

A JEWISH VIEW OF "THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT"

By Walter Zander

The *Sword of the Spirit* movement aims not only at "the unity of all Catholics in these islands," although this is demanded above all things, but also at an establishment of a universal spiritual unity in this moment of supreme crisis. This unity is to be based on "the belief in the divine government of the world"; "the infinite worth of each individual soul"; and "the intervention of the Spirit in history."

As Christopher Dawson says, "these conceptions are most clearly expressed in the prophets of Israel," whom he even calls "in a special sense the bearers of the *Sword of the Spirit*." They are, indeed, the very centre of Jewish religion. The longing for oneness is at the bottom of the Jewish heart. Three times a day the religious Jew prays for the establishment of the Kingdom of God in which all nations of the world shall be united. Man, according to the Jewish faith, is created in the image of God; and human history for the few receives its meaning only by its divine relationship.

A movement like the *Sword of the Spirit* is therefore bound to arouse great interest among the Jews, and is certain of their sincerest sympathy. There remains, however, a problem which far beyond the question of a Jewish membership, in my opinion, touches the very foundation of the movement and its capacity to achieve its aim. This problem lies in the question to what extent the *Sword of the Spirit* is interwoven in the conception of the Defence of the West.

When in the summer of 1940 the movement started, Christopher Dawson exhorted all "those elements in Western Society that still possess a principle of spiritual unity to rally the divided forces of our civilisation." "It is vital," he writes "that all the positive intellectual and spiritual forces of Western culture should come together in the defence of their common values and traditions." And in December 1940 Barbara Ward in her broadcasts, "The Defence of the West" (published as a pamphlet in February 1942), called the attack on the West the real issue of the war.

Such a conception was in accordance with the facts when, after Dunkirk, Great Britain stood alone, and the only hope of an ally rested with America. Since then, however, fundamental changes have taken place. The centre of the war shifted long ago to the battlefields of White Russia and the Ukraine; and since Pearl Harbour with America involved the issue has circled the globe and has, indeed, become worldwide. China, India and the Pacific have become a new focus of the struggle. Everybody knows that now more is at stake than the defence of the West; and the ideals of Western tradition, Western civilisation and Western culture have

proved utterly inadequate to rouse the nations of the East, whether Malaya, India or even Egypt in support of the British cause. One can even say that the failure there, symbolised by the fall of Singapore, partly springs from the limitations of the "Western" conception. Moreover, the ideal of western civilisation can hardly serve as a foundation of the relationship to Russia. Great, therefore, as these ideas were when in the Battle of Britain the fate of these islands was at stake, today a wider and more profound vision is needed. That is not only a question of military and political expediency. It is a spiritual problem of the first order which may determine to a large extent the cause (sic) of the war and the nature of the coming peace.

As a starting-point it should be kept in mind that Christianity as well as Judaism, from which most of the ideas here involved are derived, are not peculiar to the West but originated in the East. But the problem altogether transcends geographical and cultural distinctions. It belongs to the sphere of the Spirit. To my mind the task must be to integrate *all* spiritual forces wherever and under whatever form they may reveal themselves. For such purpose the idea of "Defence," necessary as it was, is no longer adequate. What is needed is an active, creative effort to establish a universal, spiritual unity. That does not, of course, mean a confusion of systems or a dilution of dogmas. All essentials have to be maintained. But a way must be found of integrating spiritually the various groups, preserving at the same time their fullest individuality.

Judaism as well as Catholicism has developed certain thoughts which may lead the way towards the solution of this problem. According to Rabbi Meir (2nd century) "a gentile whose life is based on the Torah is to be honoured like the High Priest." According to certain Catholic theologians a distinction is to be made between the soul and the body of the Church, and the soul includes those "who without being members of the Church direct their thoughts towards God and the divine, towards truth and goodness." As far as I understand it, however, such admission of outside members into the soul of the Church is possible only if their "ignorance regarding the true religion is invincible" (Pope Pius IX, allocution of December 9th, 1854). Such an approach, if I may venture to offer an opinion, will scarcely be enough. For the attribution of "invincible ignorance"-combined with the assumption of the fullness of knowledge on the other side - can never be sufficient to integrate the non-catholic world, whether it be Christian, Jewish, Moslem or of the ancient East. This integration, however, is the task before us, and it must even embrace the spiritual forces which are interwoven with atheistic communism.

The religious man of the West, Christian and Jew alike, has failed in many spheres, and more than ever humility should be his part. The consciousness of human imperfection, common to all, in the intellectual not less than in the moral sphere, should be, indeed, the basis of a universal unity; and the consciousness that man, created in the image of God, has to fulfil an infinite duty may give the strength to establish that oneness for which everywhere the best are longing today.

We are much indebted to our distinguished contributor for his thoughtful article. As he raises a point of Theology, we think it proper to point out that the movement of the Sword of the Spirit seeks the co-operation of all men of goodwill in the practical field of social and international endeavour. It has not to do with theological issues and differences as such. For the rest, we may refer to the Theology of St. Paul as expressed in Chapters 9, 10 and 11 of the epistle to the Romans ; and to the Commentaries on these chapters, e.g. the little work of Dr. Erik Petersen "Le Mystère des Juifs et des Gentils dans l'Eglise" with a preface by Jacques Maritain, published by Desclee de Brouwer (1936).-ED.