Editorial

Dr Parkes takes the whole question of the relation between the Church and the Synagogue to a deep level, and Fr Gillet follows him there. They are not discussing whether Christian missions to the Jews ought to be modified or can be improved in one way or another. Dr Parkes is asking whether the "missionary" approach to the Jews is after all the right one, and whether it is not due to a false theology. Ought not the break between the Church and the Synagogue to be regarded as a schism within the Israel of God? And, if so, ought not Christian-Jewish relations to be brought within the scope of the reunion or ecumenical movement?

Christians and Jews have a common ancestry. The traditions by which both live stem from the Hebrew Bible. We may recall Léon Bloy's moving witness to this from the Christian side: "Suppose that people about you were to speak continually of your father and your mother with the greatest contempt, and to have for them only insults or outrageous sarcasms, what would be your sentiments? Well, that is exactly what is happening to our Lord Jesus Christ. We forget, or rather we do not wish to know, that as a man our Lord was a Jew, the epitome par excellence of the Jewish nature, the Lion of Judah; that His Mother was a Jewess, the flower of the Jewish race; that the apostles were Jews, along with all the prophets; finally, that our whole liturgy is based on Jewish books. How, then, can we express the enormity of the outrage and the blasphemy involved in vilifying the Jewish race?"

Christians and Jews belong together and are one people, in a way that Christians and Hindus or Buddhists are not. The separation between them is more like the separation between long sundered branches of a family than the gulf between the Church and the non-Christian religions. Is not this way of viewing the matter in accord with St Paul's testimony in the Epistle to the Romans about the mystery of Israel?

It is at present more important and more fitting to establish dialogues between the Church and the Synagogue than "missions" from one to the other. They have grown very far apart, when they ought to have been coming close together. When the Church remembers her responsibility for the terrible treatment of the Jews in the past, and contemplates the more terrible sufferings which they are bearing in the present, she must be eager to draw as near as possible to them. And Christians certainly have much to learn from the Jews. In a sense, as a recent writer has said, "the fate of Christianity depends on how much or how little Judaism it contains."

1 Quoted by J. Maritain, Antisemitism (1939), p. 28.
2 J. Maybaum, Synagogue and Society (1944), p. 49.
Christianity that is most popular in Britain contains dangerously little Judaism.

Yet when Christians and Jews enter into an understanding and faithful dialogue, we believe they find that the differences between them are more fundamental and inevitable than Dr Parkes supposes. Here we agree with Fr Gillet. It does make all the difference in the world whether you believe that Jesus is the Messiah who has come and will come again, or whether you deny that and believe that the Messiah has not yet come. Whoever holds either of these convictions is bound to have a sense of mission towards those who reject it, though whether or in what circumstances there should be organized "missions" is a further question. Our experience of these is too slight to warrant us in forming an opinion concerning them, but we have not found that a sense of mission on both sides bars the way to friendly and fruitful dialogues between Christians and Jews, in which each sincerely respect the other's convictions.

It may be that before long Christians and Jews, like the separated Christians, will be brought together in ways that cannot yet be clearly foreseen. As M. Maritain has said: "Malheur au Juif qui plait comme au chrétien qui plait. Et le temps vient peut-être, il est déjà venu dans certaines nations, où le témoignage de l'un et le témoignage de l'autre étant pareillement tenus pour intolérables, ils seront haïs et persécutés ensemble; et unis dans la persécution, ramenés ensemble à leurs sources."  

A Christian looks at the Christian Mission to the Jews²

I. The development of the "ecumenical movement" among the Christian Churches has posed anew the problem of the right attitude of any group convinced that it possesses the truth to those who do not share its view. Up to a couple of generations ago it would not have occurred to any loyal Protestant that his attitude to a Roman or Orthodox Christian should be other than the desire to convert him to Protestantism. There existed organized missions from one group of Christians to another. To-day the Romans are almost the only body who cannot conceive of any solution for non-Romans other than that of conversion to Romanism.

The "goodwill" movement between Christians and Jews is another product of this changed attitude among Christians. But, naturally perhaps, it has not been willing to go as far as the ecumenical movement has done. It evades the question of its compatibility with official missions to the Jews. There are Christians in the movement who condemn the missions, but they tend to be so liberal in their interpretation of Christianity that they have really deserted its basic ethos and are little more than vague theists or even pantheists. More orthodox Christians have merely shifted their ground a little and altered

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1 Questions de conscience (1938), pp. 78 f.
2 This article is appearing in Hebrew in the Metsudah.