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Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 13, Folder 19, Catholic-Jewish, 1973-1975.

memorandum

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

FO-SFB
date February 4, 1975
to Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum
from Ernest Weiner
subject FATHER SHEERIN'S COLUMN
CATHOLIC NORTHWEST PROGRESS, 1/31/75

Since you are "profiled" as "perceptive, friendly, and well disposed to Catholicism" on the one hand and prone to deal in "riddles" on the other, I am sure you may want to clarify the picture for Father Sheerin when he next asks the question "will the real Marc Tanenbaum stand up!"

I would like to know if Sheerin is syndicated or a local type in Seattle.

Best regards.



cc: Isaiah Terman
Neil Sandberg

Jewish Statement

By FATHER
JOHN B. SHEERIN CSP



C. Nov
Progress
1/31/75

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The new Vatican Commission for Catholic-Jewish Relations issued on January 3 an important statement on relationships between Catholics and Jews. It was a good statement and worthy of praise. However, certain items that had been in a working draft of the statement were deleted in the final text.

Time magazine commented (January 13): "The omission of any direct reference to Israel's place in Judaism was a victory for factions in the Vatican Secretariat of State who are known to favor better relations with the Arabs." This hint of cloak-and-dagger chicanery in the Vatican probably served a good purpose in publicizing the existence of the Vatican statement.

Catholics engaged in the dialogue, however, saw the statement as a step forward to better relations with Jews. Father Edward Flannery, director of the US Bishops' Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations, said it goes well beyond the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions and is the fruit of the friendly dialogue that has been taking place since the council. While admitting that certain items in the working draft had been deleted from the final text, he made clear that these deletions would not detract from the positive merits of the statement.

One Jewish official, however, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, director of interreligious affairs of the American Jewish Committee, surprisingly took issue with a statement on evangelization in the document. It was surprising because Rabbi Tanenbaum is well-disposed to Catholicism.

He objected strongly to the part of the text which says that "the Church must preach Jesus Christ to the world." He conceded the right of the Church, as a matter of religious liberty, to evangelize the world but he claimed that inclusion of this item in a statement on Catholic-Jewish relations "cannot but cast doubt about the

motivations of the entire program."

It seems to me that Rabbi Tanenbaum's usual good judgment has gone astray here. There is no threat of any kind of a Catholic movement to convert the Jews, much less any such sentiment among Catholics in the Catholic-Jewish dialogue. How anyone as perceptive and friendly as Rabbi Tanenbaum can read into the Vatican statement a conversionary intention is a riddle wrapped up in a mystery.

If there is a threat to the Jews at this moment, the threat is that of the revival of anti-Semitism, not coerced conversion by ecumenical Catholics. Fortunately, the new Vatican document explicitly reaffirms in strong language Vatican II's condemnation of anti-Semitism and calls for the continuing elimination from all Catholic catechetical books of any materials unjustly offensive to the Jews.

Am I hearing voices and imagining sounds when I say that anti-Semitism is a gathering danger at the moment in the United States? Have you listened to people on buses or subways talking about the possibility that Israel might "drag" us into a war with the Arabs?

The fall issue of Judaism contained the views of distinguished Jewish scientists, scholars and writers on the topic, "Where Do I Stand Now?" The contributors to this symposium dealt with their present relation to the Jewish heritage. There was only one reference, a casual one, to the danger of "intermarriage and conversion."

But two articles dealt with the threat of anti-Semitism. Lothar Kahn said, "I regard the recurrence of a virulent anti-Semitism, both from the left and the right, as a distinct possibility." John Hollander said that anti-Semitism, after a 25-year moratorium, "is no longer considered in bad taste." Leo Pfeffer in his article doth protest too much that hostility to our pro-Israel policy is not connected with anti-Semitism. I wish he were right.

COPY

memorandum

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date Buenos Aires, March 18, 1975
to Morris Fine
from Jacobo Kovadloff *[Signature]*
subject Jewish-Catholic Meeting in Sao Paulo

You will remember last year, the Third Jewish-Catholic Meeting was held in a town near Buenos Aires. Said gathering was jointly organized by the Latin American Jewish Congress and the Commission for Jewish-Christian Relations of the CELAM (Latin American Bishops' Conference).

You will undoubtedly remember that the subject was extensively analyzed in a conversation I had with you and Marc Tanenbaum on the occasion of my last trip to New York, in May, 1974.

Now a fourth meeting is announced. It will be held in Sao Paulo on April 20 through 22. I was officially invited and have personally participated in a few previous meetings held here in Buenos Aires, related to the organization of that event.

Of course, the AJC is not listed as a co-sponsor, due to the reasons I mentioned to you at that time in my correspondence. But my own participation is clearly stated, and this is as the AJC representative, not just as a member of the local Jewish community.

I take this opportunity to enclose the translation into English of an article by Father Rafael López Jordán, born in Argentina, living in Rome and devoted to Catholic journalism -he writes for several newspapers in the Continent. This article is about the latest Vatican document and I thought you might be interested in reading it.

My best wishes to you all for a very happy Passover.

Best regards.

JA/et
 encl.
 cc.: L. Tanenbaum
 D. Geller

DOCUMENT DEALING WITH THE

RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS

ISSUED BY THE HOLY SEAT
AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

Rafael López Jordán

זכר אלה יעקב וישראל

DOCUMENT DEALING WITH THE RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS ISSUED BY THE HOLY SEAT

Rafael López Jordán

Paul VI has decided to give a new push to the dialogue with the Hebrew world. The chosen form and its context - a document with practical applications signed by the Dutch Cardinal Willebrands (Cardinal Bea's successor) at the beginning of a Holy Year devoted to reconciliation- could not be more significant, as they are both a demonstration of the Pope's will to develop with a new intensity the Catholic dialogue with the great monotheistic religions.

When Cardinal Bea, at the beginning of the Council, presented his draft of a statement on the relations with the Jews, the concise energy of his language greatly shocked everybody. The project found difficulties within the Council, not on account of the content of its doctrine, but due to the historical moment. The Arab bishops claimed that, even though they were dealing with a religious matter the Arabs would see it from a political point of view, that is, as an indirect support of Israel. They argued it was useless for the clergymen to try persuading as Arabs, Moslems and Christians would have felt the document had a political intention underneath.

As dealing with the subject of other non-Christian religions was also intended, the idea of inserting the draft of a statement within a larger frame prevailed. So was it done, and it became one of the several parts of "Nostra Aetate" statement, thus losing some of its former strength. Later on, it was revised, and the result was a further loss of vitality. Thus, the enthusiasm raised by the "Bea Statement" turned into apathy, and such was the public opinion's attitude at receiving "Nostra Aetate" statement.

In spite of its weaknesses, this text prepared by the Council shows the repudiation of an anti-Semitic tradition -not always just cloaked- which had prevailed throughout the centuries. The Catholic Church declared that neither the Jews living at that time nor present-day Jews could be indiscriminately blamed for Jesus Christ's Passion.

A frequently bitter page from history had been turned over, and there lies precisely the value of "Nostra Aetate".

This new document leads to putting the previous one into practice. It was preceded by a text for the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Islam (1969). As the document dealing with the Jews was being delayed, some attributed this to Mons. Rijky's resignation to the Secretariat for Christians' Union -an agency in charge of the preparation of the document. The delay was thought to have been either caused by theological reasons -some people's desire to have it preceded by a part referring to doctrine- or by political reasons -the eternal Middle East 'conflict among relatives'.

Now the document comes out, without much of a doctrine apparatus, but leading to pragmatism, to action. As to the doctrinary aspect, "Nostra Aetate" is generally enough. If we want even more, if a "Christian Theology of Judaism" is expected, we should wait longer. Obviously, that theology is interesting for the future specialists' ever deepening study, but it still calls for much study. This is what Jesuit Father Carlos Martini, head of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, said at presenting the document to the journalists.

Differences Between the Present Document and the Former One

Although the purpose of the present text is pragmatic, it contains several attempts in the field of doctrine. And we can say that the new document shows an improvement as compared with the one issued by the Council nine years ago.

Let us point the most significant elements:

1. "Nostra Aetate" regretted anti-Semitism. This time, the verb condemn is used twice. The nuance is much more lively.

2. The root of this condemnation is not only human dignity but something more essential, Christian faith and the Revelation, "spiritual and historic bonds" between the Christian Church and Judaism.

3. In order to strengthen said bonds, numerous suggestions are made: encouragement of brotherly dialogue; common prayers; cooperation in the field of social action; joint efforts for justice and both domestic and international peace under the sign of reconciliation (purpose of the Holy Year).

4. As to liturgy, it calls for attention to be paid to the Biblical texts. "Without minimizing at all the original Christian elements, emphasis shall be put in the continuity of our faith, as related to the Old Covenant faith." As to the liturgical readings, they should be subject to a fair interpretation in the homilies, "particularly when there are excerpts showing the Hebrew people as such under a non-favorable light."

5. Scientific meetings and chairs for Hebrew studies in Catholic universities are encouraged.

6. The present document reaches a point the previous one did not reach. It stresses the positive aspect a Christian should acknowledge in the permanence of Judaism, since "Jewish tradition" has been developed ever since the destruction of Jerusalem up to the present day, and it is rich in religious values." In other words, this tradition does not lack services.

7. The document is the presentation of the Commission for Jewish-Christian relations, headed by Cardinal Willebrands, founded by Pope Paul VI on October 22, 1974 -at the time a Secretariat for relations with Islam was created. The document gives an orientation to the Commission, but it is not limitative; its vitality aims high. A set of initiatives and attitudes shown in several countries by independent people and institutions -frequently isolated and not understood- was but a starting point. Now, these scattered energies are being led through a common launching slope.

8. The desire that the document will not merely become further material for files is shown in the recommendation of creating regional and national commissions and secretariats, with capable people in charge of them, people who can carry out initiatives emanating from the document, all within the Council line.

9. The document is temperate but -we say it once again- it is not limitative. Since its aim is the whole Church, it cannot take care of each particular situation. Suggestions are the general lines of a program leading to stimulate the local Churches' imagination so that dialogue may be started in accordance with that of the Universal Church .

The new text is temperate, but not obscure in meaning. It draws lines, but avoids drawing circles meaning a limitation. Each Bishop Commission will be free to carry out the initiatives it deems more fruitful.

10. The new document is totally religious. It lacks political connotations. It does not deal with the bonds between the Jewish people and the land of Israel, opposite

to what was done in 1973 by the French Bishop Committee for the relations with Judaism.

There were endless polemics dealing with that Committee's position. Its statement was attacked by the left. The right shared this quarreling attitude, although it attacked from the other flank.

I keep many elements of that discussion in my files. Some indicated that the Committee mistook the political field for the religious one, as they meant to give a theological meaning to the State of Israel. The Council purposely tried to avoid this mistake. Others argued that the statement did not lead to understanding among the peoples, but it gave way to the most negative passions.

We had better separate the fields: we ought to speak about politics when dealing with politics, and speak about religion when dealing with religion. Mixtures, and the lack of clarification as to limits, do not lead to lasting results. Mixtures lead to confusion. And there is no reason to say that the Italian captain Goethe described was right when he said ; "It is necessary to have a mixed-up mind."





memo

February 18, 1975

TO: NJCRAC Membership
FROM: Joel Ollander
SUBJECT: Vatican Guidelines on Relations with the Jews

Guidelines designed for the purpose of implementing improved Catholic-Jewish relationships pursuant to the Second Vatican Council's 1965 "Declaration on the Jews," released on January 3, 1975 by the Vatican were reviewed by a subcommittee of the Commission on Church-State and Interreligious Relationships on January 21, 1975.

The Subcommittee agreed unanimously that the Guidelines, in the context of present Catholic-Jewish relationships and the position of Jews throughout the world, is a useful and constructive document which could have positive influences on the further development of Catholic-Jewish relations.

Portions of the Guidelines deemed particularly helpful were their condemnation of all forms of anti-Semitism, and their call for increased interfaith dialogue and joint social action.

On the other hand, the Guidelines were assessed as falling short in several important areas; most seriously in failing to take any recognition of the State of Israel and its crucial role in Judaism and the life of the Jewish people and in continuing to call for Christians to "witness for Jesus" without explicitly excluding Jews as objects of such "witnessing."

The Subcommittee recommended that the foregoing assessment be disseminated to the NJCRAC membership together with:

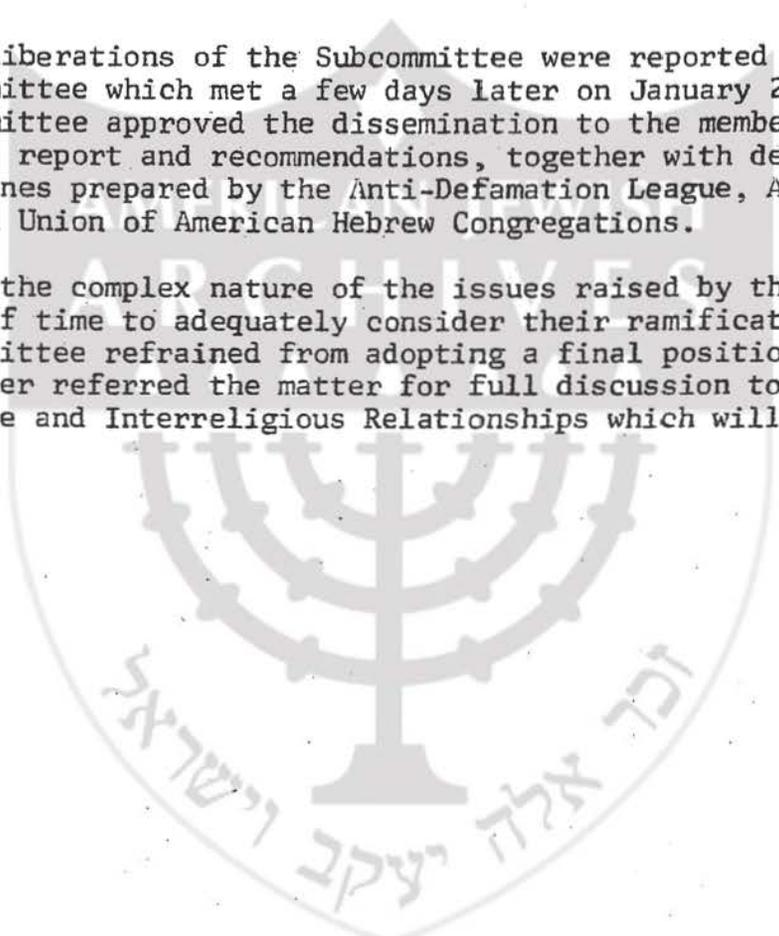
1. The texts of the Vatican Guidelines and the responses by the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, as they appeared in The New York Times of January 3, 1975.
2. Excerpts from Pope Paul's address to the Liaison Committee and the response by Dr. Gerhard Riegner, its spokesman at the meeting with the Pope, as they appeared in The New York Times of January 11, 1975.
3. A recommendation that every national agency and local community:
 - a. Study the Guidelines and the Jewish responses carefully and make their membership fully acquainted with them.

- b. Concurrently with the study process or immediately thereafter, seek out appropriate Catholic groups in order to facilitate frank discussions and joint activities on various levels, in line with the 1974-75 Joint Program Plan recommendation "that Jewish community relations agencies reinvigorate their relationship with Christian organizations, churches, clergymen, and others in all appropriate areas."

* * * * *

The deliberations of the Subcommittee were reported to the NJCRAC Executive Committee which met a few days later on January 26, 1975. The Executive Committee approved the dissemination to the membership of the Subcommittee's report and recommendations, together with detailed analyses of the Guidelines prepared by the Anti-Defamation League, American Jewish Committee, and Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Due to the complex nature of the issues raised by the Guidelines and the lack of time to adequately consider their ramifications, the Executive Committee refrained from adopting a final position on the Guidelines but rather referred the matter for full discussion to the Commission on Church-State and Interreligious Relationships which will be meeting shortly.



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Enclosures (4)

TO: Members of the International Jewish Committee for
Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC)

FROM: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, IJCIC Co-Secretary
representing the American Jewish Committee

DATE: December 26, 1974

RE: VATICAN GUIDELINES TO BE ISSUED ON JANUARY 3, 1975: A
JEWISH CRITIQUE

Following is my critique of the proposed Vatican "Guidelines" which I propose as a basis for discussion with members of the Vatican Office for Catholic-Jewish Relations when we meet in Rome from January 7 through 9:

The Guidelines for implementing the Vatican Council Declaration dealing with Catholic-Jewish relations have been promulgated as an internal document for the guidance of the Catholic community, and, as such, it would normally be inappropriate for us to comment on an interior Catholic matter - especially since its contents have not been formally shared with IJCIC prior to their publication.

On other levels, however, it is not only appropriate but obligatory that we clarify our views regarding critical aspects of this document: first, the guidelines make a number of explicit references which constitute value judgments regarding the validity and legitimacy of Judaism and the Jewish people. Insofar as we have accepted the responsibility of representing the interests of large segments of world Jewry, we are morally obligated to assure that the dignity and honor of the Synagogue and the Jewish people are defended

and upheld. Second, Cardinal Willebrands in his introductory note to the Guidelines characterizes this document as "the charter of the (Vatican) Commission for relations with Judaism." The contents of the guidelines are therefore of crucial significance for the future of Catholic-Jewish relations in our lifetime, since it provides authoritative orientation for the Catholic people throughout the world in both their official institutional and interpersonal daily relationships with Jewish agencies and Jewish persons as neighbors and fellow-citizens.

Viewed in their entirety, the Guidelines represent from an informed Jewish perspective a significant clarification of a number of vital issues central to Catholic-Jewish relations which we welcome as a constructive and timely contribution to the advancement of Jewish-Christian understanding and cooperation.

At the same time, it contains regrettably certain formulations that no self-respecting Jewish person can live with in good conscience, since these formulations imply a religious "second class" status in the family of faith communities.

The positive features of the Guidelines which we welcome include the following:

a) A reiteration of the explicit condemnation by the Roman Catholic Church of anti-Semitism and discrimination which was first contained in the Vatican Council Declaration on Non-Christian Religions. The re-commitment to the cause of combatting anti-Semitism assumes

heightened importance today in light of current international conditions in which this ancient hatred is being exploited systematically by the enemies of the Jewish people, and therefore this action is most timely.

b) The appeal to Catholics to recognize that "dialogue demands respect for the other as he is, above all, respect for his faith and his religious convictions." In respect of Judaism and the Jewish people that implies, as the Guidelines state, that Catholics seek "to learn by what essential traits the Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience." A declaration, if taken seriously, would logically and morally necessitate a coming to terms with the fact that the Jewish people's self definition centers on the critical conviction that God's Covenant with Israel is everlasting and is not subject to termination or substitution by the claims of another faith community. As the Bible declares in Deuteronomy 7: 6-9: "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be His own treasure, out of all peoples that are upon the face of the earth.

"The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people - for you were the fewest of all peoples - but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of Bondage, from the land of Pharoah King of Egypt. Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, who keepeth

Covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His Commandments to a thousand generations."

The free election by God of His people explicitly involves not only the Sinaitic Covenant, but the Covenant with our Father Abraham by which the Holy Land was promised to him and to his seed, the people of Israel, until eternity. Any definition of contemporary Jewish religious experience that does not provide for due comprehension and acceptance of the inextricable bonds of God, People, Torah, and Promised Land risks distortion of the essential nature of Judaism and the Jewish people, and would constitute a regression in Jewish-Christian understanding.

c) The charge to implement new understandings in scholarship through the various methods of "teaching and education" is a valuable and needed reinforcement in these vital areas. The abandonment of the false and polemical teachings regarding the alleged collective guilt of the Jewish people for the death of Jesus, of the stereotypes of the Pharisees as the corporate enemies of Jesus, and the so called spiritual decline of Judaism after the first century - all these historic falsehoods which have constituted an incitement to anti-Semitism - must continue to be uprooted as the weeds of prejudice and discrimination. The systematic incorporation of these new insights of contemporary scholarship which have come to a fresh discovery of Judaism as a living reality into all areas of Catholic Education, liturgy, and mass media would constitute nothing less than a revolution in

esteem between Catholics and Jews everywhere.

d) The call to joint social action is particularly welcomed at this time when such pressing national and international problems involving so much human suffering require maximum cooperation.

As to the negative features of the Guidelines we wish to make clear the following: While acknowledging the right of Christians to evangelize, the assertion of a conversionary intention within the framework of Guidelines for the Improvement of Catholic-Jewish relations cannot but cast doubts about the motivations of the entire program. Presupposed in a conversionary approach to the Jewish people is a clear assumption that Judaism is inadequate as the source of truth and value to the Jewish people, and that the election of Israel as a covenanted people has somehow been terminated. Such an assertion, either implied or explicit, contradicts in fundamental ways other positive statements in the Guidelines that appear to recognize the integrity of Judaism in its own terms.

To welcome these Guidelines without making clear that these negations or unresolved ambiguities toward Judaism and the Jewish people are totally unacceptable to the Jewish conscience would be nothing less than a betrayal of God's revelation to Israel and to truth itself. Beyond that, such anachronistic claims, if uncontested, would undermine the authority and credibility of all those great Christian scholars in all denominations, and in a variety of scholarly disciplines, who have been formulating a systematic new

theology of Israel that is congruent with the actual religious realities of Judaism and the Jewish people. This theological development, the most hopeful sign of Jewish-Christian relations in 1900 years, provides the only basis for genuine mutual acceptance and mutual trust between Christians and Jews. We feel strongly that the Guidelines must seek to encourage this development and not contribute to its weakening or dissolution.

We therefore take seriously Cardinal Willebrand's instruction in the introductory note that "the text does not give a Christian theology of Judaism" which requires further study before a position can be developed that will be acceptable to various schools of thought, Jewish as well as Christian. We pledge our every cooperation in that vital study and learning process that hopefully will lead to a new positive era in Jewish-Christian relationships.

Why has there been a mixed reaction in the Jewish community to the recently-promulgated Vatican Guidelines on Catholic-Jewish relations?

The answer to that question lies, in part, in knowing something about the behind-the-scenes facts regarding the way in which the document was released, as much as it has to do with a precise understanding of its contents.

The Guidelines were prepared by the Vatican Commission for Catholic-Jewish Relations, appointed by Pope Paul VI in October 1974, and headed by three Catholic leaders who are genuinely sympathetic to Judaism, the Jewish people, and quite possibly, Israel. (They are Cardinal Jan Willebrands, a learned Dutch theologian who is president both of the Commission and of the Vatican Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity; Canon Charles Moeller, a brilliant Belgian philosopher, who is vice-president, and the Rev. Pierre de Contenson, an effervescent French Dominican priest, who serves as Secretary.)

In recent years, a major massive struggle for power has taken place between the various branches of the Curia, with the Vatican Secretariat of State emerging with all the political control centralized in its hands. When the Guidelines on Catholic-Jewish relations were completed, they were sent "upstairs" to the Secretariat of State for approval.

The Secretariat of State "took over" the document, made a number of changes in its text, and then arranged for its world-wide distribution to Catholic hierarchies on a "sub secreto" (secret) basis. The State authorities also set the publication date for Friday, January 3, 1975 "12:00 a.m." (Rome time). That date preceded by three-days the long-scheduled meeting between the Vatican Commission on Catholic-Jewish Relations and the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC).

The general contents of the Guidelines became known to the Jewish representatives about ten days before their release to the press. When it became clear that some of the contents would become a cause of controversy - especially the studied omission of any reference to Israel's religious and historic meaning to the Jewish people and a contrived reference to the Catholic's need to "witness" their Christian faith to Jews, albeit sensitively - I telephoned the European office of the American Jewish Committee and asked if it was possible to have the publications of the Guidelines postponed. After all, I argued, we were to meet with the Vatican Commission three days later in Rome. Why could we not discuss the Guidelines together and find a way to help formulate a text-especially those "sticky" parts - so that misunderstanding and friction could be reduced to a minimum, and in order that its genuinely positive features could gain maximum acceptance and thereby really give Catholic-Jewish relations a major push forward?

The answer came back promptly from Rome that postponement of the Guidelines was absolutely out of the question, and that the power to change that decision was out of the hands of the Vatican Commission for Catholic-Jewish relations.

The reason for that arbitrary publication of the text of the Guidelines on the very eve of the Vatican-Jewish meeting soon became abundantly clear. The Vatican Secretariat of State, which is the "Politburo" of the Holy See, has been actively engaged in its own diplomatic offensive exploring detente with the Arab governments, Moslem nations, and the Moscow-dominated Communist bloc. By publishing the Guidelines three days "Erev" the Vatican-Jewish consultation, the Secretariat of State's diplomats signaled a clear and unambiguous message to the Arab-Muslim-Communist world.

Stripped to its essence, that message was: Have no anxiety about the meeting with the Jews next week. Nothing will change in Vatican policy. There will be no moves toward recognition of the State of Israel, for, as you can see in the actual text we are publishing before hand-which is not subject to modification once it is promulgated-there will not be even a single religious or theological reference to "the holy land." And when the Jewish delegate meet with Pope Paul VI on January 10 - an altogether warm and "gemutlich" audience - it was the Jewish statement (which I was asked to draft for the Jewish delegation) which referred to the importance of Israel to Judaism and the Jewish people. The Pope's statement conformed entirely to the Vatican Secretariat of State policy of total silence on Israel, even in spiritual terms.

The Guidelines also communicated a reassuring message to Arab Christians, such as Patriarch Maximos Hakim arch defender of gun-running Archbishop Capucci, and Archbishop George Khodr of Lebanon. These Arab churchmen, and hundreds of others like them throughout the Middle East, have been preaching an unreformed theology that asserts in the classic formulation of 4th century Bishop Eusebio of Cesarea, that Judaism is "preparator Evangelica", it existed solely as a preparation for the coming of Christianity which is now the "true Israel." That triumphalistic version of pre-ecumenical Christianity happens to be a powerful theological support for current Arab nationalism, for if it can succeed in persuading the Christian world that God's permanent election through the Sinaitic covenant with the people of Israel has been invalidated, then it should easily be able to make the case that the same God's covenant with Abraham to whom the Promised Land was given "forever" can also be cancelled. (Gen.12)

Prof. David Flusser of Hebrew University, perhaps the greatest authority on first-century Judaism and Christianity, has written that the reference to "Christian witness" in these Guidelines was not necessary "in principle." No such statement appeared in any form in the magnificent 1969 proposed set of Guidelines which the Vatican Secretariat on Christian Unity prepared, nor in the 1973 French Bishop's Committee's Declaration on Christian Relationships with Judaism; nor in the 1967 American Catholic Bishops Guidelines.

Indeed, the 1969 Vatican "working document"-had it not been suppressed by the same alliance of pro-Arab political forces and ultra-conservative theologians-would have deserved to be called "historic" for it dealt forthrightly and with intellectual honesty with three fundamental issues that are central to any real understanding between Christians and Jews:

On Judaism as a living religion, it declared, "God has revealed himself to his people Israel and made to it the gift of the Torah. And he has confided to it a word that 'endures forever' (Isaiah 40:8), a word that has become an unquenchable source of life and prayer, in a tradition that has just not ceased to enrich itself through the centuries.

On The Land of Israel, it said, "Fidelity to the covenant was linked to the gift of a land, which in the Jewish soul has endured as the object of an aspiration that Christian's should strive to understand..."

On Proselytizing, it stated:

This 1969 document, and those of the French Catholic Bishops' committee and the American Catholic Bishops, make it abundantly clear that the Catholic church has available to it "the theology of Judaism" that would enable it to put aside once and for always its proselytizing approach to the Jewish people, and to come to terms both spiritually and practically with the momentous importance of Israel as the dominant existential reality in Jewish self-consciousness today.

It is tragic that representatives of the World Jewish Congress and the Synagogue Council of America have found it necessary to explain why the Vatican has not found it possible to adopt these enlightened views toward those issues which count most to Jews today. Are Jewish institutional and personal careerist publicity needs so corrosive that Jewish spokesmen become apologists for anti-Jewish forces in the Vatican, rather than proud advocates of their people's interests.

The Guidelines of Jan. 3, 1975, does have many good things in it, and they should be welcomed as far as they go, and should be actively implemented. But when compared with how far they should have gone as an act of justice to the Jewish people, the welcome should be - as Prof. Flusser rightly advised - modest and restrained.

ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE

OF B'NAI B'RITH

315 Lexington Avenue
New York, N. Y. 10016

MEMORANDUM

To: ADL Regional Directors

From: Rabbi Leon Klenicki

Date: January 13, 1975

Subject: On the Vatican Document "Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing The Conciliar Declaration Nostra Aetate." I. Theological Understanding of the Document.

The declaration on the relation of the Church to non-Christian religions of Vatican Council II was promulgated by Paul VI on October 28, 1965. The declaration, known also as Nostra Aetate for the first Latin words of the document, dedicates one chapter, the fourth, to the relationship with the Jewish religion. The other sections study the relationship of the Church to Islam, and to "the variety of non-Christian religions."

Nostra Aetate stated the theological position of the Council in regard to Judaism, but did not advise the Catholic community on how to implement the Conciliar Declaration. Several working papers were presented at the 1969 meeting in Rome where Catholic representatives of different countries suggested outlines and guides. One of those suggested working papers was leaked in Baltimore by Lawrence, Cardinal Sheehan. The media, at that time, announced it as "the set of guidelines" though it was only a working paper presented at the study session of 1969 in the Vatican, a session presided by Jan Cardinal Willebrands, presently President of the newly created Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism.

After five years of preparation the Vatican published on January 3rd, a set of "Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration Nostra Aetate." Enclosed please find a copy of the official edition of the document. The Guidelines follow the main recommendations of the working papers with certain important exceptions, that will be explained later on.

I will analyze the document in its positive and negative aspects and in another memorandum will suggest some programs based on the Guidelines.

Negative and Disputable Aspects

The main objection to the document and the one that will rightfully face a critical reaction in the Jewish community is the lack of any reference to the State of Israel or the Land of Israel. The Vatican's reasoning for this exclusion is based on the assumption that the Guidelines constitute a religious document. Further the Vatican believes that a specific reference to Israel could be taken as a political move in the tense atmosphere of the Middle East. Professor Federico Alessandrini, the Vatican's chief press spokesman, echoed this position when he said in Rome, January 3rd: "The document has an exclusively religious significance. There is nothing whatsoever to do with any political problems."

(over)

It is important to say that at least three of the working papers presented in 1969 included references to the role of Israel in the spiritual and religious existence of the Jewish people, and the importance of this consideration by Catholics. (1) For example, the document prepared by a Commission composed of Professor C. Rijk, Father Edward N. Flannery, Dr. J.R. Kruijf, Abbot Rudloff, and Father Le Deault, November 1969, had the following on the question of land and Israel which has not been included in the present Guidelines:

"In the wake of long generations of painful exile, all too often aggravated by persecutions and moral pressures, for which Christians ask pardon of their Jewish brothers, Jews have indicated in a thousand ways, their attachment to the land promised to their ancestors from the days of Abraham's calling. It could seem that Christians, whatever difficulties they may experience must attempt to understand and respect the religious significance of this link between the people and the land. The existence of the State of Israel should not be separated from this perspective, which does not in itself imply any judgment on the historical occurrences or on decisions of a purely political order."

The omission of Israel in the Guidelines should not be an obstacle in our interreligious work. Quite the contrary. The Vatican view is not necessarily shared by American Bishops or by the Catholic community. Diocesan newspapers, prestigious Catholic magazines and Catholic leaders have expressed their support and sympathy for Israel. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops in November 1973, issued a resolution, "Towards Peace in the Middle East," where they expressed the view that a political solution to the Middle East situation involves the "recognition of the right of Israel to exist as a sovereign state with secure boundaries."

A paragraph of the document, written in a very dubious style, is of disputable character and may reopen the old proselytizing polemic. The Guidelines say that "dialogue demands respect for the other as he is, above all, respect for his faith and his religious convictions." This positive expression is somewhat obscured by the phrase "in virtue of her divine mission, and her very nature, the Church must preach Jesus Christ to the world (Ad Gentes, II). Lest the witness of Catholics to Jesus Christ should give offense to Jews, they must take care to live and spread their Christian faith while maintaining the strictest respect for religious liberty in line with the teaching of the second Vatican Council (Declaration Dignitatis Humanae). They will likewise try to understand the difficulties which arise for the Jewish soul rightly imbued with an extremely high, pure notion of the divine transcendence - when faced with the mystery of the incarnate word." This is backed later on in the document with an excerpt from *Nostra Aetate*: "With the prophets and the Apostle Paul, the Church awaits the day known to God alone, in which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and serve him with one accord (Soph. III-9)."

There is no open denial of conversion or proselytizing while the above mentioned working paper of 1969 says that "all intent of proselytizing and conversion is excluded."

It is unfortunate that such a clear and strong denial has been removed from the present declaration. There is no justification for it unless we have in consideration that the Guidelines have been written by Catholics and are directed

to them. Father de Contenson, a Dominican and Secretary of the Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism remembered this fact in a press conference in Rome, January 3rd, he said that the Guidelines had been elaborated without "direct collaboration by Jewish experts" and were "a document of the Catholic Church" not, "a document of a mixed body." However, the "Guidelines" issued by the Archdioceses of New York, Rockville Centre and Brooklyn, though directed to Catholics made a point in saying that: "We reaffirm here the statement made by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in their GUIDELINES FOR CATHOLIC-JEWISH RELATIONS: that 'proselytizing is to be carefully avoided in the dialogue.'"

The reference to the divine mission of the Church may have been a concession to conservative minded Catholics. But the obscurity of the text is not helpful and will cause a negative reaction in the Jewish community. The Church is logically divided in this matter of proselytizing, and the problem is also faced in Protestant-Catholic relations. Even after the Decree on Ecumenism there are discussions among Protestants and Catholics on the matter. But for Judaism it has a painful meaning. (2)

Another element of disputation is the concept that God, "inspirer and author of both testaments wisely arranged that the New Testament be hidden in the Old Testament, and the Old be made manifest in the New Testament." This phrase was taken from the Vatican's Council Second Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum).

The above mentioned working document of 1969 had the following on the same subject: "An effort must be made to understand better that the Old Testament retains its proper validity. This should not be denied by reason of the subsequent interpretation of the New Testament. The Old Testament should not be understood exclusively in reference to the New, nor reduced to an allegorical significance, as is so often done in the Christian liturgy." They also quoted from the Constitution Dei Verbum, but from Chapter 14 and 15, that recognizes the value per se of the Hebrew Bible. (3)

The ambiguities in the Dei Verbum Declaration reflect Pauline influence. St. Paul was torn between two different and opposing views: the recognition of Judaism as a valuable religion and the new development embodied in Jesus' message. The working paper of 1969 chose to take one view, the one I feel will be most helpful in dialogue, that is, Paul's recognition of Judaism (Epistle to the Romans 9:4-5). (4)

Positive Aspects

1. Condemnation of anti-Semitism. The Guidelines "condemns as opposed to the very spirit of Christianity, all forms of anti-Semitism and discrimination." This is a stronger statement compared to the Declaration Nostra Aetate where it says: "The Church moreover, rejects any persecution against any man. For this reason and for the sake of the patrimony she shares with the Jews, the Church decries hatred, persecutions, and manifestations of anti-Semitism directed against Jews at any time and by anyone." The word "decries" is a translation of the Latin word "deplorat", from the verb "deplorare" and is stronger than the English deplore. In 1965, the time of the promulgation of the Declaration Nostra Aetate, the word "condemn" was not used because Catholic theologians felt that this word was used in the Church in relation to heresies and heretics. The usage of a stronger language in condemning anti-Semitism is an advancement in the present Guidelines, especially at this time when anti-Semitism is a danger for Israel and for the Diaspora.

2. Holocaust. The Document mentions the Holocaust as the major force in shaping the Council's Declaration *Nostra Aetate*. It says that the Council "finds its historical setting and circumstances deeply affected by the memory of the persecution and the massacre of Jews which took place in Europe just before and during the Second World War."

3. Monologue and Dialogue. The Document indicates that the relationship is not a monologue, a reference to the Middle Ages, when the Church spoke alone in the disputations, or in sermons to the Jews in Catholic Churches, etc. The present relationship, as indicated in the Guidelines, is a dialogue, the encounter of two equal entities. It clearly states that: "A dialogue supposes the desire for mutual knowledge, as well as expansion and growth of that knowledge. It constitutes a privileged way to encourage better knowledge of one another, and especially when it applies to Jewish-Christian relations. This dialogue fosters a deeper understanding of the riches proper to each tradition. The conditions for dialogue are the respect for each other as he is, especially for his faith and for his religious convictions."

4. Changes in the Liturgy. This second paragraph of the document is of great importance. It indicates the obligation to explain the Bible texts that are read at services, especially those which create anti-Jewish feelings. The Guidelines specifically point to an example of the Gospel of John, one of the most controversial books of the New Testament, and a source of anti-Jewish polemics. The Guidelines indicate the procedures to be followed when reading from the Gospel of John or any other Book of the New Testament that may have any polemical reference to Jews or Judaism: "Commissions entrusted with the task of liturgical translation will pay particular attention to the way in which they express those phrases and passages which Christians, if not well informed, might misunderstand because of prejudice. Obviously, one cannot alter the text of the Bible. The point is that, with the version destined for liturgical use, there should be an overriding preoccupation to bring out explicitly the meaning of the text while taking scriptural studies into account." (5)

The Guidelines are recommending a method already used in our tradition, that is, the Midrashic method of explaining a Biblical text.

5. Common Prayer. The Document also refers to common prayer "in whatever circumstances as shall prove possible and mutually acceptable." This is a very delicate matter that has created innumerable problems in the Jewish-Catholic relationship. Prayer plays different roles in both Judaism and Catholicism, and a common liturgical endeavor may hinder the peculiar theological implication of each faith. The danger of synchronism is always present.

6. The Role of Catholic Education. This is the best section of the document and will enable ADL to work with greatest intensity in Catholic colleges and seminaries.

The main areas of recommendation by the Guidelines are: "At all levels of Christian instruction and education, information concerning this question is important, and among the sources of information, the following should be especially noted, catechetical texts, history books, mass media (press, radio, films, television). The effective use of these means presupposes a thorough formation of instructors and educators in the training schools, seminaries and universities."

The document also recommends the following: "Research will be encouraged upon the specialists and departments teaching Judaism and Judeo-Christian relations,

especially in the areas of exegesis, theology, history and sociology. Higher institutions of Catholic research, if possible in association with other similar Christian institutions and experts, are invited to contribute to the solution of such problems. A Chair of Jewish Studies will be created where possible, and collaboration with Jewish scholars will be encouraged."

7. Social Action. The document calls for "effective action from mankind, seeking social justice and peace at local, national and international levels."

This social action is of great interest for joint cooperation in the fields of poverty, food, immigration, etc. It may involve Jews and Catholics at grassroots levels in improving local conditions, city problems, etc. It may be an area of close and intelligent involvement, but it also touches upon questions that divide even the Jewish community, as the abortion issue or federal aid to private confessional schools.

Final Remarks

The Guidelines in general constitute a good document. It will open new vistas in Catholic education, especially in the domain of Catholic colleges, seminaries and universities. ADL has been already involved in this area, by countless encounters in Catholic educational organizations, and a series of scholarly publications. The recent invitation of Monsignor W. Paradis to study and react to the draft of the Catechetical Directory, and its treatment of Jews and Judaism is one good example of this interreligious work. The recommendations in liturgy will allow the cleansing of anti-Jewish reference in sermons, misinterpretations based on the reading of the Gospel of St. John, for example. Such a change, the obligation of presenting the anti-Jewish polemical text with adequate clarifying explanations will reach Churches and grassroots, and will eventually help to create an atmosphere of understanding for Judaism and Israel.

The Guidelines, despite some shortcomings, will mark a new era of understanding and cooperation between Jews and Catholics.

My next memorandum will outline some specific programs to implement the Guidelines. Meanwhile, I will appreciate your reactions, and any reaction that might be expressed by Catholic leadership or in articles that appear in the Catholic press.

LK:am

(over)

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