

Seton Hall University

From the Selected Works of Reverend Lawrence E. Frizzell, D.Phil.

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Jewish-Christian Studies on the Graduate Level

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Jewish-Christian Studies on the Graduate Level

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JEWISH-CHRISTIAN STUDIES ON THE GRADUATE LEVEL

Reverend Lawrence Frizzell

This report reflects on work that prepares the next generation for their role as educators.

In the “Declaration of the Church’s relationship to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*), the Second Vatican Council clarified the Christian bond with the Jewish People as rooted in the past, initiated a new, positive era in the present, and oriented the faithful toward the final consummation of history in cooperation with the divine plan.

In the paragraph that follows this series of statements, the Council calls for “that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit above all of biblical and theological studies, and of brotherly dialogue.”

The ideal of *mutual* understanding cannot be mandated, but eventually should flow from the awareness among various sections in the Jewish community concerning the sincerity of the Church’s call for a reassessment by Catholics of theological misunderstandings of God’s message. Such studies should be undertaken in every part of the world, and especially in Catholic institutions of higher learning. Fraternal dialogue as such is limited to the places where Jewish partners can be found. Scholarly and pastoral studies of the Sacred Scriptures, the liturgy and Church history everywhere should be in “harmony with the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.” This is a key principle for interpreting the biblical message. People in the Church of the Philippines or South Korea will meet Jews when they migrate to New York or New Jersey. Will they see beyond stereotypes?

On December 1, 1974, the Holy See’s Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, founded on October 22, 1974 and housed within the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, published “Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate* (No 4).” This document is modest and practical in its tone as it speaks of “the obligation of reciprocal understanding and of renewed mutual esteem” (*Introductory Note*).

At a number of places this set of Guidelines calls for Christians to acquire a better knowledge of Jews and Judaism and for each side to know the other better (*Preamble*).

Research into the problems bearing on Judaism and Jewish-Christian relations will be encouraged among specialists, particularly in the fields of exegesis, theology, history and sociology. Higher institutions of Catholic research, in association if possible with other similar Christian institutions and experts, are invited to contribute to the solution of such problems. Wherever possible, chairs of Jewish studies will be created, and collaboration with Jewish scholars encouraged.

This goal was anticipated by Msgr. John M. Oesterreicher when, in 1972, he began to present an extensive Master’s program in Jewish-Christian Studies to the decision-making bodies of Seton Hall University, located in South Orange, New Jersey. The program was to be financed by the

resources of Ms. H. Suzanne Jobert for the first five years and then the University would decide whether to accept it on a permanent basis. Classes began in Fall 1975, with Msgr. Oesterreicher as chairman, two full-time professors, Rabbi Asher Finkel, Ph.D. (Tübingen) and Father Lawrence Frizzell, D. Phil. (Oxford), and three adjuncts (including Mr. Joseph Sievers and Rabbi Herbert Weiner) to give one course each semester. The University gave approval to the MA program in July 1978 and placed it in the College of Arts and Sciences.

The call of the Second Vatican Council for Jewish studies in Catholic Universities and seminaries coincided with an incentive in various secular state and private universities in North America to develop African-American and other programs of certain ethnicities, including Jewish studies. Rabbi Jacob Neusner's doctoral program in Brown University (Providence, Rhode Island) provided a number of scholars for these positions. The Jesuit University of San Francisco hired a Rabbi as an adjunct professor and during the next decade several seminaries invited Jewish scholars to teach elective courses to graduate students, many of whom were candidates for the Catholic priesthood. This was an important step especially if the full-time professors of Biblical studies, liturgy, Church history and related disciplines integrated the teachings of the Council into their work. Already a significant step was taken in Austria. Dr. Kurt Schubert founded the Institutum Judaicum in Vienna in 1949 and his collaborator, Father Clemens Thoma, S.V.D., founded the Institute for Jewish-Christian Research in the University of Luzern in 1981.

The second Master's program in Jewish-Christian Studies was created in St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, during the 1980s, as the initiative of Sister Maureen Fritz, N.D.S. (Sister of Zion). This was a program of three years, three semesters in Toronto and three in Jerusalem, centered at the Ratisbonne Institute in the Jewish area of the holy city. After a few years this program closed.

By the late 1980s the Fathers and Sisters of Zion at Ratisbonne Institute in Jerusalem developed a program in French with the Institut Catholique in Paris. Sister Maureen Fritz complemented this program with the Bat Qol program, "The Bible in the Land," in English but the political tensions in the Holy Land during the 1990s were an impediment to the recruitment of numerous qualified students. After an investigation on behalf of the Holy See in December 1996 by William Cardinal Keeler, Archbishop Theodore McCarrick and Bishop Edwin O'Brien, the decision was made to invite Father Charles Miller, S.M., to poll the Bishops and institutions of higher education worldwide concerning the viability of a rigorous academic program in Christian study of Judaism. This did not materialize and the Holy See turned the Ratisbonne building over to the Salesians. The longstanding work of several valiant scholars in Jerusalem would be continued on a personal level, but the Church's presence in Israel was not enhanced when the graduate studies and research opportunities through Ratisbonne connections were severed.

Father Ari Roest-Krollius, S.J. was active in Catholic-Jewish relations at the Gregorian University in Rome 1978-2002. The Cardinal Bea Centre was created in 2003 at the Gregorian and it inherited the legacy of the SIDIC Centre founded by Mother Edward Berkeley of the Sisters of Zion in 1965. Its first Director was the Rev. Dr. Joseph Sievers, Professor of Jewish History and Literature of the Hellenistic Period in the Pontifical Biblical Institute. This Centre has expanded to become the Church's contribution to graduate Jewish Studies in Rome

(www.unigre.it/struttura_didattica/Judaic_studies/index_en.php). This was presented as a parallel to a Jesuit Institute for Islamic Studies, which could not be located in Saudi Arabia. Mention of this “parallel” neglected to acknowledge that Jerusalem is a city open to the three monotheistic religions!

The Russell Berrie Foundation of New Jersey sponsors students for the ecumenical-interfaith graduate programs in the University of St. Thomas Aquinas (The *Angelicum*) in Rome (www.pust.it/index.php/en/faculties-and-institutes/interreligious-studies), in conjunction with courses offered by Rabbi Jack Bemporad of the Center for Interreligious Understanding (ciunow.org) in Carlstadt, New Jersey.

In 1998 Dr. Edward Kessler founded a Master’s program in Jewish-Christian Relations at Cambridge University and validated by Anglia Ruskin University. Besides courses on campus the program offered distance learning opportunities that were attractive to students in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. This program is now being phased out (www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/courses/ma.asp). At this time Boston College is initiating a graduate program on Christian-Jewish Understanding.

An extraordinary baccalaureate program, The School of Hebrew Philology, was created under Franciscan auspices in Torun, Poland in 2008. The strong emphasis on modern Hebrew and other Semitic languages makes the program an excellent foundation for the next generation of scholars! Cooperation with Jewish-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University is being explored.

Now I return to a detailed description of the first Master’s program:

The Master’s program in Seton Hall University’s College of Arts and Sciences was a Department from 1979-2010. As part of a major restructuring of the College in 2010, Jewish-Christian Studies was united with the undergraduate Department of Religious Studies to become the Department of Religion.

From the beginning, as approved by the University in 1973, the Master’s program in Jewish-Christians Studies is grounded in the study of the Jewish Scriptures, literature of the Second Temple Period and the New Testament. Then several history courses review the challenges and tragedies of the relations between Jewish and Christian communities. Both communities have based their liturgical practices and doctrinal-moral message on the Sacred Scriptures and ancient traditions that guide biblical interpretation and application in the community life. There are courses on Jewish and early Christian Prayer, Jewish Roots of Catholic Spirituality and in ethical issues relating to peace and war, personal morality and marriage, education and ecology. 40 courses are offered over a 3-year cycle.

Study of the Nazi period has always been part of the program, but always has been seen in the context of the millennial history of the two communities. Thus, “The Holocaust (*Shoah*): History and Interpretation” was complemented by “The Fall of Jerusalem: Jewish and Christian Interpretations.” This biblical theology of catastrophe is balanced by a course on “Biblical and Jewish Eschatology.” After the State of New Jersey mandated Holocaust and Genocide Studies for all schools in the State, other courses were developed to meet this need. Sister Rose Thering,

O.P. of Seton Hall's School of Education was a charter member of the New Jersey Commission for Holocaust and Genocide Education and a Fund in her name to sponsor teachers for courses in continuing education was created in 1990. Specialized graduate programs in Holocaust studies have been developed by Stockton College in Pomona, N.J., Kean University in Union, N.J. and there is a doctoral program in Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts.

The Seton Hall Master's Program prerequisite of knowledge of Biblical or modern Hebrew may be completed during the time students are taking regular courses. Those who plan to advance to doctoral studies are encouraged to take three of the four courses in the reading of Hebrew texts. This has served them well in their work in the fields of biblical and rabbinic studies. Those students who know other languages are encouraged to use their knowledge in research, as Jews and Christians have made contributions in virtually every part of the world. Along with students from several areas of the United States, the following countries have been represented over the years: Australia, Austria, Cameroon, Canada, Cuba, Egypt, France, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, the Philippines, Poland, South Africa, South Korea and Taiwan.

By definition, Jewish-Christian studies demand interdisciplinary approaches. Students are encouraged to build upon their education background and professional experience. Their research for term papers and other projects often links with their career goals or present profession.

The beauty of a program with an international student body of mature individuals includes the potential for active discussion and exchange of ideas in a variety of contexts. Seton Hall's setting between New York City and Princeton provides for abundant possibilities for research and study of a multitude of topics pertinent to Jewish-Christian relations, past and present. The Foundation for Judeo-Christian Studies has supported the program in several ways, including an endowment for purchase of Library resources and a number of tuition scholarships each year.

Faculty members work together to provide the participants in the program with a vision of the ideals that their Jewish and Christian ancestors lived by, with an awareness of their failures and an understanding of ways in which each community and its members can be ever more faithful to the exalted call to be human in the divine image and likeness.

The vision of European pioneers in Christian-Jewish relations during the dark and dangerous years of the Nazi period was taken up at Seelisberg, Switzerland in July 1947 and partially into the teachings of the World Council of Churches in 1948 and 1960. Then the second Vatican Council presented a brief but incisive instruction for Catholics that moved from the printed page to the churches and classrooms (on every level) of many nations. This was supplemented by the re-evaluation of texts books and the creation of new ways to present the Christian faith to both adults and children. The foundation has been laid for an extensive search, not only to overcome anti-Jewish bigotry but to present the positive values of the Jewish tradition in New Testament times and down through the ages. In the words of Rabbi A. James Rudin: "We are all the children of Vatican II!"

THESES COMPLETED IN THE GRADUATE PROGRAM IN JEWISH-CHRISTIAN STUDIES

1. Joseph M. Devlin, **Servants of the Covenant: Jewish-Christian Ethical Convergence** (1978).
Mentor - A. Finkel
2. Regina Augusta Todd, **The Biblical Deer in Ancient Jewish and Christian Literature and Art** (1982). Mentor - L. Frizzell
3. Blake Gulbrand, **A Theology of Being Strangers, Exiles and Pilgrims: A Perspective for Social Criticism** (1982). Mentor - L. Frizzell
4. John J. Gilchrist, **The Pentecost Experience - Jewish and Christian: An Historical Perspective** (1982). Mentor - L. Frizzell
5. Mary Rittinger, **The Prophetic View of Salvation in Relation to Justice to the Poor** (1983).
Mentor - A. Finkel
6. Thomas Ferguson, **Psalm Prayers: Their Role in Psalm Interpretation and Liturgical Practice** (1984). Mentor - L. Frizzell
7. Sibyl Wyner, **The Covenant and the Torah: A Comparison and Contrast between Rashi and Nahmanides** (1984). Mentor - A. Finkel
8. Pol Castel, **The Septuagint: Targum or Translation?** (1987). Mentor - A. Finkel
9. Eleanor Rubin, **How the Religious Community Responds to the Elderly: A Survey Report of Religious Institutes and Affiliated Agencies in the State of New Jersey, 1986** (1987).
Mentor - L. Frizzell
10. John Roskoski, **Interpretations of Samson: The Judge as He Appears in Bible, Jewish and Early Christian Writings** (1990). Mentors - A. Finkel and L. Frizzell
11. Roberta Salvador, **The Covenant and Meal in Qumran's "Rule of the Community"** (1991).
Mentors - A. Finkel and L. Frizzell
12. John T. Monahan, **The Son of Man in Jewish and Christian Scriptures** (1995). Mentors- A. Finkel and L. Frizzell
13. Albertine Senske, **Light in the Gospel of John** (1996). Mentor- L. Frizzell
14. Cheryl Waters-Rice, **The Maskilim: Exempla of Levitical Pedagogy in Second Temple Judaism** (1999) Mentor- A. Finkel
15. Peppy Margolis, **Transmitting The Memory Of The Holocaust: Challenges For Educators** (2000) Mentor- L. Frizzell
16. Barbara Wind, **The Myth of Jewish Non- Resistance during the Holocaust: Abraham Sutzkever: A Model of Resistance, Revenge of the Discourse of Consolation** (2002)
Mentor- L. Frizzell

17. Karl McDaniel, Mentor, **The Son Of Man And Apocalyptic Restoration: Culmination In The Gospel Of Matthew** (2002) Mentor- A. Finkel
18. Jeremy Penner, **Legal Witnessing in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Maintaining Purity and Holiness** (2003) Mentor- L. Frizzell
19. Sr. Caroline Mbonu, **The Covenanted Pilgrim: The Biblical Roots of the Consecrated Life** (2004) Mentor- L. Frizzell
20. Fr. Linus Akpan, **God's Gift of Woman to Man: A Jewish-Christian Perspective on Genesis 2:18-24** (2006) Mentors- A. Finkel and L. Frizzell
21. Meredith Ahlgren, **Prayer in Tobit** (2008) Mentor- L. Frizzell
22. Laura Smith, **Messianic Vigil During Passover and Mark 13:32-14:72** (2008) Mentor- A. Finkel
23. Rebecca Finch, **Lady Wisdom and the Book of Judith** (2009) Mentor- L. Frizzell
24. Elizabeth Bakes, **The Heroine in Ancient Hebrew Literature** (2009) Mentor- L. Frizzell
25. Fr. Joseph Udeze, **God in the Midst of Human Warfare** (2009) Mentor- L. Frizzell
26. Teresa Miyamoto, **A Critique of Catholic Hymns regarding Judaism and the Jewish People** (2011) Mentor- L. Frizzell
27. Todd Whelan, **Face-to-Face and Dialogue Post-Structural Identity Politics and Jewish-Catholic Encounters** (2011) Mentor- A. Brill
28. Fr. Jose Montes de Oca, **Theodor W. Adorno: Judaism, Christianity and the Redemption of Subjectivity** (2011) Mentor- A. Brill
29. Michal Fine, **Mandatory War in Modern State of Israel and the IDF Code of Ethics (Purity of Arms)** (2011) Mentor- L. Frizzell
30. Deborah Lerner Duane, **The Language of Acceptance: A Jewish Response to Christian Zionism** (2012) Mentor- A. Brill