

THE JEWS

ONE of the most terrifying of contemporary phenomena is the emergence of virulent anti-semitism, not in Germany or in Italy, not under this or that political regime, but within the Church. It is terrifying; because it means that the devil is active in the Church in a way for which there is perhaps no previous parallel. Evil has always been active in the Church; but it has taken the form of lust, avarice, ambition, pride. This is something far worse. The essence of Christianity is love, and understanding based on love. The essence of ideological anti-semitism is hatred, and stupidity based on hatred. One was shown recently some leaflets written, according to their own testimony, by a Catholic, and urging Catholics to unite against the Jews and their threat of world domination. They made painful reading because of their extraordinary vulgarity. But they were terrifying because of the sheer violence of hatred they revealed. One felt that one was looking at the naked face of evil. Suppose that the author of these leaflets were right in his contention that world Jewry is plotting to dominate the world, to destroy Christendom; there could still be no excuse for tearing the Christian faith to shreds in a way that no outside force, Jewish or otherwise, could ever begin to do. To disseminate this poison in the name of Christ is a betrayal that is only possible to a Christian. But in face of such a betrayal, all calamities to the Church from without are negligible.

If there is indeed a danger that such a poisoning of the very pith of Christianity may spread in the Church, then surely we should be on our guard as we have never been before. It is absolutely necessary for us to be clear about the Jewish problem, not only in our hearts, but in our minds; so that we may see the truth of the matter, be strong ourselves against evil propaganda, and perhaps help others to be strong against it too.

The Jewish problem is indeed a problem. It can certainly be an economic problem; it may be a political problem; it might conceivably be a racial problem. But we shall surely deceive ourselves if we imagine that economics or politics or any racial necessity is the cause of the persecution which is going on to-day, and which lies at the back of such propaganda as that mentioned above. The thing is deeper than that. But propaganda never deals with profundities; of its nature it appeals to the superficial, which can easily be made plausible. These things, then, must be considered. There is an element of truth in every error. We are wise to sift the element of truth from the mass of falsehood. But also, the propaganda, stupid though it so often is—and the tragic thing in the world is precisely the terrible efficiency of stupidity when it is based on hatred—must be met, exposed, denounced, if the deeper truths are not to be lost in the din of falsehood.

We are in the hands of Jewish finance: therefore there must be a universal pogrom; that is one of the most popular lines of argument. And it can be made to appear cogent. An imposing list of statistics can be brought forward, accurate and true, to show that industry after industry, combine after combine, is in Jewish hands. What does that prove; and what line of action does it suggest? In the first place, it is quite obvious that to say that this or that industry, or indeed the whole industrial structure, is in the hands of Jews means actually that it is in the hands of certain particular Jews. It is quite obvious that if the money power is a Jewish money power it is certainly not a power vested in the unfortunate thousands who have been hounded from their homes and robbed of their substance, such as it was, and left to die as best they may. If the premiss is valid, the conclusion drawn from it is obviously puerile. It is also diabolic. It is as puerile as saying: A man in a green tie has robbed me, so I shall murder all men in green ties. It is as diabolic as saying: This citizen has wronged us, so we shall exterminate the entire city.

But secondly, whose fault is it that we are thus in the hands of some Jews? The point has been admirably dealt with by Mr. Wyndham Lewis in his *The Jews—Are They Human?* which indeed provides a valuable examination of all these slick stupidities. The system is ours; we are responsible for it. If others like to make use of it, and prove themselves more capable at it than we, who can blame them? Our obvious duty is to remedy the system, not to exterminate some of those who make use of the system; for if we should exterminate the Jewish money masters, we should simply find our servitude continued under Gentile masters; and it may be questioned whether our lot would be in the slightest degree ameliorated. Gentiles may be less intelligent than Jews; they are certainly not less ruthless, less inhuman.

But again, it is not only the international money power that is regarded as sufficient pretext for a pogrom on a vast and glorious scale. The Jews, it is argued, have established a strangle-hold, a monopoly, or at least a preponderating share, in the economic life, still more in the professional circles, of this country and of that; so that it is impossible for the national, the patriot, to win his due place in the sun. Suppose this to be true; what follows? It is worth remembering in the first place that the Jew is often a better patriot in the country of his adoption than are that country's natural offspring. The nation which casts its bread upon the waters by harbouring the harbourless is not likely, in the long run, to regret it. Moreover, the immigrant creates employment by increasing demand. But what is of more ultimate importance is this: that if it be true that the presence of Jews creates a problem, it must be regarded, rationally, as a problem, not irrationally as a pretext. The essence of a problem is that it requires a solution. Hatred solves nothing, because it breeds chaos; pogroms solve no problem, they create problems, temporal and eternal.

But these and similar arguments on the part of the pro-

pagandists have been dealt with by Mr. Wyndham Lewis and others. The racist line of argument, in particular, has been dealt with by the Holy See. Our main concern should be for the deeper issues. The forces which we have most to fear in the world to-day are the forces which are doing their best to drive us back to barbarism. Those forces are not Jewish. On the contrary, they are the deadly enemies of Jewry. For the Jew is civilized. The recognition of the existence of absolutes is in the blood of the Jew; it is not for nothing that for centuries and centuries before Christianity began the people of Israel held, however precariously at times, to the faith; worshipped, with many apostasies, the true God. To have faith in absolutes is to rouse the fury of the modern barbarian; for the modern barbarian is not the man who has never found the absolute, but the man who has rejected it. Modern barbarism is not irrational; it is anti-rational. It is a deliberate return to the dark forces of instinct. Impossible to understand the tension which threatens to divide the world into two warring camps, impossible to account for what seems to us not only treachery but senseless treachery, unless we realize that there are in the world to-day two fundamentally different ideas of what truth is, and therefore of the meaning of justice and law and equity. On the one side is Christian tradition, with its adherence to absolutes, and its imposing structure of international law as embodying the pattern of life, of world society, dictated by those absolutes. That structure is the work of reason. On the other side is barbarism, with its rejection of absolutes as meaningless idealist counters, and its concept of law as simply the demands, the instinctive demands, of life, knowing no criterion of means but efficiency in fulfilling those demands. That barbarism is not confined to this or that nation, though it has received most explicit expression in certain nations. It is the logical conclusion of a materialism and a relativism from which the whole world has long been suffering, and is still suffering. The Church, for a time,

was strong enough to uphold the rule of absolutes; it has long since ceased to be strong enough. We are reaping the rewards of our emancipation, our liberty. But if there is one ideological struggle for which the world is preparing, and preparing at so breathless a speed, it is surely that; and as always in human affairs, the bulk of the world is neither wholly in one camp nor wholly in the other, but tragically and dangerously poised between the two. Yet there is little doubt to which side the Jewish people, as such, belongs. It is not an adherence to absolutes with the lips or the brain that rouses the fury of barbarism so much; it is adherence with the heart. The hatred of the Jew is inspired, ultimately, by the fact that he bears witness to the absolute in a world which hates the absolute. The Jews, we learn in the scriptures, are a stiff-necked and a stony-hearted people; but in those very faults there is a strength, the strength which has enabled them, through centuries of persecution, to cling to their faith and their worship.

And it is that same religious tenacity, which sets them in such radical opposition to barbarism, which should bring them so close to the Christian. There are bonds between us which cannot be broken. To them we owe the preservation of those books of the Old Law which are an essential part of God's revelation. To them we owe much of our liturgy, our religious poetry, our philosophy, the very idiom in which as Christians we enshrine our thought. More than that, to them we owe, humanly speaking, the birth of the Redeemer: the promise was made to Abraham and to his seed. There is the story of the priest who announced from the pulpit that in view of recent regulations all Jews must leave the church; and a figure crept down from the cross and went out with the rest.

There are Jews, as there are Gentiles in plenty, who have renounced God. But there are Jews who worship God with a tenacity and a rectitude and a fervour which must shame us who like to think of ourselves as the child-

ren of light. We need, badly, that intense realization of the absolute which the centuries have bred into their bones. For Christians have not been, like them, an outcast race for century after century. The world has been ours, our territory; and in consequence we have come to terms, or tended at least to come to terms, with the spirit of the world. That is one reason why to-day as never before we should pray for the conversion of Israel, that the rocklike intransigence of their blindness may be transformed into new impregnable bastions of the truth.

It is not for us, as Christians, to vilify those who persecute the Jews. On the contrary, it is for us to do all that we can to solve the problem where the problem exists. But above all it is our duty to see our relationship to Israel clearly and fully. Sentiment, however sincere, is not enough. The Jews killed Our Lord, and He forgave them because they knew not what they did. If we Christians are to kill, or to urge others to kill, the Jews in the name of Christ, will He say the same of us?

Thank God, the danger that the Church may be identified with anti-semitism is remote. Pope Pius XI condemned it categorically; and his lead has been followed. But it is necessary to be thoroughly fore-warned and fore-armed. As it is easy to be rational in our international judgements in time of peace, but impossible when war-psychosis grips the nation unless we are strongly armed against it; so here, too, unless we are strongly armed we may find in time of crisis that we have forgotten the truth.

God hath not rejected His people whom He foreknew, says St. Paul. Christendom in the past rejected them often enough; perhaps the opportunity is being given us to-day to redeem the sins of the past, lest the load of our iniquities bring down about our ears that world which the Church, under Christ's guidance, laboured so long, and so loyally, despite the sins of its children, to build.

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