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## **Introduction**

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## INTRODUCTION

JEW and Christians cannot ignore each other. Their agreements and disagreements are so deep that apathy toward them and toward one another would be a greater wrong than some of the hostile disputes of the past. For the silencing of passion—that insensibility of heart the Stoics assumed to be the highest condition of man—is neither a Christian nor a Jewish virtue. Christians and Jews alike call Abraham their father, certain that they believe as he believed, but their creeds are not the same. Though Church and Synagogue trace their origins to the *magnalia Dei*—the “great and terrible things” (Deut 10:21) God worked for the Israel of old in the days of the Exodus—they have moved in different directions. Both address the same God, see in man His image, rejoice in grace, dread sin, desire redemption, and look toward the world-to-come. Yet their visions of God and man, their thoughts on grace, sin, redemption, and life-to-be do not only vary, at times they are irreconcilable. And there is Jesus. For Christians He is, to use Isaiah’s phrase, a sanctuary, while for Jews He has remained a stone of offense (see 8:14).

Akin and apart, Jews and Christians cannot ignore each other. Even though they frequently differ to the point of contradiction, a hasty division of their beliefs into opposites obscures rather than illumines their disagreements and hampers their conversation. A Christian may be tempted to see in the traditional Jew nothing but a literalist who does not look beyond the letter of Scripture and Talmud, while a Jew may think of the Christian as a dreamer who ignores the letter in favor of imaginative interpretations. Both groupings are false; they distort the Christian as well as the Jewish attitude toward letter and spirit. Likewise, simply to call the Church a usurper of the Hebrew Scriptures, or the Synagogue a miser unwilling to share Israel’s privileges, helps only those who do not seek to understand the differences but prefer to widen and perpetuate them.

There are other deceptively neat classifications. None is more often

repeated than the one distinguishing the New Covenant from the Old as the covenant of love and forgiveness from that of fear and vengeance. There is also the attempt to set Judaism against Christianity as sheer legalism that knows little of the joy of service and nothing of friendship with God. Legalism is as much a travesty of Jewish devotion to the Law as license is of that freedom in which St. Paul sees the calling of Christians, the splendor of God's children (see Rom 8:21). Yet, it is true that the role attributed to the Law, to the Law of Moses and to law as the guiding principle of life, divides Church and Synagogue. A rabbi of the end of the third century A.D. was able to say that the Lord loves the houses in which the legal traditions are studied more than those in which services are held and sermons preached for the people's edification. Another rabbi of the same period could add: "Since the day the Temple was destroyed, the Holy One, blessed be He, has nothing in this world but the four cubits of Halachah," the circumscribed realm of talmudic elaboration on biblical law that regulates the life of a Jew from morning till night and year after year, that governs his relationship to God and that to his fellow (see Ber. 8a).

In keeping with these thoughts of Rabbis Hisda, 'Ulla, and Hiyya ben Ammi, even a contemporary writer like Dr. Taubes defines the issue between Judaism and Christianity as that of law: "Christian theology is based on Christology, which means that all things, human and divine, achieve relevance only as they relate to Jesus the Christ. Judaism, based on the Law, grants relevance to all things, human and divine, only as they relate to Halachah." (*Commentary*, XVI, December 1953, 532.) In this he is right, but he is less right when he continues: "The controversy between the Jewish and Christian religions points to the perennial conflict between the principle of law and the principle of love. The 'yoke of the Law' is challenged by the enthusiasm of love. But the 'justice of the Law' may, in the end, be the only challenge to the arbitrariness of love." (*Ibid.*, p. 533.) True love is never arbitrary. And the yoke of a law minutely directing man's every action may well cause him to rebel, not only against the law but also against its giver.

Sharp distinctions have an important place in man's knowledge and understanding; they have a particular place in the conversation between Jews and Christians. But if distinctions are drawn so sharply

as to disregard the complexities of both the Jewish and the Christian positions, and if they are repeated again and again till they become stereotypes, they contribute very little. Were I not convinced that man's liking for stereotypes, for oversimplifications, is as strong as his attachment to sin, I would predict the death of certain prejudices by the force of several studies in this volume. Still, I hope that many readers will find in them new insights. The masterly study on "Liberty and Law," though not directly concerned with the propaganda image of St. Paul as the victim of Hellenistic influences, as an inwardly torn man hating himself and his people, should convince everyone who lends his ear to Father Lyonnet's argument that the Apostle was in no way a man of hidden rancor. There was no contempt in him for Torah, quite the opposite. The Christ of glory, whom he had seen in a flash at Damascus and to whose words he must have listened during long hours of study and meditation in the desert, taught him that all law was only a beginning whose end was freedom, and that the Law imposed on Israel amid the stirrings of the elements could have no nobler fulfillment than to make room for the stirrings of the Spirit. To be impelled by this inner dynamism of love is the height of the Christian vocation. Again, Father Brennan's investigations of the rabbinical teachings about the three roads of love and Sister Raffaella's essay on "The Duties of Hearts"—a medieval work whose influence among Jews might best be compared with that of the *Imitatio Christi* among Christians—lay open some of the richness of the Jewish tradition. Deep though the differences between Christians and Jews are, the great Jewish teachers of the inner life hold with its Christian masters that there is no higher rung on the ladder to perfection than the love of Him who loved us first, and that man fails his vocation unless his heart and his flesh sing to the living God (see Ps 83[84]:3).

Even more persistent than labels defining the dissent between Church and Synagogue are slogans that pretend to tell, in a word or two, the distinction between the two Covenants. More than nineteen centuries ago—only about a hundred years after the first Pentecost—a priest, by the name of Marcion, appeared in Rome to propagate his ideas that the Law and the Gospel were irreconcilable and that the God of the Jews, the "just God," was totally different from the "good God," the Father of Jesus Christ. Marcion's doctrine was condemned and he cut off from communion with the Church; never-

theless, his doctrine of a radical opposition between Old and New Testaments has its followers to this very day. Time and again, one can hear men who should know better speak of the God of wrath and of the God of pardon, as if pardon had been unknown in the Ancient Dispensation and as if judgment were foreign to the New; as if the God of Christians were another than the unrivaled, uncompromising God of Israel. No doubt, the two Covenants are not identical, but they form a marvelous continuum. Both are manifestations of the same divine care for man. Though the world had to wait for an apostle to utter the breathtaking words: "God is love" (1 Jn 4:9), he could not have spoken them had not, long before, the psalmist been made to proclaim that the Lord was his shepherd, his light and salvation (see 22[23]:1; 26[27]:1).

The word itself may not appear, still love is written all across the page that records Abraham's plea with his and the world's Judge to spare the doomed cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, because of their just (see Gen 18:22-32). It is written, too, across the page that takes us to the mountain where Elijah, man of zeal, found his Lord in neither fire nor wind nor earthquake (see 3 Kg 18:11-12). Who is this God who can be encountered only in a gentle whisper, in the voice of silence, who is ready to bear with a multitude of sinners for the sake of a handful of upright men, if not the same God we meet in the Gospels? None of the severity the Old Testament relates, none of the harshness the ancient Israel shared with her neighbors—after all, God chose as His witness and instrument not ageless spirits but a people of flesh and blood, located in time and space—none of these can justify any degrading of God's bond with Israel. Into this union Jesus was born, from it His humanity received nourishment and strength; it would be giving small honor to Him, then, were one to discredit the Covenant that was nurse of His mind and will.

Whatever else was lacking in the Ancient Dispensation, never absent was the revelation of love. In her essay, "The God of Israel, God of Love," originally a lecture given at one of this Institute's Scripture symposia, Mother Sullivan speaks of Yahweh as the Lord of history. The sacred events, through which the chosen people lived, were the disclosure of His saving design. History's secret and power are the mercy, the steadfast love of Him who is its prime mover, its beginning and its end, the God who acts and speaks, creates and re-

creates. It is this experience of God's love that the books of the Old Testament state, hymn, and proclaim. Thus the great *Hallel*, that noble litany of thanksgiving, could resound through the Temple of old:

*Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good,  
for His mercy endures forever.*

(Ps 135[136]:1)

*Ki l'olam hasedo*, "for His grace, His covenant love, lasts forever," is not only the refrain with which the pilgrims to the Holy City answered the appeal of a chanter, it is the refrain of the Old Testament itself in which king, prophet, and people join (see 1 Par 16:34, 41; 2 Par 5:13; 7:6; 20:11; and others). When Jeremiah foretold that in the then deserted Jerusalem the sound of worshippers bringing thank offerings to the house of the Lord would be heard again, he linked their praise to cries of joy and gladness, to the voices of bridegroom and bride (see 33:11).

The prophet's hope for the voices of bridegroom and bride to ring out again reminds one immediately of that most unusual of Old Testament books, the Song of Songs. That love tunes, songs of utter delight in the beauty of a man's and of a woman's body, airs celebrating the passion of a maiden and the conquest of a youth, should carry another melody—the melody of God's love for His people and of their love for Him, indeed, that of His dealings with the whole of mankind—must be shocking to those who wish to sever the world of the spirit from that of the senses. To Scripture, however, the theme of the Song of Songs is basic. Divine love fills the universe; the flesh has a sacramental quality that enables it to become the bearer of grace; things created cry out to their Creator till God vests in the body of a man and in the elements of the earth. As the name of God goes unpronounced throughout the Song of Songs, so the Song speaks of the Incarnation without speaking of it. It is the perfect hyphen binding the Old Testament to the New and the perfect medium in which the new man, redeemed by the blood of Christ, can pour out the most intimate love of his heart. As Dr. Ulanov in his study "The Song of Songs: The Rhetoric of Love" shows so well, without this duet between lover and beloved the Christian mystics would frequently be deprived of speech. Their highest joys would go unsung and their deepest experiences unrecorded.

The two Testaments are inseparable. Any attempt to tear them apart, even though it be done unconsciously, violates their deepest meaning. To read, for instance, the parables of Jesus as if they taught the banishment of the Jewish people from the sight of God is to *misread* them. In her paper on the parables, Dame Mirjam Prager makes apparent that they do not gainsay the title St. Paul gives to the Israel according to the flesh: Dear to God for the sake of the fathers (see Rom 11:28). How could they? Though revelation is of many parts, it is of one piece. True, Jesus' parables rebuke but they do not reject. They warn, they threaten, as did the appeals of the prophets, but the judgment they both announce springs from love and leads to it. There is no man to picture a gloomier future than Jeremiah, yet it is he who calls the desolate people "virgin Israel," assuring her of God's everlasting love, of His never-waning favor, promising her deliverance and restoration of her beauty (see 31:3, 4, 7). To Jews and to Christians who think that the Lord has forsaken the people He once chose and, no less, to the many today who have forgotten *Him*, He says through the mouth of another prophet:

*Can a mother forget her infant,  
 be without tenderness for the child of her womb?  
 Even should she forget,  
 I will never forget you.  
 See, upon the palms of my hands I have written your name.*  
 (Is 49:15-16)

This prophetic vision is also the Christian way of looking at history, and the only vision to yield true understanding of the relationship between Church and Synagogue. Though history is filled with tears, it will have a happy ending; though the story of man and of his salvation is drama, it is not a tragedy but a *divina commedia*.

The reader who has stayed with me has long realized the theme around which this fourth volume of *The Bridge* revolves: Love in the Old Testament and in the New, love in both the Christian and the Jewish traditions. I can safely leave it to him to tie in all the other essays, be they on the Inquisition or current events, on the Jewish marriage ceremony or the veneration of the Torah by the popes, on literary figures or saints. It will be obvious to him that the love treated here in such variety—though far from adequately, since the love of

God can never be spoken of as it ought—compels Christians and Jews not to ignore each other.

DOES "not to ignore each other" say all that ought to be said? The same enraptured apostle who saw God as Love wrote: "If anyone says: 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar" (1 Jn 4:20). Hence I would be remiss were I to conclude this introduction to a volume on love without recording two recent events that have momentous bearing on the relationship between Christians and Jews. The first is a word of welcome by Pope John XXIII, the second a prayer of the Catholic bishops of Germany.

In October 1960, representatives of the United Jewish Appeal paid homage to Pope John. They gratefully remembered his wartime efforts to tear as many victims as he could from the clutches of their persecutors. To the salutation of his visitors the Pope responded with an affectionate greeting of his own, overcome with joy like Joseph, who had found his brethren after a long separation. "I am Joseph, your brother" (Gen 45:4), he declared, thus reaching out to those around him and to Jews everywhere. He then continued:

True, there is a great difference between one who accepts only the Old Testament and one who joins to it as supreme law and guide the New. This distinction, however, does not suppress the brotherhood that springs from their common origin, for we are all sons of the same heavenly Father; among us all there must ever be the brightness of love and its practice.

*Signatum est super nos lumen vultus tui, Domine*, "Thou has put over us, O Lord, the light of thy countenance." This radiant truth of Psalm 4 makes us understand what is meant by genuine help, by true human solidarity. Such solidarity will, indeed, bring closer the solution of many problems that harass the world and will unite all men in that fundamental reality: We come from the Father, we shall return to the Father.

(*L'Osservatore Romano*, October 19, 1960.)

Never before was it so clearly stated that the bond between Christians and Jews is woven of two strong threads, one being creation, the other sacred history. In greeting his visitors: "I am Joseph, your brother," Pope John spoke as a man, for Joseph is his own first name. At the same time, he spoke in the name of Christ, for to the fathers of the Church Joseph, loved, humbled, and raised, is a type of Christ.



Another declaration I should like to record, indeed, to highlight, is that of the Catholic bishops of Germany, issued at the end of May 1961:

Gathered at Bühl [for their spring deliberations], the German bishops reviewed, among other things, the questions raised by the Eichmann trial. They noted that German Catholics are following it with great earnestness and are deeply struck by the fact that so terrifying an injustice could have been committed by men who were part of our people.

The stirring testimonies at the trial force us to ponder anew what it was that made that horrible desecration of human dignity, that destruction of countless human lives, possible. These things happened because the political leadership of our people presumed to abrogate the eternal laws of God.

Our people must try everything humanly possible to make amends for the injustice done to the Jewish people and to other peoples. Though material restitution is necessary, it alone does not suffice. The bishops, therefore, call on German Catholics to implore, in a spirit of repentance, God's forgiveness for the sins committed by members of our people but also to beg for the spirit of peace and reconciliation. At the same time, the bishops appeal to the initiative of priests and laymen to join, as far as possible, visible signs of expiation to their prayers.

Most urgently, the bishops call on all men and women on whom the responsibility for our nation rests today, in conscience to resist every new attempt to do away with God's commandments, every attempt to jeopardize again the dignity and the rights of men.

Those who help form public opinion should keep alive in the consciousness of our people, and particularly in that of our youth, the memory of those selfless women and men who in the dark hours of our history, at the risk of their own lives, helped the persecuted and often suffered with them unto death.

*(Katholische Nachrichten-Agentur, May 31, 1961, No. 39/61.)*

With this appeal, the bishops published an extraordinary prayer for the murdered Jews and their persecutors, which they ordered to be said in all the Catholic churches of Germany on Sunday, June 11. It should add a new dimension to the lives of many Christians.

Lord, God of our fathers! God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob! Father of mercy and God of all consolation! Thou didst receive Israel thy servant and didst send to him and all men Jesus Christ thy Son as the

Redeemer. Though He was without guilt, thou didst deliver Him for our sake so that, through Him, we might all be delivered.

We confess before thee: Countless men were murdered in our midst because they belonged to the people from which comes the Messiah, according to the flesh.

We pray thee: Lead all those among us who became guilty through deed, omission, or silence that they may see their wrong and turn from it. Lead them so that they examine themselves, be converted, and atone for their sins. In thy limitless mercy forgive, for the sake of thy Son, that limitless guilt no human atonement can wipe out.

May the example of those who strove to help the persecuted and resist the persecutors become a power among us.

Comfort the mourners, calm the embittered, the lonely, and the sick. Heal the wounds that have been inflicted on souls. Make us, and all men, understand more and more that we must love each other as thy Son loved us.

Give to the murdered thy peace in the land of the living. May their death, unjustly suffered, be to their salvation through the blood of thy Son Jesus Christ, who with thee lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, forever and ever. Amen.

*THE EDITOR*