

CHAPTER I

THE CHURCH AND ISRAEL

THE HISTORICAL PROBLEM

The word 'Israel' is applied to the Christian Church for the first time by Justin Martyr *c.* A.D. 160. It is a symptom of the developing take-over by Christians of the prerogatives and privileges of Jews. Initially there is hesitancy about this transposition: but a growing recognition of the necessity to appropriate titles and attributes ensures a complete transfer. The date A.D. 160 corresponds roughly with the beginning of a new attitude to Judaism. Prior to this time there is a measure of continuity between the Church and Israel: they are able to talk together, in some places to worship together, to expect and receive converts from one to the other; but after the mid-second century these possibilities seem to disappear and discontinuity becomes more radical.

The break did not happen suddenly. It is clear that the appropriation of 'Israel' as a designation for the Church is not itself the motivation for a change in attitude, but is the sign of something far more profound. Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, in which this transposition is effected at last, is not itself the great divide. In the creative step in which the equation is made explicit—'Church' = 'true Israel'—Justin gives accurate expression to a long-standing tendency to increase the degree to which Christianity views itself as the heir of all which Israel once possessed. Justin also witnesses to the fact that in A.D. 160 there is still a sensitivity to the close relationship which obtains between Christianity and Judaism: Justin and Trypho can talk reasonably, without malice, and to a large extent from common ground.

If the complete transposition from Israel to Christianity is not effected until such a date, what are the factors which work towards it? Is it possible to isolate a point, or a principle, or an historical factor which inevitably determines the way in which the later argument would develop? While acknowledging the

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radical nature of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is necessary to recognize that his disciples, even after his death, are still within the bounds of Judaism. Ensuing developments create a *de facto* break between Jews and Christians from place to place but, theologically, the break remains an inference within the NT and not an explicit requirement. Can we pinpoint the earliest steps away from Judaism by the early Church, which set the pace for the later developments? Can we find in Jesus' words and in the Evangelists' reports of those words traces of the break? Can we find in Paul's writings a new step on the way to separation? What part does Judaism play? What are the principles which determine the course later reflection on the problem of the relationship between Jew and Christian takes?

Such an examination has some hope of success. Even if it must rely upon inference and, to some extent, speculation, it is a quest that should not be avoided. The 'parting of the roads'¹ is of great importance for the history of both Christianity and Judaism. Misunderstanding of it colours the Church's attitude to Judaism and contributes to anti-Semitism. None the less, the parting is two-sided. Each engages in controversy with the other, and each addresses an informed apologetic to the other. But the evidence which we have seems also to speak of a Christian concern for Judaism, and especially of the desire to show Jews the truth of Jesus Christ.

In the earliest period there is a theological necessity, from the Christian side, to retain close communication with Jews. Only slowly does this need give way, in the face of the *de facto* break, to the other solution of actively asserting Christianity's right to all those things which it finds valuable in Judaism. It transposes what it can, transforms other things, and leaves behind what has no value. This shift from an actual to a theoretical state of affairs is very important, but so close are the NT authors to their own situation that it goes unrecognized by them. It is not until after the close of the NT period that consistent consideration is directed towards this theoretical side. We shall attempt to trace this shift, and to describe and discuss the factors

¹ The title of a book edited by F. J. Foakes Jackson (London, 1912), being 'Studies in the Development of Judaism and Early Christianity' by members of Jesus College, Cambridge. Unfortunately only one essay, by Ephraim Levine, deals with the 'breach'.

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which are at work in it. The centre of interest is in the name 'Israel'. It is the most crucial prerogative pertaining to the people of God, and for that reason it later provides the most powerful apologetic device.¹ We shall also consider other aspects of Jewish life and practice and the degree to which Christians assert their right to them.

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The relationships between Jew and Christian present a borderline situation; like all boundary cases, this confrontation between similar yet different groups poses the greatest problems and creates the most violent upheavals. In our own day the relations between Communist China and Communist Russia are a close parallel. A large measure of agreement is coupled with a small, but significant and growing area of disagreement, creating the tension that ends in rupture. A few ecclesiastical examples are the Anglican/Methodist difficulties in the eighteenth century, the Exclusive/Open Brethren break in the early nineteenth century, and the Presbyterian splintering in the mid-nineteenth century in Scotland.² Such events are often marked by great bitterness and opposition.

When one examines the NT records, it is evident that the early difficulty in the proclamation of the faith is the transition to a Gentile mission. In fact the Jewish mission is the one which questions the accepted presuppositions more thoroughly. When one is thrown up against fellows rather than opposites, one is driven to the most searching re-examination of the basic tenets. It is often easier to be a missionary to pagans than to neighbours.

Amos, Ezekiel, John the Baptist, and Jesus: each faces his nation with a boundary-line problem. Each comes in the first instance with a creative message from God for his own people, setting apart those who respond to the challenge as a slightly different group—a sect. Each creates a new boundary-line or

¹ One could also say the same things of the OT scriptures. There is the same importance, apologetic value, and reluctance to be explicit about their exclusive transfer to Christians.

² A similar observation has been made concerning the Jewish non-conformist sects of the first century in their relationship to the ortho-praxis of the Pharisees, by Matthew Black, *The Scrolls and Christian Origins* (London, 1961), p. 166.

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shifts the old one. The degree to which the developing group becomes self-contained affects the speed with which the boundary-line is transformed into a wall of separation. With the OT prophets this never really happened. Even in the NT this is not a straight-line development where the same changes take place everywhere at the same time; there are local variations of time and emphasis. Generally, similar solutions to the tensions created by the boundary are adopted. There are two approaches to the inevitable dissolution of the tension: erasure of the boundary-line by giving up the distinctiveness of the new; or erection of a dividing wall so that the new might be emphasized in isolation and the old let go. In the latter case the wall may be erected from the other side too, of course, by the explicit rejection of everything new. Our problem is to examine this tension, not only between the two sides of the border, but also between the two approaches to the dissolution of the tension.

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Theological issues are raised by such considerations. One cannot speak of the historical factors at work impelling one or the other solution, without at the same time recognizing the underlying theological issues which must have been in the minds of those who influence the direction events take. The central issue, theologically, is the relationship of the Church to Israel after the work of Christ is finished. In any attempt to define the problem more exactly consideration must first be given to questions raised by such a seemingly simple assertion. In order to do this, it is necessary to start back in the time before Christ.

In the prophetic writings the doctrines of election and of the remnant begin to be used to distinguish what is and is not Israel. The criterion of birth remains a factor, but faithfulness to the covenant of God is stressed increasingly. At the same time there is an incipient universalizing of Judaism, so that there is a dual possibility: a narrowing of the category 'Israel' within Judaism, and an opening up of the same designation to some from outside. There is a distinction between these two tendencies, however: the one is based on ritual and ethical standards and is present and observable; the other is an eschatological conception.

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The exclusivist tendency is complicated by the distinction between Northern and Southern Kingdoms—between Israel and Judah—where a nationalistic criterion for this limitation is substituted for one which is based on purity of heart. Both Judah and Ephraim lay claim to God's favour. Each national entity tends to absolutize itself in an almost sectarian way, though Hosea and Ezekiel clearly show that in very different contexts the sense of unity has not been lost altogether: there is an eschatological possibility that God will overcome the present separation.

Sectarian tendencies increase in the inter-testamental period.¹ Polemical and apologetic considerations lead groups to posit such a discontinuity between themselves and the rest of Israel that they move towards an identification of their own sect with 'Israel'. Antagonism often leads to the assumption that those not with them are no longer a part of Israel. This tendency exercises a widespread influence.

Against this background, John the Baptist appears in Palestinian Judaism. His relation to Qumran, while important, is incidental to this analysis. What is important is the purpose and significance of his baptism. One theory holds that it is basically a proselyte baptism which has for its presupposition that all Jews have forfeited their right to be Israelites, have become as Gentiles, and therefore have to be readmitted.² This may overstate the case, and need not be pressed, but certainly his baptism implied

¹ See Appendix C: cf. W. Förster, *Palestinian Judaism in New Testament Times* (Edinburgh, 1964), pp. 187 ff.

² See R. Eisler, *The Messiah Jesus and John the Baptist* (London, 1931), pp. 267–70; W. H. Brownlee, in *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, ed. K. Stendahl (London, 1958), pp. 33–53, esp. p. 37; cf. also A. Oepke, art. βαπτω etc., *TDNT*, I, 529–46, esp. p. 537. C. H. H. Scobie, *John the Baptist* (London, 1964), criticizes this view but not convincingly, and he finally arrives at a point not far removed from Brownlee, cf. pp. 99 f., 101 with 114. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London, 1962), adopts a mediating position, e.g. pp. 18, 31, 41 f. (although he rejects the identification of proselyte baptism with John's baptism); both he and W. R. Farmer (art. *Interpreters' Dictionary of the Bible*, Nashville, 1962, s.v.) emphasize the eschatological nature of the act. Cf. also P. Vielhauer, art. 'Johannes', *RGK*, III, cols. 804 ff.; H. H. Rowley, *HUCA*, xv (1940), 313 ff. On the origin of proselyte baptism, see T. F. Torrance, *NTS*, I (1954–5), 150–4; *per contra*, T. M. Taylor, *NTS*, II (1955–6), 193–8.

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a large degree of discontinuity between those who sought it and those who rejected it. Whether these formed, in John's teaching, the true Israel as over against Judaism we shall probably never know, but we can say with reasonable assurance that there is a quite sharp discontinuity on the one hand, with at least a latent possibility of the universalizing of God's fellowship on genuinely equal terms on the other. John is a marginal case, part of both old and new.

This is the background for an assessment of the measure of continuity and discontinuity between Jew and Israelite. It becomes a more acute problem with Jesus' Incarnation, life, death and Resurrection, and with the fulfilment of the old which he claims for his life and work. Can there be any continuity between the previous entity and its continuation after the Easter events? If the answer is affirmative, what are the relationships between the various groups involved: the people of God before Christ, the people of God after Christ, Judaism, Israel, the Church? We cannot simply draw a diagram so that all comes to a focus in Jesus, and when the lines broaden out on this side introduce completely new categories or thoroughly transpose the old ones. In this interpretation, at the one moment when Christ is alone on the cross, he and he alone is 'Israel'.¹ The conclusion drawn from this is that 'Israel' then comes to be applied to those who follow Christ after the event. There can be no continuity between Israel B.C. and A.D. because, in this scheme, the continuation loses all significance. There would, therefore, be no need even to look at the post-Easter relationships. This we reject; for, while there is theological truth to the assertion, it obscures history hopelessly.

Another position might be described, beginning from the observation that parts of the NT testify to a continuation of a group after Easter called 'Israel' which is distinct from the Christian Church. If so, there is a valid continuity between 'Israel' before and after Christ. This we suggest is the new situation which accounts for many of the problems faced in the NT. Jesus' coming has not obliterated all distinctions. We suggest as a preliminary hypothesis that some of the NT pre-

¹ This can be found from Justin to Barth, but it is nowhere said in the NT, although perhaps inferred in a non-schematic form in a passage such as John 15: 1 ff.

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supposes a distinction between Jew and Israel outside Christianity. Together with the failure of the NT to assert that Jesus is himself 'Israel', this is evidence against a schematic view, which holds that the Church is the continuation of 'Israel' B.C., and that any other physical continuation is not the People of God. The issue at stake is the degree to which the Church fulfils and supersedes what Israel is. It must be affirmed that the Church is both continuous and discontinuous with Israel B.C. There is also discontinuity between the Church and Israel A.D. In spite of the many attributes, characteristics, privileges and prerogatives of the latter which are applied to the former, the Church is not called Israel in the NT. The continuity between Israel and the Church is partial; and the discontinuity between Israel B.C. and its continuation A.D. is partial. The two sides of the problem must be retained: What is the continuity and discontinuity between Israel B.C. and A.D.; and between Israel and the Church?

In the same way that there are historical relationships before Christ bearing upon the main theological problem, so there are practical relationships after Christ which elucidate the central problem and provide the only background against which it can be understood. There are four groups to be considered, connected with four dissimilar words that play a large part in the investigation: Jew, Israel, Gentile, Church. Some combinations of these are important for us.

(a) We shall have to determine whether there is a distinction between Jew and Israel after the Resurrection. We have maintained the theoretical possibility, but we must investigate whether the distinction is submerged or retained.

(b) The relationship of the Gentile to Jew-Israel (to blur the categories) is relevant as a means of explaining the reaction of the earliest Church to universalizing tendencies and the problem of mission.

(c) What then is the attitude of the Church to Gentile mission? Later it is assumed that only Gentiles will respond, but in the earliest period this is balanced by the Church's close tie to Judaism-Israel.

(d) We must investigate carefully how the Church interprets itself *vis-à-vis* the Jew who was not convinced of the Messianic claims of Jesus.

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(e) And finally, we must determine the relationship of the Church to Israel.

This last constitutes the real borderline case, and thus demands caution. Its importance lies in the fact that it poses in an historical setting the question discussed above in a theological setting. Most of our data for establishing the theological conclusion will have to be developed from the historical analysis.

(f) An appended relationship is that between Christians of a Gentile origin and those of a Jewish origin. It is a microcosm of the larger issues noted above. In the light of the claim by some that 'Israel' describes Jewish Christians alone, it might indeed suggest that there is a serious exclusivist limitation to the kind of continuity that obtains.

There is one further preliminary observation: the conditions were not static. The historical and practical situations presuppose shifting relationships in which one stage of development may not obtain elsewhere. Whether the theological awareness lagged behind or went ahead of the actual situation is not always clear; probably it more often lagged. Furthermore, there must have been considerable tension between various factions in the early Church, so that there was not a single normative view of the relationship of the Church to Israel. From a necessarily analytical approach a synthesis will be attempted on a different level. What factors were at work moulding these opinions and creating these fluctuations, and finally developing a monolithic view of the Church/Israel relationship?

CHAPTER II

THE CHURCH FATHERS TO A.D. 160

JUSTIN AND THE TRUE ISRAEL

In his *Dialogue with Trypho* Justin asks Trypho and his friends: 'What is the force (δύναμις) of the name, Israel?'¹ This also is the question asked here, but not in an etymological sense like Justin's.² The other side of the question is: What does 'Israel' signify in relation to the Church? There is no doubt about the answer given in the dialogue: Ἰσραηλιτικὸν γὰρ τὸ ἀληθινόν, πνευματικόν, καὶ Ἰούδα γένος καὶ Ἰακώβ καὶ Ἰσαάκ καὶ Ἀβραάμ... ἡμεῖς ἔσμεν.³ The transference from Israel to the Church is complete; but, and this is the point we wish to make, Justin's dialogue with Trypho is the first time in Christian literature that such an explicit claim has been made.

One of the obvious marks of this transference is the increased emphasis on newness and finality. This comes in the opening paragraphs of the first main section, e.g. 11.2 f.: 'For in fact I have read, Trypho, that there is to be both a final Law and a Disposition (τελευταῖος νόμος καὶ διαθήκη) that is superior to all others (κυριωτάτη πασῶν), which must now be observed by all those who lay claim to the inheritance of God. For the law given at Horeb is already antiquated (παλαιός) and belongs to you alone, but that other belongs to all men absolutely. And a Law set over against a law has made the one before it to cease.'⁴ Something of this same force is evident in the concern for 'twoness', as in 12.3: 'A second circumcision is now neces-

¹ 125.1: for translation and numbering, see A. Lukyn Williams (London, 1930), *Translations of Christian Literature*, Series 1; for text see J. C. T. Otto, *Iustini Philosophi et Martyris Opera* (Jena, 1876, 3rd edition).

² The answer is given christologically (125.3): 'a man overcoming power'.

³ 11.5; much of 10–29 is concerned with this same question, and the contrast: failure among you, acceptance among us, is present in much of the dialogue; note especially 14.1; 29.1, 2; 55.3; 63.5; 87.5; 116.3; and see below.

⁴ Cf. also e.g. 11.4; 24.1; 33.1; 43.1.

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sary',¹ which carries with it an implication which comes to the surface clearly in 63.5—we are to leave the old behind and 'forget even the old customs of our fathers'.

As well as a general transference (82.1: 'what was of old in your nation has been transferred (μετετέθη) to us'), specific items become the property of Christians. In the same passage, the gifts of prophecy are mentioned, and a little later it is said that scripture is now misinterpreted by Jews (82.3; the example follows in 83, cf. 84.4; 55.3) because they are Christian scriptures, not Jewish (29.2: 'your scriptures, or rather not yours but ours, for we obey them'). So also, Christian sacrifices are better (29.1; 117.1) because they are now the high-priestly race (116.3). This is because they have believed and Jews have not (14.1). Specific typological transferences are made also: the flour offering becomes the bread of the Eucharist (41.1); sacrifices generally become bread and wine (41.3); circumcision becomes a spiritual circumcision (41.4); the seventh day is superseded by the eighth (41: 4); the twelve bells on the priest's robe are now the Twelve Apostles (42.1). Generally the principle is: 'all the other things...appointed by Moses [are] types, and figures, and announcements...' (42.4).

Justin deals at length with the hardness of the Jews and their rejection of the good news offered by the Messiah,² as well as noting at numerous points the active opposition of the Jews to the progress of the gospel.³ The corollary to this is an unparalleled emphasis on the Gentiles as the heirs of these promises (particularly 109 ff.), whose 'otherness' is so stressed that a Gentile exclusiveness almost replaces the former Jewish exclusiveness.⁴ Along with this he implies that to accept Christianity means the abandonment of one's Jewishness (cf. 64.5).

In asserting that Christianity is the true Israel (and Jacob), Justin maintains that Christ himself is Israel and Jacob. 'Israel

¹ On this 'need' cf. 19.3, 5; on 'second' cf. 113.6; 114.4; and 135.6: 'two seeds of Judah, two races, two houses of Jacob'.

² See 12.2; 18.2; 27.4; 33.1; 44.1; 46.5.

³ Note the Synagogue Ban (16.4; 38.1; 96.2; 137.2) and the messengers who denounce the Christian heresy to the world (17.1; 108.2; 117.3).

⁴ Cf. especially 119 ff.; e.g. 119.3: ἡμεῖς λαὸς ἕτερος... ἡμεῖς δὲ οὐ μόνον λαὸς ἀλλὰ καὶ λαὸς ἁγίος ἔσμεν, and 119.4: τοῦτο γὰρ ἔστιν ἐκεῖνο τὸ ἔθνος, and 122.6. This same theme is found in the *First Apology*, 52–3.