

# Correspondence

## Beyond Brotherhood Week

To the Editors: Before commenting on Henry Siegman's informed and intelligent account of recent Roman Catholic documents on the Jews ("Jews and Christians—Beyond Brotherhood Week," *Worldview*, December, 1975), let me put in a plug for Notre Dame. In answer to Siegman's question whether the ideas provided by the Vatican Guidelines will be put to good use, Notre Dame recently appointed its first Jewish scholar with specific responsibility for Jewish history and thought after the beginning of Christianity and has established a center for the study of Judaism and Christianity. The university library is increasing its holdings in Hebrew books and is now purchasing the Makor series of manuscripts in facsimile editions and other early Jewish texts. The study of the Hebrew language (Biblical, Mishnaic, and modern) is being intensified. Whether any of this has to do with the Vatican Guidelines I doubt (our efforts began several years ago), but it does represent our intention to make the study of Judaism part of our regular offerings for undergraduates, graduate students, and future priests.

Mr. Siegman's discussion of the Vatican Guidelines, and the various Jewish criticisms of them, is judicious, eliminating questions due to misreading or misunderstanding and focusing on the chief issues, e.g., the land in Jewish piety and thought, the State of Israel, and theological questions posed by the relation of the two religions. In the theological discussion, however, he presents a view of Christianity and Judaism that, no matter how well intended and initially attractive, is not a realistic possibility for the Christian. He speaks of the "ultimate incommensurability of Judaism and Christianity" as the starting point for Jewish-Christian dialogue. The difficulty with this view, a difficulty that has plagued Christian-Jewish relations since the beginning, is that Christianity has not, indeed cannot, view Judaism simply as another religion such as Islam or Hinduism. As Siegman recognizes, Christianity has validated itself historically and theologically by

reference to Judaism and the Hebrew Scriptures. The appeal to Judaism and the interpretation of Christianity in relation to the Jewish Bible is not an accidental development within Christian thought, but at the center of the Christian self-understanding. Parenthetically, the continuing use of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Christian Old Testament) in Christian worship, accented in recent years by a new lectionary that includes a reading from the Hebrew Bible (alongside two readings from the New Testament) in the Liturgy, only serves to underline the situation.

If Sinai and Calvary were mutually exclusive, the history of Christian-Jewish relations would, I am certain, have taken a much different form. It is precisely because, over the whole of Western history there have continued to be believing, observant Jews, that Christianity has felt threatened and defensive in the face of Judaism. The continuing existence of Judaism is an implicit criticism of the Christian claims, a fact noted not only by Jews, but also by Greek critics of Christianity in antiquity such as Porphyry and Julian. In answer to its critics, Christianity caricatured Judaism as moribund, a charge that was patently false. But this view became part of the Christian tradition and has made it extraordinarily difficult for Christians to see Judaism for what it is and has become rather than what Christians thought it should be. A Judaism that is lifeless and legalistic (so the Christian caricature) or nonobservant is much easier to integrate into the Christian perspective than one that is dynamic, spiritual, observant, and biblical. Mr. Siegman is correct that the most hopeful aspect of the Vatican document is the recognition that Judaism is a rich and vital religion in its post-Christian period, but he does not appreciate that this statement, viewed theologically, not simply phenomenologically or historically, is profoundly troubling to the Christian mind.

But perhaps we can take a clue from another issue raised by his article, namely, Christian attitudes toward the establishment of the State of Israel. Classical Christian theology constructed its view of Judaism, at least in part, on the basis of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. These events were thought to be evidence that the Christian claims were true. In the

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## WORLDVIEW

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Philip A. Johnson, *Publisher*

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this collection. Reporters, editors, and TV executives must make difficult decisions for which Epstein has no certain rules; he does, however, sensitize both consumers and producers of "the news" to the unreflective ways in which biases distort our understanding of the world. The author focuses his analysis on such major stories as Watergate, the Black Panthers, the Pentagon Papers, and the reporting of the Vietnam war.

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fourth century, however, before Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman Empire, the Emperor Julian attempted to rebuild the temple and restore the city to the Jews. His efforts, even though aborted by his early death, terrified the Christians. If Julian had been successful, he would have ended the "captivity" (in the Christian view) of the Jews, which had begun in 70 C.E., a captivity that, according to the Christian reading of the prophets, was *never* to end. This captivity has now ended, and the fathers have been proven wrong, suggesting, incidentally, the fragility of any theology based too closely on historical events. Christian theology, though at times seemingly intractable to empirical evidence, will be forced into making the necessary adjustment in its thinking, for the earlier views were shaped in response to other events. And the same will, I am certain, be the case for Christian attitudes toward Judaism itself. Christians have never really known the Jews and their religion, but as they begin to know and appreciate Jewish tradition and history, they will, slowly to be sure, begin the process of adjusting their religious ideas to their new experiences and understanding. Up until very recently Christian theology has seen the existence of Judaism as visible evidence challenging the Christian claims about Jesus and God's presence in the world. It is, of course, too much to say in 1975, and the Jew can hardly be expected to take comfort from it, but there may come a day when Christians will see the existence of believing Jews and the continuation of Judaism as a sure sign of God's presence in the world. From the Christian perspective, then, the starting point of any Christian-Jewish dialogue cannot be the exclusivity of Christianity and Judaism, but their mutual dependence

and their complementary testimony to God and his ways with the world.

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To the Editors: Rabbi Henry Siegman's article on the Vatican Guidelines is a wise and irenic discussion, and he is to be complimented both for its occasional bluntness and its prevailing graciousness. As a Christian of Protestant persuasion, I do not feel called upon to agree or disagree with his positions on *Nostra Aetate* and the long-delayed Guidelines. But there are certain points where his observations reach to non-Roman Christianity and may justify comment.

First, I am not sure that there "have been no comparable developments of similar import for Christian-Jewish relations during this entire decade in Protestant...Christianity." At one level there can never be similar developments on any subject—for Protestant churches do not have the Roman *magisterium*. At another, to the extent that basic change at judicatory level is accompanied by a changing mind in the congregations, the 1971 statement of the Synod of the *Hervormde Kerk* (Netherlands) and the 1975 declaration of the *Rat der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland* are as important as any Protestant developments can be.

Second, Rabbi Siegman's statement of the way Christianity and Judaism parted may be misleading. It may be a good way of expressing it to say that Christianity "chose the liberating experience of faith in Jesus over the stubborn evidence of unredeemed history"; it is certainly a generous way. But there was another article of belief, the Incarnation, that should have anchored Christianity in history, with all its ambiguities. Instead, Christians have oscillated between flight from history (Docetism) and equating the Second Person of the Trinity with the historical church (Triumphalism), both of which positions are heresies. The sharp questions for Christian self-examination run along this path: "Was Jesus a 'false Messiah'? If not, where are the signs of the millennial age?"

Related to this line of thought is "the failure of the Christian world to assimilate, morally and theologically, the two

seminal events of contemporary Jewry: the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel." The Holocaust was also an alpine event in contemporary Christian history, for the mass apostasy of the baptized that made the Holocaust possible is root cause of the credibility crisis we Christians must now wrestle down. To the superficial mind, the incapacity of many churchmen to deal with the historical fact of the State of Israel is excused by "fairness" and "evenhandedness," asking why "the Arabs" should be called on to "pay for Christendom's sins." This formula has the temporary advantage of every flight from history: It avoids the issue posed by a continuing and vital Jewish people (contrary to traditional Christian speculations), it avoids the fact of Israel and how it came about, and above all—true progeny of "cheap grace"—it pulls the plug on any pressure buildup for Christian repentance. An unrepentant Christendom does not have to deal with an earthy Israel, and not because of a true "liberating experience," but because it floats in the nonhistorical dream world of the heavenly flesh of Christ, a dream world where there are no betrayals, no crucifixions, no resurrections, and no word is made flesh.

Third, and this is a criticism rather than an extrapolation, it seems to me Rabbi Siegman's view of the dialogue is too static. I like the blunt way he demands that fundamental differences be faced ("...a mutual acceptance of the ultimate incommensurability of Judaism and Christianity; our most critical affirmations of faith, which define that which is most unique about them, Sinai and Calvary, are mutually exclusive....Judaism constitutes a denial of the central Christian mystery and its notion of salvation..."), but must we assume that the parties will not change through genuine interaction? What then would be the point of initiating a process?

Affirming the Jewish right of self-definition, and insisting as a Christian that our traditional lies and malice vis-à-vis the Jewish people must undergo conversion, I would still affirm that the eschatological hope applies to Jews as well as Christians. We shall *all* be changed.

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(from p. 55)

To the Editors: In "Jews and Christians—Beyond Brotherhood Week" Henry Siegman criticizes the Vatican (1) for taking ten years to issue, in January, 1975, the "Guidelines for the Implementation of *Nostra Aetate* No. 4" on Catholic relations with Jews; (2) for not dealing (within the Guidelines) with the theological dimension of the Jewish relationship to the land of Israel; and (3) for not recognizing (apart from the Guidelines) the State of Israel. A few comments on these criticisms.

General causes of Vatican slowness aside, other reasons surely include the fact that the treatment of relations is only one part (part 4) of that document, and that development in these relations could not fail to be viewed in the Vatican in the light of similar progress in relations with Muslims (part 3). I pass over the setback to Jewish-Catholic relations caused by the gaffe involving Cardinal Shehan of Baltimore and a "working paper" on Jewish-Catholic relations that was released mistakenly to the press as a Vatican document. But other specific reasons include, first, the rigidity about Israel of some Jews and of some pro-Israeli Catholics (involved in Jewish-Catholic relations) and, second, political conditions touching the State of Israel. On this rigidity I will restrict myself, for the most part, to conditions in the U.S.

Anyone involved in U.S. Jewish-Catholic discussions in the last ten years is aware of the very great sensitivity (and blindness) that have existed on questions touching the land, the State of Israel and the Palestinians, and of the attempts, by both Jews and pro-Israeli Catholics, to use religious discussions for Israeli political purposes.

Several years ago I attended an elaborately prepared series of discussions on the Arab-Israeli conflict and Jewish-Christian relations. Under optimum conditions for openness (privacy, small numbers, selected participants and speakers and ample time) it took two sessions before the decision could be made to invite a Palestinian speaker. Later one of the participants, who visited other U.S. cities and spoke of this series and Palestinian participation in it, was told repeatedly: Maybe you can do it in Cambridge, but not here.

I submit that this sensitivity (and the

political motivation) has inhibited freedom, and this diminished freedom has slowed development. To ignore this reality is naive. (The title of the new Vatican Commission on *Religious Relations with Jews* is significant.)

Rabbi Siegman's triumphalism about Israel's "decent and humane" record of treating its minorities only allows him to admit that that treatment is "in need of improvement." How can a Jewish spokesman, so innocent of reality, expect to talk fruitfully on this subject with a Vatican official, who can know from abundant sources and over decades just how bad that treatment has been? (See the remarkable Christmas, 1970, letter of Archbishop Joseph Raya of Galilee.)

The best single recent commentary on this situation I know of is indirect, an article not by a Christian but by an Israeli Jew, retired General Mattityahu Peled. "Exposed to American Jewry during a recent three-week lecture tour in the United States, General (Res.) Peled writes of his disappointment with the American Jewish community, which he finds, as a whole, supporting the most intransigent views in Israel on the Arab-Israeli conflict, in the belief that this is expected of it, and oblivious to the fact that Israel is not monolithic politically and that the hard line taken by the Israeli Government is seriously challenged within Israel. The uncritical acceptance of Israel's official policy and the assessment of any disagreement with, or criticism of, that policy as betrayal or even anti-Semitism is unworthy of the liberal tradition of American Jewry" (*New Outlook*, May-June, 1975).

Peled quotes observers as viewing these attitudes as resulting from the October, 1973, war. Personally, I feel that the situation, at least in some respects, has improved rather than deteriorated since then.

Regarding Jewish ties to the land and recognition of Israel, it is naive to expect the Vatican to say much unless it is free to express its reservations, in view of both the truth and the political realities. But would Jews accept such reservations?

Would the Vatican, were it to speak about Jewish ties to the land, be silent about Palestinian Arab ties to the same land? Would such silence be conscionable? If the Vatican were to discuss these ties, what might it say and what might the Jewish reaction be inside and outside

of Israel? Could the Vatican say that Palestinian Arab rights, including self-determination, were violated, first, by the call, since Herzl's time, for the establishment, against the wishes of the Palestinian Arabs, of a Jewish state and, secondly, in succeeding years, by the historical implementation of the proposal for a state that would be essentially Jewish? If some Israeli Jews acknowledge that Zionism involves the dispossession of Arabs, yesterday and today, will the Vatican ignore this situation when many of the persons affected belong to its oriental churches?

Further, would the Vatican fail explicitly to apply to Palestinians the right, upheld in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, to return to their land? But were the Vatican to treat these questions, what an uproar there would be!

Another point. Any Vatican declaration considering ties to the land based on the Bible might appropriately take up and criticize the "fundamentalist" interpretation of Scripture by Jews and Christians in general, and, specifically, its use as a justification for the dispossession of Arabs from their land today. The refusal by many Jews within Israel since October, 1973, to accept withdrawal from the occupied territories is based on religious grounds. In connection with the Jewish settlements in the territories, Bernard Avishai writes of the cult of the land these settlements have engendered, "a spiritual élan heavily laden with vulgarized religious mysticism and messianic righteousness . . . . In its most strident form, this political feeling has now found a political voice in Gush Emunim. . . . It proclaims, for example, that occupying and settling the West Bank are not merely tactically necessary but must be celebrated as unifying 'Eretz Israel'" (*New York Review of Books*, October 30, 1975). How could the Vatican speak favorably about Jewish ties to the land without expressing frank and solid reservations about their application in the occupied territories?

Regarding Vatican recognition of Israel, if such recognition were not to be delayed until a peace settlement, what Israeli boundaries should the Vatican recognize? Only those set by the U.N. partition plan? If not, on what grounds? Should the Vatican, in accordance with the overwhelming opinion of the international community, consider Israeli

annexation of East Jerusalem as invalid and Israeli subsequent actions as null and void? If so, what would Jewish reaction be? We already have some idea in the Jewish response to something much less—*L'Osservatore Romano's* criticism some years ago of Israeli housing construction in East Jerusalem.

Suppose the Vatican were to take up in a public document the injustice by which Palestinians (some belonging to the Catholic Church) from areas within Israel who never left Israel, were declared "absent-present" and were deprived of their land. Suppose the Vatican were to publicly admonish (as Pope Paul did privately during Mrs. Golda Meir's visit to the Vatican) the Israeli Government for the mistreatment of Palestinians living under its control. Suppose the Vatican were to raise questions about the basic difficulty of non-Jews in a Jewish state and declare, as the Catholic bishops of the Holy Land did in their December 15, 1971, letter to the Catholic bishops of the U.S., that "an effective solution cannot be reached by a unilateral conception which would necessarily lead to domination by one ethnic group."

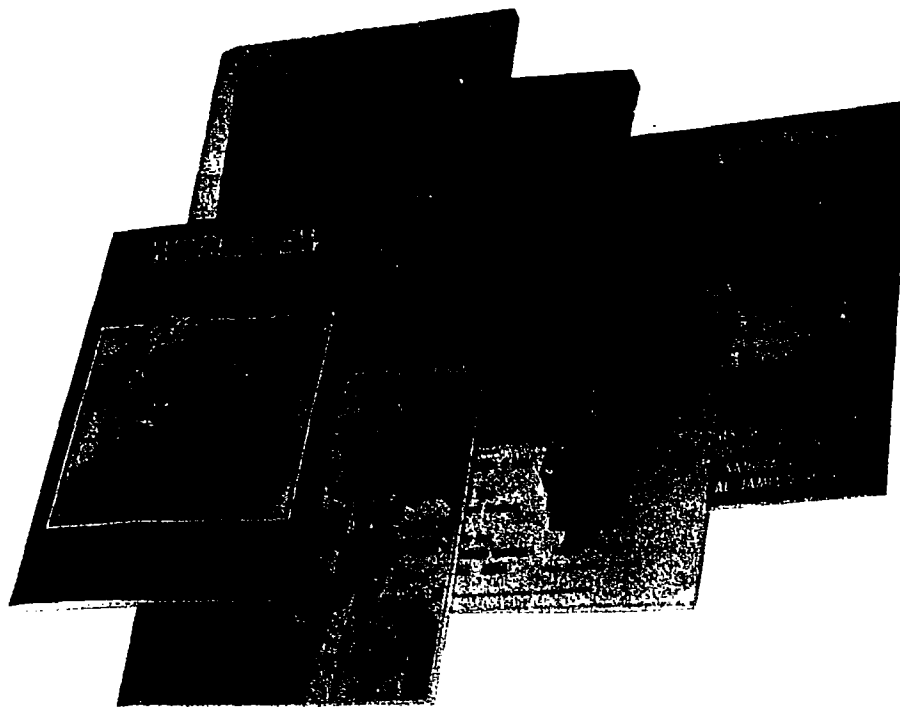
To sum it all up, the Vatican, by avoiding touchy subjects on which it would have had to express "harsh" judgments, has spared Jews much anguish, something of which, I suppose, Rabbi Siegman is too intelligent and politically alert not be keenly aware.

A final point. It would be misleading to imply that the French statement, which Rabbi Siegman praises so much and which drew much adverse criticism, represents the French episcopal conference.

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To the Editors: Rabbi Siegman's voice is gentle and discerning. Small wonder that his piece in the December issue has been praised by several churchmen as a thoughtful analysis of some aspects of the new encounter of Christians and Jews. His observation—"Nostra Aetate marked a turning point in the history of the Catholic Church and the Jewish people"—is a case in point. That it is framed by statements less discreet, less sensitive, is a pity but does not gainsay its judiciousness. Ours is an impatient age. Though the insight that man is a



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historical being is now fairly common, though the modern mind rebels against authoritative statements, many non-Catholics, Jews in particular, expect the Church to speak on issues of *their* concern dogmatically so that matters would be settled once and for all.

Am I mistaken in assuming that Rabbi Siegman's comment acknowledges, at least implicitly, the fact that, after centuries of hostility and estrangement, the Conciliar Statement on the Church and the Jewish People could be no more—and no less—than a breakthrough, a new beginning? It could not contain everything that needed to be said. Even if it had been possible to state to the fullest the new vision of the reality of Judaism and of the Church's roots in, and bond to, it, it would not have been wise to do so. In this instance as in others it seems better to trust the inner dynamic of an issue or a message.

Moreover, in summoning Catholics to change their hearts and rethink some false theologumena about the Jews, the Council had to rely on the creativity of time. Things of the spirit are not like ready-made articles of cloth. They are rather like seeds that are sown, that sprout, blossom, and bear fruit. I am sorry that Rabbi Siegman, at one point at least, seems to think little of growth and calls it, disdainfully I fear, "local option legislation."

I regret even more that Siegman misjudges the motivation of the Council so completely that he can write: "Jews generally understood that the Catholic Church saw its Statement on the Jews as an act of charity...." I wonder how he, a deskman, determined what Jews *generally* thought about Vatican II's action. To characterize its message as "charity" sounds more like the propaganda of those Jews who opposed the Council's declaration even before it was born. Showing the mildest interest in the proceedings of the Council was considered an acknowledgment of Christianity and thus apostasy.

As the one who wrote the set of principles that guided the early drafts of the Conciliar Statement and as a member of the team which, under the direction of the bishops, prepared the major versions, I know something of the spirit that prompted the bishops. Some had theological misconceptions, others political prejudices or antipathies; "charity" in the popular sense—the bending down of one who thinks himself

superior in dignity, rank, or power to another who is considered inferior—was not among the forces that could have "pulled" the Council "down." Charity in the Christian sense, however, the love of others for the sake of God, was, I am happy to say, part of the dynamic that moved the overwhelming majority (2,312) of bishops in a solemn vote at the day of promulgation to approve the Statement. The no-sayers were no more than 88.

I am at a loss to understand other misreadings of the Conciliar Statement on the Jews. Rabbi Siegman maintains that "the universal and perennial attitude of the Catholic Church toward Judaism...that its vitality and religious worth are to be found in its pre-Christian existence only" remained "fundamentally unaltered by *Nostra Aetate*." Really? St. Paul said of his kinsmen: "Theirs is the sonship, and the glory, and the covenants...." The Council did not hesitate to make this assurance its own. It also proclaimed that "now as before, God holds [the Jews] most dear," that He "has not withdrawn [from them] His gifts and calling," that neither teachers nor preachers may present the Jewish people "as rejected or accursed by God."

Again, it is hard to believe that Siegman should ignore the text of *Nostra Aetate*, that he should read rather the Statement with the eyes of headline writers. Nowhere in the document is it said that now Jews are "*absolved*" from the sin of decide. Absolution implies real guilt. The Conciliar Statement, however, strongly opposes the notion of a collective guilt of the Jewish people, indeed, of collective guilt as such. Only editors, with little theological concern but with a great deal of interest in the appearance of the front page, spoke of the absolution of Jews by the Council.

It was no flattery but the truth when I began my letter by extolling Rabbi Siegman's keen, discerning mind. His unequivocal rejection of fears that see attempts of proselytism where there are none; his plea that the dialogue be based on respect for the uniqueness of both Christianity and Judaism rather than on that Christian theology accommodate itself to Jewish beliefs; the clarity with which he defends the possibility of a common meeting of Jews and Christians "in the presence of God"—all these are evidence of the perspicacity I admire.

Alas, such an attitude is not main-

tained throughout. Rabbi Siegman speaks of "the failure of the Christian world to assimilate, morally and theologically, the two seminal events of contemporary Jewry, the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel." I do not say that he is wrong. Unfortunately, he is right. With the exception of some outstanding personalities, however, Jews have not done very much better. One has but to recall Ben Gurion's hope that the Eichmann trial would awaken Israel's youths; for them the Holocaust had become an event in a remote past that seemed to have no bearing on their lives. Again, one need but read the complaint of an American Jewish father in the January, 1976, issue of *Moment* about the failure or inability of today's youngsters "to confront the Holocaust, to confront the unanswered—for many of us the unanswerable—challenge to faith that the Holocaust provides," and also of the inability of Jewish religious schools to teach the Holocaust in an existential manner.

When anguish drives a man or woman to argue with God, the anguish and argument may be as deep as love. But anyone—Jew or Christian—who experiences the Holocaust only as a challenge to his or her faith, who does not feel challenged—questioned—in the core of his own being, has never looked beyond the surface. The answer to the Holocaust must not be less but more love. Whoever says that all that is given us today are "moments of faith" is in danger of losing all faith. Faith, love, fidelity do not admit of a breaking up into several pieces. Had we—Jews and Christians—heard the voices of agony at Auschwitz and other substations of hell in our hearts; had we truly heard the message of rejuvenation that was born with the birth of the State of Israel, our faith would not be problem-ridden but passionate, our commitments would be stronger, our hopes surer. If I am right in this, then we have both failed, Jews and Christians, Christians and Jews. Modesty in speech is an essential part of all ecumenical encounters. What I have in mind is a moderation that forbids us to castigate others, no matter how well-founded our reproach may be, without beating our own breast.

Rabbi Siegman ends his lively contribution on a note of confidence: The Church's new vision of, and attitude toward, Judaism "will find, I am per-

sueded, 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 exults 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.