

COMPARISON OF THE SITUATION OF HELLENIZED JEWS WITH THAT OF ANGLICIZED PARSIS

Dr. Kersey Antia, Jul 7, 2020

Lester Grabbe compares the Hellenization of the Jews with “the Anglicization of India in the nineteenth century or of the Westernization of Japan in the post-World War II era”. In these three cases even though the Jews, Indians or Japanese adopted the language, dress or mode of life of their new rulers, their conduct in the domestic life, language and religious sphere hardly changed. Grabbe further notes that “Hellenism was a culture, whereas Judaism was a religion” and even the most extreme of the Hellenizers did not reject the label “Jew,” as to be Hellenized did not mean to cease to be a Jew or to compromise their Judaism. As I have already noted, this is true of the Parsis to this day, as they drew a clear line between westernization and adherence to their own religion and traditions. What Grabbe notes about the Hellenized Jews is equally true about the Anglicized Parsis – one can readily accept the Anglicization of the Parsis “without denying their uniqueness, loyalty to religion, careful maintenance of tradition and custom” and study of their religion and history. (*Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, Volume I, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1991, 169-170).