

The Continuing Crucifixion Of The Jew

The Jew As Classic Scape-Goat

The recent hanging of a number of Iraqi Jews has served to bring back the memory of the millions of Jews who were cremated by Hitler. The United Nations hastened to condemn Israel for destroying civilian property in Lebanon in retaliation for an attack on an Israeli plane loaded with people; yet the U.N. said nothing, took no action on the mass executions in Iraq. Said U. Thant, the Secretary-General, "The Iraqi matter is an internal matter." The United States properly hastened to fly an air-lift from Cuba to help Cuban refugees from Castroism. It did almost nothing to help the Jews condemned by Hitler. Where the Jews are concerned, it seems always to be an "internal matter": translation - no help will be forthcoming.

Jacques Soustelle, writing from Paris in an article published in the *Miami Herald*, Feb. 9, 1969, "The situation of the 500,000 Jews in France is deteriorating steadily. The political police under Interior Minister Marcellin is investigating Jewish organizations and personalities. French Jews, who are considered among the most patriotic and loyal of French citizens . . . complain that they are now considered 'second-rate' Frenchmen. More than 500 French Jews are leaving France every month to establish themselves in Israel".

It is a familiar story, is it not, the Jew on the move, fleeing from his former friends who, for some reason, are not able to help him? Why? What is the root of all of this irrational hatred? When will it end? Will it ever end?

"Let Him Go!"

When the great modern Jewish painter, Chagall, painted Jesus on

the cross, he pictured him with a tallit (prayer-shawl) around his loins. For Chagall, Jesus the Jew is not the Son of God, but he is the symbol of the crucified Jew. In his memorable book, describing the continued persecution of the Jews of Europe, Andre Schwartzbart develops a scene where a group of German children, playing with a young Jew, begin to act out the New Testament story of the crucifixion of Jesus. They force upon the unwilling Jewish boy the role of spokesman for the Jewish "mob", as described in the New Testament. When they came to the part where the Roman ruler asks, "What shall be done with the prisoner?" the German boys turn to the Jew and wait for him to say, "Crucify him, Crucify him!"; but the Jew says nothing. "Say, 'Crucify Him'", the German Christians scream; "Say, 'Crucify him'!" The Jewish boy, identifying himself with the unseen prisoner, cannot bring himself to say such a thing. Whereupon, the German youths begin to cuff him around, to hit and kick him. "Say, 'Crucify him', you dirty Jew," they shouted. The Jew finally speaks, sighing soulfully, "Oh, let him go. Let him go!" For Schwartzbart in his book, *The Last Of The Just*, the Jewish people is the crucified Jesus, the symbol of all who suffer needlessly, symbol of all misunderstood minorities, symbol of all who are defenseless and who are the victims of the unreasoning mob.

Similarly, in the novel, *The Fixer*, by Bernard Malamud (as in the movie), the persecuted Jew is identified by the author with Jesus. Of course, to Schwartzbart and to Malamud, Jesus is not seen as a divine being, but simply as another meek Jew, unjustly set upon by the authorities, whether they be Roman, as in the New Testament, German, as in Schwartzbart's book, or Russian, as in Malamud's book. To these Jewish writers, Jesus is but one Jew wrongly condemned by his accusers, and what all these writers are saying is, "Why can't the Christians see this? Why so much Christian sympathy for one Jew who died 2,000 years ago, and why so little sympathy for the six million crucified Jews of Europe? Why so much sympathy for a victim of Roman tyranny 2,000 years ago and so little sympathy for the 2 million Jews of Israel surrounded once again by hostile forces?" Alas, it is a legitimate question, and the identification of the entire Jewish people with one of their own who died so long ago is not a false identification, if we leave aside the Christological implications of his dying. At the end of his compelling book entitled, *The Anguish Of The Jews*, the Catholic Priest, Edward Flannery, quotes Jacques Maritain as saying, "The passion of Israel is more and more clearly taking the shape of the

cross." When Maritain uses the phrase, "The passion of Israel", he refers to the suffering of Israel, much as our Jewish writers speak of it. (E. Flannery, *The Anguish Of The Jews*, McMillan Co., N.Y., 1965, p. 277).

Early Anti-Semitism

Father Flannery attempts to trace the development of anti-semitism in his scholarly study. He points out that much of modern anti-semitism is rooted in the early conflict between the Synagogue and the Church. There are no greater enemies than two factions which are really somewhat close together and which are competing for followers. Father Flannery describes how, in the early centuries of this era, the Synagogue was, at first, friendly to the early Christians, and, then, an enemy, as the Jewish leaders slowly realized that what was developing was not merely just a different Jewish sect but a whole new religion which was turning its back on Judaism. Similarly, the early Church Fathers, according to this Christian scholar, at first were admirers of Judaism, then, ambivalent towards the Jewish people, and, finally, its enemies. The main break came in the fourth century with St. Augustine and, especially, with St. Chrysostom. Where Jesus had nothing but love for his people and carried his message only to them, St. Paul, who later propagated his own concept of Christianity, was hurt by the failure of the Jews to accept him as a new prophet. Still, Paul felt that God had a special love for the Jewish people.

St. Augustine, who is one of the greatly admired men of the early Church, at one point called for Christians to approach the Jews with love; but he also wrote, "Judaism since Christ is corruption; indeed, Judas is the image of the Jewish people..." (Quoted by Father Flannery, p. 50). You will recall, that Judas was the disciple who betrayed Jesus to the Roman soldiers. It is precisely here with St. Augustine in the 4th century that we see a willingness to identify all of the Jews with one of their evil members, Judas, while there is an unwillingness to identify the Jews either with Jesus, the good guy, or with other disciples who did not betray Jesus and who were also Jews! St. Augustine also said, "... (The Jews) bear the guilt for the death of the Savior. For through their fathers they have killed the Christ" (Flannery, p. 50) Here we see one of the sainted teachers of

Christendom glossing over the cardinal fact that Jesus was but one Jew crucified by the Romans; but, beyond this, Augustine casts aside Christian charity to blame not only the Jews present at the time one of their number was crucified, but all Jews living four centuries later! Christian students who were to read St. Augustine down through the ages absorbed his anti-semitism. St. Augustine, however, was not as bad as St. Chrysostom who lived also in this critical fourth century in Antioch. A major emphasis of his ministry was on hatred of the Jew. In his *Homily*, Chrysostom wrote, "(The Jews are) . . . the most miserable of all men . . . lustful, rapacious, greedy, perfidious bandits . . . inveterate murderers . . . men possessed by the Devil". "Indeed," he wrote, "they have surpassed the ferocity of wild beasts for they murder their offspring and immolate them to the Devil." "And why are Jews so degenerate?" this Christian Saint asked. And he answered, ". . . (because of their) . . . odious assassination of Christ." Again he wrote, "(for this deicide) . . . no expiation is possible, no indulgence, no pardon . . ." Chrysostom topped off this eternal damnation with this teaching, "It is the duty of Christians to hate the Jews . . .".

Not Official Church Doctrine

Henceforward, people of different background in different countries were able to quote St. Chrysostom as an ally in their attempt to harm the Jews. In making this presentation to you, let me carefully assert that not all the early Church Fathers felt like this teacher. Further, his hatred was not part of official Church doctrine. Official Church doctrine down through the centuries has been more consistent with the teaching of St. Paul in the New Testament. The Church has looked for the time when the Jews would accept Jesus as their Savior, and this acceptance is regarded as an essential part of the coming of his kingdom. Nonetheless, it must fairly be said that all too many Priests and Christian laymen identified with the mood of St. Chrysostom, who, as one of the early Fathers, was admired and respected by later Christians. Even though many of the roots of anti-semitism lie in this charge of deicide with respect to the Christian God, the matter is not quite that simple. It is further

The Anguish Of The Jews, p. 48. See further his discussion of the Code Of Theodosianus, A.D., 438, which made Jewish proselytism a criminal act, barred Jews from public functions, and made marriage to Jews punishable by death. pp. 54-55. With the combining of Christianity with political power, anti-semitism became legalized.)

complicated by the fact that the Jew was a traveler. Everywhere he went, he was the stranger, the different one, the minority. In times of crisis, whether it was Russia or Germany or Spain, it was always the minority, the visible minority which became the convenient scapegoat. Further, the intellectual tradition of the Jew often worked to his disadvantage. He was resented because his wanderings had forced him to become adaptable and successful in whatever surroundings he found himself. He was resented because the laws excluded him from the ownership of land and forced him to become a merchant with money. He was resented, on the one hand, because the laws of kashrut did not permit him to eat at another's table, and, on the other, because he was identified with the miserable living conditions in which he was forced to live in the ghetto. The Jew dressed differently and acted differently. He shied away from normal gentlemanly pursuits like hunting and war. Because he was the great unknown, and therefore mysterious, he was hated for imaginary and fantasy-fed reasons.

Father Flannery draws our attention to a startling fact. If Hitler's anti-semitism fed on a stored Christian hatred of the Jew, it had its deeper psychological base in another phenomenon. Hitler attacked not only the Synagogue but the Church, as well. His call was not to a purified Christian nation but to a nation rid of all but Germany's pagan past. Rauschning, one of Hitler's Lieutenants, spoke derogatorily about, "Conscience . . . that Jewish invention". In his *Weltanschauung*, Hitler attacks the Jews for representing symbolically the demands of the divinely established moral law, the Ten Commandments, which stood in the way of his radical amorality and his deification of the German State and the German Volk (Flannery, p. 271).

Anti-Semites As Jesus Haters

Jacques Maritain has perceived that the hatred of the Jew is an unconscious hatred of Jesus himself. It is Maritain's theory that the Christian anti-semite, incapable of hating Christianity openly, centers his resentment of Jesus and his teachings on his people. Maurice Samuels has said of Christian anti-semites, "They must spit on the Jews as the Christ-killers, because they long to spit on the Jews as Christ-givers." Father Flannery observes, "Often the rigid Christian . . . is the most likely candidate for anti-semitism."

Flannery points out that the Nazi leaders, Himmler, Goebbels, Hess and others...were products of a "rigid Catholic piety". In revolting against their own strict background of Puritanism, they made the authors of the ethical laws, the Jews, into the symbol of immorality, the very opposite of what their laws would indicate that they were! Freud, and others psychologically oriented, have spoken of this simple principle of inversion which is at the heart of many crimes and hatreds. (Flannery, p. 271).

I cannot close these brief introductory remarks on the nature of anti-semitism without making this additional point. The Jews are not the only people which has suffered in history. Moreover, the Jews have often lived happily for long periods of time. We have survived where other persecuted peoples have been totally destroyed or submerged. Indeed, it is at least partially true that our persecution has been an asset to us, for it has made us see the folly of super-nationalism and dictatorships. From our wanderings we have learned how to select the best of many cultures, and we have been forced to sharpen our intellect and our character. I do not say that we should look upon our suffering as a complete blessing, for we have suffered far too much for that, but I do say that if we can look at our suffering objectively, we can observe that there has been some benefit from it.

Let us turn our attention now briefly to the 53rd chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, written perhaps 2500 years ago. The prophet describes, in the past tense, a figure whom Jewish scholars understand, and many outstanding Christian scholars understand, to be the representative of the Jewish people. The prophet says, "...he was despised and forsaken of men...he was wounded for our transgressions...surely, our diseases he did bear and our pains he carried...". Some Christians have preferred to take the past tense of the Hebrew and make it a future tense. They say that Isaiah was speaking, in these passages, of the yet-to-be crucified Jesus. Christians have wept much over this one Jew who suffered at the hands of a non-Jewish power, the Romans. Before Easter, Christians join with Jesus in the walk up to Calvary, picturing him as carrying the burden of the cross, with the nails driven into his wrists; yet they found it difficult to walk with his descendants, crucified at Auschwitz and Maidanek and at a hundred other places. I want you to know that I do not despair of the possibility of Christian understanding in this regard. The time will come when, like the painter Chagall, they will see Jesus, not as the personifica-

tion of the Wasp, but as a personification of the Jew wrapped in his tallit; or like Bernard Malamud in *The Fixer*, they will see the incongruity of the Christian policeman, pointing his gun at the Jewish inmate of the prison and saying, "For Christ's sake, die"; or, like Andre Schwartzbart in *The Last Of The Just*, the Christian will come to see the Jew not in the role of the Roman crucifier (or in the role of Judas), but as the poor, beat up Jewish child amongst the German bullies, crying out to his tormentors, "Let him go; Let him go!"

In the words of Father Flannery, "The sin of anti-semitism is many things, but in the end it is a denial of the Christian faith, a failure of Christian hope."

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Post-Script

I could not end this brief study of anti-semitism without referring to the positive changes that I have seen taking place here in Miami and around the world. Cooperation between the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish faiths in Miami at the highest level is exemplary. This may not have been true 25 years ago, but it is true today. On an international basis, the Catholic Church has included in one of its main policy statements in recent years the teaching that the covenant between God and Israel is eternally valid. Some national Protestant bodies have made similar proclamations. Here in southwest Dade County we have a fruitful ongoing relationship between Ministers and Rabbis of various persuasions. While some Ministers, Priests and Rabbis may not share the warm feelings of others, it is nonetheless true that the frequent contacts made between the leaders of the various denominations are genuine and supportive.

We must not forget the depths to which prejudice can sink, but let us take heart from the important changes that are taking place in American life today. I believe that these changes provide a foundation on which future trust and cooperation can be built.

(1969)

The Character Of God

(Presented During Dedication Week
At First Methodish Church of South Miami)

On behalf of the congregation of Temple Beth Am, I should like to congratulate the First Methodist Church for this beautiful and reverent building. It is impressive evidence of your good taste and your dedication to religion. Members of this Church know that it has been my privilege to speak on several occasions in their original chapel. Our children, too, have benefited from your hospitality, for in the days when Beth Am was young and struggling (we are old and struggling now), we used the facilities of this Church for our Hebrew School. Indeed, our people have been so often within the walls of this church that there might be some confusion at Beth Am as to whether we are raising good Jews or good Methodists.

I think we all have to recognize that the easy and warm friendship between these two congregations is not typical of Church-Synagogue relationships. We have here a precious and unusual evidence of the true spirit of religion. I do not think that the intensity of this relationship would be possible were it not for the genuine love which emanates from your Pastor, Ralph Huston, towards all men. They say that a man teaches best by what he himself is. In Judaism, we would call the Reverend Huston, a "Tzadik," that rare individual who demonstrates through his personal being, something of the divine attributes, and through him we are drawn closer to God. I trust that the members of this church do not take your pastor for granted.

I wish to speak tonight about the subject of divine attributes or qualities. We are accustomed to hear the statement that the world owes a debt to ancient Israel for leading us to the belief in one God. I submit to you this evening the thought that Israel could have led the world into great difficulty by stressing the concept of one God. The ancient pagans taught not merely that there were many Gods, they taught that the Gods ruled by whim and caprice. One of their legends teaches that the great flood came because the Gods