PREFACE

FOR MANY CENTURIES the Children of Israel have felt upon their backs the lashes of a whip wielded by Christian orthodoxy. Hence, it would not be strange if the Jews become apprehensive because of the new "orthodoxy" which has appeared upon the Protestant theological horizon since the First World War. Men like Karl Barth and Emil Brunner in Europe and Reinhold Niebuhr, H. Richard Niebuhr and Paul Tillich in this country have been outspoken in their criticisms of Christian liberalism. Liberalism made the central message of Christianity that of the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God. Is there a danger that when emphasis is placed elsewhere a theological basis will be created which will only serve to aggravate the plight of the Jewish people? Liberalism was convinced that the words attributed to Jesus, "no one cometh unto the Father, but by me," are open to serious question, or at best can be accepted only to mean the necessity for a high type of moral behavior for all men rather than the requirement of a unique religious devotion to Christ. Will a stress upon Jesus as Christ or Messiah lead to increased tension between Christians and those who do not accept Christ?

The term "neo-Orthodoxy" is largely a misnomer, but even if we employ a more fitting title, neo-Reformation theology,* for the type of thought here presented, there may be awakened in the Jewish consciousness memories of a man like Martin Luther and his treatment of the Jews.

If a concern over possible apprehensiveness on the part of Jews is one of the motivations for this treatise, another is the conviction that Christian liberalism has failed adequately to understand or to deal with social questions like anti-Semitism. Can we find insights in neo-Reformation thought which contain a conception of human nature and of the Christian faith affording a more profound basis for approaching the question

* Conservative Protestantism, particularly in its attitude towards the Bible, is strongly criticized by neo-Reformation thought. The term "neo-Orthodoxy" may lead to confusion with a new form of fundamentalism.

of man's relationships with his fellows? This is not to say that we should look upon the contribution made by one or another school of thought as a possible means of social salvation. In the words of H. Richard Niebuhr,

> a member of the Christian community faces a moral problem when he deals with Judaism and anti-Semitism and can go to none of the schools of theology for his answer. The question is, in Kierkegaardian[*] terms, an existential one. There is no answer in the back of any book. This thing must be dealt with responsibly in the presence of God and man by the Christians of this day, and just as Reformation theology and liberal theology are inadequate guides to a man's religious relation to God so they are inadequate guides to his moral relation to his Jewish neighbor.[1]

Hence, we are not concerned with defending or rejecting a given theological system but rather with determining whether the application of one or another set of convictions to relations between Jews and Christians may better serve the Kingdom of God. Neo-Reformation thought, along with every Christian attempt to reach rational theological insight, is constantly in danger of substituting a theory about, for example, God and sin for the realities themselves. The purpose of this treatise is not that of showing that the "school" of thought to which the writer belongs affords a "better" means of approaching the Jewish question than do other modes of thinking, but rather of attempting to state in confessional terms the way that question looks from the point of view of neo-Reformation convictions about God and phenomena like election, sin and redemption, and the consequences one might expect to flow from this understanding. It is hardly necessary to add that the writer does not pretend to be able to legislate the answers which all neo-Reformation thinkers must give to the question under consideration. He can only present an interpretation from his own perspective within the larger circle of which he counts himself a part. To the extent that a theologian approaches the Jewish question with a basic aim that of telling the Jews they need not fear what is going on in his circle of thought, to that extent is he blinding himself to the potential need for a radical reconsideration of his own thinking in the event that he aggravates, rather than helps to alleviate, the Jewish plight. Apologetic thinking may easily offer an occasion for self-defense, something which a confessional point of view tries to avoid. Yet confessional theology cannot completely escape from apologetics. We always try to defend at least to a certain extent a point of view which seems to us to represent the truth.

* The reference is to Sören Kierkegaard, Danish Christian philosopher of the nineteenth century.

It would be to transcend the scope and purpose of this treatise to attempt an adequate comparative study of the positions of the various men who have contributed to neo-Reformation thought; we are more interested here in trying to present something of the common *Weltanschauung* of this "school." Such comparisons as are made are incidental to the main task of seeking for the path a Christian may follow as he lives with his brothers, the Jews.

From these remarks it will be seen that the approach followed in this treatise differs somewhat from that found in most analyses of the Jewish question. However fruitful the disinterested attitude of the social scientist may be and however important it is that the insights of various branches of the social sciences be not ignored, the hope of the writer is that a theological orientation may likewise prove of some worth.

This study does not pretend to be historically exhaustive. For example, little attempt is made adequately to place the various positions presented within their social and historical context. The treatise is systematic and hence selective in nature and undoubtedly suffers from restrictions which such an orientation always imposes. The greatest danger is probably that of arbitrariness. No claim is made to exhaust all the possible approaches which the Christian community may meaningfully take in its moral relation to the Jews. For several reasons two theological categories have been selected. These are religious absolutism, a position maintaining that a given historical reality or "space" embodies ultimate truth or possesses final validity, and religious relativism which denies this claim. Roughly speaking, orthodoxy and liberalism are respectively implied. These categories may help to serve as guides as we try to thread our way through a vast and complicated question. More important, they are especially appropriate in the present context, since, as we shall see, the problem of religious absolutism versus religious relativism is of central significance for the Christian as he looks at the Jews.

Like all methodological instruments our categories fail at several points. To put people and points of view into one or another—partly preconceived—category may easily involve arbitrariness. The "parts" of reality cannot be pigeonholed. As we shall see, religious absolutism has its relativist aspects and vice versa. It is hoped that valid insight into the Jewish question will not be completely vitiated by the methodology followed and that the device used will be of some help towards an understanding of our problem. The reader should keep in mind that the two categories are employed partly for the sake of expediency.

Material used in the preparation of this treatise has been chosen on the basis of the methodology noted. When the writer first undertook this study he had no conception of the vastness of the data available on the Jewish question. The limitations which he marked out for himself have been of assistance in selecting bibliographical data. However, he has not had to limit himself to material found on the printed page; he has had a number of opportunities for personal conversations and correspondence with some of the men whose views are presented.

We will begin with an analysis of the plight of the Jews in our world today. This will include an elaboration of a number of interpretations of the phenomenon of anti-Semitism, together with some of the solutions which have been offered, and including a critique of the latter. Some criticism is presented of the several interpretations, but the more constructive section in this area is reserved for the second chapter. The third and fourth chapters discuss, respectively, the implications for the Jewish question to be found in religious absolutism and in religious relativism and this is followed by a final chapter which draws upon some of the insights of the two positions mentioned and speaks of a possible guide for Christians concerned with mitigating the Jewish plight.

Before proceeding to the main body of our task several additional terms require explanation. The phrase "Jewish plight" has already been used. It is felt that adequate analysis cannot be made on the presupposition that the only matter with which we must be concerned in regard to the Jews is that of anti-Semitism. Hence the word "plight" is employed to signify all the problems which confront the Jews by virtue of the fact that they are Jews. The term has grave connotations, but certainly the Jewish situation is grave.

"Anti-Semitism" will be taken simply to mean "hatred for the Jews" *(Judenhass)*. Both an attitude and acts against the Jews resulting from that attitude are implied. The term is in itself not entirely accurate. We do not say that hatred of the Arabs is anti-Semitism, although they are a Semitic people. In addition the word "anti-Semitism" is of modern origin, applying particularly to a political movement of the nineteenth century.[2] It was coined in Germany in the eighteen seventies as a symbol that it was not the Jewish religion which was to be attacked but instead the political activities of "Semitic" aliens in European society.[3] Nevertheless the term has generally been employed to mean hatred and persecution of the Jews irrespective of the period of time under consideration. For the sake of simplicity we will adhere to this use. Actually, ill treat-

ment of the Jews before the nineteenth century was largely in the form of anti-Judaism rather than of ethnic or racial antipathy.

Finally, because the phrase "Jewish problem" may involve unfortunate connotations, it will not be used. In the first place, Jews are human beings and not *objects* which we are to manipulate as we do pawns in a chess game, in order to "solve" a given problem. Further, the word "problem" is itself ambiguous. Besides meaning "something to be solved," it may be used in the present context to connote that the Jews themselves are somehow a *problem* to us—in other words a bad nuisance, as we say of "problem" children.[1]* It is for these reasons that the term "Jewish question" has been substituted. One virtue of the latter expression is its superiority over "Jewish problem" from the psychological side. "Jewish problem" may place the onus for solving the "problem" largely upon the Jews whereas the other expression at least implies that Christians are faced with a situation about which *they* must do something. When one is presented with a question, he must answer, one way or the other. Unfortunately, in the psychology of the anti-Semite, one term may be as bad as the other: "Why should there be a *Jewish* question? There is no *Gentile* or *Christian* question."

The writer fully realizes that he has taken upon himself a delicate and controversial subject, and one the analysis of which is bound to stimulate much discussion and criticism from many sides. If this is the response he will be gratified, for disputation is superior to indifference. His own interest in the Jewish question was first awakened by the activities of a small group of Christian Bible students in a college with an overwhelmingly Jewish population. The members of this group were convinced that all their Jewish fellow students were on the road to destruction because of unbelief, and that they must be "saved." Although the writer speaks from the point of view of an acceptance of Jesus as the Christ—an acceptance which is not merely "ethical" in character—he has the temerity to suggest that the Bible students were misinterpreting the meaning of Christian faith.

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* It is significant that an anti-Semitic agitator like Rev. "X" of the West Coast can use what the Institute of Social Research in its analysis of his activities calls the "problem device." The agitator insists upon the gravity of the "Jewish problem" in America and says that this "problem" must not be allowed to go on.