

FOR THE NEW MAN IN A NEW WORLD

AN ESSAY BY
RAMZI MALIK

“There exists a Christian Arab Lebanese trying to express his being both as a Christian and as an Arab. He thus hopes to bear witness to the truth with a view to entering into a frank and sincere dialogue with his fellow men, particularly with believers in the God of Abraham and also believers in Man as a conscious and free person, created in God’s image, called to Himself, passing over to Him, summoned before His Holy Face. Yet, let us have no illusions: as long as God permits and man wants them, the differences remain, not only between our three great monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but also even among our Christian Churches. It is time, however, that we feel seriously concerned about the common legacy which is indeed ours. This our legacy, and our aspiration, is Man in his integrity and God—The Unique, The Living. Therefore any word of truth and testimony not unworthy of God or Man, no matter where it comes from, will find its place in this Series, in this Publishing House.”

(R.H.M., *God in the Lebanon, Foreward*; 1966)

“It is you who are the witnesses to it all.”

(Lk. 24:48)

Fr. Luke, Ramzi Habib Malik, O.P.

ISRAEL AND ISHMAEL

(New Edition, entirely revised)

With a letter-preface by Yves Congar

AL-BA'TH

BEIRUT

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fr. Yves Congar

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20, Rue des Tanneries

March 7, 1976

Brother,

Since you have sent me your Israel and Ishmael, I want to give you, in evangelical simplicity, not only my hearty thanks, but my reaction.

People have often and rightly criticized "Politics drawn from Holy Scriptures." Indeed, these are realities that are situated at different levels. Between Scripture, witness of the word of God for salvation, and Politics, stand the complexity of realities and forces, the action of men, individuals and peoples, their passions, the successive economico-social relations. Etc. I ask myself, for the same reasons, it one can link Politics to Holy Scripture and if that is not, in fine, what you do?

You have one merit, however, and that is, to pose, beyond the politics of men, a question relevant to divine politics, if one is allowed to translate thus the classical expression of *Oikonomia*, or God's plan of salvation. Why not? You do it obviously at your own risks and perils according to your insights, among which you place what you estimate to be a grace and a vocation from God. You have thus the merit drawing our attention to a certain dimension, let us say depth of what happens in the history of men.

Your very sublime proposal that Ishmael grant his Land to Israel is so sublime that it remains in its own heaven, above even questions of doctrine. You emit a cry, strong with all your life and fervor. Beside these, the wishes I could express have no weight. I can therefore only convey to you the faithfulness of my fraternal affection.

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(Translated from the original autograph in French)

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When that day comes there shall be a highway between Egypt and Assyria; Assyrians shall come to Egypt and Egyptians to Assyria; then Egyptians shall worship with Assyrians.

When that day comes Israel shall rank with Egypt and Assyria, those three, and shall be a blessing in the centre of the world. So the Lord of Hosts will bless them: A blessing be upon Egypt my people, upon Assyria the work of my hands, and upon Israel my possession.

(Is. 19:23-25)

INTRODUCTION

FACING THE EVENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THE CHRISTIAN CANNOT REMAIN INDIFFERENT... ISRAEL AND ISHMAEL CALL HIM

The Christian who meditates on the word of God and its realization in history cannot remain indifferent to the events in the Near East, not simply because of the fate awaiting the holy places in Palestine, but also because of the very presence of Israel. Israel, after two thousand years of diaspora and on the very morrow of its most cruel martyrdom with its six million victims, Israel as much a people as a state, strikes roots in and rises again in the once promised land. And there, his brother Ishmael rises up against him, contesting his very right to exist.

The Christian may not remain indifferent to this unprecedented conjuncture, for the word of God as well as the posterity of Abraham embraces not only Isaac and Jacob with their descendants but also the posterity of Ishmael and Esau. Thus the Christian, above all the truly Christ-like one, who refuses to become partisan, cannot help but be interested in the destiny of the state of Israel in Palestine, and also cannot pass over in silence the problem of the presence there of the Muslim Arab.

I invite the reader to contemplate the Palestinian drama *sub specie aeternitatis*, first in its origins, that is to say in the Holy Bible, the word of God; then in history, past and contemporary. I shall close this first theoretical part with a series of questions. In a second and a third part, which are intended to be practical, I shall address an appeal for a new ecumenism, more Catholic still, that is, more universal, because it includes not only the separated Christians, our brethren in Christ. But also the Jews and the Muslims. If the last two are not yet our brethren in Christ, they are our brethren at least in Abraham and in the God of Abraham. It is thus my intention to work for the *gathering together of the scattered children of God*,¹ in the hope of contributing to the fulfillment of the mystery of Israel and Ishmael, and consequently to that of the people of God.

This outlook *sub specie aeternitatis* will lead to an appeal for prayer and penance, to a renewed intelligence of faith and traditions. It is not likely to lead—nor is it intended to lead—to long- or short-term political action.

1 Jn. 11.52

The “mystery of Israel and Ishmael” that we are dealing with is extremely complex and delicate. I am more and more aware that my expression of the vision can and should be improved. Therefore, I solicit the insights and corrections of the reader so as to make it more ecumenical, that is, hopefully, truer for Jews, Christians and Muslims. I have already composed another version with an Israeli Jew, Dr. Joseph D. Ben-Dak, which we have entitled *Children of Abraham. Toward a New Spirit in the Near East.*² In the Preamble we express the intense desire to be joined by the third dimension that all lack, the Arab Muslim.

² Joseph Ben-Dak & Ramzi Malik: *Children of Abraham. Toward a New Spirit in the Near East.* With an Introduction by Mark O. Hatfield, United States Senator from Oregon. IDEAS, Washington, D.C., 1974.

1

DESTINIES OF
ISRAEL AND
ISHMAEL

I. IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A. DESTINY OF ISHMAEL

1. *Abraham, father of believers.* The history of the people of Israel and of the promised land begins with the call of Abraham, descendant and heir of Shem, son of Noah, son of Adam. It is the faith of Abraham that evokes and establishes God's promise; it is the obedience of Abraham—even unto the sacrifice of Isaac—that seals forever the covenant with the Eternal. Abraham thus becomes the patriarch *par excellence*, that is to say, the starting point of sacred history and the ancestor of the chosen people. It is to Abraham and to his posterity that the Lord grants his blessing; it is to them that he promises the land of Canaan; and it is through Israel, posterity of Abraham and of Isaac, and people of God, that *all the families on earth will pray to be blessed as (the patriarch is) blessed.*³ God is the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of Israel.

2. *Abraham, father of Ishmael and of Isaac.* Abraham, however, is not only the father of Isaac by Sarah, but also the father of Ishmael through Sarah's Egyptian maid Hagar. Saint Paul will remind us of it:

It is written that Abraham had two sons. one by his slave and the other by his free-born wife.

(Gal. 4:22)

And God because of Abraham and because of Hagar blessed Ishmael too and granted him certain promises: Ishmael will be fruitful, he will multiply exceedingly, he also will become a great nation. That blessing and those promises are equally the creative word of God and his gift forever.

3. *The word of God commits itself towards Ishmael and his posterity.*

a. *Word of God to Hagar, mother of Ishmael.* Concerning Ishmael, God addressed a special word to Hagar his mother. It began even before the birth of the child, for Hagar also had a sort of annunciation:

3 Gn. 12:3.

“I will make our descendants too many to be counted...You are with child and will bear a son. you shall name him Ishmael..”

(Gn. 16:10-12)

The adventure of Hagar reveals a mysterious aspect of God’s plan for universal salvation, which will repeat itself, intermittently, throughout sacred history. Outside the official genealogy, outside Abraham’s and Sarah’s lineage through Isaac; therefore, outside the institution and the tradition that are going to structure the chosen posterity into a people, God is present and active too, living and vivifying, among men and women (Hagar and Ishmael, Jethro, Ruth etc.). And this action of God finds itself in direct relation to the chosen lineage. Thus, outside Israel, people-culture-state, outside the institutional church, there is salvation: there is even vision of God, life with God. From the beginning, the mystery overflows the institution; the institution is to be viewed in function of the mystery; the church is at the service of the kingdom and prepares it. In fact, the Lord God reveals himself to Hagar, although it is not from her but from Sarah that the child of the promise is to be born.

She called the Lord who was speaking to her by the name El-Roi, for she said, “Have I indeed seen God and still live after that vision?”

(Gn. 16:13)

After the birth of Ishmael, when Hagar is forced to depart from Abraham and Sarah, and to carry the child away, the Lord God continues to reveal himself to the mother with regard to the son, granting them a promise.

“What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid: God has heard the child crying where you laid him. Get to your feet, lift the child up and hold him in your arms, because I will make of him a great nation.

(Gn. 21:17-18)

Nor indeed did God forsake Ishmael afterwards, who became, in contrast to the sedentary Isaac, an inhabitant of the desert.

God was with the child, and he grew up and lived in the wilderness of Paran. He became an archer, and his mother found him a wife from Egypt.

(Gn. 21:20-21)

- b. *Word of God to Abraham concerning Ishmael.* The promises that God pledged to Abraham regarding his first born son Ishmael are even more creative and more binding, for they include the divine blessing.

“I have heard your prayer for Ishmael. I have blessed him and will make him fruitful. I will multiply his descendants; he shall be father of twelve princes, and I will raise a great nation from him.”

(Gn. 17:20)

And long before the birth of Isaac, Ishmael is the first to receive from the hands of his father the circumcision, sign of the covenant.

Abraham took Ishmael his son, everyone who had been born in his household and everyone bought with money, every male in his household and he circumcised them that very same day in the flesh of their foreskins as God had told him to do. Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he circumcised the flesh of his foreskin. Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. Both Abraham and Ishmael were circumcised on the same day..

(Gn. 17:23-26)

Afterwards, although Abraham was grievously displeased because Sarah requested that he cast out Hagar, nevertheless he agreed to comply with his wife’s request, yet not without a divine intimation. For on this occasion God renewed his promise concerning Ishmael and his posterity.

“I will make a great nation of the slave-girl’s son too, because he is your own child.

(Gn. 21:13)

The old Abraham took a third wife, Keturah, who gave birth to several sons.⁴ The word of God, however, makes no commitment to this lineage of Abraham.

Before his death Abraham separated all the other sons from Isaac, and sent them away unto the east country, as he had previously done with Hagar and Ishmael in sending them away southwards.

Abraham had given all that he had to Isaac: and he had already in his lifetime given presents to the sons of his concubines, and had sent them away eastwards, to a land of the east, out of his son Isaac's way.

(Gn. 25:5-6)

At the death of Abraham, however, it was Ishmael alone who came back to Isaac: together they laid the body of the patriarch in that grotto of Machpelah where Sarah had been buried before. This sepulchre would be the only lot of the promised land which the father of believers would ever possess, having duly bought and paid for it in cash.

His sons. Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, on the land of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite, east of Mamre, the plot which Abraham had bought from the Hittites.

(Gn. 25:9-10)

4. *Destinies of Isaac and Ishmael, the double posterity of Abraham.* Between Ishmael and Isaac therefore, there exists a mystery whereby one is put aside and the other is elected. With regard to the posterity of Abraham which leads directly to the Messiah and the Incarnation, to whom falls the promised land and whose history composes the Old Testament – with regard to Israel people of God, Ishmael and his descendants are put aside (for the son of the slave-girl shall not share the inheritance with Sarah's son⁵). Isaac alone with his descendants are elected to be heirs of Abraham. God's blessing to Abraham, in which all the families on earth will pray to be blessed as he was blessed⁶, passes thus solely through Isaac and his progeny to the exclusion of Ishmael.⁷

Nevertheless, Ishmael and his descendants will also form a *great nation*. The word of God affirms it categorically. Ishmael will have, as the Lord God had promised him⁸, twelve sons⁹, who will help to constitute the tribes of North Arabia.

4 Cf. Gn. 25:1-4.

5 Cf. Gn. 21:10.

6 Cf. Gn. 12:3.

7 Df. Gn. 17:19 and 21; 21:12; 22:18. Cf. Ro. 9:7.

8 Cf. Gn. 17:20.

9 Cf. Gn. 25:12-16.

B. DESTINY OF ESAU

This mystery of putting aside and of election repeats itself with the twin brothers. Esau and Jacob, born to Isaac; here again the elder is put aside and the younger elected.

“Two nations in your womb, two peoples, going their own ways from birth! One shall be stronger than the other; the older shall be servant to the younger.

(Gn. 25:23)

Saint Paul will remind us of it:

... Rebekah’s children had one and the same father, our ancestor Isaac and yet, in order that God’s selective purpose might stand, based not upon men’s deeds but upon the call of God, she was told, even before they were born, when they had as yet done nothing, good or ill, “the older shall be servant to the younger”; and that accords with the text of Scripture, “Jacob I loved and Esau I hated.”

(Ro. 9:10-13)

We know how through a stratagem devised by Rebekah Jacob managed to let God’s election of him be confirmed, while according to the natural order of things it would have been Esau the first born who would have received the first blessing. Nevertheless Esau, after his rejection, remains subject to blessing.

“Your dwelling shall be far from the richness of the earth, far from the dew of heaven above. By your sword shall you live, and you shall serve your brothers; but the time will come when you grow restive and break off his yoke from your neck.”

(Gn. 27:39-40)

The Epistle of the Hebrews interprets this remote past in the light of future realities. Esau’s benediction then is a pledge for the messianic goods, in which he also will share.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau and spoke of things to come.

(He. 11:30)

Esau in contrast to Jacob, just as Ishmael in contrast to Isaac, possesses the characteristics of the inhabitant of the desert, of the bedouin, of the Arab. He leaves the land of Canaan and settles to the south of Palestine, in the Araba, not far from the desert of Paran where Ishmael had established himself.

So Esau lived in the hill-country of Seir. Esau is Edom.

(Gn. 36:8)

C. DESTINY OF MOAB AND OF AMMON

The lot of Moab and Ammon will be similar. These descendants of Lot, the nephew of Abraham, will settle to the east of the Dead Sea. The Lord God recommends to Israel as they were still on their march towards the Promised Land:

“Do not harass the Moabites nor provoke them to battle, for I will not give you any of their land as a possession. I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession.”

(Dt. 2:19)

“Today you are to cross by Ar which lies on the frontier of Moab, and when you reach the territory of the Ammonites, you must not harass them or provoke them to battle, for I will not give you any Ammonite land as a possession; I have assigned it to the descendants of Lot.”

(Dt. 2:19)

This divine will, so deliberately delimiting that which is granted to Israel and that which goes back to others, must be taken into consideration in the present dispute opposing Israelis and Palestinians. At the very time when God promises a land to the people issued from Isaac, he forbids them inconsiderate annexations.

D. DESTINIES OF THE DESCENDANTS OF ISHMAEL AND ESAU

Esau took for his wife a daughter of Ishmael, his neighbor in the desert. Thus the branches crossed each other. Although sprung from the loins of Abraham and Isaac, they remain by divine will separated from Israel, the jealously exclusive heritage of God.

Then Esau, seeing that his father disliked the women of Canaan, went to Ishmael, and in addition to his other wives, he married Mahalath sister of Nebaioth and daughter of Abraham's son Ishmael.

(Gn. 28:8-9)

Jacob-Israel and Esau-Edom met again to bury their father Isaac, just as Isaac and Ishmael had joined to bury their father Abraham.

Isaac died and was gathered to his father's kin at a very great age, and his sons Esau and Jacob buried him.

(Gn. 35:29)

The descendants of Esau united themselves in matrimony with those of Ishmael and peopled the desert east and south of Palestine.¹⁰ Thus the Israel of old was surrounded mostly by tribes descended from Ishmael and Esau, just as the Israel of today is surrounded by Arabs.

These are the main passages in the Old Testament which demonstrate that the posterities of Ishmael and of Esau were also subject to blessings and promises on the part of the Lord God, the God of Abraham, the God of Israel, the Father of Jesus Christ.

10 Cf. Gn. 36:9-43.

II. MYSTERY AND DESTINY OF ISRAEL IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament the mystery of election and putting aside renews itself, but this time in favor of the nations against Israel. For Saint Paul, the greater number of Jews are cast away and the Gentiles, including Arabs,¹¹ begin from now on to enter the Church of Christ to make up the new people of God.

The Lord Jesus had already disclosed this mystery to his disciples. He dissuaded the twelve from conceiving the kingdom of heaven as a sort of exclusive club. In fact the way of the Spirit is that of the wind: *it blows where it wills*.¹² It was up to the disciples, who constituted the Church, to follow the Spirit where it blows, and Saint Paul will recommend in turn not “to quench” the Spirit,¹³ not to even exasperate it, nor “to grieve” it.¹⁴ But it was John the Evangelist, the disciple whom Jesus loved, who by relating the incident concerning the use of Jesus’ name showed that he understood best the spirit of the master.

John said to him, “Master, we saw a man driving out devils in your name, and as he was not one of us, we tried to stop him.” Jesus said, “Do not stop him; no one who does a work of divine power in my name will be able the next moment to speak evil of me. For he who is not against us is on our side...”

(Mk. 9:38-40)

Jesus revealed himself to the Samaritan woman, whereas the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans.¹⁵ Even more, she belonged to those very Samaritans who received Jesus¹⁶ and, long before the disciples, on his very word acknowledged and confessed him as the Messiah, *the Saviour of the world*.¹⁷ Only the foreigner, a Samaritan, thanks him for having healed him (Lk. 17:16); it is another Samaritan who becomes the model of a Christian’s love for his neighbor (Lk. 10:25 ff). Jesus himself praised the faith of certain heathens: the woman of Canaan finally

11 Ac. 2:11.

12 Jn. 3:8.

13 Th. 5:19.

14 Eph. 4:30.

15 Jn. 4:9.

16 Cf. Jn. 1:12, Jn. 4:40.

17 Jn. 4:42.

wrenched from him a cry of admiration: “O woman, great thy faith”¹⁸; the centurion of Capernaum roused his enthusiasm to the point that he confessed his astonishment, saying: “I tell you this: nowhere, even in Israel, have I found such faith.”¹⁹ It was just then that he disclosed the mystery to the people who were following him.

“Many, I tell you, will come from east and west to feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of Heaven. But those who were born to the kingdom will be driven out into the dark, the place of wailing and grinding of teeth.”

(Mt. 8:11-12)

In the parallel passage of the Gospel according to St. Luke the Lord rebuked the Jews and, as he announced the rejection of the unfaithful among them, he also affirmed the call of the heathens.

“There will be wailing and grinding of teeth there, when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrown out. From east and west people will come, from north and south, for the feast in the kingdom of God. Yes, and some are now last will be first, and some who are first will be last.”

(Lk. 13:28-30)

Thus the process of electing and putting aside that happened between Ishmael and Isaac, then between Esau and Jacob, repeated itself, though analogously, between Israel and the Goim: the first shall be last. That is how Saint Paul interpreted the passage from the Old to the New Testament:

And you, my brothers, like Isaac, are children of God’s promise. But just as in those days the natural-born son persecuted the spiritual son, so it is today. But what does scripture say? “Drive out the slave-woman and her son, for the son of the slave shall not share the inheritance with the free woman’s son.” You see, then, my brothers, we are no slave-woman’s children; our mother is the free woman. Christ set us free, to be free men.

(Gal. 4:28-31)

18 Mt.15:28.

19 Mt. 8:10.

The rejection of the unfaithful Jews with the catastrophe of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple were to inaugurate a new phase in God's design in history: *the times of the Gentiles*.

"...For there will be great distress in the land and a terrible judgement upon this people. They will fall at the sword's point; they will be carried captive into all countries; and Jerusalem will be trampled down by foreigners until their day has run its course..."

(Lk. 21:23-24)

History since Pentecost must therefore be construed as the age of the fulfillment of God's will for salvation of the Gentiles. It was Peter who, by right, will open the gates of the Church to the first Goim by baptizing Cornelius and all his household.²⁰ But it was Paul, the Apostle *par excellence* of the Gentiles, who will be entrusted with this mystery, both its knowledge and its proclamation.

With this in mind I make my prayer, I, Paul, who in the cause of you Gentiles am now the prisoner of Christ Jesus—for surely you have heard how God has assigned the gift of his grace to me for your benefit. It was by a revelation that his secret was made known to me. I have already written a brief account of this, and by reading it you may perceive that I understand the secret of Christ. In former generations this was not disclosed to the human race; but now it has been revealed by inspiration to his dedicated apostles and prophets, that through the Gospel the Gentiles are joint heirs with the Jews, part of the same body, sharers together in the promise made in Christ Jesus. Such is the gospel of which I was made a minister, by God's gift, bestowed unmerited on me in the working of his power. To me, who am less than the least of all God's people, he has granted of his grace the privilege of proclaiming to the Gentiles the good news of the unfathomable riches of Christ, and of bringing to light how this hidden purpose was to be put into effect. It was hidden for long ages in God the creator of the universe, in order that now, through the church, the wisdom of God in all its varied forms might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the realms of heaven. This is in accord with his age-long purpose, which he achieved in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him, we have access to God with freedom, in the confidence born of trust in him.

(Eph. 3:1-12)

20 Ac. 10.

This new phase in the plan of God concerning the Gentiles, that is to say *the foreigners*, the non-Jews, the non-Israel, did not, however, constitute the last stage in God's design in history. The rejection of Israel is not final. Israel, though rejected, remains a mystery. If they were put aside in turn, it was only to initiate a new stage in the history of the people of God, namely, to admit the Gentiles to the legacy of Jesus Christ. And this admission of the non-Jews serves also the destiny of the Jews themselves: by the salvation of the Gentiles the jealousy of the Jews is thus provoked:

Because they offended, salvation has come to the Gentiles, to stir Israel to emulation. But if their offence means the enrichment of the world, and if their falling-off means the enrichment of the Gentiles, how much more their coming to full strength!

(Ro. 11:11-12)

Israel remains in a mysterious sense a chosen people, in spite of his infidelities, in spite of the condemnation to death of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, due to the complicity of some Jews with the Roman power. The God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob abides forever faithful to his original election and promise. God goes on with his plan of salvation in history vis-a-vis the Jews and the non-Jews. And Israel, though unfaithful at present, as in the past, remains, by reason of divine Providence, a particular object of that Providence and a privileged means for further purposes.

In the spreading of the Gospel they are treated as God's enemies for your sake; but God's choice stands, and they are his friends for the sake of the patriarchs. For the gracious gifts of God and his calling are irrevocable.

(Ro. 11:28-29)

Israel, unfaithful and put aside, constitutes ever a mystery of God.

For there is a deep truth here, my brothers, of which I want you to take account, so that you may not be complacent about your own discernment: this partial blindness has come upon Israel only until the Gentiles have been admitted in full strength; when that has happened, the whole of Israel will be saved..

(Ro. 11:25-26)

We may now try to fathom that mystery's depth. Israel's rejection—a mystery: it is in order to let in the Gentiles and thus to provoke the emulation of Israel itself. Israel's permanency—again a mystery: it remains in a sense the chosen people and God has further designs for it. Israel's conversion at last—the fulfillment of the mystery: this conversion will display the depth of the mercy, the riches, the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

*For if their rejection has meant the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean?
Nothing less than life from the dead!*

(Ro.11:15)

The plan of God for man is, therefore, one large design of infinite mercy towards all men, both Jews and Gentiles.

Just as formerly you were disobedient to God, but now have received mercy in the time of their disobedience, so now, when you receive mercy, they have proved disobedient but only in order that they too may receive mercy. For in making all mankind prisoners to disobedience, God's purpose was to show mercy to all mankind.

(Ro. 11:30-32)

That is indeed the design of God for man in history: the mystery of a merciful love.

O depth of wealth, wisdom, and knowledge in God! How unsearchable his judgements, now untraceable his ways! Who knows the mind of the Lord? Who has been his counsellor? Who has ever made a gift to him, to receive a gift in return? Source, Guide, and Goal of all that is – to him be glory forever! Amen.

(Ro. 11:33-36)

The puttings aside on the part of God were never meant to be final rejections. We find here again one aspect of the mystery of death after revelation:

*God did not make death,
and takes no pleasure in the destruction of any living
thing; he created all things that they may have being.
The creative forces of the world make for life;
there is no deadly poison in them.
Death is not Ring on earth, for justice is immortal;
but godless men by their words and deeds have asked
death for his company.
Thinking him their friend,
they have made a pact with him because they are fit
members of his party; and so they have wasted away..
God created man for immortality,
and made him the image of his own eternal self;
it was the devil's spite that brought death into the world...*

(Wis. 1:13-16; 2:22-24)

Death is not God's work. If the Lord God permits sin to happen, and consequently death, if he allows the devil, the adversary, to corrupt his creation, it is only for a time and in view of a greater good. Thus death becomes the condition of the resurrection and the glory, of life everlasting—the glory and life of God.

The election of the one does not mean, then, the exclusion of the other. On the contrary: Providence makes her children “play” their role each one in turn in a vast design, to the glory of her “game” as well as to the greater benefit of all concerned. This is, indeed, the wisdom of God, delighting to be with the sons of men.

*I was at his side each day,
his darling and delight,
playing in his presence continually,
playing on the earth, when he had finished it,
while my delight was in mankind.*

(Pr. 8:30-31)

It is the wisdom of God, but also God's folly.

God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. As God in his wisdom ordained, the world failed to find him by its wisdom and he chose to save those who have faith by the folly of the Gospel.... Divine folly is wiser than the wisdom of man, and divine weakness stronger than man's strength.

(1 Co. 1:21 & 25)

Wisdom and folly of the Father who loves all his children. It is certainly one of the lessons taught by the parable of the lost son and the faithful son (Cf. Lk. 15:11-32).

"My boy," said the father, "you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. How could we help celebrating this happy day?..."

Sin is an occasion for the manifestation of God's mercy. One may say that it is the return of the prodigal son that allows all characters of the parable to liberate themselves, to become happy: he himself is reintegrated into his family; the father also exercises his fatherhood towards all the members of his household; the elder brother is shaken in his selfishness and exposes his resentment (he was not behaving as a son, but as a slave, that is, not out of love for his father, but out of interest for himself and his "friends"); and the servants themselves begin to celebrate. It is then the sinner who, in a sense, ministers to the others, teaching them the sacrament of forgiveness (par-don) and reconciliation. Without him, they would have not become what they are called to be.

The divisions between God and man, and among men themselves, are not final: there will be re-union, re-conciliation, at-one-ment. First, reconciliation of sinners with God, of those who once had not been chosen:

Formerly you were estranged from God; you were his enemies in heart and mind, and your deeds were evil. But now by Christ's death in his body of flesh and blood God has reconciled you to himself, so that he may present you before himself as dedicated men, without blemish and innocent in his sight.

(Col. 1:21-22)

The division of men between Jews and Gentiles begins to come to an end with and in Jesus Christ.

Remember then your former condition: you, Gentiles as you are outwardly, you, “the uncircumcised” so called by those who are called “the circumcised” (but only with reference to an outward rite)—you were at that time separate from Christ, strangers to the community of Israel outside God’s covens and the promise that goes with them. Your world was a world without nope and without hope and without God. But now in union with Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near through the shedding of Christ’s blood. For he is himself our peace. Gentiles and Jews, he has made the two one, and in his own body of flesh and blood has broken down the enmity which stood like a dividing wall between them; for he annulled the law with its rules and regulations, so as to create out of the two a single new humanity in himself, thereby making peace. This was his purpose, to reconcile the two in a single body to God through the cross, on which he killed the enmity. So he came and proclaimed the good news: Peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near by; for through him we both alike have access to the Father in the one Spirit. Thus you are no longer aliens in a foreign land, but fellow-citizens with God’s people, members of God’s household.

(Ep. 2:11-19)

The original harmony with God, disturbed by sin, is now restored not only between men, but also among all the beings of creation, thanks to Jesus Christ and to him alone.

For in him the complete being of God, by God’s own choice, came to dwell. Through him God chose to reconcile the whole universe to himself, making peace through the shedding of his blood upon the cross—to reconcile all things, whether on earth or in heaven, through him alone.

(Col. 1:19-20)

If and when God divides it is only for a time, for *his times*; and it is always in view of the great final reconciliation, the messianic gathering together of all. Saint Paul summarizes this mystery of unity and union—at-one-ment—in his magnificent hymn of reconciliation, which recapitulates God’s plan of salvation from all eternity to all eternity.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has bestowed on us in Christ every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms. In Christ he chose us before the world was founded, to be dedicated, to be without blemish in his sight, to be full of love: and he destined us—such was his will and pleasure—to be accepted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in order that the glory of his gracious gift, so graciously bestowed on us in his Beloved, might redound to his praise. For in Christ our release is secured and our sins are forgiven through the shedding of his blood. Therein lies the richness of God’s free grace lavished upon us, imparting full wisdom and insight. He has made known to us his

hidden purpose—such was his will and pleasure determined beforehand in Christ—to be put into effect when the time was ripe: namely, that the universe, all in heaven and on earth, might be brought into a unity in Christ.

In Christ indeed we have been given our share in the heritage, as we decreed in his design whose purpose is everywhere at work. For it was his will that we, who were first to set our hope on Christ, should cause his glory to be praised. And you too, when you had heard the message of the truth, the good news of your salvation, and had believed it, became incorporate in Christ and received the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; and that Spirit is the pledge that we shall enter upon our heritage, when God has redeemed what is his own, to his praise and glory.

(Eph. 1:3-14)

This envisioned triumph of harmony between heaven and earth achieved by and in all creatures also characterizes the triumph of the elect in heaven:

After this I looked and saw a vast throng, which no one could count, from every nation, of all tribes, peoples, and languages, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were robed in white and had palms in their hands, and they shouted together:

“Victory to our God who sits on the throne and to the Lamb!” And all the angels stood round the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, crying:

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honour, power and might, be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.”

(Rev. 7:9-12)

In the time between the first and second comings of the Messiah, the ministry of reconciliation, the service of at-one-ment, which has been accomplished once and for all through and in Jesus Christ, but which has only begun for men and women, has now been entrusted to us.

From first to last this has been the work of God. He has reconciled us men to himself through Christ, and he has enlisted us in this service of reconciliation. What I mean is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself no longer holding men’s misdeeds against them, and that he has entrusted us with the message of reconciliation. We come therefore as Christ’s ambassadors. It is as if God were appealing to you through us: in Christ’s name, we implore you, be reconciled to God!

(2 Co. 5:18-20)

III. DESTINIES OF ABRAHAM AND ISHMAEL IN THE QUR'AN

For the Jews, divine revelation confines itself to Torah; for the Christians, it fulfills itself in the Person of Jesus the Christ.

The rise of Islam, however, gave a new start to Ishmael's destiny and heritage in the history of world religions. For Mohammed claimed to belong to Abraham and to the God of Abraham through Ishmael the ancestor of the Arabs. It was Abraham and Ishmael according to the Qur'an, who purified and even built up the Ka'bah, the temple of Mecca; God had entrusted them with its cult; it was Abraham with Ishmael who had inaugurated the pilgrimage to Mecca; it was their descendants who established themselves there to serve the true God, and they were destined to grow into a great people and a great nation (*umma*). Abraham had prayed to God to grant this his nation a messenger, who would be Mohammed himself.

And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words, and he fulfilled them, He said, "Behold, I make you a leader for the people." Said he, "And of my seed?" He said "My covenant shall not reach the evildoers."

And when We appointed the House to be a place of visitation for the people, and a sanctuary, and: "Take to yourselves Abraham's station for a place of prayer." And We made covenant with Abraham and Ishmael: "Purify My House for those that shall go about it and those that cleave to it, to those who how and prostrate themselves."

[...]

And when Abraham, and Ishmael with him, raised up the foundations of the House: "Our Lord, receive this from us: Thou art the All-hearing, the All-knowing: and, our Lord, make us submissive to Thee, and of our seed a nation submissive to Thee; and show us our holy rites, and turn towards us; surely Thou turnest, and art All-compassionate; and, our Lord, do Thou send among them a messenger. one or them. who shall recite to them Thy signs, and teach them the Book and the Wisdom, and purify them; Thou art the All-mighty, the All-wise."

(Qur'an interpreted by ARBERRY: II, 117-119; 121-123)

Ishmael, the Qur'an teaches, was also a patriarch, both the forefather of a people and the starting point of a religion. More than a simple Messenger, Ishmael was a prophet entrusted with God's revelation, as were other patriarchs and prophets, including Moses and Jesus.

Say you: "We believe in God and in that which has been sent down to us and sent down on Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and the Prophets, of their Lord; we make no division between any of them, and To Him we surrender.

(Qur'an 11, 130)

We have revealed to thee as We revealed to Noah, and the Prophets after him, and We revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, Jesus and Job, Jonah and Aaron and Solomon, and We gave to David Psalms, and Messengers We have told thee of before, and Messengers We have not told thee of...

(Qur'an IV, 162-163)

And mention in the Book Ishmael; he was true to his promise, and he was a Messenger, a Prophet. He bade his people to pray and to give the alms, and he was pleasing to his Lord.

(Qur'an XIX, 55)

For Mohammed as well as for Islam, Allah thus becomes the God of Abraham, of Ishmael, of Isaac and of Jacob.

Why, were you witnesses, when death came to Jacob? when he said to his sons, "What will you serve after me?" They said, "We will serve thy God and the God of thy fathers Abraham, Ishmael and Isaac, One God; to Him we surrender."

(Qur'an II, 127)

Later the Muslim tradition, even more than the Qur'an itself, will extol the figures of Ishmael and of his mother Hagar, and many commentators will go so far as to substitute Ishmael for Isaac in the sacrifice of Abraham. Today, in the popular imagination as well as in the iconography of Muslims everywhere, the son to be sacrificed by his father Abraham is Ishmael, not Isaac.

So much for the Writings concerning Israel and Ishmael. May I now draw attention to two actual facts.

IV. THE THREE ABRAHAMIC MONOTHEISMS: JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM...

If the term “religion” be taken in the strict sense, only three confessions rightly claim the appellation for themselves: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Only these three religions claim (rightly or wrongly) that the only true, transcendent and personal God has revealed himself exclusively and jealously through them. All the other systems may be qualified as religious in the broad sense of the word: Buddhism, Confucianism, or Hinduism, for instance. According to their own founders and well-informed followers, these are only pure human speculations based a certain equally human morality. Only these three monotheisms, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, acknowledge the same true God, creator of heavens and earth, who speaks and reveals himself to man in time and space, who is the supreme judge and the ultimate end of the spiritual creature. Those three religions also claim to belong to the same Abraham (the Jews through Isaac, the Muslims through Ishmael) as their patriarch, that is, as their forefather who inaugurated sacred history and initiated monotheistic revelation. Abraham is the father and the prototype of all believers, be they Jews, Christians or Muslims.

V. FACE TO FACE WITH MODERN ANTITHEISM

On the other hand, when materialistic atheism (whether of the radically militant type, as in Marxism, or of the more diffuse and tolerant type, as in certain quarters and teachings in the West) negates and wars against God, it does not will or proclaim the death of any god, but precisely of the Lord God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – the Father of our Lord

Jesus Christ – and also *Allah*, the transcendent God of Islam. For it is above all that God who radically “alienates” man: either by electing him (Judaism), or divinizing him (Christianity), or by calling him to a destiny other than that of this earth (Islam). It is *that* God who disturbs history by meddling in it, in order to remake and save Man.

CONCLUSION: ISRAEL AND ISHMAEL?

In the light of all I have said I now ask: There is in God's plan a mystery and a dialectic: between Israel and the Gentiles after Torah, between the Church and the Synagogue after the New Testament, and this until the salvation of the whole of Israel.²¹ How does this dialectic subsist between the Church, Mystery of salvation, heavenly Spouse of Christ, People of the elect, and the Jews, Christians, Muslims, and others?

Could such a vision of sacred history have the power to launch a new ecumenism around this privileged region of the Lord that constitutes the Middle East? Privileged because of the holy places; privileged on account of the Eastern churches, to which the Apostles, the Fathers and so many early Saints belonged; privileged on account of the return of a part of Israel to Palestine; privileged even in the eyes of the Muslims for whom Jerusalem is equally the Holy City, *al-Quds*.

Would that ecumenism be called upon to embrace all children of Abraham? Jews, children of Abraham according to the flesh (that is, according to descent and education) through Isaac; Christians, children of Abraham according to the Spirit (that is, through community of faith) by and in Christ; Arabs, who consider themselves also children of Abraham through Ishmael; Muslims, again claiming themselves to belong to him through Mohammed and Islam.

Could there be in God's plan, alongside the ever persisting mystery of Israel, a web enclosing²² the descendants of Isaac-Israel and those of Ishmael-Esau, a design that would thus embrace also Arabs and Muslims?

The openness of the Second Vatican Council towards the non-Christian religions, particularly Judaism and Islam, as well as the development ever since of the general "sense of the Church", no less than the course of world religious events themselves – do not all these facts seem as *the signs of the times*²³ pointing to such a convergence, to such an advent?

Is not the Church, not the institution but the mystery of God living among men, the very ark, where not only the Christians, but also the Jews, Muslims, and the others, must sooner or later take refuge, in order to save the undeniable values of their respective religions? Where they must acknowledge each other and become reconciled, if they do not want to be carried away by the flood that threatens to uproot the notion of God from the hearts of men?

Would the God of Abraham faced by a world that is determined to "kill" him. (*He laughs them to scorn!*),²⁴ call forth new witnesses from among the seed of Abraham, including Israel and Ishmael?

21 Cf. Ro. 11:26.

22 Cf. Ro. 11:32.

23 Cf Mt. 16:3.

24 Ps. 2:4.

Could the return of an ambiguous “Israel” to Palestine afford an opportunity for the conversion of all to the Lord God and therefore for *the gathering together of the scattered children of God*: Jews, Muslims, Christians, and others?

Could the once promised land be called upon again to play in the plan of salvation between Israel and Ishmael, between Israelis and Arabs (particularly: Palestinians), between Jews, Christians, and Muslims?

Are we drawing nearer to the hour when *the times of the Gentiles* will have run their course²⁵ and therefore when the whole of Israel shall be saved?²⁶

Could the posterity of Ishmael be granted the privilege of provoking Israel to jealousy and emulation?²⁷

Does an initiative at the present time fall particularly to Ishmael spiritualized?

Should Ishmael transform the once promised land into a land of hospitality by offering it for nothing, for the love of the God of Abraham, for the love of our father Abraham, for the love of our elder brethren in the faith, the Jews?

Shall Ishmael offer the Land to his brother Israel as a *sadaqa* of a new order, a present of friendship and brotherhood, a purely free gift in the charity and the truth of the Living God, gift as a sacrament of forgiveness?

And Israel, also spiritualized, in turn, shall he accept this gift from the hands of his brother Ishmael, and respect the limits fixed by the latter?

Shall Ishmael grant the Land to Israel, or reconquer it, or shall he give it up?

Shall the successive God’s plan be only the puttings-aside, never rejections, in God’s plan be only the terms of a dialectic in view of the great reconciliation of all?

Are Jews, Muslims, Christians—all sinners, all ambiguous—are they now forced to acknowledge their lack of faith and brotherly love, as well as their mutual theological needs for each other, and in thus doing shall they start a new ecumenism towards the Kingdom? Do not Christians need their Jewish and Muslim brethren in order to become more and more Christ-like? Do not Jews and Muslims need their Christian brethren in order to become more spiritual and more universal?

25 Lk. 21:24.

26 Cf. Ro. 11:26.

27 Cf. Ro. 11:11.

Shall the gift of Ishmael, the *put-aside*—singularly in the person of the Palestinian—be a sort of sacrament of forgiveness and conversion and atonement for the chosen: Jews and Christians, as well as a sacrament of reconciliation for a divided world?

Our speculations about the destinies of Israel and Ishmael, as well as of the Christians, have ended in question marks. But what remains a question on the theoretical level may—and consequently ought to—become an affirmation on the level of a Christ-like action.

I come now to the second part of my essay.

2

THE CHURCH- MYSTERY FACING ISRAEL AND ISHMAEL

I. THE CHURCHES IN THE EAST

At the present moment the churches in the East (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant) are experiencing a sort of revival, and the churches in the West have at their disposal efficient means to help them. There are also religious congregations in Muslim world, and the beginnings of a dialogue between Christianity and Islam appear less of an impossibility. A Christian testimony amidst the Jews is a blessed reality in the land of Israel itself. Moreover, the late Paul VI constituted two parallel commissions for religious relations, the one with Judaism, the other with Islam (October 22, 1974).

On the occasion of the publication of “the first important act” of the Commission with the Jews, Pope Paul, addressing the members of the Liaison Committee between the Catholic Church and World Judaism, on January 10, 1975, formulated “the sincere wish that, in a manner appropriate to our age and thus in a field that to some extent exceeds the limited domain of merely speculative and rational exchanges, a true dialogue may be established between Judaism and Christianity”.²⁸ The adjectives *true*, *real* qualify again and again the dialogue with the Jews in recent documents. “To tell the truth, such relations as there have been between Jew and Christian have scarcely ever risen above the level of monologue, from now on, real dialogue must be established.”²⁹ A new approach to the “other” seems to characterize this *true*, *real* dialogue; the Catholic Church from now on desires to listen to the “other” in his “otherness”, as he himself is aware of his identity, not as the Church herself claims to know and define him, or would like him to become. “Dialogue demands respect for the other as he is; above all, respect for his faith and his religious convictions.”²⁸ In the particular case of the dialogue with the Jews, “Christians must therefore strive to acquire better knowledge of the basic components of the religious tradition of Judaism; they must strive to learn by what essential traits the Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience”.²⁹

On this occasion, I witness the Catholic Church formulating two extraordinary conclusions: the first by the Pope himself; the second in the document of the Commission with the Jews. The Holy Father expresses his hope concerning the results of such a dialogue between the Catholic Church and Judaism: “We hope that this dialogue, conducted with great mutual respect, will help us to know one another better and will lead us all to know better the Almighty, the Eternal

28 *Address of the Holy Father to the Liaison Committee between the Catholic Church and World Judaism. Information Service of The Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican City, No. 27, 1975/II, pp. 36-37.*

29 *Guidelines and suggestions for implementing the Conciliar Declaration “Nostra Aetate”, n. 4. Information Service, No. 26, 1975/I, pp. 1-7.*

One, to follow more faithfully the ways that have been traced out for us by him who, in the words of the prophet Hosea (11:9), is in our midst as the Holy One, who takes no pleasure in destroying.”²⁸ In the conclusion to their *Guidelines and suggestions....*, a document that the Pope presented as being “addressed to the faithful of the Catholic Church by the central authority of the Church”²⁸, the Commission for Religious Relations with World Judaism declares:

“The problem of Jewish-Christian relations concerns the Church as such, since it is when ‘pondering her own mystery’ that she encounters the mystery of Israel.”²⁹

I declare, in the name of the Lord of Glory, and to my mother the Church, as mystery much more than as institution, that the Church-People of God, the God of Abraham, can no longer afford, in the present historical conjuncture to ponder her own mystery and to see herself confronted with the mystery of Israel, without also being led to find herself confronted with the mystery of Ishmael and Islam. It is precisely this new relationship, naturally *ecumenical* of the Church with synagogue as well as the “Mosque” (better *Al Ummah*, the Muslim Community), with *Israel and Ishmael*, that constitutes my vision, which I hold from the Lord, and my mission, which I announce in his name. I not only see an event without precedent in the history of the church as institution, (but not in the Church as mystery, as we have remarked at the beginning of this essay, since the Revelation to Abraham). Above all I do foresee a biblical current (and the Qur’an also is book, scripture) deciding and structuring the religious future of humanity, whose axis is the posterity of Abraham, with a renewed trinitarian theology, taking into consideration “the difficulties which arise for the Jewish (and also the Muslim) soul—rightly imbued with an extremely high, pure notion of the divine transcendence—when faced with the mystery of the incarnate Word”.²⁹ I see a new christology, taking into account Christ who has come but even more the Messiah (and the Mahdi) still to come: for “we believe that those promises were fulfilled with the first coming of Christ. But it is none the less true that we still await their perfect fulfillment in his glorious return at the end of time”.²⁹ And I see a new ecclesiology, where Jews and Muslims will bring in their share of respective original stones (neither Latin, nor Greek, nor Syriac, etc., but *Jewish and Muslim*) in the building up of the universal Church, People of the God of Abraham and his posterity, the Mystical Body and Spouse of Christ.

Now there is not yet a movement of prayer and penance, of studies and publications (e.g., *A Bible-Qur’an Synopsis*), of ideas and action, comprising at once Jews, Christians, and Muslims; a movement still more ecumenical at the service of the Church–People of God; a movement with a view to reconciling the two separate brothers, now become bitter enemies, *Israel and Ishmael*, with each other, as well as with their other brethren who believe in the Lord Jesus; a movement that would contribute to the restoration of peace in the Middle East and in the world; a movement above all, laboring in the interim between and in the resulting tension of the “Already and Not Yet”, to lead the children of Abraham: Jews, Christians and Muslims, toward the Kingdom of the Father.

II. THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM: JEWISH AND MUSLIM SOLUTIONS

The *ultimate* reason for the bitter hatred and enmity between Arabs and Israelis in the Middle East should be sought not in politics but in religion, in Islam as well as in Judaism. As they have not in the past accepted the Crusaders' states, nor were willing to coexist with them, the Arabs and the Muslims cannot possibly accept today freely and willingly the state of Israel in Palestine. Palestine, for them, is indeed Arab *de facto* and Muslim *de jure*. Besides, the Jewish religion is, according to them outdated and the Israelites must abandon themselves to Islam. On the other hand, the Jews in turn shall never renounce their right to the Land even if they should be evicted from it again and no matter how many times they are evicted, simply because the Lord God once and for all, in their conviction, promised it to his people. Moreover and in another sphere of reality, Israel as a state is now a full member of the United Nations, recognized by most of the nations of the world.

Consequently, it is only natural that come 140 million Arabs, more or less backed by some 750 million Muslims, with the rest of the Third World, should one day in one way or another try to unite themselves and eradicate the state of Israel from the map. An exasperated Muslim world could ally itself to a Red China, as some *feda 'yyin* already have, and the fate of Baghdad, destroyed by the Mongols, could repeat itself in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Yasir Arafat, addressing the world from the rostrum of the United Nations (November 13, 1974) has demonstrated that the exclusion of Israel from the world organization is not an absolute impossibility. At one point the U.N.E.S.C.O. could no longer locate the state of Israel on the terrestrial globe. At another point, the General Assembly's Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee voted 70 to 29, with 27 abstentions, to define Zionism as "a form of racism and racial discrimination" (October 17, 1975); less than a month later (November 10), the General Assembly adopted the resolution by 72 votes against 35, with 32 abstentions and 3 absences. Nor is it unthinkable that Israel may attempt to dominate the Arab Middle East, and perhaps even succeed in this attempt, at least economically. Thus, neither the Jewish solution nor the Muslim solution is, nor can it be, a promoter of justice and peace; on the contrary, both tend towards endless conflict.

III. SEARCH FOR A CHRISTIAN SOLUTION

Be it said once more, the present situation in which both Jews and Muslims with Christians face each other so radically and irreconcilably in Palestine, finds its ultimate *raison d'être* in a certain Judaism, a certain Christianity and a certain Islam, all politicized. It cannot reach its valid solution except in the religion of truth, love, and forgiveness, which only authentic Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are capable of producing. We are confronted with an historical conjuncture that will sooner or later battle all human endeavors for settlement, the more so that both parties involved bring forward in the long run, in their respective vindications, God's name and not man's. The Palestinian drama offers, in my view, *sub specie temporis* no possibility of a just and peaceful solution. On the human and religious levels we find ourselves face to face with a tragedy, the more atrocious since it occurs between two brothers each with his own destiny in God's plan. As all tragedy, it shall find its solution only in the Lord God. We may say that in a sense already of all realities, human and historical, which are essentially tragic, for there is death. Nevertheless, this applies in a singular manner in our present case, which is unique, for we have to deal here with an important part of the Jewish people, which still constitutes a mystery.³⁰ We are here also before another phenomenon, participating in God's plan in history, namely, Ishmael and Islam. And the Christians, especially the churches, do not seem to be capable of discerning the will of their Lord in all this affair. In truth there is only one authentic peace and one authentic justice, the Lord God's. Only the Lord God can grant unity, peace and justice to the world; his Spirit alone can restore them in that Holy Land of Palestine, by giving his very self the more to Jews, Christians, and Muslims, to Israel as well as to Ishmael. But the peace and the justice of God with his Spirit, are fruits of the faith in the God of Abraham. It is a unique problem; let us find the unique solution. Before the mystery, only prayer is decent; it alone can prevail. An occasion, a very great one, presents itself in the present conjuncture, which by the very nature of the case demands to be exploited, an extraordinary opportunity for testimony to and propagation of the faith, as well as for the exercise of prayer and penance. It is this occasion which calls for a serious quest after a truly Christian solution to the Palestinian problem, a quest which is a sacred duty on the part of the Christian and the churches, towards the Jew, towards the Israeli, towards the Muslim, towards the Arab and singularly the Palestinian, towards the whole of the Muslim world, a sacred duty towards our two separated brothers, Israel and Ishmael, and all the children of Abraham, as well as towards the other believers in Asia and Africa.

30 Cf. Ro. 11:25.

IV. A HOLY TASK

1. On the part of the Christian and the churches

Every Christian and every church must be concerned by the Palestinian drama. To assume an attitude of neutrality or indifference, to remain an observer or in expectancy, while men hate and kill each other, women live in anxiety and panic, children are terrorized and massacred. Is unworthy of any man and is sin to the Christian. Christendom—it is not dead or now is the moment to raise it from the dead—must envisage the present conjuncture in the light of the word of God contained in the Bible, and in the Bible and Qur’an too, in scripture, and also in the light of the consciences and good wills of both the Jew and the Muslim, as believers and worshippers of the same one true living God, the God of Abraham. They are, indeed, our brethren in the faith in the Lord God. We are all children of the same Father—*one God and father of all who is over all and through all and in all*.³¹ We are dealing here with *the People of God*, with those who with us belong to *God’s household*.³² The matter concerns God, *our* Lord God, the Almighty, the Eternal One, Allah—Who is Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Every Christian and every church, because disciple and spouse of Jesus Christ, need in this particular instance to *wear the Lord Jesus Christ*,³³ to become Jesus Christ, to be Jesus Christ, *the New Man*,³⁴ towards the Jew and the Muslim. For *this* is to be Christian, namely, to become Christ-like. It is not for one’s self, and it is not for God; it is for *the other*, the brother and the sister. Jesus the Christ, he is the one *who did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give up his life a ransom for many*.³⁵ Jesus the Christ is the reconciliator *for he is himself our peace. Gentiles and Jews, he has made the two one, and in his own body or flesh and blood has broken down the enmity which stood like a dividing wall between them; for he annulled the law with its rules and regulations, so as to create out of the two a single new humanity in himself, thereby making peace. This was his purpose, to reconcile the two in a single body to God through the cross, on which he killed the enmity*.³⁶ We all together, Jews, Christians, and Muslims, with all men and women of good will everywhere, need to form the People of the God of Abraham. The hour has come when every Christian and every church must at last put themselves at the service of *our other brethren*, the Jews and the Muslims, thus repairing the crimes committed (very often by us) against them in the past, distant and near. “What have you done of your brothers?” Shall we answer: “Are we our brothers’ keepers?” Actually it is we, Christians, that *God has reconciled to himself through Christ, and has enlisted us in this service of reconciliation*.³⁷

31 Eph. 4:6.

32 Cf. Eph. 2:19; Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution of the Church* #16.

33 Cf. Ro. 13:14; Gal. 3:27.

34 Eph. 4:24.

35 Mt. 20:28.

36 Eph. 2:14-16.

37 2 Co. 5:18.

2. Towards the Jew

In the Palestinian drama the Christian, the Christ-like one, ought to play the role of mediator, of man of peace, because he belongs to Jesus Christ who is himself the mediator, the man of peace, as we have seen again and again. It is a debt that we former Gentiles, owe Israel. I confess for my part to be incapable of the hatred that certain Christians always vowed for the “perfidious Jews”. On the contrary, I deem, with St. Paul, that we, being the *wild olive tree*,³⁸ continue to have an infinite debt of gratitude not only towards *the root* that sustains us,³⁹ the Christ, but *also towards the cut off branches: for it is in God’s power to graft them in again.*⁴⁰ This ought to manifest itself, in what concerns us now by fear lest, as the Apostle himself exhorts us, we ourselves be not spared and in turn lopped off;⁴¹ and, in what regards old Israel, by respect for the mystery which it still represents; and also by love, ever by love. And in the long history of the Christians I would find no other gesture more dignified and more just than that of Christendom, for the love of the God of Abraham, for the love of Abraham, for the love of Jesus of Nazareth and of his Mother (both Jews indeed), and also for the love of Israel himself, our elder in the faith, helping the Jews to regain the Land, a Christendom which would also be an instrument of reconciliation and of peace, of faith, of love, and hope between Israel and Ishmael, between Jews and Muslims. I am thinking of Christendom, not as political powers pursuing their own selfish temporal interests, but as real Christians touched by a supernatural motivation and moving their own governments to appropriate action.

What I here propose to Christendom, I also do propose to *dar el-Islam*: nothing would be more magnificent than the spectacle of a Muslim world helping, out of love for Allah, *for the face of Allah (liwajhi-lah)*, the Jews to regain possession of the Land, for nothing would be more in conformity with the Spirit in Islam as well as with a certain nobility of the Arab character, than this gesture of forgiveness (for-giving) and magnanimity. It is by such a gesture that Ishmael can help to redeem himself, redeem Israel, and redeem us, Christians.

The truly Christ-like man or woman needs to search for his or her brother and sister the Jew in spiritual affinity with him Sister animated by the same spirit, in order to build up together the people of God. It is a life of faith, prayer and penance and also study, shared among brethren in Abraham, that can still *use the present opportunity to the full, for these are evil days.*⁴²

38 Cf. Ro. 11:17.

39 Cf. Ro. 11:18.

40 Cf. Ro 11:23.

41 Cf. Ro. 11:21-24.

42 Cf. Eph. 5:16.

3. *Towards the Israeli*

Moreover, we have an obligation towards the state of Israel as a nation in the community of nations. We must, with certain Jews, help Israel society to open itself more to the non-Jew, particularly to the Muslim and Christian Arab. We, in brotherly collaboration with Jews everywhere, must not let the Israeli community close in upon itself in a hugely reversed ghetto – where only Jews, solely because they are Jews, are human beings, enjoying rights and duties, are worthy of respect and public trust; where only the Jewish woman, uniquely because she is Jewish, is considered as “pure”, whereas all the other women, solely because they are “other”, according to some tradition and law would be treated as “impure”. This task of the Christian, as well as of any honest person, against a theocratic aspect (aberrant, as we shall see invoking Torah) in the state of Israel would not be one of the lesser indices of the mystery of which we all are both subject and object, and which in our ambiguity cross-examines and challenges us, each one in turn: Jews, Christians, Muslims. The Children of Abraham henceforward are in solidarity exposed before history, and each one of them vis-a-vis of the other or the two others together. We have indeed become our brothers’ keepers! The one must no more have his hand against every man and every man’s hand against him,⁴³ or be servant to the other,⁴⁴ or break off the yoke of the other.⁴⁵ The three brotherhoods that claim to belong to the God of Abraham can no more live each in a ghetto and at the expense of the others, simply because they are “others”. On the contrary, each is compelled by history to open himself to the others. Not only in the name of the human person, whoever he/she is, without any distinction such as race, color, sex, language or religion, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but above all in the name of the Living God intervening in the history of men and women, according to Torah as well as to the Gospel and the Qur’an.

When an alien settles with you in your land, you shall not oppress him. He shall be treated as a native born among you, and you shall love him as a man like yourself, because you were aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

(Lv. 19:33-34)

43 Cf. Gn. 16:12.

44 Cf. Gn. 25:23.

45 Cf. Gn. 27:40.

You have learned that our forefathers were told, “Do not commit murder; anyone who commits murder must be brought to judgement.” But what I tell you is this: Anyone who nurses anger against his brother must be brought to judgement. If he abuses his brother he must answer for it to the court; if he sneers at him he will have to answer for it in the fires of hell.

(Mt. 5:21-22)

You have learned that they were told, “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth.” But what I tell you is this: Do not set your self against the man who wrongs you. If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn and offer him your left. If a man wants to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well. If a man in authority makes you go on one mile, go with him two. Give when you are asked to give; and do not turn your back on a man who wants to borrow.

(Mt. 5:38-42)

Therefore (after Cain repented for the murder of his brother Abel) We prescribed for the Children of Israel that whoso slays a soul not to retaliate for a soul slain, nor for corruption done in the land shall be as if he had slain mankind altogether; and whoso gives life to a soul, shall be as if he had given life to mankind altogether.

(Qur’an V:35)

4. Towards the Muslim

The Christian also has a duty towards his brother the Muslim. He ought to bear testimony before him of Jesus Christ, live Jesus Christ, be Jesus Christ. To let oneself be contaminated by the hatred that the Muslim may vow for the Jew, or that the Arab quite naturally bears for the Israeli invader whom he ought to repulse, would be for the Christian a betrayal, not only of his Lord, who is Love, but also of his brother Israel, whom he ought also ever to love. Love should remain ever, even if some Jew becomes the most fanatic of Zionists, even if some Palestinian finds himself cornered by injustice to become the most extreme *fiḍa’i*. It would also be betrayal of the Muslim himself, in what he expects precisely from us, and only from us, that which he needs most in order to attain the Spirit in Islam itself, since we are the only ones to affirm it and pretend to it, namely: *We have come to know and believe the love which God has for us. God (our God, not that of the Jew, nor that of the Muslim; better still: the Eternal One, indeed; Allah, indeed) is*

love.⁴⁶ We ought therefore to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us.⁴⁷ If we love only those who love us, what reward can we expect? Surely the Jews do as much as that. And if we greet only our brothers, what is there extraordinary about that? Even the Muslims do as much. There must be no limit to our goodness, as our heavenly Father's goodness knows no bounds.⁴⁸ One of the gloomiest victories for the Jew or the Muslim over us, Christians, and particularly Catholics, would be to win us over to his selfish partial cause. On this very point few Christians in the East seem aware of the extent of their Islamization, and few Christians in the West of the extent of their Israelization.

The Christ-like person must also set himself to the task of seeking his Muslim brother and sister in spiritual affinity with him or her; and together they ought to look for their Jewish brother and sister animated by the same spirit.

5. Towards the Arab and the Palestinian

A Christian who falls into hatred also betrays the Arab at his best. For I am convinced that the Arab in his genuine native generosity, in his inimitable sense and practice of hospitality, if left to his deep true self, is very capable of that *sadaqa* towards the Jew which we described above as a *sadaqa* of a new order. Be that as it may, although Israel appears to have reconquered a part of Palestine, yet he is really in possession of his "Promised Land" neither *de facto* nor *de jure*. In order that he may feel secure at home, he must obtain the agreement and love of his brother. In order to have peace, Israel must still receive Palestine *from the hands* of Ishmael, and with reception of the Land be granted forgiveness, hospitality, and brotherly love, out of love for Abraham and out of faith in the God of Abraham. Ishmael alone can grant Palestine to Israel, and in thus giving, forgive. And I, by the grace of God, Christian and Catholic, and I, by the grace of Providence, Lebanese – am thankful and proud to be also in that sense an Arab, son of an Arab.

Together with the duty of the Christian to bear testimony to the truth before the Muslim there is also his debt of justice towards the Arab. For here, indeed, is *a crime that cries high unto heaven*: more than one and a half million Palestinians have been driven out of their homes and lands in the Holy Land of Palestine. Too many of these displaced persons live to this very day in tents and camps under inhuman conditions. Worst of all, they are left to rot, abandoned and without responsibilities, and apparently condemned to vegetate and die out as refugees in utter hopelessness. I say again: that is *a crime that cries high to heaven*. Christian charity – I mean the love of the Christians – ought to fly to their aid; that is elementary. But the Christian sense of justice

46 Cf. 1 Jn. 4:16.

47 Cf. Mt. 5:44.

48 Cf. Mt. 5:46-48.

ought also to stir. In the West one hears above all the voice of Israel. That is easy to explain and to understand. The Christians of Europe and America, however, need to lend a more attentive ear to the voice of Ishmael, to the legitimate claims and aspirations of the

Palestinians, particularly concerning these refugees of the Holy Land. Israel himself ought also to repair all injustice and compensate every single Palestinian refugee – remembering that he himself has been recipient of indemnities for having been himself too the victim of injustice on the part of men. We must aid the Palestinians most generously in building up their destinies again as citizens.

A curse upon him who withholds justice from the alien, the orphan, and the widow.

(Dt. 27:19)

I speak of indemnity, and not of reparations. Christ alone has repaired, repairs and shall repair. There are injustices that man can never repair. Who can ever do justice to the American Indians?... It is high time, however, that we, Christians, begin to atone and co-repair, by prayer and penance, study, and change of mentality and approach, the crimes committed against our brethren the Jews and the Muslims, against Israel and Ishmael. For over thirty years, I have been offering my life and death for the reconciliation and conversion of Abraham's children: Jews, Christians, and Muslims...

6. Towards the whole of the Muslim world

The Christians have a special task towards the Muslims of the entire world, a task rendered all the more urgent under the unprecedented conditions of our times. They need to aid the Muslims to save their own faith in the God of Abraham. This their faith is nowadays seriously threatened by contemporary materialistic atheism, hailing upon them principally from the West. The Muslim peoples and nations find themselves today at a crossroads, both politically and religiously, at the very moment they accede again to world history. One would understand almost nothing of what unfolds itself before our own eyes everywhere in Asia and Africa, if one did not grasp at last the fact that the masses of these two continents aspire in reality far more towards human dignity and freedom than towards bread and money and technique. People there think they find what they look for in the economic and the political. They are unaware that, in limiting themselves to these, they may indeed win much in terms of civilization and even

culture, but they risk losing their souls, losing the most precious thing they have, a thing which a certain social and industrial West is itself in danger of losing forever: the sense of God and the faith in him. This should apply in a singular way to the Muslim peoples, whose souls are so remarkably attached to Allah. *Allahu akbar—God (is still the) greater!* We already know the terrible judgement passed upon the 19th century, when the churches lost the working classes. This puts us today on guard against the danger of the Church losing the masses of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In this order of ideas I would make it a point to emphasize that the Church cannot remain unconcerned about the Muslim masses throughout the world losing their faith in God.

In the present relations between East and West, the political with the economic and the military play almost an exclusive role. It is time for the Christians in Europe and America to react. They must understand that in the Muslim world they still have real brethren in the faith in the God of Abraham, and not only allies, clients, and customers. It is high time that we Christians see in the Muslim not the infidel, the secular enemy, not even the underdeveloped, but the faithful; and we need to come to his aid in every aspect of his life, above all out of love for the God of Abraham. It is time that the Christians receive witnessing, even the gift of faith, through the Muslims. The cases of Frenchmen like Ernest Psichari, Charles de Foucauld, Louis Massignon, ought also to be considered *as signs of the times*; these sons of “the elder daughter of the church” actually regained their Catholic faith through contacts with Muslims in *al-Mashriq* (the Middle East) as in *al-Maghrib* (North Africa). It is high time that all believers, Jews, Christians, and Muslims, tend towards a common consciousness and action. For my part, I confess and attest that my contacts with my brethren Jews and Muslims have profited me considerably in all respects, and above all from the spiritual point of view. Without them I would be poorer of the Living God, and also of man.

7. *Towards Israel and Ishmael, and all the Children of Abraham*

This union of believers finds its true scope by transcending the Palestinian problem and even the Muslim world and, seizing the present occasion, calling forth a renewal of faith against materialistic atheism wherever it is to be found – not only behind the so-called iron curtain, but also in our own world, nay, even in our very hearts. Before the adversary of all faith, Christians ought also to work on *gathering together in one the children of God scattered* in the posterity of Abraham, thus building up the People of God for the kingdom. Such an action has value in itself. It promotes a revival of the faith among the Christians, contributes to the fulfillment of the mystery of Israel, and initiates a new approach in the dialogue with the Muslims. And it accomplishes all that in direct reference to divine revelation as delivered in the Bible and also as reflected in the Qur’an. The union of the faithful in the God of Abraham aims further at bearing witness in common before the other believers, especially in Asia and Africa.

8. *Towards the Other Believers in Asia and Africa*

Those who believe in the God of Abraham have a sacred duty to perform towards those who still believe in God and adore him. The former ought to help the latter to salvage their belief in God in order that it may become faith in the Living God. These other believers constitute (still) the immense majority, especially in Asia and Africa. Before the adversary of all divinity and all faith, particularly faith in the God of Abraham, Jews, Christians, and Muslims need to bear common testimony. This union of believers would be an occasion for the so-called heathen world to acknowledge *this* God as the true Living God, just as the unity of Christians is for the world a source of faith in Jesus Christ.⁴⁹ The Palestinian tragedy offers a unique opportunity for Jews, Christians, and Muslims, to help in restoring peace to that land which they consider holy; they may accomplish this by acts of faith, of hope and of brotherly love. Such acts, unthinkable on the human and political planes, could only be performed by the faithful themselves, and understood by the other believers, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As the Catholic Church invites us in the liturgy of the Easter Vigil, let us pray God: *praesta, ut in Abrahae filios et in Israeliticam dignitatem, totius mundi transeat plenitudo* – so that He may grant that all the nations of the world may become the children of Abraham, and partake of the dignity of the people of Israel.

CONCLUSION: A NEW ECUMENISM?

This new ecumenism which includes our brethren in the God of Abraham who are severed from us because they do not know Jesus Christ as he is, in my mind expands the first ecumenism which is oriented towards our brethren in Jesus Christ who are separated from us because we do not commune together from the same Chalice. And who knows?—perhaps the new ecumenism will help the old to become more articulate and happily reach its end. For before the Jews and the Muslims, who believe in God, but not in Jesus as he is, i.e., the Messiah and the Son of the Living God, the Christians ought become more conscious of their scandalous staleness, divisions, and unbearable contradictions. Before the challenge of the Jew and the Muslim which the militant atheist shall not fail to exploit to the full in order to discredit all religion, especially the one true faith, Christians of all persuasions must feel compelled either to seek the full unity of the Church according to the will of Christ, or to give up altogether bearing his holy name – and the churches to reform themselves and renew their communion to the same Chalice or to lose more and more of their credibility.

With the grace of God and the benediction of my mother the Church, I contemplate founding the “Brethren of Israel and Ishmael”, in view of this new ecumenism.

49 Cf. Jn. 17:21.

3

**“BRETHREN OF
ISRAEL AND
ISHMAEL”**

I. NOT ISRAEL ALONE, NOT ISHMAEL ALONE: BUT BOTH ISRAEL AND ISHMAEL

The “Brethren of Israel and Ishmael” are determined to consecrate their lives to this task: to live Jesus Christ and his Gospel not to Israel alone, not to Ishmael alone, but to both Israel *and* Ishmael – with all the children of Abraham and of the God of Abraham. In the Palestinian problem, in the present conflict that opposes Arabs to Israelis, Muslims with Christians to Jews, the “Brethren” are not interested in politics for politics’ sake, put on to the extent that the political commits the religious and the spiritual. This nuance is all the more important in our case as neither Israel nor Ishmael makes the same distinction between the spiritual and the temporal that we Catholics make, and, further, because the point in question happens to be a piece of *land*. So, that, if the “Brethren of Israel and Ishmael” should ever find themselves involved in the temporal and even the political (and both are inevitable), it should be from motives of pure love for their brethren to the very end,⁵⁰ and of total respect for their several convictions concerning this same piece of land. The “Brethren of Israel and Ishmael” have in truth one aim only, one great prayer: that the Good News reach, unmitigated and whole (Catholic), as much the Jews and Muslims as well as the Christians so that we all may be delivered from sin, liberated from Judaism, from Islam, and from Christianity, in what there is in them that is obsolete, aberrant, or impure, but saved in our faith in the God of Abraham, the Father of all. So that we all may have *life and have it more abundantly*.⁵¹ Following in the footsteps of St. Paul, the Brethren will help in *casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing in captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*,⁵² who has come and/or who is still to come. And all that by testimony and the whole of life even more than by thought. They believe that all this is only possible with an ecumenical opening (some sort of a conversion) to Judaism and Islam as faith in the Living God. They are convinced that the hour has struck for a spiritual life which should embrace all children of Abraham at once and whose importance affects not only peace in the world, but above all the fullness of the mystical Body of Christ and the march of the People of God in history, towards the kingdom.

50 Cf. Jn. 13:1.

51 Jn. 10:10.

52 Cf. 2 Co. 10:5.

II. AT THE RISK OF ALIENATING BOTH, JEWS AND MUSLIMS, ISRAELIS AND ARABS

The “Brethren of Israel and Ishmael” entertain no illusion. They know perfectly well that they will be maligned and persecuted by both their brothers, undoubtedly more at the hands of Ishmael. They shall, however, consider themselves happy to be counted, and not unworthy to be reviled and to endure persecutions for the sake of Jesus name and the kingdom, as they work towards the conversion and reconciliation of all children of Abraham. They do not think that hatred and struggle between any two peoples are necessary laws eternally governing their relations. They are sure that the Living God alone, his truth, his love, his justice, and his peace, yesterday and today and for ever, shall prevail. The labour for the kingdom of God, whose coming they pray for and endeavor to promote in the world.

III. “I COULD EVEN PRAY TO BE OUTCAST FROM CHRIST MYSELF”

The founder of the “Brethren” is a priest of Jesus Christ. He is a Lebanese, an Arab. He wishes he could make the word of St. Paul his own:

For I could even pray to be outcast from Christ myself for the sake of my brothers, my natural kinsfolk. They are Israelites [and Ishmaelites]: they were made God’s sons; theirs is the splendour of the divine presence, theirs the covenants, the law, the temple worship, and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them, in natural descent, sprang the Messiah. May God, supreme above all, be blessed forever! Amen.

(Ro. 9:3-5)

IV. AN APPEAL: TO BECOME:

a) Brother or Sister of Israel and Ishmael

The founder appeals to the faithful of the churches in the East and in the West, as well as to men and women of good will and lovers of peace everywhere, including Jews and Muslims to adopt his cause, or at least to contribute to it to the best of their abilities. As for himself, he humbly prays to be worthy of serving it. Let us not be content with words; let us act, beginning with the greatest and most efficacious of all acts: prayer. It is good to spread the good news of the appeal; it is still better to make it one's own. When thou becomest a sister or a brother of Israel and Ishmael, antisemitism and racism under any form whatsoever, shall have no access to thy mind or heart. Thou shalt not favour one against the other. Thou shalt remain catholic, that is to say universal. Thou shalt be strictly fair towards both, identifying thyself as much as possible with the truth and justice of both claims. As much as the objective situation permits, thou shalt be for truth and for justice wherever and however they may be found, and no matter at what cost. Because thou seest the mysterious link that binds both brothers to their father Abraham, who is the father of us all believers, thou shalt know, by the grace of the God of Abraham, how to discover what may reconcile both, as well as what ought to be done to lead them both to reach together the Messiah, who has come and/or who is still to come. Thy method is to walk with thy two brothers towards the Father. But keep this well in mind: thy task consists not in converting them; it is the Lord alone who converts hearts, minds, and wills – theirs as well as thine. Thy prayer, indeed, shall ever remain for their conversion as well as thine. Thy task, however, is to be and to live and to witness to Jesus Christ before Israel and Ishmael; it is to be the Good News for both; it is to be a sister or a brother to both. If thou remainest in thy country, thou mayest still pray and work for that intention. On the other hand, thou canst come to the Middle East, to Israel *and* Ishmael, putting thyself at their service and helping to be and radiate Christ, who has come and/or who is still to come. Thy profession and means will determine thy way and the strength of thy testimony. If for one reason or another thou canst not become “Sister” or “Brother”, perhaps thou canst still become a “Friend”. The “Friend” contributes both spiritually and materially to help the “Brethren” in their task.

b) *Brother or Sister of Our Brethren in Asia and Africa*

What is said here of the Israelis and the Arabs may apply equally to the other peoples of Asia and Africa. These have become more and more suspicious or foreign agents harbingers or world powers, propagandists of one ideology or another, or representatives of some culture that may be even more humane than theirs. It is not enough for them to be visited by politicians, businessmen or tourists. Even some types of missionaries are no longer effective, when they are not dangerously harmful to the spirit of the natives: I charge some with spiriticide. What they need most are genuine sisters and brothers who understand, love and help them to grow materially and spiritually, for the love of God and also for their own sake. Authentic representatives and faithful messengers of Jesus Christ, of God, can in the final analysis best help them towards that end. More than ever the Church of Jesus Christ needs in the East as in the West good unprofitable⁵³ servants, incarnated unto death on a cross.⁵⁴

CONCLUSION: THE SPIRIT RENEWS THE FACE OF THE EARTH

Outside the Lord God there is no salvation for the world: no salvation for East and West alike, no salvation for Israel and Ishmael, no solution for their great dispute. Outside the Lord Jesus there will be no peace on earth and certainly not in the Holy Land. Without the Lord God and his Spirit I can foresee only ghastly hatred and pitiless fratricidal war until the bitter end – until extermination. But the Spirit, in blowing over the children of Abraham, shall renew the face of the earth.

53 Cf. Lk. 17:10.

54 Cf. Ph. 2:5-9.

BELIEVERS, UNITE!

Jews!

Christians!

Muslims!

In the presence of modern atheism and materialism, we believers in the God of Abraham, must unite. If the unity of the believers in the God of Abraham is, however, in fine the affair of the Lord God himself (he alone converts hearts and wills), the union of the children of Abraham may be, and consequently should become, our proper affair: the affair of all believers – Jews, Christians, as well as Muslims. This union is more imperative today than ever.

It is indeed against our God, the Living God, the God of Abraham – and not the God of the philosophers and the scientists – that contemporary antitheism batters. It is he that they want to kill. For it is above all this our God who, they claim, radically alienates man by calling him to a destiny other than that of the earth; it is he who disturbs history by meddling in it. Yet, without our God, the Master of Man and the Lord of History, the world is doomed to disintegrate. This fact has become nowadays more evident than ever. Thus, the union of us all believers in the God of Abraham will contribute to saving the world.

Let us then by acts of peace and love edify the union of believers, so long as it is not possible to fulfill it in the unity of the Faith.

Let us, Christians and Muslims of the whole world, grant the Land to the Jews – and you Jews of Israel and of the Diaspora do accept this gift as a sign of renewed brotherhood. Let this giving be a sacrament for and of our forgiving.

Let us, Christians and Jews, especially in Europe and America, organize a generous and efficacious aid to the developing peoples and countries of the Muslim world – and you, Muslims everywhere, acknowledge this offer in the same spirit of brotherhood. Let this giving also be a sacrament for and of our forgiving.

Let us, Christians, Muslims and Jews, all work out a final solution to the Palestinian problem by helping the Palestinians build up their destinies again as citizens.

It is only by such acts of good will that we can forge our union, baffle the diabolic plans of the adversary, and bring down the walls that separate us. It is such acts, performed above all for the love of our God, the God of Abraham, and for the love of our brethren, the believers everywhere,

whether Christians, Jews, Muslims, or others, that we will contribute to pulling down the curtains of mistrust, hatred and unforgiveness among men and against God, curtains that not only divide the world and the Holy Land, but above all eat into our hearts and sterilize our souls as believers, be we Christians, Jews, Muslims, or others.

Lastly, let us, Christians in East and West, pray and work together so that the Holy Father may invite not only our brethren in Jesus Christ who are separate on account of the church of Rome, but also our brethren in the God of Abraham, Israel and Ishmael, who are separated from us by reason of Jesus Christ, to the next Ecumenical Council. Let us also hope that the next Ecumenical Council will hold its sessions in the Holy City, al quds, Jerusalem, and that both Muslims and Jews will be invited to it.

Let us, believers everywhere, Christians, Jews, and Muslims, work together to save the world. Let us all together universalize Jerusalem in accordance with the vision of the Prophet (Is. 2:1-4; 11:1-12; 60), so that she may become the point of convergence of all people, ula-lqiblatain. Let us make it a center of the United Nations.

Believers in the God of Abraham, brethren in Abraham, father of all believers—unite!

Dusseldorf, March 1959 – Paris, December 1963 – Jerusalem, August 15, 1969 – Washington, D.C., December 1974 – Saint Catherine, Kentucky, March 1975 – Dubuque, Iowa, October-November 1975; June 1978.

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

(Is. 2:1-4)

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;

And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:

But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.

And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, from and from Egypt, and Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.

And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

(Is. 11:1-12)

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.

For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.

And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.

Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.

Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense, and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord.

All the flocks of Ké-dar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Ne-bai'-oth shall minister unto thee; they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.

Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?

Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.

And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.

Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night that men may bring unto thee the forces of Gentiles, and that their Rings may be brought.

For the nation and Kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted.

The glory of Leb'-a-non shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.

The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the LORD, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations.

Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of Kings: and thou shalt know that I the LORD am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness.

Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within they borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.

The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory.

Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdrawn itself for the LORD shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.

Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands that I may be glorified.

A little one shall become a thousand and a small one a strong nation: I the LORD will hasten it in his time.

(Is. 60)