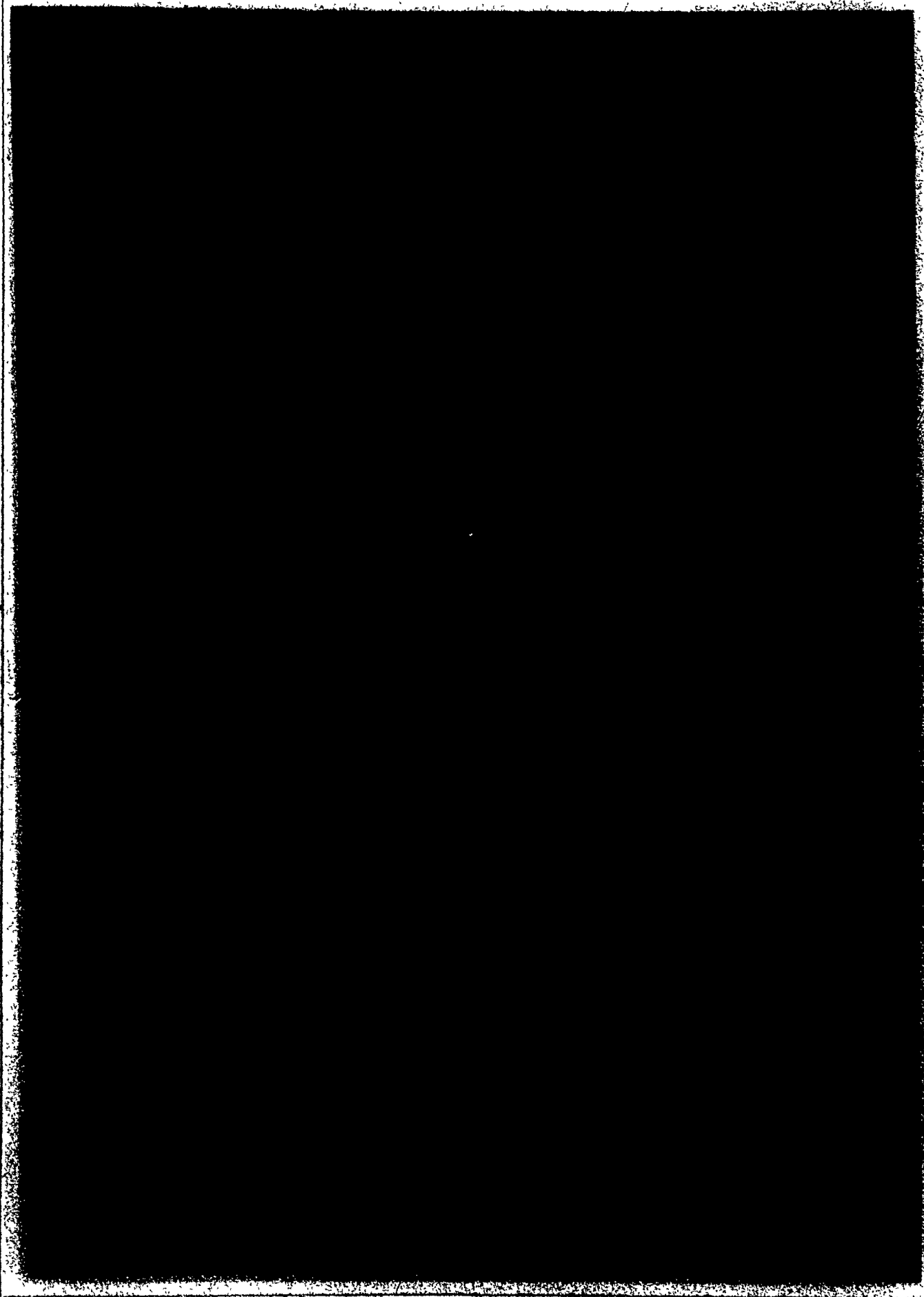
Panel MA 3.

EXODUS AND THE CROSSING OF THE RED SEA
scene 2



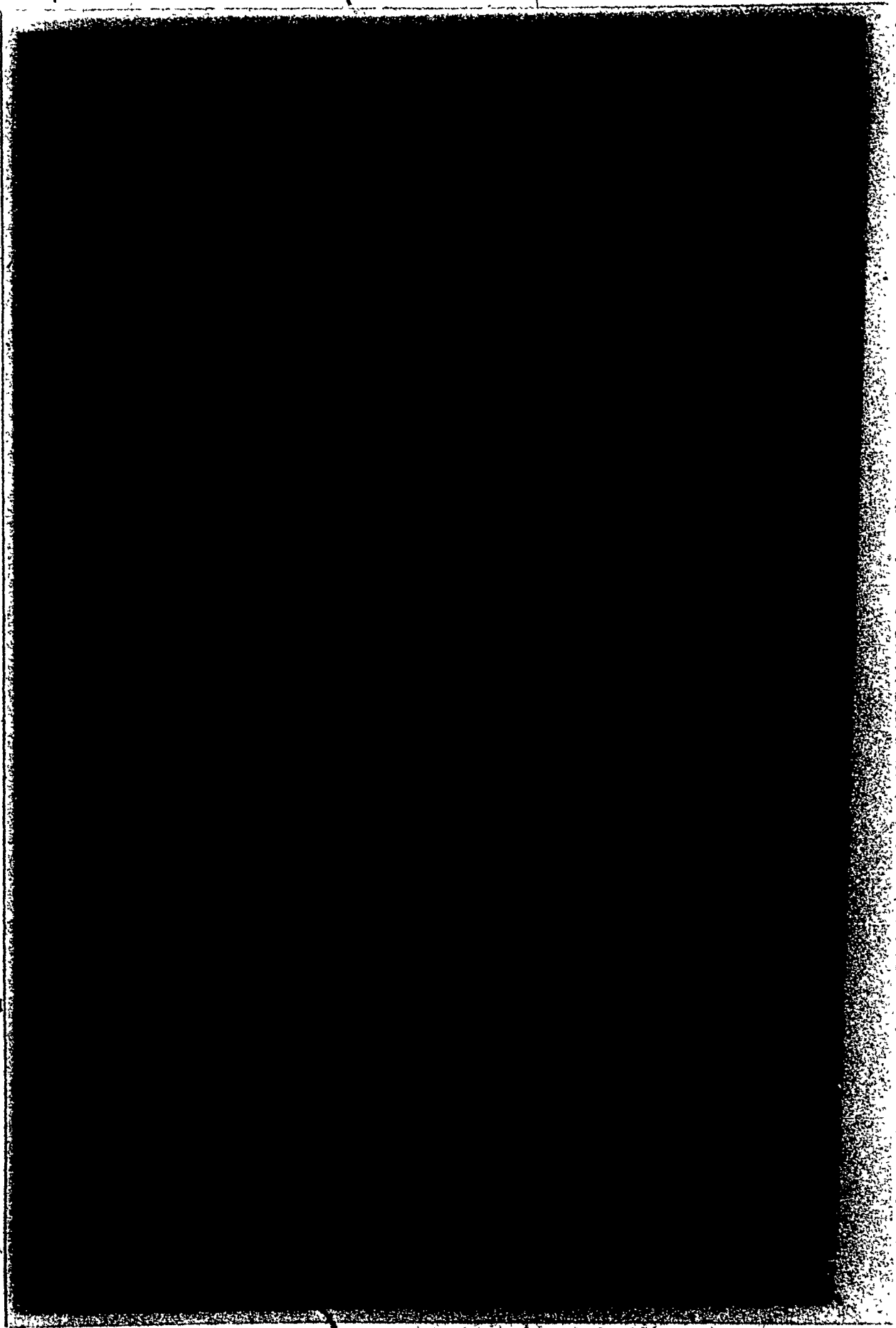
Panel MC 4.

PHAROAH AND THE INFANCY OF MOSES
scene 1



Panel 5C 3.

THE PROPHETS OF BAAL ON MOUNT CARMEL



Panel NO. 2

MONDECAT AND ESTHER
SCENE 2

