

THE CROSS

In the upper hemisphere, is a Cross.

In the study of the writings of Edith Stein, our beloved Sister, now Blessed Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, undertaken by two theologians at the request of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints (Rome 1977), we read:

“As a Jewess, though a non-practicing one, the Cross symbolized (for her), the (Gentile) majority in the midst of which she lived, participating in its economic and cultural life, but distinguished from it by the religion of which the Cross was the symbol” (p. 54).

What was true for Edith Stein is, in a general way, true for Jews everywhere; the Cross is a symbol against which they react negatively and, what is more, one which has depressing associations for them. In their own way, Jews are intensely sensitive to the Cross. Now and again, I stroll down to town from the hill-top on which stands my monastery, passing a row of apartment-blocks, built for Jewish immigrants to Israel. The hundreds of window-panes which stare at me indifferently, are held together, uniformly, by a single horizontal bar for each window, never by two bars crossed to hold four panes, as is customary in Europe. The reader might shrug off my observation; but what would he think when I tell him that the plus sign is represented by a simple perpendicular standing on an horizontal line, in Israeli school-books, though perhaps not in all of them.

By adopting the Cross, the AHC signifies the spiritual revolution which the Christian faith provokes in the soul of a Jew. Returning again to the report of the theologians:

“Once converted” they write *“she (Edith Stein) placed herself in the shadow of the Cross, which she now contemplated with a regard illuminated by faith”* (ibid.).

Where her contemplation of the Cross led Sister Teresa Benedicta everyone now knows; she has left her meditations as a legacy to Hebrew Catholics, available to them as to others, in her book, *The Science of the Cross*. She invites them to explore the heights and the depths of the new spirituality which faith opens up to their admiring gaze.

In contemplating the Cross, *“with a regard illuminated by faith”* Edith Stein was fulfilling prophecy, for in the twelfth chapter of the Book of the prophet Zechariah, we read:

“When that day comes, I shall set myself to destroy all the nations who advance against Jerusalem. But over the House of David and the citizens of Jerusa-

lem I will pour out a spirit of kindness and prayer. They will look on me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for him as for an only son and weep for him as for a first-born child.” (Ze. 12: 9-10)

The oracle leaves the identity of *“on me whom they have pierced”* wrapped in mystery, on which light is thrown by chapter nine of the same prophetic book:

“See how your king comes to you; he is victorious, he is triumphant humble and riding on a donkey.” (Ze. 9:9)

These oracles impose an obligation on Hebrew Catholics, which they assume as an eschatological group, pioneering the future of their people. Their contemplation of the Cross, is no mere private spiritual exercise, but a way of redemption for their people.

The Cross summarizes Jewish history; Jewish history, in turn, is a parable of the Cross. Suffering is central to the Cross; Suffering has been central to Jewish history.

Many have been the occasions when I have been asked by Israeli school-teachers to show their children the *Stations of the Cross*. There are fourteen of them, strung out along a shady path in the grounds of the monastery, overlooking the town. Each is monumental in size, the relevant scene being depicted in Spanish tiles. My explanation to the children is restrained, for fear of creating the impression in the minds of the teachers that I am exploiting the moment to influence the children in favor of Christianity. At the sixth station, however, I cannot forebear to allude to the history of the Jews.

“You see here” I say to the children *“a Jewish passer-by named Simon, the Cyrenean, whom the Roman soldiers are forcing to take over the Cross from Jesus. Simon is a symbol of the Jewish people. When Jesus died, he left the Cross in heritage to his people. As he was handed over to the Gentiles to be humiliated and put to death, so they would be handed over to the Gentiles and be put to death”* I then move off with the group to the next station.

The Hebrew Catholic is called upon to bear three crosses:

- the sins of his ancestors and his own;
- the burden of confession and expiation on behalf of his people;
- the hostility of his brother-Jews on the one hand and anti-Semitism on the other.

“The reintegrated Jews takes upon himself his share of these burdens and offers them to God as a sacrifice, through Christ-Messiah, his mediator, to whom ultimately the burden is linked and on whom ultimately it lies”.

The Redemption of Israel, Sheed and Ward, London 1947, p. 129.

Edith Stein followed this way which led her to the gas-chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau and to the glory of her beatification.

THE INSCRIPTIONS

- The titulus
- The Messianic acclamation

The titulus

The titulus alludes to the cause for the condemnation of Jesus; it was written out briefly by Pontius Pilate himself and fixed to the Cross by the soldiers: Jesus, the Nazarene, King of the Jews.

A relic is conserved in the Church of the Holy Cross, Rome.

Christian art commonly reduces the titulus to the letters INRI: *Jesus Nazarenus Rex Judaeorum*.

The logo uses the equivalent Hebrew letters: Yod (י), Nun (נ), Mem (מ), Yod (י), naturally, running from right to left (ינמי). These are placed between the two hemispheres. For those who prefer it, English letters may be used, though they would seem less appropriate.

St. John the Evangelist recounts how the titulus came to be formulated:

Pilate wrote out a notice and had it fixed to the cross; it ran: Jesus, the Nazarene, King of the Jews. This notice was read by many of the Jews, because the place where Jesus was crucified was not far from the city, and the writing was in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. So the chief priests said to Pilate, “You should not write ‘King of the Jews,’ but ‘This man said: I am King of the Jews.’” Pilate answered, “What I have written, I have written.”

(John 19:19-22)

Kingship was the key theme for Pilate in his interrogation of Jesus and the source of his disquiet:

“So you are a king, then?” said Pilate. “It is you who say it” answered Jesus. “Yes, I am a king.”

(John 18:37)

The claim of Jesus to be a king, even if not of this world, created a dilemma for Pilate, more disturbing than the accusations of the chief priests. Should he acquit Jesus, he could just expose himself to criticism and a possible denunciation to Caesar. To escape from the dilemma, he committed a gross act of injustice; he

sentenced an innocent man to death and then washed his hands, thinking to clean the stain on his conscience by a material gesture. The Roman soldiers eagerly seized on the words of Jesus and staged a parody, dressing him up in a purple cloak, crowning him with thorns and placing a reed sceptre in his hand.

Hebrew Catholics recognize in Jesus, not only their personal Messiah; they recognize the kingship of Jesus over Jewish history.

The sacred authors of the TNH had already taught that YHWH was king of history. The Psalmist exults:

“Clap your hands all you peoples, acclaim God with shouts of joy; for YHWH, the Most High, is to be dreaded, the Great King of the whole world” (Ps. 47:1-2).

The earthly kings of the Jews were anointed recipients of God’s blessing and gage of their people’s prosperity. Beyond their line, the prophets glimpsed the figure of a privileged descendant of David, whom God would designate to do his saving will; he is the Mashiah, the Anointed one, par excellence. Jesus, himself, drew the attention of the Pharisees to the second psalm, which refers to the Messiah, both royal and divine:

“While the Pharisees were gathered round, Jesus put to them this question, ‘What is your opinion about the Christ? Whose son is he?’ ‘David’s’ they told him. ‘Then how is it’ he said ‘that David, moved by the Spirit, calls him Lord, where he says:

“The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand and I will put your enemies under your feet”’ (Mt. 22:41-44).

Faith in the Risen Christ reveals to the Hebrew Catholic, the extent of the domination of Jesus over the Jewish people. Jesus and the Jews have been locked in a titanic struggle of wills for nigh on two thousand years. Their confrontation is prefigured in the episode described in the Book of Genesis, where Jacob wrestles with a mysterious angel at the ford of Jabbok. Jacob does not cede; but his hip is dislocated by the angel. The Jews did not cede to Jesus; but they limped their way through history.

Jesus imposed his royal will on his people by moulding it to his own image, suffering, humiliated and dying at the hands of the Gentiles. He did this to facilitate their recognition of him as their true Messiah, divine Son of God, for only God moulds man to his image. He did it to prepare their union with him in will and intelligence, not just in parable. Jesus traced out in advance the way of perfection for the Hebrew Catholic.

In their devotion to “King Messiah,” Hebrew Catholics are in continuity with rabbinical tradition. We read

the following in the Encyclopaedia Judaica:

Messiah (col 1410): In rabbinical thought the Messiah is the king who will redeem and rule Israel at the climax of human history and the instrument by which the kingdom of God will be established.

Hebrew Catholics could agree with every word of the sentence.

The same article informs us that Rabbi Aqiva declared that the Messiah would occupy a throne alongside God! (col. 1412).

The Messianic acclamation

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord”

The Messianic acclamation encircles the logo; it is derived from Ps. 118:26, which is a processional hymn for the feast of Sukkot closing the Hallel (Ps. 113-118). One ought to imagine various groups of chanters advancing towards the gate of the Temple, chanting the versicles and responses of the psalm and finally receiving the blessing of the priests. The psalm tells the story of an Israelite representing the community, who is attacked by pagans and rescued by YHWH. He erupts in shouts of joy and thanksgiving to God his saviour. The chanters raise the ritual cry:

Hosannah (O grant salvation):

*Blessings on him who comes in the name of YHWH.
Baruch ha-ba be-shem YHWH*

in use among Jews as a Messianic acclamation.

We can now understand the reason why Jesus introduces the acclamation into his discourse, in Lk. 13:34-35:

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets and stone those that are sent you! How often have I longed to gather your children as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you refused! Yes, I promised you, you will not see me till the time comes when you say:

*“Blessings on Him who comes
in the Name of the Lord.”*

The verses are penetrated with pathos; they open a window on the inner world of Jesus of Nazareth. He expresses the tender love for his people which inspires his apostolate; he complains of their incredulity and tells them of his disappointment. All the same, Jesus does not dwell on his sense of personal hurt; the prophets of Israel had been treated in the same way. Perhaps he had in mind the words of Elijah:

“I am filled with jealous zeal for YHWH Sabaoth, because the sons of Israel have deserted you, broken down your altars and put your prophets to the sword” (1 Kgs. 19:10).

In Lk. 13:35, Jesus moves on to a consideration of the future: he predicts the consequences of his compatriots' incredulity and beyond that, he envisages the prospect of a reconciliation.

Their house, Jerusalem, not the Temple, which is the house of God, will be abandoned by YHWH, as it had been in the days of Ezechiel (Ez. 11:23). Jerusalem will be destroyed and with it the Temple, so that not one stone will be left standing on another (Lk. 19:41-44).

Jesus, too, will abandon Jerusalem, until such time as the Jews are ready to welcome him with the traditional Messianic acclamation:

*“Blessings on Him who comes
in the Name of the Lord”.*

What Jesus is saying is that the Jews will see him again, when (on condition that) they recognize him as their Messiah.

Jesus is here referring to a mysterious “coming,” which is not the Last Coming. It is an intermediate “coming,” especially directed to the Jews. Its precise form is left shrouded in obscurity.

For the present writer, the verses clearly refer to the time of the ingrafting of the Jews, their entry en masse into the Church; they will then recognize Jesus as their Messiah in the words of the Messianic acclamation, as they did on Palm Sunday (Lk. 19:38).

Jesus will then show himself to them, though how, remains a mystery.

The Hebrew Catholic is the forerunner of that entry en masse of the people. He can hasten the day by reciting the “*Baruch ha-ba...*”. In so doing he joins hands with his Orthodox brethren who pray constantly for the coming of the Messiah to the people, certain of his coming, even though he delay his appearance.

THE CROWN

The circle of the logo is surmounted by a crown, symbolizing Our Lady of Israel.

The crown should prompt a life-long meditation on the role of Mary, Mother in Israel.

Mary is never depicted alone, brooding over herself. If she reflected it was on the wonderful things God had done for her and through her.

St. Matthew's first mention of Mary is that she is engaged to Joseph. The Magi find the child “with Mary his mother”.

The shepherds enter and encounter Mary and Joseph and the child who lies in the crib.

At the Annunciation, Gabriel recalls Elizabeth, Mary's cousin. What follows at the Visitation is a charming fam-

ily scene, Mary meeting Elizabeth, Jesus meeting John.

Cana is a wedding party, to which Mary is invited and where she takes her seat amongst friends and, perhaps, other members of her family. Her attention is given to the intentions of her son and the needs of the guests. We can be sure that Cana was a happy moment for her.

When Jesus embarks on his Public Ministry, the family go to remonstrate with him, taking Mary with them.

Mary stands at the foot of the Cross, with her sister Mary, wife of Cleophas (Halfi, a good Jewish name), and Mary from Magdala.

The Holy Spirit descends upon the Apostles at Pentecost, who gather in the Upper Room for prayers, with Mary in their midst.

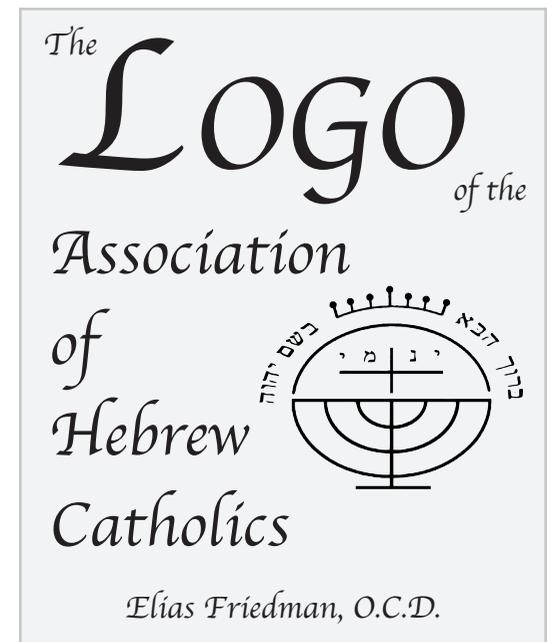
Hardly a day passes, without our sanctuary on Mount Carmel, filling with a group or two of Israeli school-children, high-spirited and chattering, as children are everywhere. They settle down in their seats to listen to Fr. Giovanni Battista, who amiably answers their questions, about Christianity or the religious life. Behind him, thrones Mary, Queen Beauty of Carmel. I know that Fr. Giovanni enjoys these contacts, perhaps, because he knows the art of dealing with children, unlike myself who does not. My thoughts, at those moments are for Our Lady, looking down on the scene. How she must love to find herself once again in the midst of her people. When Fr. Giovanni points at the statue, the children glance up, timidly admiring her.

Fr. Giovanni is proud to report that the children never react negatively to Mary; they are pleased to hear that she loves them.

I tell him, in return that they never leave the sanctuary of Mount Carmel without taking with them her maternal blessing. When I glance at the armed guard escort that accompany the children, I realize how necessary that blessing is for them.

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THE MENORAH

The fundamental form of the logo is a circle, the lower hemisphere of which contains a schematic menorah.

The menorah was the seven-branched candelabrum placed in the sanctuary of the Temple of Jerusalem. Its pattern was shown to Moses by God, according to Ex. 25:40. Modern Israelis who are more prosaic, believe that its structure was modelled on that of a plant which may be found growing in the dry regions of the country.

The history of the menorah, both biblical and post-biblical, makes fascinating reading. It suffices for our purposes to recall the Judah Maccabee, after cleansing the Temple, had a new one installed, the original one having been stolen by Antiochus Epiphanus IV.

For the Hasmoneans, the menorah represented Judaea Resurrecta. The symbolic significance they attached to it has come down to us through the ages. It motivated the adoption of the menorah as the official symbol of the State of Israel.

For the AHC, the menorah represents the hope of a spiritual resurrection of the people in Jesus Christ, promised by Holy Scripture and announced as (eschatologically) imminent by the Ratisbonnes and the Lémanns.

Note: The logo has been adapted from an original design by Andrew Sholl, Australia.