

return. Opinion may vary as to the exact order, but the order given by the writer is that which in his opinion has the Scriptures for its basis. May these things help us to remember that we, as the fathers of old, are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth", and that "here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 11:13; 13:14), even that city which is described in

Psalm 48: "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King . . . Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death" (vv. 2,12-14).

(Concluded)

Will Jewish assimilation lead to further persecution?

Richard Mellowes

AN INTERESTING feature appeared in the *Electronic Telegraph* for 11 April 2001, entitled, "Assimilation: will it spell the end of the Jews?". The introductory abstract summarised the feature article: "Religious leaders are appalled that Jewish communities continue to shrink. Could the watering down of Judaism threaten their very survival? . . . [author] Graham Turner talks to Jews in Britain and the United States about their fears—and to others, Orthodox and converts among them, who are determined to defy the tide".

Post-assimilation and the Holocaust

Anything that concerns the Jews is of potential interest to us, a community of spiritual Israelites. For myself this interest was heightened when I read in the opening paragraph an explicit link between this current decline and the Nazi holocaust, which did so much to fulfil prophecy and to further the rebirth of the Jewish state: "'America is finishing Hitler's work', declared James Adelman, a Jewish lawyer who lives near Chicago. Like a good many other Jews, he is deeply worried by the steep decline and dilution of the Jewish community in the United States, because so many young Jews are 'marrying out'".

But just why should such a trend interest us as watchers on Zion's walls? The reason is that it was precisely the process of Jewish assimilation in Europe that led in large measure to the Nazi holocaust. For centuries Jews had been persecuted throughout Europe. Then in 1789-93, with the French Revolution, began the process of emancipation of citizens in almost every Euro-

pean country. Jews were not excluded. They gained new civil rights in the increasingly secular states of the continent. They were able to realise their full potential in the arts, in education and throughout the professions. Indeed, in almost every field their success was out of all proportion to their numbers.

This reaction was in a sense understandable. The persecution of the preceding centuries had taken place because the Jews were so distinctive. In any time of crisis they were easy to pick on as a scapegoat. Without any land or statehood, they clung to their religion as their identifying national feature. But, in a continent dominated by the Roman Catholic Church, this religious separation kept them distinct and made them incessantly vulnerable to the vitriol of Rome. So the opportunity to be treated as equal citizens in Europe's states was perceived as a way to avoid further persecution for present and future generations.

The result, especially from the late nineteenth century onwards, was an increasing degree of resentment and anti-Semitism. Emancipated, and playing a full part in the lives of the countries of their birth, French, Austrian or German Jews wanted to be seen as Frenchmen, Austrians or Germans first, and Jews second. The Dreyfus affair in France in the 1890s was a prime and well-known example of anti-Semitism, which directly influenced Theodor Herzl to develop his Zionist philosophy and write *The Jewish State*. In Germany this anti-Semitic resentment underpinned the ideas of the philosopher Nietzsche, whose writings were later to influence Adolf

Hitler. The Jew was seen as the cause of the world's problems.

Assimilation rises again

The newspaper feature referred to above seems to illustrate that a similar reaction by Jews to past persecution, in this case the Nazi holocaust, is taking place in the USA, and to a lesser extent in the UK. In these predominantly secular and affluent societies Jews are seeking assimilation. Consciously or subconsciously, but either way mistakenly, they see this as a way to avoid future persecution because they are Jews.

One American Jewess comments: "Assimilation is inevitable and, as that goes on happening, we'll lose our historical identity. In its present form American Judaism is doomed". To illustrate her point the same lady refers to a recent magazine cartoon of a mixed Jewish-Christian marriage. The woman had a star of David on her back and the man a cross. The caption was, "The Final Solution".

The *Electronic Telegraph* feature contains some interesting statistics that illustrate the trend towards assimilation. In the USA, sixty per cent of Jews are 'marrying out'; that is, marrying Gentiles. In the UK the leading rabbi in the Jewish Liberal community estimates the equivalent figure is sixty-six per cent. In mixed Jewish marriages in the USA, only twenty-eight per cent of the children are brought up as Jews; and in the next generation a mere six per cent identify themselves as Jewish. The Jewish population in the UK has fallen from 450,000 in the 1950s to 260,000 today. In the USA the birthrate among Jews is the lowest of all the ethnic communities, and the Jewish proportion of the total population has halved over the last forty years to just two per cent. One estimate is that the Jewish population in the USA will halve in the next twenty-five years.

A separate people

However much Jews in any country of the world try to become assimilated in order to avoid persecution, God has long ago declared that this would never be allowed to happen. They will always remain a separate and distinct people to witness to Yahweh, because they covenanted to be a separate people. Consider the following Scriptural testimonies.

Firstly, we are assured that even though they might break their covenant with Him, God would never break His covenant with them and de-

stroy them as a people: "And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break My covenant with them: for I am the LORD [Yahweh] their God" (Lev. 26:44). The reason for this is spelled out by Moses in his final address to Israel: "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deut. 7:6).

As "a special people" Israel are unique among the nations. They have to act as God's witnesses whether they wish to or not. They are required to witness to the existence of Yahweh and to the truth of His prophetic Word: "Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and shew us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth. Ye are My witnesses, saith the LORD [Yahweh], and My servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He: before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me" (Isa. 43:9,10).

But in this context perhaps the most telling words are those put by God into the mouth of Balaam causing him to bless Israel: "For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Num. 23:9). The Jews will always be separate from the other nations. One of the reasons is that God is with them, working with and through them for their ultimate good, to the glory of His Name: "For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not in that Thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth" (Ex. 33:16). Whatever the immediate future of the parts of Israel that are scattered among the Gentile nations, the truths expressed in these verses will not be broken.

When the Jews of central Europe sought assimilation in the nineteenth century, the result was the most vicious persecution they had ever experienced, genocide on a scale that has never been exceeded in the awful annals of human history. The Nazi holocaust actually achieved exactly the opposite effect of assimilation, its underlying cause. It drove out of continental Europe the bulk of surviving Jewry. They

became, after World War 2, not merely a separate people, but a separate nation, back in their own land, with renewed statehood.

Further Jewish persecution?

We know for certain that the remaining world Jewish population (and still there are more Jews living outside Israel than in the land) will have to be regathered at some point. This will be one of the functions of Elijah's future mission. What we do not know for certain is whether the Jews of Britain and America will be regathered before or after the return of Christ to judge the saints. But, given the parallels we have drawn, it is possible (we can say no more than that) that the Jews in these countries, who in their affluence seek assimilation, will be punished for their betrayal of the covenant of separation. Something will happen to cause them to return, via the "wilderness of the people" (Ezek. 20:35), to the land of their fathers. We do not know if it will be another round of persecution, but that is not impossible, as the lesson of history shows. And whatever it is that causes that return, we do not know either whether we shall see it in this order of things. But it nonetheless behoves us to maintain an active interest in the nation and people of Israel, to whose commonwealth we belong by adoption.

It is only fair to record that the same *Electronic Telegraph* feature goes on to discuss the parallel reaction amongst Orthodox Jews, especially in the UK and to a lesser extent in the USA. They

are rigidly against marrying out, and attempt to counter the declining birthrate elsewhere among their people by having large families. Apparently ten children in a family is common amongst Orthodox families in Manchester, and fifteen is not unknown! But even here history is repeating itself. It is clear that this group has the same arrogance as the Pharisees of Jesus's day. Their judgement and punishment may be of the same order.

It is vital that we do not miss the lesson for ourselves. We too are called and covenanted to be a separate people by the God of Israel, and we too will be punished if we betray our covenant by being assimilated into the societies in which we live. Many of us live in and among affluence. Let us not lose our sense of utter dependence on the God of Israel. Let us not lose our distinct, witnessing role, especially by 'marrying out':

"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Cor. 6:14-17).

The Holy Spirit

From time to time over recent years the Brotherhood has been troubled by claims of Holy Spirit possession, direct Holy Spirit influence or even possession of miraculous powers. Concerns about this currently happening have recently emerged.

Such claims emerge because of a lack of understanding of basic Bible teaching on the subject, and the superficial attractiveness of enthusiastic Pentecostal and evangelical churches. *The Testimony* has tried to promote a sound Biblical understanding of this subject, not least in publishing the book (based on earlier articles) '*Spirit*' in the New Testament by Brethren Edward Whittaker and Reg Carr. This book is commended to readers as the finest exposition of this subject available. It covers such issues as:

- The 'Comforter' passages of John's Gospel
- The promise of the Spirit at Pentecost
- Baptism in the Spirit
- The Spirit gifts
- The mind of the Spirit
- Divine enlightenment.

'*Spirit*' in the New Testament is 185 pages, including an index, and costs £3.50 inclusive of postage in the UK. For overseas orders please await invoice and payment instructions. Orders please to the Subscriptions Secretary, address rear cover.