

CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

Encounter and Mission

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INTRODUCTION

The need for a theological restatement of Christian missions is widely felt in the Church. Not that theologians are able to revive the flagging spirit of missionary zeal, but they can greatly help towards a clarification of the missionary perspective in the modern world. That there is need for a fresh assessment of the missionary task in view of the rapidly changed circumstances is admitted in many circles.

The urgency of the task derives from the fact that the Christian public at large and even the missionaries themselves are frequently at a loss to justify the missionary enterprise of the Church. But at the same time it is widely felt that the abandonment of Christian missions somehow constitutes a betrayal of Jesus Christ. The extent of the confusion was recently described in a provocative article by H. Daniel Friberg. Under the caption: "Missionaries or Marines", the writer points out the extent of the change in the missionary climate of our times. He says: "Even in circles where theology remains truly biblical the expected consequences in the matter of evangelization are so denatured by the prevailing mood of universalistic optimism and listlessness that when one, for instance, sings the great missionary hymns of the Church . . . even while admiring their *esprit* and vigour one wonders where the writer derived his compulsive sense of mission." Daniel Friberg avers that in the present situation the marines have replaced the missionaries, and that even "before the marines had ever arrived on the scene in great numbers Christian missions were no longer conducted as the major and passionate concern".¹

There are many reasons for the present ebb in missionary zeal, not the least of these being the shift of emphasis from loyalty to Jesus Christ to the more sentimental experience of religion in general. The thesis underlying this book is that the Church in her encounter with Judaism is pressed into a position in which her missionary seriousness becomes the test of her Christianity. In confrontation with the Synagogue, she can be the Church only if she is whole-heartedly a missionary Church. The subject we are dealing with is more than a theological pastime and bears in upon the situation in at least a threefold manner:

- 1) In view of the syncretic tendencies of our top-heavy civilization which tend to blur the line of demarkation between Christ and religion, it is of the utmost importance for the Church to understand herself in her concrete particularity. It is the conviction of this writer that only by facing the Synagogue can the Church rediscover her true nature.
- 2) There is at present afoot a sustained effort to formulate a theology of missions which would be both consistent with the biblical perspective and also take into account the rapidly changing situation which the Church faces in the world. Again, it is the conviction of this writer that in the formulation of such a theology, the confrontation between Church and Judaism provides a vital aspect which demands our most careful attention.
- 3) In view of the recent controversy evoked by Reinhold Niebuhr's statement about the inadvisability, even the harmful effect of Jewish missions,² such a confrontation between Church and Synagogue opens up the very nerve of the *raison d'être* of the Church.

For these, if for no other reasons, we can justify an effort to re-examine the Judeo-Christian encounter as it bears upon the missionary orientation of the Church.

Notes to Introduction

1. *Christianity Today*, 3 August 1962.
2. Cf. *Christianity Today*, 8 December 1958; also *C.C.A.R. Journal*, the organ of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, April 1958.

I. CHURCH AS MISSION

It is an established rule of Christian theology that it orientates itself towards Holy Writ. Theology does not start in a vacuum, it starts with given data derived from the Bible. It is therefore obvious that a theology of missions must have its anchorage in Scripture if it is to carry any weight. Especially for Protestant theology the scriptural basis is a deciding factor.

It is universally granted that the concept of mission is already inherent in the prophetic message of the Old Testament.¹ The prophet in his own person is a classical example of the missionary, the *shaliah*, who has a word not only for Israel but also for the surrounding nations. The small book of Jonah is an eloquent plea by a biblical writer concerned with "foreign missions".²

In the New Testament the missionary presupposition is more obvious, especially in the Fourth Gospel and the Pauline letters. There can therefore be no difficulty in establishing the missionary principle as far as the Bible is concerned.

Our present perplexity in formulating a theology of mission does not derive from exegetical difficulties but from a misunderstanding of the nature of the Church.³ It is our contention that a careful analysis of the relation between Church and Israel will contribute towards a more biblically orientated understanding of the relation between the Church and the world.

It is a long-established tradition within the Church to regard the function of historic Israel as having terminated with the coming of Christ. It is usually assumed that Israel ends at the point where the Church begins. But once we accept this view the result is a radical rift in the history of revelation. The connection between the Old and the New Testaments, between Israel *κατὰ σαρκά* and Israel *κατὰ πνεῦμα*, between promise and fulfilment, becomes difficult to maintain, and as a result the Church drifts from her historic moorings towards an over-spiritualized existence. Much of the false otherworldliness so prominent in Church history has its root in this misconception. A dichotomy in the history of revelation inevitably leads to a non-historical understanding of the Christian faith. Furthermore, once we have accepted the view of a radical rift in the history of revelation we have already created a gap between the Church and the world, and therefore between Church and missions. The reason for this lies in the biblical concept of Israel. Israel as God's people is not an isolated entity entirely separated from the world, but that particular people where God acts on behalf of the world. Israel represents humanity in all its need.

In addition, the logic of separation between historic Israel and Church demands a fundamental distinction between the home-base and "foreign missions". On the one side is the Church of God, and on the other side is non-church. But such a clear-cut division does not correspond to fact and lends itself to hypocrisy. A radical distinction between Church and world is at the root of all sectarian movements within Christendom. It is only in the perspective of the covenantal relationship between God and his people that we can re-discover the biblical connection between Israel and the world and Church and missions.⁴

Wilhelm Anderson's essay *Towards a Theology of Mission*⁵ makes it plain that the fundamental problem for theologians to-day is to establish an organic connection between the Church and her missionary enterprise. But in the biblical context there is no such difficulty, for

oddly enough, in the Bible Israel is at the same time both Church *and* mission. Israel is Church as God's people by election; but Israel is also mission as part of the rebellious world in need of conversion. At no time does Israel cease to be both. In the biblical perspective it would mean that Church and mission are never separate, where there is Church there is mission, and where there is mission there is Church.

We will now turn to the Bible for a verification of this statement.

1. The Church-Mission Perspective in the Biblical Context

The Bible confronts us with a situation remarkably similar to our own: here Church and mission so overlap that a clear distinction is impossible. The people of God is both: the elect people of the Covenant, pledged and committed to the God of Israel; but at the same time it is also the rebellious people laden with iniquity to whom God sends his prophet-missioner to call it to repentance (cf. Isa. chapters 1 and 2). The peculiar theological situation lies in the dialectic ambiguity whereby Israel is called *'ammi* ("my people") and *lo-'ammi* ("not my people"). Such a situation always arises within the category of election by grace; outside election there is no such tension. Where man achieves salvation by his own effort, he has either arrived or is not yet there. But within the polarity of sin and grace he is *there* by grace, and grace only, though a sinner. It is the prophet's task to keep alive the tension by holding out before Israel his vocation as God's people while at the same time uncovering his people's rebellious attitude to God.⁶

The situation in the New Testament is not dissimilar. Jesus as God's Apostle, *shaliah*, missionary, (cf. Heb. 3:1) knows himself sent to call his people to repentance. Here is a typical case of "home missions" within the context of the people of God and the category of election. This calling of God's people to *teshubah*, *μετάνοια*, "repentance", has always the overtone of a call to mankind. When retranslated into Hebrew, the Great Invitation: "Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden" (Matt. 11:28) immediately reminds one of the Great Invitation uttered by the prophet: "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth" (Isa. 45:22). In both cases the call to Israel is a call to the world. Here home mission and foreign missions coincide, Church and world stand together in the common human need.⁷

We could easily, multiply the evidence to prove our point, but there is no need. In the context of the Bible the conclusion seems justified that mission begins with the Church and in the Church. This is amply confirmed by the situation we meet in the Pauline letters.

From St Paul's letters we know that the "saints" he addresses in places like Corinth were only saints in a "theological" sense. In practice they were confused, struggling sinners whom the Apostle accuses of arrogance and spiritual pride and whose moral standards were such that they tolerated the vilest kind of adultery (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1 ff). Yet he never hesitates to address them as the Church of God who have been called into a covenant-relationship by God's grace and forbearance. In other words, we meet here exactly the same situation as in the Old Testament. It is only within the area of grace which is a synonym for election, that those benighted heathen can be addressed as the "saints" of God. This is only possible in the light of God's mercy in Jesus Christ. Neither Israel nor the Gentiles can on their own merit deserve such a description. We can now see why the Apostle Paul is so insistent on the gratuity of grace: without grace there is no salvation and therefore no Church. We can gauge the whole force of a text like Eph. 2:8 only when we set it in this context: "By grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your

own doing, it is the gift of God." The perfect tense is noteworthy: "You *are* the saved ones."⁸ It points to an accomplished act on the part of God. Yet there is a human side to it as we read later on: "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (Eph. 4:1). The declaration of accomplished salvation on the one hand, and the exhortation to live up to this fact on the other, indicate the gap which exists between what we are and are meant to be. On this side of history nothing can be completed in the ultimate sense.

Anyone familiar with Church life will be quick to acknowledge the ambiguity of the human situation within the limits of his own experience. How otherwise could we speak of ourselves as "saints" except in the Pauline sense?

Our familiarity with the concept of home evangelism makes it easier for us than perhaps it was for our forefathers to recognize the fact that the Church is both the communion of saints and the object of mission at the same time. In fact it cannot be otherwise. Only the deification of the Church, which Kierkegaard described as "permanent rebellion against God"⁹ could obscure this her twofold position. There can never be a situation when the Church has outgrown the need for conversion and could preach to others without preaching to herself. It is part of the irony of life that it is possible for the Church to be in more desperate need of conversion than the people to whom she sends missionaries. Such a situation arose at the time of our Lord when harlots and publicans entered the Kingdom of God while the pious Pharisees remained outside.

We are thus driven to two inevitable conclusions:

1) A radical distinction between Church and mission rests upon a misunderstanding: in the Bible, Church and mission always coincide. At no time does the Church become truly Church and cease to be the mission field. Church and mission go together; where there is Church there is mission, and where there is mission there is Church.

2) The Church can preach to others only if she preaches at the same time to herself. In other words, *only a repenting Church can be a missionary Church*. This imposes a discipline and a humility which is decisive in our approach to other people. If the word "missionary" has become an ugly word in some parts of the world as pointed out by Eugene D. Nida, we may well question whether we have always gone to non-Christian lands in the right spirit. Here is what he says: "White people abroad have often acted with consummate bigotry and pride, and this has not recommended either them or their kind to the people. Some missionaries have not been guiltless of overbearing paternalism, and it is not entirely without reason that some Malayalam speakers in India make a pun of the word for 'missionary' and change it slightly into 'poisonous tiger'. One South Indian teaching in Ethiopia so incurred the displeasure of a student that the latter denounced him vehemently, finally calling him a 'missionary', the worst thing he could think of."¹⁰

It would be dangerous and utterly unjust to generalize such outbursts of animosity and to call the scores of saintly men and women who have literally sacrificed their lives in the missionary cause as "poisonous tigers", but on the other hand we all know of missionaries who would have done the cause a great favour if they had stayed at home. This brings us to the question of the missionary motive.

2. The Missionary Motive

The fact that only the penitent Church can be the missionary Church predetermines our relationship with non-Christian peoples. The reason for it is plain enough: there is no truly human approach to others except by identification.

In the discussions on the subject of a theology of mission the question of "validity" has attracted the greatest attention. The very fact we concern ourselves dead seriously with the "validity of mission" is in itself a symptom of sickness. It reveals our lack of Christian conviction. The Church is now trying to justify her missionary endeavour by formulating theological reasons; this is an apologetic motive. Our great missionary pioneers would have been horrified to think that the missionary obligation is anything but self-evident.

Wilhelm Anderson draws attention to the fact that "the missionary enterprise has not come into being through conscious theological reflection on the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ but rather as a result of the compulsion of the Holy Spirit in the experience of individuals or groups of Christians".¹¹ But this is by no means an abnormal situation. Theological reflection is not meant to precede but only to follow the act of announcing the Gospel, literally as an after-thought. Neither Church nor mission begins with theological formulation, it begins with an act of God. Just as Church is called into existence by the will of God and theology is not asked to establish the validity of her *raison d'être* but only to work out the implications of this fact, so mission requires no justification, only the cognizance of its existence. This does not mean that there is no need for theological inquiry; it only means that the theological task is not to establish the validity of mission but the nature of its relation to the Church. To inquire about the "validity" of mission is tantamount to inquiring about the "validity" of the Church, or the "validity" of life. These are data, and as such require no validation, only acceptance on our part.

Our sympathies are with those who at the Willingen Conference of 1952 objected on principle to discuss the "validity" of mission. They wanted the Conference to accept mission as an axiomatic and self-evident proposition of the Christian faith.¹² From a theological point of view their position was correct, for mission is already posited by the fact of the Church. Only if we were prepared to ask about the "validity" of the Church could we ask about the "validity" of mission. Though Anderson does not seem to object to the formulation of the question as such, he occasionally hints at its impropriety, at least by inference. "The Church", he says, "is not the place of origin and goal of the missionary enterprise: the missionary enterprise is that historical happening which embraces the Church and takes it up into its services."¹³ He obviously intends to suggest that mission is prior to Church and that both are interdependent.

By ruling out of court the question as to the validity of mission we are ruling out the apologetic motive of the missionary endeavour.¹⁴ The only legitimate question theology can ask is, "What is meant by mission?"

For an answer to this question, as Anderson rightly suggests, we must not go to the Church but to Jesus Christ: "A new formulation of the basis of the missionary enterprise", he says, "must take its start not from the doctrine of the Church but from the doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ, from faith in the crucified and risen Christ".¹⁵ The missionary motive of the Church cannot be her will for expansion or her desire to compete with other religions.¹⁶ No philanthropic sentiment, no cultural impulse, no political expediency such as the unification of the world, can validate Christian missions. The only justification for the missionary enterprise is faith in the

Lordship of Jesus Christ. If the Church really believes that Jesus is Lord, then she can be nothing else than a missionary Church, otherwise she trifles with her profession.¹⁷

It is at this point that the encounter with Judaism becomes important.

In any other setting the Lordship of Jesus Christ becomes befogged by secondary issues, such as moral values, social aspects, religious insights, cultural standards. It is only in Judaism that the Church meets her equal. Church and Synagogue share the same ethical code, the same social vision, the same spiritual tradition, the same cultural standards. Professor Niebuhr, though drawing the wrong inference, is right in holding that these two faiths are closely related. Between Church and Synagogue there is only one issue—the claim which the Church makes on behalf of Jesus Christ. This is *the* issue not only in the Judeo-Christian dialogue, but in every other encounter with the world. Yet in no instance does it become as clearly defined as when Church and Synagogue meet. Naturally, there is always the temptation to by-pass the central issue for the sake of common ground and in the name of goodwill. Professor Niebuhr, great theologian that he is, fell into the temptation. As a Christian his position is untenable and without a shred of justification, but as an American, as a gentleman, and as a "cultural theologian" he shows a generosity which is both disarming and appealing to the unbigoted mind. To avoid misstatement here are his own words: "The two great faiths [he means Judaism and Christianity] are sufficiently alike for the Jew to find God more easily in terms of his own religious heritage."¹⁸ This sentence touches upon the very nerve of the missionary motive. Here two things are implied: (a) the validity of the "religious heritage" of a people to serve as a substitute for the Gospel; (b) the proximity between Jews and Christians in areas outside the christological centre as sufficient ground for an equation. What Professor Niebuhr ultimately says is that as far as Judaism is concerned, the Cross and the Resurrection need not necessarily be the only conditions of an approach to God. This cuts the vital nerve not only of mission but of the Church as well.

Once the missionary motive is other than the Lordship of Jesus Christ, Professor Niebuhr's position is as reasonable as any. The issue at stake we discover in all its ramifications, only when face to face with Judaism. For this reason the Christian encounter with the Synagogue constitutes the acid test of our profession regarding the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

3. Solidarity with Sinners

The profession of the Lordship of Jesus Christ is the basis both of Church and mission. But the Lordship of Jesus Christ carries two contradictory aspects: his exaltation and his humility. He is both the Son of God and the servant of men, the Eternal Word and the man of sorrows. In our profession that Christ is Lord, both these aspects must be present: Christ's claim upon the world and his service to the world, for he reigns not from a throne but a Cross; he came to give his life as a ransom for many.

The discussion concerning the underlying principle of mission has led to a division of opinion among theologians. Some, mainly Americans, suggest the Kingdom of God as the justification for missions. Others, chiefly Anglicans, look upon the Incarnation as the basis of the missionary enterprise, for in it God reveals his solidarity with creation. Europeans, usually Lutherans, insist that only the Cross can be the basis of missionary work, for by it is revealed God's will to reconcile the world to himself.¹⁹ Such divergence of opinion may seem unimportant and somewhat lacking in realism, but at closer examination it reflects traditional attitudes which

have much wider significance. These differences touch upon vital presuppositions which reveal theological predilections and ultimately determine the underlying motives of the missionary enterprise. It is no accident that Americans take the Kingdom Of God as the missionary motivation. It is a typical expression of American optimism and efficiency. Behind it is the conviction that man can so organize himself as to attain to the Kingdom; all he needs is will and exertion. Americans do not just believe in praying for the Kingdom, they want to build it. Europeans on the other hand who have only recently emerged from a major crisis and have suffered bitter disillusionment, are not so optimistic. They are more conscious of human failure and inadequacy and know more deeply of the need for reconciliation, hence their appeal to the Cross. As for Anglicans, mainly Anglo-Saxons, their appeal to the Incarnation stems from a traditional addiction to Pelagianism which tends to reduce the distinction between God and man to a minimum. For them the Incarnation is the bridge spanning the sensible and spiritual world, thus opening the way from earth to heaven and from heaven to earth—a most useful starting place for a conversation with world religions.

It would be easy to suggest that none of these views is exclusive of the others and that taken together they convey the full extent of the Christian message: the Incarnation, the Cross, the Kingdom of God. But in theology a synthesis is never a solution, only an evasion of a problem. It is certainly true that the fullness of the Christian message requires all these aspects of God's action in Christ. But the edge of theology is to be found in its emphasis and not in its comprehensiveness. The theological emphasis is determined by the starting-point. If we start with the Incarnation we shall develop a different bias compared with our starting with the Kingdom of God.

We can only repeat what we have already said in connection with the missionary motive: the starting-point for a theology of mission is the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This is already implied by the fact that he is the Lord of the Church and therefore of mission. Mission is *his* mission to the world. He comes not to rule but to serve and to identify himself with sinners.²⁰

The Church began when men and women by the gift of the Holy Spirit called Jesus Lord. In this profession is included faith in the Incarnation, the Cross, and the promise of the Kingdom. But this is not a synthetic inclusion: the bias of the Christian faith is towards the Person of Jesus Christ and not towards dogmatic statement. That bias is unthinkable without faith in the Resurrection. Only because the disciples knew him as the risen Christ did they acclaim him Lord. Both Crucifixion and Resurrection stand for the supreme fact of the Gospel—God's solidarity with sinners. This is the very heart of the Gospel and the only theological ground for Church and mission: "He was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). Jesus Christ is the radical expression of God's love for man. The Gospel carries an awesome message: God's self-abandon in Jesus Christ reaches the point of blasphemy; it constitutes the scandal of the Cross. Judaism has no need to deny that Jesus died upon a cross, what it vehemently denies is that in the person of the man Jesus, God died upon the Cross. This to the Synagogue is supreme blasphemy, and in a sense it is. It is the most fantastic statement that could be uttered by human lips, yet it is the heart of the Gospel. Karl Barth called it the "humanity of God"—God's solidarity with sinners.²¹

4. Encounter with the Synagogue

The radical nature of the Gospel remains hidden to a large extent until the Church faces Judaism. In this encounter the edge of the Gospel becomes visible as nowhere else. To the Jews this appears as an intolerable exaggeration for which they blame the Apostle Paul. The Christian affirmation that the God of Israel, the Creator of the Universe, the King of kings and Lord of lords, stoops down to the dust and identifies himself with sinners, appears to Jews to be sheer madness. The rabbis cannot possibly reconcile their lofty view of Almighty God who reigns from above as a righteous King who demands righteousness, with the Christian identification of the Suffering Servant. This to Jewish scholars is utterly alien to the Old Testament and was imported from extraneous sources by Paul of Tarsus.²² To say as St Paul does, that Jesus Christ was in the form of God, and that he emptied himself and took the form of a servant and become obedient unto death and died upon a cross, is to commit double blasphemy: first, by the suggestion of a plurality in the Godhead, and second, by bringing God down to the level of sinful flesh. Here the Christian theologian is truly embarrassed. Against the pagan background with its polytheism and elaborate mythology the radical nature of the Gospel is lost. It is only against Judaism with its spirituality and its reasonableness that we discover the extravagance of the Christian claim. No wonder theologians are trying to tone it down!

This helps us to realize the significance of the christological issue for the missionary effort of the Church. For this reason the encounter with Judaism is of special importance to us: only in confrontation with the Synagogue does the centrality of Jesus Christ for the Christian faith become truly visible.

But there is still a further cause for embarrassment in the Christian encounter with Judaism.

No theologian acquainted with the sorry tale of the Christian treatment of the Jews can face the Synagogue other than with a sense of shame. It is no wonder that some Christians take up the attitude that in view of the failure of the Church we have no moral right to preach the Gospel to the Jewish people. Men like Niebuhr, Tillich, James Parkes, and others feel strongly on this point. Behind this attitude is the supposition that the missionary effort indicates a sense of superiority. Here is yet another reason why Church and mission must be kept together: only when the Church knows herself to be the mission-field at the same time can she have the humility to preach the Gospel in spite of herself and *against* herself.

An extreme case is provided by the situation in Germany after the Second World War. There were Jewish missions in parts of Germany till the rise of Nazism. After the war the question arose: How can Germans resume their missionary effort in view of the ghastly massacre perpetrated by Germans against the Jewish people?

After a break of seventeen years the Evangelical-Lutheran Central Committee for missions among Jews published its first post-War bulletin, *Friede über Israel* (September 1950). This insignificant-looking, four-page pamphlet is an important document for the theology of missions. The director, in an explanatory note, ends with these words: "We carry in us the hope that the proclamation of the message of peace among Israel will not only bring some healing to the bitter and painful wounds inflicted upon this hard-trying people, but will also help the Church while performing this service recover from her own deep-seated sicknesses which have befallen her."²³ Here in a nutshell is all we are trying to say: a sick Church while preaching to others is finding healing for herself.

Behind these few sentences is the story of humiliation and betrayal which only those familiar with the German scene are able to discern. The wisdom of this world would say: "Physician, heal thyself." The German Church is morally unfit to carry the message of reconciliation to a battered and outraged people. But the logic of the Gospel suggests the opposite: it is a sick and humiliated Church which has to face the Jewish people and face up to it. She can do so only with a humble confession upon her lips and contrition of heart. In this encounter the Church can never assume an air of superiority, but can only in humble penitence try to hear again what she says to others. It is at this crucial point of humility that Church and mission coincide, and the Church truly learns what it means to be the Church of Jesus Christ, namely solidarity with sinners.

In this connection we would quote the address by Dr John A. Mackay who acted as chairman at the Ghana Assembly of the International Missionary Council (28 December 1957 to 8 January 1958). Making the servant image of the Church the predominant note, he put every emphasis upon the fact that the Church, if she is truly to follow her Lord, cannot exist for herself but only for the world. His stirring address entitled "The Christian Mission at this hour", carried the challenge: "We must catch the vision of the servant and assume the servant form."²⁴ This lofty sentiment, however, remains confined to the realm of mere rhetoric until tested in the crucible of daily living on the part of Christian men and women. Here again it is in the encounter with the Jewish people that the servant-image of our Christianity is put to the ultimate test.

In the past the Church has tried to impose her faith upon unwilling Jews and has reacted with violence when they resisted. To-day, the Church feels so embarrassed by the past that she has largely reduced the encounter to mere conventionality. But Church and Synagogue do not truly face each other if they are unable to speak within the context of faith. For the Church such encounter must not reduce itself to theological formula. The Jewish people are not impressed by pious words. Ultimately, there is only one way to preach the Gospel—to live it. The Church must cease to expect people to conform to her pattern. All she is expected to do is to put herself at the disposal of others as the servant of Christ. It is only in humble service that she fulfills her vocation to the world.

We may now try to sum up.

Our subject, so far, has been "Church as Mission". We have proceeded on the supposition that there is an unbroken historic unity between Israel and the Church. This led us to predicate of the Church what is predicated of Israel, both election and judgement. Like Israel, the Church is both the communion of saints and the assembly of sinners. From this position we tried to understand the missionary task with the result that the Church is always involved in her own mission. She can never preach the Gospel to others without preaching to herself. Only by identification with sinners can the Gospel be conveyed. We come here upon an odd paradox: from the height of perfection sinners cannot be reached. Jesus took his place with those he tried to help and identified himself with them. But the Church plays an even more ambiguous role: she is not the Church of Jesus Christ by merit but by grace. This startling fact she learns afresh in confrontation with the Jewish people. In trying to understand the position of Israel in the providence of God, the Church discovers herself in a similar situation: she is both *'ammi* and *lo-'ammi*.²⁵ She therefore cannot afford to preach the Gospel without preaching it to herself at the same time. Herein lies the cause of her humility. From this it follows that she cannot call people

to herself but only to her Lord. The missionary motive therefore cannot be the extension of Church but the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

The profession that Jesus Christ is Lord is the distinctive mark of the Church and is tested in a particular and drastic way when face to face with Judaism: here as nowhere else Church and mission coincide.

Notes to Chapter I

1. Cr. Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church*, London 1962, pp. 31-54 Dr J, Blauw's distinction between the centripetal and centrifugal aspect—the former characteristic of the O.T. and the latter of the N.T. seems to us too artificial. The intense missionary activity of the Synagogue, a fact which he admits, would require an explanation other than the O.T., if the centripetal principle were maintained.
2. Blauw dismisses the book of Jonah far too lightly; cf. op. cit., pp. 33 f. The same applies to Ferdinand Hahn, cf. *Mission in the New Testament*, 1965, p. 20.
3. It is Blauw's main merit to have emphasized the supreme fact that there can be no separate "theology of missions", but that mission derives from the very nature of the Church; cf. op. cit., pp. 120 f, 126.
4. Though Karl Barth is for a clear division between the *corpus christianum* and the world (cf. *C.D.* IV/3/2, p. 872), yet he realizes that the Church cannot be treated as if it were "an embedded foreign body" within the world, but that she is herself "a genuinely and thoroughly worldly element participating in world-occurrence" (ibid., p. 723). And again: "The Christian community is not merely *ad extra* and visible. But it would not be the Christian community if it were not also wholly visible, *ad extra* and worldly . . ." (ibid.).
5. S.C.M. Press, 1955, tr. Bishop Stephen Neill.
6. For the tension between "Church" and nation as a result of election cf. Blauw, op. cit., p. 148, n. 17.
7. Barth thinks that "nominal Christians" cannot be easily classified with the heathen, yet he admits the "shifting frontier" and speaks of the "sleeping Church". He explains "evangelism" as the sounding out of the Gospel "on this shifting frontier between true and merely nominal Christians" and he readily admits that the missionary task of the Church is "continually hindered by the notion that all nominal or serious Christians are already at the place to which they are summoned by the Gospel" (ibid., p. 873). Cf. also Blauw's opposition to van Ruler's distinction between the Church's mission to Europe, where it faces an apostate Christendom, and to Asia. Van Ruler speaks of "a deeply spiritual difference, a difference of theological principle" (Blauw, op. cit., pp. 170 f, n. 29), which we find impossible to allow.
8. **σθεσωμένοι**
9. W. Lowrie, *Kierkegaard*, 1938, p. 428.
10. Eugene A. Nida, *Customs and Cultures*, Anthropology for Christian Missions, 1954, p. 9.
11. Op. cit., p. 13.
12. Cf. Anderson, p. 14.
13. Ibid., p. 41.

14. Barth warns against any "attempt at compromise or at finding points of contact and the like" (op. cit., p. 875).
15. Op. cit., p. 41.
16. Barth warns against the slogan: "The world for the Church" (op. cit., p. 767).
17. Cf. W. C. C. Bulletin, vol. II no. 2: "The Lordship of Christ over the world and the Church." Cf. also Hahn, op. cit., p. 150.
18. *C.C.A.R. Journal*. Barth who expresses caution regarding "Jewish Missions" is motivated by quite a different reason, namely the ἀμεταμέλητος, the irrevocable nature of God's calling: "The Gentile Christian community of every age and land is a guest in the house of Israel. It assumes the election and calling of Israel" (op. cit., p. 877). For the controversy Niebuhr's article evoked see *Christianity Today*, 8 December 1958 (articles by Rabbis Arthur Gilbert and Victor Buksbazen); also "The Gospel and the Jew" by George H. Stevens, *Christianity Today*, 28 March 1960.
19. Cf. Anderson, op. cit., p. 31.
20. Barth stresses that the missionary task of the Church is related to her Lord's "solidarity with the world" (Cf. op. cit., p. 725).
21. Cf. K. Barth, *God, Grace and Gospel*, E. T., 1959, pp. 29 ff.
22. Cf. Joseph Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul*, E.T. 1944, pp. 580 ff.
23. *Friede über Israel*, no. 1, September 1950, ed. Pfarrer W. Grillenberger, Neudorf.
24. *The Ghana Assembly of the International Missionary Council*, ed. Ronald K. Orchard, 1958, p. 121.
25. The question in what sense we can legitimately speak of the Church as the "new Israel" needs careful clarification. There is no such concept in the New Testament. When John A. Mackay says, "The Christian Church, amid all the diversities of her structural form, and underlying all the ecclesiological theories that seek to define her nature, is inescapably, as Paul said, the 'new Israel' " (op. cit., p. 119), he goes beyond what is warranted. He would find it extremely difficult to produce a text to prove his case. For the whole subject, see J. Jocz, *A Theology of Election*, 1958, pp. 120 ff; also Gregory Baum, *The Jews and the Gospel*, 1961, pp. 233 ff.

II. CHURCH WITHOUT MISSION

We now come from the theological perspective to the concrete historical fact of the Church. At this point "Christianity" takes over with its own specific values, ethos and dogmas. The Church as "Christianity" has frequently managed to exist without mission. This always happened when she became separated from Israel and understood herself as replacing God's disobedient people. In doing so she lost sight of her own disobedience.

Not that the Church could ever manage to be entirely without mission. Mission takes place within the Church herself whenever the Bible is read and the sermon is preached. But this is *localized* mission, the Church concentrating upon herself—it is not solidarity with sinners in the widest sense.

There have been periods in Church history when there was hardly an awareness of responsibility for the world. The missionary impulse in Protestantism derived from German pietism and the evangelical revival in Great Britain. Luther lacked a sense of the world mission and Melancthon limited the Great Commission to the times of the Apostles. At present we are experiencing a decline in missionary zeal which will become more evident as time goes on. Already in 1932 the Report *Re-thinking Missions* stated: "The old fervour appears to have been succeeded in some quarters by questionings if not by indifference."¹ The situation has anything but improved since then. Officially, we still have mission-boards, budgets, missionaries, and missionary reports, etc. But most of the people supporting missions are prompted by motives which have little to do with the profession that Jesus Christ is Lord. To the majority of church-people Christian missions express the philanthropic and cultural work of the Church. To them missions mean hospitals, schools, care for lepers, and adult literacy. This change of attitude reflects the change which has taken place in the atmosphere of the Church at home.

1. The Change from Christ to Religion

Changes in thinking take place by a slow and gradual process as ideas penetrate to the wider public. It is an imperceptible process except for those who have a keen enough eye. It would be difficult to pinpoint the exact time when the emphasis began to shift from the Christian faith towards universal religion. It seems to us that this gradual change coincided with the popularization of modern psychology and the science of comparative religion.

To this process theologians have made their own doubtful contribution mainly by equating the Christian faith with religious sentiment. The logic of such an equation demanded a universal denominator which would link "Christianity" to the world religions. The preparatory work was already done by Schleiermacher who defined the Christian faith in terms of religion, and defined religion in terms of sentiment: *Abhängigkeitsgefühl*—a "feeling of dependence".

There was an interval of some considerable length when philosophers "debunked" religion and psychologists frowned upon it. Speaking generally, this was the period from Ludwig Feuerbach to Sigmund Freud. At the height of Freud's influence, religion was looked upon as a pathological phenomenon. The situation changed with the ascendancy of Jungian psychology, especially after the Second World War. In some intellectual circles religion became suddenly respectable and even atheists began to advocate it.

It all began when Jung realized the therapeutic effect of religion and made use of it in his clinical work. "The relation of religion to consciousness", says Ira Progoff, "is one of the foci for Jung's diagnosis of the modern psychological situation."² Jung himself relates that in his work as a practising psychologist, he found that for people, especially for those in middle age, the religious problem is a major factor in their mental health.³ His insights were taken up with great alacrity by clergy who have vested interests in this particular field. It led to co-operation between priests and psychologists in hospitals and consulting rooms. It even influenced atheists to reconsider their attitude to this common human phenomenon. The result is that now everyone knows that "religion is good for you". "Almost everyone in the United States", writes Will Herberg, "today locates himself in one or another of the three great religious communities." But he explains quickly that this popularity of "Church membership does not mean the same today as it meant in the 18th and 19th centuries, when something of the older sense of personal conversion and commitment still remained".⁴ The modern religious quest is a new phenomenon: it is not a quest for God, in fact it is utterly this-worldly. Herberg says: "So thoroughly secularist has American religion become that the familiar distinction between religion and secularism appears to be losing much of its meaning under present-day conditions. Both the 'religionists' and the 'secularists' cherish the same basic values and organize their lives on the same fundamental assumptions—values and assumptions defined by the American Way of Life."⁵

This analysis by a Jewish writer is more than borne out by Martin E. Marty's book *The New Shape of American Religion* (1959). Dr Marty describes this new phenomenon of pseudo-Christianity by the term of "cultural religion". Professor William Hordern of the Garrett Biblical Institute, in his review of Marty's, book, summarizes the situation as follows: "Cultural religion takes the form of religion for religion's sake. It embraces the primary, social and cultural goals of society and gives to them religious sanction. God is highly extolled but he is seen as the God who is unquestionably 'on our side'. Cultural religion refuses to face questions about the particular nature of God." Americans are told "that it is fine to believe, but dangerous to proclaim boldly that we know in whom we have believed".⁶

This non-historical, non-propositional, non-theological, emotionally charged religiosity spurns not only denominational barriers but every form of particularism. It is the natural ally of religion wherever found. This new attitude was bound to have a profound effect upon the missionary situation. The already mentioned Hocking Report, *Re-Thinking Missions*, gave expression to the changing atmosphere within the Church when it subordinated the Christian faith under the general aspect of religion. It explicitly states that because Christianity by its essential nature is religion, it finds itself aligned with all other religions in the task of combating the anti-religious trends of our time. Because of the common danger, the report advises "every religion to be aware and to stand upon the common ground of all religion".⁷ In other words, according to the Hocking Report, this is not a time when religions can afford to compete with one another. If they want to survive, they must unite forces and together fight the enemy. Their differences are not important enough to keep them divided. In this situation of emergency it would be folly to disrupt the unity of purpose by proselytizing, especially when it is recognized that in the last resort all religions are after the same goal.

It is no accident that the writers of the Report have so much to say about the nature and function of religion⁸ and so little about the uniqueness of the Christian faith.

The recognition that religion is a natural human phenomenon which has its own *raison d'être* is now acknowledged by militant atheists, at least in the West. In our defence of "religion" we thus find ourselves embarrassed by an odd company of bed-fellows. Julian Huxley is the most outstanding spokesman of this group. In his book *Religion without Revelation* he makes a plea for the cause of religion on condition that it be dissociated from a "personal god".⁹ He wants unadulterated religion which would help man to attain "a sense of interpenetration with the reality around us", but without the traditional theological superstructure. There is an increasing group of religious atheists who hold similar ideas. Gerhard Szczesny feels justified in chiding the Church for standing in the way of genuine religion by holding on to old-fashioned theistic views. Here are his words: "As long as public opinion in the West insists that the world can be saved only by accepting Christian postulates as true, the period of unbelief will be prolonged and ever new generations will be driven to cynicism, superficiality and stupidity." This sounds like a sermon, but it is a sermon in favour of enlightened religious atheism. For Gerhard Szczesny "faith" is not faith in the God of the Bible but faith in Man.¹⁰

It may seem to us grotesque, but in fact there is nothing unusual about the alignment of atheism with religion. Inasmuch as religion expresses man's need to come to terms with the outside world, or according to John Dewey's definition, to achieve "effective union of the ideal with the actual", an atheist has every right to be religious. We know of an atheistic group in New York which meets regularly for religious exercises. It consists of a circle of Jewish people who do not believe in a personal god, but have religious needs as every one else. Their spokesman, Emil Weitzner, explains in his *Meditations of a Humanist* (1959), that they are held together by a common sense of mystery and wonder. They meet, he says, in order "to give expression to the continuum of their historic and spiritual heritage" as Jews, though they are unable to accept the idea of a deity. Out of loyalty to the past they use some of the biblical psalms but in a rewritten form so that the mention of God does not occur. It is in the literal sense of the word an expurgated text.¹¹

Thus Schleiermacher's *Speeches on Religion to its Cultured Despisers* has borne its fruit. "Cultured people" do not despise religion any more.¹² They have taken the great theologian at his word. Schleiermacher in the Second Speech set out "to show that all forms of religion, even the most imperfect, are the same in kind". This sub-stratum of religious sentiment which fascinated Schleiermacher was skilfully analysed by William James from a psychological point of view, and was provided with a pseudo-theological content by Rudolf Otto. From now on the *Idea of the Holy* is reduced to the experience of the *numinous* and "experimental" religion has become the vogue. Here is the bridge which links "Christianity" to the rest of the world-religions and makes missions appear ridiculous, if not hypocritical. No wonder that Professor Hocking's "Report" amounts to the suggestion that the missionary effort be gradually discontinued.¹³

2. Nationalized Christianity

Ours is essentially a godless age. Our whole civilization is bent upon material comfort. Scientific man finds it next to impossible to believe in God, except by *a sacrificium intellectus*. Ours is a dead god and all we have left is Man. The contemporary preoccupation with race, nationhood, anthropology, folk-lore, archaeology, etc., somehow relates to this fact that we are people bereft of God and are left to our own resources. God being unreal to us we have to fall

back upon ourselves. The primeval instinct of survival drives us back to the herd. "Race" not in the scientific sense, but in the primitive biological sense is the most potent factor in modern consciousness. J. H. Oldham in his study *Christianity and the Race Problem*, quotes the author of *Race and National Solidarity* (1923), C. C. Josey, to the effect that the Western peoples are torn between two conflicting desires. On the one hand they carry the vision of white supremacy inherited from the older conceptions of imperialism, while on the other hand they are impeded by ideals of justice and humanity. Dr Josey's advice is to brush aside all scruples as an expression of weakness and to adopt a policy of domination.¹⁴

From history we know that the white man requires no especial encouragement. His Christianity was never in the way of his racial expansion. The pious Spaniards knew how to deal with the Aztecs in Mexico; the early settlers managed to decimate the Red Indian population of North America; the Protestant South were not troubled in their Christian conscience by the cruelties of Negro slave labour; the South African Church endorses the policy of *apartheid*. Wherever the white man goes, he leaves behind him a legacy of cruelty and resentment.

The unfortunate alliance between the white man and Christianity is the tragedy of the Church. J. H. Oldham quotes a passage from Graham Wallas' book, *Human Nature and Politics* (1920), which carries the incontrovertible, indictment of Christianity.

"Christianity", says Graham Wallas, "has conspicuously failed even to produce a tolerable working compromise" of the problem of race relationships. As to the practical question "whether the stronger race should base its plans of extension on the extermination of the weaker race, or on an attempt, within the limits of racial possibility, to improve it, Christians have during the nineteenth century, been infinitely more ruthless than Mohammedans, though their ruthlessness has often been disguised by more or less conscious hypocrisy".¹⁵ On this question of race relationships, Protestants seem to be more vulnerable than are Roman Catholics. Oldham admits that "the Roman Catholic Church has in this matter been truer to the genius of Christianity than the Protestant bodies".¹⁶ The fact that a Christian writer had to devote a book to provide scriptural evidence "in order to prove that segregation is not according to the Bible", as Dr Everett Tilson has done¹⁷ damns Protestants before the bar of humanity. On the question of race Islam puts the "Wasps" to shame. "White Anglo-Saxon Protestantism" is a parody of the Christian faith and our deep-felt sympathy is with the American Negro who turns away in disgust from this form of pseudo-Christianity. He is offered truer fellowship and a deeper sense of brotherhood in the Mosque than he has ever known among Christians. It is here that Kierkegaard's caustic saying becomes relevant: "The fundamental misfortune of Christianity is Christendom", for "Christendom" to him was nothing else but "a conspiracy against the Christianity of the N.T." It is on the vital question of race that the conspiracy becomes most apparent.

The Toronto daily newspaper, *The Telegram*, published a documentary report on the racial problem in South Africa by Ken MacTaggart, 27 June to 16 July 1956. The paragraph dealing with the attitude of the Church carries the legend "White superiority backed by the Church". The most shameful aspect of the situation is to be found in the hypocritical language the South African Church was using in order to justify her attitude. It supports *apartheid* on the feeble argument that unity cannot be enforced upon the members, and that weaker members of the Church must not be given cause for stumbling. The basic question of right and wrong is not even

discussed. When Anglicans and Roman Catholics have spoken against *apartheid* they were immediately dubbed *uitlanders*—"foreigners". Here "Christian" and Boer are synonymous terms and the Church is appropriated as a national institution. We have chosen South Africa because it serves as an extreme example. The other "national Churches" show similar prejudice though in a less overt form.¹⁸

Ken MacTaggart records an interview with a young South African Negro who concluded his remarks about the Church with the following words: "I hate to say it, but I can't believe in your Christianity any longer."¹⁹ Who could?

It seems to us that J. H. Oldham is begging the question when he suggests that the failure of the Church is in some degree due to the fact that she never made a serious intellectual effort "to relate her conceptions of life to the actual conditions of modern society".²⁰ The problem goes much deeper, and Oldham tacitly admits it when he makes allowance for the fact that the Church does not really exist except "in part". His words deserve to be quoted in full: "The Church which we may set in opposition to race antagonisms is not simply the Church that is, with all its painful limitations and imperfection, but the Church also that is waiting to be born."²¹ In other words, the Church is and is not at the same time. At every moment in history she is at the crucial point of remaining hidden as the Church of our faith or becoming evident as the Body of Jesus Christ. In the act of submitting to the Lordship of Jesus Christ she becomes the Church, otherwise she remains "Christendom" in the Kierkegaardian sense.

3. Cultural Christianity

To complete the picture, culture must be added as the third element belonging to the pattern of human existence. Religion, race, and culture represent forces which mould man's life and determine his place in society.

It is almost impossible to decide what is meant by "culture". The dictionary suggests "training or discipline by which man's moral and intellectual nature is elevated". But this does not allow for the difference in the wide variety of national cultures. National culture, such as French or English culture, would have to include something that is specifically French or English. To this, a flavour of "Christianity" would have to be added, for Christian values have to a large extent influenced Western culture, so much so, that till quite recently it was still the custom to speak of the "Christian nations" of the West.

Kierkegaard in a famous passage makes use of the Christmas game of "star-gazing" to illustrate the fallacy of "cultural Christianity". The question is asked: "Whose pledge is this?" Answer: "This is Mr X's pledge." "What shall the forfeit be?" Answer: "He shall go into a dark room and gaze at stars." Kierkegaard imagines twenty-five people engaged in the game. Each one in turn enters the dark room. The first is a clergyman. He is asked to answer in all honesty the question: "Art thou a Christian?" He admits: "I am not really a Christian." The same admission is made by each of the other participants individually, but when they reassemble in the drawing-room their attitude immediately changes: "Yes, naturally, we are indeed all of us Christians, we are a Christian nation . . ."

This is the difference: individually each person knows of his inadequacy as a Christian, but collectively they fall under the spell of an illusion. Here Christianity in terms of culture takes the place of Christianity in terms of obedience and faith. This cultural aspect of "Christianity" may

be described as religion in the aggregate with a slight admixture of Christianity taken at its lowest level.

Culture, like religion and race, is something all people have. It is indigenous and does not need to be imported. Christianity therefore in terms of culture cannot be a missionary faith. It is tied to ethnic tradition and history, and is geographically confined.

Since Paul Tillich and the Niebuhrs have made the problem of culture a theological issue, the subject has attracted wide attention. The situation has changed since the time of Kierkegaard. Our present problem is not how to relate the Christian faith to what used to be called "Christian culture", but how to relate Christianity to modern, secular culture. H. Richard Niebuhr is fully aware of the complexity of the situation and the danger involved in a compromise. He warns: "We must not say, 'Both Christ and culture', as though there were no great distinction between them; but we must say 'Both Christ and culture', in full awareness of the dual nature of our law, our end and our situation."²³

There are at least three good reasons for the Niebuhrs to take the quest after a synthesis between Christianity and culture seriously. (a) It is within the tradition of the Church to assimilate secular culture and to make it subservient to spiritual ends; (b) Christians cannot afford to live a divided life between culture and faith, or else, take refuge in obscurantism; (c) For the liberal theologian culture itself is a manifestation of God's revelation to man.²⁴ It belongs to both realms, the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom, and therefore applies to both reason and revelation.²⁵

The case of Reinhold Niebuhr is more complicated. Though an outspoken critic of modern culture, yet he believes in the revelatory character of cultural values because the "hidden Christ operates in history".²⁶ He therefore deplors "the tendency towards obscurantism" in the Lutheran and Calvinist Reformation and looks upon this fact as "a contributory cause of the defeat of the Reformation by the Renaissance".²⁷ To restore the balance he therefore suggests a "new synthesis" which "incorporates the twofold aspects of grace of biblical religion, and adds the light which modern history, and the Renaissance and the Reformation interpretations of History, have thrown upon the paradox of grace".²⁸

The important phrase in this complicated sentence is the reference to the "twofold aspects of grace". It is remarkable how in every area of theological endeavour the particular concept of revelation is always intruding. Here as elsewhere, the assumption is the same: special revelation in the Bible, general revelation outside the biblical sphere, so that both aspects ultimately coincide and become complementary. Not that Reinhold Niebuhr is unaware of the limits in the area of co-operation between grace and culture. He knows that grace must maintain the supremacy over all cultural pursuits, otherwise there is the danger of idolatry.²⁹ In our age this would especially apply to the realm of science. Yet, because Niebuhr is convinced that civilization itself bears evidence of revelation, of the power of God, who "hath chosen . . . the things which are not, to bring to nought things that are",³⁰ a synthesis is both necessary and possible.

Apart from a rather unusual misapplication of a text which belongs to a completely different, context, Reinhold Niebuhr's mistake is the perennial mistake of theologians: the breaking asunder of revelation into special and general.

A similar synthesis though in a less guarded manner is attempted by Paul Tillich.

In this essay "Religion and Secular Culture", Tillich expresses the conviction that it is possible to close the gap "by a fresh interpretation of the mutual immanence of religion and culture within each other".³¹ It may be questioned, however, whether there is a gap at all according to Tillich. He tells us that "religion is the substance of culture and culture the form of religion". True enough, he makes a distinction between "autonomous" man "as the bearer of universal reason" and the "theonomous" man whose innermost law is "rooted in the divine ground". But oddly enough, the divine ground "is man's own ground" and the divine law which transcends man is at the same time man's own law. We meet here Tillich's principle of "correlation" which blurs the distinction between God and man, revelation and culture.

Admittedly, "cultural theologians" have a legitimate concern: they aim at preserving the wholeness of life. Tillich insists that "religion is more than a system of special symbols, rites, and emotions, directed towards a highest being; religion is ultimate concern; it is the state of being grasped by something unconditional, holy, absolute. As such it gives meaning, seriousness, and depth to all culture and creates out of the cultural material a religious culture of its own."³² But this striving after wholeness, human as it is, halts at the point of biblical revelation. The Eternal Logos breaks through history and leaves it open. The Voice from above has no "correlation", it does not speak within culture but *to* culture, it is not immanent but external to us. Divine speech is not along the lines of human speech but produces disruption. This vertical aspect of revelation puts culture, whether "theonomous" or not, in a different light. Thus seen, culture frequently means entrenchment or escape from God. "Man's ultimate concern" is likely to turn out to be a concern to escape both judgement *and* grace.

The human flight to the citadel of culture from the living God is depicted in the Bible as the attempt to build the city of Babel. It stands for human autonomy and rebellion. This does not mean that there is an eternal contradiction between culture and grace. But on this side of history synthesis is not possible. Man's destiny, it seems, is to live in tension between the two—the living God and the gods of his own creation.

It may well be that we are mistaken to treat culture as a noun. Culture is not a "something", it is an activity, a verb, it is the way man lives in society and the way he is moulded by it. If we grant the sinfulness of human nature, then culture is a most subtle expression of man's autonomy in the face of God. There are, however, aspects of culture which do credit to man; this we readily admit.³³ But like religion and race, culture frequently becomes an end in itself and so acquires the character of idolatry. Culture does not exist apart from man; the blame is not with culture but with man.

We have briefly discussed three important aspects of human life. Religion, race, and culture are the moulds in which man is fashioned. The Gospel comes as a challenge to man's assumed security, his repose in himself. The result of the challenge is that religion, race, and culture combine to assure autonomy both to the individual and to the nation. It is in this context that the Church is tested to the uttermost. It is here that her rebellion becomes most visible. Again, the fundamental issue is the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Church without mission means Church in repose, where the Lordship of Jesus Christ is not any more an important issue. Such a Church has surrendered to the opposition and lives by an uneasy compromise. She still talks about Jesus Christ, but only in terms of religion, race, and culture. It is in confrontation with Judaism, the classical exponent of religion, race, and culture, that she discovers herself as the twin sister to the

Synagogue. In Judaism she faces her true counterpart. The Gospel interpreted in the categories of religion, race, and culture makes the Church the Gentile Synagogue. Here mission, if pursued at all, is not motivated by the Lordship of Jesus Christ, but by purely humanitarian considerations. In this case the Church has no *mission*, only an obligation to less fortunate nations.

The fact that the missionary movement within the Church was begun and carried on by individuals corroborates the observation that in history the Church was frequently without a sense of mission, and that Church and mission do not necessarily coincide. But whenever the Church finds herself without mission, then the Lordship of Jesus Christ is at stake, and she approximates most closely to the Synagogue. Christianity as religion, race, and culture finds it difficult to relate Church to mission. The implications of this fact the Church discovers in confrontation with the Synagogue. By discovering her true opposite, she discovers herself in her historical ambiguity: Church without mission means Church without the Lordship of Jesus Christ, which ultimately means non-Church.

Notes to Chapter II

1. *Rethinking Missions: A Layman's Inquiry*, 1932, p. ix.
2. Ira Progoff, *Jung's Psychology and its Social Meaning*, 1953, p. 209.
3. Cf. C. G. Jung, *Psychological Types*, E.T., 1944. pp. 300 ff.
4. Will Herberg, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew*, 1956, pp. 59, 61.
5. Will Herberg, op. cit., p. 287.
6. *Canadian Journal of Theology*, April 1961, p. 87.
7. *Re-thinking Missions*, p. 33. Cf. the fine article by George Johnston, "A Review and Restatement of Missions", *Canadian Journal of Theology*, vol. IX (1963) no. 4. Dr Johnston has shown how much is at stake when the Church ceases to concern herself with missions. He says: "When I reflect on this problem, I am bound to state that the catholic and apostolic faith of the N.T. and the early Church has mission at its very heart" (p. 236).
8. Cf. pp. 18, 25, 27, 29, 30, 37, 44, 47, etc.
9. Julian Huxley, *Religion without Revelation*, revised ed. 1957, pp. 22 ff, 189 f.
10. Gerhard Szczesny (Frederick Heer), *The Future of Unbelief*, 1961, pp. 220 f.
11. Cf. Emil Weitzer, *Meditations of a Humanist*, N.Y. 1959.
12. Robert Gordis defines religion as "man's sense of relationship to the world and the forms, both individual and collective, for expressing this relationship". (*A Faith for Moderns*, 1960, p. 61).
13. Cf. *Re-thinking Missions*, p. 102. The more recent article by W. Norman Pittenger, "In Defence of Universal Salvation", in *The Christian Century*, though with greater theological elaboration arrives at a similar position as does the Report: "I believe that we must extend the notion of salvation to include that which comes to men from all sources and by all channels, to bring about their restoration to their true (i.e. God-intended) nature . . ." (*The Christian Century*, 7 June, 1961, p. 709).
14. J. H. Oldham, *Christianity and the Race Problem*, 1925, pp. 13 f.
15. J. H. Oldham, op. cit., 1925, p. 96.

16. Ibid., p. 263. More recently the Roman Church has applied the discipline of excommunication to persons of a segregationist group; cf. *Christianity Today*, 11 May, 1962, pp. 37 f. Racial prejudice is acutest in predominantly Protestant lands like South Africa and the Southern States of North America. Mr John Howard Griffin, though a non-Protestant himself, does not exaggerate when he presents the Southern Protestant more prone to a racist attitude than is the Roman Catholic. (Cf. *Black Like Me*, Houghton Muffin Co., Boston 1961). Samuel Southard in an article, "Are the Southern Churches Silent?" admits that for the most part they are. He offers as an explanation: (a) the timidity of the pastors who strive to maintain "numerical and financial gains"; (b) the limitation of church members who are unable to discern the connection between the love of God and the love of neighbour (*The Christian Century*, 20 November 1963, pp. 14, 29 ff).
17. Everett Tilson, *Segregation and the Bible*, 1958. For the struggle of Negroes to end racial discrimination see Langston Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, 1962.
18. For a fuller picture of the South African situation, see Rhona Churchill, *White Man's God*, with a preface by the then Archbishop of Cape Town, Dr Joost de Blank, Hodder and Stoughton, London 1962. Here is one single statement in a book crammed with indictment of White Christianity: "The white Christians, like those of nearly every Protestant community in the Union, practice strict colour-bar Christianity. They refuse to take communion with 'smelly Kaffirs'. They do not permit coloured children (half whites) to attend their Sunday Schools, or coloured families to join Church outings. They do not allow black priests to mount their pulpits" (p. 81). Miss Churchill points out that the rule applies to all white people, Roman Catholics and Anglicans included. The leaders may raise objections to the colour-bar but the rank and file uphold it without scruple. For a more recent statement of the problem see the article by the editor of *Christianity Today*, "South Africa's Race Dilemma" (*Christianity Today*, 9 January 1964).
19. What the attitude over race in the United States does to the missionary endeavour of the Church abroad was set forth with great clarity in a recent article by Ross Coggins, "Missions and Prejudice", in *Christianity Today*, 17 January 1964. Mr Coggins asks the embarrassing question: "What profound dichotomy has enabled many Christians to believe in world missions abroad and racial discrimination at home?"
20. Oldham, op. cit., p. 237.
21. Ibid., p. 260.
22. Cf. W. Lowrie, *Kierkegaard*, pp. 527 f.
23. H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, p. 129.
24. It may seem unjust to class Reinhold Niebuhr among "liberal theologians" in view of his consistent and vigorous protests against liberal theology. But the term "liberal" is wide enough to include him in its ranks. His affinity with liberal theology was shown by D. D. Williams; cf. *Reinhold Niebuhr: His Religious, Social and Political Thought*, ed. C. W. Kegley and R. W. Bretall, 1961, especially pp. 203 f. Cf. however, Paul Lehmann's essay: "The Christology of Reinhold Niebuhr", *ibid.*, p. 255. Lehmann credits Professor Niebuhr with reversing "the Christological orientation of theological liberalism".

25. Ibid., p. 128. For H. R. Niebuhr's theological position, especially with regard to culture, see Kenneth Cauthen, "An Introduction to the Theology of H. R. Niebuhr", *Canadian Journal of Theology*, January 1964.
26. *The Nature and Destiny of Man II*, p. 109n.
27. Ibid., p. 204.
28. Ibid., pp. 207 f.
29. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 209.
30. Ibid., p. 304.
31. Paul Tillich, *The Protestant Era*, 1951, p. 61.
32. Ibid., p. 65.
33. Jacques Maritain (*On the Philosophy of History*, 1957, pp. 142 f) discusses the positive aspects of culture from a Thomist point of view.

III. THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN ENCOUNTER

Church and Synagogue have faced each other for centuries. It was and still is an uneasy encounter. The very fact that the two faiths derive from a common root makes for tension. Originally Christianity made its appearance as a Jewish sect. To some Christian converts Judaism seemed an attractive alternative, so much so that they had to be warned against it. The tract by Commodianus, *Instructiones per litteras versuum primas* (circa second half of third century), pokes fun at Gentile Christians who have fallen for the Law and practise a kind of semi-Judaism: "What!" he exclaims, "art thou half a Jew? Wilt thou be half profane? Thou goest to those from whom thou canst learn nothing."¹ The attraction for educated Gentiles still is that Judaism has all the advantages of a cultured religion and none of the disadvantages peculiar to the Christian faith.

The encounter between Church and Synagogue was never by choice. Neither party has ever sought the other except for purposes of conversion. This applies more to the Church than to the Synagogue as the latter was forced to give up proselytizing at an early stage. But there is reason to believe that the encounter has a providential aspect and is not merely accidental.

1. The Messiah

Church and Synagogue always meet in an atmosphere of tension. The effort to neutralize the tension is a modern phenomenon and a reflection upon both parties. This does not mean that the two faiths can speak to each other only in a spirit of hostility, but it does mean that their encounter carries a hidden dialectic of question and answer. Such a dialectic already belongs to the historic setting of the Gospel and underlies the story of the New Testament. The tension derives from the fact that Israel became divided on the question of the Messiah.

The issue was not only whether Jesus was *the* Messiah, but the even more complicated question as to the implications of Messiahship as such. The whole controversy with the "Jews" in the Fourth Gospel turns on this point.² The polemic behind the Johannine Gospel is not so much concerned with the claims to Messiahship on the part of Jesus as with the fact that these claims stand in direct opposition to traditional Jewish ideas. Because the New Testament views of Messiahship are inseparable from the person of Jesus Christ, he constitutes the centre of division between the Johannine "Jews" and those who accept the challenge of Christ's discipleship.

That Jesus met with bitter opposition cannot seriously be denied. It is also part of the genuine tradition of the Gospels that to follow the Master implied carrying a cross (cf. Mark 8: 31-4). The statement: "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master . . . If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more will they malign those of his household" (Matt. 10:24 f), reflects a genuine situation within the early Church. The breaking of Israel within two opposing camps took place over the person of Jesus of Nazareth. To some he became a stone of offence, to others the means of salvation. This is how the early Church understood the passage in Ps. 118:22: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone" (cf. Mark 12:10 and parallels; Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7). The division which came about as a result of the messianic controversy is reflected in the words which Luke puts into the mouth of old Simeon: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and the rising of many in Israel, and

for a sign to be spoken against . . . that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed." (Luke 2:34 f).

It is only natural that the early Church should understand the dividing of the ways in the prophetic context of judgement and grace: to the unbelievers the Gospel becomes judgement, while to the believers it spells grace. This is how the text in Isa. 6:10 is interpreted: "Make the heart of this people fat and their ears heavy and shut their eyes . . ." (Mark 4:12 and parallel). The attitude to Jesus reveals whether a man is on the side of darkness or light. Such at any rate is the Johannine argument.

When we ask what there was about Jesus that caused offence, the Gospels answer unanimously: His extraordinary claims to authority. At bottom the clash between Jesus and the Jewish leaders turns on this question: "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" (Mark 11:28 and parallel). The question of **ἐξουσία** (authority) looms large in the controversy. The authority which Jesus exercised by word and deed constituted an offence to the religious Jew. Those who submitted to the authority of Jesus expressed their obedience by calling him "Lord". In the Johannine Gospel **Κύριος** (Lord) is more than a courtesy title and carries definite overtones to the tetragrammaton as is already indicated by the peculiar use of the phrase **ἐγώ εἰμι** (I am).³

For a short time Church and Synagogue coexisted side by side; the difference was only gradually realized. In the letter of James, the Church still thinks of herself as the Synagogue, though with a difference. The same probably holds true for the book of Revelation. It is important to bear in mind that belief in the Messiahship of Jesus by itself constituted no offence and could not be the cause of separation. What constituted the offence was the kind of Messiah Jesus claimed to be and this is closely related to the question of **ἐξουσία**.

In principle, Judaism has no reason to object to the "prophet" of Nazareth. It has, however, every reason to object to the Pauline and Johannine Christ. It cannot do otherwise in view of its total commitment to the Unity of God. The Christian understanding of Messiahship constitutes an intolerable disruption to Israel's faith. To give way on this point spells the dissolution of the Synagogue. No religious Jew can call Jesus Lord in the Pauline or Johannine sense. Hippolytus describes as the special characteristic of a certain section of the Essene party that they refused to call anyone "Lord" except the Deity "even though one should put them to the torture, or even kill them".⁴ The profession that Jesus is Lord in the New Testament sense constitutes the dividing line between Church and Synagogue. Here Messiahship carries connotations which go far beyond what is admissible to Judaism.

The bridging of the gulf between the two faiths can be accomplished only at the point of a diminution of traditional christology. The peculiar bias of the Christian Faith towards Jesus as the Son of God in the unique and special sense, would have to give way to a more rational attitude. Jews do not object to Jesus as the teacher, the saint, the prophet, or even the Messiah. Some outstanding Jewish thinkers like Leo Baeck, Martin Buber, Hans Joachim Schoeps, and Franz Rosenzweig are willing to concede that Jesus is the Messiah of the Gentile world. Much of Sholem Asch's work on the Christian phenomenon is based on this premiss. Though in the mind of Jewish thinkers Jesus is not the ultimate Messiah for whom Israel prays, yet his appearance

carries messianic significance in that he brought the nations nearer to the God of Israel. This was already the view of enlightened rabbis in the Middle Ages.⁵

But for the Church to reduce her high christology in order to accommodate the Synagogue would spell dissolution. She stands and falls with the confession that Jesus is Lord. Lev Gillet has attempted to write a bridge theology on the basis of our common messianic hope. He speaks of the possibility of "a real 'Messianic communion' " founded upon the messianic expectation of both Church and Synagogue. But Gillet admits that such a "communion" would have to be a compromise, especially on the Christian side, since "from the strict Christian standpoint, what could be a 'Messianic communion' that was not, from both sides, a 'communion in the Messiah'?" he asks.⁶

It is a matter of fact that a bridge theology spanned between the two faiths always means a compromise for the Church on the basic issue, namely the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Confrontation with the Synagogue therefore always forces us back upon the central problem: What is meant by "Christianity"?

2. Christianity

In the view of this writer "Christianity" is an ambiguous term, but we use it deliberately in order to remind ourselves of Harnack's famous lectures: *Das Wesen des Christentums*. Perhaps the most fitting description of this remarkable, even moving essay, is Harnack's own phrase: "erlebte Religion".⁷ It is a phrase not easily translated, for it means more than "experienced religion". By it Harnack means to describe the kind of religious experience which deeply affects the whole person. He believes that such an experience resulted from the disciples' encounter with Jesus of Nazareth. In this sense Jesus was truly the channel of conveying knowledge of God. He was able to do this by reason of his own unique relationship to, and awareness of, God the Father. In Harnack's own words: "His consciousness, to be the Son of God, is therefore nothing else but the practical result of the knowledge of God as Father and as his Father."⁸ Though Harnack recognizes the impossibility of fathoming Jesus' self-consciousness, yet he believes it possible to deduce from a careful reading of the Gospels as to his self-understanding (*Selbstzeugnis*). Thus it would appear that Jesus regarded himself as the Way to the Father, the one ordained by the Father to act as judge.⁹ But once we ask the question as to the core of the *euangelion* which Jesus preached, Harnack resolutely answers: "*Not the Son, but only the Father belongs to the Gospel which Jesus annunciated.*"¹⁰ It means that the centre of the Gospel is not the Person of Jesus but the message which he brings. That message, for Harnack, consists of three basic cycles of thought: the Kingdom of God; the Fatherhood of God and the eternal value of the human soul; the "better" righteousness and the commandment of love.¹¹

Rabbi Leo Baeck who wrote a careful critique of Harnack's *Das Wesen des Christentums* accused the distinguished scholar of misrepresentation. His point is that the title is misleading: this is not the Essence of Christianity but of Harnack's Christianity or Harnack's religion.¹² There is an undeniable truth in this contention. "Christianity" is here understood from the vantage point of a nineteenth-century idealist.¹³ What Harnack is after is pure religion purged of all alloys. Because he believed that this was the very purpose of Jesus' preaching he regards the Gospel not any more as religion, but as the very essence of it.¹⁴ The message which Jesus lived and preached

was: "God as Father and the human soul as ennobled so that it is able to unite with Him and does so unite."¹⁵

Here the "fusion" of the divine and the human is complete. This is the goal of all mystical experience and religious endeavour. At this point there is indeed a bridge thrown from the New Testament to the world religions. Now we understand what Harnack means by "erlebte Religion". Religious experience is the common denominator and brings "Christianity" in line with the other religions. The name of Jesus is still retained; the Bible is still the religious book; but the specificity of the Person of Jesus Christ is dissolved in the sea of religion. Though we may still call him the Son of God, as Harnack does, what we really mean is not the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, but Jesus the religious genius.

Pan-religion is the atmosphere of the twentieth century. Even atheists have caught the vision of a thoroughly secularized religious outlook.¹⁶ The opening address by Canon M. A. C. Warren at the Anglican Congress in Toronto, August 1963, is an interesting example of the corroding influence of religion upon Christian thought. "God has revealed himself in divers manners," says Canon Warren, "the God of a hundred names is still God . . . 'in the beginning' of every religious experience is God. . ."¹⁷ The editor of the Toronto *Globe and Mail* was quick to recognize the implications of Canon Warren's syncretism. Referring to Archbishop Dubois of France who at the Vatican Council expressed similar sentiments, the editor observed that these men "seem to be preparing to abandon that most stubborn dogma of all religious faiths which reads, I am right and therefore you are wrong. If the attitude becomes general, religion might cease to divide the world's people. In the end it might help to unite them."¹⁸ It is obvious that the editor is more concerned with unity than truth. His assumption is that religion freed from all particularity will dissolve into a sentiment of goodwill. This is the dream of every idealist. In this case mission is a pernicious undertaking, unless it is mission of religion in general.

3. The Challenge of Judaism

In a general atmosphere of religious sentiment the missionary work of the Church looks ridiculous if not mischievous. If religion were the goal, then we are trying to convey something the nations already have in abundance. It is like "taking coal to Newcastle". We might of course, take the position that it is not a matter of religion but of the "best religion". We must confess that this was frequently the argument. It is therefore wholesome for the Church to discover that as far as religion is concerned, Judaism has no peer.

There was a time, especially in Germany, when Judaism was deprecated as an inferior religion. Jewish scholars have laboured hard to prove the contrary and have largely succeeded. It is not any more the fashion to speak lightly of the Synagogue's faith.

Judaism is upheld by a great spiritual tradition. Because of its unitarian monotheism it is philosophically and metaphysically more palatable than is Christianity. Its ethical code is better adjusted to daily life than are the unattainable standards of the Sermon on the Mount. Judaism is free from cumbersome dogmas and demands no sacrifice of the intellect. It is pleasantly this-worldly without being over-indulgent. It stands for man's dignity and self-reliance and can boast high moral achievements in personal and family life. In fact, Judaism shows all the advantages of a cultured, ethical, and intelligent religion without the disadvantages peculiar to other religious systems—Christianity included.

a) Integrated Religion.

Judaism has managed to achieve a degree of integration between religion, race, and culture unequalled in history. While Christianity is plagued by an evil conscience in the matter of race, the Synagogue has no such problem. The Church finds herself in a contradictory situation: theoretically she stands for universalism. She proclaims that Christ died for all men and that believers are brothers irrespective of race or culture. But in practice, Christendom is deeply divided nationally. In addition, colour constitutes an almost insuperable barrier which the Church has not managed to overcome. Judaism never suffered from a similar dichotomy, mainly because the Synagogue frankly acknowledges her ethnic roots. Liberal Judaism has tried for a time to loosen the national ties, but the establishment of the Israeli State is now reversing the trend. It is true that some rabbis are still anti-Zionist and appeal to the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, but their numbers are diminishing.¹⁹ Rabbi Charles E. Shulman in his contradiction of Sussman's position is more true to the genius of Judaism when he affirms that "the rebirth of the Jewish national consciousness is inseparable from Judaism". He points out that the Reform Prayer Book now has a prayer for the builders of Zion and that the Conference of 1937 with its Columbus Platform has "practically reversed" the Pittsburgh attitude. The whole weight of Jewish tradition is on Shulman's side in accordance with the Talmudic dictum: "Israel and Torah and God are one." Shulman speaks within the context of Jewish life when he maintains that "peoplehood is an essential part of any definition of Judaism."²⁰

Jewish leaders have consistently maintained that Judaism is not for export. It is indigenous to an ethnic group which has evolved its own characteristic religious culture. It is therefore with good reason that Rabbi Shulman is able to speak of Zionism as "a religious revival" which in a certain sense is "a path leading to the attainment of a Jewish culture". Some Jewish writers may deplore "the confusion of ethnicity and theology", as does A. A. Cohen,²¹ but within Jewish experience these two strands are inseparably welded. There are still sporadic efforts to proselytize, but this is usually done by individuals, and the community has no part in it.²²

In essence, mission work among non-Jews runs contrary to Jewish thinking. The Synagogue does not believe that man needs to be "saved". God has made man free and endowed him with all he needs to lead a reasonable and righteous life. If man fails to live up to his better knowledge, it is his own fault and he must take the blame. No Gentile therefore need become a Jew in order to find God. Judaism and all other religions ultimately lead to the same goal. It is an ancient opinion of the Synagogue that the righteous of the nations will inherit '*olam ha-ba*', literally the "world to come", i.e. eternal bliss. All that God requires of man is a righteous life.

Jews regard it an imposition to be invited to join a foreign faith and in return they refrain from missionary activities. For them religion is indigenous to a people and is determined by birth.

b) Religious Autonomy.

Judaism views with surprise the Christian affirmation that God breaks into history and disrupts it. The Synagogue does not believe that God interferes personally in human affairs except by way of general providence. The King of kings reigns from above without having to stoop down to the human level.²³ Judaism is free of all mythology. It sees no need for God to come down in the disguise of a man to save the world. In fact, it does not see any need for

salvation: every nation has its law which makes for righteousness and Israel has the *Torah*. Every individual is equipped with the knowledge of good and evil and must be held responsible for his deeds. Judaism is not troubled by the conflict between religion, philosophy, and science, for all knowledge comes from God who is the source of wisdom.

The presupposition behind this attitude is man's freedom of choice. For this reason the emphasis is not upon the vision of God but upon the Commandments. The discipline of the Law covers the whole horizon of Jewish thought. Though Liberal Judaism has shifted the emphasis from rabbinic to moral law, it is still law which is the regulating principle of human action.

Underlying the concept of the Law is the supposition that man, if he so wills, is capable of keeping it. This makes for his autonomy: he does not need to be "saved", he stands and falls with his deeds. A Jew is no "miserable offender" like the Anglican, nor is he "totally depraved" like the Calvinist. He is a person created in the image of God, conscious of his dignity and proud of his inheritance. The Synagogue's liturgy does not begin with a confession of sin but with a song of praise. The Christian concept of sin as a state into which man is born is totally foreign to the Synagogue. When the rabbis speak of sin they mean only trespasses.²⁴

Judaism is a wholesome religion, rational, uninhibited, and human. Here there is no dialectic between spirit and matter, no strain between time and eternity, no dualism between holy and profane. The Synagogue's faith does not rest upon a paradox but upon reason. It therefore makes a specially strong appeal to the exaggerated sense of man's own importance. Judaism treats man seriously; it appeals to his heroic instinct and tells him bluntly: "He can for he must". In Judaism we meet religious man emancipated, self-reliant, and autonomous. Here man fends for himself and takes full responsibility for his deeds. He does not need to be "saved" for he saves himself.

4. The Issue at Stake

The question must be posed: Why did the Church ever separate from its Jewish moorings?

Let it be said at once that "Judaism" is by no means a characteristic phenomenon confined to the Jewish people. If we were to make a careful examination, a large proportion of Church people think in Jewish categories. By their religious concepts, by their attitude to race, tradition, and culture, and in their understanding of God, sin, and man, many "Christians" spiritually belong to the Synagogue. The whole movement of Unitarianism is in reality Judaism in a Gentile setting. It is the misfortune of many "Christians" to have been born Gentiles. They carry the label "Christian" by reason of their family tradition, but in their thought-forms and attitudes they are nearer the Synagogue than the Church. Once we seek to determine the line of division we raise immediately the question of the specifically Christian categories.

From our study of Christian origins we are driven to the conclusion that the Church never tried to separate herself from the Synagogue. She was forced out of the Jewish community for reasons which made coexistence impossible. The Hebrew Christians held views which constituted an intolerable offence to Jewish susceptibilities. There were three major issues which decided the parting of the way: (a) the person of Jesus Christ; (b) the question of the Law; (c) the position of the Gentiles.

a) *The Person of Jesus Christ.*

We have already pointed out that faith in the Messiahship of Jesus constituted no offence. It was also no offence for somebody to claim that he is the Messiah.. All that was necessary was to substantiate the claim. Much of the Gospel evidence is an effort to prove the Messiahship of Jesus. The difficulty lies in the fact that the New Testament idea of Messiahship runs contrary to traditional Jewish views. Jesus reveals himself the kind of Messiah who directly contradicts Jewish messianic hopes. The Johannine tradition makes Jesus say to Pilate, "My kingship is not of this world" (John 18:36). Behind this sentence is the story of a bitter polemic between the Christian minority which acclaimed a crucified Messiah and Jewish public opinion which attached quite different hopes to the advent of the messianic age.

To this must be added the extraordinary position the Christian community allotted to the person of the Messiah. Quite early in the development of the Church Jesus was accorded the title of **Κύριος** with a connotation bordering on divine honours, a fact most offensive to the religious Jew. There is good reason to believe that when Paul arrived on the scene, there was already in vogue a christology which was characteristically Christian. This fact goes back to the very beginning of the movement and is inseparable from the unusual authority which Jesus assumed. To become a disciple carried a connotation of obedience far beyond the ordinary relationship of leader and follower. Jesus occupied a position in the life and thought of his disciples which can only be described as charged with religious significance. The proof of this is in the fact that their faith persisted even *after* the Crucifixion. The profession that Jesus is Lord is therefore indigenous to the messianic movement. The New Testament knows no other Christianity.

In the encounter with the Synagogue the Lordship of Jesus becomes alive again. Everything else about the Gospel becomes a side issue in comparison with this major question. In this situation the Church rediscovers that the Christian knowledge of God is of a peculiar kind: we do not know God *through* but *in* Jesus Christ. This is what Paul means when he speaks of Jesus as the **εἰκὼν** of the invisible God: "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Col. 1:15, 19; cf. 2:9). Among the Gentiles with their polytheistic traditions the peculiarity of this claim is lost. It is only in confrontation with Judaism that the scandal of the profession that Jesus is Lord becomes evident and acquires New Testament proportions.

b) *The Question of the Law.*

The second question follows logically upon the first: the position of the Messiah and the authority of the Law are closely related. This connection must not be overlooked. The authority of Jesus as Lord carries profound personal and moral implications which conflicts with the impersonal and ceremonial aspect of the Law. At the same time, the Church has never held that the Mosaic Law was other than of divine origin. There can be no doubt that for Jesus himself the Law had divine authority—it was God's Law. His quarrel with the "lawyers" was not about the sanctity of the Law or its binding power. The disagreement stemmed from a different approach to the Law and a different perception of its purpose. Jesus was not guided by a literalist exegesis but by spiritual insight. This comes out again and again: in the question of the Sabbath; in the question of divorce; in his attitude to sinners. Yet Jesus was no reformer; his intention was not to liberalize the Law. Occasionally he takes it upon himself to amend the Law as in the case of the *regula lex talionis*. Implied in his attitude is the position that the standards of the Kingdom of

God go beyond the letter of the Law. When Jesus says that the Son of Man is also the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28), he makes a claim which far exceeds the permissible authority of the rabbi.²⁵ There is no doubt in our mind that the Pauline juxtaposition of law and grace goes back to the earliest Christian tradition, namely to Jesus himself.

For Paul, Jesus is the fulfiller of the purpose of the Law. It means that the breaking in of the messianic age introduces a new principle in the human-divine relationship, namely the principle of grace. For the Apostle, the coming of Jesus brings about "the end of the ages" (1 Cor. 10:11) and therefore a completely new situation in God's dealing with man. Those who stand under the authority of the Messiah are not any more in bondage to the Law, though they are not without law. The Christian believer has the law of God written upon the tables of his heart in accordance with the prophetic vision of Jeremiah (Jer. 31:33). From now on the autonomy of the Law is broken and does not apply to believers who are under the law of Christ. (1 Cor. 9:21). This openness for God which makes mere conformity to the external Law a futile attempt to gain righteousness before the Judge of all flesh, is the messianic category in which the Christian life takes place. Here not the Law but the Holy Spirit is the decisive factor.

While the Law spelled out man's autonomy, the Holy Spirit stands for man's surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Paradoxically stated, the freedom of the children of God consists in their captivity to the suzerainty of God (cf. 2 Cor. 10:5 f). It is therefore no more a matter of correct definition of the precepts of the Law so that man should know how to cope with its requirements. The Gospel means that God himself, in the person of the Messiah, breaks into human life to reveal himself as Saviour and Lord. Since Christ died for sinners, not Law but Grace is the norm of God's dealing with man.

It is not by accident that in the early Church the "lawyer" was superseded by the authority of the prophet. This fact is indicative of a completely new situation in the relationship between God and man. The Law stood for man's ability to work out his own salvation as best he could, while the Gospel proclaims man's utter bankruptcy. It reveals the fact that man by himself is unable to cope with the demands of the Law. This is the essence of St Paul's argument.

The Synagogue contradicts the Pauline logic. For the rabbis the *Torah* is the charter of man's autonomy. The Talmud records the amusing story of a dispute between the two sages on the question of *halakah*. When a voice from heaven intervened on behalf of one of the disputants, the sages declared that because the *Torah* is not in heaven but upon earth, no heavenly voice can decide the issue. Naturally, this is only a funny tale but at the same time it expresses the characteristic Jewish understanding of man's position as a responsible and rational creature. Man has the endowment to deduce from the *Torah* what is right and wrong, and not even God can interfere with the logical process. The "correlation", to use a Tillichian expression, between God and man is here settled by way of man's rational sufficiency. We can now see why Judaism is committed to the immutability of the Law as defined by the Maimonidian Creed: "I believe with perfect faith that this Law [i.e. the Law of Moses] will not be changed, and that there will never be any other law from the Creator, blessed be his Name."

If the Law were changeable, then its rationale could be called in question, which must never be, for this would imply an irrational element in the structure of the universe. This is exactly what the Gospel does imply with its concept of grace.

If "law" is to be the basis for man's relation to God then the mission of the Church becomes redundant by the fact that the nations are already under law. At the same time, Law and Gospel cannot be paired, the one contradicts the other. This is exactly what St Paul means by the difference between "faith" and "works". In the last resort, at the heart of the problem is the question of man's competence to cope with his own situation. This becomes only too obvious in confrontation with Judaism.

This brings us to the last issue.

c) The Position of the Gentiles.

The Bible has no plural for Israel; there cannot be two peoples of God. Because God is the God both of the Jews and of the Gentiles (cf. Rom. 3:29), for the whole human race belongs to him, salvation has meaning only if it is inclusive of mankind. The Johannine vision of one flock and one shepherd is the prophetic vision of the Bible as a whole. To give up this vision would be to deny the very nature of God as the Father of mankind. No one saw this more clearly than did Saul of Tarsus. He therefore concluded that the Gospel is for both Jews and Greeks.

Jesus is not really the Messiah if Jews and Gentiles remain separate. This is the very argument of the letter to the Ephesians. The mission to the nations was the inevitable result of the claim that Jesus is Lord. He would have proved to be a false Messiah and outside the prophetic tradition if the Gentiles had been bypassed. The gathering of the nations into the commonwealth of Israel belongs to the very signs of messianic fulfilment.

At no point is humanity more visibly broken than at the point of its separation from God's people. Israel apart from the rest of mankind is a denial of the reality of God's kingdom. The Gospel is only Good News if the offer of God's grace extends to all men. The conversion of the Gentiles is therefore a token of the beginning of the messianic age ushered in by Jesus Christ. The Church in Jerusalem may have doubts as to the conditions on which Gentiles were to be admitted, but the principle of admission was never in question. The very claim that Jesus is *the* Messiah necessitated the widening of Israel's borders. The mission to the nations was thus the turning-point of Israel's destiny as the people of God.

There is some important difference between the Synagogue's work of proselytizing and the missionary effort of the Church.

We know that Judaism already had a considerable following among the Gentiles when the Church made its appearance. There were numbers of non-Jews attached to the Synagogues of the Diaspora. These men and women stood in a varied relation to the Law and the Covenant. In the case of men submission to circumcision was a special obstacle. It is probably a warranted assumption that the majority of Gentiles in the Synagogue were sympathizers and not full proselytes. On the whole, it is fair to say that full proselytes enjoyed a measure of equality with born Jews²⁷ but this is a disputed statement. The difference between Church and Synagogue lay not so much in the position of proselytes in the respective communities as in the condition under which they were accepted. To become a full proselyte a Gentile had to undertake to observe all the minutiae of rabbinic law. St Paul contended that in Christ man is freed from the law and that there is no difference between Jew and Greek. For it is not by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ that man is justified (Gal. 2:16).

The principle of unity is worked out with great emphasis upon the *novum* of the messianic situation in the letter to the Ephesians: the Messiah has brought together Jews and Gentiles and has made of the twain one new man (Eph. 2:15).

It is generally agreed that Jewish proselytism was greatly hampered by the fact that Judaism could not free itself from its ethnic ties. It is therefore natural that the Synagogue should evolve a passive attitude towards the nations. This was later fortified by its struggle for survival in Christian lands and by the legal prohibition to acquire converts. Gradually the Synagogue learned to make of necessity a virtue and completely abandoned active proselytism, with the result that it is now content to rest in itself. Jewish apologists repeatedly tell us that the Jewish mission is survival as a separate people: "The mission of the Jew is to be a Jew."²⁸ The revival of national consciousness as a result of the Jewish State in Israel took the form of a new emphasis upon peoplehood. The movement associated with the name of Mordecai Kaplan goes under the name of Reconstructionism. Some Jewish writers deplore this retreat into secularized nationalism²⁹ which tends to bypass the spiritual heritage. But the ethnic ties of Judaism inevitably tend towards a racial bias. Even within the Reform movement such a bias is taken for granted. One of the fathers of that movement, Bernhard Felsenthal, made no bones about the fusion of nation and faith: "Judaism", he tells us, "is not a universal religion. Rightly understood it is a national religion. There would be no Judaism without Jews."³⁰ Ignaz Maybaum, who writes from a similar position, puts it in even simpler language: "As Jews we are separated. Election is selection, segregation from others."³¹ This is a radical difference, for it is a difference of status. For this reason "conversion" is for the Gentiles, a Jew has only to return to his own, whereas a Christian has to be remade or made new.³²

Judaism does not need a "Gospel" and does not want to preach one. There is thus no missionary urgency. No rabbi has ever felt as St Paul did that he is "under obligation both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish" (Rom. 1:14). Judaism is first and foremost a matter for Jews.

Western Christianity, marooned in tradition, history, and culture, is in mortal danger of reducing itself to the state of religious self-sufficiency. When this happens, she will approximate to Judaism at its closest. The Church has come very near it already. Tertullian could still say that Christians are not born but made.³³ But most members of the Church are born Christians, just as Jews are born Jews. Barth's assault upon Infant Baptism was prompted by the sorry fact that the Church has become a biologically propagated institution.³⁴

It is only in confrontation with the Synagogue that the principle underlying Church existence becomes once again a major issue. Here "born" Christians meet born Jews in a situation of unusual challenge: "I am a Christian as you are a Jew, by birth." But this is an anomalous situation. No one can claim God's grace by reason of birth, especially not the Christian. Mission is the constant reminder that the Church cannot live by biological increase but by the conquest of the Spirit of God.

In closing this essay we sum up:

In confrontation with Judaism the Church rediscovers herself. In the last resort, the issues between them do not turn on matters of metaphysical niceties. Concretely, the dividing line between Church and Synagogue is the person of Jesus Christ. To the question: Who is Jesus of Nazareth? Judaism and Christianity give two opposite answers. In the difference of the answer

lies their difference. Whenever the Church offers a more "Jewish" answer, the Lordship of Jesus Christ becomes a special issue. The moment we profess Jesus Christ as Lord a missionary situation is created.

In such a missionary situation the question of religion, race, and, culture inevitably intrude. It has always been the temptation of the historic Church to fall under the spell of these three basic categories which govern human life. But the moment she yields to the temptation she becomes Church-without-mission and therefore non-Church. As non-Church she approximates to the Synagogue most closely. But at the same time, in facing Judaism she is forced to rediscover her basic commitment, namely the profession of Jesus as Lord.

In the dialectic situation of Church and non-Church we make a further discovery, namely our kinship with historic Israel as God's people and not-God's-people. At this point Church and world coincide. When the Church discovers herself as the world, she acknowledges herself as the mission-field. In this new situation she becomes also the missionary. Here preaching to others means at the same time preaching to herself. This makes for humble preaching.

We have thus seen that interpreted in terms of Christ's Lordship the Christian faith becomes separated from Judaism and the world religions. To affirm the absolute uniqueness of Jesus Christ is to emphasize the particularity of the Christian faith and so to isolate it.³⁵ This does not mean that we need treat the great world religions with contempt, but it does mean that when we treat God's incarnate Word seriously, religious speech becomes human speech no matter how profound. From here we realize that the Gospel is not spoken alongside the religious situation but into it. God's judgement is primarily judgement upon man's religion, for it is here that his entrenchment is most evident. Inasmuch as "Christianity" is also religion, there is a sense in which it stands under the same condemnation. Only at the point of the surrender of our religion do we become the Church of Jesus Christ. The ultimate test is not theological orthodoxy but the humble submission of our lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

It is thus evident that the contribution of the Judeo-Christian encounter to the missionary orientation of the Church goes beyond mere theological reflection. It constitutes a challenge which the Church cannot afford to neglect. No wonder that Christianity is avoiding the encounter with Judaism. We must, however, remember that if it has no Gospel for the Jews, it has no Gospel for the world. But that the Church has a Gospel she rediscovers in her encounter with Judaism, for the Gospel of the Lordship of Jesus Christ spells out God's love for the world.

Notes to Chapter III

1. *Instructiones* 37. There is some suggestion that Commodianus was a Jewish convert; cf. O. Bardenhewer, *Patrologie*, 1910, p. 197.
2. Cf. C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 1953, p. 346.
3. Cf. Dodd, *op. cit.*, pp. 95 f.
4. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, IX. 21.
5. Cf. J. Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*, pp. 142 ff.
6. Lev Gillet, *Communion in the Messiah*, 1942, pp. 106 ff.
7. Adolf von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, 1950 (Neuaufgabe), p. 98.
8. *Op. cit.*, p. 77 (the author's translation).

9. Ibid., p. 87.
10. Ibid., p. 86 (Harnack's italics).
11. Ibid., p. 31.
12. Dr Leo Baeck, Harnack's *Vorlesungen über das Wesen des Christentums*, Breslau 1901, p. 4; cf. p. 7.
13. Even the holocaust of the First World War was not able to shake Harnack's idealism, as can be seen from his preface to the book republished in 1925.
14. Cf. op. cit., p. 38.
15. The German verb is *zusammenschliessen* which could be translated "to fuse".
16. Cf. Julian Huxley, *Religion without Revelation*, revised, 1957; and Gerhard Szczesny, *The Future of Unbelief*, 1961. There are other books of a similar kind.
17. *Anglican Congress, 1963*, Report of Proceedings, Toronto, Canada, p. 20.
18. Editorial: "The People of God", *Toronto Globe and Mail*, 19 October 1963. Cf. also Robert Lawson Slater, *World Religions and World Community*, 1963.
19. The Pittsburgh declaration read: "We consider ourselves no longer a nation, but a religious community, and therefore expect neither a return to Palestine, nor a sacrificial worship under the sons of Aaron . . ." (David Philipson, *The Reform Movement in Judaism*, 1907, p. 492; cf. also the article by Leonard Sussman, "Judaism for all Seasons", in *The Christian Century*, 3 April 1963, pp. 427 ff).
20. Charles E. Shulman, "Zionism and Judaism", in *The Christian Century*, 3 July 1963, pp. 858 ff.
21. Arthur A. Cohen, "A Theology of Jewish Existence", in *The Christian Century*, 23 January 1963, p. 106.
22. An unusual example of missionary zeal is Rabbi Moshe M. Maggal who has dedicated his life to the conversion of Gentiles; cf. *The Canadian Jewish News*, 23 August 1963. Rabbi Maggal now directs the "National Jewish Information Service" at Los Angeles, U.S.A., which purports to be "A Jewish Missionary Organization".
23. George Foot Moore attributes to the rabbis an almost Christian concept of God when he writes of "the humanity of God" and "the humility of God" (cf. G. F. Moore, *Judaism*, (1927) vol. I, pp. 439 f). But it seems to us that by reading into the anthropomorphic expressions in Talmudic literature these ideas he goes beyond the Jewish position. Here is an example taken from a contemporary Jewish writer, Ignaz Maybaum, contradicting the Islamic idea that God sends down a book from heaven, says: "It is the Jewish idea that God himself 'comes down' (Ex. 19:20), presents himself to man and exposes himself to man" (*The Jewish Mission*, p. 105). This almost sounds like the Incarnation, but in fact Maybaum is as far from Christianity as he is from Islam. In essence, neither he nor the ancient rabbis mean more than God's immanent presence and nearness to man.
24. Cf. J. Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*, pp. 275 ff.
25. It seems that the editor of Mark is toning down the extraordinary claim to authority on the part of the Messiah by introducing a play of words where "man" and "Son of man" are treated as synonyms. The ambiguity of the text almost suggests a libertine interpretation of the Law.

26. Cf. *Bab. M.* 59b. The story has a hilarious tone about it and deserves to be quoted in full. The translation is taken from *A Rabbinic Anthology* by C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, 1938, p. 340: "On a certain occasion R. Eliezer used all possible arguments to substantiate his opinion, but the Rabbis did not accept it. He said, 'If I am right, may this carob tree move a hundred yards from its place.' It did so . . . They said, 'From a tree no proof can be brought.' Then he said 'May the canal prove it.' The water of the canal flowed backwards. They said, 'Water cannot prove anything.' Then the walls of the house bent inwards, as if they were about to fall. R. Joshua rebuked the walls, and said to them, 'If the learned dispute about the Halakah [the rule, the Law], what has that to do with you?' So, to honour R. Joshua, the walls did not fall down but to honour R Eliezer, they did not become quite straight again. Then R Eliezer said 'If I am right let the heavens prove it.' Then a heavenly voice said, 'What have you against R. Eliezer? The Halakah is always with him [his view is always right]'. Then R Joshua got up and said 'It is not in heaven' (Deut 30:12). What did he mean by this? R. Jeremiah said, 'The Law was given us from Sinai. We pay no attention to a heavenly voice. For already from Sinai the Law said, "By a majority you are to decide" ' (Ex. 23:2 as homiletically interpreted). R. Nathan met Elijah and asked him what God did in that hour. Elijah replied, 'He laughed and said, My children have conquered me!' ". "
27. Cf. William G. Braude, *Jewish Proselyting*, 1940
28. Ignaz Maybaum, *The Jewish Mission*, 1949, p. 60.
29. Cf. Jacob J. Petuchowski, "The Limits of 'People Centred' Judaism", in *Commentary*, May 1959, pp. 387 ff.
30. Cf. *Judaism*, Fall 1958, p. 362.
31. Op. cit., p. 163.
32. So Monford Harris, "Interim Theology", in *Judaism*, Fall. 1958, p. 306.
33. Tertullian, *Apol.* 18.
34. K. Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, E.T, 1948; cf. *Church Dogmatics* vol. III, Pt. 2, pp. 585 f.
35. Cf. the excellent book by W. A. Visser't Hooft, *No Other Name*, 1963, pp. 116 ff.