

THE PROBLEM

It is not a problem, but a mystery: a mystery, that is, as sin is a mystery, and the redemption. In fact, the so-called Jewish problem is an aspect of the mystery hidden from eternity, the divine plan for man's salvation, made known by the prophets and by Christ, worked out in history but not fully accomplished or revealed in all its grandeur until the end of time. There is therefore no solution of the Jewish 'problem' without the intervention of grace, no understanding of it apart from supernatural revelation. It belongs to 'those things which proceed from the will of God alone and are beyond all rights of the creature' and, therefore, according to the sound principle of St. Thomas, 'can only be known to us as far as they are handed down in Sacred Scripture, through which the divine will is made known' (*Summa Theologica*, III, q. 1, a. 3).

To this theme of salvation, even with the emphasis on the place of Israel in it, the whole of the Scriptures are devoted; but the locus classicus is the Epistle to the Romans ix-xi. Leaving aside all the details of interpretation, concentrating on the clearest and most generally accepted sense of St. Paul's words, three facts are certain:

1. The Jewish nation once possessed a unique—and, in fact, the highest—vocation among the nations of the earth;
2. They failed, as only the noblest can fail, terribly and—but for God's grace—without hope of restoration;
3. Before the end they will return, and their restoration will be as glorious as their failure was shameful, for it will correspond to the grandeur of their first calling.

The centre of these facts is Christ, the head of the body of which the community of Israel was the type: not the type as a mere likeness, but a true preparation, a spiritual and material unity of which the Church is the heir. For his sake they were called, against him they sinned, through him they will be saved.

It is our duty on earth to bring to completion God's designs so far as these are known to us; to contribute to the fulfilment of his plan for the Jewish people is particularly our task as Christians, since it is to us that the mystery has been revealed. We shall not therefore discuss, for instance, the problem of Zionism as if it were simply one of competing secular interests; nor on the other hand, since the promises have been fulfilled, can we regard the Zionist claim as validly based on the ancient calling of the Jews. But if

this or any Jewish claim is honourable in itself, in accordance with natural justice, not hostile to the Christian revelation (for that would be contrary to the true meaning of the promises to the Jews themselves), but rather facilitating the final restoration announced by the Jewish apostle to the Gentiles, then it will be supported by all the means at our disposal, on the political and social planes and in a spirit of Christian charity.

The last qualification is of supreme importance. The order of agents must correspond to the order of ends. As the end is supernatural so must the means be, and any attempt at an exclusively natural solution of the Jewish question is doomed to failure. If supernatural grace was necessary to win back those who had sinned outside the rule of the Mosaic Law, if it is necessary to secure even the observance of the Natural Law, how much more is it necessary to redeem those who have failed to carry out their mission of grace, who have rejected and crucified the Word made flesh, and how much more necessary to restore them to a glory commensurate with their vocation!

On the natural plane we can only provide the conditions for the working of supernatural grace. We can recognise the status of the Jews as a distinct nation, even as a religious community which does not infringe the order of the state and by the purity of its teaching helps to form good and worthy citizens. If they have vices (and their vices may be 'typically Jewish'), these should be punished to the extent that the vices of non-Jews are punished—i.e., in view of their social consequences. But if there seem to be particular vices associated with the Jews, that is even less of a reason for condemning the whole people than are other national vices; for they arise not from evil tendencies, in so far as they are typical, but from the frustration of the good: the consciousness of a mission of which they are temporarily deprived, their solidarity as a nation which seems to be required for the final restoration as it was the means of their remaining loyal to their calling until the day of their almost-final abandonment. The faults of Jewry serve to remind the world of their ancient glory and testify to the power of God to permit evil that he may draw from it a greater good.

We must go beyond the natural plane for a solution. Israel must be fulfilled in Christianity and, though it seems that she will return as a nation, we must give a particular welcome to individuals who seek the true fulfilment. Here, too, extremes are to be avoided. Happily there is no organised proselytism on the part of Catholics (and little enough by other Christians) in the modern world. Our fault is more often that of distrust: a suspicion, sometimes articu

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.