

province [Rome], and from time to time traveling for various matters of business to the regions of Marseilles, have apprized us that many of the Jews settled in those parts have been brought to the font of baptism more by force than by preaching. Now I consider the intention in such cases to be worthy of praise, and allow that it proceeds from the love of our Lord. But I fear lest this same intention, unless adequate justification from [a verse of] Holy Scripture accompany it, should either have no profitable effect; or there will ensue further (God forbid) the loss of the very souls which we wish to save.

For, when any one is brought to the font of baptism, not by the sweetness of preaching but by compulsion, he returns to his former superstition, and dies the worse from having been born again.

Let, therefore, your Fraternity stir up such men by frequent preaching, to the end that through the sweetness of their teacher they may desire the more to change their old life. For so our purpose is rightly accomplished, and the mind of the convert returns not again to his former vomit. Wherefore discourse must be addressed to them, such as may burn up the thorns of error in them, and illuminate what is dark in them by preaching, so that your Fraternity may through your frequent admonition receive a reward for them, and lead them, so far as God may grant it, to the regeneration of a new life. [Though Gregory was ready to force pagans into Christianity, he believed Jews should be converted only by preaching and example.]

II. *October 598*—GREGORY TO FANTINUS, DEFENSOR * OF PALERMO

«A little time ago [in June] we wrote to Victor, our brother and fellow-bishop, that—inasmuch as certain of the Jews have complained in a petition presented to us that synagogues with their guest-chambers [for the poor and ailing], situated in the city of Palermo, had been unreasonably taken possession of by him—he should keep aloof from the consecration of them [as churches] until it could be ascertained whether this thing had actually been done, lest perchance injury should appear to have been alleged by the Jews of their own [ill] will. And, indeed, having regard to his priestly office, we could not easily believe that our aforesaid brother [Victor] had done anything unsuitably.

But, we found from the report of Salarius, our notary [a papal agent], who was afterwards there, that there had been no reasonable

* Papal administrator.

cause for taking possession of those synagogues, and that they had been unadvisedly and rashly consecrated. [When Bishop Victor found out that the Pope wanted him to restore the synagogues he hastily consecrated them.] We therefore enjoin thy Experience [Excellency] (since what has been once consecrated cannot any more be restored to the Jews) that it be thy care to see that our aforesaid brother and fellow-bishop pay the price at which our sons, the glorious Venantius the Patrician and Urbicus the Abbot, may value the synagogues themselves with the guest-chambers that are under them or annexed to their walls, and the gardens thereto adjoining. Thus what he has caused to be taken possession of may belong to the Church, and they [the Jews] may in no wise be oppressed or suffer any injustice. [Gregory orders that the Jews be compensated for their losses.]

Moreover, let books or ornaments that have been carried off be in like manner sought for. And, if any have been openly taken away, we desire them also to be restored without any question. For, as there ought to be no license for them to do anything in their synagogues beyond what is decreed by law, so neither damage nor any cost ought to be brought upon them contrary to justice and equity, as we have ourselves already written. [Gregory here refers to his letter of June, 598, to Victor, Bishop of Palermo: "Just as one ought not to grant any freedom to the Jews in their synagogues beyond that permitted by law, so should the Jews in no way suffer in those things already conceded to them." This dictum was frequently repeated in the bulls of later popes.]

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ADDITIONAL SOURCE MATERIALS IN ENGLISH

For further light on the attitude of Gregory to the Jews consult the "Selected Epistles of Gregory the Great," in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-*