

Personal-Unofficial

February 6, 1967

Mr. Nathan Saperstein, President
National Council of Young Israel
3 West 16th Street
New York, N.Y. 10011

Dear Nat:

The other day you wrote me with some excitement about the problem of Canon Law at the Hebrew University. Let me give you what my inquiry shows. I also write you something about what they mean by the Canon Law Lectureship.

The Rector of the Hebrew University stated categorically last week that there will be no chair in Canon Law at the Hebrew University. He further added that all academic programs at the Hebrew University, whether of teaching or research, cannot be decided upon by outside bodies (in this case, the Chicago people), but only by the faculties concerned and subsequently these decisions must be approved by the Senate and the Board of Governors.

All that has been agreed to by the University is that a Visiting Lectureship in Canon Law is to be set up. From time to time, outstanding experts in this field will be invited to deliver lectures in Jerusalem on aspects of this subject. There will be no regular course for students or others. The University has several similar lectureships such as the Samuel Paley Lectures in American Culture and Civilization, and the Lionel Cohen Lectureship in Law. These visiting lectureships provide a very useful addition to the regular curricula of the University enabling the University to bring outstanding figures to Jerusalem periodically.

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A very important point which seems to have been confused due to some of the statements in various newspapers is on the nature of Canon Law. This is a specifically legal subject and is not concerned with the teaching of Catholicism as such. This is a discipline which belongs within the field of legal studies. It should be borne in mind, incidentally, that marriage, inheritance and other matters of personal law of the Catholic citizens of Israel are officially governed by Canon Law just as Rabbinic law governs the same areas for the Jewish citizens.

If, for example, Notre Dame introduced a lecture-ship in Talmudic law concerning marriage, inheritance, damages, criminal law, etc., it would not mean that Judaism is being taught at Notre Dame. I have not checked the curricula of all Catholic institutions in this country and elsewhere, but I dare say they have such courses. If they do not, I would say there is a void in their studies of comparative law.

I hope what I have written above will alleviate any apprehension which evidently has been expressed by certain people, and even by my good friends at Hebrew University. Wouldn't it be wonderful if people investigated and thought before they spoke.

With kindest personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

EDWARD S. SILVER

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