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ADDRESS BY RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM, NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF
INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE AT
THE "INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THEOLOGICAL ISSUES OF
VATICAN II." UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME, NOTRE DAME, INDIANA

MARCH 20-26, 1966

On a Thursday morning toward the end of September, 1965, it was my great privilege to attend the fourth session of Vatican Council II as the guest of Lawrence Cardinal Shehan of Baltimore, then Chairman of the American Bishops Commission on Ecumenism. As I stood before the magnificent Bernini's canopy, where Pope Paul VI and several cardinals had just celebrated Mass, and as I looked out across the tribunes that flanked the central aisle of St. Peter's basilica, I felt myself caught up by an overpowering sense of history. In that moment, which had for me the power of a revelation, I felt the overwhelming significance of what had been taking place in Rome in the relations between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people. Standing there, gazing upon the multi-colored vestments of the 2,300 Council Fathers from throughout the inhabited world, and listening to their interventions, I suddenly recalled an earlier episode that involved Jews like myself who stood in the aula of an earlier version of St. Peter's basilica. It came to my mind, as though by some strange intuition, that 600 years before and roughly at the same time of the year, a group

of Jews came out of the Jewish quarter of Rome and marched through the streets of the Eternal City into the St. Peter's of the 14th Century. The circumstances were somewhat different. By Church prescription, the delegation of Jews once each year were compelled to leave the Jewish ghetto and parade into St. Peter's to offer compulsory homage to the reigning Pontiff. According to the historical accounts, the Jewish delegation, often headed by their Chief Rabbi, would present the sacred Torah scroll to the Pontiff, and the Pope would return it with a derogatory remark. On one such occasion, Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303) remarked to the Roman Jewish leaders that he acknowledged their reverence for the Law, but condemned their "misrepresentation" of it. In a state of abasement and humiliation, the Jewish delegation returned to the cramped Jewish quarter of Rome to live out another year as the pariah people of the Christian West. Jewish historians regard that "dialogue" as typical of Catholic-Jewish relations during the greater part of the Middle Ages.

As I stood now in St. Peter's another episode of Catholic-Jewish relations flooded my mind. I found myself recalling the events of September 28-29th, 1964. It was the third session of Vatican Council II and it was during those two days that the debate over the proposed text on the

Jewish Declaration was taking place. Ironically, and it has hardly been remarked elsewhere, the debate took place on the Jewish festival, Simchat Torah, which marks the rejoicing by the Jewish people over the divine revelation communicated to Israel through the Torah. The debate called forth interventions by 35 cardinals and bishops from 22 countries. Thirty one of the cardinals and bishops from every major continent of the world took positions regarding Catholic attitudes in relation to the Jewish people, to Judaism, to the role of Israel in salvation history, toward the synagogue and its continued relevance, to conversion, to anti-Semitism--positions that have never been heard before in 1,900 years of Catholic-Jewish history, positions articulated with such friendship, indeed, fraternal love, as to make clear that a profound turning point had taken place in our lifetime.

Cardinal Cushing, the first of the American hierarchy to speak out on the declaration on the Jews, called for a denial by the Vatican Council of the culpability of the Jews as a people for the death of Jesus. Rejection of Jesus by the Jewish people is a mystery and is to serve to instruct us not to inflame ^{to} us, Cardinal Cushing said. He declared that the Catholic Church can not judge the ancient judges of the Jews, as that is for God to do. At the same time, the

Cardinal said Christians must be aware of the universal guilt of all men who by sinning crucified and are crucifying Christ.

The late Cardinal Meyer of Chicago stated that "it is not enough for the Church to deplore any injustices against the Jewish people. It must also point out the group relationship of the Church with the Jews." Cardinal Meyer pointed out that St. Th. Aquinas taught that the Jews were not guilty of deicide.

Cardinal Ritter of St. Louis said that the declaration would repair injustices of past centuries. He said that it is often assumed that God abandoned the Jews and the Jews were rightly to be accused of condemnation of Jesus. Now he said an opportunity had been offered to remedy these errors and to remove these injustices. Referring to the passage that spoke of the "reunion" of the Jews with the Church, Cardinal Ritter said it sounds as if the Church envisions conversion of the Jewish people. He pointed out that the text did not speak of the Moslems, Hindus, and Protestants in the same respect. Therefore he suggested that the final text find less offensive wording and including a paragraph expressing the Biblical hope of the union of all men at the end of days.

Cardinal Leger of Canada called the declaration a necessary act of the Church's renewal.

Cardinal Leacaro suggested that the declaration emphasize Biblical discussions with the Jews. He said the Jewish people should not be regarded as having value only in the past. But the heritage of Israel, the institute of the eucharist within

the Jewish Pashcal cycle, relation between the Passover meal and the Mass, the common fatherhood of Abraham--all these should be emphasized in the declaration, Cardinal Leacaro said, in order to give witness in a pastoral way and to foster piety. He added that the Jews of today should not be called an accursed or deicide people, but rather that we should recognize that all of us "have strayed like sheep."

Archbishop Pocock of Canada said that the Church must acquit the Jewish people of all false accusations made in the past through the abuse of truth and charity.

Bishop Stephen A. Leven of Texas, in rejecting the ancient deicide charge against the Jews, declared;

Fathers of the Council, we are not dealing here with some philosophical entity but with a word of infamy and execration which was invented by Christians and used to blame and persecute the Jews. For so many centuries, and even in our own, Christians have hurled this word against Jews and because of it they have justified every kind of horrible excess and even their slaughter and destruction. It is not up to us to make a declaration about something philosophical but to reprobate and damn a word which has furnished so many occasions of persecution through the centuries. We must tear this word out of the Christian vocabulary so that it may never again be used against the Jews.

For the greater part of nearly 2,000 years, the attitudes of the Catholic Church toward the Jewish people, and that of some of the major Protestant churches, have been characterized by a profound ambivalence of love and contempt. Students of the history of Jewish-Catholic relations know full well how this ambivalence was expressed in the writings of many of the Church Fathers, in ecclesiastical legislation, in liturgical prayers, in catechisms, in sermons, in Passion plays, all of which contributed to a predisposition of contempt toward the Jewish people and toward the synagogue. During those two days of debate in Rome and in the final text that was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965, the Catholic Church took a great and historic leap forward in reconciling this ambivalence, affirming on the highest levels of its teaching authority the indebtedness of Christianity and the Christians to Judaism and the Jewish people, the rejection of anti-Semitism and an unprecedented call for fraternal dialogue between Christians and Jews. I should like to discuss the Declaration that was promulgated and both the Jewish and Catholic reactions to it later in this paper.

There is a larger dimension to what took place in Rome at Vatican Council II that should be of as great significance to the Jewish people as the Jewish Declaration itself. The clue to that larger significance is suggested by the letter that

Pope Paul VI sent to Cardinal Tisserant, Dean of the Council Presidency, on November 9, 1965. In that letter, Pope Paul VI announced that Vatican Council II would end on December 8, "on the same date on which in 1869, there was solemnly inaugurated the first Vatican Ecumenical Council." The Pope then said that "our Council can well be considered under many aspects a worthy counterpart" of Vatican Council I. Before this audience, I need not belabor the point of how great an advance, indeed a revolution, Vatican Council II represents in contrast to Vatican Council I. As you know, most objective church historians have described Vatican Council I as that which marked the decisive victory of ultra-montanism--that movement which the historian Rudolf Sohm characterized as "the intolerant doctrinal Catholicism which with the lust for power demands once more the complete subjection of the individual, of the world itself, to the supreme authority of the Church." The foundation stones of Vatican Council I were laid in the encyclical "Quanta Cura" and the "Syllabus of Errors" issued by Pius IX in 1864, which condemned the liberty of conscience as "deliramentum" (madness), toleration, secularism, democracy, and the modern state. As the church historian Rudolf Sohm described the mentality of Vatican Council I, and of Pius IX, "They held that the supposed safeguard of the Christian faith against liberalism was to convert the Catholic Church into a Maginot line of impenetrable defense." In the face of a

series of shocks beginning with the Reformation in the 16th Century and climaxed by the French Revolution in the 18th Century, the church became preoccupied with her own self-preservation and was relatively indifferent to the fate of those who were non-Catholic. This virtual obsession with the preservation of herself and her institutions made it possible for the church to enter into concordats with the blackest forces of reaction, a tradition which led to tragic consequences in the 20th Century.

As one reads the texts of the 16 Declarations promulgated by Vatican Council II and compares these with both the spirit as well as the rhetoric of the documents of Vatican Council I, there is no conclusion possible other than that the Catholic Church has undergone a revolution in terms of not only her self-perception but in her attitudes toward non-Catholics and her ^{own} responsibility for the welfare of other people. Nowhere is this new attitude of concern for others, involvement in their fate and destiny more clearly reflected than in the Declaration on the Church in the modern world, the Declaration on religious liberty, the Declaration on Ecumenism, and the ~~Declaration~~ Declaration on non-Christians.

No person of good will can fail to be moved by these words contained in the declaration on "The Church in the Modern World":

"The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted-- these are the joys and the hopes, the grief and the anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men."

"In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of every person without exception, and of actively helping him when he comes across our path, whether he be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a hungry person."

"Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political and even religious matters."

This emergence from behind something of a Maginot line and the joining of a dialogue with the world was dramatically ratified as much for non-Catholics as for Catholics in the brilliant address of Pope Paul VI before the United Nations at the end of last year. The Pope renounced for the Catholic Church any pretense to temporal power and then declared, "We make our own voice of the poor, the disinherited, the suffering, to those who hunger and thirst for justice, for the dignity of life, for freedom, for well being and progress." Pope Paul VI gave Catholic support to "the pluralism of states" and to "coexistence" between peoples. He said to the United Nations, "your vocation is to make

brothers not only of some but of all peoples." He then ratified "the formula of equality" saying, "let no one inasmuch as he is a member of your union be superior to the others; never one above the other." The Pope then decried that "pride" which "disrupts brotherhood." Noting that the United Nations proclaims "the fundamental rights and duties of man, his dignity, his freedom - and above all, his religious freedom," the Pope declared that "the life of man is sacred; no one may dare offend it."

I believe that I speak the mind of most informed Jewish observers when I say that if this mentality had been normative for the Pope's, the Vatican and the Catholic and Protestant masses over the past 100 years, the incredible phenomenon on hundreds of thousands of so called devout Christians becoming accomplices or passive spectators to the cruel slaughter of millions of men, women and children who happened to be born Jews-- or Gypsies--would not have been possible. The pragmatic significance of this newly-articulated humanitarian mentality has given birth, I have no doubt, in the magnificent involvement of priests and nuns and Catholic laymen together with ministers and rabbis, who marched together through the streets of Selma, Alabama, or in the March on Washington as a powerful renunciation of that mentality which echoed in traumatic silence less than 25 years ago in the cities of ancient Christian culture of Germany and Austria.

The Pope cried out, "No more war, war never again!" and moved the world when he pleaded. Vatican Council II has proclaimed to the whole of the human family, "No more indifference, ~~in~~ difference and silence no more!"--as long as the dignity of a single human being is offended or is exploited.

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The promulgation of the Declaration on non-Christians on October 28, 1965, received a mixed reaction in the Jewish community. As a commonplace pun has it, "where there are two Jews, there are three opinions"--which is a Jewish self-critical way of describing the deep-seated democracy and pluralism that exists in Jewish life. The Jewish reaction ranged across a broad spectrum--there were those who opposed the Declaration, and in fact, who resented it. There were those who were indifferent to it. There were those, including myself, who welcomed the Declaration as an important contribution to improve the future relations between Catholics and Jews. In my study of the Jewish responses, I became aware of how decisive a role mass media played in influencing relations between groups. A substantial segment of the Jewish community reacted not to the content of the Declaration, as much as to the headlines which reported about the Declaration. The day following the promulgation, newspaper headlines throughout this country, and in fact, throughout the world, carried such statements as, Vatican Council

exonerates Jews for Death of Christ;" "Catholic Church absolves Jews of Crucifixion." The so-called Jewish man-in-the-street naturally responded to such presumptive formulations with resentment if not worse. No Jew in my acquaintance has ever felt guilty for the death of Jesus. Therefore, no Jew ever felt in need of absolution. But it was the newspapers and the radio and television commentators who used those words. The text of the Declaration itself does not use "absolve" or "exonerate" even once. This is not to impute bad motives or incompetence to the mass media. The problem of reducing to headlines a complex historical and theological problem is one that I am glad I didn't have to face. But again, the fact that such headlines and such radio and television reports were dinned around the world for days both prior to and following the promulgation, led almost inevitably to a negative reaction of so many Jewish people.

A more substantive consideration is that fact that the Vatican Council, for whatever reasons backed and filled over this declaration for some four years. And to many Jews, it was as though the Jewish people were being subjected to a trial over this period of time. When you add to that the fact that a number of unfortunate episodes took place during those four years--including the insulting articles and speeches by Bishop Carli of Segni who said, in fact, the Jews and Judaism today are collectively re-

sponsible for the Crucifixion and stand under God's reprobation because of it -- then one has another insight into how the Jewish patience wore thin. Overriding all, however, was the absence in the declaration of any note of contrition or repentance for the incredible sufferings and persecutions Jews have undergone in the Christian West. The Church declaration asked forgiveness from the Protestants, the Eastern Orthodox, from the Moslems, but not from the Jews. Many Jews, especially those who lived through the Nazi holocaust, asked with great passion, "How many more millions of our brothers and sisters will need to be slaughtered before any word of contrition or repentance is heard in the seats of ancient Christian glory?"

The Jews who are indifferent to the Vatican Council's action believe that it was too little and too late. Within this group, there is a strong feeling that the Catholic Bishops in Germany and perhaps Pius XII himself could have spoken out decisively, unambiguously at a time when it would have meant something of profound importance to the Jewish people. That did not happen in terms adequate to the need and, therefore, the loss of confidence in the present usefulness of the Vatican statement is widespread among this group. In the perspective of history this group has also been aware that up until the time of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution the Church contributed to the

disenfranchisement of the Jewish people of the Western world and much worse. This group looks to the secular powers of the world for its political and civic salvation. In the view of this group, history has outdistanced the Christian community and such statements which are only pleasant rhetoric and are really of no significance effect in terms of the security or fate of the Jewish people in the 20th Century.

In view of the third group, the text of the final version of the Declaration that was adopted represented a compromise document compared to the text that was introduced at the close of the third session and which received an overwhelming majority vote of the Council Fathers. The earlier version was warmer, more generous, and less severe and it dealt explicitly with the "deicide" concept which became something of a symbolic test of good will. In that perspective, the failure of the Council to enact the majority will of the Fathers of 1964 was a disappointment. But in the view of this group, seen in the perspective of 1900 years of Christian-Jewish history, this Declaration represents an incredible achievement.

As important as the declaration itself is the commitment of Catholic Church authorities and institutions to translate the guidelines in this document into reality in the lives of 550 million Catholics throughout the world. That commitment was given

decisive expression when the American Catholic hierarchy designated a special sub-commission on Catholic-Jewish relations charged with the responsibility of implementing the objectives of the Declaration in every level of Catholic culture and society. The determined action of the Vatican that put an end to the veneration of Simon of Trent--that ritual blood libel episode which since the 15th Century has been celebrated by annual procession through the streets of Trent, repeating an insult to the whole of the Jewish people--was another impressive demonstration of the commitment of the Catholic Church to express in deeds its new attitude of respect and esteem for the Jewish people. The order of Cardinal Dopfner of Munich to the organizers of the Oberammergau Passion Play to revise the text so that all anti-Jewish references are removed is another earnest of the Catholic Church's commitment to the uprooting the sources of anti-Semitism.

In the face of the agonizing history that the people of the cross had wrought in the transformation of the Jews into a cross among the peoples there should not be too great bafflement or wonder over some of the skepticism of a number of the Jewish people in this country and abroad as to the real meaning of the Vatican Council Declaration to them and their children. As long as Father Julio de Mainville of Buenos Aires is allowed by the Catholic hierarchy to serve as Chaplain to a group of young Catholic

Fascists, who ruthlessly exploit anti-Semitism for their economic and political purposes; as long as hostile references to the Jewish people, and Judaism and the Synagogue, continue to appear in Catholic textbooks, missals, liturgical commentaries and sermons, a great many Jews will continue to view the Vatican Council Declaration as a vain and even hypocritical show. Having worked closely with members of the Catholic community both here and abroad, especially in the fields of religious history and religious education, I am deeply persuaded that a vast and irreversible tide of self-purification and self-correction with regard to the portrayal of Jews and Judaism in the teaching process of the Catholic Church -- nor should the Protestants be slighted -- is under way and that the fruits of this process are already in evidence. That is not to overlook the hard reality that a great deal more needs to be done before the last weeds of anti-Jewish teaching and anti-Jewish poison are removed. But in my judgment, no Jew has a right to scant or to belittle the great advances that have been made already. I am persuaded that we are now going through a period of transition which will find both Jews and Catholics fumbling and stumbling as they seek to find appropriate new modes of relating to each other in a growing climate of mutual tolerance and esteem.

"Transition" may be too loose a word. As one looks beneath the surface of events that have taken place in Jewish-Christian relations during the past five years, one is probably

justified in asserting that Catholics and Jews, and Christians and Jews generally, have reached a critical stage in their relations perhaps even a crisis. The present encounter, in fact, is not unlike that which is taking place between the Negro and white societies both in the United States and abroad. For generations, indeed, centuries, the Negro and white societies on the one hand, and the Christian and Jewish societies on the other, have lived side by side relating to each other in the main through abstractions, stereotypes, and mythologies. The evolutionary world situation, the growing interdependence of the whole human family, the restless yearning for elementary human rights, the terrible risk that hatred and divisiveness poses for the survival of the human race in an age of intercontinental ballistic missiles--all these forces have rendered anachronistic the ancient modes of caste, class and racial and religious pride.

During the course of the deliberations of Vatican Council II in connection with the "Jewish declaration," the contradictory and at times confused views expressed with regard to the inclusion or elimination of a passage in the third version of the text relating the question of the conversion of the Jews brought into sharp focus the fact that the Catholic Church has done very little serious thinking about the place of Jews and Judaism in the divine economy. That episode alone underscored the need for Catholic theologians and

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scholars to develop a theology of Israel and the Synagogue in salvation history that has some correspondence with the historic realities of the present-day living Jewish people. At the same time, the bewildering and bewildered response of many Jews to the Vatican Council II, whose attitudes toward present-day Christians are based on old world memories of Christians as persecutors, threw into sharp relief the critical need for Jews to develop a theology of Christians and Christianity that is consonant with the realities of an emerging "new Christian" society that is struggling in unparalleled fashion to uproot anti-Semitism and to restore her traditions to Biblical modes of thought and practice.

At the heart of Christianity's problem of what to make of the Jew is the Christian's immense ignorance, if not illiteracy, regarding Judaism. If the Jews were supposed to have committed deicide against Jesus, then a great many Christians in fact have committed homicide against him. They have killed Jesus as a Jew and as a man. The weapon was ignorance of Jesus' Jewishness. But Jesus' life, his preaching, his teaching, his vision of the Kingdom of God, the very ground of his messianism cannot be accurately nor profoundly understood apart from his background in the Synagogue, his life of worship and observance as a Jew, and his education with the Pharasaic rabbis of the first century. Indeed, the New Testamaent itself cannot be fully comprehended as other

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than a Jewish book, written almost entirely by Jews for Jews, and in the Jewish mode of exegesis, known as Hagaddah. Long passages of the New Testament are, indeed, actually nothing less than new and different exegesis of the Jewish Bible, the difference being determined by the belief in the divinity of Jesus, which stands in opposition to the uncompromising monotheism of Judaism.

The significance of this Christian amnesia regarding the Jewishness of the origins of Christianity is that the Christians who live in this ignorance are expressing the Marcionite heresy. God bestowed promises upon the Jews, and he chastised them with curses, in order that they might repent. But a certain tradition of Christian teaching appropriated the promises for "the new Israel" and imposed upon the "old Israel" the left-over curses. In this way, many Christians found it possible to cease to identify religiously with Judaism and, worse, perceived the Torah and Judaism as "stagnant" and "dessicated." From this conviction it was but a short step to the belief that the Church "superseded" Israel -- despite St. Paul's admonition in Romans that God's call and promises to the Jews are irrevocable.

When one adds to this ignorance of first century Judaism the even greater lack of knowledge about post-Biblical Judaism, the ground of misunderstanding becomes an abyss. To most Christians, Judaism came to an abrupt end with the close of the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures. But Judaism did not come to an

end with the Old Testament. Just as a non-Catholic does an injustice to Catholicism by failing to take into account the significance of tradition, Church teaching and canon law, in addition to Sacred Scripture, so do non-Jews distort Judaism by failing to recognize that modern Judaism is the product of a long and rich development of post-Biblical thought, devotion, and piety that the great Rabbis and Sages of the Jewish people developed over the past 1,500 years. In the absence of that knowledge, the continued use by Christian pedagogues of the stereotypes of "Pharisees" for hypocritical post-Biblical Jesus, the false antimony of Judaism as a religion of law and justice versus Christianity as a religion of love, mercy, and compassion, will only serve to perpetuate bias and no-nothingism in religion.

In this perspective, it has now become very clear that there are at least three major and decisive areas of scholarship that must be vigorously pursued by Catholic, and other Christian scholars, if the Vatican Council II call for "biblical and theological studies" are to be translated into "mutual understanding and respect." These are: first, critical commentaries and interpretations of the New Testament that will remove any possibility for bigots to exploit certain expressions in the Gospels for anti-Semitic purposes. An excellent example of such studies is to be found in the essay "Anti-Semitism and the Gospel," by Father Dominic M.

Crossan, O.S.M., which appeared in a recent issue of Theological Studies. In that essay, Father Crossan wrote that "the often-repeated statement that the Jews rejected Jesus and had Him crucified is historically untenable and must, therefore, be removed completely from our thinking and our writing, our teaching, preaching, and liturgy."

The second area is that of historical studies. If one reads church histories and Jewish histories of the same events, it is as though Christians and Jews are being educated in different universes of discourse. A Christian historian, for example, Father Philip Hughes, writes of the Crusades of the 11th and 12th centuries as holy war to free Jerusalem. "Never before had Europe known such a vast and successful propaganda as the preaching of the First Crusade, and its success is a most eloquent proof of the reality of the new reformation's hold on the average man and of its popularity with him," wrote Father Hughes in his "A Popular History of the Catholic Church." To Jewish historians the Crusades "becomes a gory story of pillaging Jewish settlements, killing Jewish people, looting Jewish wealth. Such serious restrictive legislation as the humiliating garb, ritual-murder charges, Host desecration libels, and confinement of the ghetto were not the heritage of the Dark Ages but the heritage of the Crusades."

As Father Edward Flannery, author of "The Anguish of the Jews" has written, "most Christians have torn out of their history books the pages that Jews have memorized." The time has

come, perhaps, for a proposal to be made for Christian and Jewish historians to join together in writing a common history of the Jewish-Christian encounter which will fill in the blank pages.

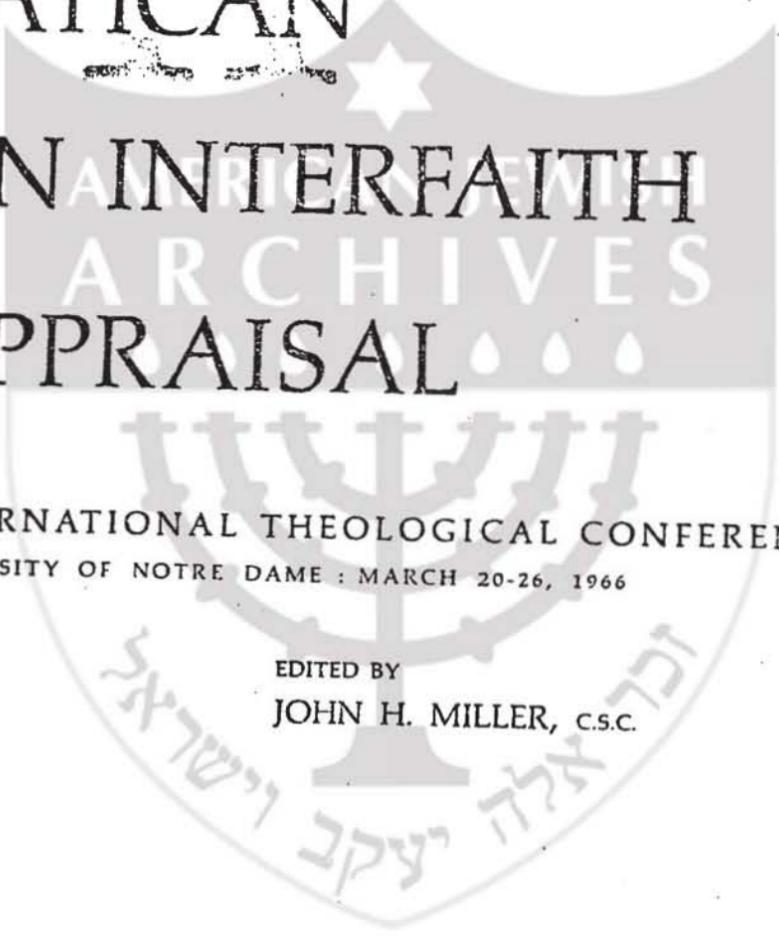
The third area of much-needed scholarship is that of theological studies in Jewish-Christian relations. Unless and until Christian scholars and people develop theological conceptions regarding Judaism and the Synagogue that reflects in some way the vital reality of the existence of present-day Judaism very little else of significance in Jewish-Christian relations will be possible. Father Gregory Baum, writing in the *Ecumenist* of May-June 1965, has begun to point the way:

"...the apostle tells us, that the Jews of the Synagogue remain dear to God for the sake of the fathers (of. Romans, 11,28). Their election stands. Why? Because God is faithful, his gifts and call are irrevocable" (Romans 11,29). His election cannot ultimately be undone by human decision against it. This scriptural theme is invoked in the conciliar text.

"What does this mean for the understanding of the Jews of our day? Giving this Pauline theme its weakest possible meaning, it asserts that God continues to be present and to address Jewish believers in their synagogue services. The testimonies of God's mercy in the past as celebrated in the synagogue worship remain a way of divine action, for 'his gifts and call are irrevocable.' We have here the answer to a question crucial to the Jewish-Christian

dialogue. What is the present synagogue worship before God? Is the Christian forced to regard present Jewish worship as an empty form, as words and gestures without meaning? Or is he able to acknowledge in Jewish worship the presence of the living God? The conciliar text answers this question by its adoption and use of the Pauline theme. God remains present in his gifts to Israel."





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VATICAN
AN INTERFAITH
ARCHIVES
APPRAISAL

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME : MARCH 20-26, 1966

EDITED BY
JOHN H. MILLER, C.S.C.

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME PRESS : NOTRE DAME & LONDON

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum

A JEWISH VIEWPOINT



AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

IT SHOULD BE SAID at the very outset that there is considerable confusion in the use of the term "ecumenical," confusion both within Christendom, as well as confusion between Christianity and Judaism. In its strictest technical sense, the term "ecumenical" applies to relationships among Christians—Catholics, Protestants and Eastern Orthodox; and the ground of ecumenism is the shared Christology which is particular to Christendom. In this sense it is, therefore, a misnomer and a misapplication of the term "ecumenism" to apply it to relations between Christians and Jews. One can apply it, of course, to Christian-Jewish relations in its broadest, most generic sense; but in its authentic theological meaning it is a term specifically applicable to relations within Christendom. In this application, it deals with the activities of Cardinal Bea's Secretariat relating to the reunion of the "separated brethren." Yet having said that, at the same time one cannot really explore or exhaust the full meaning of what ecumenism means in its ultimate reaches without its application to relations between Christians and Jews, since the Hebrew Bible is the foundation of all monotheism. But for reasons of clarity, it is probably wise and prudential that we use the term "interreligious relationships" to describe the relations between Christianity and Judaism and between Christians and the Jewish people.

It is appropriate, I think, to ask why it is that "the Jewish declaration," introduced at the second session of Vatican II, November, 1963, and pro-

THEOLOGICAL ISSUES OF VATICAN II
Session VIII

mulgated October 28, 1965, has elicited such widespread universal attention.

As Cardinal Bea said in his *relatio* September 25, at the time of his introduction of the "Jewish declaration,"

I can only begin with the fact that this Declaration certainly must be counted among the matters in which public opinion has shown the greatest concern. Scarcely any other schema has been written up so much and so widely in periodicals. . . . Many will judge the Council good or bad by its approval or disapproval of the Declaration.

This decree has engaged the concern and the attention of 2,300 Council Fathers in Rome over a period of three years. It has involved the attention of the Protestant and Eastern Orthodox observers. Why is the issue of the relationship of Christianity to Judaism and the practical relations between Christians and Jews on a daily level of such central significance? Why has it attracted such widespread attention?

It is my thesis that the issue of relations between Christians and Jews has reached the point of ripeness, of maturation, in a way that can be seen analogously in terms of the ripeness and the fullness which relations between the Negro and white societies have reached. The moment of crisis, or the moment of truth, in relations between Negro and white are being tested and resolved to the degree to which we overcome the contradictions between our professions of love, charity and justice and our practices which have often stood in flagrant opposition to our pious verbalizations. In the process of being confronted by Negroes with a challenge to our moral claims, and our negative attitudes and behavior toward them, we have begun to find it necessary to face truthfully the fact that we have been dealing with Negroes in the main as abstractions, as mythic perceptions, but not as real people, not as persons who have a human dignity that demands a certain response from us as brothers. One of the facts that has become very clear to us is that we have evaded our moral duties to the Negro by substituting a series of myths for genuine confrontation. These myths have buffered us from encountering the reality of the Negro. As we dig beneath the surface of our attitudes and feelings in all the issues of the civil rights struggle, we find that in each instance we have developed a mythology that has crippled us from coming to grips with realities. Thus, we have told ourselves, literally for 350 years, that the Negroes are illiterate; the Negroes have weak family life; the Negroes are lazy and unreliable, and, perhaps the most diabolic myth of all, the Negroes have a bad odor.

We have told ourselves that the Negroes are illiterate, refusing to face up to the fact that by the year 1830, every state in the South had passed a law proscribing Negroes from learning to read or write because of the fear that literate, educated Negroes would rise up in rebellion against their white

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masters, the plantation barons. And so now we justify our segregation in schools by saying the Negro never learned to read or write; he is illiterate and therefore he cannot have equal education opportunities. We have broken up Negro families, used Negro women for breeding purposes, sold them "down the river" to the plantations of Louisiana, destroyed the foundations of Negro family life, and now we use this as an excuse for saying that Negroes cannot live next door to us because of their family habits. We have prevented Negroes from getting certain forms of employment and we have justified this by saying that they are lazy, shiftless, unreliable. Then we have kept Negroes away from public accommodations because of their supposed "bad odor." But as Gunnar Myrdal said in *The American Dilemma*,¹ "This has never prevented us from using Negroes as porters or as people who run our houses for us as maids."

Now in many ways the mythology, the unreality, the capacity to abstract human relationships and to empty them of solid human meaning and feeling, finds its analogy in the relations between Christians and Jews. What we have begun to confront in the relationships between Christianity and Judaism and between Christendom and Jewry is the fact that there is a fundamental ambivalence, historically and theologically within Christian teaching and within Christian social practice that has never been confronted before in any serious and systematic way in the past nineteen hundred years of the Christian-Jewish encounter. Just as the social revolution of the Negroes today has caused us to confront the race issue in a way that we cannot escape, so certain revolutionary facts of the twentieth century have made the Christian-Jewish confrontation inescapable.

I believe that the Nazi holocaust and all that that has meant for the Christian conscience, as well as the tremendous needs of a new world of the twentieth century in which Christians and Jews together find themselves increasingly a minority in relation to a non-white, non-Judco-Christian world, are compelling us to confront the deep realities of the relationship between Christians and Jews. Fundamentally, Christianity has never made up its mind as to where it stands in terms of its common patrimony with Judaism and its daily attitudes and relationships and behavior toward Jews. We find as we look into the history of the Christian-Jewish encounter for the greater part of the past two millennia that there have been teachings and episodes betokening the greatest of mutual respect and esteem between Christians and Jews. Thus, we find St. Athanasius, one of the early Church Fathers at the beginning of the fourth century, who said that "the Jews are the great school of the knowledge of God and the spiritual life of all mankind." St. Jerome, who lived in the fifth century and who spent forty years in Pales-

¹ (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

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tine where in Caesarea with Jewish scholars and biblical authorities he studied the Holy Scriptures and the Masoretic traditions—and from whom he obtained insights on which he based his translation of the Scriptures into the Vulgate—declared that “the Jews were divinely preserved for a purpose worthy of God.”

This side of the affirmative attitude of the Church toward the Jews reflected the tradition of St. Paul in Romans 9 to 11, which speaks of Christians being engrafted onto the olive tree of Israel (11:17) planted by God. This tradition also found expression in positive behavior of popes even in the Middle Ages. Thus Callixtus II issued a bull in 1120 beginning with the words “Sicut Judaeis” in which he strongly condemned the forced baptism of Jews, acts of violence against their lives and property, and the desecration of synagogues and Jewish cemeteries. Gregory IX issued the bull “Etsi Judeorum” in 1233 in which he demanded that the Jews in Christian countries should be treated with the same humanity as that with which Christians desire to be treated in heathen lands.

Side by side with that tradition there existed a tradition of hostility and contempt which the late French historian, Professor Jules Isaac, has written about in his various studies. This tradition was perhaps most explicitly embodied in the eight sermons of St. John Chrysostom, who in the year 387 spoke from the pulpits of the city of Antioch to the first congregations of early Gentiles who became Christians, saying:

I know that a great number of the faithful have for the Jews a certain respect and hold their ceremonies in reverence. This provokes me to eradicate completely such a disastrous opinion. I have already brought forward that the synagogue is worth no more than the theatre . . . it is a place of prostitution. It is a den of thieves and a hiding place of wild animals . . . not simply of animals but of impure beasts . . . God has abandoned them. What hope of salvation have they left?

They say that they too worship God but this is not so. None of the Jews, not one of them is a worshiper of God. . . . Since they have disowned the Father, crucified the Son and rejected the Spirit's help, who would dare to assert that the synagogue is not a home of demons! God is not worshiped there. It is simply a house of idolatry. . . . The Jews live for their bellies, they crave for the goods of this world. In shamelessness and greed they surpass even pigs and goats. . . . The Jews are possessed by demons, they are handed over to impure spirits. . . . Instead of greeting them and addressing them as much as a word, you should turn away from them as from a pest and a plague of the human race.

Now, if one enters into the historic background and the context within which St. John Chrysostom made these remarks, perhaps one can understand a little better—one can explain if not excuse—what led St. John Chrysostom to make these anti-Jewish remarks. It may be useful to take a moment to

observe that the Church in the first four centuries of this era was struggling for its existence as an autonomous, independent faith community. In the minds of the Roman Empire the early Christians represented another Jewish sect. Judaism was the *religio licita* (a favored religion), and for early Christians to achieve any status, including the right to conduct Christian ceremonies, they had to come as Jews to achieve recognition from the Romans.² And so the early Church Fathers found it necessary to separate Christians from the Jews. The early Christians felt very close to Jews; observed their Sabbath on the Jewish Sabbath, their Easter on the Jewish Passover. At the time of the Council of Elvira (ca. 300) many Christians in Spain thought the Jews had a special charism as the People of God and therefore invited them to bless their fields so that they would be fruitful. To separate Christians from their associations with Judaism, to create a sense of autonomy and independence for Christianity, apparently in the wisdom of the early Church Fathers it became necessary to embark on a drastic effort to break the bonds between church and synagogue and to give Christians a consciousness of difference from the Jews. In the process of this disidentification, however, the pattern of anti-Jewish attitudes and of anti-Jewish behavior became so entrenched, that by the time the Church became the established religion of the Roman empire, these attitudes were reflected increasingly in ecclesiastical legislation. These laws subsequently led to the establishment of ghettos, the forcing of Jews to wear yellow hats and badges, and in general, this legislation reduced Jews to the status of pariahs throughout the Roman empire. As the Church became the major institution integrating the whole of medieval society, the perception of the Jew within medieval Christendom became the perception of the Jew within Western culture and civilization.

Lest one think that these attitudes are mainly of academic or historic interest, one needs to confront the following facts. A prominent Catholic educator has recently traveled around this country to various Christian seminaries and universities, to speak of the new understanding between Christians and Jews. As she sought to elaborate her thesis of the historical and theological factors which helped shape the conception of the Jew in the Western world, she received many questions from students at the end of her lectures. These are some of the questions that were asked of her by students in Catholic and Protestant seminaries and universities, and also on some secular campuses:

If the Jewish people did not kill Christ, who did?

You said that the high priest and the elders and not the Jewish people had a share of responsibility in Jesus' condemnation. That is not true. The gospel says that the people clamored for his death.

² See James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (London: Soncino Press, 1934).

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I am a Catholic and I know what I have been taught when I went to catechism; and that is that the Jews killed Christ. That is what my Church teaches. I don't like it. I have several friends who are Jewish, but what can I do? I have to believe my Church.

Don't you think that in this country we are antagonistic to Jews because they are too successful in business?

Why are all Jews rich?

Why are the Jews better than anyone else in business?

I have heard it said that Hitler had to do what he did because the Jews held all the money in Germany.

The St. Louis University study, in its examination of Catholic parochial school textbooks, found that there are echoes and resonances of this tradition of contempt in materials used even to this day. Thus, for example, to cite some of the teachings which have an unerring echo from the teachings of St. John Chrysostom, it is written in some of the religious textbooks studied by Sister Rose Albert:

The Jews wanted to disgrace Christ by having him die on the cross.

Show us that the Jews did not want Pilate to try Christ but to give permission for his death.

When did the Jews decide to kill Christ.

The Jews as a nation refused to accept Christ and since that time they have been wandering on the earth without a temple or a sacrifice and without the Messias.

The findings of the Yale University Divinity School study, published in book form as *Faith and Prejudice* by Dr. Bernhard E. Olson, have revealed analogous results in some of the denominational textbooks used in Protestantism. There have been significant revisions, as well as improved portrayals of Jews and Judaism, in Catholic and Protestant teaching materials since the publication of the St. Louis and Yale studies. Nevertheless, there is still a heavy residuum from the polemical histories of the past in far too many textbooks, and above all, in sermons, religious radio broadcasts, Seminary Manuals, Bible commentaries, liturgical missals, catechisms, passion plays, and in fact in the daily attitudes of many professing Christians.

These studies, which are of interest, I think, to people who have professional religious and educational responsibilities, do not begin, however, to make us aware of the consequence of these generations of teachings in terms of the impact they have had on the attitudes toward Jews in Western society and culture. These views which began in a theological and religious matrix have penetrated into the marrow of Western civilization and continue to influence the Western world's attitudes toward the Jews to this very moment.

When you go home to your studies, if you will open any unabridged dictionary and look up the definition of a Jew, you will find the following:

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Webster's Universal Dictionary:³

"Jew—to cheat in trade; as to Jew one out of a horse. To practice cheating in trade; as, he is said to Jew. To Jew down."

Funk and Wagnalls:

"Jew—(slang) to get the better of in a bargain; overreach: referring to the proverbial keenness of Jewish traders."

Merriam Webster:

"Jew—adjective, Jewish, usually taken to be offensive.

"Jew—verb, to cheat by sharp business practice, usually taken to be offensive.

"Jew—noun, a person believed to drive a hard bargain."

Contrast this with the dictionary's definition of "Christian":

Webster's Universal Dictionary:

"Christian—colloquial, a decent, civilized, or presentable person, characteristic of Christian people, kindly."

If one looks at the general social reality in terms of the way the Jew is perceived by and large (with significant changes in recent years growing out of our greater contact with each other), one finds, for example, a striking double standard in the evaluation of the behavior of the Christian and the Jew in the world of commerce. When a Jewish business man is successful in a given business or industry, in the parlor rooms and in the bars where the "man-to-man talk" is made (and all of us have heard this enough to know that it is true and not a figment of one's imagination), one hears the "explanation": "Well, he's a Jew." There's something sharp, there's something cunning about his practices. It is the Jewishness of the man which leads to his success. But if a Christian or a Gentile is engaged in the same industry, using virtually the same business practices, achieves the same kind of success, then in the American mythos this is the result of "Yankee ingenuity." This is living out the Horatio Alger myth of rags to riches in American life. It is a consequence of living out the "Puritan ethic."

One must confront ultimately how as recently as the past twenty-five years in a country—which, when it vaunted its great values and its great moral traditions, spoke of itself as a country of ancient Christian culture, which was in fact the seat of the Holy Roman Empire for almost a millennium beginning with Charlemagne—it was possible for millions of Christians to sit by as spectators while millions of human beings, who were their brothers and sisters, the sons of Abraham according to the flesh, were carted out to their death in the most brutal, inhuman, uncivilized ways. And one must confront as one of the terrible facts of the history of this period the conversation that took place between Adolf Hitler and two bishops in April,

³ See Jacob Chinitz, "Jews and Judaism in the Dictionary," *Reconstructionist Magazine* (June, 1963).

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1933, when they began raising questions about the German policy toward the Jews and Hitler said to them, as reported in the book, *Hitler's Table-Talk*, that he was simply completing what Christian teaching and preaching had been saying about the Jews for the better part of 1,900 years. "You should turn away from them as a pest and a plague of the human race," said St. John Chrysostom, and 1,500 years later thousands of his disciples implemented his teachings, literally.

One must compel oneself to face these hard facts in our own time because there is a tendency to want to evade the reality of this problem, since in America both for Christians and Jews anti-Semitism is not much more than a social nuisance. It is not a serious problem of human deprivation, of human discomfort, or a clear and present danger. But to this very day in the city of Buenos Aires, for example, where 400,000 Jews live, Jewish merchants are packing guns into their business places, synagogues are being stored with armaments because in the past three or four years the Neo-Fascist, ultra-nationalist movement called the TACUARA, consisting entirely of young, well-to-do Catholic students, have been tramping through the streets of Buenos Aires spraying machine gun fire at synagogues and throwing bombs into Jewish businesses. In June, 1963, the TACUARA apprehended a Jewish girl, Graciela Sirota, as she came home from the university in the evening, kidnapped her and carved a swastika in her breast. The chaplain of this TACUARA movement is a Father Julio de Meinvielle, who has written a book called *The Mystery of the Jew in History*. Father Meinvielle has claimed that he bases his "ministry" to these students in the TACUARA movement on the fact that the tradition of St. John Chrysostom's views toward the Jews and Judaism and those who have repeated that tradition, represent the authentic view of the Church toward the Jewish people and to Judaism.

Within the past four to five years all of us have lived through what in fact may be the most revolutionary period in the history of the Christian-Jewish encounter over the past two millennia. As in race relations, the churches have begun to seek to reconcile the ambivalences and the contradictions between theology and history. The Catholic Church, through Vatican Council II's approval of a declaration dealing with Catholic-Jewish relations, the World Council of Churches, in its very forthright resolution at New Delhi in December, 1961, and American Catholic and Protestant bodies have all contributed dramatically to the powerful assault against anti-Semitism. Their wide-ranging programs of textbook and curriculum revision, teacher training, seminary education, retreats and adult education have been confronting increasingly the issues of responsible portrayal of Jews and Judaism.

If nothing else came out of Vatican Council II other than what took place in Rome on September 28 and 29, 1964, the Council more than justified its

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existence in terms of Jewish interests. On Friday, September 25, 1964, Cardinal Bea arose in the aula of St. Peter's Basilica to read his *relatio* to the "Jewish Declaration." After indicating the importance of this decree to the life of the Church, the importance of the Church's understanding of her true relationship to Israel, to the Bible, to the Jewish people, ancient and present (an understanding upon which is founded the whole future and prospect of the biblical, liturgical and theological renewals of the Church), Cardinal Bea declared before 2,300 Council Fathers, "There are many historical instances from various nations which cannot be denied. In these instances this belief concerning the culpability of the Jewish people as such has led Christians to consider and to call the Jews with whom they live the deicide people, reprobated and cursed by God and therefore to look down upon them and indeed to persecute them." Then he described what he thought was authentic Church teaching about the role of the Jews in the passion and the mystery of the relationship between Christians and Jews. The moment of truth, as those of us who were privileged to be in Rome were able to observe, occurred on those two days when thirty-five cardinals and bishops from twenty-two countries arose on the floor of St. Peter's, and one after another, in terms more powerful and more committed than had ever been heard before, called upon the Catholic Church to condemn anti-Semitism as a sin against the conscience of the church. Thirty-one of the cardinals and bishops from every major continent of the world took positions regarding Catholic attitudes in relation to the Jewish people, Judaism, the role of Israel in salvation history, the synagogue and its continued relevance, conversion, anti-Semitism—positions that have never been heard before in 1,900 years of Catholic-Jewish history. positions articulated with such friendship, indeed, fraternal love, as to make clear that a profound turning point had taken place in our lifetime.

Cardinal Cushing, the first of the American hierarchy to speak out on the declaration on the Jews, called for a denial by the Council of the culpability of the Jews as a people for the death of Jesus. "Rejection of Jesus by the Jewish people is a mystery and is to serve to instruct us not to inflate us," Cardinal Cushing said.⁴ He declared that the Catholic Church cannot judge the ancient judges of the Jews, as that is for God to do. At the same time, the Cardinal said Christians must be aware of the universal guilt of all men who by sinning crucified and are crucifying Christ.

The late Cardinal Meyer of Chicago stated that "it is not enough for the Church to deplore any injustices against the Jewish people. It must

⁴These paraphrases of the interventions of the Council Fathers are based on the press reports issued by the Press Service of the National Catholic Welfare Conference and also on the summaries printed in the *Herder Correspondence*. The publication of the full texts of the interventions would be a valuable contribution, in my judgment, to a fuller understanding of the historic implications of the Council's actions for the future of Catholic-Jewish relations.

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also point out the close relationship of the Church with the Jews." Cardinal Meyer pointed out that St. Thomas Aquinas taught that the Jews were not guilty of deicide.

Cardinal Ritter of St. Louis said that the declaration would repair injustices of past centuries. He said that it is often assumed that God abandoned the Jews, and the Jews were rightly to be accused of condemnation of Jesus. Now he said an opportunity had been offered to remedy these errors and to remove these injustices. Referring to the passage that spoke of the "reunion" of the Jews with the Church, Cardinal Ritter said it sounds as if the Church envisions conversion of the Jewish people. He pointed out that the text did not speak of the Moslems, Hindus and Protestants in the same respect. Therefore he suggested that the final text find less offensive wording and include a paragraph expressing the biblical hope of the union of all men at the end of days.

Cardinal Leger of Canada called the declaration a necessary act of the Church's renewal.

Cardinal Lercaro of Bologna suggested that the declaration emphasize biblical discussions with the Jews. He said the Jewish people should not be regarded as having value only in the past. But the heritage of Israel, the institution of the eucharist within the Jewish paschal cycle, the relation between the Passover meal and the Mass, the common fatherhood of Abraham—all these should be emphasized in the declaration, Cardinal Lercaro said, in order to give witness in a pastoral way and to foster piety. He added that the Jews of today should not be called an accursed or deicide people, but rather that we should recognize that all of us "have strayed like sheep."

Archbishop Pocock of Canada said that the Church must acquit the Jewish people of all false accusations made in the past through the abuse of truth and charity.

Bishop Stephen A. Leven of Texas, in rejecting the ancient deicide charge against the Jews, declared:

Fathers of the Council, we are not dealing here with some philosophical entity but with a word of infamy and execration which was invented by Christians and used to blame and persecute the Jews. For so many centuries, and even in our own, Christians have hurled this word against Jews, and because of it they have justified every kind of horrible excess and even their slaughter and destruction. It is not up to us to make a declaration about something philosophical but to reprobate and damn a word which has furnished so many occasions of persecution through the centuries. We must tear this word out of the Christian vocabulary so that it may never again be used against the Jews.

During those two days of debate in Rome and in the final text that was promulgated by Paul VI on October 28, 1965, the Catholic Church took a great and historic leap forward in reconciling this ambivalence, affirming on

the highest levels of its teaching authority the indebtedness of Christianity and the Christians to Judaism and the Jewish people, the rejection of anti-Semitism and an unprecedented call for fraternal dialogue between Christians and Jews. Later in this paper I should like to discuss the Declaration that was promulgated and both the Jewish and Catholic reactions to it.

There is a larger dimension to what took place in Rome at Vatican Council II that should be of as great significance to the Jewish people as the Jewish Declaration itself. The clue to that larger significance is suggested by the letter that Pope Paul VI sent to Cardinal Tisserant, dean of the Council presidency, on November 9, 1965. In that letter, Paul VI announced that Vatican Council II would end on December 8, "on the same date on which in 1869, there was solemnly inaugurated the first Vatican Ecumenical Council." The Pope then said that "our Council can well be considered under many aspects a worthy counterpart" of Vatican Council I. Before this audience, I need not belabor the point of how great an advance, indeed a revolution, Vatican Council II represents in contrast to Vatican Council I. As you well know, most objective, impartial historians have described Vatican Council I as that which marked the decisive victory of ultramontanism. The foundation stones of Vatican Council I were based on the encyclical *Quanta Cura* and the accompanying *Syllabus of Errors* issued by Pius IX in 1864.⁵ J. B. Bury, regius professor of modern history at Cambridge, in his study *The History of the Papacy in the 19th Century* summarizes the contents of the encyclical and the *Syllabus* in this way:

The leading ideas which are associated closely with modern progress are described as *monstrous opinionum portenta*, and those who propagate them are designated as slaves of corruption who design to demolish society, *civilis societatis fundamenta convellere*. . . .

He [Pius IX] begins his comments on this doctrine (of toleration) by quoting with approval a passage from *Mirari Vos* of his predecessor, where liberty of conscience and the right of each man to practise his own religion are described as *deliramentum*. Such liberty, says Pius, citing St. Augustine, is *libertas perditionis*.

⁵ Whether the *Syllabus* possessed dogmatic character is a subject of controversy which Prof. Bury discusses at some length. He cites critics, such as M. Dupanloup and others, who sought to minimize its binding import, but concludes from evidence contained in letters of Cardinal Antonelli "that the *Syllabus* was intended to have dogmatic value . . . on the subject of modern errors." Similarly, there is a deep divergence of views regarding ultramontanism itself. Paul Droulers, S.J., for example, writing in the *Journal of World History*, characterizes the "ultramontanist" movement as one "impelled by the desire for greater purity and fervor" and constituted a "voluntary renunciation of local ecclesiastical particularism. It held up the pope, the head and center of the Church, as the visible source of Catholic vitality, while steadily consolidating his practical authority." Looking at the same set of "facts," the Lutheran church historian, Rudolph Sohm, in his book, *Kirchengeschichte im Grundriss*, characterized ultramontanism as "the intolerant doctrinal Catholicism which with its lust for power demands once more the complete subjection of the individual, of the world itself, to the supreme authority of the Church."

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Professor Bury concludes (p. 6) that "the general drift of the argument [of the encyclical] is: liberty, toleration, secularism, and democracy are closely bound together, and what they mean is materialism."

Wrapped up in religious phraseology, Bury adds, the encyclical "is really a political document, setting forth an ideal of civilization and declaring principles of political import."

The positive principles which it asserts by means of condemning their negations may be summed up thus: The State must recognize a particular religion as regnant, and submit to its influence, and this religion must be Catholic; the power of the State must be at its disposal, and all who do not conform to its requirements must be compelled or punished. The duty of governments is to protect the Church, and freedom of conscience and cult is madness. Not the popular will, but religion, that is the papal authority, is the basis of civil society, otherwise it will sink into materialism. The Church is superior to the State, and therefore the State has no right to dictate to her, and has no power over religious orders. The family and the education of children belong to the Church, not to the state. The Pope can decree and prescribe what he chooses, without the State's permission, and his authority is not limited to doctrines and morals (p. 8).

The Episcopalian scholar, the Rev. Dr. Frederick Grant, in his introduction to Professor Bury's study, described the mentality of Vatican Council I and of Pius IX as that which held that "the best safeguard of the Christian faith" against liberalism and modernism was to convert the Catholic Church into "a Maginot line of impenetrable defense." In the face of a series of shocks beginning with the Reformation in the sixteenth century and climaxed by the French Revolution in the eighteenth century, the Church became preoccupied with her own self-preservation and was relatively indifferent to the fate of those who were non-Catholic. This virtual obsession with the preservation of herself and her institutions made it possible for the Church to enter into concordats with the blackest forces of reaction, a tradition which led to tragic consequences in the twentieth century.⁶

As one reads the texts of the sixteen declarations promulgated by Vatican II and compares these with both the spirit as well as the rhetoric of the documents of Vatican Council I, there is no conclusion possible other than that the Catholic Church has undergone a revolution in terms of not only her self-perception but in her attitudes toward non-Catholics and her own responsibility for the welfare of other people. Nowhere is this new attitude of con-

⁶ Paul Droulers, S.J., writing on *Roman Catholicism in the 19th Century World*, states, "The diplomacy of the Court of Rome . . . was adapted to meet the varying circumstances of the individual countries, striving to obtain the fullest possible measure of civil liberty for the celebration of worship and the exercise of spiritual government. . . . The Bull *Sollicitudo Ecclesiarum*, of August 7, 1831, contains an explicit reminder that in the cause of religion the Holy See will negotiate with any duly constituted government, though this does not imply recognition of its legitimacy before the law (293).

cern for others, involvement in their fate and destiny more clearly reflected than in the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, the *Declaration on Religious Freedom*, the *Decree on Ecumenism*, and the *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*.

No person of good will can fail to be moved by these words contained in the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*:

The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community composed of men (art. 1).

In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of every person without exception, and of actively helping him when he comes across our path, whether he be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a hungry person (art. 27).

Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political and even religious matters (art. 28).

This emergence from behind something of a Maginot line and the joining of a dialogue with the world was dramatically ratified as much for non-Catholics as for Catholics in the brilliant address of Pope Paul VI before the United Nations at the end of last year. The Pope renounced for the Catholic Church any pretense to temporal power and then declared, "We make our own voice of the poor, the disinherited, the suffering, to those who hunger and thirst for justice, for the dignity of life, for freedom, for well being and progress." Pope Paul VI gave Catholic support to "the pluralism of states" and to "coexistence" between peoples. He said to the United Nations: "Your vocation is to make brothers not only of some but of all peoples." He then ratified "the formula of equality" saying: "Let no one inasmuch as he is a member of your union be superior to the others; never one above the other." The Pope then decried that "pride" which "disrupts brotherhood." Noting that the United Nations proclaims "the fundamental rights and duties of man, his dignity, his freedom—and above all, his religious freedom," the Pope declared that "the life of man is sacred; no one may dare offend it."

I believe that I speak the mind of most informed Jewish observers when I say that if this mentality had been normative for the popes, the Vatican and the Catholic and Protestant masses over the past one hundred years, the incredible phenomenon of hundreds of thousands of so-called devout Christians becoming accomplices or passive spectators to the cruel slaughter of millions of men, women and children who happened to be born Jews—or Gypsies—would not have been possible. The pragmatic significance of this

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newly articulated humanitarian mentality has given birth, I have no doubt, to the magnificent involvement of priests, nuns and Catholic laymen who, together with ministers and rabbis, marched together through the streets of Selma, Alabama, or in the March on Washington as a powerful renunciation of that mentality which echoed in traumatic silence less than twenty-five years ago in the cities of ancient Christian culture of Germany and Austria. The Pope cried out "No more war, war never again!" and moved the world when he pleaded. Vatican Council II has proclaimed to the whole of the human family "No more indifference, indifference and silence no more!" as long as the dignity of a single human being is offended or is exploited.

The promulgation of the *Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christians* on October 28, 1965, received a mixed reaction in the Jewish community. As a commonplace pun has it, "Where there are two Jews, there are three opinions"—which is a Jewish self-critical way of describing the deep-seated democracy and pluralism that exists in Jewish life. The Jewish reaction ranged across a broad spectrum. There were those who opposed the Declaration and, in fact, who resented it. There were those who were indifferent to it. There were those, including myself, who welcomed the Declaration as an important contribution to improve the future relations between Catholics and Jews. In my study of the Jewish responses, I became aware of how decisive a role mass media played in influencing relations between groups. A substantial segment of the Jewish community reacted not to the content of the Declaration, as much as to the headlines which reported about the Declaration. The day following the promulgation, newspaper headlines throughout this country and, in fact, throughout the world, carried such statements as "Vatican Council Exonerates Jews for Death of Christ"; "Catholic Church Absolves Jews of Crucifixion." The so-called Jewish man-in-the-street naturally responded to such presumptive formulations with resentment, if not worse. No Jew in my acquaintance has ever felt guilty for the death of Jesus. Therefore, no Jew ever felt in need of absolution. But it was the newspapers and the radio and television commentators who used those words. The text of the Declaration itself does not use "absolve" or "exonerate" even once. This is not to impute bad motives or incompetence to the mass media. The problem of reducing to headlines a complex historical and theological problem is one that I am glad I did not have to face. But again, the fact that such headlines and such radio and television reports were dinned around the world for days both prior to and following the promulgation, led almost inevitably to a negative reaction of so many Jewish people.

A more substantive consideration is the fact that the Vatican Council, for whatever reasons, "backed and filled" over this declaration for some four years. And to many Jews it was as though the Jewish people were being sub-

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jected to a trial over this period of time. When you add to that the fact that a number of unfortunate episodes took place during those four years (including the insulting articles and speeches by Bishop Carli of Segni, who said, in fact, the Jews and Judaism today are collectively responsible for the crucifixion and stand under God's reprobation because of it), then one has another insight into how the Jewish patience wore thin. Overriding all, however, was the absence in the Declaration of any note of contrition or repentance for the incredible sufferings and persecutions Jews have undergone in the Christian West. The Church's various declarations asked forgiveness from the Protestants, the Eastern Orthodox, from the Moslems, but not from the Jews. Many Jews, especially those who lived through the Nazi holocaust, asked with great passion, "How many more millions of our brothers and sisters will need to be slaughtered before any word of contrition or repentance is heard in the seats of ancient Christian glory?"

The Jews who are indifferent to the Vatican Council's action believe that it was too little and too late. Within this group there is a strong feeling that the Catholic bishops in Germany and perhaps Pius XII himself could have spoken out decisively, unambiguously at a time when it would have meant something of profound importance to the Jewish people. That did not happen in terms adequate to the need and, therefore, the loss of confidence in the present usefulness of the Vatican statement is widespread among this group. In the perspective of history this group has also been aware that up until the time of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution the Church contributed to the disenfranchisement of the Jewish people of the Western world and much worse. This group looks to the secular powers of the world for its political and civic salvation. In the view of this group history has outdistanced the Christian community, and such statements are only pleasant rhetoric and are really of no significant effect in terms of the security or fate of the Jewish people in the Twentieth Century.

In the view of the third group the text of the final version of the Declaration that was adopted represented a compromise document compared to the text that was introduced at the close of the third session and which received an overwhelming majority vote of the Council Fathers. The earlier version was warmer, more generous, and less severe: it dealt explicitly with the "deicide" concept which became something of a symbolic test of good will. In that perspective, the failure of the Council to enact the majority will of the Fathers of 1964 was a disappointment. But in the view of this group, seen in the perspective of 1900 years of Christian-Jewish history, this Declaration represents an incredible achievement.

As important as the Declaration itself is, the commitment of Catholic Church authorities and institutions to translate the guidelines in this docu-

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ment into reality in the lives of 550 million Catholics throughout the world was of even greater importance. That commitment was given decisive expression when the American Catholic hierarchy designated a special subcommission on Catholic-Jewish relations charged with the responsibility of implementing the objectives of the Declaration throughout every level of Catholic culture and society. The determined action of the Vatican shortly after the Declaration was promulgated which put an end to the veneration of Simon of Trent—that ritual blood libel episode which since the fifteenth century has been celebrated by annual procession through the streets of Trent, repeating an insult to the whole of the Jewish people—was another impressive demonstration of the commitment of the Catholic Church to express in deeds its new attitude of respect and esteem for the Jewish people. The instruction given by Cardinal Döpfner of Munich to the organizers of the Oberammergau Passion Play to revise the text so that all anti-Jewish references are removed is another earnest of the Catholic Church's commitment to the uprooting of the sources of anti-Semitism.

In the face of the agonizing history that many of the people of the cross had wrought in the transformation of the Jews into a cross among the peoples, there should not be too great bafflement or wonder over some of the skepticism of a number of the Jewish people in this country and abroad as to the real meaning of the Vatican Council Declaration to them and their children. As long as Father Julio de Meinvielle of Buenos Aires is allowed by the Catholic hierarchy to serve as chaplain to a group of young Catholic Fascists, who ruthlessly exploit anti-Semitism for their economic and political purposes; as long as hostile references to the Jewish people, Judaism and the synagogue continue to appear in Catholic textbooks, missals, liturgical commentaries, theological dictionaries and sermons, a great many Jews will continue to view the Vatican Council Declaration as a vain and even hypocritical show. Having worked closely with members of the Catholic community both here and abroad, especially in the fields of religious history and religious education, I am deeply persuaded that a vast and irreversible tide of self-purification and self-correction with regard to the portrayal of Jews and Judaism in the teaching process of the Catholic Church—nor should the Protestants be slighted—is under way and that the fruits of this process are already in evidence. That is not to overlook the hard reality that a great deal more needs to be done before the last weeds of anti-Jewish teaching and anti-Jewish poison are removed. But in my judgment, no Jew has a right to belittle the great advances that have been made already. I am persuaded that we are now going through a period of transition which will find both Jews and Catholics fumbling and stumbling as they seek to find appropriate new modes of relating to each other in a growing climate of mutual tolerance and esteem.

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During the course of the deliberations of Vatican Council II in connection with the "Jewish Declaration," the contradictory and at times confused views expressed with regard to the inclusion or elimination of a passage in the third version of the text relating the question of the conversion of the Jews brought into sharp focus the fact that the Catholic Church has done very little serious thinking about the place of Jews and Judaism in the divine economy. That episode alone underscored the need for Catholic theologians and scholars to develop a theology of Israel and the synagogue in salvation history that has some correspondence with the historic realities of the present-day living Jewish people. At the same time, the bewildering and bewildered response of many Jews to Vatican Council II, whose attitudes toward present-day Christians are based on old-world memories of Christians as persecutors, threw into sharp relief the critical need for Jews to develop a theology of Christians and Christianity that is consonant with the realities of an emerging "new Christian" society that is struggling in unparalleled fashion to uproot anti-Semitism and to restore her traditions to biblical modes of thought and practice.

At the heart of Christianity's problem of what to make of the Jew is the Christian's immense ignorance, if not illiteracy, regarding Judaism. If the Jews were supposed to have committed deicide against Jesus, then a great many Christians in fact have committed homicide against him. They have killed Jesus as a Jew and as a man. The weapon was ignorance of Jesus' Jewishness. But Jesus' life, his preaching, his teaching, his vision of the kingdom of God, the very ground of his messianism cannot be accurately or profoundly understood apart from his background in the synagogue, his life of worship and observance as a Jew, and his education with the Pharisaic rabbis of the first century. Indeed, the New Testament itself cannot be fully comprehended as other than a Jewish book, written almost entirely by Jews for Jews, and in the Jewish mode of exegesis, known as *Hagaddah*. Long passages of the New Testament are, indeed, actually nothing less than new and different exegesis of the Jewish Bible, the difference being determined by the belief in the divinity of Jesus, which stands in opposition to the uncompromising monotheism of Judaism.

The significance of this Christian amnesia regarding the Jewishness of the origins of Christianity is that the Christians who live in this ignorance are expressing the Marcionite heresy. Further, God bestowed promises upon the Jews and chastised them with curses, in order that they might repent. But a certain tradition of Christian teaching appropriated the promises for "the new Israel" and imposed upon the "old Israel" the left-over curses. In this way, many Christians found it possible to cease to identify religiously with Judaism and, worse, perceived the Torah and Judaism as "stagnant" and "desiccated." From this conviction it was but a short step to the

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belief that the Church "superseded" Israel—despite St. Paul's admonition in Romans that God's call and promises to the Jews are irrevocable.

When one adds to this ignorance of first-century Judaism the even greater lack of knowledge about post-biblical Judaism, the ground of misunderstanding becomes an abyss. To most Christians, Judaism came to an abrupt end with the close of the canon of the Hebrew Scripture. But Judaism did not come to an end with the Old Testament. Just as a non-Catholic does an injustice to Catholicism by failing to take into account the significance of tradition, Church teaching and canon law, in addition to Sacred Scripture, so do non-Jews distort Judaism by failing to recognize that modern Judaism is the product of a long and rich development of postbiblical thought, devotion and piety that the great rabbis and sages of the Jewish people developed over the past 1,500 years. In the absence of that knowledge, the Christian pedagogues' continued use of the stereotypes of "Pharisees" for hypocritical post-biblical Jews, the false antimony of Judaism as a religion of law and justice versus Christianity as a religion of love, mercy and compassion will only serve to perpetuate bias and know-nothingism in religion.

In this perspective, it has now become very clear that there are at least three major and decisive areas of scholarship that must be vigorously pursued by Catholic and other Christian scholars if the call of Vatican Council II for "biblical and theological studies" is to be translated into "mutual understanding and respect." These are, first, critical commentaries and interpretations of the New Testament that will remove any possibility for bigots to exploit certain expressions in the gospels for anti-Semitic purposes. An excellent example of such studies is to be found in the essay "Anti-Semitism and the Gospel," by Dominic M. Crossan, O.S.M., which appeared in a recent issue of *Theological Studies*. In that essay Crossan wrote that "the often-repeated statement that the Jews rejected Jesus and had him crucified is historically untenable and must, therefore, be removed completely from our thinking and our writing, our teaching, preaching, and liturgy."

The second area is that of historical studies. If one reads Church histories and Jewish histories of the same events, it is as though Christians and Jews are being educated in different universes of discourse. A Christian historian, for example, Philip Hughes, writes of the Crusades of the eleventh and twelfth centuries as holy war to free Jerusalem. "Never before had Europe known such a vast and successful propaganda as the preaching of the First Crusade, and its success is a most eloquent proof of the reality of the new reform papacy's hold on the average man and of its popularity with him," wrote Hughes in his *A Popular History of the Catholic Church*. To Jewish historians the Crusades "becomes a gory story of pillaging Jewish settlements, killing Jewish people, looting Jewish wealth. Such serious restrictive legislation as the humiliating garb, ritual-murder charges, Host desecration libels,

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and confinement of the ghetto were not the heritage of the Dark Ages but the heritage of the Crusades."⁷

As Edward Flannery, author of *The Anguish of the Jews* has written, "most Christians have torn out of their history books the pages that Jews have memorized." The time has come, perhaps, for a proposal to be made for Christian and Jewish historians to join together in writing a common history of the Jewish-Christian encounter which will fill in the blank pages.

The third area of much-needed scholarship is that of theological studies in Jewish-Christian relations. Unless and until Christian scholars and people develop theological conceptions regarding Judaism and the synagogue that reflect in some way the vital reality of the existence of present-day Judaism, very little else of significance in Jewish-Christian relations will be possible. Gregory Baum has begun to point the way:

The apostle tells us, that the Jews of the Synagogue remain dear to God for the sake of the fathers (cf. Rom 11:28). Their election stands. Why? Because God is faithful, his gifts and call are irrevocable (Rom 11:29). His election cannot ultimately be undone by human decision against it. This scriptural theme is invoked in the conciliar text.

What does this mean for the understanding of the Jews of our day? Giving this Pauline theme its weakest possible meaning, it asserts that God continues to be present and to address Jewish believers in their synagogue services. The testimonies of God's mercy in the past as celebrated in the synagogue worship remain a way of divine action, for "his gifts and call are irrevocable." We have here the answer to a question crucial to the Jewish-Christian dialogue. What is the present synagogue worship before God? Is the Christian forced to regard present Jewish worship as an empty form, as words and gestures without meaning? Or is he able to acknowledge in Jewish worship the presence of the living God? The conciliar text answers this question by its adoption and use of the Pauline theme. God remains present in his gifts to Israel.⁸

⁷ Max Dimont, *Jews, God and History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962).

⁸ Gregory Baum in *Ecumenist* (May-June, 1965).