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THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

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November 17, 1961

His Eminence Agostino Cardinal Bea, President
Secretariat for Christian Unity
Collegio Bio Brasiliana
Via Aurelia 527
Rome, Italy

Your Eminence

In accordance with the conversation between yourself and the representatives of the American Jewish Committee, Messrs. Ralph Friedman and Zachariah Shuster, that took place in your study on July 13th, we send you the enclosed memorandum entitled, "Anti-Jewish Elements in Catholic Liturgy"

This document will supplement the material contained in our memorandum on "The Image of the Jews in Catholic Teaching" sent to you on July 13th.

We are most grateful that you have agreed to receive on November 26th the eminent Jewish theologian, Professor Abraham J Heschel of New York City, Dr. Max Horkheimer, Professor of Philosophy and Sociology at Frankfurt University in Germany, Zachariah Shuster of Paris, Director of the European Office of the American Jewish Committee, for a discussion of these documents. We are confident that your discussions will contribute markedly to the realization of our shared objective of improving mutual relations.

As we have indicated in our July 13th letter, we are prepared to make available our resources of additional scholarship, research, and other services that you may regard as helpful both prior to and subsequent to the convening of the Ecumenical Council

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ANTI-JEWISH ELEMENTS IN CATHOLIC LITURGY

A Memorandum to

AMERICAN JEWISH
THE SECRETARIAT FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY
ARCHIVES



Submitted by

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

New York

November 17, 1961

I THE JEWS IN CATHOLIC LITURGY

In submitting this memorandum to the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, we are motivated by the same desire that promoted our earlier memorandum on "The Image of the Jews in Catholic Teaching" - the desire to improve relations between Catholics and Jews. It is our hope that the present document, which focuses upon certain passages in Catholic liturgy which we consider prejudicial to Jews, will be accepted by the Secretariat as a constructive attempt to confront sources of misunderstanding and hostility between Catholics and Jews.

Attitudes communicated to Catholics in the public worship of the Church are deeply implanted and are supported by the authority of the Church and the solemn majesty of the service. Thus, when we call attention in this memorandum to passages in Roman Catholic liturgy which are hostile to Jews, we do so on the assumption that these passages, and the commentaries they have traditionally elicited, contribute to anti-Jewish attitudes and behavior -- an assumption unfortunately justified by Jewish historic experience.

Submitted to His Eminence Augustin Cardinal Bea, July 13, 1961.

Recent Changes in the Liturgy

We acknowledge with appreciation that recent changes have been made in the liturgy of the Church with a view toward effecting more positive understanding of the Jewish people and Judaism on the part of Catholics, i.e., the removal in 1955 of the special rubric which made the Jews the only exception to the rule of flectamus genua -- a rubric that was greatly offensive to Jews who were aware of it and knew its intention was to humiliate them, the specification by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, in 1948, that the expressions perfidis Judaeis and Judaica perfidia may be translated as signifying simply a lack of faith in the Christian revelation, and finally, the elimination of the words perfidia and perfidis by Pope John in 1959, and the subsequent authorization of this change by the Sacred Congregation of Rites

Nevertheless, anti-Jewish passages remain within Catholic liturgy. These are found in

- 1) liturgical books of the Church, such as Missale, Graduale, Vesperale, Antiphonale, etc. which serve the public worship in parish churches and cathedrals,
- 2) homilies and officially approved commentaries upon the public liturgy, which guide and inform the priest in the preparation of his sermon,
- 3) texts belonging to the monastic ritual, or to the Breviary or to obsolete ordines or sacramentaries,
- 4) so-called para-liturgical tracts

In this memorandum we have limited our consideration to the first two categories, which are directly related to the public worship of the Church, although numerous anti-Jewish passages and interpretive remarks may be found in the third category¹ and in para-liturgical tracts, particularly in devotional materials prepared locally by sodalities, fraternities, etc.

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- 1 E.g. "Dicant nunc Judaei, quomodo milites custodientes sepulcrum perdiderunt Regem ad lapidis positionem. Quare non servabant Petram justitiae? Aut sepultum reddant, aut resurgentem adorent, nobiscum dicentes 'Quod enim, vivit, vivit Deo, Alleluia'." (Hymn "Christus resurgens", Vesperale juxta ritum S. Ordinis Praedicatorum, Romae 1900, ed Fruehwirth, p 190/1)

"Let the Jews say, how the soldiers, who guarded the sepulchre, gave away the body of the King, according to the (changed) position of the tombstone Why did they not serve the rock of justice? They should have either put back the stone, or adored the resurgent (Christ), saying with us 'For he is alive, alive with God, Alleluia'".

"Erubescat Judaeus infelix qui dicit Christum ex Joseph semine esse natum." (Ibid., p. 433)

"May the wretched Jew blush for saying that Christ was born out of the seed of Joseph".

"Sit etiam signorum sonitus, Domine, Judeis et perfidis terrificatio valida resipiscenda a malitia..." (Liber ordinum, ed. Férotin, Paris, 1904) This is, according to Férotin, the oldest formula for the blessing of bells.

"Let also their clamorous sounding, (of the bells) be a strong deterrent to Jews and traitors, lest they take courage for new wickedness..."

"Lugeat carnalis Judaeus, sed spiritalis gaudeat Christianus..." (Ibid., p. 423)

"Let the carnal Jew mourn, but the spiritual Christian may rejoice..."

Footnotes continued from Page 3.

"Saevienti diabolo per ministeria Judaeorum formam
servi nihil peccati habentis objecit..." (From the
Breviarium juxta ritum S Ordinis Praedicatorum
/Dominican Order/ Tournay 1894, vol. I Good Friday;
from the Sermons of Pope Leo I, p. 407)

"With the help of the Jews the sinless servant
of God was thrown to the raving Devil "

(Contra Judaeos) "O natio nefandi generis / cur gratiae
donis abuteris?" (From Dom Ulysses Chevalier,
Repertorium hymnologicum, vol II, p. 213, No.13302,
Louvain, 1897.)

"O nation of infamous character, why do you abuse
the gifts of God's grace?"



Within the public worship of the Church, there are a number of passages and statements expressing hostility to the Jewish people. For the most part, these are found in the New Testament lectionaries. Occasionally, a hostile comment drawn from the New Testament actually becomes a part of the Mass. For example. "Tradent enim vos in conciliis, et in synagoga suis flagellabunt vos..." (Commune Apostolorum et Evangelistarum, Vesperale Rom.) "They will hand you over in meetings and in their synagogues they will whip you..." This phrase is repeated during the Mass on the occasion of every memorial day of an Apostle or Evangelist.

In addition, some medieval hymns, several of which are still in liturgical use, are particularly prejudicial to Jews. We quote only a few instances

Wipo's sequence for Easter (Victimae paschali laudes)
Credendum est magis solae Mariae veraci
Quam Judaeorum turbae fallaci

You should put more trust in Mary, the true one,
Than in the horde of lying Jews.

Guilelmus Secundus (Meditationes circa mysteria
passionis Domini)
Judaei Jesum Reum Mortis Conclamant.

Bos herum noscit rationis expertus
Sedulo impensas redimens labore,
Te suum quaerit scelerata proles
Perdere Patrem

The Jews demand that Jesus be condemned to death

Even a slave, stupid as an ox, recognizes his
master and repays his expense with useful work;
But this heinous brood would fain
Ruin Thee, their Father!

While the texts and chants contained in the liturgy we have, in this memorandum, centered our attention on that area of Catholic public worship which is considered most critical in the formulation of attitudes toward Jews and Judaism the liturgy of the triduum, and the homilies based upon them. The triduum is the peak and climax of the Christian year. It stands out from all other holy days. It is the nucleus of the most ancient Christian worship. A great and extensive homiletic literature has evolved dealing with the triduum, and it is here that anti-Jewish sentiments and interpretations accumulate in their most concentrated form.

Moreover, history records that this period of the Christian calendar was often attended by the most harsh and vicious manifestations of anti-Semitism, by the notorious ritual blood libels, and by pogroms and massacres of the Jews. The medieval Hebrew chronicles attest to the widespread suffering that Jews endured at the hands of the populace during Holy Week.¹ Similar evidence is contained in the chronicles of the Christian historians of that period.² A contemporary acknowledgment of the relationship between the liturgy of the Holy Week and the mistreatment of Jews is found in the writing of Gregory Baum, O.S.A.

. .the days of Holy Week were the most dangerous ones of the year for medieval Jewry. The people, excited by the liturgy depicting the crime of "the Jews" would, on leaving the Church, molest and maltreat the Jewish population. In some areas the humiliation of the Jews took place even in Church as part of the ceremony.³

1. Emek habakha, ed. M. Wiener, Leipzig, 1858, pp.30,36,51, 56, 59, 63, et passim.

Liturgy in the Vernacular

All passages which are susceptible to anti-Jewish interpretation and which have been used to justify harsh anti-Jewish messages in past centuries and anti-Jewish sentiments in both past and present, are all the more dangerous when they are (1) said in the vernacular, (2) elaborated upon in subsequent homily.

Footnotes cont'd from p.5

2. "Abud Mogontiam Judei numero virorum ac mulierum mille et 14 interfecti sunt et maxima pars civitatis exusta est..."
(Pertz, Mon. Wirziburgenses ad ann. 1096, II, 246)

"Near Mayence, a thousand and fourteen Jews, men and women, were killed and a large part of the city burned."

"Hoc anno (1420) Dominus Albertus Quintus dux Austriae captis omnibus Judaeis in tota Austria, in Octava Ascensionis Domini sub ortum solis et plurimis conversis ad fidem, tandem in feria quarta ante diem Pascae sequentis anni videlicet 21 omnes nondum converti volentes utriusque sexus fecit comburi sub una eademque hora, cremati sunt in Vienna 110 solidi utriusque sexus." (Oefelius, Rerum Boicarum scriptores, [Chronicon Joannis Staindelii], in Mon. Germaniae, [ed Pertz], I and II.)

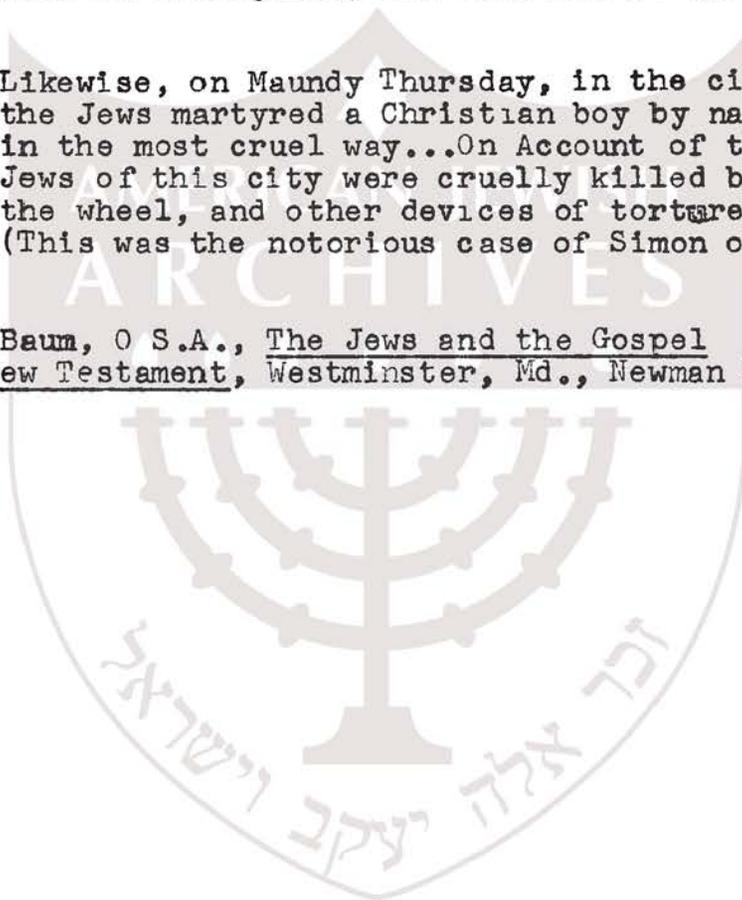
"In this year (1420) the duke of Austria, the Lord Albert V, took all Jews of Austria prisoner, then, in the week after Ascension Day, right after dawn, many converted to the faith, but on Wednesday of Holy Week of the following year, he had the twenty-one who were still not willing to convert, of both sexes, burnt at the stake at one and the same hour, in Vienna 110 were burned of both sexes."

Footnotes cont'd. from p. 6

"Item in die Coenae in civitate Tridentina Judaei martyrisaverunt puerum quendam Christianum nomine Simonem, crudelissime. . Et ob hoc Judaei in eadem civitate crudeliter per ignem, rotas et alia poenarum genera sunt puniti et interfecti. (1475)"
(Chronicon Salisburgense, ed. Pez, II, p. 437)

"Likewise, on Maundy Thursday, in the city of Trent the Jews martyred a Christian boy by name of Simon in the most cruel way...On Account of this all the Jews of this city were cruelly killed by fire, the wheel, and other devices of torture. (1475)
(This was the notorious case of Simon of Trent.)

- 3 Gregory Baum, O S.A., *The Jews and the Gospel* A Reexamination of the New Testament, Westminster, Md., Newman Press, 1961,p.10.



II THE TRIDUUM

Within the liturgy of the triduum there are three categories of passages to be considered. These are

- A. Readings from the New Testament lectionary
- B. Passages from patristic literature
- C. Liturgical poetry

Let us consider these three categories separately.

A. New Testament Lectionary

The main lessons of Holy Week are taken from the Fourth Gospel¹, which, as is commonly recognized, is the gospel most frequently used as the basis for the vilification of the Jews and as justification for anti-Jewish measures.

"There can be no doubt that John's gospel has often served as a justification for the contempt in which the Jewish people were held and even for the injustices and violence with which they were treated. The hostile passages which we find in the Church fathers likening synagogues to temples of the devil and making each individual Jew a co-operator with evil spirits in the fight against Christ's kingdom, have their literary origin in the Gospel of John... when the whole history of Christian hatred of the Jews is told and the account given of the pretended motives for it drawn from the New Testament, an impressive case could be made for the author of the Fourth Gospel being the father of Christian anti-Semitism."²

1. Cf. H. Schmidt, S.J., Introductio in Liturgiam Occidentalem, Rome, 1960, p. 516 ff.

"Sine ullo dubio, Evangelium S. Joannis in Quadragesima (immo in toto tempore paschali) gaudet praedilectione speciali praesertim autem tribus ultimis hebdomadis ante Dominicam Resurrectionis...nam in istis Evangeliiis S. Joannis lateret antiquissimum systema lectionis continuae de S. Scriptura .."

Undoubtedly, the Gospel of St. John enjoys a special predilection during Quadragesima (indeed in the whole Easter Season), but particularly during the last three weeks before Resurrection Sunday...for in these lessons of St. John rest the oldest system of continuous reading from Holy Scripture...

2. Baum, op.cit., pp.98-99 (Father Baum maintains that the gospels are not anti-Jewish in themselves, but have been erroneously used to support or justify anti-Semitism.)

B. Patristic Literature - St. Augustine's Lessons

If the gospel lessons of the triduum depict the Jews as a base and villainous people, motivated only by hatred and vengeance, the patristic literature -- which is the only homiletic literature elevated into the integral service of the triduum -- unfortunately serves to reinforce this defamatory stereotype.

Lectio V

Nostis qui conventus erat malignantium Judaeorum, et quae multitudo erat operantium iniquitatem. Quam iniquitatem? Quia voluerunt occidere Dominum Jesum Christum. Tanta opera bona, inquit, ostendi vobis. propter quod horum me vultis occidere? Pertulit omnes infirmos eorum, curavit omnes languidos eorum, praedicavit regnum caelorum, non tacuit vitia eorum, ut ipsa potius eis displicerent, non medicus, a quo sanabantur. His omnibus curationibus ejus ingrati, tamquam multa febre phrenetici, insanientes in medicum qui venerat curare eos, excogitaverunt consilium perdendi eum tamquam ibi volentes probare, utrum vere homo sit, qui mori possit, an aliquid super homines sit, et mori se non permittat. Verbum ipsorum agnoscimus in Sapientia Salomonis . Morte turpissima, inquit, condemnemus eum. Interrogemus eum erit enim respectus in sermonibus illius. Si enim vere Filius Dei est, liberet eum.

Translation

You know about the council of maligning Jews and whose was the conspiracy of wrong-doers. What wrong? For they intended to kill the Lord Jesus Christ. So many deeds of mercy have I shown you, says he, for which of those do you want to kill me? He supported their weak ones, cured all of their sick, preached the Kingdom of Heaven, did not gloss over their vices silently, so that they would lose pleasure in their sins, not in the physician, by whom they might be healed! Yet for all his loving endeavors they thanked him not, like frenzied by a delirious fever, whose fury went against the physician who came to heal them, they hit upon the plan to do away with him. Thus they meant to probe, whether he was a man, who could be put to death, or something superhuman, who would not permit himself to die. Their words we recognize in the Wisdom of Solomon.

"Let him be sentenced to an ignominious death, and thus we shall put him to the test, then in his own way he shall find deliverance. If he is God's Son indeed, God will deliver His Son."

Lectio VI

Exacuerunt tamquam gladium linguas suas. Non dicant Judaei Non occidimus Christum Etenim propterea eum dederunt judici Pilato, ut quasi ipsi a morte ejus viderentur immunes Nam cum dixisset eis Pilatus Vos eum occidite, responderunt Nobis non licet occidere quemquam. Iniquitatem facinoris sui in judicem hominem refundere volebant sed numquid Deum judicem fallebant? Quod fecit Pilatus, in eo ipso quod fecit, aliquantum particeps fuit sed in comparatione illorum, multo ipse innocentior. Institit enim quantum potuit, ut illum ex eorum manibus liberaret nam propterea flagellatum produxit ad eos Non persequendo Dominum flagellavit, sed eorum furori satisfacere volens ut vel sic jam mitescerent, et desinerent velle occidere, cum flagellatum viderent Fecit et hoc. At ubi perseveraverunt, nostis illum lavisse manus, et dixisse, quod ipse non fecisset, mundum se esse a morte illius. Fecit tamen. Sed si reus, quia fecit vel invitus illi innocentes, qui coegerunt ut faceret? Nullo modo Sed ille dixit in eum sententiam, et jussit eum crucifigi, et quasi ipse occidit et vos, o Judaei, occidistis Unde occidistis? Gladio linguae aculistis enim linguas vestras Et quando percussistis, nisi quando clamastis Crucifige, crucifige?

Translation

They sharpened their tongues like a sword Let not the Jews say we did not kill Jesus Christ For exactly this was in their minds, when they handed Him over to Pilate, so that they themselves might appear innocent of His death .For, when Pilate said to them you kill Him, they replied we are not permitted to kill anyone They wanted to shift the iniquity of their crime to a human judge but, did they deceive the Divine judge? Whatever Pilate did, he was, to a certain extent, an accessory but in comparison with them [the Jews] he was much more innocent. He endeavored, to the best of his ability, to deliver Him from their hands thus he displayed Him to them scourged He did not scourge the Lord in order to persecute Him, but because he wanted to satisfy their fury so that they might relent and desist from wishing to kill Him when they had seen Him scourged. This, too, he did But when they

persevered, you know that he washed his hands and said that, as it was not his doing, he was innocent of His death. This, too, he did. But if Pilate is guilty, because he did what he was bade by them, are they innocent who forced Pilate to act? In no way. Yet he pronounced the verdict and commanded Him to be crucified, and thus killed Him, as it were. But you, O Jews, have killed Him. In which way have you killed Him? With the sword of the tongue, for you sharpened your tongues. And when did you slay Him, but when you cried out crucify, crucify?



These excerpts incorporate accusations against the Jewish people that have become the refrain of anti-Semites throughout the ages. The Jews, as a people, are depicted as merciless and vindictive. They are held collectively and unilaterally responsible for the Crucifixion, and their stigmatization as a deicide people is clear.

While the inclusion of these excerpts in the liturgy is a venerable tradition,¹ there exist many more lenient and favorable comments by St. Augustine himself (Sermo ad Judaeos) and by other fathers of the Church. It is regrettable that these passages -- which strengthen rather than balance the negative impact of the gospel lessons -- were selected.

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1. The custom of inserting patristic commentaries of the Psalter in the nocturns antedates Gregory the Great, as he advised his bishops (Epist. XII, 24) "Dic (Mariano episcopo) ut commenta psalmodum legi ad vigiliis faciat." (Cf. C.Callewaert, J.D.C., De Brevarii Romani Liturgia, II., Bruges, 1939, p.124) The definite reference to St. Augustine's commentaries in the nocturn of Good Friday seems to appear for the first time in the Ordo Rom. 28 (ca. 800), contemporary in the Cod. Parisinus 974, where Duchesne located the primary sources more than sixty years ago. (Cf. Mgr. L. Duchesne, Christian Worship, 3rd ed., London 1903, p. 455, also H. Schmidt, S. J., Hebdomada Sancta II., Rome, 1957) Callewaert believes that the regular patristic lesson in the second nocturn was a consequence of St. Benedict's rule, whereas Mgr. Battifol takes it a "purely Roman creation". (Cf. Mgr. P. Battifol, History of the Breviary p. 526 Rome, 3rd ed. N. Y. 1912, p. 92)

C. Liturgical Poetry -- The Improperia

In the triduum, the most dramatic of all litanies are the Improperia. These verses, which represent the crucified Jesus indicting his own people in powerful and emotional language, have a strong potential anti-Jewish impact, unfortunately, the commentaries and homilies on this litany almost invariably interpret the indictment as directed solely against the Jewish people (From the viewpoint of the Jewish scholar, the Improperia are particularly offensive because they are a deliberate inversion of a Jewish prayer of thanksgiving to God³) In America, the significance of this litany is magnified by its recitation in English by the entire congregation.

Latin Text

- R Popule meus, quid feci tibi? aut in quo contristavi te?
responde mihi.
- (1) Quia eduxi te de terra Aegypti parasti crucem Salvatori tuo.
R. (Trisagion)
- (2) Quia eduxi te per desertum quadraginta annis, et manna cibavi te, et introduxi in terram satis optimam, parasti crucem Salvatori tuo.
R. (Trisagion)
- (3) Quid ultra debui facere tibi, et non feci? Ego quidem plantavi te vineam meam speciosissimam et tu facta es mihi nimis amara
- (3a) aceto namque sitim meam potasti et lancea perforasti latus Salvatori tuo.
R. (Trisagion)
- (4) Ego propter te flagellavi Aegyptum cum primogenitis suis et tu me flagellatum tradidisti

³See Appendix A for remarks on the origin of the Improperia.

- R Popule meus...
- (5) Ego te eduxi de Aegypto, demerso Pharaone in mare Rubrum;et tu me tradidisti principibus sacerdotum
R. Pópule meus...
- (6) Ego ante te aperui mare et aperuisti lancea latus meum
R Popule meus...
- (7) Ego ante te praeivi columna nubis,et tu me duxisti ad praetorium Pilati.
R. Popule meus...
- (8) Ego te pavi manna per desertum,et tu me caecidisti alapis et flagellis.
R. Popule meus...
- (9) Ego te potavi aqua salutis de petra et tu me potasti felle et aceto.
R. Popule meus. .
- (10) Ego propter te Chananaeorum reges percussi et tu percussisti arundine caput meum.
R. Popule meus...
- (11) Ego dedi tibi sceptrum regale; et tu dedisti capiti meo spineam coronam.
R. Popule meus...
- (12) Ego te exaltavi magna virtute,et tu me suspendisti in patibulo crucis.
R. Popule meus...

English Translation¹

O My People, what have I done unto thee? Or in what have I offended thee? Answer Me. Because I led thee out of the land of Egypt, thou hast prepared a Cross for thy Savior. R. (Trisagion)

V Because I led thee out through the desert in forty years, and fed thee with manna, and brought thee into a very good land, thou hast prepared a Cross for thy Savior.. R (Trisagion)

V What more should I have done, and did it not? Behold I

¹My Lenten Missal, explained by Rev. Joseph F. Stedman, Confraternity of the Precious Blood, New York, 1941. ("Three Hours Agony" Service) pp. 380 ff 381,382.

have planted thee as My fairest vine, and thou hast become very bitter unto Me, for thou hast quenched My thirst with vinegar, and with a lance hast thou pierced thy Savior's Side

R. (Trisagion)

V For thee did I scourge Egypt and its firstborn, and thou hast given Me over to be scourged ..

R O My People

V I led thee out of Egypt, overwhelming Pharaoh in the Red Sea, and thou hast delivered Me to the chief priests .

R O My People..

V I opened the sea before thee, and thou hast opened My Side with a lance

R O My People .

V I went before thee in a pillar of cloud, and thou hast led me before the seat of Pilate ..

R O My People .

V I have fed thee with manna through the desert, and thou hast beaten me with blows and lashes

R O My People.

V I gave thee the water of salvation to drink from the rock, and thou hast given Me gall and vinegar to drink

R. O My People. .

V For thee I struck the kings of the Chanaanites, and thou hast struck My Head with a reed

R. O My People.

V I gave thee a royal sceptre, and thou hast given My Head a crown of thorns

R O My People .

V With great power I lifted thee up, and thou hast hung me upon the gibbet of the Cross

R O My People

The "people" who are accused of such great treachery and faithlessness are the Jews, since it was the Jewish people for whom God performed the acts specified in the poem. And, lest there should remain any doubt that the Jews are the object of this attack, the commentaries and homilies based on the Improperia

(indeed, on the entire triduum) make this abundantly clear. In fact, what a great opportunity has been lost here! Authoritative commentary could do much to mitigate the unfortunate effects of the Improperia, the patristic literature and the lectionary. It could provide the necessary background, explain, for example, that in the Gospel of John the term "the Jews" is unfortunately used to describe only the enemies of Jesus, it could caution the faithful against misinterpretation, universalize and internalize the Church's understanding of sin and redemption. For the most part, however, the commentaries do exactly the opposite, they point out and specify the guilt of the Jews and absolve the Romans of historical responsibility, and mankind of theological responsibility. They are often more vindictive and hostile toward the Jews than the liturgical passages upon which they, often falsely, elaborate.

III COMMENTARIES

We are aware that commentaries are not directly inspired by the Sacred Congregation of Rites. Nevertheless, they could not exist without the liturgy on which they are based, and they cannot be separated from the liturgy with regard to their impact upon the feelings and attitudes of Catholics toward Jews. Negative commentaries about Jews may be stimulated by other, isolated passages in the gospels and the liturgy, but in the triduum, the most negative and hostile gospel passages, patristic literature and the Improperia all converge together at the most solemn and important of the Christian holy days, and it is here that the commentaries reinforce the most accusatory and vindictive aspects of the liturgy.

The following illustrations are excerpted from contemporary commentaries on the liturgy of the triduum, all written by priests or members of orders. Here, again, the Breviary and its commentaries have not been considered. These examples are all drawn from homilies on public worship, and they are typical, not exceptional, excerpts from approximately 50 commentaries scrutinized.

1. J.F. Stedman, ed., My Lenten Missal, New York, 1956

p. 269 (Thursday of Passion Week)

In the EPISTLE she [the Church] asks us to study the prayer of Azarias. His Jewish nation was suffering an exile of seventy years. In captivity they were atoning for the worship of false gods. In these modern days, the Jews are still dispersed in every nation, in a condition worse than exile. They have been atoning these 1900 years for the greatest of all crimes, committed when an entire nation rejected, crucified, and shed the Blood

of the Son of God Amongst us Christians they are witnesses of a lost vocation, without 'prince, or prophet, or sacrifice,' or a temple in Jerusalem, divine punishment hangs over them until the end of time, when God, because of His promises to the Prophets, will, in some extraordinary way, bring them to believe and live in Jesus Christ.

p. 284 (Saturday of Passion Week)

. . .their [the Jews'] hatred of Him grew in proportion as He revealed His love for them the more and more. He permitted the destruction of their homeland as a correction, Worldly happiness caused them to neglect God and soul. Worldly suffering brought them to their knees...

2. Louis Rouyer, O. P., Le Mystère Pascal. Paris, Editions du Cerf, 1950.

p. 339

...quand bien même ceux que en sont l'objet ne lui répondent que par des rebuffades, et finalement par le deicide. Mais, quel sera leur sort, si cette extrémité n'a pu les émouvoir? Si cet amour les condamne, pouvons-nous dire, retournant le mot de saint Paul qui les délivrera?

However, the very people who were the object [of His love] answered Him with rebuffs, and finally by deicide. But what will be their lot, if this supreme sacrifice could not move them? If that love condemns them, can we say anything except, in the words of St. Paul Who will save them?

3. Prosper Gueranger, O.S.B., The Liturgical Year, Vol. 6, Passiontide and Holy Week, translated by Laurence Shepherd. Westminster, Md., Newman Press, 1947.

p. 312

Jerusalem is doomed to be a slave, and a slave to infidels, to all but the very end of time She drew this frightful curse upon herself by the crimes she committed against the Son of God .

p. 321

The Synagogue, having crucified the Son of God, did its utmost to destroy the Church, by putting many of her children to death.

p. 328

The seventh psalm declares the vengeance of God on those who excite His anger. It shows us what will happen to the Synagogue...it shall drink the cup of God's wrath, even to 'The very dregs thereof'.

p. 458

Like the tiger that grows fiercer as he sees blood, so is Israel at the sight of Jesus after His scourging.

1. If the Jews prosper in a country during a certain time, this is interpreted as indication that they are unscrupulous materialists and worshippers of the Golden Calf.
2. If the Jews are oppressed or their lives are made miserable by temporal power, this is interpreted as proof that they are a despised people, fugitives and wanderers till the end of time. The suffering of the Jewish people is seen, not as an indication of man's brutality and inhumanity to his fellow man, but as proof that the Jews are a cursed people " .it is from the lowly condition, inflicted upon the Jews by Christians, that the same Christians then pretend to prove the victory of the Church over the Synagogue and the superiority of the Christian faith."¹
3. The language of the Old Testament and its sense of justice is in general criticized as wrathful and short of pity, stern and merciless. However, when this language turns against the Jews, as in the Prophetic literature, then the Christian theologians consider it eminently suitable and adequate. Instead of adopting the self-critical and self-corrective perspective embodied in the Prophetic writings, and applying the same standards to the Christian community, the vast majority of commentators use these passages as a polemic against the Jews.

1. Baum, op. cit., p. 7

4. Nearly all homilies stress the fact that the Jews are dispersed as a people and that they do not possess Jerusalem, the Holy City. Such comments are not only anachronistic in the light of recent world developments, but they give the unfortunate impression that the commentators are making a political judgment about current events. (In fact, the mentality formed by these traditional interpretations may predispose a writer to view current history with prejudiced eyes)¹



1 Cf, e g., Civiltà Cattolica, April 1938 "Concerning the Question of Zionism", we read "Judaism is a deeply corrupted Religion, it is nationalistic inasmuch as it is the religion of corrupt messianism."

IV CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sacra enim Liturgia ut humanis, ita divinis constat elementis, haec autem, ut patet, cum a Divino Redemptore constituta fuerint, nullo modo ab hominibus mutari possunt, illa vero, prout temporum, rerum animorumque necessitates postulant, varias commutationes habere possunt, quas Ecclesiastica Hierarchia, S. Spiritus auxilio innixa, comprobaverit... inde progrediens **incrementum** proficiscitur, quo peculiare excolendae religionis consuetudines ac peculiaris pietatis opera pedetemptim evolvuntur, et quorum tenuis dumtaxat iudicium superioribus aetatibus habebatur....

..Ita pari modo, cum de sacra Liturgia agitur, qui ad antiquos redire ritus consuetudinesque velit, novas repudiando normas, quae ex providentis Dei consilio ob mutatas rerum condiciones fuere inductae, non is procul dubio, ut facile cernere est, sapienti rectoque movetur studio.

Pius XII, Encycl. "Mediator Dei", pars IV.

We follow here the officially endorsed paraphrase given by C.R.A. Cunliffe of these celebrated passages from the Papal encyclical

In 'Mediator Dei' the Pope distinguishes between the divine elements in the liturgy, which can never be changed, and the human elements of the liturgy, which were devised by the Church and are subject to change by her authority. The purpose of the latter is to engender in those who are to receive grace through the divine elements of the liturgy the optimum dispositions which will enable them to profit to the full.¹

Of the passages which we have considered in this memorandum regarding the liturgy of the triumph, the Improperia and the lessons from St. Augustine's treatise on the Psalms are of human origin and character. Equally of human origin are the commentaries and homilies on the liturgy, whether written for educational or devotional purposes.

1. C.R. A. Cunliffe, English in the Liturgy, London, 1956, pg.50

In the interest of better relations between the adherents of the historical monotheistic religions, we request the Church to seek ways of mitigating the impact of the liturgy of the triduum. Were the Church to select passages which would accurately convey its true attitude toward the Jewish people, or to produce or stimulate authoritative interpretation or commentary which would, for once and for all, lift the charge or implication of deicide from the Jewish people, it would make a great contribution to increased understanding between Catholics and Jews.

Most Jews are profoundly convinced that the charge of deicide, uttered throughout the centuries has been a central factor in the persistent anti-Semitism of Western civilization.

Serious and thoughtful Catholic scholars have agreed that misinterpretations of Catholic scripture and teachings -- misinterpretations sometimes spread among the populace by ecclesiastics and church documents -- contributed to anti-Jewish prejudice up to, and including, the present. Yet, in a commentary on the Impropria written in 1950, only five years after the greatest planned slaughter in human history, we encounter the term "deicide," quite clearly intended to apply to the Jews, written by a responsible and learned Catholic author.¹

1. Cf. comment by Louis Bouyer. "...quand bien même ceux qui en sont l'objet ne lui répondent que par des rebuffades, et finalement par le deicide..." (supra p.15)

That such a provocative charge may be found in Catholic homily five years after the horrors of the Nazi death camps is a source of deep disturbance. Not only does commentary of this sort misrepresent the intentions of the Church, it must, of necessity, create anxiety and suspicion among Jews.

In the light of the Church's authoritative and self-critical teaching, is it not time to put an end to the un-Christian use of the Jews as a scapegoat people?

We respectfully request that the Church, rectify, according to its own precedents and through its own methods, the passages in liturgy and teaching which, in themselves, or by way of homily, stimulate and reinforce the slanderous concept of the Jews as a cursed, despised, deicide people.

At this critical time in human history, the adherents of the great monotheistic, revealed religions must bend their efforts to do away with the barriers of suspicion and prejudice which have created bitterness and bloodshed in the past. We are faced, on the one hand, with the possibility of a man-made Armageddon and, on the other, with the threat of totalitarian anti-religious oppression. If we are to confront these great challenges, no fellow man who lives by God's commandments should be defamed or humiliated.

While the social and political realities of our time warrant such a response, our appeal is based primarily on moral grounds -- the principles of charity and the demands of justice.

Quod si delibatio sancta est,
et massa, et si radix sancta,
et rami. (Rom. XI 16)

Secundum evangelium quidem
inimici propter vos, secundum
electionem, charissimi propter
patres. (Rom XI 28)

Pax omni operanti bonum Judaeo
primum, et graeco, non enim est
acceptio personarum apud Deum
(Rom II 10, 11)

For if the firstfruit be holy,
so is the lump also and if the
root be holy, so are the branches.
(Rom. XI 16)

As concerning the gospel, indeed,
they are enemies for your sake
but are touching the election,
they are most dear for the sake
of the fathers.
(Rom. XI 28)

But glory and honour and peace
to every one that worketh good
to the Jew first, and also to the
Greek.
For there is no respect of persons
with God.
(Rom II 10,11)

November 17, 1961

4/30/61

Tanamban

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THE IMAGE OF THE JEWS IN CATHOLIC TEACHING

A Memorandum to

THE SECRETARIAT FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY



Submitted by

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

New York

I. CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

Spiritual Man at the Crossroads

The middle years of the twentieth century have ushered in a period of profound change, unparalleled in the history of mankind.

Titanic forces--technical, intellectual and spiritual--are at work. Atomic energy, new methods of communication and travel, the population explosion and the dawn of space exploration, are remaking our society. Political and economic upheaval is the order of the day, as rich nations, blind and complacent, are faced with the awakening of the world's underprivileged masses. Established religions everywhere are confronted by the legions of those who either deny spiritual values, or else wear a false religious badge while seeking only success, material comfort or power.

Under the impact of these forces, a totally new age has come into being in less than 25 years. Two overwhelming factors dominate this age. First there are no islands any more, what happens anywhere on earth happens next door to us. Second man is now able to destroy himself in a matter of minutes.

For these reasons, man's actions today have far wider repercussions than formerly-- for better or for worse. The mighty forces at large in today's world can spell spiritual division and physical annihilation, or they can speed man on his search for unity and spiritual fulfillment.

Catholic-Jewish Tension

The state of the world thus calls for a re-appraisal of values among all those concerned with the spiritual destiny of man. In this grave hour, His Holiness Pope John XXIII has called an Ecumenical Council, the first in nearly a century.

The American Jewish Committee would like to take the opportunity afforded by the calling of this Council to lay before the Head of the Church a matter of deep concern the question whether Catholic teaching about Jews--particularly in the United States--is fostering prejudice and hostility.

Tensions between Jews and Catholics are centuries old, but the dangers of the present day make the issue more urgent than ever before. Whatever may have been true in past ages, prejudice against any religious group today inevitably weakens the entire fabric of society, degrades both the haters and the victims, and saps the spiritual strength of all mankind. Hostility among believers of different creeds serves only to advance the cause of anti-religious forces. In this hour of peril, all those who share the spiritual heritage of the Bible must stand together if humanity is to survive.

The Christian Conscience and the Jews

Jews have lived in the Christian world since its beginning, yet their status among the Christian majority has almost always been precarious. On one hand, the Church has protected them, Popes and Church Councils, in medieval and modern times, have condemned anti-Jewish propaganda, violence and persecution, and

for five hundred years (from the 11th until the 16th century) Jews enjoyed safety in the Papal states. But, on the other hand, Jews in nearly every century have undergone untold suffering and degradation at the hands of supposed Christians, sometimes with the acquiescence of ecclesiastical authority.

This ambiguous attitude of the Christian world toward the Jews has persisted into our own time. When Hitlerism -- an essentially pagan movement generated chiefly by social and economic forces unrelated to religion -- unleashed the most terrible of all persecutions, some devout and valiant Christians courageously saved Jewish lives, but the majority of Christendom stood indifferently by. The Jews will not forget their rescuers, but neither can they forget the six million whom no one rescued.

How could this diabolical crime have come to pass, in a country of ancient Christian traditions, unless the Christian conscience had been numbed -- unless a strong undercurrent of anti-Jewish feeling ran through the Christian culture? In the days of the death camps as in those of the Black Death, many nominal Christians must have felt that the Jews were outside the human community, that they somehow deserved their fate, and that the rest of mankind was not responsible for them. It was this hostility, contempt and indifference which made possible the greatest mass murder in history.

Teachings About the Jews

It is appalling, therefore, to find that fifteen years after the catastrophe our culture still is permeated by

religious prejudice -- the result of a variety of social, psychological and political forces -- and that the old hostility, contempt and indifference are being transmitted to a new generation

Churches must share some of the responsibility for this state of affairs. Religious bodies invariably condemn anti-Semitism in principle, but often give sanction to it by some of their teachings. Thus, Catholic religious teaching today contains defamatory misstatements and omissions which may encourage hostility and contempt for Jews

Such teachings appear in all their monstrous absurdity when read against the true relationship between Catholicism and Judaism. The close historical and spiritual ties between the two faiths were forcefully recalled in 1938 by Pope Pius XI

"Anti-Semitism is . . . a movement in which we, as Christians, cannot have any part whatever. Spiritually, we are Semites."^{1*}

Among the influences by which anti-Semitism is perpetuated, faulty religious teaching is one of the most insidious, because it permits the erroneous belief that anti-Semitic ideas have the approval of the highest moral and spiritual authority.

For this reason, the American Jewish Committee considers it a duty to bring the matter to the attention of the Head of the Church, and to add its voice to those of others who ask for a

* Sources of quotations are listed at the end of this memorandum.

re-examination and revision of Catholic teaching materials concerning Jews, insofar as they violate the precepts of love and brotherhood

We do so without accusation and without rancor, moved solely by the belief that eradicating religious antagonism will greatly benefit both Christians and Jews, and will strengthen the spiritual forces in the world.

II AMERICAN ASPECTS

Prejudice a Danger to America

Because of certain historical and ethnic factors in American society, the problem of Catholic attitudes toward Jews in the United States has important civic and social implications in addition to its spiritual ones

The immense variety of religious faiths and national backgrounds among the American people makes it necessary to work steadily and rapidly toward the elimination of intergroup tensions -- not by persuading anyone to abandon his religion for that of the majority, nor by preaching syncretism in any form, but by creating a climate free from prejudice

To accomplish this end, Americans of all faiths in recent years have made special efforts to do away with all religious sanctions of bigotry. The election of a Catholic to the Presidency of the United States is in part the result of these efforts

Anti-Semitism in America

Jews have always lived peacefully in America, even though they have been, and to some extent still are, subjected to certain unofficial forms of discrimination, such as quota restrictions in college admission, and ineligibility to some clubs and residential areas. Occasional expressions of flagrant anti-Semitic prejudice -- an epithet hurled at a Jewish child on the street, an anti-Jewish slur in conversation among Gentiles -- are usually dismissed as trivial

Yet, even in America's open, pluralistic society there runs an undercurrent of anti-Semitism. In times of political, economic and social stress, this current sometimes comes to the surface in irrational outbreaks that are far from trivial. Thus, in 1957-58, anti-Semitic violence accompanied mob resistance against the Negroes' demands for equality. Another series of outbreaks occurred in 1959-60, with some 800 acts of Nazi-style vandalism against synagogues, homes and other property.

Possible Sources of Bigotry

We believe the persistence of anti-Semitism thus evidenced cannot be explained solely in social and economic terms. Such explanations cannot by themselves account for the fact that the Jewish minority has been singled out as a target of prejudice in the most varied circumstances -- when they were many and when they were few, when they lived apart and when they were assimilated, when they were capitalists and when they sided with the working classes. There is at least a strong

possibility that anti-Semitic attitudes are strengthened by misguided religious notions

We note, for example, that racist agitators in America often pose as Christians and base their anti-Jewish appeals on such themes as God's alleged rejection of the Jews and the myth of the "cursed people." These and other defamatory notions are still widely current in religious publications. By propagating them, churches give unintentional sanction to false prophets.

Traditional notions of a kind likely to breed distrust and dislike of Jews may be repeated by writers of religious publications and passed by the Censor without awareness of their possible psychological effect. But the damage they can do to America's spiritual strength is no less for being unintentional. Of all the forces that might seriously impair America, none is more destructive than the prejudices that set citizens against one another.

More Than a National Problem

Because America's inner strength is of critical importance to the destiny of mankind, religious prejudice in the United States is not merely a national problem, but a danger to the world.

If the American nation is to remain united by bonds stronger than materialism, religious groups must not be content merely to condemn violent bigotry. They must recognize and correct erroneous teachings that keep bigotry alive, and thus strip prejudiced beliefs of any semblance of religious

sanction We think many Catholics in America, as elsewhere, would be eager to assist in this task if they were assured of the Vatican's support and encouragement.

III WHAT CATHOLICS LEARN ABOUT JEWS

Sources of Material Cited

What are the false charges against the Jews which still distort Catholic teaching, spreading old hatreds among a new generation of Americans? We find that such charges are similar to those identified by investigators in other countries They are documented below, in extracts from current Catholic teaching materials

The extracts quoted are not an exhaustive collection They are merely examples encountered by the American Jewish Committee's Institute of Human Relations in surveying a random selection of approved parochial-school textbooks, plus a few other publications. However, the large number of objectionable passages found in these few, presumably typical, texts would seem to indicate that the problem is widespread

A comprehensive study of the ways in which Catholic teaching materials portray other religious, racial and ethnic groups is now in process at St. Louis University under the supervision of Father Trafford P Maher, S J Self-studies of Protestant and Jewish teaching materials have also been undertaken, the former at Yale University, the latter at Dropsie College

Portrayal of the Jews

Many of the Catholic textbooks we have examined take an exemplary attitude toward other groups in lessons on the social or civic responsibilities of Catholics. In this context, the tone is friendly and positive, human brotherhood and the contributions made by persons of different cultural and religious backgrounds are stressed. For example =

"A considerable number of Jews have made original contributions to American culture. Through newspaper and book publishing, the theater, motion picture production, and radio, others have assisted in the popular dissemination of information and culture. There is hardly a national group or a voice in the world that has not in some way left its mark upon our arts or daily living."²

The difficulties arise in passages that interpret Scripture or doctrine. When the discussion turns to such topics as the birth of Christianity, the conflict between the early Church and the synagogue, or the relationship between Jesus and his contemporaries, teaching about Jews often becomes uncharitable and distorted. The portrait painted often is so negative as to cancel out well-intentioned statements in other lessons. Jewish contributions to culture will hardly impress a student who is also taught, directly or indirectly, that the Jews are cursed by God as the murderers of Jesus.

Father Louis Hartman, C. Ss. R., General Secretary of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, has stated

"The New Testament quite clearly lays the chief responsibility for the death of Christ on a small but powerful group of men who could not claim to act as the rightly constituted head of the Jewish people. The rabble which they were able to rouse up to clamor for the death of Christ before Pilate's tribunal could not speak in the name of the whole Jewish people of that time and certainly not in the name of all later Jewish generations. The Gospels show that the vast majority of the Palestinian Jews with whom our Lord came in contact were very favorably inclined towards Him. Moreover, the bulk of the Jews at that time probably lived outside of Palestine, and apparently very few of these had even heard of Jesus of Nazareth until some decades later when the Apostles first preached to them.

"Historically speaking, therefore, there is no basis for the claim that the Jews of that time as a people were guilty of the death of Christ, and obviously there is not the slightest reason for bringing this accusation against their descendants of two thousand years later "3

Yet many of the texts examined by us make precisely that accusation, stating or implying that the Jews as a people are exclusively and collectively responsible for the death of the Son of God, and that they are a cursed people, condemned and rejected by God. A few examples follow

"The Jews wanted to disgrace Christ by having him die on the cross."⁴

"The vast majority of Jewish people...condemn Him to death as a blasphemer, and deliver Him up to the Romans to be crucified."⁵

"The chief priests took up a cry that put a curse on themselves and on Jews for all time 'His blood be on us and on our children!'"⁶

"Show that the Jews did not want Pilate to try Christ but to give permission for his death."⁷

"Again the Jews were changing the charge, as they had done in the religious trial. If one accusation didn't work, they would try another."⁸

"When did the Jews decide to kill Christ?"⁹

"He declared the divinity of Christ whom the Jews had crucified "¹⁰

"The curse of Christ and the subsequent decay of the [fig] tree symbolized the condemnation and the destruction of the Jewish people for their empty lives."¹¹

"The Jews as a nation refused to accept Christ, and since his time they have been wandering on the earth without a temple or a sacrifice and without the Messiah."¹²

"The Gentiles came to take the place of the Jews in Christ's Kingdom "¹³

"God separated Israel from the rest of the world

and gave it ample protection. He left it in the keeping of the leaders of the people, and from time to time, through His prophets, asked for results. The harsh treatment given these spokesmen of God reached a climax in the willful murder of Christ. As a consequence, these false leaders and their followers were rejected as the foundation of the Kingdom in favor of the Gentiles."¹⁴

"When they (the Jews) would not heed the Prophets, He sent His only-begotten Son to call them to repentance. Him also they put to death. Because of this fact, they were finally rejected by God and their rights to His Kingdom were given to others."¹⁵

Similarly, in the footnotes of an edition of the New Testament we find

(Commenting on St. Luke 23:31, "If it goes so hard with the tree that is still green, what will become of the tree that is already dried up?")

"This verse is generally understood to mean, 'If crucifixion is the lot of The Innocent, what is to be expected by the guilty (that is, the Jews)'"¹⁶

(Commenting on St. Matthew 23:29-32, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees it is for you to complete your father's reckoning") "To complete your father's reckoning? By killing the Son of God as their fathers had killed his prophets."¹⁷

And in a Lenten Missal we read

"His Jewish nation was suffering an exile of seventy years. In captivity they were atoning for the worship of false gods. In these modern days, the Jews are still dispersed in every nation, in a condition worse than exile. They have been atoning these 1900 years for the greatest of all crimes, committed when an entire nation rejected, crucified, and shed the Blood of the Son of God. Amongst us Christians they are witnesses of a lost vocation, without 'prince, or prophet, or sacrifice,' or a temple in Jerusalem, divine punishment hangs over them until the end of time, when God, because of His promises to the Prophets, will, in some extraordinary way, bring them to believe and live in Jesus Christ."¹⁸

Teachings like these are likely to instill the conviction that the Jews bear a collective guilt and somehow deserve the sufferings and persecutions that have marked their long history. This concept is extraordinarily invidious, because it cuts off the Jews from the common body of humanity and may make Catholics indifferent to the fate of their fellow human beings. If a child is taught that God has cursed and rejected the Jews, who will blame him for doing likewise?

Partiality in the Use of the Term "The Jews"

The suggestion that the Jewish people are guilty in a collective sense is frequently reinforced by partiality in the use of the word "Jews."

Thus, in some books, the enemies of Jesus are identified as Jews, while his friends and followers are not. For example, there is no mention of Jews in these passages

"Christ chose the twelve men who were to be the foundation of His Kingdom."¹⁹

"All together, numbering well over five thousand, they listened to the Master all day, forgetting even to eat "²⁰

"In the beginning of His public life, Jesus was held in great admiration by the people "²¹

Contrast these passages with the following -- particularly the first, in which history and logic are blatantly twisted

"It was on the day Christ raised Lazarus from the tomb that the Jews decided to kill him. Nevertheless, they were afraid of the people "²² (Were not "the people" also Jews?)

"Scripture tells us that Judas was watching for a chance to turn his Master over to the Jews "²³

"They were afraid to be seen by the Jews, for fear they might be put to death as their master was "²⁴

"The Jews stirred up the rabble against him "²⁵

"For what words of His did the Jews attempt for the second time to stone Him?"²⁶

In the examples just given, and in those that follow, the generic term "the Jews" is freely used in contexts in which actually only some Jews were involved. Merely by correcting these omissions and false emphases, much could be done to

change the erroneous impression that the Jews as a people hated Jesus and conspired toward his death

The name "Jews," thus generically used, is frequently coupled with alleged evil qualities

"Since Pilate could not find anything wrong with Christ, he decided to disfigure His pure and beautiful body so that even the bloodthirsty Jews would back down "27

"Jesus . . . was rejected by the leaders of the Jewish people because of their material and carnal minds "28

Time and again we find references to "the envious Jews," "the blind hatred of the Jews," and so forth. The repeated use of such phrases makes it possible for students to associate evil characteristics with all Jews, and to think of Jews as a hate-ridden, cruel and materialistic people

Many textbooks also show partiality in calling Jews by different names in Old and New Testament contexts. In lessons about the Old Testament, where the Jews are presented in friendly, positive fashion, they usually are named "Hebrews" or "Israelites." In New Testament lessons, where the prevailing attitude is negative and unfriendly, "Jews" is the commonly used term. Since that is the name in use today, the Catholic student is likely to associate Jews with the conflict described in the New Testament, but not with the living people to whom God revealed Himself, who upheld even through martyrdom the faith in the one and living God which made Christianity possible

The student is not made sufficiently aware that the "Hebrews" and "Israelites," who are praised for their loyalty and devotion to God, are the same people as the Jews.

Sweeping generalization, oversimplification and partiality in the use of names have long been recognized by scholars as stimulants for anti-Semitic attitudes. Thus Father Trafford P. Maher, already mentioned as one of the American Catholics concerned with the impact of such material on the minds of students, quotes an objectionable passage from a Catholic textbook

"The Jews, on the contrary, by the bad influence of their pride and hypocrisy, hindered the spread of the knowledge of God among other nations."²⁹

Comments: Father Maher

"Patently, the problem here is the broad sweep in the author's statement, his lack of care in the statement of the facts, and his apparent unawareness of what such a statement might do in the formation of the young reader's attitudes toward people in his own world."³⁰

The Pharisees

The treatment of the Pharisees in Catholic textbooks may be questioned on several grounds. No distinction is made among Pharisees, although the New Testament itself distinguishes between those who opposed and those who supported and befriended Jesus. No true religious motivation is ever ascribed to the Pharisees, nowhere is it suggested that Pharisees who opposed

Jesus might have done so out of sincere conviction. It is said, for example, that the Pharisees pretended to be shocked by Jesus' claims, the possibility that they might really have been shocked is never raised.

The Catholic student thus is given a picture of a group utterly debased, completely hypocritical, with nothing but hatred and willful blindness toward Jesus.

"No one has any sympathy for the Pharisees because they deliberately made themselves blind to the inspiring miracles and teaching of Christ."³¹

"The high priest and the rest of the Temple Gang /described as Pharisees and scribes/ played the part of hypocrite and looked horrified at what Christ said."³²

"Back of it all was the envy of the Temple Gang -- the better a man Christ was, the greater their hatred of him."³³

In his book on Christian catechetics and the Jews, Father Paul Démann writes

"The manner in which we approach and judge the Pharisees would seem to constitute a true test of the spirit of our teaching. Too often, instead of seeing in them, and in the reproaches that Jesus directed to them, the mirror of our own hypocrisies, our own narrowness, our own formalism, we are tempted to take exactly the same attitude toward them which

they were tempted to take toward the sinners and publicans To present the Pharisees in a historically and theologically accurate way means to show that their temptations, their sins, the reproaches addressed to them, are to be taken, not in a collective sense but rather in a permanent and universal sense, it means to understand and to make it understood that the question is not 'they (as against us),' but 'we beside them' "34

Nowhere in the materials examined by us are the Pharisees dealt with in the manner called for by Father Démann.

Unjust or Inaccurate Comparisons

In expounding Christianity, unjust and inaccurate comparisons with the Jewish faith are often made Judaism is depicted as a legalistic religion, concerned only with external observances, devoid of love, mercy and compassion Catholic students are not told that love of God and neighbor was first mentioned in the Old Testament and is just as obligatory there as in the New Gratuitous slurs on Judaism are introduced to heighten the contrast with Christianity

"The Jews believed that one should hate an enemy, but Christ taught the opposite "35 (Actually, St Paul's injunction, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him," Romans 12 20, is a direct quote from Proverbs 25 21.)

"No Jewish rabbi reads the Old Testament scriptures as faithfully as does the priest "36

"The first martyr was St. Stephen . who was stoned to death for defending the new Faith and the right of Gentiles (Non-Jews) to salvation "³⁷ (The implication is that St Stephen was killed for preaching salvation outside the Jewish faith Actually, Jews did not then and do not now deny that faiths other than their own may lead to salvation The rabbinic dictum, "All the righteous of the earth have a share in the world to come," was expressed almost a century before Jesus.)

"But little progress has been made in the conversion to any form of Christianity of groups who regard their race or religion as the antithesis of Christianity, such as the Jews and Mohammedans Both of these large bodies are more anti-Christian than they are pro-something "³⁸ (Jews are not a race, they practice their religion for its own values, not in opposition to another faith, and they do not consider Judaism "the antithesis of Christianity ")

In addition, Catholic history textbooks unwarrantedly accuse Jews of many evil deeds

"In order to divert the masses from what they believed the true origin of the fire, Nero, perhaps at the suggestion of the Jews*, charged it to the Christians "³⁹

* Underscore is ours

"The Jews no doubt* had insisted on wreaking vengeance on someone, after St Paul had escaped their fury by his appeal to Caesar."⁴⁰

"In 726 Leo the Issaurian (717-741), urged perhaps by Mohammedans and Jews* ordered the destruction of all images in the churches "⁴¹

Omissions

What is left out of a lesson may be as important in forming of attitudes and values as what is put in. By ignoring certain facts -- either intentionally or under the influence of unconscious prejudice -- authors of educational literature may stimulate or abet bigotry.

For example, it would be untrue to state that in the Middle Ages many Jews were moneylenders. But the statement would be misleading unless it were explained that Jews had few other ways of supporting themselves, being barred from guilds and forbidden to own land.

Some omissions likely to foster prejudice are illustrated here

1 The Jewish background of Christianity is often ignored. Many Catholics are largely unaware of Christianity's Jewish roots. Some passages give the impression that the Bible did not exist previous to the Catholic Church.

"God inspired men whom He chose to write the different smaller books which comprise it the Bible. There can be no doubt that the world must thank the Catholic Church for the Bible "⁴²

* Underscores are ours

2 There are no references to Judaism as a religion after the birth of Christianity Jewish religious practices, holy days, etc , are described only in the context of the ancient past The Catholic student is given the impression that Judaism as a faith ceased to exist with the founding of Christianity, or with the destruction of the Temple The Jews of later ages thus are made to appear, by implication, as an irreligious people Even though Catholics believe Christianity to be the fulfillment of Judaism, is there not a responsibility to mention that Judaism continues as a living faith?

3 Through omission of facts, later phases of Jewish history are presented in a false light For example

"The Jews, as religionists, were not subject to the Spanish Inquisition, but only as baptized Christians, known as Marranos Jews who practiced their own religion were not molested Jewish scholars admit that many Jews, of their own free will, embraced the Catholic Church, were baptized, followed Catholic practices, yet were insincere "43

(It is not mentioned that Jews who practiced their own religion were severely molested by the civil authorities if not by the Church. Most Marranos converted, not of their own free will, but under pressure and the threat of expulsion)

Summary

— Prejudiced teachings about Jews in the materials examined by us fall into certain categories

- 1 Slanderous interpretations (e g , sole and collective responsibility of the Jews for the Crucifixion, deicide, "cursed people", Jews rejected by God)
- 2 Oversimplifications and sweeping statements (e g., description of the Pharisees, partiality in the use of the term "Jews").
3. Unjust or inaccurate comparisons (e g., the religion of law vs. the religion of love)
4. Invidious use of language (e g , "carnal Jews," "bloodthirsty Jews").
5. Omissions (e g , Jewish roots of Christianity, continuity between Old and New Testaments).

IV DESTROYING THE ROOTS OF PREJUDICE

The Church's True Position

In the preceding pages we have cited many negative and hostile references to Jews and Judaism, which seem to contradict the Church's precepts of love and charity

We recognize, however, that these references -- especially those bearing on the central issue of the Passion -- do not reflect the true doctrine of the Church. That doctrine, formulated four centuries ago by the Council of Trent, rejects the view that the Crucifixion was a crime committed by the Jewish people, and places the responsibility on all mankind

"It was the peculiar privilege of Christ the Lord to have died when He Himself decreed to die, and to have died not so much by external violence as

by internal assent Should anyone inquire why the Son of God underwent His most bitter Passion, he will find that besides the guilt inherited from our first parents the principal causes were the vices and crimes which have been perpetrated from the beginning of the world to the present day and those which will be committed to the end of time "In this guilt are involved all those who fall frequently into sin, for as our sins consigned Christ the Lord to the death of the cross, most certainly those who wallow in sin and iniquity "crucify to themselves again the Son of God, as far as in them lies, and make a mockery of Him" (Hebrews 6 6) This guilt seems more enormous in us than in the Jews, since according to the testimony of the same Apostle 'If they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory' (I Corinthians 2 8), while we, on the contrary, professing to know Him, yet denying Him by our actions, seem in some sort to lay violent hands on Him.

" Men of all ranks and conditions were 'gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ' (Psalms 2 2). Gentiles and Jews were the advisers, the authors, the ministers of His Passion, Judas betrayed Him, Peter denied Him, and the rest deserted Him . "44

Nor are we unmindful of the Catholic forces that are striving today for greater harmony between Christians and Jews. In the following pages, some of these forces and their accomplishments are identified.

Liturgical Changes

That the Church is concerned about her influence on attitudes toward non-Catholics is indicated by certain changes in the liturgy made during the last six years. Thus, in 1955, the Sacred Congregation of Rites reintroduced the Flectamus genua for the Jews during the Good Friday service, and in 1958, after the accession of Pope John XXIII, reference to "perfidia Judaei" and "perfidia Judaica" were removed from the Good Friday prayer. In 1959, the following sentence was dropped from the Act of Consecration of the Human Race (celebrated as part of the Mass of the Sacred Heart, the Blessing of the Holy Sacrament, the Feast of Christ the King, and on the first Friday of each month)

"Look, finally, with eyes of pity upon the children of that race which was for so long a time thy chosen people, and let thy Blood, which was once invoked upon them in vengeance, now descend upon them also in a cleansing flood of redemption and eternal life "

Finally, in 1960, this sentence was dropped from the Baptism of Converts

"Horresce Judaeam perfidiam, respue Hebraeam superstitionem."

Contributions by Scholars

The Holy See's concern with religious influences on attitudes toward Jews is echoed by the work of Catholic thinkers, both in Europe and the United States.

In articles, documents, lectures and books, scholars and theologians have called for changes in Catholic teaching where it touches upon Jews for greater emphasis on the close bonds between Judaism and Christianity, for an affirmation of the Jewish roots of Christianity and the Jewishness of Jesus, for a truer interpretation of the Passion, which will place the responsibility in the conscience of mankind, instead of laying it on the Jewish people.

A comprehensive survey of Catholic teachings about Jews, by Father Paul Démann, M D S (La Catéchèse chrétienne et le peuple de la Bible, Paris 1952), has already been mentioned

Jewish scholars, too, have helped to shed new light on interreligious problems -- most notably the distinguished historian Jules Isaac in France. In the United States, Hyman E Goldin, Morris Goldstein, Joseph Klausner, Samuel Sandmel and Solomon Zeitlin have published studies of Jesus from the Jewish viewpoint during recent years.

Spokesmen and Organizations

Specific issues bearing on Catholic-Jewish relations have been the subjects of statements by Richard Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston, Achille Cardinal Liénart, Bishop of Lille, Msgr. Charles de Frovenchères, Bishop of Aix, Father John A. O'Brien of Notre Dame University (U S A), Father John LaFarge, S J , and others.

Organizations in several countries are working for improved relations between Catholics and Jews -- for example, the Confraternidad Judeo-Cristiana in Argentina, Amitié Judeo-Chrétienne in France, and the Catholic Commission for Israel in the Netherlands

Publications

Teaching about Jews has been discussed in the United States in at least three Catholic magazines -- America, Jubilee and Social Order -- and in the Annual Report of the Catholic Library Association

A periodical on Catholic-Jewish relations, Rundbrief zur Förderung der Freundschaft zwischen dem alten und dem neuen Gottesvolk im Geiste der beiden Testamente (Freiburg) is published in Germany.

In Catholic diocesan newspapers the new, positive approach is reflected from time to time. One such publication for example related the Christian Easter to the Jewish Passover, and continues

"To say -- without reservation -- that the Jews rejected our Lord is to forget the record. The nucleus of every early Christian congregation was Jewish. The bishops of today are the successors of 12 Jews (or 14, counting Paul and Barnabas). The Popes of the Middle Ages condemned persecutions of Jews -- including persecutions by slander. But enough Catholics, individual clergy included, participated in persecution -- even of the physical

kind -- as to leave a lasting mistrust in the minds of Jews To avoid even the appearance of slander, Pope John XXIII dropped the term 'perfidis Judaeis' from the liturgy of Good Friday . Can the rest of us do less, this Easter time, than try to eliminate slander from our words and ideas about Jews?"⁴⁵

It would not be truthful to suggest, however, that this positive attitude has been adopted by the Catholic press as a whole.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

= Catholic attitudes toward Jews and Judaism today range all the way from foresight and understanding, as expressed in the efforts of Pope John XXIII and certain Catholic leaders, to age-old hostility, wittingly or unwittingly kept alive in many parts of the Church community.

The moral obligation of religion to inspire love and respect for all the children of God, as well as the need for unity in a world threatened by materialism and totalitarian oppression, demand an end to religious prejudices that have scarred the relationship between Catholics and Jews for many generations.

To ensure that a spirit of good will toward people of other faiths may animate the entire Church community, we respectfully request, in private and without publicity

That His Holiness, Pope John XXIII, cause precise directives to be issued from the Vatican--through proper channels and according to established methods--for improving Catholic teaching about Jews and Judaism, by cleansing all Catholic educational and liturgical publications of inaccurate, distorted, slanderous or prejudiced statements about Jews as a group.

Such a revision would bring books and teaching materials into line with the precedent already set by recent changes in the liturgy of the Church, made by the present Pope and his predecessors.

We, members of the American Jewish Committee -- an organization devoted to fostering cooperation and understanding among religious and racial groups in the United States -- believe that the improvement of Catholic teachings about the Jews is an urgent task, of equal importance to the spiritual health of America and that of the whole world.

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6/22/61