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THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

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A RE-EXAMINATION OF
THE CONCILIAR STATEMENT ON THE JEWS

by

JOHN M. OESTERREICHER



THE INSTITUTE OF JUDAE0-CHRISTIAN STUDIES

Seton Hall University

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The link between Christians and Jews has been established by God, the Lord Himself. God has bound us together. Thus we are dealing not only with relations between men, but with God's own acting in history.

When we Christians and Jews try to understand one another better, we touch something of the Lord's presence in human history. Both of us have experience and knowledge of God in our lives and in our respective traditions. There are several fundamental differences in our faiths. And yet, we are linked together by the same Lord, who has chosen us in order to manifest His mysterious plan of salvation for all mankind Although in different ways, we try to be witnesses to this loving and saving action in the world. Thus we are "waiting for and hastening the coming of the Day of God" (2 Pt 3:12), when all the people will "call on the name of the Lord and serve Him with one accord" (Zeph 3:9).

+John Cardinal Willebrands

From a message, dated October 19, 1970, to the Convocation celebrating the fifth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*.

Preface

THIS booklet contains the paper that opened a Convocation of scholars assembled at Seton Hall University from October 25-28, 1970, for the fifth anniversary of the promulgation of the Conciliar Statement on the bond of the Church to the Jewish people. The Convocation stood under the joint sponsorship of the University's Institute of Judaean-Christian Studies and The American Jewish Committee. For delivery, the present text was considerably condensed; still, the pages that follow were in the hands of all the participants of the colloquium.

I have often heard people call the Conciliar Statement on the Jews the document that "absolved them from the guilt of the Crucifixion." This popular description owes its inspiration, not to the Statement itself but to newspaper headlines. Headlines strive for brevity, but brevity is sometimes achieved at the expense of truth. Had the Council really absolved the Jews—something, obviously, not in the power of a council—it would have implied that the Jews *were* guilty. Instead, the Council condemned the notion of collective guilt. It deliberately refrained from giving a detailed account of the passion of Jesus. It left open, for instance, the question of whether He was condemned by the Sanhedrin or the Roman governor. The majority of scholars today seem to lean toward the second alternative. In order to carry weight, to have legal consequence, the condemnation had to come, and did come, from the representative of Caesar, they hold.

It seems significant that the Conciliar Statement says of the Jewish authorities only that they "*pressed for* the death of Christ (cf. Jn 19:6) [*italics mine*]." Thus the Council stated without hesitation and without reserve that, no matter what the involvement of the high priestly clique and the Jewish crowd before the governor's palace may have been, the events of Jesus' passion, its pain and injustice, must never be charged to the Jewish people as a whole, of any time in history. To quote the very words of the Statement: "What happened in His passion cannot be attributed without distinction to all Jews then alive, nor can it be attributed to the Jews of today."

This pronouncement is full of implications for the Christian theologian. Not only does it rule out any name-calling of Jews—"Christ-killers," "deicides," and all the other self-righteous appellations that in the past have ravaged the bodies and souls of Jews and warped the spirit of Christians—it tells him never to make an imagined guilt of the Jewish people the starting point of theological thinking. Thus his eyes will be open to the wonder that is Judaism and, no less, to the wonder of his own faith. He will be led to rediscover the meaning of continued Jewish existence, and he will do so, not because of any weakness of conviction but because his faith is strong enough to make him acknowledge the workings of God's grace, wherever it may be.

The new vision of Jews and Judaism that preceded Vatican II and that has been widened by the Conciliar Statement on the Jews is evidence of creativity and one of the hopeful signs of the times. No dying Christianity could ever have begotten this new vision nor will the latter impair the future life of the former. On the contrary, it will, please God, lead to new riches for Christians as well as for Jews.

Mr. Chet Kolton, the designer and printer of this booklet, grasped this at once on reading the manuscript. He brushed aside various suggestions of mine for a cover and has sketched, instead, ever increasing horizons, rising suns of light. For this, I thank him. But what words are there to thank Rabbi Jakob Petuchowski, Professor of Rabbinics and Jewish Theology at Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, for his generous introduction? There could be no greater reward for my effort than a response like his. My thanks also go to Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, National Interreligious Affairs Director of the American Jewish Committee and co-chairman of the entire Convocation, whose collaboration I value highly.

One final remark. Without friends, a man will find it hard to follow his calling. Thus I dedicate this booklet to those friends whose help has made this publication, indeed much of my work, possible.

January 1, 1971

John M. Oesterreicher

Introduction

CHRISTIANS and Jews live by different calendars, the former reckoning their years in terms of *Anno Domini*, the latter in terms of *Anno Mundi*. What complicates, rather than simplifies, matters is the fact that both calendars, the Christian and the Jewish, are firmly rooted in the eschatological scheme of pharisaic-rabbinic Judaism. That scheme expected the present world order, *ha'olam hazeh* ("this world," "this aeon"), to be followed by *yemoth hamashiach*, the Messianic Age, while the latter, in its turn, would be succeeded by *ha'olam haba*, "the World-to-Come."

Whereas Jews continue to regard themselves as living in *ha'olam hazeh*, Christians regard themselves as already living in the *yemoth hamashiach*. Both of them, indeed, share the hope in an ultimate world-to-come, a world of spiritual fulfillment. But, in the meantime, the great and fundamental differences in evaluating the present, symbolized by the difference between *Anno Mundi* and *Anno Domini*, have often made communication between Christians and Jews completely impossible. Jews and Christians have been talking, not to one another, but past one another. There has been little attempt on either side to understand (not to speak of appreciating) the presuppositions of the other. In this way, Christians have felt impelled to criticize and ridicule Judaism's "this-worldly" emphases (the concrete observance of the Law, the concrete peoplehood of Israel, the concrete Land), while Jews have seen fit to make critical comparisons between Christian claims of messianic fulfillment, on the one hand, and the palpably unredeemed state of our world, on the other. Since, moreover, both Church and Synagogue saw themselves as based upon the teachings of the Hebrew Bible, it was inevitable that, sooner or later, the claim to the truth of the biblical exegesis of the one would lead to the charge of the falsity of the other.

That is why, from the beginning of Christianity until the end of the Middle Ages and even beyond, the spiritual and intellectual relations between Judaism and Christianity can be characterized as an unceasing "Battle of the Proof Texts." (We are speaking here of the spiritual and intellectual relations only.

On the political level, it was a different and an infinitely sadder story.) Many Christian spokesmen, quoting the Scriptures, denied that the Jews still had a share and an inheritance in the God of Israel, that, in other words, the Jews were still God's chosen people. The Jews' faithfulness to the Sinaitic Revelation was regarded as worthy of condemnation. Indeed, the miserable exilic conditions of the Jews—their loss of political sovereignty and independence—were not infrequently used by Christian polemicists to demonstrate the truth of Christianity. (To the Jews, on the other hand, the very facts adduced by the Christians merely served to underline their own conviction that the Messianic Age had not yet dawned!) By and large, the "Battle of the Proof Texts" remained inconclusive. Jews and Christians had been talking past one another.

If the "Battle of the Proof Texts" was characteristic of the long centuries of the Middle Ages, the modern period of history (which, for the Jews, did not really begin until the eighteenth century) shifted the emphasis from theological and scholastic argumentation to the objective, philological, and "scientific" study of classical sources. The Hebrew Bible and the New Testament were now studied as "objectively" as were the literary remains of the Greeks and the Romans. In theory, the religious affiliation of a given scholar should have made no difference to his scholarly conclusions. Many Christians studied the Hebrew Bible "scientifically," without reference to its New Testament and patristic interpretations; and some Jews ventured into the "scientific" study of the New Testament and the Church Fathers. A number of Christian scholars even managed the arduous task of making themselves at home in the field of rabbinic literature. But all too often, the theory broke down at this point. With but a few notable exceptions, most Christian scholars who saw the relevance of Rabbinics to New Testament studies engaged in a practice which was anything but "scientific." They delighted in juxtaposing some dark ("legalistic," "particularistic," "narrow-minded") rabbinic utterance to the bright ("universalistic," "spiritual") light that shone in the New Testament. Rabbinic literature, then, was not perceived as a token of the fact that Jews and Judaism continued to live, and live creatively, even after the canonization of the Hebrew Bible, and of the New Testament, but rather as supporting evidence for the assumption that, at the time of Jesus, Judaism had become spiritually dull and religiously stagnant.

10 Happily, however, within more recent years, Christian scholars of rabbinic

literature have become far more objective, and have, in fact, recognized that that literature has its own intrinsic value—quite apart from its usefulness for New Testament scholarship. However, an "objective" understanding of our respective religious literatures is only the beginning, not the end, of mutual understanding. As a Jewish scholar, I may be very much intrigued by the relationship of Mark and Matthew to "Q" and putative collections of the *logia* of Jesus. But that scholarly preoccupation does very little by way of helping me to understand what makes my next-door Christian neighbor religiously tick in the "here and now." Similarly, a Christian scholar may have acquired a fine expertise in the relationship of the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to the Amoraic Midrash. But this, in and by itself, does not yet enable him to understand what the Sabbath means to me in the "here and now," what inspiration I derive from the donning of phylacteries, and how I relate to what is going on in the Land of Israel. For such an understanding, we have to go beyond literary criticism and philological knowledge. We have to bring back the theological dimension—with full awareness of (and protection against) the dangers which, in the past, have infested that dimension. We need, in other words, a Jewish theology of Christianity, and a Christian theology of Judaism.

To achieve this goal, we may have to bypass a certain tendency which has made itself felt within recent decades, particularly on the American scene. That tendency, born of good and noble intentions, has given rise to the so-called Goodwill Movement. It stresses what Christians and Jews have in common to the virtual exclusion of any acknowledgment of the important and profound differences between those two religious systems. But truth is too high a price to pay even for goodwill. And, in the long run, nothing is gained by bartering religious convictions for a friendship which, under the circumstances, can only be superficial.

These lines are being written on Christmas Day, 1970. It is also the third day of Hanukkah, in the year 5731. Last night, my Christian neighbor lit candles, and I lit candles. His children received gifts, and my children received gifts. This morning, he heard Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" in his church, and I recited the *Hallel* psalms in my morning devotions. But, unless we are willing to commit the "fallacy of primitivism," and regard ourselves as engaged in the observance of the pagan festival of the winter solstice, we shall have to admit that my neighbor and I are not celebrating the same festival. Hanukkah is not

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Christmas. My neighbor is celebrating the birth of the Christian savior. I am celebrating God's mighty deeds in letting the Maccabees be victorious. But neither my neighbor nor I are engaging in mere reminiscences of the past. We are not, primarily, archeologists or historians. The stable in Bethlehem is a very present reality to him, just as the rededicated Temple in Jerusalem is a very present reality to me. Now, I want him to understand what Jerusalem means to me, just as I am trying to understand what Bethlehem means to him. It is this kind of understanding which I see as the outcome of a Christian theology of Judaism, and of a Jewish theology of Christianity.

If, until now, a satisfactory Christian theology of Judaism (i.e., of a kind which Jews would not have to regard as a caricature) has been conspicuous by its non-existence, the fault would seem to lie in a certain ambivalence of the Church *vis-à-vis* the post-biblical Jews and Judaism. On the whole, the Church has managed quite well to withstand those attacks upon the Hebrew Bible which, from time to time, have emanated from within the ranks of Christianity—beginning with Marcion, and extending beyond Harnack into the present. But the real problem has not been with the Hebrew Bible. It has been, rather, with those Jews who, understanding the biblical heritage in the light of rabbinic teachings rather than of New Testament interpretation, have obstinately clung to their own religious and cultural traditions, and have survived. It has been with those Jews who, far from regarding themselves as a "fossil" of an ancient civilization, have, in our own day, undergone a national renaissance and a political rebirth. How do they fit into the Christian scheme of things? That has been the real *skandalon* with which many pious and devout Christians have had to grapple. (Israel crucified and - - - resurrected!)

It is the great merit of Monsignor John M. Oesterreicher's interpretation of the Conciliar Statement on the Jews that it opens up valuable and exciting possibilities in dealing with this very problem. Not yielding up one iota of his own Christian commitments, he shows how a believing Christian can come to an appreciative understanding of what the rabbinic tradition means to the living and practicing Jew. Indeed, he does more than that. He is so attuned to the "words of the living God" contained in that rabbinic tradition that he even sees the possibility of Christians' learning from it, even as, at one time, they learned from its biblical antecedents. And, just as he is able to appreciate the post-biblical Jewish tradition, so does he manifest a profound under-

standing of the role of the Land of Israel in the Jewish (and in the divine) scheme of things.

Monsignor Oesterreicher's "re-examination" is, in other words, a great step forward in the creation of the kind of Christian theology of Judaism which we have described as the need of the hour. It is to be hoped that many will follow him in this endeavor, just as we trust that Jewish thinkers will be moved to approach with renewed vigor the task of developing a Jewish theology of Christianity.

Let not the fact that Monsignor Oesterreicher's effort is "only" an "interpretation" of the Conciliar Statement be of small account in our sight. "Interpretation" is a weighty matter in our respective religious traditions; it is a process in which the Holy Spirit has its share. The New Testament is an "interpretation" of the Hebrew Bible, and the patristic literature is an "interpretation" of the New Testament. The Talmud is another "interpretation" of the Hebrew Bible, an "interpretation" of which the dynamics are the lifeblood of Judaism to this very day. But the Talmud is more than *one* "interpretation." It is a *collection* of interpretations, of conflicting interpretations. At the beginning of the chains of conflicting interpretations, there stand the two great masters, Hillel and Shammai. Hillel's was often the more generous and more humane interpretation; and, in the majority of instances, the Tradition accepted Hillel's interpretation as the decisive one.

Conceivably, there may be other—less charitable and humane—"interpretations" of the Conciliar Statement than the one offered by Monsignor Oesterreicher; and great searchings of the heart will yet have to take place within the Church before the stereotypes and the rigidities of the past will finally be overcome. But, when that time comes, we hope and pray that the generous and humane "interpretation" outlined in this booklet will be the one which—like Hillel's "interpretation" in the rabbinic tradition—is accepted as decisive.

Cincinnati, Ohio
Kislev 27th, 5731/December 25th, 1970.

Jacob J. Petuchowski

A Re-Examination of The Statement on the Jews

FRIENDS!

YOU MAY all have experienced my predicament; I have to speak on something that I have treated before, even more than once. *Timeo virum unius libri* says an old Latin proverb; freely translated: "Beware of the man who has only one topic." The danger of becoming stale and boring is too obvious to belabor. In looking, then, for a fresh approach, it occurred to me that I might begin with a one-sentence summary of the Statement on the Jews.

NO SOONER had this possibility flashed through my mind than I realized, happily, that in doing so I would follow in the path of the rabbis who were fond of summing up the teaching of Scripture in concise terms. George Foot Moore has called it "the law in a nutshell."¹ Anyone with even a slight knowledge of Judaism knows of an unnamed pagan's request to be taught "the whole Torah while standing on one foot," *kol ha-torah kulah al-regel achat*. Equally well, does he know Hillel's answer: "What you yourself do not like, do not do to your fellow man. This is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary" (*Shab.* 31a).

Christian writers have used bottles of ink to show that this negative phrasing of the Golden Rule is inferior to the positive wording Jesus gives it (Mt 7:12; Lk 6:31), while Jewish apologists have gone to great lengths to show that the two phrasings are exactly the same in content. Maybe so, maybe not. The different wording has nothing to do with the basic views of the two teachers, Jesus and Hillel; its reason is the different people they spoke to. While Jesus

*The
Torah
in a
Nutshell*

addressed himself to Jews who had lived under the discipline of the Law and had been trained to walk in the sight of God, Hillel spoke to a pagan to whom *imitatio Dei* was something alien—his gods were hardly models of holiness. To my mind, the negative form shows Hillel's sensitivity, his awareness of speaking to a man nurtured by a far from perfect, probably utilitarian morality, a man still to be brought under the wings of the living God. The negative cast is characteristic neither of Judaism nor of Hillel himself. In fact, Hillel used to say: "Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing it. Be one who loves his fellows and brings them near the Torah" (*Ab.* 1, 12).

Almost as familiar as Hillel's answer is the dispute between Rabbi Akiba and Ben Azzai (early second century, A.D.). For R. Akiba, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Lv 19:18) was the all-embracing rule of the Torah, whereas for Ben Azzai, "This is the book of the descendants of Adam. When God created man, He made him in His likeness" (Gn 5:1) was the Torah's foundation and crown.²

Not quite so well known is a charming homily by Rabbi Simlai (late third century, A.D.). He delighted in searching for the basic principles of the Torah. First he found eleven in Psalm 15, later six which he saw expressed in Isaiah 33:15. With Micah, he reduced the manifold rules to three:

*You have been told, O man, what is good
and what the Lord requires of you;
Only to do what is right, to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God.*
(6:8)

With the Second Isaiah, R. Simlai narrowed them to two: "Maintain justice and do right" (56:1). Finally, he saw the unity of the Torah in the words of the Lord, spoken through Amos: "Seek me and live" (5:4).³ How warm an image, how different from the conception so many Christians have of Judaism!

In the context of these rabbinical insights, the conversation between Jesus and a pharisaic scholar appears in a noncombative light. It must have been an earnest student of God's words who asked Jesus: "Master, which is the Torah's greatest commandment?" Jesus' answer was a happy one indeed:

"'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.' This is the great, the first commandment. A second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two *mitsvot*, everything in the Law and the Prophets depends, *kol ha-torah ve-gam ha-neviim*" (Mt 22:36-40).

For many exegetes, to whom biblical, that is passionate, thought and speech remain a riddle, Jesus' relationship with the Pharisees is bound to appear as one of complete estrangement and uninterrupted bitter polemics. Thus they take the legitimate desire of the *talmid chakham* to test Jesus' teaching as an attack or an attempt to trap Him. Consequently, they understand Jesus' answer as a counterattack, the "unmasking of pharisaic legalism." One goes so far as to write: "Instead of a commandment that a juridical mind could grasp, Jesus offers a purely moral one; the expert in the Law—a jurist—did not know what to make of it."⁴ In my opinion, there is no warrant for this in the Matthean text. Older translations, like King James or Douay, say of the young scholar that he "tempted" Jesus, whereas most modern versions use the verb "test." The Greek word *peirazein* means exactly this: "to put to the test." By itself, it tells nothing of whether the "tester" is led by a search for truth or by antagonism against the one to whom the test question is put. If the word itself is ambiguous, the situation on which Matthew based his story must have been entirely free of hostility, rancor, or even dispute.⁵ For it was a perfectly natural one. Jesus was asked a question with which any teacher in Israel might have been confronted, and He answered like a true teacher in Israel. However singular the juxtaposition, indeed interdependence, of the love of God and the love of neighbor may have been,⁶ it was not of an explosive nature. In no way did it transgress the frontiers of Judaism. The conversation implied no criticism of the many minutiae of the Law,⁷ only the emphatic truth that, without love, all deeds, great or small, are nothing.⁸

*The
Conciliar
Statement
in a
Nutshell*

16 I MAY have tried your patience; I promised to give the sum and substance of the Statement in a brief sentence, but then seemed to have lost myself in recalling rabbinical ways to defend my method. In discussing the method, however, I have already touched on the content. What the rabbis did for the Torah, I would like to do for the Conciliar Statement on the Jews. To put it within

the compass of one sentence, section four of *Nostra Aetate*, the Council's Declaration on the Church's Relationship to Non-Christian Religions, bespeaks the discovery, or re-discovery, of Judaism and the Jews in their intrinsic worth, as well as in their import for the Church.⁹

This summary may be the last thing you expected. If it surprises you, I am happy. A man who can be startled, thrown off his preconceived ideas, can also be convinced. But if you reject the view I propose outright, without probing my arguments, I stand little chance of being heard by you. My words will simply go past you. I can also conceive of one who is neither amazed nor rebuffed by my interpretation, but brushes it aside as purely subjective comments. My comments are indeed subjective in that I stand fully behind them. They are not subjective in the sense that they spring from my imagination, without a corresponding reality. I do not think I need apologize for offering a summary, in other words, for my conviction that the Conciliar Statement requires a commentary. What is Christian teaching if not a commentary upon Scripture, and what is the rabbinical tradition if not commentaries upon commentaries? It is no proof of want of meaning or of ambiguity but of richness when a sentence or series of sentences need interpretation. I would consider it deceptive were I to read my own predilections into the text. Yet, I consider it my duty to let the text speak in all its power, to let it give voice to meanings that are not on the surface.

For there are those who will reject my summary by saying that the Council Statement does not recognize the Jewish people as a spiritual reality, that, in fact, it denies that reality by calling the Church "the new people of God." Some Christian scholars think that "the new people of God" is not a felicitous phrase. Even so, the phrase is part of a compound sentence. If one reads the first clause: "Certainly, the Church is the new people of God," by itself, independently of the second, one undoubtedly gets the impression that here the old theologoumenon is repeated which sees Israel as having been replaced or superseded by the Church, or, to put it differently, which views Israel as a servant dismissed, a son disowned, or a wife divorced.¹⁰ But as soon as one continues to the second, the main clause: "nevertheless, the Jews are not to be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from Holy Scripture," it becomes clear that Israel is not driven from the presence of the Holy One, blessed be He. For all their differences, the Church and Judaism need not be antagonists, rather does the Covenant bind them to a common

task, to a partnership before God. In the words of the Viennese scholar Clemens Thoma, the Conciliar Statement

*confirms the biblical profession that God's calling and gracious gifts are irrevocable (see Rom 11:29), that the Jewish people is, therefore, still God's special possession (see Ex 19:5), and that the particular distinction of Christians, as God's people, is to be joint heirs, joint members, joint partners with the Jews. (See Jn 10:16; Eph 2:11-16; 3:6; 1 Pt 2:7-10.)*¹¹

Some may counter that this is all very well but in the text of the Conciliar Statement the recognition of Judaism is so skimpy as to be practically absent or worthless. I would like to analyze and answer this second objection historically. Undoubtedly, the vast majority of Christians down the ages did not ignore the Jews, but they reduced them to mythical figures: devils incarnate, assassins of Christ, embodiments of malice and obstinacy. Against them stood a small minority of Christians who, now and then, tried to do justice to the Jewish reality. Edward H. Flannery has pointed out that Christians have torn from their history books, as well as from their memories, the hard facts of the persecution of Jews at the hands of Christians.¹² It is of the greatest importance to tell the story of Jewish tears and blood. Still, the opposite is no less important. Some time ago, Edmond Fleg, the great French literary interpreter of Jewish thought, rejected the view that life was "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing" (*Macbeth*, V, v, 27); in the Jewish tradition, he held, another vision prevailed, that of meaningful history. He had been asked to prepare a history of Jewish suffering, to which he replied that he would rather write a history dominated by the friends of the Jews than one by their enemies.¹³ (See Appendix I.)



I HAVE cited Edmond Fleg's insight, not to gloss over the long history of Christian wrongdoing and Jewish suffering—it is, after all, the injustice and pain which made the men of conscience, quoted in Appendix I, speak out—but to

show that the Conciliar Statement, however great a breakthrough, was not entirely without forerunners. Justice is indivisible. A man like myself, who

considers it his duty to clamor that justice be given to Jews and Judaism, must take particular care not to tolerate clichés and over-generalizations about the role of Christians. Please, do not misunderstand me. I dislike the Elizabeth Ardens of Church history who use their cosmetic art to make everything look beautiful. But I equally dislike the modern flagellants who delight in phrases like this: "We Christians worship the Cross, but the Jews carry it." There is truth in this avowal. Still, I cannot join in the global confession of some well-meaning Christians: "We are all guilty of the Holocaust." This high-sounding phrase is just as dangerous as apathy, for if all are guilty, meaning equally guilty, then for all practical purposes none is guilty.¹⁴

In my opinion, the agony of the Jews must not dominate—I repeat, dominate—the theological thinking of Christians on the reality of the Jewish people. Not that I wish to say with Rabbi Jochanan (second century, A.D.):

*Every distress
in which Israel and the nations of the world share
is a real distress.*

*Every distress
confined to Israel
is no real distress.*

(Dt. R. 2:22)

I confess that the superhuman magnanimity of R. Jochanan's dictum has me both awed and stultified. No doubt a homiletic hyperbole, it seems to offer little comfort to the sufferers, little to their spiritual kin. Neither does its interpretation by the learned translator of *Deuteronomy Rabbah*¹⁵ shed light on the abysmal character of Auschwitz, Dachau, Bergen-Belsen, Treblinka, and all the other substations of hell. Still, R. Jochanan's opinion stands like a marker indicating the heights to which rabbinical thought, often maligned, has been able to rise. Do I stand this saying on its head when I read into it a summons to Christians to see in the victims of Goebbels' extermination policy¹⁶ not only Jewish witnesses but also witnesses that belong to mankind? If I am right, not Jews alone but Christians, too, must speak of the Nazi victims as "our martyrs."

This summons notwithstanding, I do not wish to dwell on the agony of the Jews. It must not be the foundation of our dialogue. True, one cannot speak

of it frequently and loudly enough, but such is the paradox of the Jewish-Christian co-existence conditioned by centuries of wrong thinking and wrong doing that one can speak of it too much and too often. I beg you not to confuse this statement with the complaint of many gentiles that Jews are obsessed by the Nazi slaughter. Of course they are, and they have every right to be. My statement that one can speak of the Holocaust too much and too often is not born of that protective mechanism by which we seek to insulate our hearts against pain, its sight and its sound. I am motivated by exactly the opposite desire.

IV SOME hold that the Statement hardly bespeaks a new vision of Judaism since it does not even mention the Holocaust—this is but another version of the objection that the attention paid to Judaism in the document is skimpy. I am sure the Fathers of the Council thought they were expressing their horror, disgust, and indignation at the tortures inflicted on Jews by the Nazis when they said that the Church “decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, staged against Jews at whatever time in history and by whomsoever.” Many may think that these words are not strong enough, not explicit enough. I will not contend this criticism. But are there words in Latin or English, or any other language, forceful and graphic enough to deal with the abysmal event of the slaughter of Jews by the Nazis, when hell went on a rampage the world has never seen before?

When you remember that the medieval Christian was nurtured by the legend of the Wandering Jew; when you remember that the emphasis among the best Christian writers has often been, as in the case of Léon Bloy, on “the people of tears”; when you remember that even Jews, Marc Chagall for instance, like to portray the sufferings of their people in the image of the crucified Jesus—please, do not take this as criticism, I love Chagall’s insight—you may understand my misgivings about any attempt to base the new Christian vision of Judaism on the anguish of the Jewish people. Christians, good Christians, may find it easy to look upon Israel as the people of pain, whereas they may never think of it as the people of life.

Christians may become so fond of the image of the Jews as a people crucified that they forget Israel’s primary witness. It is of the greatest moment that Christians learn that Israel’s primary witness is simply *to be*, to live, to live in

*The
People
of
Life*

the presence of the living God. There is no other people whose members commemorate the death of one of their loved ones by a prayer that is, in the deepest sense of the word, an assertion of existence, the *Kaddish*:

*Mighty be His great Name, and holy,
in the world fashioned by His pleasure.
May He establish His reign
while you live and the days are yours¹⁷
and during the life of all Israel.
May He do so swiftly—soon,
and let us say: Amen.*

The *Kaddish* can be understood only if one realizes, as the Jewish tradition evidently does, that to live is not only to eat and breathe, but to worship. The eminence of the *Kaddish* in Jewish life springs from an impetus embedded in the Jewish soul not to break the chain of those called to sing God’s praise. Thus, in every generation, the son taking the place of his departed father continues the line of those who hallow God’s name.

Again, I doubt that there has ever been another people who, in celebrating a marriage, whether in a palace or in the ghetto, prayed:

*Praised are you, Lord, our God, King of the universe.
You created joy and gladness, groom and bride,
mirth and song, pleasure and delight,
love and harmony, peace and companionship.*

*Soon, Lord our God, may there be heard
in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem
the jubilant voice of marrying couples
from under their nuptial canopy,
and the song of young people, feasting and singing.*

*Praised are you, O Lord!
You cause the groom to rejoice with his bride.*

Comment would destroy the beauty of these lines.

Israel is truly the people of anguish and yet the people of merriment. It has died a thousand deaths and yet it is alive. *Am Yisrael chai*, "The people of Israel lives." The survival of the Jewish people through the centuries is not only a physical or biological fact, it is a theological reality. This reality a Jew experiences in his innermost being. It ought to be, as much as is humanly possible, the experience of gentile Christians, too. Jewish survival must therefore be, I hardly need stress, a political concern, but it must also become a theological category, an affirmation of faith, the Christian faith. Christian theological textbooks dare not ignore this sign of God's faithfulness.

V MAY I beg you to remember that, when I questioned making the anguish of the Jewish people in the past and in our day the one lever of our dialogue, I did so because I am speaking to men and women who do not have to be convinced that the Holocaust was an outburst of hellish forces. Any sensitive person is struck dumb by its malice. Hence a man in his right mind is loath to offer rational explanations and glib consolations. This is not to say that God, who gives meaning to human events, has ceded His throne to meaninglessness. The various attempts proclaiming that in Auschwitz God, too, was destroyed—a proposition absurdly different from the theology of the Suffering Servant, and no less from the midrash that has the Holy Spirit weep over the agonies of the chosen people (*Lam. R.*, I, 45, 46) or the one that has the Shekhinah go into exile with exiled Israel (*Lam. R.*, I, 33)—hand to Hitler that victory which history denied him. I, for one, side with that unknown Jewish fugitive from the Nazis who, hidden in the cellar of a Cologne building, wrote his faith on one of its walls. Of the bombed-out house, little remained but that wall with its inscription:

*I believe in the sun even when it is not shining.
I believe in love even when I do not feel it.
I believe in God even when He is silent.*¹⁸

I will go even further. I believe with Rabbi Meir that when the noose tightens around a criminal's neck, the Shekhinah laments: My head hurts, my arm is heavy. "If God," R. Meir continues, "is so grieved over the blood of the wicked . . . how much more over the blood of the righteous!" (*Sanh.* 46a.)

A
Divine
Elan

True sensitivity sees not only the volcano of evil that erupted in Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Bergen-Belsen, but also the ultimate failure of the greatest poisoner of history; for all his success, he did not triumph. Horrible though it was, the "Final Solution" was anything but final. Six million Jews died, but the Jewish people lives. What this sentence really means is exemplified by the State of Israel. Here, an ancient people that for almost two thousand years was severed from the soil, that as a whole had not been involved in statecraft, that in the days of Hitler had been defaced in every possible way, was rejuvenated.

Prior to the founding of the State of Israel, it was an uncontested axiom among gentiles, even among many Jews, that Jews were incapable of building up and sustaining a state because of their over-developed individualism, their lack of discipline, the desire of each one to go his own way. But Jewish individualism notwithstanding, Israel was founded and has survived innumerable odds. As you all know, when Israelis are asked how it is that, each time war with the Arab states erupts again, they are victorious even though they are a handful compared with the multitudes of Arab soldiers, they answer: "We have a secret weapon we call *aleph bet*." These first two letters of the Hebrew alphabet stand for *Ain b'rerah*, "No alternative," or "No way out." In this instance, it means "No way out but to fight, and fight to the last." Surrounded by hostile armies on three sides and with the Mediterranean threatening from the fourth, they have no choice but to defend themselves unless they wish to drown in the sea.

Ain b'rerah, however, has a still deeper meaning: Israel's survival is due to a force greater than the common instinct for self-preservation or even an extraordinary tenacity for life. When the age-old desire for regaining sovereignty came close to fulfillment, all sorts of plans were hatched: Jews were to find a new home in Uganda or Madagascar or Argentina. It would have been much easier to follow one of these plans than to return to the eroded land of their fathers. When they did return, they could have chosen an international language like English or French as the official tongue of the country. This would have been the sensible thing to do but the pioneers were "foolish enough" to reawaken the language of their ancestors, which few men understood, and to refashion it for modern use.

Why was Israel resettled against all sober calculations, and how has it been able to survive against all odds? I see only one explanation: With all respect

for the idealism, the self-sacrifice, the industry, and the valor of the fore-runners, the planners, the founders, the keepers, and the plain citizens of Israel, one has to profess: *Ain b'rerah*. Ultimately, Jews had and have no choice. They are driven by an *élan* that is a divine gift, for they are wedded to God; they are a covenanted people. To be His people means that they cannot get away from Him, even if they wanted to. After the Emancipation, European Jews tried to be fully assimilated into the nation in whose midst they lived, but it did not work. Even when they throw off the yoke of service to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they cannot escape Him. "Israel alive" is a wonder that should inspire Christians, first into awesome silence and then into praise.¹⁹

It has often been said that the Conciliar Statement on the Jews is an answer to Auschwitz. It is a fearsome truth that the unspeakable horror of Auschwitz was needed to awaken Christian conscience and consciousness. Yet, to say that the Statement is a belated response to the Holocaust would be, at best, a half truth. The Statement is, above all, a witness to Jewish existence, to the reality of Judaism; it confirms the Jewish self-awareness that expresses itself in *Am Yisrael chai*, "The people of Israel lives." Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones—of bones, bereft of life and strength, being fleshed out, coming alive again by the power of the Spirit—spoke of an event uniquely located in time and space, that is, Israel's regeneration and reunion after the Babylonian Exile (Ez 37:1-14). Though the prophetic vision is thus linked to a definite date, it is not dated. Like many other biblical utterances, it has lasting meaning; it describes the perennial wonder that is Israel. Should not Christians, whose lives are marked by the power of the risen Christ, be the first to look in amazement on the repeated revitalization, indeed resurrection, of God's people?

VI

I AM still dealing with the objection that the Statement's recognition of the Jewish people is skimpy or, as some critics put it, that it speaks well of biblical Israel but ignores the Judaism of later days. I have always been amazed at this

hasty reaction. True, the Council did not expressly say that Judaism is a living faith and a grace-filled way of life. But, let me ask, does a lover ever preface his profession of love by stating his philosophical conviction that his beloved is real, and not a figment of his imagination? This is very much the way it was with the Statement.

A
Hand
Extended

Some of you may raise your eyebrows or burst out laughing at my comparison when you recall the difficulties and polemics at the time of the Council. It is true, the document did not have easy sailing, but does the fact that it met with hostility on the part of a few Council Fathers and of a frenzied, anti-Semitic lobby outside the Council not testify to, among other motives, their fear of its inherent power? I do not deny the lacunae of the Conciliar Statement nor its weakness in certain parts; still, for all its imperfections, it was a work of love. Its architects and champions were driven by affection for the Jewish people, and they did—at least for some wonderful moments—infect the majority of the Council. If I dare engage in a personal reminiscence, even though there were endless discussions, arguments, and alterations of the Statement in the sessions of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, my first speech there, introducing the early *Decretum de Judaeis* and pleading its acceptance, was greeted by an ovation. As far as I remember, it was the only instance in the days preceding the Council that this dignified body broke into applause, an applause hailing not the speaker but the message.

The Conciliar Statement expresses the wish that Christians and Jews learn to know one another; that they grow in respect; that they study together the Scriptures, seedbed of both their lives, and that they engage in brotherly conversation. No one can converse with a corpse, no one hold dialogue with a relic of the past. Even though it is not spelled out in the text that Judaism is a living force, it is implicit in these recommendations of the Council. It is not to the Israel of old that the Church extends her brotherly—or if you prefer her sisterly—hand, but to the Jews here and now. The common patrimony the Statement speaks of could obviously not refer to the treasures Christians share with the Israel of patriarchal or prophetic days because patriarchs, prophets, singers, and all the teachers of ancient Israel are the ones who "established" this patrimony or handed it down.

All this is stated, not just implicitly but explicitly, by another passage of the Conciliar document. I mean the one that refers to the Church's living memory of the fact "that the apostles, the Church's foundation stones and pillars (cf. Ap 21:14; Gal 2:9), sprang from the Jewish people, as did most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ's Gospel to the world" (*Nostra Aetate*, 4). Please notice the past tense "sprang," for this recollection is preceded by an emphatic statement in the present tense: "Theirs is the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the law and the worship and the

promises; theirs *are* the patriarchs and from them *is* the Christ according to the flesh (Rom 9:4-5)." [Italics mine.] The unexpected use of the present tense by the Apostle as well as the Council is a singular witness to that dignity of the Jewish people which nothing "in heaven, on earth, or in the depths"—to use another Pauline phrase (Phil 2:10)—can kill. (See Appendix II.)

VII

THIS witness, together with the excursion into New Testament interpretation given in Appendix II, reveals, I think, a fact often overlooked: Paul's vision of his kinsmen is one of the most important parts of the whole Statement on the Jews. In fact, it is a key, if not the key, to the proper understanding of the Statement. This is not the place to analyze Paul's vision, word by word. What the key sentence tells is simply this: Israel—that is, the Israel of all times—is a unique people. But it is not merely a people, or merely a faith community, it is a covenanted people. Forever, it is like a son to God. Forever, God stands by this son of His and the promises given him. The son was chosen to hallow God's name. When Moses and Aaron first appeared before Pharaoh, they conveyed this message of the Lord, the God of Israel: "Let my people go that they may worship me in the wilderness" (Ex 5:1). The Hebrew words *yachogu li*, which I have rendered perhaps too simply as "worship me," are often translated as "celebrate a festival for me," or "keep my pilgrim feast." Martin Buber reads the divine command as *Entlass mein Volk, dass sie mir rundreihen in der Wüste!*²⁰ which might be rendered: "Dismiss my people, that, dancing round and round, they may honor Me!"

Slave laborers that they were, the Israelites were called to serve God in joy. Not that they were to imitate the wildness of pagan orgies. On the contrary, they were and are to serve God in disciplined joy; therefore the Torah is given them. If we keep in mind the tradition that all Jewish generations stood at Sinai—or as the Haggadah puts it: "Every man in every generation is bound to look upon himself as if he personally had gone forth from Egypt. . . . It is not only our fathers that the Holy One redeemed, but ourselves also did He redeem with them"—then it is clear that Israel is meant to be a special and lasting witness to the Holy One, blessed be He. It is to remind us that the world be ruled, not by man's instinct but by righteousness. To put this into a contemporary context, as the Cain-like instinct of Hitler clearly felt, Israel is for all times a symbol of conscience, a sign that makes some burst out into praise and others withdraw into rancor.²¹ These few remarks are not meant

*The Old
Testament,
Source
Of Life*

to exhaust the meaning of Paul's saying. All I intend to show is that what he says in Romans 9:4-5 makes concrete and more explicit his other saying, also quoted in our Statement: "God has not withdrawn His gifts and calling" (Rom 11:29).

I hardly need to stress that a good writer will be on his guard lest he violate the sequence of tenses. He will never shift from the past to the present or vice-versa, without a compelling reason. I have discussed one deliberate shift in tenses by the framers of the Statement on the Jews. There is a second one. It reads:

The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God, in that loving-kindness words cannot express, deigned to conclude the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which the wild shoots of the gentiles have been grafted (Rom 11:17-24) [emphasis mine].

I see no possibility of doing justice to the first, and for that matter to the second, part of this passage. A whole book would be necessary. In fact, a few years ago I wrote one on the roots of Christian teaching in the *Tenach*.²² To treat those roots, however, runs the risk of being misunderstood by many, as if such a treatment implied a deliberate shoving aside of the rabbinical sources of Christian teachings. I had and have no such intention but, as a Christian, I cannot say loudly enough that the only Scripture the Apostles knew was the Old Testament. Since it filled and guided their lives and that of the early Church, "old" could not possibly mean antiquated; rather does it imply that, in the Ancient Scriptures, the revealing God makes His first giant steps into the midst of men.

"Giant"—denoting only magnitude—is an inadequate adjective for the unique saving deeds by which God intervened in Israel's history, the age-old love with which He loves His people or the unfailing care He maintains for them (see Jer 31:3). Still, God's singular covenant with Israel does not gainsay His salvific will toward all men, the "omnipresence of grace." That the Statement on the Jews is placed within the wider context of non-Christian religions may point to a deeper meaning than the expediency that led to the present

location: Israel is God's very own, a treasured possession, *segulah mikol-ha'amim* (Ex 19:5), but God's love embraces all—"the earth is mine" (*ibid*). This is the teaching of the Gospel, but it is a teaching in no way foreign to Judaism. The Talmud records, for instance, an exposition of Malachi's oracle that God is honored by sacrifice and His name great among the nations (1:11) by Abba Arika—a sage so important he is simply called Rav, the teacher. When Rav said that certain nations "know Israel and their Father who is in heaven . . . and others do not," his pupil Shimi pointed out that the prophetic saying spoke not of some nations but of the world from the rising of the sun unto its setting. Rav brushed the objection aside: "You, Shimi!" which I take to mean: "How can you, of all my pupils, not understand!" He simply continued: "They [the nations] call Him the God of Gods" (*Men. 110a*). Even more impressive is a verse from Ibn Gabirol's "The Royal Crown" which devout Jews say during the night of *Yom Kippur*:

*You are God! All creatures are in your service.
Not diminished is your glory
by those who pay homage to a being of their fancy.
For they all strive to draw near You.*²³

I must return to the Hebrew Scriptures as a living source of a vibrant Christian faith. Recently, an outstanding American Catholic exegete, speaking on "The Relevance of the Old Testament for Preaching in the 1970's," was quoted as "admitting only a modest claim for Old Testament relevancy at any time. The problem is obvious—the Christian religion is not the religion of the Old Testament."²⁴ Quite true, but neither is it that of the New Testament only. To follow Jesus means to embrace both Testaments.²⁵ In the words of the German Protestant scholar Claus Westermann, "the Old Testament was the Bible of early Christianity; the writings of the New became Scripture, that is, part of the Bible, by being added to the Old. Since the Ancient Scriptures proclaimed the deeds and words of the God from whom Jesus knew He was sent and to whom He spoke as to His Father, they could not be cut loose from the words and deeds of Jesus Himself."²⁶

Time was when it was customary to say that the Old Testament was the manifestation of the God of anger and the New Testament that of the God of grace. Yet, one and the same God, the God of judgment and of mercy, of wrath and of love, speaks in both Testaments. Time was when Christians used

to set the Gospel against the Law, but again the whole of Scripture is Law and Gospel, Gospel and Law. Time was when Christians were wont to say that the Ancient Scriptures concern themselves only with the blessings of earthly goods, while the apostolic writings speak of spiritual blessings alone. This and all similar dichotomies are artificial, man-made, and thus wrong; they must go; they must disappear from the pulpit as well as the classroom. These dichotomies must go because they are in keeping, neither with modern scholarship nor the thrust of the Conciliar Statement.²⁷

In everything the Gospel proclaims, the Torah and the prophets are presupposed. They are the foundation of its teaching and, even when not explicitly referred to, they are present. No man can grasp the gospel of redemption unless he has fully understood the gospel of creation, unless he has heard Israel's God thunder against sin as well as offer hope. Again, a Christian will be tempted to reduce the incredible message of resurrection to rational proofs of immortality, unless Israel's vision of man has really become part of him. It is impossible to accept as a neighbor the man whom speech, garb, and custom stamp as an enemy (see Lk 10:29-37) unless one has accepted the proclamation of the Hebrew Scriptures that every man is God's image. Hence, in all human relations, in all social concerns, the Christian cannot dispense with the teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures.

VIII

HOWEVER important the Hebrew Scriptures are in the life of the Christian, he must not ignore the teachings of the ancient rabbis. After all, Matthew has the pharisaic scribes "sit in the chair of Moses" (23:1). It is of no small moment that the evangelist attributed this saying to Jesus and placed it at the beginning of a pericope that reflects the struggle between the early Church and the pharisaic leaders after the destruction of the Temple or, more concretely, the hurt of Jewish Christians whose desire to stay within the body of Judaism had been rejected.

Two examples will make clear, I hope, what I mean by the indispensable role of the rabbis in understanding New Testament language. First, if one listens, without their help, to the story of the woman who was cured by a power going out from Jesus as she touched the fringes of His cloak (see Mk 5:25-34; Mt 9:20-22; Lk 8:43-48), one might easily interpret the work of healing as

*The
Rabbi
Guide
to
Under-
stand*

plain magic.²⁸ But the fringe the woman wished to hold in her hand, be it only for a second, was doubtlessly one that every Jew wore at the four corners of his garment, to which "a cord of blue" was attached (Nu 15:38). The fringe, *tsitsit*, was meant to be a call to observe all the commandments of the Lord; a reminder not to follow the heart's instinct, or a lustful urge, but to be holy to God (15:39-40). For the woman, to hold the *tsitsit* was thus a way of manifesting visibly her desire to hold on to God and to His will.

This interpretation is confirmed when one considers the meaning of the blue cord. Rabbi Meir (second century, A.D.) explains: "Blue is the color of the sea, the sea mirrors heaven, and heaven is like the throne of glory" (*Men.* 43b). On the strength of this quotation, Rabbi William G. Braude concludes that

*for the woman, the act of touching was an act of adoration. The sick people believed, which is what the authors of the Gospels mean to tell us, that Jesus was the Messiah, the living rule, so to speak, through whom one might come to know Him who sits on the throne of Glory.*²⁹

Second, if a Christian exegete is at home with the thought and speech patterns of the ancient rabbis, he will not be embarrassed by, nor go through mental acrobatics to explain, the credal profession that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. As the clock moves, the span from Good Friday afternoon till Easter morning is hardly two days. Karl Lehmann, Professor of Dogmatic Theology at the University of Mainz, has drawn our attention to the fact that in rabbinical literature "on the third day" is not an attempt to date an event, or to measure its duration, but a statement pertaining to the history of salvation.³⁰

Midrash Rabbah interprets the phrase "on the third day . . ." (Gn 22:4): "It is written 'After two days, He will revive us, on the third day, He will raise us up that we may live in His presence' (Hos 6:2)." This midrash goes on to give the example of Joseph who "said unto them the third day: 'This do, and live' (Gn 42:18)"; of the spies who were told to hide three days (Jos 2:16); of the prophet Jonah who was in the belly of a great fish for three days (2:1); of Esther who, on the third day, put on her royal garments in which she appeared before the king to plead for her kinsmen (5:1), and other examples.

The English translator of the given midrash adds: "The point of all these quotations is that relief from distress or the climax of events occurred on the third day."³¹ Even more enlightening are these words: "The Holy One, blessed be He, never leaves the righteous in distress more than three days" (*Gen. R.* 91, 7).³² "On the third day" thus designates the revelation of God's glory, His saving power—an understanding presupposed by the New Testament writers but never spelled out. It is made explicit only in midrashic literature.

IX

I AM still discussing the re-discovery that the Church is nourished by the sap rising from the root of the well-cultivated olive tree. I readily admit that not all those who had a decisive say in the wording of the Conciliar Statement grasped its full range. Still, in probing its hidden depths, I would like to repeat: To do justice to the New Testament, the Christian requires the tutelage of the Hebrew Scriptures as well as that of the ancient rabbis. Yet, I will go further and say that he particularly needs to listen to those Jewish teachers of today who themselves are eager to understand the Gospels. To perceive the full measure of Jesus, the Christian must see Him as His contemporaries saw Him. To view Him thus, he may do well to seek the help of a gifted, open-minded, and interested Jewish scholar. Though there are several, for the moment I shall quote only two.

Each year, German Protestants gather for what is called the German Evangelical Church Day. One of its most significant workshops is that on "Jews and Christians." At the 1969 Convention, held in Stuttgart (July 16-20), Rabbi Robert Raphael Geis addressed that workshop on "Jews and Christians Facing the Sermon on the Mount." He holds that, for Jesus, Sinai no longer sufficed, since the time of salvation had begun. To him, the Sermon on the Mount is one great anticipation of the kingdom-to-come and the beatitudes resound with a mighty "Onward! Onward!"³³

Dr. Geis also speaks of the Jewish people's long road of suffering and of Jewish responsibility today. Jews must not be part of the arrogance of silence, as millions of men here and there endure "a Jewish fate." He seeks to unsettle them by referring to some rabbinical sages of the fourth century A.D. who knew that messianic days were not to be days of ease:

*Modern
Jewish
Inter-
preters*

*Ulla and Rabba declared: Would that the Messiah appeared soon but that we were no longer around to see him. Only R. Josef said: Would that he came soon and that I be considered worthy to sit near the dung of his donkey (Sanh. 98b). So grave are the things to come! So grave the overturning of the old order! So grave the revolution that breaks with all we are accustomed to but lets the pure features of human man radiate, that man for whom we long and whom, at the same time, we fear!*³⁴

Turning to Christians, Rabbi Geis stresses that he in no way considers the realm of the beyond in Christianity as insignificant and marginal; still, he reminds them of the words of James: "My brothers, what use is it for a man to say that he has faith when he does nothing to show it?" (2:14). He professes to have witnessed in his Christian friends that justification by grace allows no lazy life of compromise but clamors for the works of faith.³⁵

I have cited Rabbi Geis and quote him more extensively in Appendix III in order to show that the Church still draws sustenance from the root of the well-cultivated olive tree, though in a rather unexpected manner. With Karl Barth, the great theologian of the 20th century, I would like to say:

*The Bible . . . is a Jewish book; it cannot be read, understood, or interpreted unless we enter into the speech, the thought, and the history of the Jews in complete openness, unless we are ready to become Jews with the Jews. Thus we are asked to take a stand toward the continued existence of the Jews as a proof that God is and works through history—whether we affirm it or intend to howl against it with the wolves.*³⁶

The wolves here are, of course, the Jew-baiters, the vulgar as well as the sophisticated ones. Since Barth wrote these words in 1938, he no doubt thought in particular of the Nazi cacophony and all those Christians who, afraid of being discovered as not part of the pack, joined in the howling.

Another contemporary Jewish voice is that of Professor Gerald Blidstein who ends his yet unpublished paper on "Judaism in the Gospels" with these uncompromising words: "For the Christian [Jesus] is more than a pharisaic sage; for the Jew he is less."³⁷ Still, he makes these startling observations:

*The student of Judaism is fascinated by the gospels—indeed, by the phenomenon of Christianity as a whole—because it represents, at least in part, the development of certain elements of his own faith that in his own faith are preserved in a radically different proportion and so create a different experience. I do not mean the clearly recognizable similarities, the many values and structures which, despite their differences, Judaism and Christianity share as against, say, Buddhism or Taoism, the transcendence of God and His personality, the reality of good and evil, and so on. I speak rather of differences that are often, in all actuality, the working out of a new balance, a new proportion, between elements that are quite traditional. Christianity is often, then, a re-proportioning of Jewish elements, the striking of a different balance. The student of Judaism is fascinated by the potential of the doctrines and institutions of his own faith, and moves to explore the "atomic structure" of these elements, if I may call it that, and to understand afresh the meaning of the proportion and balance in which Judaism holds them.*³⁸

In the course of his paper, Professor Blidstein deals extensively with Jesus' attitude toward the Sabbath. He discusses, in particular, the controversy with some Pharisees occasioned by the hungry disciples who had plucked and eaten some ears of corn on the Sabbath (see Mt 12:1-8; Mk 2:23-28; Lk 6:1-5). Without wishing to identify myself with all his remarks on the incident and on rabbinical parallels, I find his suggestion on Matthew 12:6—though different from the interpretation common to Christian exegetes—quite penetrating:

*If I may be allowed, parenthetically, a bit of textual second-guessing: May I suggest that the "something greater than the Temple" is not Jesus, but rather, as the sentences immediately following suggest, the doing of mercy? For the passage as a whole reads, "I tell you there is something greater than the Sabbath here. If you had known what that text means, 'I require mercy and not sacrifices,' you would not have condemned the innocent. . . ." The "something," then, is the feeding of the hungry; since one sacrifices on the Sabbath, certainly one ought to be able to do all deeds of goodness.*³⁹

I wish time permitted me to treat the work of Professor David Flusser and that of Professor Asher Finkel, and to do so extensively. Still, in limiting myself to the words of Rabbi Geis and Professor Blidstein, I have indicated the deep potential for a certain theological exchange or cross-fertilization if you wish. I trust I have succeeded in showing that, despite the separation of the two faiths, Christians would do well not to live independently of the people of Israel. They must not behave as if Judaism did not exist or had nothing to offer them. Some may counter that I have gone beyond the literal meaning of the Conciliar Statement that the Church "draws sustenance from the root of the well-cultivated olive tree," that is, the Israel according to the flesh. The objection is justified, if the emphasis is on "the root," but if the oneness of the "olive tree" is stressed, then I have applied the words of our document in what I think is a legitimate way.

X

I HAVE given two examples of how Christians need the help of their Jewish brothers to understand themselves better. But this fact pales before another to which, in my opinion, readers of the Conciliar document have not given sufficient atten-

tion or weight. Twice the Council clothes its message in traditional Jewish terms.

(1) In saying, with the Apostle, that "God holds [the Jews] most dear, for the sake of the fathers" (Rom 11:28), the Council did not speak condescendingly, as some critics assume. "For the sake of the fathers," is a happy echo of that precious rabbinical doctrine of "the merit of the fathers," *zechut avot*. According to rabbinical tradition, the patriarchs were created before the world was made (*Gen. R.* 1, 4). Elsewhere they are considered the rocks and the hills, in other words, the very foundations of the world. Abraham, in particular, is called the "rock" on which the Holy One, blessed be He, built the earth (*Yalkut to Pent.*, ¶1766). Again, it is because of the merits of Israel's great forbears, that is, because of God's mighty covenant with them, that the people was delivered from the Egyptian bondage and safely passed through the waters blocking their way to the promised land (*Ex. R.* 1, 36). It is on account of their virtues that Moses was allowed to ascend Mount Sinai and receive God's revelation in the Torah. When the people abandoned their Deliverer by dancing around the Golden Calf, Moses' pleading with God was in vain till he said: "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants" (*Ex* 32:13). As soon as he recalled them, God heard him at once.⁴⁰

Cast
in
Jewish
Idiom

To plead with God that He be merciful because of His love for Abraham, His friend, Isaac, His servant, and Jacob, His saint, is part of Jewish literature even prior to the rabbis. When, in the revolt of Judas Maccabeus, his army had to face Nicanor, a commander determined not only to defeat the Jews but to send them into slavery, many fled in terror. Those who remained prayed to the Lord to save them, "not for their own merits, but by virtue of the covenants God had made with their ancestors, and because of His holy and majestic name they bore" (2 Mc 8:15). Again, the apocryphal *Testament of Levi* predicts that the Temple will be razed and Jerusalem's inhabitants dispersed throughout all nations as captives. Yet, destruction and exile are not God's final word. He will be gracious again. The author of the *Testament of Levi* thought it necessary to remind his readers that "were it not for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, our fathers, not one of our issue would be left on the earth" (*Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, Levi 15). Asher, too, prophesies the desolation that will come over the land and the scattering of Israel unto the four corners of the earth. He, too, concludes his dire testament with words of hope: "In His fidelity, the Lord will gather you together again through His tender mercy, for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (*ibid.* Ash. 7).

Among many Christians, the word merit does not have a pleasant ring. The mischievous sale of indulgences during the Middle Ages may, in part, excuse the bias. Another source may be the mistaken notion that Christianity is superior to Judaism in that the Christian is bidden to love God, without seeking any reward, whereas the Jew is told to pile merit upon merit, reward upon reward. This is sheer myopia, not to say ignorance. On the one hand, Jesus taught His disciples to suffer insults and persecution gladly, and theirs would be "a rich reward in heaven" (Mt 5:12). He also said:

*Do not store up for yourselves treasure on earth
where it grows rusty and moth-eaten,
and thieves break in to steal it.
Store up treasure in heaven
where there is no moth and no rust to spoil it,
no thieves to break in and steal.*
(Mt 6:19-20)

On the other hand, there are numerous rabbinical sayings that praise love of God as the one governing rule of life: "Whatever you do, do not do it except

for love" (*Sifre* on Dt 11:13). Indeed, it is the hope of the rabbis that those who obey out of lesser motives will come to obey out of the highest. Safra, a Babylonian rabbi of the fourth century, prayed:

May it be your good pleasure, O Lord our God, to make peace among your family above and your family below,⁴¹ also among the disciples who occupy themselves with your Torah whether for its own sake or not; and may all those who do not occupy themselves with it for its own sake come to do so (Ber. 16b-17a).

I do not claim that the Conciliar Statement on the Jews is a perfect document, but honesty demands that I complete this admission by another statement: Many criticisms by Christians, and even by Jews, betray little knowledge of Judaism, or little application of that knowledge. To my mind, it is invaluable and thrilling that the Church should acknowledge what the Jewish people means to God in terms borrowed from the storehouse of Jewish thought.

(2) There is another instance of the same phenomenon even more remarkable than the first. Jews and Christians are brothers in hope; both long for, and walk toward, God's universal rule. Though they both believe in an age-to-come when God will be all in all, they differ in the interpretation of their common hope. Who would have thought that, in professing her own expectations, the Church in Council would use, not the New but the Old Testament? Who would have dreamt that, basing herself on one of Zephaniah's utterances, she would say: "The Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and 'serve him with one accord' (Zeph 3:9; cf. Is 66:23; Ps 65:4; Rom 11:11-32)" (*Nostra Aetate*, 4)? Can there be any doubt that, by clothing her own eschatological hope in traditionally Jewish language, the Church honors the people of Israel?

Another, somewhat later, oracle proclaiming the same hope for the universal acknowledgment of the one living God is that of the prophet Zechariah:

*And the Lord shall be King over all the earth:
On that day shall the Lord be one and His name one.
(14:9)*

Obviously, it could not have entered the mind of the prophet to deny, ahead of its revelation, the triune life of the Lord God, but rather does he

emphasize the uniqueness of the God of Israel, peerless and sovereign. His saying is, in the words of the late chief rabbi of the British Empire, Joseph H. Hertz,

one of the fundamental verses of the Jewish conception of the Kingdom of Heaven. It proclaims the Providential care of God for all mankind, and the future recognition of the true God by all mankind. It closes all synagogue services.⁴²

Quite apart from the frequency of its recitation, the spirit is akin to that of the prayer Jesus taught His disciples, with which it shares the ardent desire for the complete unfolding of God's kingship.

As is plain, the Jewish and Christian concepts of the age-to-come differ, and no council would wish to gloss over the difference. But it ought not to go unnoticed that the Council wished to bridge the gap in an unusual way. Though no dogma, a traditional Jewish view speaks of a time when the nations of the earth will submit to the Law of God as written in the Torah; the Christian tradition, however, looks toward an end point in history when all will turn toward the Way that is Christ. As the Council quotes one prophetic utterance and implies another with which the Jewish liturgy resounds, it points to an age when words, far from losing their meaning, will reveal their full wealth; when they will no longer separate, but unite; when the reality-to-come will far surpass our present stammer.⁴³

XI

I AM obviously unable to deal with every problem raised by the Conciliar Statement, but there are two I must touch on. The Council said nothing about the one reality crucial to Jewish existence today: the State of Israel. I can be brief on this since I have already spoken of the challenge the State poses to Christians, in this paper and on several other occasions.⁴⁴ To me, the State of Israel is the visible expression of the God-willed permanence of the Jewish people. As is Judaism, so is the State of Israel, a banner of God's fidelity. Jewish history began with the promise of the Land. Or, more precisely, the promise of the Land antedates the existence of the people. Scripture has God bid Abram: "Go forth . . . to the land that I will show you" (Gn 12:1). The Christian

*The
State
of
Israel*

must not ignore that the foundations of the State are thus even deeper than an act of the world community and a decision of the settlers of the Land.

One of the difficulties the State of Israel presents to most men is that it does not fit into the usual categories and preconceived ideas. To give only one example: Here is a state whose neighbors have been at war with it for years; terrorist bands threaten the lives of its people, again and again. Yet when one of the neighboring states felt itself threatened by the same terrorists and became engaged with them in an armed conflict that took many lives and destroyed many homes, the people of Israel did not rejoice in the misfortunes of its enemies. Instead, Israel was the first country to send help to Jordan, help to the wounded, help to the hungry. There are few instances that show the depth of Israel's mentality as the particulars of this effort. The Jordanian authorities accepted Israel's aid only under certain conditions. The whole relief program had to be carried out under the patronage of the International Red Cross instead of Israel's Magen David Adom. The sixteen vehicles loaded with medical supplies and the ten lorries carrying over two hundred tons of food were not allowed to carry Israeli license plates. So disinterested was Israeli assistance that the men in charge were ready to "cover up" their act of mercy as long as those in need were helped. I venture to say that many Israelis who think of themselves as non-religious are religious despite themselves. Here is a state human in a way that none of its accusers is, and, may I say for the benefit of my co-religionists, more "Christian" than any "Christian state" ever was.

In Jesus' great parable, a passing Samaritan takes pity on a Jew who had been the victim of highwaymen and put him into the care of an innkeeper. The Israelis took some two hundred people wounded in the Jordanian civil war into their own hospitals and those located in the occupied territory. If Jesus praised the good Samaritan, what would He say of the good Israelis? Of course, this is a rhetorical question. I have no doubt what He would say of them if He walked again the roads of His land. My concern is: When will Christians come to say the right word about *Erets Yisrael*? When will they recognize that it is more than several thousand square miles but a spiritual reality, that it, fruit of divine promise, has itself become a promise? To me, at least, the unselfish acts I have just noted are prophetic signs.

XII

A MAJOR obstacle to constructive dialogue between Christians and Jews is the suspicion of some Jews that the Statement is but a screen for missionary efforts and the dialogue but a new device to win converts. A few Jews, by no means unfriendly, may even say that the Church cannot help it: She is missionary by her very nature.

I will be as candid as the problem demands. Let me begin by saying: The Statement is an honest document. It means what it says, never something else. It is no cryptic invitation to Jews that they enter the Church; it cannot be, for it is not even addressed to Jews but to Catholics. Yet, it is quite correct to say that it is the mark of the Church to be missionary. In other words, only at the price of ceasing to be, could she forget that she is sent into the world to serve men and offer them the healing power of Christ. The Church must bear witness to Him. Even without preaching, she bears this testimony by her very presence, and so does the individual Christian. This witness wells forth from the very heart of the Christian existence, and no Christian can change it without unmaking himself.

Close to, but different from this inner mission, is organized missionary activity, or "the missions." I hardly need tell this audience that missionary activity is a part of the Church's Jewish heritage. I wish there were time to describe the efforts and the success of Jewish missionaries prior to Jesus' time. But I must at least disavow as a fallacy the common stereotype that Christianity is, by its inner dynamic, missionary and outgoing, while Judaism is self-contained and thus non-missionary.

To come to the contemporary scene, there is in the Church today no drive, no organized effort to proselytize Jews, and none is contemplated for tomorrow. Though the Church will always profess Jesus as the Saviour of all men; though she will never abandon her vision of a humanity united in the living God; though she will continue to welcome wholeheartedly to her ranks Jews who have been led to believe in Jesus as the Christ—they are, after all, essential to her make-up as the Church of Jews and gentiles—she cannot treat the worshippers of the Holy One, blessed be He, as if they dwelt "in the land of death's dark shadow" (Mt 4:16 NEB; Is 9:1). These words of Isaiah referred to the hungry and despondent survivors of the Assyrian invasions of 733-732 B.C.; they may not be applied to the religious nature of Judaism, nor

Prose-
lytism

can the servants of the living God be seen on a par with servants of idols or of some anonymous power.⁴⁵

No doubt, the New Testament is intransigent, at first glance even overwhelmingly so. But it is also conciliatory, indeed open; it acknowledges deep commitment in "others" and the divine light in their hearts. Jesus declared point-blank:

*He who is not for me is against me;
he who does not help me gather, scatters.*
(Mt 12:30)

Yet, with no less force, He also said: "He who is not against us is for us" (Mk 9:39). Again, when one whom the Gospels call a "teacher of the Law" agreed that the Lord God was the one and only Lord and that He had to be loved with all one's heart, strength, and being, and that one's neighbor ought to be loved as one's self, Jesus hailed him: "You are not far from the kingdom of God" (Mk 12:34).

Would I could forever lay to rest the suspicion that the Conciliar Statement on the Jews is meant to conceal missionary aggression, the "soul-snatching" of the Church. But after centuries of estrangement, it takes time for confidence in one another to strike root. Let me say only one more word on this point: No matter how firmly we reject any "conversionist tactics," we must, at the same time, love the concept of, and call to, conversion. In the pre-ecumenical age, Christians sought to convert others. Today, Catholics realize much more their own need to be converted.⁴⁶

"Conversion" stands at the threshold of Judaism as well as of Christianity; both ways of righteousness are unthinkable without it. In saying this, I am not thinking of conversion as a change from one religious group or spiritual family to another, or even a turning from a life of sin to one of goodness. I take conversion, in its deepest sense, as a reorientation of one's total existence in the sight of God. The ancient rabbis taught that repentance was among the seven things created before the creation of the visible world. In more modern terms, *teshuvah*, "repentance," the turning to God, is woven, as it were, into the fabric of our being. The ability to abandon all that is wrong, to heave overboard everything that hinders our pilgrimage, and to turn to God as the

true Captain of our ship—this ability is born with each man. The Talmud has collected many rabbinical praises of man's power to turn. Here are a few:

*Great is repentance: it carries healing to the world . . .
Great is repentance: it reaches to the throne of glory . . .
Great is repentance: it brings about redemption.*
(Yom. 86a)

Every Christian can make these tributes his own.

What is needed, however, is not our eulogy of *teshuvah* but our actual turning. Let me close, then, with the prayer that each of us, be he Christian or Jew, become a *baal teshuvah*, a penitent, a convert; that we learn to appreciate and respect each other's thought and work; that we learn to think as well as speak of each other's tradition with sensitivity;⁴⁷ that we discuss our differences with painstaking honesty; that we, hostile kinsmen of yesterday, learn to be loving brothers, today and tomorrow.

I would like to clothe this request for brotherhood in words of the Jewish liturgy and make my own this prayer of *Rosh ha-shanah*:

Eloheynu ve-Elohey Avoteynu
*Our God and God of our Fathers,
in your glory, rule the entire universe;
in your majesty, tower above the whole earth;
in your mighty splendor, show yourself to all who dwell on it.*
*Every creature will then know that you created it, and every being that
you made it.*
*And every living thing will profess:
The Lord, the God of Israel is King
His reign embraces all that is.*
Adonay, Elohey Yisrael, Melekh
u-malkhuto bakol mashalah.

APPENDIX I

IN THE framework of this paper, I can refer only to a few representative figures without, however, discussing their testimonies in full. One is the twelfth century thinker, Peter Abelard. Among his minor works is *A Dialogue Among a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian*. The *Dialogue's* philosopher is a pagan for whom reason and nature are the sole foundation of morality. He finds the vision of the Jew and that of the Christian stultifying because both have recourse to revelation. In the course of the exchange, the Jewish partner delves into the suffering of his people. This is part of his tale:

Despised are we and hated by all. Anyone who wrongs us, considers it supreme justice, indeed a service lofty and pleasing to God. . . . Even when allowed to exist, we are not permitted to own fields, vineyards, not even a patch of land—and there is no one to defend us against open or concealed attacks. Thus filthy lucre is all that is left to us. To keep our miserable life going we must charge exorbitant interest, which in turn makes us hated by those who think that we oppress them. . . . Truly, the state we are in speaks louder than a tongue ever could (PL 178:1618).

This plaint on the lips of a Jew really springs from Abelard's heart. I am convinced of this because now and then Abelard makes his Jewish companion use Christian terms. The latter thus calls the seal of God's covenant with Israel *circumcisionis nostrae sacramentum*, the "sacrament of our circumcision" (*ibid.*). Prior to this, the Jewish colloquist calls the Christian *frater iste qui Christianum profitetur*, "that brother who confesses to be a Christian" (PL 178:1615). If one remembers that the Jewish speaker, however realistically drawn, is Abelard's disguise, one is bound to conclude that it is he, the Christian, who calls the Jew his brother.

STARTLING, too, is Johannes Reuchlin's *Gutachten*, his *Expertise on Whether One Ought to Seize, Do Away With, and Burn All Books of the Jews*. His opinion, addressed to Emperor Maximilian in October, 1510, sought to answer the question of whether the Talmud should be destroyed because, among other things, it was written "against the Christians" and "insulted Jesus, Mary, and the Apostles . . . as well as the Christian order."⁴⁸ Interestingly, he based his judgment on those excerpts which had been used to vilify

rabbinical teaching. For, despite all possible efforts, he had not been able to get hold of the entire Talmud.⁴⁹ Here is one of his significant points:

Suppose the Jews had deliberately written their books against us—something I do not really hold and which, in any case, would require convincing demonstration—they could plead that they did so, not to harm anyone but to defend themselves. On Good Friday of every year, we publicly abuse them by calling them perfidos Judaeos, that is, "treacherous Jews," or without mincing words, "men in whom there is neither faith nor trust." To this they could well counter among themselves: "They slander us. We have never betrayed our faith."⁵⁰

When Reuchlin took up the defense of rabbinical literature, he stood all alone. Yet what is so remarkable about his brief is not only his courage and scholarly honesty, but also his sympathetic understanding. I would go even further; the last sentence I quoted betrays an extraordinary stance: Rather than sit in judgment over the "obstinate Jews," Reuchlin is convinced that they have no other motive than to be faithful to their calling.

AS A third witness, let me single out Abbé Henri Grégoire of the late eighteenth century, one of the champions of full rights of citizenship for Jews. His paper on the physical, moral, and political regeneration of the Jews—a paper that carried off the prize of the Metz Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences—ends with this plea:

You nations, for eighteen hundred years you have trampled on the remnants of Israel. The severity of divine vengeance has fallen on them⁵¹—but has God appointed you His instruments? The fury of your fathers chose its victims from among this tormented flock. What kind of treatment have you saved for those frightened lambs that escaped the slaughter and fled into your arms? Is it enough to let them stay alive, all the while robbing them of the things that make life bearable? Will you bequeath your hatred to your children? Do not judge this people except in the light of their future. . . .

A new age is about to begin . . . The Jews are members of that universal family that is bound to establish brotherhood among all peoples. Over them, as over you, revelation spreads its majestic veil. Children of the same father, rid yourselves of every pretext for antipathy towards your brethren. Some day, they will be united with you in the same fold. Give them homes where they may rest their heads in peace and dry their tears. Then the Jew will return tenderness to the Christian and embrace in me his fellow citizen and his friend.⁵²

I will not discuss the style so characteristic of the Enlightenment, but one comment may be necessary. Though Grégoire seems to cling to the traditional Christian hope that some day Jews and Christians will be one in Christ—in his words, “united . . . in the same fold”—he is no proselytizer. He is every bit as emphatic in stressing the common humanity of Jews and gentiles, and the common roof spread over men of biblical faith as well. For him, Jews and Christians live under the same firmament, the spiritual firmament of the revealing God. He does not refer to the Church and the ancient Israel, but to the men of his time: the Christians who are free men and the Jews who are prisoners of the ghetto.

A FINAL witness. In the summer of 1935, the Catholics of Czechoslovakia held a national convention to which the Chief Rabbinate of Prague bid the delegates welcome. The bishops of the land acknowledged the greeting with the following letter:

Prague, June 30, 1935

Gentlemen:

You were kind enough to welcome the National Assembly of Catholics with a biblical wish of peace which recurs again and again in the books of the Old and New Testaments. From the depths of our souls, we thank you for this message and, with all our hearts, we return the greeting.

*Fiat pax in virtute tua, “May there be peace in your strength” (Ps 122 [121]:7). * The words of the Psalm you have quoted form part of the daily prayers of the Catholic Church. We*

are certainly of one mind with you, Gentlemen: Mankind is divided today into only two camps, the camp of those who proclaim faith in God and the camp of His foes. We also trust that the common values of faith and morality be, without exception, a rampart to those who build their lives on the sacred truths of divine revelation. The sublime commandment of the love of God and of neighbor, already contained in the Old Testament, is the common base of all that is sacred to Jews and Catholics.

The message of peace that goes out from this National Assembly of Catholics is addressed to the entire world and to all men without distinction. For every human soul is of infinite value before God. You have greeted this Congress with the words of the singer of the Lord. Permit us to respond with the high priestly blessing, with these lofty words: Yeverechocho Adonay veyishmerecho, words we apply to all mankind without exception:

*May the Lord bless you and keep you,
May He let His face shine upon you,
And give you peace—Ve-yosem lecho shalom (Nu 6:24-26).*

+Leopold Precan

Archbishop of Olmütz and Metropolitan of Moravia
President of the Conference

+Charles Kaspar

Archbishop of Prague, Primate of Bohemia
Host Bishop of the Conference

John George Rückl

Papal Chamberlain
Executive President of the Conference

Need I emphasize that this simple exchange of well-wishing, of good will toward one another, took place thirty years before the Council? It is a document of the post-conciliar spirit in pre-conciliar times.

*This is the Vulgate's rendering of the verse which really reads: “Peace be within your walls.”

APPENDIX II

PAUL'S enumeration of the divine gifts granted to Israel has been a constant crux to exegetes. Christians have often assumed that Jews not believing in Jesus as the Christ are banished from the sight of God and deprived of His love. How, then, can the Apostle put the bestowal of these graces in the present tense? One exegete asks himself: "Why does Paul set forth all these advantages of Israel?" only to answer: "to make the mystery of the rejection of Israel truly great and inconceivable."⁵³ But chapters 9-11 of the Epistle to the Romans were written to proclaim, not Israel's rejection but God's righteousness and fidelity. The Apostle himself poses the problem of whether God has rejected His people and replies with a resounding *Mē genoito*, "Never!" (11:1).

Another exegete is so bewildered by Paul's attributing Israel's "prerogatives" to those Jews who do not share his belief in Jesus that he has the Apostle speak here, not of the Israel of history but of "God's Israel," that is, the nation after God's own heart, the "ideal" people fulfilling His plan.⁵⁴ One need not be a scholar to realize that Paul was concerned with the empirical, not an ideal people, not with an ultimate concept of Israel dwelling in a transcendental realm but with those Jews the Christians of Rome knew.

The most drastic solution of the difficulty the present tense poses to exegetes has been offered by the English translator of the Jerusalem Bible. Contrary to the Greek original and the French translation, the English edition has Paul of Tarsus say: "They [my brothers of Israel, my own flesh and blood] *were* adopted as sons, they *were* given the glory and the covenants; the law and the ritual *were* drawn up for them, and the promises *were* made to them" [italics mine]. Here the translator is guilty of violating one of the most primitive rules of scholarship, never to twist a text to conform it to one's preconceived ideas. If a biblical passage does not fit one's theology, surely one must revise one's theology, not the text. I am sorry to add that the translator of the Epistle to the Romans in the new American Catholic version, the most recent of translations, outstanding in many respects, has chosen to be as arbitrary as the one of the Jerusalem Bible.

APPENDIX III

TO GET the full flavor of Rabbi Geis's insight, more than a few phrases are necessary. Here, then, is a larger excerpt:

In proclaiming the nearness of the time of salvation, Jesus is no visionary, no fanatic, who overlooks, indeed mercilessly disdains, human weakness. Still, the way Jesus disavows the existing human order has a revolutionary element without parallel. The Sermon intends the transformation of this earth: "How blest are you poor, the Kingship of God is yours. How blest are you who now go hungry, your hunger shall be satisfied. But woe to you rich, gone is your solace" (Lk 6:20-21, 24). In these utterances of Jesus, there throbs an eschatological impatience. One almost hears the mighty "Onward! Onward!" . . .

Together with many Jews, most Christian "functionaries" want to have none of Jesus the revolutionary, as Karl Barth calls Him. Still, this changes nothing, diminishes nothing. The Man of mercy, the Bringer of righteousness and peace has appeared. The might, the power play of the world are about to vanish. Yes, so unsettling can the demand be that man live with his eyes on the coming of God's Kingdom, that one begins to lead life within the Kingdom in a world that is not yet ready for it. The Sermon on the Mount is one great anticipation.

In saying this, one must not forget, even for the wink of an eye: Jesus is a Jew, he speaks the language of his people. Malkhut shamayim, literally translated "the kingdom of heaven," means but one thing, God's kingship on earth. The reason for saying heaven is simply the reserve of a Jew that makes him shun pronouncing God's name and makes him substitute "heaven" for it. As a Jew, Jesus means by redemption a public act on the stage of history; only on the strength of this public act does the redemption of the individual soul emerge. He who asks in the Sermon: "Is life not more than food, the body not more than clothing?" (Mt 6:25) cannot be pushed off into the hereafter and thus have His mighty bidding dulled.

It is this bidding in the proclamation of Jesus, and only this bidding, that matters; it does not merely "interest" us, it grips us. A Man appears with the intent of propelling what the prophets announced to the very point where salvation begins, in order to burn into all of us, Christians or Jews, an image of man that should never let us be content with man—as he is. Christians and Jews may shake their heads in bewilderment. I cannot keep a Christian from doing so. A Jew, however, should reflect on how Leo Baeck, a master at weighing his words, said something hard to ignore: "Judaism may not pass [Jesus' gospel] by; Judaism may not misjudge nor dispense with it."⁵⁵ In like manner, Buber speaks of Jesus' great place in the history of Israel's faith.⁵⁶ [Baeck and Buber] are joined by another Jew who up to now has had, as far as I can see, the deepest perception [of Jesus].

David Flusser, who teaches New Testament at the Hebrew University, has made these incisive comments: "Jesus is the only Jew of antiquity known to us who proclaimed not only that men were at the threshold of end-time but also that the new age of salvation had already begun."⁵⁷ Our anxious times must not serve as an excuse for us Jews to draw back behind these clear markings. All the less should we do it because the Christian world sees things anew and, unless we are deluded, hears again Jesus' saving message on the kingdom of God on earth in its concreteness and directness. The singular interest in the religious "I", fostered for so long, pales before the kingdom of God. . . ."⁵⁸

FOOTNOTES

1. *Judaism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1944), II, 84ff.
2. *Sifra*, *Kedoshim Perek*, 4, 12; *J. Talmud*, *Ned.* 9, 4; *Gen. R.* 24, 7.
3. See Moore, *Judaism*, II, 83.
4. "An Stelle eines juristisch fassbaren Einzelgebotes nennt er ein rein moralisches Gebot, mit dem ein Gesetzkundiger als Jurist nichts anfangen konnte." Paul Gaechter, *Das Matthäus Evangelium* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia-Verlag, 1963), p. 712.

5. The adverse interpretation of the Matthean scene follows the model of John Chrysostom. Without much knowledge of the Gospel's Jewish milieu, he writes in one of his homilies on Matthew: "When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had put the Sadducees to shame, they approached Him again. Although it would have become them better to hold their peace, they decided to enter into an argument with Him. They put forth a man well skilled in the Law, not from any desire to learn from Jesus but to trap Him" (PG 58:661). Would it not have been more likely for the Pharisees to rejoice in the way Jesus unmasked the weakness of their opponents' stand? Again, why would it have been necessary to select a particularly learned man to ask a question that was on many minds and lips? Wisdom was required to answer the question, not to utter it.

The ignorance of the Gospels' Jewish milieu manifest in John Chrysostom's comments is, I am sorry to say, almost a hallmark of patristic exegesis, not to speak of that of later ages. In the field of New Testament interpretation, the motto "Back to the Fathers!" is not an altogether happy one. A return to patristic exegesis would not only clash with many of the insights of the modern biblical sciences, it would also block the true understanding of Jesus' relationship to His people and its various groups.

This is as good a place as any to quote a great Jewish master of our times. In replying to Alfred Edersheim—who in his *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (New York: Longman's Green, 1917) perfected the "art" of making the difference between Christ and Judaism "one of infinite distance" (II, 15)—Solomon Schechter observes: "We venture to hold that the glory of such a sublime figure as that of Jesus Christ in no wise requires the process adopted in dealing with a microscopic object, namely, the obscuration of its surroundings." (*Studies in Judaism*, Third Series [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1924], p. 165). Indeed, to darken the background of Jesus' life in order to make Him stand out does Him no honor; worse than that, there is

always the danger that what starts out as antagonism against Jews will in the end become hostility toward Jesus Himself.

6. For a similar teaching, see Test. Iss. 5, 2. *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, ed. R. H. Charles and W. O. E. Oesterley (New York: Macmillan, 1917), p. 63.

7. Interestingly enough, the view that there are 613 commandments in the Torah, which the detractors of Judaism never tire of repeating, was first expressed by R. Simlai, the same man who so ingeniously sought to arrive at a unifying principle of the Torah.

8. The rabbis' teaching is similar; for instance, "to love the Lord your God" is explained as "whatever you do, do not do it except from love." (*Sifre*, Dt 11, 13; *Ned.* 62a.)

9. Some writers have described the Conciliar Statement as a "rejudaization of Christianity." I consider this designation unfortunate, indeed, misleading. To give only two reasons: First, in apostolic times, "judaizers" were Christians who insisted that, in order to be saved, gentiles would have to keep the practices ordained by the Mosaic law (see Ac 15:1). When the Council taught Catholics to be fully aware of the Church's origin in Israel—an origin that has put an indelible character on her—when it reminded them of the Hebrew spirit that does, and must, mark her life, it obviously did not demand that she acknowledge all the biblical or halachic precepts as still binding on her members. But it is exactly this or some other kind of amalgam that the term "rejudaization" suggests. Our search, however, must be for that clarity without which the dialogue between Christians and Jews cannot flourish.

Second, among the difficult tasks that will face the Church of tomorrow is to take deep root in the various parts of Asia and Africa. Among other things, she will have to relate the biblical idiom to new thought and speech patterns. Rejudaization, at best a vague term, does not prepare her for the delicate work of adapting herself to new surroundings, without the least loss of her being, an essential part of which is her Hebrew heritage. She must learn new ways to serve while remaining faithful to her everlasting Lord. To be keeper and dispenser of things old and new (see Mt 13:52) is one of her privileges.

10. Years ago, Jacques Maritain, to whom all engaged in the ministry of reconciliation owe much, said in "The Mystery of Israel": "The mystical body of Israel is an unfaithful and a repudiated Church (and that is why Moses had figuratively given forth the *libellum repudii* [bill of divorce])—repudiated as a Church, not as a people. And ever awaited by the Bridegroom, who has never ceased to love her." (*Ransoming the*

Time, trans. H. L. Binsse [New York: Scribner's, 1941], p. 154.) Today, an alert theologian would be loath to separate the Jewish people as an ethnic entity from the Jewish people as the Lord's witness.

11. See *Kirche aus Juden und Heiden* (Vienna: Herder, 1970), p. 16.

12. *The Anguish of the Jews* (New York: Macmillan, 1965), p. ix.

13. See *La Conscience Juive* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), pp. 5, 8f. Fleg's exact words were: "Si je faisais un travail de ce genre, ce serait plutôt l'histoire du philo-sémitisme que j'écrirais, car si nous n'avions eu de tout temps des amis plus puissants et plus nombreux que nos ennemis nous n'existerions plus. Nous avons été continuellement accueillis et sauvés le long de notre histoire et c'est là aussi un de ses aspects essentiels" (p. 9). "Were I to do a work of this kind, it would rather be a history of friendship for Jews for had we not had, at all times, friends more powerful and more numerous than our enemies, we would no longer exist. All through our history, we have been continually helped and saved, and this, too, is one of its essential aspects."

14. Greater discernment is shown by Emmi Bonhoeffer in *Auschwitz Trials, Letters from an Eye Witness* (trans. U. Stechow [Richmond: John Knox, 1967], p. 19), who writes: "Involvement in the guilt reached all the way to the universities, which had made the false doctrine their own; into the manufacturing firms, which had made profit on the murders; into the churches which had worshipped Hitler."

What troubles me about most attempts to castigate the moral involvement of all those not directly participating in the murder is their vagueness. A sober analysis would have to take into account notions like "man is nothing but a highly developed animal" or "right and wrong are but conventions." It was Hitler's demonic logic that put these and other ideas characteristic of the "modern mind" into practice, concluding that men could, indeed ought to be, bred as well as slaughtered like cattle and that anything *der Führer* willed was justice. Again, those who blame Hitler's atrocities only on pseudo-theological notions like deicide—notions I abhor—reveal a naiveté about the power of religion in the lives of all men. In many instances, what appears as a religious prejudice is really a political or psychological impulse—the will to power, self-righteousness—religiously disguised.

15. A footnote in the English edition says that a distress of Israel alone is not a true distress "because God quickly hears their prayers (E.J.). The Yalkut, however, reverses the reading, and this is preferable." (*Midrash Rabbah, Deuteronomy*, trans. J. Rabbinowitz [London: Soncino, 1939] VII, 50. E.J. stands for a commentary by R. Enoch Zundel b. Joseph of Bialistock, 19th century.)

16. In speaking of "Goebbels' Final Solution," I am following the historian of the SS who bases himself on Felix Kersten, Himmler's personal physician and confidant. Himmler once confessed to Kersten that Hitler's original order was to remove all Jews from Germany in an orderly fashion, allowing them to take with them all their movable property. But toward the end of 1941, Goebbels convinced the Nazi leadership that "the Jewish question could be solved only by the unsparing annihilation of all Jews. As long as a single Jew remains alive, he will be an enemy of Nazi Germany. Hence, any kind of clemency and humanity toward the Jews would be ill-advised." (See Heinz Höhne, *Der Orden unter dem Totenkopf, Die Geschichte der SS* [Frankfurt: Fischer, 1969] II, 343.)

Assuming the correctness of the report, it is psychologically interesting that the idea of the "Final Solution" should not have come from any of the gangster types in Hitler's entourage, but from its most sophisticated member, who, one ought not forget, was a cripple and in no way resembled Nordic man.

17. In the traditional way, these words are spoken by the one who leads the prayer—hence "while *you* live."

18. See, for instance, *The Jerusalem Post Magazine*, May 1, 1970, p. 10.

19. On all this, see Helmut Gollwitzer, *Israel und Wir* (Berlin: Lettner, 1958).

20. *Das Buch Namen* in *Die Schrift*, vol. II (Berlin: Lambert Schneider, n.d.), p. 21.

21. I am referring here to Hitler's contemptuous statement that conscience is a Jewish invention. (See Hermann Rauschning, *The Voice of Destruction* [New York: Putnam, 1940], pp. 223-224.) Sayings like these make clear that he and his henchmen hated the Jews, not because of any faults they might have had, but because of the singular position they held in God's scheme. It is this kind of hatred that makes the slaughtered Jews martyrs in the strict sense of the word.

22. *The Israel of God* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1963).

23. See *The Order of the Form of Prayers for the Day of Atonement According to the Custom of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews* (2nd ed.; London: E. Justius, A.M. 5570), p. 42. Fidelity to Ibn Gabirol's thought demands that I mention the lines that follow. In them, he calls those who seek the king's highway but stray from it, blind men who fall into a pit, or the abyss of perdition. Though they may think they have attained their goal, they have labored in vain. Only those who travel the straight road will arrive

at the king's palace. I wonder whether the latter verses do not weaken the lofty view of those quoted in the text.

24. Daniel Durken, O.S.B., on Roland Murphy, O. Carm. in *America*, 5/30/70, p. 588.

25. Fr. Murphy's stand may actually be close to mine for, in Fr. Durken's words, he continued: "The solution is just as obvious—the God of the Old Testament is the God of Jesus Christ" (*ibid.*).

26. *Das Alte Testament und Jesus Christus* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1968), p. 7.

27. Westermann, too, disavows these false distinctions. He also gainsays the often mentioned antithesis between the first Covenant as the one of promise and the second as the one of fulfillment. Promise and fulfillment are the marks of both Testaments (see *ibid.*, p. 10).

Exegetes, preachers, and catechists face another danger, that of over-allegorizing. As the rabbis interpret biblical texts allegorically, so may the Christian teacher. In fact, the use of Israel's songs, the Psalms, as the Church's own prayer presupposes her reading of references to Israel or Jerusalem as references to herself. This is as it ought to be. Again, a Christian, on hearing many of the psalms, may hear the voice of Christ. St. Augustine, for instance, called Him *iste cantator*, "that unique singer" (*Sermon on Ps 122*), "the man who is all men" (*On Ps 34*). A worshipper who hears the cry of the poor and afflicted as a cry of Jesus, exercises what I would call the creative imagination of love. A lover sees his beloved everywhere. Likewise, a Christian, who is nothing if he is not a lover, sees Christ on many a page of the Old Testament but it is not "fancy" that moves him, rather love, the love of Jesus and his own.

The use of allegory, the search for a figurative sense, is thus correct provided two main rules are scrupulously observed. First, the preacher may well apply "Comfort, comfort my people" (Is 40:1) to the followers of Jesus, as long as he does not suppress that "people" refers originally and first of all to the people of Israel. He may take "I will help you, says the Lord" (Is 41:14) as a promise to believers in Christ, again as long as he does not forget that the offer is made primarily to the Israel according to the flesh. Second, the figurative interpretation must not be selective, in the sense that all references to phrases like "Israel the chosen," "Jacob the favored," "Zion restored," are applied to the Church and phrases like "Israel the sinner," "a stiff-necked people," "the people and city punished or doomed" are seen as pointing to the Jewish people. Wisdom, which lives on humility, will lead the Christian to see himself marked by the good and the bad, the promise and the threat, the gift and the punishment the Hebrew Scriptures offer.

28. Examples of such interpretation are legion. The most recent seems to be by Edward J. Mally, S.J. who writes: "Jesus is described as possessing an almost magical healing power that operates automatically upon contact with him." ("The Gospel According to Mark," *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* [Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968] II, 33.)

29. "A Rabbinic Guide to the Gospels," *Scripture* (London, April 1967), p. 7. See also the narrative in Mk 6:56 and Mt 12:36.

30. See *Auferweckt am dritten Tag nach der Schrift* (Freiburg: Herder, 1968), pp. 262-290.

31. *Midrash Rabbah, Genesis*, trans. H. Freedman, I, 491, n.2.

32. *Ibid.*, II, 842.

33. See "Juden und Christen vor der Bergpredigt," *Gerechtigkeit in Nahost* (Stuttgart: Kreuz, 1969), p. 10.

34. See *ibid.*, p. 12.

35. See *ibid.*, pp. 12, 15.

36. *Church Dogmatics* 1, 2 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1956), pp. 510-511.

37. From an unpublished lecture given on September 23, 1969, at the New York Theological Seminary, titled "About Jews and Judaism: an Interreligious Colloquy."

38. *Ibid.*

39. The process of learning from contemporary Jewish scholars requires discernment, as Professor Blidstein's entire attitude toward the Christian message shows. In another context—a review of Rabbi Arthur Gilbert's book *The Vatican Council and the Jews*—he writes: "Christianity does have a superb myth, of proved subjective efficacy, and the sociological and cultural situation is one, obviously, that puts the Jew at a disadvantage in both overt and subtle ways." It is not clear whether myth is used here as in Gnosticism, as something that happened nowhere, yet could happen anywhere, or in a modern sense as a poetic interpretation of ultimate reality. Professor Blidstein also holds that there has been no meaningful shift in the thought of Christian theologians. The reason is that "[this] task has been thus far beyond their powers because Christian scripture is in part—whether read from a fundamentalist or 'symbolic' perspective—anti-Semitic." Were these the words of a gentile scholar with scant knowledge of Jewish history, one could

understand. They are strange coming as they do from a Jewish scholar who must know that the history of Jewish thought is, to no small extent, a history of fierce controversy. The polemics in the New Testament, too, are the reflection of strife among brothers. In any case, they were not one-sided. Take, for instance, the remark of Rabbi Tarphon (ca. 100 A.D.) that the Jewish Christians are worse than idolaters: The idolaters deny God without knowing Him; the Christians know Him but deny Him nevertheless (*Tos. Shab.* 13, 5). New Testament polemics are bound to a concrete situation in history and are, therefore, not of a dogmatic nature. Yet, Professor Blidstein wants us to believe that the religious causes of anti-Semitism can "be eliminated only by a thorough secularization." He seems to have misgivings about his own suggestion for he adds "as disastrous as such a development may be from other points of view."

To be fair to Professor Blidstein, I would like to quote a few more passages from the same article. First: "Christianity has meant more than persecution of Jews, and its religious and moral performance cannot be dismissed, no matter how heinous its role in Jew-killing." Again, turning to his Orthodox fellows, he admonishes: "We ought seriously consider the image of the non-Jew in Orthodox pedagogy and folk-culture. I do not intend to forego an ounce of Jewish pride and selfhood; I question, though, whether this pride need be bought with defensiveness and hostility. All the pieties about *benei Noah* and the possibility of their spiritual and person [*sic*] integrity are not as potent as the expletive, *goy*." Interesting, too, is this self-examination: "The naïveté of Jewish shock at Christian silence [before, during, and after the Six Day War] shocked me more than the silence itself. Have our *gedolim* said anything about Biafra? Or more to the point, said anything about South Africa?" ("Jews and the Ecumenical Dialogue," *Tradition*, II, 2, Summer 1970, pp. 103-110.)

40. Moore, *Judaism*, I, 537.

41. The translator of the Soncino edition of the Babylonian Talmud notes that "family above" refers to the guardian angels of the nations, while, from the context, "family below" would seem to mean the nations of the earth. He also mentions that Rashi considered the latter to mean "the assembly of nations." (*The Babylonian Talmud, Berakoth*, trans. M. Simon [London: Soncino, 1948], p. 99, nn. 6 and 7.)

42. *The Authorised Daily Prayer Book* (Rev. ed.; New York: Bloch, 1952), p. 105.

43. See John M. Oesterreicher, "Commentary: Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," *American Participation in the Second Vatican Council*, ed. Vincent A. Yzermans (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967), p. 609.

44. See "The Theologian and the Land of Israel" and "A Statement of Conscience" in *Brothers in Hope*, Volume V of *The Bridge*, ed. John M. Oesterreicher (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), pp. 231-243 and pp. 291-295. See also "Salute to Israel," *Teshuvah*, Institute Paper No. 1 (1970).

45. It does not seem to be sufficient to rule out a Christian approach to Jews that resembles the mission to animists or to men worshipping figures of their own making. This would, after all, be a purely negative stance. Elsewhere, I have raised the question, as have others before me, of whether Judaism and Christianity are not two ways of righteousness that have complementary functions. Among other things, I wrote: "I have no doubt that, at the end of ages, the chasm will be closed, even though I do not know exactly by what wonder of grace unity will come. Is it necessary, indeed, possible that in the present eon—for the Christian the 'age of the in between,' between the first and the second comings of Christ—we do away with the opposing visions of Christians and Jews? Is their polarity not rather meant to be an agent that makes both communities, and the world with them, run toward that final consummation of which the prophets dreamed? Do not both communities, each in its own way, serve the will of God, and though seemingly apart, push together toward the ultimate goal: God's perfect reign and man's delivery from all and every evil?" For the full text, see *Brothers in Hope*, pp. 27-30.

Further, various guidelines for Catholic-Jewish relations, foremost among them those of the American bishops, expressly warn against the abuse that would turn dialogue into an attempt to proselytize the partner. (See *Brothers in Hope*, pp. 257-262.) There have been, however, a few voices, like those of John Cardinal Heenan and Fr. Arthur Klyber, that have strongly criticized all anti-conversionist views. Few major theologians have spoken on the subject. Hans Küng is one. He writes: "Only one course of action is permitted to the Church on this common pilgrimage—not 'tolerating,' not 'missionizing,' not 'converting,' but only 'stirring [Israel] to emulation,' (see Rom 11:11-14). The Church can make Israel jealous of the 'salvation' it has received, so as to spur Israel to imitation. How? The Church, in its whole existence, must be a token of the salvation it has received. In its whole existence, it must bear witness to the messianic fulfillment. In its whole existence, it must vie with Israel in addressing itself to a world that has turned its back on God, and in demonstrating to it, with authority and love, the word that has been fulfilled, the righteousness that has been revealed, the mercy that has been accepted, the reign of God which has already begun." (See *The Church*, trans. R. and R. Ockenden [New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967], p. 149.) For another interesting view on the problem see Kurt Hruby, "Reflections on the Dialogue," *Brothers in Hope*, pp. 124-128.

Of considerable weight in judging the mind of the Church on missionary activity is the fact that the Sisters of Zion, originally founded, it seems, to work toward the conversion of the Jews, have today completely disavowed

such a goal or, to use the language of one of their unpublished position papers of a few years ago, "resolutely eliminated every attempt at proselytism as contrary to the Church. . . . Proselytism seeks to make conversion an end without taking into account God's mysterious conduct. He alone knows what is best for the soul." This is just one of many similar lines in this document. Another proof of a new attitude in the Church is the changed Good Friday intercession. For a discussion of the new form, see my Introduction to *Brothers in Hope*, pp. 24-26.

46. Recently, Ernst Simon, Professor Emeritus of Education at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, wrote in the Catholic journal *Hochland*: "Die Parallelen, Judentum und Christentum, schneiden sich nicht erst im unendlichen Gott, sondern schon hier in der irdischen Endlichkeit. Hier und jetzt können Juden und Christen versuchen, einander zu begegnen, um voneinander zu lernen. Dies ist die einzige heute noch mögliche Rechtfertigung für den immer fragwürdiger gewordenen Begriff der Mission. Sie ist nur dann noch statthaft, wenn ein Jude durch die persönliche Erfahrung, die ihm im Glaubensleben eines vorbildlichen Christen begegnet, ein besserer Jude wird, als er vorher war, oder umgekehrt: wenn ein Christ durch die Erfahrung einer gerechten jüdischen Glaubensgemeinschaft ein besserer Christ wird." ("Das Volk der Überlieferung in der Zeit und Ewigkeit," *Hochland*, Vol. 62, Sept./Okt. 1970, p. 420.)

In English, this reads: "The parallels, Judaism and Christianity, meet not only in the infinite God, but even here in the finitude of the earth. Here and now, Jews and Christians can try to encounter one another, to learn from one another. This is the only possible justification today for mission, a concept that has become so questionable in our day. It is permitted only when a Jew, through that personal experience given him by an encounter with the living faith of an exemplary Christian, becomes a better Jew than he was before; and vice versa, when a Christian, experiencing the righteousness of a Jewish faith community, becomes a better Christian."

Unless I misunderstand him, Simon fuses here two different concepts we wish to keep apart, mission and dialogue.

47. There is no doubt that the ignorance, misunderstanding, and misrepresentation of things Jewish by Christians have been more harmful than the misinterpretation of things Christian by Jews. This, however, does not dispense Jewish writers and spokesmen from the obligation of presenting Christian views or tenets with that fairness they rightfully demand for their own.

48. See *Gutachten über das Jüdische Schrifttum* (Constance: Thorbecke, 1965), p. 28. The English title in the text reproduces the original title of 1510.

49. See *ibid.*

50. See *ibid.*, p. 84. The German for "treacherous Jews" is *gläubbrüchige Juden*.

51. It is not clear what Grégoire means by "divine vengeance has fallen on them." I doubt that he subscribed to the notion that Israel's dispersion and all its other misfortunes were punishment for the Crucifixion. I have dealt with this misconception elsewhere. (See, for instance, my Introduction to *Brothers in Hope*, pp. 20-21.) In this context, I will not repeat what I have said there, but I think it appropriate to stress that the idea of the people's punishment is not one devised by Christians. Rabbinical literature often speaks of the destruction of the Temple, its cause and consequences, in the most stringent terms.

The Jewish liturgy resounds with the awareness of Israel's sin, of God's judgment as well as of His mercy. The most profound expressions are found in the *Selichot*, "Prayers of Penitence," that are to be said prior to *Rosh ha-shanah*. One of these, as used in the Sephardic congregations of the United States, reads:

*More than all other peoples we have transgressed,
Hence deep is our shame more than any other nation.
Our joy has gone into exile;
Because of our sins our heart is faint.
Our longing is shattered,
The crown of our glory is ravished.
Our sanctuary is laid waste
Through our transgressions.
Our homeland lies desolate,
Its beauty is given to strangers;
Our strength is spent for others.*

(*Prayers for the New Year*, ed. David de Sola Pool [New York: Union of Sephardic Congregations, 1948], p. 25.)

That City and Temple were destroyed because of the people's sins is part of both the Jewish and the Christian traditions. The tremendous difference between them is that Christian teachers, at least in the past, were easily misled by the tone of finality given to many biblical sayings into seeing God's judgment as irreversible, while Jewish interpreters did not. The Jewish response to the divine punishment is varied and immensely rich. The Jewish worshipper may voice Zion's lament: "The Lord has abandoned me." He can imagine even God Himself sorrowing: "I am become like a sparrow. . . . When you take away its young a sparrow is left solitary. . . . I burnt my children . . . and I sit solitary." Yet, he feels assured that, even though Jerusalem be in ruin, God's eyes and heart "will be there perpetually" (1 Kgs 9:3). He remembers that God promised long ago: "I return to Jerusalem with compassion" (Zech 1:16) and "I will be a wall of fire round about, and I will be the

glory in her midst" (Zech 2:9). Still more encouraging is God's "fellow-feeling." "The Holy One blessed be He . . . sees Jerusalem in desolation . . . and two great hot tears fall into the depths of the sea," writes a novelist of the last century. An ancient midrash tells that, when the Holy One, blessed be He, saw the destruction of the first Temple, He wept and said: "Woe is me for my house. My children, where are you? . . . What shall I do with you, seeing that I warned you but you did not repent?" He then has Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses summoned from their tombs to mourn with Him, "for they know how to weep." (For full references, see *The Holy City, Jews on Jerusalem*, ed. Avraham Holtz, a B'nai B'rith Jewish Heritage Classic, [New York: Norton, 1971], pp. 110, 84, 68, 110, 108-109, 144, 81.)

52. See *Essai sur la régénération physique, morale, et politique des Juifs* (Metz, 1789), pp. 193-194.

53. Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans* (London: SCM, 1958), p. 356.

54. See Lucien Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul*, trans. G. Webb and A. Walker (2nd ed.; New York: Herder and Herder, 1959), p. 20.

55. *Judaism and Christianity*, trans. W. Kaufmann (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1964), pp. 101-102.

56. See *Two Types of Faith*, trans. N. P. Goldhawk (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), p. 13.

57. *Jesus*, trans. Ronald Walls (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), p. 90.

58. See "Juden und Christen vor der Bergpredigt," *loc. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

The dialogue with the Jewish people expressly asked for by the Council is a duty which touches every member of the Church.

Cardinal Willebrands at the opening of the new SIDIC Centre in Rome, Spring 1970.

BROTHERS IN HOPE

often referred to in this paper, complements its message. Volume V of The Bridge, organ of the Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University, it is also edited by Monsignor Oesterreicher. In its Introduction, he says of the various contributions by Jewish and Catholic authors: "They all show the same eagerness to right old wrongs and to lift the relationship of Jews and Christians to a creative plane. Theirs is an engagement with the future."

Here are some of the first comments:

A reflection of the significant development in Jewish-Catholic relations now going on and a promise of further growth. It preaches—and itself shows—that the Declaration on the Jews is a new direction and not a final statement.

— Rabbi Irving Greenberg

An event of great importance in the history of Catholic-Jewish relations in the United States. Monsignor John Oesterreicher, the deeply compassionate and learned Editor, has proved with the publication of these scholarly, up-to-date studies on Catholic-Jewish relations, by a group of distinguished authors "united in hope," that the "dialogue" is not only necessary but feasible as well. I recommend the entire volume very enthusiastically.

— Msgr. George G. Higgins

A remarkable achievement. Men and women of both the Jewish and Catholic traditions are learning to talk to each other about the most difficult of issues with love and respect. This is no small thing when the issues discussed involve the very foundations of our being.

— Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg

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