

late, that no Jew makes a sincere or a permanent conversion. Like every form of anti-semitism, it is impossible to find more than a slender amount of evidence to support this charge. But if Jews or others do not persist in their new allegiance, the fault must be more in us than in them. Our scandals may have disturbed those who looked for a purer faith than the religion which held the allegiance of rough men, in primitive times, the neighbours of those who worshipped Moloch, Baal, and Astarte; or priests have not paid sufficient attention to the motives of conversion, and not made known in all their beauty the riches of the Catholic Faith. But if the faith is firmly planted in the mind of a sincere Jew, he will bring to the Church a greater contribution than other converts; for he has known intimately and loved that Church in her foundations, or in her beautiful reflection and foreshadowing, from which her very name is taken: the *ekklesia*, the religious community of the Jewish nation.

Yet still the problem is not solved, the mystery is not explained, and it will remain so until the day when all Israel will be saved and we shall be privileged to witness a spectacle more wonderful than the miraculous conversion of the ancient world. 'For if the loss of them be the reconciliation of the world, what shall the receiving of them be?'

EDWARD QUINN.

THE ROOT OF BITTERNESS

CHRISTIANS have, during the last nineteen centuries, talked and written a vast deal about the Jews and Jews have talked and written a fair amount about Christians: in both cases the percentage of rubbish has been considerable. It is comforting to think that in this special number of BLACKFRIARS the usual proportion will be reversed and sense will predominate greatly over nonsense. Indeed, the nonsense will **probably be**, if at all, in a very mild and inoffensive form. Naturally the present contribution is not included in the last remark.

For thirty years at least I have been a frequent talker and writer on this subject. Few have pronounced or written the word 'Jew' as often as myself. That word, lovely in itself and in its meaning—it derives from 'Judah' (the 'praise of Jehovah')—has at times, as the result of repeated use, lost something of its sweet aroma.

In the early months of what the blurb of a recent modest publication kindly calls my 'campaigning,' my conscience accuses me of having made several silly utterances on the subject, for which there lingers in my sub-consciousness a smouldering sense of shame. Some extenuation of guilt may be found in the fact that Judeology—to give it a high-sounding name—is a difficult science, presenting problems comparable almost to those that beset the hapless wight who tries to understand Predestination or Bimetallism. Anyone who would expound its mysteries must qualify for the task by a course of what Virgil, *ni fallor*, styles '*labor improbus*.' As a preliminary, he must, as far as may be, purge his soul of prejudice—a most insidious and deep-rooted disease—and beware also of every form of sentiment that savours of sentimentality. He must endeavour to be objective, concrete and scientific. Let him make sure of his facts and rigorously test his conclusion.

My original intention was to take a specific subject that would necessitate breaking fresh ground and lessen the risk of violating the aforesaid canon-law of Judeology. But this, by an accidental circumstance, was made impossible. On this plea the reader will judge me less severely for dishing up once more some old ideas, refurbished, on the Children of Israel in relationship with their Gentile brethren, considered '*sub specie aeternitatis*.' This may seem to some of our up-to-date critics to be beating about the same old mulberry-bush without much prospect of gathering fruit or of increasing the joy of nations. Then there is the danger of generating heat by raising contentious points, with little prospect of illuminating the issues at stake. Why look at the subject in the light of eternity? Is it not rather economics and practical statesmanship that are needed to clarify the situation? Should we not hold a conference and produce something of the nature of a Kellogg Pact? This may be so, as far as the near future is concerned; but to the Hebrew whose language is that of eternity, and whose chief glory in the past has been his championship of the unity of God, no apology is due for preferring to study the problem of anti-Jewishness—or should it be anti-Jewness?—on transcendental lines.

Many of the sons and daughters of Abraham insist that it is their special birthright that religion and race should in their case be united by a bond similar to that of monogamy; and most of these—monotheists par excellence—claim a monopoly of this privilege. If for the sake of argument we concede this, we are driven to the conclusion that opposition between such Jews and believing Christians is inevitable. Were they content with separate raciality there would be no necessity for collision. Celts, Latins, Teutons, Scandina-

vians, Slavs and Mongols can, as a rule, adjust themselves quite tolerably to the difficulties created by their different ethnic origin. But if a Jew regards it as essential that he should profess Judaism, he is by the exigencies of history and logic combined committed to resenting the existence of the Christian religion. He must be provoked by the Christian and provocative to him. The reason for this is that Christianity was introduced into the world by a Jew and offered, in the first place, to His own people, who for the most part declined to accept it, considering it incompatible with the purity of their monotheism. This attitude is an implied condemnation of the Gentiles who welcomed that teaching and hold 'mordicus' that it is the only form of belief in God guaranteed by revelation. This belief and disbelief on either side provide all that is required for an endless series of battles by land and sea, to say nothing of dog-fights in the air. Even where the religious conviction of either or both is feeble, heredity, or atavism, will often supply ardour for the fight. Special friendship will reduce the risk, but in three cases out of four friction is always to be feared. The more one studies the story of the first severance of Judaist and Christian and the convulsions that followed it for centuries, the more one is convinced that this root of bitterness is a stern reality and almost ineradicable. It has been responsible for much so-called, and mis-called, anti-Semitism and also of much anti-Christianism. It has generated a cat-and-dog relationship for which both sides are to blame. Only the Supreme Judge can decide the degree of guilt on either side.

Jews seldom, if ever, consider at all dispassionately the arguments in favour of Christianity. In the large majority of cases any statement by them of Christian doctrine is sure to be inaccurate. Bigotry is in several quarters on the decline; and it is not uncommon in Liberal Jewish circles for admiration to be expressed for the character of the historic Christ. But if He was such a fine specimen of humanity, how did He come to imagine Himself to be the Messiah? Such a delusion would surely imply a grievous lack of mental balance. Then again, they blame Him for not having conformed to the type and pattern of the Messiah as conceived by them: but if we are right in our estimate of Him—and that possibility deserves to be considered—it is more reasonable to allow Him to play His own part according to His own plan.

It would have been nice to have had a millennium, at least on a small scale, to have inaugurated the coming of the Messiah. This would have made it much easier to believe in Him and—less meritorious. According to the four Evangelists He did, at any rate, bring some striking credentials with Him; and in the face of Isaiah's

testimony that it is characteristic of God to 'hide Himself,' to be the '*iatens deitas*,' we cannot with any decency demand coercive proofs. In addition to the miracles of the Public Ministry, there is the striking phenomenon of the establishment of Christianity in spite of bitter opposition, on a firm basis in so short a time.

Pessimists are constantly complaining that Christianity does not effect greater social reforms; but if one takes a little trouble to discover some of the manifold good works that are being carried on under its inspiration, one would probably sing a less doleful ditty. Christianity has in the past achieved magnificent successes in the face of appalling difficulties; and is no doubt doing so still. We must not allow the problem of evil to assume undue proportions. It is particularly unbecoming for a staunch monotheist to yield even an inch of ground to the arguments of the Manicheans: to him there can be no equality between Ormuzd and Ahriman. Good must be supreme, even if appearances belie its sovereignty.

It is now high time to address a few similar remarks to the Christian. Anyone may be pardoned for not liking any other nationality or race. This may be purely temperamental and not amenable to complete control. But to refuse to take interest in the Jews is not so easily condoned; for they are, in all probability, the most interesting of all, the peoples of the earth. Their antiquity, their contribution to religious history, their miraculous preservation throughout the ages, give solid support to this contention. Inability to take interest in them points to lack of intellectual sympathy. Though of course it would be folly to deny that the Jew of the last nineteen centuries has changed considerably, for better or for worse, from the Jew who flourished before the Christian era; but for all that they have maintained some corporate existence and have for the most part striven to preserve their family traditions. And in more recent times their contribution to European civilisation has been beyond what could, considering how small a minority they are, be reasonably expected. This has been specially noticeable during the last fifty years, and more in Germany that has been so ruthless to them than in any other country. They have taken a prominent place in the musical world, they have produced a number of philanthropists, they have more than held their own in the realm of mechanical invention and some precious drugs for the combating of deadly diseases are the fruit of their research. In these fields and in others they have a brilliant record. As it would be ungracious of them to be blind to our good points, so it is even more so for us to be ungrateful for benefits received from them.

It is only by each party seriously considering the indictment of the

other side that there is any prospect of bringing about a friendly understanding. If we expect them to reconsider the origins of the Christian religion, we must cultivate delicacy in criticising pre-Christian and post-Christian Judaism. In the past a fair number of our pulpit utterances and of our statements in religious writings have been distinctly crude. As long as we are so deeply indebted for our devotional life to the Book of Psalms, it seems absurd to disparage the spirituality of the Old Covenant. As we adopt a more conciliatory attitude, they will, we may hope, feel bound to reciprocate. Christianity—Catholicism—is the daughter religion founded not only on Keren Hattin, Tabor and the Mount of Olives, but also on Sinai and Sion.

It is recounted of St. Thomas Aquinas that when, on his way to the Lateran Council, he was stricken by his last illness, he asked that the Canticle of Canticles should be read to him. It is an astounding tribute to an oriental love-poem that it was able to satisfy the mystical longings of one of our greatest saints and sublimest theologians, and that at the moment when he knew himself to be on the brink of eternity.

Mohammed—to pass to someone of totally different calibre—is said to have professed special esteem for four women—the mother of Moses, the Mother of Jesus, his favourite wife Kadisa, and his sister Fatima. We may perhaps regard the order in which this quartette is presented as being chronological. In any case it is a pleasing feature of Islamism that it does not exclude from the inner circle of its religious celebrities the Founder of Christianity and His Mother. Similarly it is refreshing to recall that Benjamin D'Israeli, a non-Catholic Jewish Christian, regarded Mary's Maternity as one of the glories of his race. Indeed the two Miriams, the sister of Moses and the Mother of Christ, played, each in her own sphere, a very conspicuous part in each of the sister Testaments. And may we not go back further? As Wisdom, according to the Book of Proverbs (viii, 22) presided over the creation of the world, so did the destined Theotokos play the leading part, second only to that of the Redeemer, in introducing the whole economy of the Incarnation and its consequences. She was the fellow-worker with the Almighty and delighted in Her intimate association with the divine and the human in their ineffable union. It is to that Virgin-Mother that we must look for the gradual extirpation, or extinction, of the root of bitterness, substituting for it that Root of Jesse from which so fair a stem and an even lovelier Flower sprang.

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