

sualed, openness and appreciation, and, where appropriate, support and reciprocity in the Jewish community." May I applaud and thank him for these words? May I also express the hope that Christians will not slacken in their efforts to purge Christian thought and speech of even the most subtle antagonism against the people God made His "special possession" (Ex. 19:5).

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To the Editors: In your December, 1975, issue Rabbi Henry Siegman, Executive Vice President of the Synagogue Council of America, in his article "Jews and Christians—Beyond Brotherhood Week" stated: "...Pope Paul's [the VI] sensitivity to charges leveled against Pius XII are common knowledge. Since he served as Pius's Secretary of State, he sees the accusations as directed against himself as well."

In relation to this statement let me draw your attention, for the benefit of your readers, to the following facts:

1. Pope Pius XII's (Eugenio Pacelli, 1939-58) Secretary of State, until 1944 when he died, was Luigi Cardinal Maglione.
2. Pius XII did not appoint a successor to Maglione, but decided to utilize his own experience as the Secretary of State to his predecessor, Pope Pius XI, to act as his own Secretary of State.
3. Paul VI (Giovanni Battista Montini), the present Pope since 1963, was appointed by Pius XII in 1952 as Pro-Secretary of State for Ordinary Affairs and handled mainly the delicate problems of the Vatican.

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Henry Siegman Responds:

I am deeply grateful to Franklin Littell and to Robert Wilken for their thoughtful and generous comments.

That both are troubled by my position about the "ultimate incommensurability" of Judaism and Christianity as a starting point for the dialogue is sufficient reason for me to reexamine my

position. In the meantime, allow me to suggest—however tentatively—the following:

1. It would seem to be that an assertion of the "exclusivity" of Sinai and Calvary should not preclude a recognition of the mutual dependence of the two faiths and of their complementary testimony to God. (For the Jew, at least, rejection of Calvary does not preclude a salvific status for Christianity.) Nor need it contradict the notion that Judaism and Christianity have a commonality they do not share in their relations with the other faiths.

2. I am troubled by Littell's perception—if I understand him correctly—that dialogue is impossible if we do not accept at the outset that the inevitable change that dialogue brings about must be able to alter even our most fundamental faith affirmations. I agree with Littell that "the eschatological hope applies to Jews as well as Christians." But that, I think, begs the question, for how we each define that hope is determined by Sinai and Calvary.

The Reverend Joseph Ryan's letter reminded me how far we have actually come in our relations with the Roman Catholic Church; the ill will expressed in and between its lines already seems ages removed from the decency, friendship, and understanding Jews encounter in their relations with representatives of the Roman Catholic Church.

I do not wish to get involved in polemics with Father Ryan, for there exists no basis for dialogue between us. But let me indicate some of the unfortunate distortions contained in his letter.

1. The reference to General Peled is entirely dishonest. Peled is critical (as I have been—see my article in *Moment*, January, 1976). of the often uncritical support American Jews offer Israel's official foreign policy. Peled did *not* quarrel with the judgment that Israel's policy toward her minorities, for all of its problems, remains remarkably decent and humane, and most particularly when compared to the treatment of minorities in the Arab countries.

2. According to the Reverend Ryan, the reason the Vatican has been silent on the subject of Israel is concern for Jewish sensibilities, for it would then also have to speak out on Palestinian rights, Israel's annexation of Jerusalem, its occupation of the West Bank, etc.

If that argument is not entirely convincing, that is so because the Vatican

failed to recognize Israel during the nearly twenty years Israel existed within her pre-'67 borders and had not annexed Jerusalem.

Furthermore, since the Reverend Ryan too is "too intelligent and politically alert" (if I may return the compliment) not to know better, he must be aware that grave suppressions of human rights in many countries, even—if memory serves Father Ryan—Nazi Germany, did not affect the Holy See's diplomatic relations with those countries.

Perhaps the Reverend Ryan is right when he exalts that the French statement did not represent the views of the French Bishops. Far more important, however, is that Ryan no longer represents the views of the Catholic Church. That is ground for hope.

The letter from my very good friend, Monsignor John M. Oesterreicher, I find deeply troubling. How remarkable for a man who admits to having written drafts of the Conciliar document to suffer so grievous a lapse of memory as to quote the first half of a critical sentence in *Nostra Aetate*—"God holds the Jews most dear"—and to omit its conclusion—"for the sake of the Patriarchs." Does this Conciliar qualification on God's affection for the Jews really contradict my assertion that *Nostra Aetate* left unchanged the classical Christian view that Judaism's religious worth is to be found in its pre-Christian existence only?

There is finally a futility to this sort of argumentation; if nothing else, the ground is so familiar. One point, however, I am not free to leave unsaid. Yes, God knows there can be no self-righteousness after Auschwitz, for Jews no more than for Christians. But I hope I will be forgiven the observation that it takes enormous courage for a Christian to make that point to a Jew. If, as Monsignor Oesterreicher apparently finds, Jews are less than modest in their speech in the ecumenical encounter, if they are not fully seized of the "charity in the Christian sense" that, according to Monsignor Oesterreicher, is what characterized *Nostra Aetate*, it is not because we read history "with the eyes of headline writers." It is, rather, because we read history like the mourners that we are, still reciting the *Kaddish* for six million of our brothers and sisters interred in that massive graveyard that is Christian Europe.