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John M. Oesterreicher
Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies

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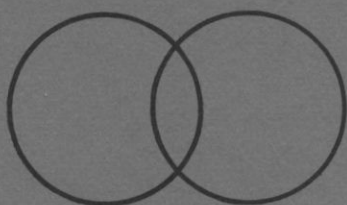
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SHALOM

THE ENCOUNTER OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS
AND THE CATHOLIC EDUCATOR

BY MONSIGNOR JOHN M. OESTERREICHER



The Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY
South Orange, New Jersey 07079

Fellow-Members, Friends:

There is an Israeli folk song whose initial words are Shalom Chaverim. "Peace, My Friends." You may have heard it; you may even have joined in singing it. Shalom Chaverim is a greeting song, thus a good way toward the Eucharistic Eucharist. Still, what made the song [Journey from the youth of Israel to the workshops of our churches? Was it its haunting melody? Was it the power of its message? Was it the sound of Hebrew? Or just shalom, that far word of benediction? All of these may have attracted us, but none are lost. The word shalom has truly invaded our souls. Now and hence we speak as Hebrews one shalom to a greeting. The word means stationary and appears in bumper stickers; not a few Christians wear it, make it, or combine it with shalom on their lips. In all this, some unwitting have been enlightened Shalom.

THE WORD: SHALOM

What is behind this word shalom? A time of violence, bloodshed, and alienation--this is shalom, if not chiefly, as we in search of peace. The substitution of the word "Shalom" after peace and pursuit of it. The Jewish vocabulary came in the wake of many who shalom do not listen to the voice of Shalom. But why is this longing expressed in Hebrew? Why not in English? "Peace," after all, is a strong word, related to the Latin *pax*. It bespeaks a pact, an agreement between warring powers to stop the bloodshed. Covenants that could bring killing to an end are worthy of praise.

Yes, let us honor the word "peace." The power of shalom, however, is greater. It opens biblical horizons. Prophets and psalmists prayed for it. The early Jesus greeted his disciples with shalom; it is its essential gift. Shalom derives from a root that means "whole," "uninterrupted," "whole." Hence, it is more than a cessation of hostility, more than the absence of war and blood. It is well-being, prosperity, unity within a man, among men, and above all, between God and man. It exists where there is strength, where there is abundance and security, where things are as they ought to be. To render it into contemporary idiom, shalom is integrity of existence, integrity of relationships.

An address given by Monsignor Oesterreicher at the 66th Annual Convention of the National Catholic Education Association in Detroit, Michigan, on April 10, 1969, under the title *Shalom: The Catholic-Jewish Encounter -- A Service to Church and Society.*

Fellow-Members, Friends:

There is an Israeli folksong whose initial words are Shalom Chaverim, "Peace, My Friends." You may have heard it, you may even have joined in singing it. Shalom Chaverim is a parting song, thus a good way to end the Eucharistic Service. Still, what made the song journey from the youth of Israel to the worshippers of our churches? Was it its haunting melody? Was it the power of briefness? Was it the sound of Hebrew? Or just shalom, that key word of Scripture? All of these may have attracted us, but mainly the last. The word shalom has truly invaded our ranks. Men and women who speak no Hebrew use shalom as a greeting. The word heads stationery and appears on bumper stickers; not a few Christians wear pins, medals, or necklaces with shalom on them. To top all this, some novitiates have been christened Shalom.

THE GOAL: SHALOM

What is behind this word explosion? A time of violence, restlessness, and alienation--this is also, if not chiefly, an age in search of peace. The admonition of the poet: "Seek after peace and pursue it" (Ps 33:15) resounds even in the souls of many who otherwise do not listen to the voice of Scripture. But why is this longing expressed in Hebrew? Why not in English? "Peace," after all, is a strong word; related to the Latin pax, it bespeaks a pact, an agreement between warring powers to stop the bloodshed. Covenants that could bring killing to an end are worthy of praise.

Yes, let us honor the word "peace." The power of shalom, however, is greater. It opens biblical horizons: Prophets and psalmists prayed for it. The Lord Jesus greeted His disciples with shalom; it is His messianic gift. Shalom derives from a root that means "whole," "unblemished," "intact." Hence, it is more than a cessation of hostilities, more than the silence of guns and bombs. It is well-being, prosperity, unity within a man, among men, and above all, between God and man. It prevails where there is strength, where there is abundance and security, where things are as they ought to be. To render it into contemporary idiom, shalom is integrity of existence, integrity of relationships.

I wonder how many of those who sing Shalom Chaverim send this greeting in the direction of the men and women who gave it birth. Is shalom not the mark of the true relationship between Christians and Jews? Is it not also the goal of all Catholic education? Is it not, in particular, the motto of every enterprise that fosters brotherliness

between the two communities? Indeed, this kind of peace is the particular burden, responsibility, and challenge of today's generation. It is a special responsibility of Christians in this country.

THE REQUIREMENTS

Understanding the Holocaust

The conciliar Statement on the Jews speaks clearly of the rich patrimony common to Christians and Jews, of the need for mutual knowledge and respect, of the importance of theological studies and fraternal dialogues. It also implores teachers and preachers to speak of Jews in such a way that their instruction follows, not the letter but the true meaning of the Gospel. The guidelines of the American Bishops' Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations are quite explicit on all this, they even list a number of the themes that "merit the attention and study of Catholic educators and scholars."

Before I discuss more fully the challenge we face, I would like to advert to a basic phenomenon: Jews have changed. Jews today are different from what they were thirty or forty years ago. A cataclysmic experience has left its mark on them; the Nazi annihilation of six million of their brothers makes their hearts ache. People counter: "Why cannot Jews forget what happened to their kinsmen in Auschwitz and in the other death camps? Why do they have to cling to the calamity that befell them over twenty years ago? Other nations had to suffer, too. At the turn of the century, for instance, a million Armenians were massacred by the Turks. In the Potato Famine of 1847 and after, two million Irish people perished. Stalin built his economy and rule on the death of, some say, fifteen millions of Kulaks. The victims of World War II from many nations, women and children included, numbered fifty millions."

This is true; indeed, these are painful truths that none of us must forget. Yet, for Jews to know that other peoples suffered as well does not do away with their own agony. The Holocaust is, in many ways, unique. The extermination plants were organized to the last detail. Prepared on the drawing board, death was delivered on the assembly line. The mass murder of Jews was born, not of momentary passion, but of a hatred that was like no other, a fiendish, diabolical hatred.

But it is not just this fiendish character of the "death factories" that makes the hearts of Jews still ache. Nor are they still agitated only because their relatives and friends were Hitler's victims. Almost every Jew experienced the Holocaust as something that happened to him: he himself was abused, degraded, deceived, and choked to death. Under the Nazis, Jews were called "sub-human"; they were compared to vermin: they were considered a danger to the body politic like the most dreaded disease; in the concentration camps, they were pushed around; they were taken to what were called shower baths, only to discover that

the shower heads did not work and that the room was slowly being filled with fumes of poison gas. Horrible though the agony of suffocation must have been, the worst pain, present at every step but most of all at the abyss, was the feeling of being alone, of being forgotten by the world. To most men today, the destruction of European Jewry is a thing of the past, a part of history's dark frame. But to Jews, the Holocaust is a unique phenomenon, a continuous event, an everpresent nightmare. Every Jew has had to descend the ladder of horror--if not in his waking hours, then in his dreams.

If we wish to understand Jews, their needs and concerns, their fears and hopes, their actions and reactions, we must descend that ladder with them. Hence, the Holocaust is a theme for our pulpits. It must be given its legitimate place in our teaching of religion and history. First, a few words on its universal impact.

The man-made hells of Auschwitz and similar places would not have been possible without modern technology. The blessings of the technical advance in our time are obvious. But the boon is, at the same time, a threat to humanity. Just think of the invasion of our privacy made possible by all sorts of modern inventions. This is just one example, and not the worst. The Nazi Holocaust is a warning to us to guard against the pitfalls of the computer age. Never must we be its slaves.

If a man of passionate faith looks at the Nazi design against the Jews, he knows himself to be face to face with evil. To quote Toronto's Jewish philosopher, Emil Fackenheim:

Where else and at what other time have executioners ever separated those to be murdered now from those to be murdered later to the strain of Viennese waltzes? Where else has human skin ever been made into lamp-shades, and human body fat into soaps--not by isolated perverts but under the direction of ordinary bureaucrats? Auschwitz is a unique descent into hell. It is an unprecedented celebration of evil. It is evil for evil's sake.¹

Long before the Holocaust, in 1939, the German Catholic thinker Theodor Haecker realized that Nazism was a child of hell. In his *Journal* he recorded this prayer: "You have shown us, O God, the very nature of evil, arrogant, triumphant in an undreamed-of measure and to the point of despair."²

The Nazis were able to triumph, though Hitler in no way concealed his murderous design. Hardly anyone would believe that man could be so monstrous. Though trust is a virtue, credulity is not. There were far too many Christians and non-Christians who fooled themselves with that hollow adage: "Things will straighten themselves out." To my

mind, Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, or Maidanek summon us to watch out for evil on the social horizon. The Holocaust begs us not to repeat the ostrich pose of men the world over who blinded themselves to Hitler's scheme.

The celebration of evil that took place in Auschwitz or Treblinka has led some Christians and some Jews to pronounce the death of God. Yesterday, the "God is Dead" theology was much thought, talked, and written about. Today it is outworn, as dead as the fossils in the deep layers of the earth. It could not live because it was no answer to the problem of evil.

After the war, allied soldiers found a lonely inscription, written on a cellar wall of the then devastated Cologne:

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

The answer to the many faces of evil in the world is not less or no faith, but more faith; not less or no concern, but deeper concern. All evil, in particular the Holocaust, is a summons to exert ourselves to do in God's name what we would like Him to do for us, in some easy--miraculous--way. The Holocaust and all the other evils of the world, are a summons to make the Christian message that God is Love heard again, not by our repeating the words, but rather by our being new women, new men.

Doing Justice to Judaism

I called "God is Love" the Christian message, and so it is. But it is also a tenet of Judaism. I stress this simply because it is so; it is this kind of truthfulness, of doing justice to Judaism, that the Holocaust demands of us.

Scripture tells that Moses and the Israelites greeted their rescue from Pharaoh's hand with song:

The Lord is my strength and my courage
He has been my savior.

(Ex 15:2)

Miriam, too, with tambourine in hand, led the women in dance and chanted:

Sing to the Lord, for he is gloriously triumphant;
Horse and chariot he has cast into the sea.

(Ex 15:21)

Thus the Bible. The talmudic narrative is different. There, the angels appear, shouting God's praise: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts." But the Lord rebukes them: "My creatures are drowning in the sea, and you would sing?" (Meg 10b).

Jewish tradition considers all national catastrophes God's judgements--yet the same chastising God mourns at having permitted the punishment. In one instance, the plaint of the prophet,

And mine eye shall drop tears and tears
And run down with tears
Because the Lord's flock is carried away captive,

becomes God's own lamentation (Hag 5b).³

Again, Scripture says that the Lord laughs at the wicked who rebel against Him or who plot against the just (Ps 2:4 and 36[37]:13). The Talmud, however, maintains that God never laughs at man, though He may laugh with him. When God and man laugh together, righteousness triumphs, grace is victorious, and the messianic times are at hand.

For a Christian, the messianic times began with the coming of Christ, His luminous life, His loving death, and His glorious resurrection. They proclaim the splendor-to-come, the new heavens and the new earth. Jews, however, desire more than seeds of hope; they long for the final harvest when trees will bend under the heavy beauty of their fruit, and they long for its appearance now.

As long as the ultimate fulfillment has not come, as long as sin is rampant, as long as the evil impulse tends to turn man away from his Creator, man needs to plead with God for strength and forgiveness. To show you something of the deepest wellsprings of Judaism, let me quote from the Selichot, the "Penitential Prayers" of the Synagogue. Time allows only a few snippets; still, they should convince you that Judaism is not, as Christians have often held, a dead worship. On the eve of Yom Kippur, the devout Jew humbly states man's situation in the sight of God:

As clay in the hand of the potter
Who widens or narrows it at will,
So are we in your hands, Gracious Keeper
Heed your covenant, not our evil turn....

As silver in the hand of the smith
Who makes it pure or impure at will,
So are we in your hand, Healing God.
Heed your covenant, not our evil turn....

Convinced of God's mercy, the devout Jew calls on Him with the whole community, in utmost trust:

Our God, and God of our Fathers
Forgive us, pardon us, cleanse us.
We are your people, and you, our God;
We are your sons, and you, our Father....
We are your faithful, and you, our Beloved;
We are your chosen, and you, our Friend.

Though the Jewish man of prayer feels himself a beggar, he knows at the same time that he is only asking for what God is eager to give:

Our God, you defer your anger,
You treat with forbearance the wicked and the good,
And this is your fame.

Our God, act not for our sake, but for your own.
Look at us who are poor and low.

Bring healing to us, lost as a leaf adrift;
Have mercy on man who is mere dust and ashes,
Cast away our sins and have pity on your creation.

Can there be any doubt that prayers like these are heard? That men who speak this way, do not speak into a void, but address the living God? The Siddur, the Jewish prayerbook, calls Him Ba'al ha-selichot ve-ha-rachamim, "Lord of forgiveness and of mercies," that is, Judge and Pardoner; Giver of breath and of grace; Lover of all His creatures and, in particular, of His special possession, Israel. I cannot imagine anyone who, knowing the Siddur, denies the quickening power of Judaism.

My reason for stressing Judaism's vitality and vigor is first this: there can be no dialogue between Christians and Jews, no true meeting, unless we recognize Judaism at its depth. Second, we cannot be happy in our own faith-convictions if we are misers, if we begrudge, as it were, others the love of God, if we deny free reign to His grace.

One instance of what grace accomplishes in a Jewish heart may suffice. The prejudice of Christians has always been that the God of the Old Testament is but an avenging God, that the love of enemy is entirely unknown to Judaism, and so on. Let me, therefore, read the prayer of a Nazi victim. I know neither his name nor the name of the concentration camp whose prisoner he was. I am taking the prayer from a small book by a German Protestant scholar. Even there, the prayer and the man who said it are not identified. To me, the prayer is truly a monument to "the unknown Jew":

Peace be to men of ill will, and may there be an end to all vengeance and to all talk of penalty and punishment.... The deeds of horror mock all yardsticks. They pass the limits of human understanding, and the martyrs are many indeed.... For these reasons, do not weigh their sufferings, O God, with the scale of justice; do not ascribe these

sufferings to the executioners, do not demand of them a dire accounting....Rather credit the sufferings to the hangmen, the informers, the spies, and all evil men, and reckon onto them all the courage and strength of the victims, their resignation their highmindedness and dignity; also their quiet efforts, their hope which did not admit defeat, their brave smile that dried their tears, all their love and sacrifice, all their ardent love,... their harrowed, tormented hearts, hearts that nonetheless remained strong and confident, even in the face of death, in death itself and in the hour of extreme weakness....May all this, O my God, count in your eyes as ransom so that the guilty might be forgiven and the just rise--may all that is good count, and not what is evil. And in the memory of our enemies, may we no longer be their victims, no longer their nightmares or the ghosts that frighten them, but an aid against their fury.... Only this is demanded of them, that they abandon their rage. And may we, when all this is over, live again as men among men, and may peace come to this poor earth for all men of good will, and peace for all the rest, too.⁴

Please, do not misunderstand me. I do not wish to imply that most victims prayed thus; that the unknown worshipper was typical of Jews--how could this superhuman attitude ever be typical? Alas, it is not even typical of Christians! What I wish to say most emphatically is that if only one Jew spoke like this before God, Hitler was overthrown and his murderous scheme defeated. That Jews survived Hitler's "final solution," that they survived centuries of persecution, was, not a chance event, not so much a happy constellation of historical factors--it was that, too--but above all an act of divine providence, an evidence of divine fidelity. God cares for the people He chose at Sinai; He will not abandon them; they are for all times His covenanted people. Not because of their merits, but for the sake of the patriarchs, that is, for the sake of God's loving pledge, they remain a people treasured, dear, and beloved (Rom 11:28).

The words of the song that goes under Moses' name are still valid:

For the Lord's portion is his people
Jacob his own allotment.
He found him in a desert region,
In an empty howling waste.
He engirded him, watched over him,
Guarded him as the pupil of his eye.
Like an eagle who rouses his nestlings,
Gliding down to his young,
So did he spread his wings and take him,
Bear him along on his pinions.

(Dt 32:9-11)

No less true is the prophet's warning:

Whoever touches you
Touches the apple of my eye.
(Zach 2:12)

Lest I give you a wrong impression, let me say that I do not hail Judaism as the banner of God's fidelity in order to please Jews. I do it, rather, in order to please God. If God is the ever-faithful One, if "he has not withdrawn his calling" (Rom 11:29), faith demands that a Christian acknowledge this wonder of grace. No doubt, in recognizing God's abiding love for His people, we contribute to the reconciliation of Christians and Jews. Less obvious is the fact that the affirmation of the Jewish people as lastingly covenanted contributes to the well-being of the body politic, for it strengthens cooperation in social matters. Paradoxically, it also serves the Church: it widens her horizon, enriches her spiritual life, fortifies her role as pilgrim.

THE WAY: A NEW SENSITIVITY

The positive vision of Jews and Judaism I am advocating sharpens our sensitivity to God's dealings--a quality that ought to animate the Church at all times and all places. "Sensitivity," then, becomes the word that best sums up our new, post-conciliar attitude toward our Jewish brethren. Let me clarify its meaning by giving a few examples from various disciplines. I am beginning with the one that ought to be an area of major concern on all levels of education, English Literature.

English Literature

As you well know, one of Shakespeare's great plays, "The Merchant of Venice," is a stumbling block for many. There are Christians as well as Jews who would like to see it taken off the curriculum or consider its performance by the drama club of any school taboo. I am not one of them. As a matter of fact, I think it a perfect means for transmitting this sensitivity. It is not a play hostile to Jews, rather does it castigate Christians and Jews, that is to say, the sinfulness of man.

Not a single character in the play is a person of moral integrity. Antonio, for instance, appears to be a man of noble heart, kind and unselfish; in reality he is no less a seeker after profit than Shylock. The difference is that Shylock's business is despised, whereas Antonio's is praised. Yet, even the praise discloses its metal: "Your mind is tossing on the ocean"--his friend tells him--"where your argosies with portly sail.., do overpeer the petty traffickers" (I,1,9,12). There seems to be so little difference between the big trader and the money lender that, at the end of the play, Portia--disguised as a young lawyer--can ask: "Which is the merchant, and which the Jew?" (IV,1,174). The

arrogance and hypocrisy of the Christians of the play are most obvious at the elopement of Lorenzo with Jessica. Before she is ready to join her lover, she returns to the house for some more money to take with her. When Gratiano hears her resolve to add theft to the betrayal of her father, he says: "Now, by my hood, a gentile, and no Jew" (II,vi, 51). These Christians, whose faith is no more than skin deep, welcome Jessica's "conversion," but she does not turn to Christ--Christ is not even mentioned--she only wishes to escape the boredom of her home and her father's shame in the world of glitter.

The climax of hypocrisy is the little drama in the court of justice. What some will take to be Portia's noble attempt at saving Bassanio is, to her, little more than a prank. (The affair with the ring confirms her as a practical joker.) She plays her role well. For a moment, she even surpasses herself and grows ecstatic. Her rapturous praise of mercy reaches evangelical heights; yet, her whole line of defense is meant to trick Shylock. He leaves the court ill. He is given this choice: either he becomes a Christian (IV,i,387)--or presently he must die! Need I add that this is an utter travesty of everything Christian? Though Shylock lives, his spirit is broken, his will crushed. Without faith, he is forced to become a Christian--and all this by the champion of mercy. As I see it, "The Merchant of Venice" is far from being an anti-Jewish play; it is, rather, an unmasking of all sham Christians. It could be a textbook for Christian-Jewish relations; it condenses a millenium to the life of one generation. If taught with discretion or played with sensitivity, it would convey to the student or spectator the sins of Christendom and implant in him the desire to make amends, to turn the conciliar Statement on the Jews into a living reality.

I am not one of those who believe that the Holocaust was the inescapable consequence of two thousand years of Christian anti-Judaism. Yet, the attitude of Christians of the kind Shakespeare portrays somehow made possible the netherworld attack on the Jews by the Nazis. Antonio calls Shylock a misbeliever, a mongrel; he is always ready to spit on him (I,iii,112,131). For Gratiano, he is a damned inexorable dog (IV,i, 120), and Lancelot sees in him the devil incarnate (II,ii,228). As if this were not enough, all his Christian neighbors--at the head of them, Antonio--treat him, not as a person but a label. To them, his name is not "Shylock," but "the Jew." He is even less than that; he is just a thing, a tool that one uses for one's convenience and then casts into a corner. There are almost limitless possibilities for a sensitive teacher or a creative producer to use the play for casting out the old yeast of Jew-baiting and for implanting in the heart of the reader or viewer the new leaven of respect and kinship. I do not have to spell out--do I?--what benefit the growth of this leaven would have for society as a whole and for the entire Church?

Social Studies

To move to another discipline, Social Studies. Never before has

there been a generation that has had as much knowledge about its Jewish neighbors as does ours. In former times, the information often came from anti-Semites and was wrong. At present--I am not speaking of the excellent scholarship of our day that has made vast contributions to a deeper understanding of Judaism--the average gentile takes his image of Jews from novels and musicals by Jewish authors, from "Fiddler on the Roof and Fiedler on the Raft," to quote a modern literary critic.⁵ They, too, I am sorry to say, mislead. In its mildest form, the distortion is simply that Jews are quaint, that they are individuals brought up on bagels; at its worst, they are all obsessed by their mothers, they are all like Portnoy.

Social Studies can correct this false vision. I am not thinking here of an anatomy of prejudice every sensitive social science teacher will offer to his students. Rather I am thinking of some tangible, sober facts. To name only a few: the number of Jewish immigrants; the reasons, the motivations of their coming; their various backgrounds--to understand them one must know the special history and heritage they brought with them. Other factors that should be discussed are the occupations and professions of Jewish newcomers; their distribution over the United States; the impact of the American way of life on them and, as a result, the keen difference between the first and second, and between the second and third generations of American Jews. Additional circumstances on which the teacher will have to dwell if he wishes his students to understand his Jewish neighbors are the economic structure into which the immigrants entered; the jobs wide open, and those firmly closed to them; their social stratification--to most non-Jews it would come as a bolt out of the blue, upsetting their neat categories, if they were told how many low-income Jews there are; finally, the organization of Jewish life, the welfare, educational, and cultural agencies, the representative and the religious bodies. To single out only the last, it is impossible to understand Jews without understanding the religious plurality among them, its causes and consequences. Nor can one understand modern Jewry without grasping the exposure of Jews to contemporary ideologies and the consequent polarities in Jewish identification.

All these points sound abstract, but behind them are some acute problems. One of the best background books, Marshall Sklare's The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group,⁶ treats many of these problems. The inside flaps of the jacket single out three:

Is it possible that alcoholism is increasing among Jews as the result of more frequent contact with non-Jews?

Why is psychoanalysis so much more attractive to Jews than non-Jews, and how does the mental health of Jews compare with other groups?

Are Jewish delinquents different from others? And what are the differences between those of the past generation and those of our own?

The sensitive and competent social scientist will not disdain what other sciences have to contribute to a clear vision. Above all things he will seek to convey to his students an awareness that the individual Jew is not merely the member of a group, however special, but also a man, a woman, a child, in short -- a person.

History

History is another quarry from which to gain knowledge leading to shalom between Christians and Jews. Since our history books are largely silent on Christian-Jewish relations, it is most important that the teacher discuss the Crusades and the Inquisition, in terms of their impact on Jews and Judaism, or to analyze--I am tempted to say "X-ray"--the legislation on the co-existence of Christians and Jews by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215 A.D.). It is intriguing--is it not?--that here the Church took a course Christians have always castigated when taken by the rabbis. (The rabbis thought it necessary that a "fence be made around the Torah" [Ab I,1], in other words, that the Law be surrounded by prohibitions. These prohibitions were to warn and to prevent willful or involuntary trespassing.) The discriminatory policy against the Jews by the Fourth Lateran Council strikes us modern men as lacking in justice and respect; still, it may be understandable in its historical context. More difficult to defend, however, is that the Lateran Council went the way of the rabbis; that it wanted to safeguard the loyalty of the faithful by proscriptions and "stoplights" like the yellow badge; that it could find no other solution to the problem of the coexistence of Christians and Jews than a sort of spiritual apartheid. This is a rather sad topic.

A promising note could be struck if the teacher treated the rebirth of the State of Israel. I happen to think that its rebirth is evidence of God's favor, the sign of His fidelity, indeed, a token of the constancy of His love. Please do not misunderstand me--I do not base Israel's right to exist merely on the thought that her founding may well be divine compensation for the slaying of most European Jews. In an age when treaties were sacred documents and began: "In the name of the most Blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," God's continuous Covenant with the Jewish people could have had constitutional value and legal weight. Yet, as a man of this age--a man aware of the frequent misuse of spiritual principles in the power struggle among men--I do not rest Israel's claim to a sovereign, secure existence on theological grounds. Rather do I base it on an act of the world community. In 1948, the majority of the then member nations of the United Nations midwived her birth. She has made swamps, hotbeds of disease, into fertile and healthy stretches of land. For twenty years, her people have not only worked the land but defended it; what is more, they have gotten married, raised children, and died there. Their blood, their sweat, their tears have "baptized" their soil; their dreams and hopes, their laughter and prayers have bedewed it. For centuries, the land was utterly neglected; as soon as Jewish pioneers settled there, it was lovingly cared for.

In saying this, I do not wish to force my views on the Middle Eastern crisis on you, nor do I wish to suggest that, were you to take my view as your own, you should impose it on those you educate. But I do suggest, and this most strongly, that it is the responsibility of the teacher to give his students the facts so that they can form their own opinions, unhampered by slogans or cliches. One of these cliches calls Israel the creature and outpost of Western imperialism. True, the influence of the Western Powers on the recognition of the newly born state was considerable, but it is important to remember that, in May 1948, one of the Russian delegates to the U.N., Ambassador Taras-senko, denounced the war of the Arabs against the young state in these words:

I should like to point out that none of the [Arab] states whose troops have entered Palestine can claim that Palestine forms part of its territory. It is an altogether separate territory without any relationship to the territories of the states which have sent their troops into Palestine.⁷

Nor ought one to forget that all the Arabic-speaking states of today are creations of the Western Powers.

To begin with Egypt: For years prior to World War I, she had been under the guidance of Great Britain. In 1914, she became a British protectorate. Yet, it was not till 1921 that she was declared an independent sovereign state and not till October 1922 that she received a constitution. -- In World War I, Arabs throughout the Ottoman Empire revolted against the Turks, and so did the Transjordanian tribes. After the war, Transjordan was freed from the rule of the sultans and administered by Great Britain. In 1922, when Palestine became a British mandate, the country East of Jordan was given to Emir Abdullah who ruled the country as a benevolent dictator till 1939. In the same year, a move toward some form of democracy was started: a cabinet was formed and a small legislature elected. -- In 1920, France received a mandate from the League of Nations over what today is Syria and Lebanon. Lebanon's boundaries were the work of that mandate. In 1925, she was granted a constitution and declared a republic. The first free elections (under French supervision!) were held in the fall of 1943. -- When still under French control, Syria was made a kingdom. Yet, the reign of King Feisal, disliked by the French army as well as by the Syrians, did not last long. His removal in no way ended the troubles of the land. It was not until 1943 that Syria received its independence from the Free French. -- A knowledge of these facts is important, I think, in order to evaluate the claims of Israel's neighbors.⁸

Our students ought to know, too, that an impressive American tradition favors a Jewish state in Palestine. Declarations by several of our presidents prove it. As far back as October, 1818, John Adams said in a New York synagogue: "I really wish the Jews again in Judaea, an independent Nation." In March 1919, Woodrow Wilson declared: "I

have before expressed my personal approval of the declaration of the British Government regarding the aspirations and historic claims of the Jewish people in regard to Palestine....[The] Allied Nations are agreed that in Palestine shall be laid the foundations of a Jewish Commonwealth." Calvin Coolidge again took up this theme when he stated in June 1924: "I am...glad to express again my sympathy with the deep and intense longing which finds such fine expression in the Jewish National Homeland in Palestine." In September 1928, Herbert Hoover echoed these sentiments. He stated: "I have watched with genuine admiration the steady and unmistakable progress made in the rehabilitation of Palestine which, desolate for centuries, is now renewing its youth and vitality through the enthusiasm, hard work, and self-sacrifice of the Jewish pioneers who toil there in a spirit of peace and social justice." Franklin D. Roosevelt said: "It is a source of renewed hope and courage, that by international accord and by the moral support of the peoples of the world, men and women of Jewish faith have a right to resettle the land where their faith was born and from which much of our modern civilization has emanated." In a letter to the King of Saudi Arabia, Harry S. Truman reiterated the American position: "It is only natural...that this Government should favor...the entry into Palestine of considerable numbers of displaced Jews in Europe, not only that they may find shelter there but also that they may contribute their talents and energies to the upbuilding of the Jewish National home."⁹

Though these presidential statements have no binding force, they must not go unheeded either by us or by our students. It is obvious, I think, that the implications of my suggestions are wide. If carried out, they would lead our students to mature political judgments, to responsible thought not tied to apron strings.

Theology

Now to the science or wisdom that should be close to us, whether it is our professional field or not, Theology. Let me prove my contention by discussing an existing text, though it is not taken from one of our manuals but from the notes accompanying the Latin-English version of the Breviary published by the Liturgical Press in 1964. They are by the late Canon Pius Parsch, a liturgist of considerable merit. Matins of Friday is prefaced by this comment:

The Matins psalms present a history of the Jewish people which is at the same time a history of falling away from God. It is an unbroken chain of sin, infidelity, ingratitude; and its final, logical link is the greatest crime of all: the murder of their Messiah.¹⁰

This, I maintain, is wrong from beginning to end. Though the old Testament abounds with the sins of the people of Israel, it is not the

history of her sin. The history of Israel, like the history of Christendom or, to stay closer to home, my life and yours, is an up and down of God's call and man's failing to respond, of God's gift and our ingratitude. Pius Parsch goes on to say: "In the story of Israel's sins, we must not fail to recognize our own sins..."¹¹ This is all very well, but saying this as an afterthought cannot undo the blasphemy--and I mean "blasphemy"--of the first comment. For to give, as it were, priority and predominance to man's infidelity rather than to God's faithfulness is not only to misread revelation; it is to rob God of His glory, to deprive Him of His reign and initiative. Again, to interpret the Passion as but the logical link in a chain of Jewish infidelities is to turn it into a local affair and to forget that the Jewish actors in the drama of salvation were but the vicars of every sinner; it is to treat the Suffering Servant of God as if He were no more than one of many rulers to be assassinated by their rivals.

Dr. Parsch annotates a number of psalms in which he finds the history of Israel's infidelities retold, but it never seems to occur to him that when the psalmists, or, for that matter, the prophets, dwell on Israel's failings, they warn and woo the people and repent in its name. That the sacred writers so freely confess the sins of Israel--of people, priests, and princes, of the multitude as well as the elite--is to Israel's great credit. To my knowledge, there is no history of the Church that is written with the same candor, the same openness, the same humility. Again, commenting on Psalm 80 that the Lord of the Covenant offers the people of Israel this choice, Dr. Parsch writes: "In your hands lie death and life; choose: life, if you obey--death, if you are faithless like your fathers." He goes on: "Christ's death on the cross shows that the Jews chose death and final rejection."¹² Who, may I ask, revealed this to him? Who told him that the Jews are forever rejected by God? This is not the doctrine of Vatican II, nor is it the doctrine of the New Testament. Having said that not all in Israel responded to the Good News, having repeated Isaiah's accusation against the Jews as "an unruly and recalcitrant people" (Rom 10:21; Is 65:2), St. Paul continues--"I ask, then, has God rejected his people? Never!" (Rom 11:1). How are we to explain that so many commentators contradict St. Paul, and do not know it?

To charge the Jewish people with "the murder of their Messias" is perverted theology. Moreover, it clearly violates the letter as well as the spirit of Vatican II. Canon Parsch wrote thirty years before the Council--that the Liturgical Press reprinted his words close to the end of the Council shows denseness to the problem of reconciliation, to the shalom between Christians and Jews. This is all the more difficult to understand since the men at and around the Liturgical Press are otherwise men of great vision. I have only one explanation: An inner inertia makes many Christians continue in the rut of centuries. Writers on Christian spirituality have endlessly quoted St. Paul that, when hearing the Torah, a veil "lies over the minds" of Jews (2 Cor 2:15) so that they cannot recognize Jesus as the Christ. It never seems to occur to our spiritual writers that, when thinking of the role

of Jews in the history of salvation, Christians, more often than not, hide behind a steel curtain, a curtain that keeps them from recognizing the hand of God in the life of the Jewish people.

It is the task of our generation to strike down this curtain so that no Christian will ever forget that Jesus suffered in freedom--the new Eucharistic Prayer II expressly reminds us of the "death He freely accepted." To shift one's attention from the meaning to the mode of the Passion, from the great Sufferer to the little executioners, is dangerous. It threatens Jews and maims Christians: It makes Christians insensitive toward their Jewish brethren and toward the great singularity of Christ's pain. The mystery of that pain is, after all, its ability to absorb every other pain and to hallow it. Any shift from the center to the periphery loses sight of the fact that the Man of Pain draws all those in anguish to Himself. Anyone who blurs this vision revolts against the Christ. Yet, whoever does not tire of orientating himself, again and again, to the so-called Jewish Declaration of Vatican II contributes to the rejuvenation of the Church.

CONCLUSION

All things must come to an end, and so must this long paper. Despite its length, much has remained unsaid. That is probably as it ought to be. For this address has only two key words: shalom, the goal of the new encounter, and "sensitivity," the way to it. Without sensitivity on your part, no amount of suggestions, rules, examples of mine would help.

I hope it is obvious that my plea for sensitivity has nothing to do with the new fad for sensitivity sessions. When I speak of sensitivity, I have in mind Isaiah's injunction to his fellow prophets:

Comfort, give comfort to, my people,
Says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem.

(Is 40:1-2)

To "speak tenderly" is the translation of the Hebrew idiom to "speak to the heart." The centuries of strife, indifference, even hatred have lasted too long; it is time that Christians speak with their hearts: that they speak with heart of the People of the Holocaust and that they speak to its heart. Hence the prophet demands of us:

Nachamu, nachamu 'ammi.
yomar eloheykem.
Dabru 'al-leb yerushalayim.

Comfort, give comfort to, my people,
Says your God.
Speak tenderly to Jerusalem.

NOTES

1. Emil L. Fackenheim, "Jewish Faith and the Holocaust," Commentary, XLVI, 2 (August 1968), p. 33.
2. Theodor Haecker, Tag-und Nachtbücher (Munich: Hegner-Bucherei, 1947), pp. 28-29.
3. Louis Ginsberg, The Legends of the Jews, trans. Paul Radin (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1942), III, 32.
4. Kart Kupish, Das Volk der Geschichte (Berlin: Lettner, 1960), pp. 207-208.
5. John Gross, "A Balanced View," Commentary, XLVII, 4 (April 1969), p. 84.
6. The Jews: Social Patterns of an American Group, ed. Marshall Sklare (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1958).
7. As quoted by Frank Gervasi in The Case for Israel (New York: Viking, 1967), p. 161.
8. See, among other reports, the pertinent entries in The Encyclopedia Britannica.
9. Gervasi, op. cit., pp. 199-201.
10. The Hours of Divine Office in English and Latin (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1964), p. 518.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., p. 529.

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