

relevant statements of Josephus are to be believed, it is possible to catch sight of a lessening of the religious motive. They wished to think of man as relying on himself and rejected the idea that God also played a part in human affairs.

These last remarks may in part indicate how the aristocracy came to adopt the course known as 'Sadducean'. To understand the origin of this school of thought, it is necessary to proceed from the fact that already in the Persian, but particularly in the Greek period, the priestly upper classes were in charge of the conduct of political affairs. The High Priest was the head of state; leading priests without doubt directed the *Gerousia* (the subsequent Sanhedrin). The duties of the priestly aristocracy were therefore as much political as religious. As a result, political issues and interests radically affected their whole attitude. But the more these took precedence, the more those of religion fell behind. This seems to have been particularly true in the Hellenistic period, the reason being that political interests were linked to the interests of Greek culture. Whoever wished to achieve something politically in the world of that time had to be on a more or less friendly footing with Hellenism. So Hellenism gained increasing ground even among the leading priests in Jerusalem. And in a corresponding measure the latter became estranged from Jewish religious interests.³⁸ It is therefore understandable that it was precisely in these circles that Antiochus Epiphanes found readiest acceptance. Some of the high-ranking priests were even prepared without further ado to exchange Jewish rites for Greek. This full-scale Hellenization was admittedly not of long duration; the Maccabaeen rising quickly put an end to it. But the tendencies of the priestly aristocracy nevertheless remained essentially the same. Though there was no more talk of a pagan cult, and though the professed Hellenizers were either expelled or silenced, there was still among the priestly aristocracy the same worldly-mindedness and the same comparative laxity in matters of religion.³⁹ The Maccabaeen rising, however, resulted in a revival and strengthening of traditional religious life. The tendency of the Hasidim towards strict observance of the Torah gained more and more influence. And with it, their claims also mounted. He alone was a true Israelite who observed the law in accordance with the interpretation given by the Torah scholars. But the more pressing these demands became, the more decisively did the aristocracy reject them. It therefore appears that it

38. Cf. M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism* I (1974), pp. 47–57.

39. For the Hellenization of the Maccabaeen-Hasmonaeen priestly dynasty, see Hengel, *op. cit.* I, p. 76; II, p. 150, n. 753. Concerning the secularization of the ruling priestly autocracy according to the Qumran community, see in particular 1QpHab. 8:8–13; 9:4–7.