

## 'GREAT MULTITUDE OF JEWS AND GREEKS'

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"... they (Paul and Barnabas) entered together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a very great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks did believe" Acts 14:1).

**T**HE PROBLEM of uniting the Greeks and Jews with Rome is a vital issue. With those Jews who adhere to the faith of their fathers, it is much as before—refusal to accept Christ. With the successors of the "Greeks"<sup>1</sup> the problem is not so much one of theological discrepancies as it was in the 12th century, but rather psychological barrier solidified down through the centuries.

### I Rome Looks to the East

The Church was founded in the East. Christ's first followers were from those very nations which are today almost totally devoid of the "Bride of Christ." Antioch, Alexandria and Jerusalem quickly became thriving churches as well as Rome. Despite bloody persecutions and days when the very existence of the Church seemed in jeopardy, all four of the patriarchates flourished. But it was at Rome that the Prince of the Apostles determined the visible Church should be centered.

The Easterners, however, took justifiable pride in their founders, some of whom were Apostles. St. Peter himself presided at Antioch for a time before going to Rome. St. James the Less was the Bishop of Jerusalem and it is probable that St. Mark founded the Church at Alexandria. As the number of converts increased, the Church took on religious customs peculiar to these countries, customs which not only increased the spiritual life of the faithful but also enhanced the beauty of the Mass and

other liturgical functions. These early Eastern Churches were true Christian Churches centered in Christ and having for their visible head, the Vicar of Christ at Rome.

After two centuries of persecutions were over, in 312 a new center of culture arose at Constantinople. Here in the capital of the East, a rivalry with Rome was soon brewing. Bitter strifes on doctrinal points often developed into heresy. Arianism was condemned in the 4th century; Nestorianism and Monophysitism in the 5th. Those not abiding by the decrees of various Councils tore whole chunks out of the Eastern Church, leaving wounds which the Emperor himself sometimes saw fit to heal. This nursing on the part of the government had unfortunate results in that it established precedents for Erastianism which the Eastern Churches have never successfully shaken off.

From the 5th to the 10th centuries the prestige of Constantinople was without peer, while Rome could hardly keep her head above the barbarian hordes which had surged across the continent. By 650 the other patriarchates had been impaled on the crescent of Mohammedanism. Constantinople stood alone. She demanded recognition as a patriarchate second only to Rome; later even above Rome. She resented the disciplinary decrees passed by a Church in the barbarous West. And when Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as Holy Roman Emperor in 800, the "Queen of the East" saw it as a personal affront. Pillaging crusaders from the West were later to contribute inestimable damage to the tenuous strings of East-West relations. So the breach between East and West which had some fundament in the variants of language, rites and temperaments, and which was wedged further by heresies and doctrinal differences, was split to the breaking point by political factions. It finally came in 1054. The Patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius, suddenly attacked Pope Leo IX, declared certain western customs and dogmas unchristian and closed all the Latin churches in the city. The Pope sent two legates to reconcile the patriarch, but in vain. On July 16, 1054, Michael and two of his prelates were excommunicated in the Church of the Holy Wisdom. As Donald Attwater states:

"It was a solemn and awful moment when, just as the Liturgy was about to begin, (the legates) passed through the crowded church, entered the sanctuary, and laid Pope Leo's bull of excommunication upon the altar. "Let God see and judge," they exclaimed, and departed" (*The Dissident Easter Churches*, p. 9).

Two attempts at reunion failed. The first was held at the Council of Lyons in 1274 and another at the Council of Florence in 1439. Both were motivated partially by the hope that the West would aid the East against the onslaught of Mohammedanism; but both were frustrated in part by the fact that no help came. Many churches have been established among the Dissident Churches which separated from union with Rome between the 5th and 11th centuries. They are basically: the Nestorian Church which holds for two Persons, a human and a divine in Christ, whereas He is only one divine Person; the Monophysite Church teaches that Christ has one nature, a divine one, whereas Christ has two natures, both human and divine; and the so-called "Orthodox Church" which includes all the Eastern Christians who followed the Patriarch of Constantinople into schism in 1054 and have not been reunited to Rome. Presently there are seven patriarchates and twelve national churches among the Orthodox which count some 160,000,000 faithful. The other two dissident churches, the Nestorian and Monophysite have 70,000 and 7,500,000 respectively. On at least three occasions a substantial group has returned to Catholic unity: the Ruthenian dioceses of the Ukraine in 1595, the Rumanians of Transylvania in 1698, and, more recently, the Malankarese of India in 1930. But in general, the situation stands much the same today as it did 900 years ago.

Why is it that so little has been accomplished in the line of a rapprochement? Ignorance, misunderstanding and false motivation have blocked earlier attempts at reunion. Fortunately, in modern times Rome has been stressing her loving desire for the return of the Dissidents to the unity of the true Church of Christ. Especially with the reign of Leo XIII this dominant note of love resounds throughout the invitations tendered to the Eastern Churches for reunion. Beginning with the encyclical *Praeclara gratulationis* in 1894, a courteous, gentle and fatherly approach has been evidenced. Benedict XV was likewise conciliatory in stating that:

"The Church of Jesus Christ is neither Latin, nor Greek, nor Slav; it is Catholic; accordingly, she makes no distinction between her children, and Greeks, Latins, Slavs and members of all other nations are equal in the eyes of the Apostolic See."

Concern for reunion of the Eastern Church was a major objective of the pontificate of Pius XI. He instituted the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, which has for its purpose the raising of funds to support missionaries working in the Near and Middle

East and to inform other nations of the significance of the Eastern rites. It was he who so poignantly determined the Latin Catholic's attitude toward the East:

"People do not realize how much faith, goodness and Christianity there is in these bodies now separated from the age-long Catholic truth. Pieces broken from gold-bearing rock, themselves bear gold. The ancient Christian bodies of the East keep so venerable a holiness that they deserve not merely respect, but complete sympathy."

Practical measures for reintegration have not been neglected. The Benedictine order has fulfilled the Pontiff's request that it establish one abbey in each congregation for the special study of Eastern affairs. St. Procopius' Abbey at Lisle, Illinois, embodies this ideal in the United States. Even now, Latin priests are training for the Eastern rites, so that once the Iron Curtain which clamps these Churches has been melted for scrap, missionaries will be ready to resume their efforts toward true union with the Chair of Peter.

There can be no doubt of the papal solicitude for return of the Dissidents. But what of their attitude toward Rome? Doctrinally, the arguments of Michael Cerularius have been reiterated by succeeding generations. In his reply to Pope Leo XIII's encyclical in 1895, the Patriarch of Constantinople, Anthimos VII, enumerated the following doctrines on which the dissidents and Rome are at odds: the Roman primacy; the dogma of papal infallibility; the procession of the Holy Spirit; the addition of the *Filioque* to the Creed; baptism through aspersion or infusion; unleavened bread; what words are necessary for the Consecration of the Eucharist; Communion under one species; the fires of Purgatory; and the Immaculate Conception. The Patriarch cited the dogma of the primacy of the Pope as being by far the principal point of difference, especially since the proclamation of papal infallibility. The dissidents believe that although the Pope is the first of the patriarchs and chief bishop, yet no one can be called the visible head of the Church on earth. However, their interpretation of the Scripture texts upon which this doctrine is based is untenable. Historically, even Eastern Fathers and writers have supported the Roman primacy. The Eastern liturgy itself bears witness to it. Many times one finds reference there to St. Peter as the foundation of the Church. This obstacle then is not unsurmountable. The rock which is Peter need not be a stumbling-block.

What of reunion? It will certainly not come over night. A wound which has been festering for 900 years cannot be expected to heal without the most delicate care. Individualism and aloofness in the West must be eradicated to draw the East from its historic and psychological doldrums. And in this reconciliation the individual plays a major part. The most direct route is a vital interest in and appreciation of the Eastern Catholic Church by "Latin" Catholics. Some 9,000,000 souls follow liturgies corresponding to the Dissident Churches while remaining in complete harmony with Rome. It is in them and through them that the hope of a permanent reunion lies. To underestimate the necessity of charity and due regard for our Eastern Catholic brethren could have grave consequences. Up to 1909, over one-half of the current membership in the Russian Orthodox Church in the United States were people who had come to America as Eastern Catholics in union with Rome. Misunderstanding and the coldness of their fellow Roman Catholics forced them to seek refuge in the so-called "schismatic" groups from which their forefathers had returned to the Church. Prayer and the correct attitude on the part of Catholics can bring them back.

## II 'Abraham and His Seed Forever'

The problem of Judaism is a complex one, for the Jews' destiny is so involved—involved with the spiritual and the mundane, the divine and the human. We read in the Old Testament of God's decision to form the Jews as His chosen people, that he elevated them above the pagans of the time and continually favored them. When enemies threatened their existence, nature intervened on their behalf (Exodus 14). With their adversaries conquered and only a homeland needed, He appointed Israel for their country (Josue 4). Even when they abandoned Him for idolatry, His mercy always remedied the situation. Such was the destiny of the Jews, caught between the spirituality of divine predilection and their earthly, human tendencies to follow the course they desired. Rising at one time, falling at another, Israel waited for the time when her Messiah would appear. And it is significant that she did rise again and again under God's grace. The Israelites were fulfilling a mission. It is also significant that until our time, Israel has been without a home since 70 A.D., some 40 years after they rejected Jesus Christ.

This, then, is the plight of the Jews. Down through the cen-

turies they have been hounded, bedeviled and persecuted; perennial social scapegoats. This ostracism was especially prevalent in the Middle Ages, though nothing can compare to the hecatomb of the Nazi persecution when one-third of the race, 6,000,000 people, were effaced from the earth. By that time, however, they were being condemned simply because of their nationality. As a religion, Judaism had been substantially destroyed with the pillaging of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. In the ruins of the city lay also their Messianic hopes, the priesthood, sacrifice and the house of David. They were dispersed throughout the world, a people among peoples, deprived of a homeland, often ashamed of their origins, but determined to retain as much of the old way of life as was possible in new environments. It was a futile insistence on the creeds of an Old Testament which had been succeeded by the New. Living as he was in the past, it was difficult for the Jew to advance in the present. Many broke the shackles for temporal consolations. Those that remained often sought to alleviate their individualism by mitigating their religion. Thus began the Jewish sects.

Three groups of Jews can be distinguished today: Orthodox, Reform and Conservative. The fundament for the division is the controversy over tradition versus change. Orthodoxy is that segment of Judaism which essays to make binding every command of the Torah. It is the Jewish religion in its strictest sense, the religion faithfully preserved by those who settled in Eastern Europe after the destruction of the Temple. But with the "Enlightenment" and the French Revolution the cancer of religious liberalism ate its way into the beliefs of those who were dwelling in Western Europe. To cast off the old bonds and attempt to conciliate one's beliefs with the modern forms and surroundings was the spirit in which the Reform was initiated. Originally, it held fast for monotheism, the immortality of the soul, God's revelation, etc. Only the binding force of the Torah was abrogated. But, as with so many modern movements based on the asserted relativity of truth, these doctrines too were to suffer. Fundamental beliefs were soon jettisoned if they threatened to be superfluous cargo. To counteract such abandon, a middle course was sought. Conservative Judaism attempted to prudently adapt old beliefs to the modern era. It has been on the rise for the past 75 years.

Here then is the Jewish religion—composed of self-governing congregations, each having no authority higher than itself,

save the Bible. But the interpretation of the holy books is left completely to the individual group. The divergence in creed is tremendous, and the gap is ever widening. Two points can be gleaned from these cleavages: the religion of the Old Testament was inadequate for their present needs in one aspect or another; and in the present *de facto* division the entire structure of Judaism is tottering. For division fosters disunity, and disunity begets weakness and eventual disintegration. Already a substantial leakage from Judaism is perceptible.

After World War II it was estimated that only one-third of the 5,000,000 Jews in the United States could be classified as synagogue members.<sup>2</sup> What has happened to the others? Many have become Zionists. Zionism began in the early years of the present century. It was a movement to unite all Jews as one nation. As such it is a political and national attitude which centers its attention on the ancient Jewish homeland of Palestine. It was hoped by many that a great religious revival would go hand-in-hand with such a foundation. But the tremendous obstacles which have been hurled in the path of the new Israel, have forced the struggling nation to focus all its attention on economic problems. This effort has, however, given Jews in this country an opportunity to remain Jewish at least in sentiment by contributing financially.

Other Jews have been enveloped into Protestantism. The Protestant ministry directed at the Jew is particularly active. Entire church boards, several magazines and mission stations have been instituted for the express purpose of winning over the Jew to the various Protestant sects. One significant group is the International Committee on the Christian Approach to the Jews, which holds conferences solely for this apostolate. A convention at Basel in 1947 had representatives from 15 different countries. We may well inquire into the Catholic approach to the Jew.

It is a fact that the Catholic Church has always protected Judaism, though careless historians have repeatedly described her as the Jew's greatest persecutor. However, Dr. Cecil Roth, the modern English historian writes:

"Only in Rome has the colony of Jews continued its existence since before the beginning of the Christian era, because, of all the dynasties of Europe, the Papacy not only refused to persecute the Jews of Rome and Italy, but through the ages the popes were protectors of the Jews. . . . Only Rome, among the capitals of the world, is free from having been a place of Jewish tragedy. For this we Jews must have gratitude" (*The Ritual Murder Libel and the Jew*, p. 20).

Yet more than just a benevolent protection is needed to win the Jew to Christ. In the United States the Catholic endeavor to convert the Jew has been and still is pitiful. An Archconfraternity of Prayer for Israel is centered at Kansas City and directed by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Sion, a community founded by a Jewish convert. Father John Oesterreicher has formed the Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University. But these and a few other groups who meet for common prayer on behalf of the Jews constitute the total organized concern to convert Christ's own people. When one compares this to the Protestant effort it is shameful.

Yet despite the apathy of Catholics, Jewish converts continue to receive the saving waters of Baptism regularly. The trickle of Jews into the Catholic fold is indeed becoming a steady stream. Especially the intellectual Jew is awakening to the beauty of the Church. Convert-philosopher, Henri Bergson, epitomizes the sentiments of many of his fellow Jews in declaring:

"My reflections have led me closer and closer to Catholicism, in which I see the complete fulfillment of Judaism" (*The Walls Are Crumbling*, p. 43).

They are beginning to realize that it is no heresy for the Jew to accept Christianity. For it rejects nothing of Judaism. Edith Stein, the philosopher-turned-Carmelite, who met death in the Nazi gas chambers; Max Picard, convert-poet who "could no longer refuse not to be where the truth was simply because of an attachment to patriotic apron strings"; Father Raphael Simon, psychiatrist, now Trappist; or Rabbi Anton Zolli, chief rabbi of Rome—all of these and many more represent a trend, an unfolding in the arms of Christ. It is an arduous passage for the Jew; one which is often deterred by the anti-Semitism of Catholics themselves. The Jew is searching for Christ. He needs assistance. The necessity for prayer, kindness and acceptance of the Jewish convert into Catholic society by each individual is emphasized by the experience of Paula Ceilson who writes:

"Except for a handful of people, I have never been treated as anything but a Jewish Catholic. I would like to be treated as myself. . . . But people do not really look at you when you are Jewish" (*Integrity*, Aug. 1947).

It is due in great measure to the personality of the Jews in general that they can accept such abuse and yet persevere. Intimate



and warm family relations, a sensitive, sympathetic nature—no doubt made acute by their sufferings—and a sparkling humor are characteristics of the Jewish race which have endured throughout its history.

What are barriers which seem to prevent the mass conversion of the Jews at the present time. Chesterton offers a plausible explanation:

“Those who shun the Church are of two types—either they suspect that our religion has something about it so wrong that the hint of it is bad for anybody; or else that it has something so right that the presence of it would convert anybody” (*The Catholic Church and Conversion*, p. 34).

The Jew who is a righteous synagogue member must hold for the first opinion, but as an individual he seems more inclined to the latter. Knowledge of the Church unfolds the knowledge of Christ, and thus enkindles a loving knowledge of a merciful God in contrast to the Judaic emphasis on His justice. For in the Old Law fear is the basic principle of all action, while in the New Law it is love. Time and again the thrill of awakening to the love of Christ is reflected in the writings of converts from Judaism. This love for Christ and of Christ is a heartwarming revelation to the Jew. He has been conditioned to despise the sacred name for so long a period that it is difficult for him to realize he is beginning to love it. He would be helped immeasurably if Christians would only take to heart the reminder of Pope Pius XI: “Spiritually we are Semites.” Charity is the greatest of all virtues and with it, and it alone, the Jewish heart can be mellowed. By displaying such charity Catholics contribute to the ultimate fulfillment of St. Paul’s prophecy that all of Israel will one day discover Christ:

“ . . . a partial blindness only has befallen Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles should enter, and thus all Israel should be saved . . . in view of the divine choice, they are most dear for the sake of the fathers. For the gifts and the call of God are without repentance” (Rom. 11:25-28).

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The term “Greeks” is used in this article with reference to the historical origin of the Dissident Churches, not as descriptive of their present national composition. Actually, of the estimated 160 million Dissident *Orthodox* Christians, 120 million are attributed to Russia. The Orthodox Church of Greece numbers less than 6 million, compared with 12 million in Rumania and 3 million in Poland. Attwater, *The Dissident Eastern Churches*, Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Some recent sociological studies suggest that a trend back to the synagogue may be underway.