



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Preserving American Jewish History

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 16, Folder 3, Crucifixion of Jesus, 1959-1964.

DRAFT

September 23, 1959

Dear Cardinal Cushing:

The religious and general press have reported the forthcoming showing at the Donnelly Memorial Theatre of the series of film shorts entitled "The Fifteen Mysteries of the Rosary". Some months ago, upon invitation, a number of us as individuals previewed 2 3/4 hours of these films which had been put together for possible commercial showings as a full length movie. We believe you would wish to know of our deep concern regarding particular scenes, character portrayals and reaction shots which, in our judgment, may have a most serious unfavorable effect on interreligious relationships as between Catholics and Jews not only in the United States but also abroad.

Permit us to underscore three points at the outset. Firstly, we are satisfied there was no intention on the part of the producers of this film to malign the Jewish people and that those parts of the film which we find objectionable were inadvertent. Secondly, we are unalterably opposed to censorship as a violation of the principle of free speech. We recognize the right of producers to make films of their own choice and we are particularly sensitive to this point as it relates to religious productions. We believe, however, that a right entails a corresponding responsibility to be alert to the danger of unnecessarily increasing interreligious tensions. Thirdly, we recognize and respect the irreconcilable nature of the theological differences between our two groups. Therefore, we have no desire to enter into further disputations in this regard.

We are addressing ourselves only to some non-theological parts of the film which we believe to be unnecessary and harmful to the existing friendly relationships between Jews and Christians which we value and wish to maintain. We trust you may agree that particularly at this juncture in world affairs when collectively we are faced with the aggressive and corroding machinations of Communism,

groups such as yours and ours should exercise care lest we may inadvertently bring about a setback to our cooperative relationship.

The following, in no special order of priority, are some examples of what we found particularly disturbing in the film:

1. The picture includes scenes of cruelty which we deem to be excessive, such as the brutality of the scourging and the bleeding that ensues; the depiction of the nails set to be driven into the flesh followed by the sound of the hammer blows; intensification of the cruelty by portraying the two thieves as bound only by ropes while Jesus is nailed to the cross.

2. The obvious relish and enjoyment by figures in the film identifiable as Jews who watch the suffering on the cross. As one of our group put it "There have been other crucifixion films and passion plays which have blamed the Jews but, this is the first one which portrays the Jews as enjoying it". Only the family and friends of Jesus and the stolid Romans who perform the acts of torture are shown in this film to be moved by pity. We believe this may persuade audiences that an unregenerate lack of mercy appears to be a universal Jewish trait. Particularly unfortunate is the appearance of Jews on the screen wearing prayer shawls and phylacteries. This is not only religiously inaccurate but gives the invidious impression of Jewish religious sanction to cruelty. In this connection, during the crucifixion scenes, reference is made to the law of Moses thus furthering the inaccurate impression of Jewish religious sanction to the crucifixion.

3. Some of the casting in this picture is most unfortunate. Those who are destined to be the followers of Jesus, together with the members of his family, are all portrayed by the same admirable physical types as are used to play the Roman officials and soldiers.

In contradistinction, those who are the enemies of Jesus or who occupy specific roles as Jews (for example, the rabbi with whom Joseph confers) are all distinguished either by selection or makeup as "caricature Jews".

4. The mob scenes in front of the palace of Pilate are particularly unfortunate in our view and as shown in this film, the outcry "crucify him" is unduly repetitive. In the same scenes, we were also disturbed at the sadist, bestial expressions and the Sturmer-type stereotyping of some of the members of the mob. In this connection, we feel the scene in which the mob calls for the release of Barabbas is especially bad.

5. Jewish religious law is misinterpreted in a number of scenes.

(a) Jewish law prohibits crucifixion as a method of putting humans to death.

(b) The Sanhedrin is inaccurately portrayed and unnecessarily placed in a bad light.

(c) The picture includes a sequence between Joseph and a Rabbi pertaining to the vow of chastity. This is contradictory to Jewish religious law which has always required married couples to strive for children.

(d) There is a scene with dialogue, pertaining to the breaking of Jesus' legs to insure his death before sundown. Jewish law prohibits the breaking of the limbs of human beings.

(e) Depicting Jews at the Crucifixion wearing prayer shawls and phylacteries is wrong on religious grounds in addition to being offensive without justification.

(f) There are scenes which show Jews going to the Temple to see the Rabbis. According to Jewish religious law, the Temple was for the priests only.

(g) Less important, but nevertheless inaccurate, is a scene which shows stairs leading to the alter in the Temple. Our Torah calls for an incline and proscribes stairs.

6. The characterization of Pontius Pilate in this film is historically inaccurate. Pilate unquestionably was a corrupt, wicked and cruel person who at one time was recalled to Rome because of his villainy. In this picture, he is sympathetically portrayed as a hero. Permit us to add that throughout this film, the Romans are pictured sympathetically as victims of circumstance while the Jews are portrayed as villains.

It is our considered view that after seeing such scenes, the average audience, which is likely to be historically uninstructed, cannot help but come away from the theatre with hostile sentiments against the Jewish people not only of those days, but of the Jewish group of our time as well. This is especially true in light of the past history of the canard which holds the Jews responsible for the crucifixion with a carry-over of Jewish responsibility to the present time.

Permit us to take this opportunity to express our high regard for your consistent efforts in behalf of justice and fair play whenever misunderstanding or malice has threatened amicable interreligious relationships. We are confident that in this instance also you will give full consideration to the subject matter of this communication.

With all good wishes.

Sincerely,

List of Those to Whom
Jules Cohen sent his Memo
With Enclosures Dated
March 4, 1959
Re The Film
"Crown of Glory"

American Jewish Committee

David Danzig
Robert Disraeli
Dr. Morris Kertzer
Edwin J. Lukas

American Jewish Congress

Leo Pfeffer
Julius Schatz

Anti-Defamation League

Benjamin Epstein
Arnold Forster
Lester Waldman

Jewish Labor Committee

Walter Kirschenbaum

Jewish War Veterans

Rabbi David M. Eichhorn

Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Rabbi Jay Kaufman
Rabbi Eugene Lipman
Rabbi Samuel Silver
Al Vorspan

Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations
of America

Rabbi Emanuel Holzer
Dr. Samson R. Weiss

United Synagogue of America

Mrs. Adele Gilead
Morris Laub

Synagogue Council of America

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum
Dr. Moses Jung

Brooklyn Jewish Community Council

Dr. Chaim I. Essrog

For the National Committee

Lester Gutterman, Chairman, (ADL)
Jules Cohen, Secretary, (NCRAC)

March 3, 1959

Mr. John Stone
Jewish Community Council
590 North Vermont Avenue
Los Angeles, California

Dear Jack:

This is to bring you up to date on developments here regarding the crucifixion film which you included in your report #105 dated June 20, 1957 under the title "The Kiss of Judas". A representative Jewish group recently saw the picture, not tentatively called "Crown of Glory". On November 24, following a screening on November 21, 1958, you sent a memo of reactions and suggestions to this film. In this memo you refer to it as "Fifteen Mysteries". We would very much like to have the entire story from your end, but first let me summarize what has happened here.

Through Ben Epstein and Arnold Forster, a group representative of the National Committee for the Motion Picture Project saw the picture at a special and confidential screening on an invitation from Martin Quigley who has undertaken the task of cutting some 25 minutes from the present running time of 2 and 3/4 hours. Mr. Quigley wanted the reaction of some of his close Jewish friends in the movie industry. He showed it to one man who was greatly disturbed by the picture. Mr. Quigley then called his friend and attorney Louis Nizer, who suggested the picture should be seen by Ben and Arnold. They and Lester Gutterman first saw it on Thursday, February 6. They too were horrified and so informed Mr. Quigley. However, they said that other Jews might feel differently about it and suggested the screening for our group which was held Friday morning, February 13.

The screening was attended by some 20 or more persons representative of the National Committee, including a number of rabbis. All of us were deeply shocked. On Monday, February 16, those who saw the picture met to exchange views. The unanimous reaction was one of abhorrence. We feel the picture is bad from start to finish; that it is so full of objectionable parts that no amount of cutting could correct the damage which undoubtedly will be done to good Christian-Jewish relations when this picture is publicly shown. We agreed we have no right and no desire to make suggestions to the producers regarding changes; that it is not only impossible, but it would be presumptuous for us as Jews to tell Catholics how to portray their doctrinal beliefs in a motion picture; that we reaffirm our civil liberties position on the basis of which we would not do anything which even by implication might be construed as censorship. Since Ben Epstein and Arnold Forster were to meet with Mr. Quigley, we also agreed each of us would send to them our objections to particular scenes, character portrayal, etc., and we did this right after the meeting. In this connection, enclosed is a copy of my letter to Arnold Forster dated February 17 which speaks for itself.

Wednesday, February 18, Lester Gutterman, Ben and Arnold met with Mr. Quigley for a couple of hours. They expressed the views of our group as above set forth. In turn, Mr. Quigley said that he had come to us; that he was soliciting our advice; would appreciate our suggestions and if we comply, no one could properly interpret this as an act of censorship by us. Our representatives said they were in no position to answer his request for suggestions, but if he wished, they would give him some details which convince us this picture will do great harm to Jewish-Christian relations. At his request they did so as per the enclosed summary of the objections voiced in our group. They did not give Mr. Quigley a copy of this memo.

Mr. Quigley said he would spend the next weeks in cutting the picture 25 minutes. When this is done, he wants us to see the picture again. He then wondered, assuming we thought the editing appropriate, would we consider giving him a letter which would not endorse or approve the picture, but would set forth what actually happened, namely, that we saw the picture at his request; discussed it with him; that he made some changes and therefore we are not opposed to the distribution and showing of the film. Mr. Quigley said he wants such a letter, not for publication, but only to show to one or two major exhibitors on a confidential basis. The response was a polite but blunt NO! It was made clear that such a letter was an impossibility because no matter how it might be worded, it would be interpreted as approval of the picture and we never approve or disapprove movies. Moreover, such a letter would be meaningless because we do not control other Jewish organizations nor motion picture distributors and if such a letter were to be condemned by some other Jewish organizations, it might bring about the very public situation Mr. Quigley would like to avoid. He was also told that since we believe this picture will do harm to inter-religious relationships, any letter to the contrary would be untrue and useless to him.

Here is where you come in. In the course of the meeting with Mr. Quigley, he asked if we know a Mr. John Stone on the West Coast. Our delegation said they thought they did, whereupon Mr. Quigley informed them you had seen the picture some time ago and that he had a memorandum from you, a copy of which he would be glad to furnish. Subsequently, he did so and we have copies of your November 24, 1958 memo. We would like to have all the details of what happened at your end. For one thing, send us a copy of your memo of November 24, 1958 for comparison purposes. Secondly, can you account for the lapse of time between your report to us in June of 1957 and the second time you saw the picture on November 21, 1958 which resulted in your November 24, 1958 memo? Did anyone else from the LA CRC Motion Picture Committee see the picture with you? Either time? Both times? Was this film discussed in the LA Motion Picture Committee? To what extent if any, were the rabbis involved? Did any attend either or both screenings and did they participate in such CRC discussions as might have been held? Why didn't we receive a copy of your November 24, 1958 memo to Breen? Please fill us in on the entire story.

Last Thursday, our group met again. We received the report from Lester Gutterman, Ben Epstein and Arnold Forster on their meeting with Mr. Quigley. They also informed us that following their meeting, a letter was sent by Arnold to Louis Nizer summarizing the February 18 conference with Mr. Quigley as outlined above. Arnold enclosed two copies of the memorandum which summarizes objections to the film. Mr. Nizer subsequently called Arnold and inquired about use of the second copy. Arnold told him we are entirely indifferent as to what he, Mr. Nizer, does with the extra copy. At our meeting on Thursday, we agreed (1) under no circumstances will a letter be given to Mr. Quigley (2) the group as a whole does not want to see the picture again after it is cut (3) we will be informed when and if Ben and Arnold are invited and a decision will then be made regarding others joining them in seeing it (4) because it is felt it would be violating Mr. Quigley's confidence, we are not circulating anything to the communities or the local affiliates of the respective national agencies for the time being (5) I am to inform you of all that happened here and to get your story.

The only other point I would underscore is that everything that happened here is on a confidential basis and should not be publicized. Also, do tell us in advance and keep in very close touch before anything is said or done in LA regarding this movie. Please reply quickly. I want to share the information you send with our group as soon as possible.

Best from all of us.

Cordially,

JULES COHEN
National Coordinator

JC/pm
Enc.

CC: Joseph Roos



National Community Relations Advisory Council

55 West 42nd Street, New York 36, N. Y. • Telephone: LOngacre 4-3450

"cooperation in the common cause"

F- FILMS

Memorandum

C O N F I D E N T I A L

To The Group Which Screened the Film "Crown of Glory"

FROM: Jules Cohen

DATE: March 4, 1959

So your record regarding the crucifixion film "Crown of Glory" will be complete, enclosed are the following items:

1. Copy of my letter to Arnold Forster dated February 17, 1959 which lists objections to particular scenes, character portrayals, etc., and points out the context in which these objections are listed.

2. Copy of the memorandum prepared by Ben Epstein and Arnold Forster which summarizes and categorizes specific objections to the picture.

3. Copy of my letter to John Stone informing him of what happened at this end and requesting full information of what took place on the west coast with regard to this picture.

4. A list of those to whom I am sending this mailing. In keeping with our understanding, I am not sending it to the full membership of the National Committee for the Motion Picture Project.

The moment I hear from Jack, I will be in touch with you.

Best regards.

J.C.

Enc.

JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
of the
Synagogue Council of America
and the
National Community Relations Advisory Council

TO: Joint Advisory Committee

FROM: Jules Cohen, Secretary

DATE: March 4, 1959

SUBJECT: Shechita - Report on Ohio Hearings held Yesterday

Charles Posner, Executive Director of the Cincinnati Jewish Community Council, called this morning to report on the legislative hearings which were held yesterday in Columbus for the opponents of the humane slaughtering measure.

At the close of the hearing, the Agriculture Committee, by a vote of 14 to 1, postponed action on the bill indefinitely. Mr. Posner tells me this is tantamount to killing the bill for this legislative session.

Rabbi Joseph P. Sternstein of Dayton testified by reading the statement prepared by Leo Pfeffer and approved in the Joint Advisory Committee. Rabbi Sternstein testified on behalf of: Cincinnati Board of Rabbis; Orthodox Rabbinical Council of Cleveland; and the Ohio regional associations of: Rabbinical Council of America; Union of American Hebrew Congregations; Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America; Union of Orthodox Rabbis of America and Canada; United Synagogue of America.

Rabbi Mordecai Gifter of Cleveland made a short statement for Rabbi Eliezer Silver and the Agudas Harabonim. The Rabbi supported the joint statement with some supplementary remarks.

Rabbi Hyman Cohen of Cincinnati also spoke for Rabbi Eliezer Silver. Rabbi Samuel W. Rubinstein of Columbus presented a brief statement for the RCA.

Mr. Posner is sending us copies or excerpts from the supplementary statements which I will make available to you just as soon as I receive them.

Packers also testified in opposition to the measure.

J.C.



National Community Relations Advisory Council

55 West 42nd Street, New York 36, N. Y. • Telephone: LOngacre 4-3450

"cooperation in the common cause"

Memorandum

TO: Morris Laub, Rabbi Eugene Lipman, Emanuel Muravchik,
Leo Pfeffer, Al Vorspan, Seymour Weisman, Dr. Samson R.
Weiss

FROM: Jules Cohen

DATE: March 4, 1959

SUBJECT: Child Adoption Across Religious Lines = Communication
From Bridgeport JCC Re Connecticut Senate Bill No. 190

Enclosed is copy of a self-explanatory letter from the Bridgeport Jewish Community Council requesting the position, if any, of NCRAC national member agencies on the issue of child adoption across religious lines. You will notice Section 15 of the measure which has been introduced in Connecticut provides

"Section 15. Religion. Whenever a child is placed in a family home for board or care or for adoption, such placement shall, whenever possible, be made with a person or persons of the same religious faith as that of the child or his parents, if such faith can be ascertained by reasonable inquiry."

This bill was briefly considered at the February 8 legislative conference convened by the Connecticut JCRC when the Connecticut humane slaughtering measures were discussed. It is my recollection that the adoption of a position by the state JCRC was deferred pending further study of the subject in the Connecticut communities and consultation with the national agencies. I reported that to the best of my knowledge, except for the American Jewish Congress, no other NCRAC national member agency has a definitive position on the subject which is under study in the respective agencies.

Are you inclined to reply directly to Bridgeport for your agency or do you see some value in our getting together informally to consider the matter?

NCRAC as such does not have a policy position on the subject. It was agreed a long time ago that the Joint Advisory Committee of the Synagogue Council of America and NCRAC should sponsor a national conference on this issue, but pressure of other matters has held up the convening of such a meeting. To complete the picture, I do not recall off hand that any of our local member agencies opposed similar measures in other states, but I intend to check our files to make sure.

Please let me know what you think and if you write directly to Bridgeport, a copy to the NCRAC would be appreciated.

J.C.

CC: Joseph Barr, Dorothy Beck, Samuel Brennglass, Rabbi Jay Kaufman,
Dr. Bernard Segal, Ben Stark, Isaac Toubin, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum

COPY

JEWISH COMMUNITY COUNCIL
360 State Street
Bridgeport, Conn.

February 27, 1959

Mr. Jules Cohen
NCRAC
55 West 42nd St.
New York 36, NY

Dear Jules:

As per our telephone conversation the other day, our Community Relations Committee should like certain information for the National Local Relations sub-committee.

One of the pending legislative measures before the Connecticut State Legislature, Senate Bill No. 190, concerns itself with adoption across religious lines. Enclosed is a portion of the bill relating to this subject. We would be grateful for the following information.

1. Do any or all of the national agencies of the NCRAC have a position on this subject? If so, what is it?
2. What is the history in other states where this type of legislation was introduced? Perhaps the American Jewish Congress could furnish this information?
3. Have any of the national agencies or community member agencies of NCRAC taken a position in connection with such state bills?
4. If any of the national agencies or community member agencies of NCRAC opposed such state measures, what repercussions were there -- if any?
5. What position would the national agencies of NCRAC recommend as a course of action?

Although, at the moment, there is no date set for the hearing of this bill, I would appreciate this information as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Beck

THE CRUCIFIXION
THE JEW AND THE CHRISTIAN

by
Bernhard E. Olson



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Faith and Prejudice is one of the most significant reports of research to appear in some time. Based on several years of research and written in a most careful and interesting style, it deals with the victims and the oppressors in the literature of Christian education, especially with the understanding of the Jews.

The Crucifixion, the Jew, and the Christian*

Bernhard E. Olson

Director, Research and Consultation in Intergroup Aspects of Protestant Curricula, New York City

ONE OF THE deep roots of tension between Protestants and Jews is frequently said to consist of teachings found "in Sunday School literature, especially in connection with the crucifixion story . . ."¹ Jewish apprehension on this score is well known. Ira Eisenstein deplors what he regards as Christian teaching "that Jews living today are guilty of killing Christ."² and another spokesman says:

In most Christian churches even very little children are taught that the Jews killed Jesus. . . . The result is that countless Christian children begin life with a prejudice: the "Jews" who killed Jesus, as they are told, are the same to them as the "Jews" who live on the next block.³

The crucifixion drama is also regarded as having played a prominent part in Jewish

disabilities through the centuries as well as providing a major cause of negative attitudes toward Jews today. In the Middle Ages, recitals of the Passion of Christ were often followed by physical violence against Jews. Medieval Christians so frequently attacked Jews on Good Friday that in some countries the latter were forbidden by law to leave their houses on that day.⁴

Three of the four Protestant publishers whose materials we have been analyzing agree that there is some relationship between antipathy toward the Jews and the charge that the Jews killed Jesus. Although some fundamentalist writers make this accusation themselves, others attack many "so-called Christians" and Gentiles for having hunted down and persecuted Jews on the mistaken assumption that they murdered Christ. The neo-orthodox curriculum notes that "in some localities Jewish people are dubbed 'Christ-killers,'" and poses for class discussion the question, "What is unfair about this kind of labeling?" Liberal authors, in noting that "feelings of hate and . . . acts of violence (against the Jew) have a long history," explain that "Christians proclaimed a gospel that condemned the Jews as a people for the death of the Savior of the world." On the question of the consequences for Jews of Christian teaching

*Abridged from chapter 8, "The Crucifixion, the Jew, and the Christian," *Faith and Prejudice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 195-222, by Bernhard E. Olson. Reprinted by permission of Yale University Press. The four series of lesson materials evaluated have the following designations: (MS) means Missouri Synod (conservative materials); (SP) means Scripture Press (fundamentalist); (PR) means United Presbyterian (neo-orthodox); (UN) means Unitarian-Universalist (liberal).

¹Newton D. Baker et al., *The American Way* (New York, Willett, Clark, 1936), pp. 34-38.

²*The Ethics of Tolerance*, p. 70.

³Roland Gittelsohn, *Modern Jewish Problems* (New York, U.A.H.C., 1951), p. 152.

⁴Jacob R. Marcus, *The Jew in the Medieval World* (Cincinnati, U.A.H.C., 1938), p. 35.

about the crucifixion, only the conservative texts are silent.

THE TEACHINGS: "WHO CRUCIFIED JESUS?"

TO WHAT EXTENT do Protestant curricula teach that the Jews crucified Jesus? Statistically, 42 per cent of the conservative lessons dealing solely with the crucifixion story contain variations of this generalization. Fundamentalists make this accusation in 36 per cent of the crucifixion lessons, and the neo-orthodox do so quite indirectly in 2 per cent of the cases. The charge does not appear in liberal materials.

Only the conservative curriculum fails to dispute or deplore the charge that the Jews killed Jesus. About 6 per cent of the fundamentalist, 10 per cent of the neo-orthodox, and 22 per cent of the liberal lessons describing the crucifixion criticize this notion. There are also other teachings that lay the blame for the crucifixion elsewhere than solely on the Jews. Thus Gentiles, the Romans, Pilate, Christians, all mankind, and "the multitudes" are likewise named as culpable. The neo-orthodox, for example, universalize the guilt to include Christians or all humanity in 40 per cent of the instances.⁵

Clearly, not all fundamentalist generalizations about "the Jews" are meant to denote all Jews, inasmuch as two lessons give a narrow definition of the term. Such distinctions, however, are usually omitted, and the assertion "the Jews crucified Christ" does not usually make clear which grouping of Jews is intended, or if the term "crucified" is to be taken literally.

When such statements as "the Jews crucified Christ" are examined in context, the actual participation of the Jews in the crucifixion seems to be viewed as indirect. Only

one lesson in the entire four curricula explicitly ascribes to Jews the *literal* act of carrying out the death sentence;⁶ all other lessons make it plain that the final sentence was imposed and carried out by the Roman authorities, even where the main responsibility is attributed to either the Jews or their religious leaders. A great number of lessons, however, merely characterize "the Jews" in a passing way as having crucified Christ, and no matter how the writers and editors might regard the meaning of this assertion, its plain meaning to the uninitiated (in the absence of any elaboration) is that the Jews not only instigated but executed the death sentence.

THAT IT WAS the Roman authorities who condemned and crucified Christ is recognized by all four Protestant groups, but chiefly by the neo-orthodox and liberals. The fundamentalists and conservatives name "the Jews" as primarily involved, but their expositions also hold the Roman authorities guilty in 24 and 29 per cent of the lessons. "Jews and Gentiles" are also linked together as mutually guilty but in a very small proportion of crucifixion units. The absence of primary accusations against the Jews by the neo-orthodox and liberals makes more significant their more frequent naming of the Roman authorities.⁷ Given the above range and diversity of attitudes about the Jewish role, the question naturally arises as to what is signified by speaking of "the Jews" in connection with responsibility for the crucifixion.

Writers often merely reproduce the term from the Gospel of John without explanation. Some fundamentalist lessons attempt to define it. Commenting upon the statement in John 7:13 that "no man spake openly of Him for fear of the Jews," the

⁵These percentages refer only to the lessons which specifically discuss the crucifixion in whole or in part, not to the total lessons in the sample. Out of a total of 2,304 lessons only 5.8 per cent of the lessons in the four curricula expound the crucifixion. Note that more than one type of statement about direct responsibility for the crucifixion tends to appear in the units.

⁶"Being restricted by Roman Law from carrying out the death sentence, the Jews took the prisoner to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, who upon their demand turned Him over to them (the Jews) to be crucified, even though Jesus was declared innocent. . . . The crucifixion and death of the Savior, while a crime on the part of the Jews, was a part of God's plan for the redemption of the world" (MS, my italics).

⁷In 57 and 56 per cent of the instances.

writer interprets: "In this verse the word 'Jews' is used of the leaders of the nation, the chief priests and Pharisees who made up the Sanhedrin and who sought Jesus' life" (SP). In the same text it is explained that "the Jews" in John 12 are the Pharisees and Sadducees. "The Pharisees were the real Jews, passionately devoted to the Torah," and who engaged in debate with Jesus. But the Jews of the crucifixion story are Sadducees.

The Pharisees usually appear in connection with theological controversy, but it was the Sadducees, as "chief priests," who finally took over Jewish leadership, pursued a policy of violence, and eventually brought about Christ's crucifixion. Thus "the Jews" originally the name of a nation, became (in John's Gospel) the name of a particular sect (SP, my italics).

Both of these lessons use the word "Jews" to denote the Sanhedrin leadership, not the rank and file of Jewry. But other writers are not this precise. The terminology of John carries over without specification when commenting on passages from the other Gospels:

When Jesus was in the Temple for the last time, a few days before His Passion, He asked the Jews, "what think ye of Christ?" Their answer was a great disappointment to Him. But on Good Friday they showed what they thought of Him. Their hearts were so filled with hatred toward Him that they shouted themselves hoarse, crying, "Crucify Him!" (MS).

The Jews in this paragraph of whom Jesus asked the question were, in reality, a group of Pharisees or Sadducees. The writer proceeds as if he were talking of the same group of people when, on Good Friday, "they" showed Jesus what they thought of him. One is left to assume that the author of the lesson regards each of the hostile segments of the Jewish nation as symbolic of the whole.

The tendency to make one Jew, or several, represent all Jews — not only of ancient but also of modern times — is demonstrated by another writer for the same curriculum. Whether he is speaking of the Sanhedrin officials, the witnesses at the hearing before

Caiaphas, or the mob before Pilate's hall, he calls them "the Jews." Matthew, he says, omits "the various accusations of the Jews." Then, climactically, the clamoring mob which exchanged taunts with Pilate emerges as all Jewry of all places and all times. The Jews — through the mob's words — become fully accountable for the death of Jesus, to this very day suffering under the curse which they brought upon themselves.

THE GENERALIZATION "the Jews" can thus easily be seen as a distortion on several grounds:

1. It removes the crucifixion event from its proper context of time and place. Since "the Jews" can mean any or all Jews anywhere, it is highly inaccurate and dangerous, giving leeway to every pupil to interpret this in whatever illegitimate fashion he desires.
2. It divorces Jesus from his own people and nation. "The Jews" logically should include Jesus, the disciples, Mary, his mother, "the people," and the many women who followed him from afar. To refer only to Christ's enemies as Jews and not to his friends is invidious.
3. The collective reference "the Jews" fails to distinguish between a mere handful of people who were involved in the plot against Jesus and the vast populace who were not. Even if limited to the Jews of this period, the generalization still erroneously implies "all the Jews" of Jesus' time.
4. Actually, it was the Romans who executed Jesus, whatever the reasons were and whatever Jews were involved. Generalizations which omit the role of the Roman authorities are inexact.
5. The comprehensive term "the Jews" may originally (in the New Testament) have been provoked as much by Jewish self-criticism and by the habit of thinking of themselves collectively, as by alleged Gentile emendations of the scriptural text. For non-Jews, however, to transform this Jewish prophetic terminology into an accusation is questionable to say the least.

THE BIBLICAL BASIS OF THE COLLECTIVE JEWISH IMAGE

THE TENDENCY to think about Jews as a collective entity derives from biblical-historical sources. The Jewish people thought of their leaders' deeds, or those of any member of the community, as ones for which the group was responsible. They were a

covenanted people, and as such acknowledged their collective guilt and punishment. The Jews took seriously, in a way that many Christians do not, this idea of "representation" — that the few may stand for the many, and even that one righteous or evil man can personify the whole.

In the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees and in the Jerusalem episodes, the New Testament writers represent Jesus as confronting not one segment of Judaism but, in effect, the authorities who stood for all of it. The early Church, Jewish to its core, spoke in corporate terms of what had happened, just as the Old Testament writers had. But they wrote this as Jews, about Jews, and to Jews who thought representatively and self-critically; they did not write as outsiders accusing another people.

There are two characteristics of the biblical concept of "representativeness": 1. The Jews interpreted their own groups' actions in this way and not merely the actions of others. 2. Collective thinking within the covenant relationship enabled the prophets to call on Israel to judge itself the more severely. Because God chose Israel, God demands more of it and punishes its trespass with pre-eminent severity.

These biblical modes of thought are not characteristic of the modern West. We judge the action of an individual — whether leader or follower of a group — as his own action, for which he is directly responsible. When the responsibilities of others are involved, we take care in the interests of justice, to make distinctions between different degrees of involvement: accessory guilt, for example.

However, Protestant writers often present generalized images of *Jews* where only a tiny group of them are actually in question. When the Sanhedrin arrested the apostles, "the Jews hounded and persecuted the Christians." In respect to *Christians*, however, responsibility for such evils as anti-Semitism tends to be placed in individual, not collective, terms. Qualifications are always clear: "Some Christians," "so-called Christians," "nominal Christian," or "this man who professes to be a Christian."

In sum, partly because some writers have not made clear to themselves or to the reader the sharp differences between our contemporary habits of judging our own groups as individuals and those collective ways in which the Bible judges Israel, the way these writers think about Israel (or Jews) is influenced by the textual sources, while statements about the guilt of our own groups are made according to the present-day habits of individualistic thought. A biblical notion of collective guilt is externally applied to the Jews, but not internally to Christians.

THE QUESTION OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND INVOLVEMENT

IN DISCUSSING teachings which assess guilt for the crucifixion, it is important to note the several different, though overlapping, frames of reference that the writers use.

The query "Who crucified Christ?" may be understood historically, psychologically, or theologically. In fact, curriculum writers pass unannounced from one perspective to another. While it is true that the Gospel writers never distinguish between the narrative and theological aspects of their account, curriculum writers need to be conscious of the ways in which their readers do indeed make such distinctions and to interpret to them the biblical events so as to convey more exact meanings.

When directed to the historical event, the question of responsibility may range from "Who actually condemned Jesus to death and carried out the sentence?" to "Who are implicated, directly or indirectly, in the crucifixion?" These questions are historical. They deal with the facts of the case.

But there is yet another kind of responsibility which the writer may have in view — the social-psychological one. Just as today we weigh the responsibility of the German people (or even Americans) as a whole for the crimes of Dachau and Buchenwald, so writers occasionally weigh the degree of responsibility of Jesus' contemporaries, who,

by their permissiveness, indifference, or indecision contributed to the agony of Golgotha. We have already noted that the practice of projecting this responsibility of the Jews indiscriminately through time is common among certain writers. Thus the scene can suddenly shift from first-century Palestine to modern Jews living anywhere in the world, and the clause "the Jews crucified Christ" can easily suggest to modern readers "the Jews who live down the street."

BUT THERE IS also a theological dimension to the question. Thus the simple historical accusation "the Jews crucified Christ" signifies, theologically, for many Christians that this accusation is itself a denial of the revelation of truth about man and God which came through the Cross. For others, who particularize it, it signifies the rejection of the Jews and their abandonment to fate. To those who universalize the cross, it points both to the disobedience of all mankind (symbolized by Jew and Gentile together) and to the divine mercy conferred upon all humanity.

These varying frames of reference in which the questions of accountability for the crucifixion are raised will produce answers which, even if similar terminology is used, cannot safely be presumed to have the same meaning. Each separate term of the unwarranted charge "the Jews crucified Jesus" many differ in signification. Thus the word "crucified" does not always mean the literal torture and execution of Jesus upon the cross. It may be shorthand for expressing "the varying degrees in which persons were implicated in the events which led to his death," or simply be a synonym for any trespass against God. Also, as has been pointed out, the designation "the Jews" may be vague and undefined; or may denote only those Jews who actually participated (and no more); or the Jewish nation of that time; or all Jews in all places and ages since the beginning of the Christian era; or a very restricted group, e.g. the Sanhedrin. The conception of the figure crucified also alters the meaning of the phrase. If the victim is God incarnate,

obviously the name "Jesus" signifies something different, theologically, than if he is thought of as a great Jewish prophet.

Any analysis of the crucifixion theme, therefore, must necessarily separate as distinctly as is possible the historical from the social-psychological and theological issues, and seek to understand what the various communicators mean by the phrases they use. However, in sorting out these intended meanings, it is helpful to bear in mind certain differences in orientation that distinguish the neo-orthodox from the liberals, fundamentalists, and conservatives. The latter three communicators stress, though for different reasons, the historical and narrative implications of the crucifixion. The liberal curriculum is interested primarily in the "Jesus of history" and not in the "Christ of faith." Believing that the Gospels obscure the "real Jesus" beneath an accumulation of theological interpretation, their writers try to reconstruct "what really happened." Thus whenever the liberal writers speak of the crucifiers, they mean those who pronounced the death sentence and actually drove the nails.

The fundamentalists and conservatives both share this interest in the pure event. But they cannot conclude with the liberals that the Gospel accounts are fallible, nor can they differentiate between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. To them, the Scriptures are verbally inspired and infallible, and Jesus is fully human and fully divine. What is contained in the Bible is to be understood as true history, so that the only valid critical problem is "What do the Scriptures say?"

These predominantly descriptive approaches of the liberal, conservative, and fundamentalist communicators are submerged in the neo-orthodox curriculum. The neo-orthodox concentrate primarily upon the *meaning* of the events — the ability of scripture to illuminate man's contemporary life and to reveal to him the nature of God and of man. Writers in this curriculum are therefore free to differ from one another about the historical facts.

These distinctions, however, while help-

ful as a guide to understanding what each communicator stresses in the crucifixion, must not be taken as absolute ones. There are, for example, in neo-orthodox literature full discussions of the what-happened aspect of the Passion, in order that the problems of what-is-happening in contemporary life can be more fully illuminated by it. Consequently, while these levels of meaning provide convenient divisions for the following discussion, they will continually overlap one another.

HISTORICAL INVOLVEMENT OF JEWS AND GENTILES: THE JEWISH AUTHORITIES

WHILE PROTESTANT communicators without exception recognize that the Roman government actually carried out the act of crucifixion, they also agree that the arrest of Jesus involved some Jewish leaders who were responsible for turning him over to the Roman authorities. None assumes that the entire responsibility was Roman. This latter position, in all events, would be impossible for Christian groups to take: on the one hand it calls into question the veracity of the New Testament account, and on the other it milks the event of any significant universal meaning.

The liberals, in fact, argue that "when the Gospel records are examined with a free and discerning mind . . . it becomes clear . . . that there was good reason for the Jewish leaders to wish to silence Jesus. He was criticizing both the Law and the Temple rituals of sacrifice." Yet they conclude that "although the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem surely shared the blame for Jesus' death, his crucifixion was the result of Pilate's decision" (UN).

The conservatives likewise recognize that it was the chief priests and other more limited groups who were involved in the plot to turn Jesus over to the Roman authorities. A lesson which ends with the statement "the Jews condemned Jesus as a criminal" begins by naming the chief priests as the "instigators of His trial and cruci-

fixion." One lesson writer says:

The leaders had long plotted Jesus' death. Two days before the Passover they met and finally resolved to act . . . They made up the Council or Sanhedrin, which consisted of 70 men and the high priest. The chief priests seem to have been the most influential members of the Council and, in this case, the ring leaders. Caiaphas had alerted all members who were in favor of having Jesus put to death (MS).

The principals are in this instance isolated as the chief priests, and, especially, Caiaphas, who is significantly regarded as having alerted *only those members of the Sanhedrin who were already in favor of sentencing Jesus*. In other words, in the conservative view not all members of the Sanhedrin were necessarily involved, and those who were had apparently been selected by the High Priest himself.⁸ It is possible that where the designation "Jewish leaders" appears in a lesson, either the high priests or the group gathered about the chief priest are intended.

Similar accounts are provided by the fundamentalists, except that the Pharisees are also included at times. Pharisees did in fact belong to the Sanhedrin, but the high priestly clique was composed of Sadducees. The significance needs to be noted. Up to this point in the Gospels, the Pharisees are Jesus' main opponents. After Jesus siezed the temple, the Sadducees and high priests became the major opposition. Quite often, lesson writers of most Protestant groups assume that the earlier hostility of the Pharisees indicates that they were responsible for accusing Jesus before Pilate. Actually, the Pharisees were possibly not a decisive group in the Sanhedrin at this time, the Temple and civil government being under the direction of the Sadducean-Boethusian priests. It has also been argued that

⁸Conservative writers would specifically exempt Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, and the others as well. When a writer charges: "Without a dissenting vote, the Council passed the death sentence on the innocent Jesus," he may be signifying that this action was taken only by the select number present.

the scribes and elders named in connection with the Temple were predominantly Sadducees.⁹

WHEN VARIOUS writers trace the principal source of Jewish involvement in the arrest and trial of Jesus to the Sadducean-Boethusian priests, their lessons indicate more clearly that other groups such as the Pharisees were possibly not involved, or, if at all, only marginally. This approach is also more likely to provide more convincingly human reasons why these "Jewish leaders" sought Jesus' death. Says a fundamentalist writer:

The Sadducees were an organization of Jewish leaders, semi-religious and semi-political in nature. Their membership was composed of the most aristocratic, wealthy, powerful families among the Jews. On the whole, they were quite subservient to the Roman government. One contributing cause of their opposition to Christ may have been a genuine fear that He would bring Jews into conflict with Rome. Religiously, the Sadducees were rivals of the more conservative Pharisees (SP).

This recognition of Sadducean subservience to the Roman government connects Rome more closely with the events that led up to the arrest and trial of Jesus than is commonly done in most lessons. In fact, the Jewish authorities involved acted more for Rome than for Israel in the opinion of one writer, who explains:

In the days of Herod the Great . . . the Temple and its management had fallen into the hands of the Sadducees. They were an insignificant group among the Jews, there being no more than three thousand of them in Jesus' day. . . .

They were the monied aristocracy of the nation whose fortunes depended upon keeping the peace and an alliance with their Roman Overlords. They were, actually, collaborationists, though they were thorough Jews. Annas, the father-in-law of the high

priest, Caiaphas, had served in that office for a legal term, having bought his way into power by a huge bribe paid to the Romans. . . . No one could be allowed on the throne without the approval of Rome, and that perpetuated Annas in power, even though he and his family were despised by the Jews themselves.

When Jesus encouraged the people to believe they could by-pass the Temple system in their approach to God, the whole financial system was imperiled, and Jesus became the object of the implacable hatred of the Temple Hierarchy (PR, my italics).

These authors who see the Jewish authorities as dominated by Rome succeed fairly well in avoiding the unwarranted generalization "the Jews" in connection with the crucifixion story.

THE EVENTS LEADING directly to the actual trial before Pilate were the arrest of Jesus and the hearings before the high priests and Sanhedrin. The treatment of these initial events depends greatly upon certain conceptions: how writers understand the relationship of the high priestly clique and the Sanhedrin to the Jewish nation and Rome respectively, whether they regard the hearings before the High Priest and Sanhedrin as actual trials, and whether they consider some of the charges brought against Jesus as containing any element of truth or irony.

For conservative writers there appear to have been at least three trials. Since they assume that (1) the night session before Caiaphas, (2) the morning meeting of the Sanhedrin, and (3) the appearance before Pilate were all trials, they tend to judge them all illegal.

For most neo-orthodox authors there were possibly two trials, the morning session of the Sanhedrin, and the trial before Pilate, with the night session regarded as a preliminary hearing. The liberals agree on this last point, but also look upon the morning session of the Sanhedrin as a meeting called for the purpose of confirming charges to be made to the Roman authorities, and not as a formal trial conducted according to Jewish law:

As soon as it was day, Caiaphas, the High Priest, summoned certain members of his of-

⁹The consensus of New Testament scholars is that the Council was under strict control of the priestly and moneyed aristocracy, led by the high priest and his followers. See Morton S. Enslin, "New Testament Themes: LL. Palestine," *Interpreter's Bible*, 7, 106. Klausner believes that the Council was made up primarily of Sadducees: *Jesus of Nazareth* (New York, Macmillan, 1945), pp. 334-35.

official council to meet in the palace to help in preparing the written charges to be brought before Pilate, the Roman governor. After some discussion, they agreed on three. . . . When the group had agreed on the charges, Caiaphas ordered the prisoner brought before them for questioning (UN).

Since the conservatives regard the *night* session as a trial held by the "council," they hold that "This was a trial at which every rule of law . . . was trampled underfoot." The judgment is correct, of course, if the Sanhedrin met at that time to conduct a formal trial. However, the high priests, who had the power to summon the aid of Roman cohorts at any time of the day or night, would not be restricted as to their convening of an investigative session. On the basis of rules laid down by the Pharisees in the Mishnah, a fundamentalist writer finds both the night and morning trials to be "illegal, by existing Jewish law, on at least five counts," including these two: Jesus "was arrested, condemned, and crucified in less than 24 hours, though the law forbade execution until ten days after condemnation." "He was tried at night, contrary to regulations for capital trials." This first indictment ignores the fact that Jesus was crucified by Roman authorities who were obviously not controlled by Jewish law, i.e. Jewish law could not make Rome's execution of Jesus illegal. Likewise, the second point is valid only if the hearing before Caiaphas could be considered a trial.¹⁰

Judgments differ also on the *morning* session of the Sanhedrin, according to whether one believes this to have been a

"formal capital trial" or an "official confirmation of charges" to be made to the Roman authorities.¹¹ If one is convinced that the real trial was conducted before the Sanhedrin, called into session for the purpose of condemning Jesus to death according to Jewish law and all that was needed to carry out the execution was Pilate's permission, then one's belief that the proceedings were illegal is probably warranted. When writers conclude, however, that the real trial was before Pilate and that the Sanhedrin session was for the purpose of indictment only, then the charges of illegality are not made.

One noncontroversial assertion of all writers is that Jesus died according to Roman and not Jewish law, and by Roman and not Jewish methods.¹² Nevertheless, the Jewish authorities are also presented as having various reasons for wishing to have Jesus condemned: interference with the Temple

¹¹Kilpatrick examines the historical and Gospel evidence and notes a possible parallel between procedures permitted to local Egyptian authorities by the Roman government and procedures permitted to the Sanhedrin in capital offenses. In Egypt, "Local authorities dealt with minor cases and held a preliminary inquiry into graver ones. These last were reserved for the prefect to deal with at the nearest assizes. Thus in Egypt a prisoner in the position of Jesus would first of all be examined by the local authority and would then be reserved for the prefect's judgement when he was available. We must recognize that the trial of Jesus could, with but little modification, be fitted into this scheme. . . . The proceedings before the Sanhedrin contained an attempt to show Jewish opinion in the Sanhedrin that Jesus was guilty. For the rest, the interrogation of Jesus by the High Priest would be the examination of a prisoner accused of a grave offense before he goes before the procurator for trial. And Jesus does go before the procurator for trial. Pilate tries him and passes sentence, and Jesus is crucified, a Roman form of the death penalty." G. D. Kilpatrick, *The Trial of Jesus* (London, Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 19-20.

¹²Had Pilate merely approved a Sanhedrin sentence, he probably would have turned Jesus over to Jewish authorities to be stoned. Whether the local religious-civil authorities had the power at this time to carry out a Roman-approved death sentence is disputed by critics. The following fundamentalist sentences are juxtaposed: (1) ". . . the Jews could pass a death sentence, but had to get permission from the Roman governor to execute it." (2) crucifixion "was the Roman method of execution. He was not to be stoned, which was the Jewish method." Are these statements contradictions?

¹⁰"The simplest way to understand the story," says Sherman E. Johnson, "is to suppose that Caiaphas and some of his friends assembled at night in the hope of gathering evidence against Jesus. They were unable to find witnesses whose testimony agreed on any point that would make a conviction possible. It was a cardinal doctrine of the Pharisees that witnesses must be cross-examined separately and they would have taken every precaution to protect any man accused of a capital offense. Thus it would have been quite impossible to convict Jesus in a Jewish court. Accordingly the Sadducean priests tried to get Jesus to say that he was the Messiah, in order to accuse him to Pilate as a pretender to the Jewish throne." "Matthew," *Interpreter's Bible*, 7, p. 486.

management, alleged blasphemy, his teachings about the Law, his violation of established folkways and customs. At times, the Jewish reasons given by writers are made the compelling ones. The fundamentalist and neo-orthodox also include a genuine Roman anxiety over the messianic activities of Jesus, and also acknowledge that the high priests and Sadducees were fearful of messianic pretenders as inviting the wrath of the Empire on the Jewish nation.

THE LIBERALS ALONE find the Sanhedrin's condemnation of Jesus to be legal. Of all the accusations brought against him, they take seriously only the charge that Jesus "had been found transgressing the covenant set forth by Moses and according to Jewish law he should be stoned to death."¹³ The writer quotes from another authority to support this point:

It is surely appropriate to ask seriously why it is necessary for Christian writers to insist that Jesus was condemned illegally. . . . He clearly modified prevalent teaching to such an extent that the Jews could truthfully say: "He stirred up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, and beginning from Galilee even into this place." . . . It is surely a grander thing to break the law gloriously in the interest of truth than to abide by a code now becoming obsolete, at a time when the world required a better code for its own true advancement.¹⁴

Liberal writers, however, fail to state the conclusion they imply — that but for the activity of the Jewish authorities, Jesus never would have been condemned to death.

Unlike the liberals, the neo-orthodox writers believe that Jesus did make a messianic claim, and thereby left himself open to the Roman charges of sedition. The title of Messiah had no fixed denotation, but in the potentially explosive situation in Palestine it was generally associated with the nationalistic hopes of Israel — freedom from Roman bondage and the establishment of the Davidic kingdom:

Since the term "Messiah" was an incendiary title, politically dangerous, there is every reason to see why Jesus should have wished to avoid its application to him and his work. . . . If Jesus had allowed his followers to hail him as "Messiah," he would surely have aroused hopes of a sort that were out of line with his own intentions. That this would have been the case is evidenced by the fact that when "the messianic secret" was out, when the confession was no longer silenced . . . the immediate sequel was that Jesus was crucified as a political threat to Caesar's kingdom (PR).

Roman fears of a potential messianic uprising is perhaps the single most neglected feature of the crucifixion accounts. When the Christians concede that the ruling Gentile conquerors of Palestine — to whom the high priests and followers were answerable — condemned Jesus to death as a pretender to the Jewish throne, the Gentile world is inescapably implicated in the tragedy of Golgotha. "It must never be forgotten," says the author of a neo-orthodox lesson, "that . . . Jesus had been crucified as a seditionist. That was the meaning of the ascription fixed over his head. It was Rome's announcement of the reason for putting him to death, and a warning to any like-minded persons" (PR).

Historically, therefore, a case can be made out for the basic involvement of some Romans as well as some Jews. Therefore, any view of the historical facts which ignores the complexity of the causes that led to the death of Christ and isolates and exaggerates Jewish responsibility runs a double danger: first, of finding little or no significance for contemporary man in the events of the cross by overlooking certain vital theological considerations;¹⁵ second, of falling into anti-Jewish attitudes that transform the cross into a weapon with which to castigate Jesus's own people.

HISTORICAL INVOLVEMENT OF JEWS AND GENTILES: PILATE

THE TRIAL OF Jesus before the Roman procurator directly confronts the writers

¹³A question one might ask at this point is, "Why, then, was Jesus not stoned?"

¹⁴(UN) The liberals are quoting from Richard W. Husband, *The Prosecution of Jesus* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1916), p. 13.

¹⁵These are analyzed in Chapter 9 of *Faith and Prejudice*.

with the fact of Roman involvement. Complex and different exegetical questions are also posed by the scriptural account, not the least of which is the traditional interpretation that the Gospels present a relatively innocent Pilate.

Their understanding of the biblical sources leads conservatives and fundamentalists to stress the greater responsibility of "the Jews." Even while recognizing Pilate's guilt, they picture him as a more or less helpless victim in the hands of the Jews. An instance of this emphasis is provided by one writer who directs the teacher as follows: "In treating the trial before the governor, present Pilate as an irresolute judge who let himself be driven by a bloody mob to condemn the innocent. *The Jew's sin was the greater.*"¹⁶

The same lesson explains that Pilate "was, of course guilty." But the reader is directed to John 19:11, where Jesus says, "He who delivered you to me has the greater sin."¹⁷ The point is that while Pilate passed sentence, it was only the Jews who wanted him crucified.

In these lessons Pilate is convinced of Jesus' utter innocence of all charges brought against him and makes one attempt after another to set him free. These attempts are shown to have begun early in the trial:

He was convinced of Christ's innocence and told the Jews so. They had no evidence to offer, but could only make a loud noise. Pilate wanted to be fair, but he lacked firmness. He should have set Christ free at once and driven the Jews from his palace. Cp. Acts 18:12-16. Unfortunately, Pilate showed that he was afraid of the Jews. . . . (MS).

These themes of Pilate's weakness — his futile attempts to free Jesus and his overwhelming fear of Jews — are the earmarks of the conservative approach to the climax of the Passion story: "The Jews saw

at once that Pilate was beginning to yield to them . . . From now on, Pilate's attempts to set Jesus free were futile efforts." He offered to release a prisoner, but "the choice of the Jews shows to what a low level of wickedness they had sunk." Finally, Pilate frantically attempts to appease the Jews by scourging Christ:

Foiled by the unexpected choice of the Jews, Pilate tried to move them to leniency toward Jesus by appealing to their feelings of sympathy and humanity. He thought that when they saw Jesus suffering great bodily agony, they would feel sorry for Him. . . . Severely bruised and with blood streaming from His body, Jesus was presented to the Jews by Pilate with the pitying appeal, "Behold the man" (in Latin, *Eccce Homo*). . . . The hardhearted, unbelieving Jews could not even thus be moved to pity (MS).

Few neo-orthodox lessons emphasize the more aggressive role of the Jewish authorities, but even these do not mitigate Pilate's guilt. "Pilate's part in the trial and crucifixion was pitiable, and the world can never forget that he lost a great opportunity to demonstrate Roman justice." The stark picture of an utterly helpless Pilate caught in the toils of Jewish intrigue is greatly modified by other considerations. Pilate was indeed pressured, and he did indeed seek to escape responsibility for his act; but so did everyone connected with the incident:

Though Pilate himself had given the orders, he had tried to wash his hands of any responsibility, placing the blame on the Temple officials. The Temple officials had forced Pilate's hand by demanding that Jesus be crucified, but they had shifted the load to Pilate's shoulders by making it an issue of Caesar or Christ. No one seemed willing to accept the responsibility (PR).

One neo-orthodox lesson clearly cautions the teacher to make certain that the pupils understand "that Pilate was generally a cruel and contemptuous procurator, and one who did not abide by the Roman policy of ruling subject peoples with some fairness and consideration." This manual then warns:

Help the class to see the turning point — when Pilate's own position was threatened. Be sure it is understood that Pilate had to be

¹⁶(MS) In these and other lessons Pilate represents himself, not "the Romans," while Caiaphas and the high priests are almost always identified as "the Jews."

¹⁷(MS) The "he" in John 19:11, however, is believed by many scholars to refer to Judas (not "the Jews" nor the Sanhedrin), although other commentators make a case for the chief priest.

persuaded to condemn Jesus. *But do not be dogmatic about the reasons for this. For our Gospels do not make it clear exactly why he was reluctant.* Doubtless, it was in part because of the impact Jesus made upon him. But remember that Pilate was very contemptuous of the Jews, and he may also have held back because he wanted to enjoy his feeling of power over them (PR).

The possibility that Pilate was pulled by several feelings — a desire to taunt and bait Jews, a superstitious awe of Jesus, and a contempt for messianic pretenders — is hinted at by several writers. Viewed in this way, Pilate's cry *Ecce Homo* could as easily be derisive and mocking as an attempt to arouse support for Jesus' release. Pilate's protestations of Jesus' innocence may have been partly a baiting of the high priest's mob, partly a vague fear that Jesus was a

"god," partly a conviction of Jesus' harmlessless, partly a pretension.

The firm conclusion of neo-orthodox writers, nevertheless, is that the trial before Pilate mainly implicates *humanity* itself and does not make any one group solely or chiefly responsible. Assaying the roles of the chief priests, the Council, Pilate, the people, Judas, the mob, and the Roman soldiers, one writer observes:

Yes, every actor had an alibi, and every actor shared the guilt. Even the disciples who had fled in fear, and who had left Jesus alone in this hour of trial — even they were guilty along with Pilate, the high priest, and the mob. We have, then, a tangled human situation: an awful crime with no one present on whom the whole responsibility can be laid. What happens, then, to the guilt? It is shared by *all* those present. No one is exclusively guilty; everyone is guilty with everyone else. (PR).





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February 20, 1961

Rabbi Mark Tannenbaum
Synagogue Council of America
110 West 42nd Street - Room 628
New York, New York

Dear Rabbi Tannenbaum:

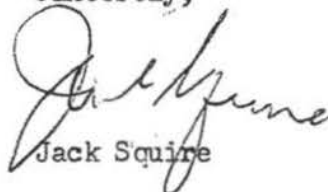
Enclosed are advance tearsheets of a forthcoming Look article that I'm sure will be of special interest to you and your organization.

As you will note, Bishop Pike cites numerous cases in which Christian educational material contains prejudicial ideas and impressions about the Jews, particularly what he calls the distorted accounts of the Jews' role in the Crucifixion.

This will appear in the March 14 issue of Look on the newsstands Tuesday, February 28.

It occurred to me that you might wish to notify your membership in your publications, memos, etc.

Sincerely,


Jack Squire

JS/ao
Enc.

July 26, 1963

Rab. Philip S. Bernstein
Temple Sh'arith Kodesh
2131 Elmwood Avenue
Rochester 18, N. Y.

Dear Philip:

Please forgive my delay in replying to your letter of June 11th. Your correspondence arrived while I was away from New York on an extended lecture tour; on my return, I was so exhausted from end-of-season accumulated fatigue that I left for an early vacation. I took your material with me, and I am responding to you from our summer home.

First, let me say that I find your exchange of letters with Dr. Anker Gjerding of great interest and potentially of serious importance. A confidential word about Gjerding: he is chairman of a special WCC "Committee on the Church and the Jewish People" (not executive secretary of the WCC; Visser t'Hooft holds that post.) Under his predecessor the Committee was a proselytizing arm of world Protestantism among the Jews and operated on the conviction that baptism was the answer to the Jewish problem and to anti-Semitism. For multiple reasons, the Committee has been reconstructed and has undergone a significant revision of outlook, seeing its present purpose as that of fostering greater understanding among Protestants about Jews, Judaism and the Synagogue. The objective of conversion to Christ is increasingly viewed in more eschatological-apocalyptic terms. The Committee's larger purpose is to develop a "theology of Israel" for Protestants, and the present tendency appears to lean in the direction of formulating a Protestant equivalent to the Formstecher-Rosenweig-Buber thesis of theological complementarity.

Dr. Gjerding came to my office in May 1962 to discuss these questions and we have been in frequent correspondence since then. The fact that he took the time and trouble to respond to your book review with thoughtfulness is support for our feeling that he and his group are working at this problem with fresh concern and seriousness.

(We sent him the AJC stimulated Yale University study of Protestant church textbooks--FAITH AND PREJUDICE--and Gjerding has since indicated that they are building a major program around these findings for the revision of world Protestant teaching materials in terms of more accurate and sympathetic portrayal of Jews and Judaism.) Against this background, therefore, your reply to Gjerding assumes particular importance.

Now to the substance of the questions: first, allow me to comment on three arguments you present in your review which, I would urge, require reconsideration on your part--then I will go on to suggest a reply to Gjerding's questions.

You write (1) "...Every generation of Christians has been poisoned by the New Testament accounts, and their interpretation, to hate the people of Jesus." This is a generalization we should try to avoid. It is one thing to say that anti-Semites claim religious sanction for their views, or even that an anti-Semitic (perhaps anti-Judaic) bias is imbedded in Christian tradition, and another thing to claim that every generation of Christians is automatically conditioned to hate Jews because of the New Testament. In a real sense, this is "a collective guilt" accusation in reverse.

(2) "...Every crime against the Jews in Christian Europe--the Crusades, the ghettos, the Inquisition, the Nazi holocaust--sprang from deep, immemorial Christian hatred of Jews." This is a severe oversimplification. Again, it is one thing to say--I believe justifiably--that the Nazi "final solution" could not have been successful without a deep tradition of anti-Semitism existing in Christendom, and another thing to characterize Nazi genocide as merely another example of "Christian hatred of Jews." Christians are always astonished and outraged at such a charge, because they believe Nazism was as anti-Christian as it was anti-Semitic. (See Gordon Zahn's book, "German Catholics and Hitler's Wars," also Franklin Littell's, "The German Phoenix." Both books document and condemn the support that Christian leaders gave to Hitler and Nazism, but at the same time present convincing evidence of the persecution of the churches by the Nazis who, under the influence of Alfred Rosenberg, regarded Christianity as "a Jewish trick". All of this I am sure is well known to you.) Certainly, Christians must accept substantial responsibility for the anti-Semitism in Christian Europe which the Nazis carried to its horrible extreme, but Jews, on the other hand should recognize the distinction between the medieval ghettos and the Warsaw ghetto--even if we insist that the latter could not have been possible without the former.

(3) Your claim that the religious factor in anti-Semitism is playing a diminishing role because of the reduced influence of Christianity and the struggle with Communism will be viewed as ungracious even by Christians who are devoted friends of our people. You leave no room for the possibility of an awakened Christian conscience on this issue. Unquestionably the geo-political factors are influential, but many sincere Christians are interested in improving religious teachings on the question of the Jews out of purer motives, and this should be acknowledged. (May I ask you to read my enclosed articles, especially "Paths to Agape," which I think points up the theological, liturgical and scriptural basis of the present ecumenical renewal. No one who studies Christian-both Catholic and Protestant-theological literature and who knows their leading personalities can discount the importance of the spiritual motivation in the ecumenical ferment. To ignore or to discount this force is to accuse Christians of rather crude opportunism-"hysterical survivalism" as one observer caricatured this response.)

With regard to Dr. Gjerding's two questions to you:

The major assumption underlying your article which Gjerding addresses himself, is that the New Testament rendition of the Crucifixion story must, perforce, predispose the Christian to hatred of Jews. In other words, as long as we have the New Testament, we are going to have Christian anti-Semitism, and this leaves us with a hopeless situation.

Some of Dr. Bernhard Olson's findings in the Yale Divinity School study are very relevant to this question. He points out that extra Biblical factors are at work in the Jewish portrait which emerges from Protestant teaching materials. "Scripture can and does affect the degree and kind of Jewish mention, imposes some problems on the curriculum writers, and may even set some kind of limit to the scores....Yet whether Protestant views of Jews are to be favorable, neutral, or unfavorable bears little relation to the Scriptural sources."

In Olson's words, "A point of view is brought to Scripture as well as derived from it." (I do not want to burden you with extensive citations that support this thesis. It is important that you read FAITH AND PREJUDICE, especially those chapters dealing with the Crucifixion.)

Similarly, in analyzing the Crucifixion lessons of different Protestant groups, he points out that for some groups, the Crucifixion becomes a source for condemning Jews, while for other groups it is used to illuminate the faults of the present-day Christian. A good deal depends on the interpretation; the critical question is whether the Christian is led to identify with Christ or with his crucifiers.

I think we must agree that we can ask mainly for interpretation which will authoritatively repudiate the concept of exclusive or collective Jewish guilt. (While we might ideally hope for a revision of the New Testament, we must be realistic; it is out of the question.) The New Testament account of the Crucifixion may not be accurate--in fact may be fictitious, but that isn't going to change the Christian acceptance of that as sacred literature one iota.

The constructive-and realistic-approach is that which I believe Gjerding infers in his questions, and that which, in fact, we are working on with him and with Cardinal Bea--namely, helping to formulate positive and historically valid interpretations which rely on a contextual understanding of the basic themes which involve the portrayal of Jews in the New Testament. I could illustrate this approach here for you, but Dr. Olson does it comprehensively in his book.

For your personal information, you will find similar approaches developed in Catholic terms in Father Paul Demann's book JUDAISM, and in Father Gregory Baum's book, "The Jews and the Gospel"--although both of these books complicate their positive approaches with references that imply that their openness toward Jews is conditioned by a hope for "their return to the mother church."

I am taking the liberty of enclosing some correspondence from Rabbi Jacob Agus with whom we have been working among Christians in the Baltimore and Maryland area with considerable effectiveness. His letter to Father Connelly contains some interesting suggestions which we have shared with Dr. Gjerding and Cardinal Bea.

Again for your private information, we are collaborating with scholars at several of our seminaries in developing a systematic approach to these problems, and their collective proposals we will continue to channel to Gjerding and others who are receptive.

Forgive me, please, for taking so long to reply. I do hope this is of some help to you. I will be personally grateful to you if you will keep me informed of any further developments in your relationship with Dr. Gjerding.

Should you visit New York in the near future, please come by and visit with me. It would give me much pleasure to show you around our Institute of Human Relations building and I would greatly welcome the chance to become acquainted with you in person.

Warm regards for a pleasant summer.

Cordially,

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, Director
Interreligious Affairs Department



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

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January 24, 1963

MEMORANDUM

To: Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum

From: Zachariah Shuster

Subj: Ludwig von Hertling article in Stimmen der Zeit

I have asked a competent Catholic theologian who is at the same time a profound student of Christian/Jewish relations to give me his views of Ludwig von Hertling's essay which appeared in Stimmen Der Zeit.

I now have before me his considered opinion, and would like to share it with you here, in summary fashion.

1. While the essay is obviously motivated by good intentions toward Jews, it contains false premises and distortions. The primary objection is against the concept of deicide which is presented by Prof. von Hertling as accepted Catholic dogma as evidenced by his saying that according to Christian belief "Deicide is an objective fact." Our expert strongly maintains that this is wrong from a Catholic theological point of view and that the juxtaposition of the terms murder and god is far from being as certain as submitted by von Hertling. Our expert devotes many pages of his exposition to the discussion of this argument, which is rather of an involved theological nature.

2. Our expert also takes serious objection to the fact that von Hertling omitted to deal with the important place in Christian theology given to the relationships with Jews within the framework of the message of redemption. He believes that particularly in modern Catholic theology there is great stress being laid on the point that the death of Christ was a fulfillment of prophetic

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vision and that in the light of ecumenic objectives there is projected a reconciliation between Jews and Christians as distinct groups.

3. Our expert also points out that von Hertling betrays a great deal of ignorance with regard to the historic conditions prevailing at the period of the life of Jesus. For example, his statements concerning the role of the Sanhedrin are contradicted by modern scholarship which demonstrates that the Sanhedrin played no role in the so-called "trial of Jesus."

4. Our expert also believes that instead of dealing with the question of how many individuals there were in the mobs who shouted to crucify Jesus it would have been more important to emphasize the fact that the group that was the ruling power in Palestine at that time was anti-rabbinical and anti-pharisean; and that it was they who made ~~it~~ possible the transfer of Jesus to the Roman authorities.

5. Finally, our expert believes that at this moment, when the Church is ready for fundamental reconsiderations of the Jewish subject, it should be the task of theologians and persons like von Hertling to produce theological reasons for these considerations which would be in conformity with contemporary scholarship on the subject, instead of repeating false theological premises and doubtful historical assertions.

I shall send you shortly a photocopy of the text summarized above.

THE ASSEMBLY THAT CONDEMNED JESUS

J. Spencer Kennard Jr.

The "sanhedrin" of the New Testament when examined in terms of Roman provincial policy is found to be an institution of the Roman imperial cult. The essence of that cult was the doctrine of the Leader chosen by God and equipped with divine powers. Thus it was comparable to the Führerprinzip of modern times. It was inaugurated by the dictator Lucius Cornelius Sulla in 82 B.C., perfected by Augustus, and resurrected two thousand years later by Mussolini.

This "sanhedrin" was radically different from that of the Talmud. It was headed by a high-priest, included Sadducees, and had political responsibilities. In contrast, the assembly of the Talmud was concerned entirely with religious affairs and was composed exclusively of Pharisees. Its president was always a learned doctor of the Law. Although the rabbis in rewriting the events of this period have appropriated to their body the history and judicial functions of the rival institution, there seem to be no adequate grounds for disputing the essentials of their tradition.

Hence the need to assume two contemporary assemblies.

The fact of two such assemblies was demonstrated a century ago by a distinguished Jewish scholar named Derenbourg. It has been developed in detail more recently by Adolf Büchler, Lauterbach, Solomon Zeitlin, and others. The evidence they have set forth is important not only to historical studies but also to religious tolerance. By proving that those who cried "crucify him, crucify him" consisted of a pro-Roman aristocratic group who were wholly out of touch with the feelings of the Jewish masses, they have pinned the lie to the charge that Jews crucified their Messiah in religio-political outlook the members of this assembly had ceased to be Jews.

The foregoing inferences have been arrived at chiefly from rab-

binic sources. They are confirmed by a critical study of the Gospel narrative, as your speaker once attempted to show in a doctoral dissertation.* They will be yet further confirmed when the aristocratic "sanhedrin" is recognized as an instrument of loyalty.

In spite of its important positive contributions, the two-sanhedrin hypothesis as hitherto presented contains a number of serious defects. One of them has been the designation "political sanhedrin" for the body of the New Testament and Josephus; we shall see that its functions were as truly religious as they were political. Another error has been the attempt to find analogy in the councils convened by Hellenistic kings; under the Roman principate a radically different type of organization was fostered. Also we have been left in the dark concerning its history, functions, and code of law that it administered. Finally, participation in such a dominantly Sadducee assembly of distinguished Pharisee leaders, as Gamaliel the Elder and Johanan ben Zakkai, needs explanation. The answer may even supply the key to why the Judaism that developed after A.D. 70 under the watchful eye of Rome was so different from that in the time of Jesus.

For answers to such questions we must turn to the provincial policy of the conqueror. Rome appears to have dealt with the Jewish nation much as she did with the other subjected peoples throughout the empire. She rewarded those that submitted to her yoke and savagely punished ^{the resisting} ~~the resisting~~ "sons of pride". Among the favors she gave to all those who cooperated with her desires was a scrupulous respect for their customs and a measure of administrative autonomy for their ruling classes. Her treatment of the Jews conformed to the same pattern.

The unifying institution through which Rome sought to weld all the diverse peoples of her empire into a unity was the imperial cult. In areas of doubtful loyalty -- a category to which Judea surely belonged -- she was especially insistent on full participation. This cult must

* Jesus in the Temple: Strasbourg diss., 1935.

not be confused with the emperor worship that was imposed by Caligula and Nero. Its theological formulation was so simple that any loyal subject, the Jew included, could accept it without sacrificing his traditional beliefs. It affirmed that God, or the gods, had selected the Roman people and the inspired Leader to be the agent of their peace.

Actually there were two cults, that of Roma -- the personification of the Roman people -- being considerably the older. For the cult of the Leader our chief information for its early development is supplied by numismatic studies. They show that Sulla was its founder. He proclaimed himself Felix, the ^Pavored of the gods, in order to commend his dictatorship. Sulla seems to have conceived this trick while campaigning in Asia Minor, where he was in contact with the Oriental cult of divine kingship. To use it, he first had to make drastic changes because Romans had long ago tossed their kings into the trash-can and had no use for rulers masquerading as gods.

Thus was begotten the doctrine of the inspired Leader. Such a man was chosen by the gods, the choice often being attested by sundry miracles. Also he was equipped with mysterious powers. These powers were often depicted as attendant goddesses/.~~an~~~~gels~~~~an~~. Also the Leader might have a "genius", a kind of alter ego, which also was divine.

Each of the dictators who followed Sulla ^{employed} ~~used~~ the new cult. Julius Caesar paid with his life for exceeding its limits. To avoid sharing his fate Augustus made a great display of repudiating dictatorial powers when on January 16, 27 B.C. he assumed the name Augustus which carried overtones of quasi-divinity. Among other gestures made by Augustus was to take the innocent title Princeps, the "First Citizen". Its connotation, "Leader" is clarified by the usual Greek translation, Hegemon.

Thus the Roman imperial cult was in essence akin to the Führerprinzip familiar to us in the governments of Mussolini and Adolf Hitler. How similar appears in the tribute to Mussolini by a distinguished British archeologist, Eugénie Strong. The occasion was a celebration

to honor his restoring of the Ara Pacis: "Voi, o Duce, lavora sotto l'ispirazione di quella forza divina". This "forza divina" that inspires the Leader expresses the difference between avowed tyrannies and those that commend themselves through mystical sanctions.

This religious aspect of the person of the Leader was emphasized in the panegyrics of court poets and in a profusion of symbols, which employed every medium of pictorial art: coins, engraved gems, statues, paintings, mosaics, bas-reliefs. The coinage is especially instructive because it enables us to trace the chronological development of the cult with ~~an~~ accuracy. Beginning with Sulla, Roman dictators increasingly placed their images on the coins, even usurping the obverse which hitherto Romans had restricted to the effigy of deity. Also there was a wealth of imagery on the coin reverse that proclaimed the supernatural virtues of the Leader. Much of this was borrowed from the figure of the ideal ruler of the Fertile Crescent, some of it directly from the Hebrew Prophets. The Wonder Child of Isaiah chs. 9 and 11 was a favorite theme. Each of his four impressive titles was translated into symbols and applied to the Leader. Thus we find the Roman emperor usurping the place of God's Messiah.

Because of the benefits they derived from the pax Augusta, the Judean aristocracy must have regarded the dynasty of Augustus as achieving all that could reasonably be expected from the Messiah of Hebrew prophecy. It had established an effective peace and achieved prosperity. It had the further advantage of protecting economic privilege, which was something that could not be hoped for from the sort of Messiah awaited by the Jewish masses. In accepting the Princeps as their Messiah pro tem they had precedent in Isaiah's hailing Cyrus, king of Persia, as the Lord's "Anointed" (Isa. chs. 44f). Hence ben David could wait; for the present their Messiah was the Heaven-commissioned Leader.

The institution through which this cult functioned was the Ethnic Assembly. Such assemblies were to be found all over the empire.

Each one ~~was~~ represented an ethnic aristocracy and its appointment was autonomous. In most areas such assemblies were revivals of those that had existed before the Roman conquest. Changes may have been introduced to assure full participation of upper-class elements and to eliminate vestiges of an older democracy. When no such bodies existed, as in nearby Syria and Cappadocia, the local gentry were encouraged to establish them. Selection of members was usually by each municipal boulē. In Judea this would mean^a choice by those of the eleven districts into which it was divided.

The importance given to aristocratic membership sprang in part from fears by Rome's patrician conquerors for revival of democratic controls associated with Greek culture. An added factor was the birth of the cult of the inspired Leader in an atmosphere of class war between Optimates and Populares, which had been waged with bitterness from the days of the Gracchi. Sulla as champion of the Optimates needed mystical sanctions for his massacre of ~~the~~ the adherents of Marius and Cinna. He found it in the new cult. In this way the Führerprinzip originated as a weapon against the Populares. And it continued so.

A term used interchangeably with sunédrión to designate the provincial assemblies is koinón. In this connection it may be translated "commonality". When a distinction is drawn, the commonality is the accrediting body and the sunédrión its ^standing executive. It convened every year at the season of a great national festival. On this occasion its chief activities consisted of expressions of loyalty to the Leader. These took the form of games, choral singing, ^{prayers} ~~rites~~, and sacrifices. Also a psēphisma, a "decree" eulogizing the Leader, was voted and transmitted to him by messenger. Further business sometimes included the initiating of impeachment proceedings against oppressive Roman officials. Among its privileges this was the most cherished. It also had to make provision for handling its affairs until it met the following year -- hence the sunédrión. And above all, it had to choose a president. Because the functions of the assembly were primarily religious, its president

bore the title "high-priest."

This religious character of the Ethnic Assembly is illustrated by the "Commonality of the Hellenes of Asia". It originated as an association to conduct the Mucian games in honor of Q. Mucius Scaevola, who as governor had conferred benefits regarded as evidences of his divinity. In 29 B.C. it petitioned for the right to transfer these honors to Octavian. The convocation, formerly held every four years, now became annual and its activities were enlarged. Its president, the "Asiarch" became a person of importance.

Full Jewish participation in the imperial cult was demonstrated with cogency by Jules Juster in his, Les Juifs dans l'empire Romain (1914, 1.399-54). This brilliant French jurist showed in what ways the cult was adapted to bring it into conformity with Jewish custom. Such adaptation accorded with the nature of the cult itself, which was supposed to be the spontaneous response of peoples everywhere to the divine benefits they received. Specific changes from the usual pattern were the omitting of the statue of the Leader, the offering of sacrifices for Rome and Augustus instead of to them as divinities, and refraining from construction of a separate temple in his honor with a college of separate priests.

As the body responsible for administering the imperial cult the Jewish Ethnic Assembly may be presumed to have conformed closely to the other provincial assemblies throughout the empire. Like most of these others it was an adaptation of one that had existed before the conquest, in this case, the Beth Din Shel Kohanim. This Sadducean body had shared in the defeat of Aristobulus and been abolished at the time of Pompey's conquest. Sixteen years later, in 47 B.C., Julius Caesar appeared upon the scene. An ardent champion of the Scaevola doctrine of self-determination, he had already freed Aristobulus from his imprisonment, and he must now have extended the amnesty to his companions of the priest nobility. Also he must have given them permission to revive their assembly.

par. But the new "sanhedrin" was no longer the same body of pre-Roman times

Changes were demanded to bring it into conformity with provincial policy. Even though aristocratic birth was more than ever a precondition of membership, all persons possessing sufficient property qualifications were now eligible. This included Pharisees.

Proof that the ^{Judean} ~~Samarian~~ aristocracy lost no time in establishing an Ethnic Assembly is the arraignment of the young Herod before it a few months later. ~~xxxxx~~ During the first two decades of its existence it can hardly have functioned as an instrument of loyalty. The attempt to execute Herod for slaying a noted patriot is an example of its continued hostility to Rome. And this hostility must have continued during the next two decades of war devastation and ruthless exaction. Added to the consequent suffering was the humiliation of drastic alienation of territory. The change must have taken place about 27 B.C. By then the aristocracy of Judea, in common with that of other subjected peoples, had acquired a vested interest in the pax Augusta.

Even though now its members had less fear of arbitrary removal and execution at the hands of Herod, it remained subject to his whims. Shortly after he had imposed his rule, he executed many of its members. Their anti-Roman sympathies had afforded a convenient pretext for thus getting rid of them in order to seize their estates. Yet Herod gave token recognition to its authority, an instance being the claim in his memoirs to have submitted to it incriminating evidence against Hyrcanus. Also it administered most ^{Judean} ~~Samarian~~ affairs. ~~xxxxx~~ This seems implied by the remark of Josephus that during this period certain high-priests were governors of Judea (Ant. 20.251). As governors they must have had a court before which to summon offenders.

The subordinate role of the Ethnic Assembly ended with the annexation of Judea in A.D. 6. Speaking of this occasion Josephus says of Herod the Great and his son Archelaus,

after their death the government became an aristocracy and the high-priest was entrusted with dominion over the nation.

-- Ant. 20.251

The administration was now what Polybius calls a Synedrisme Politeia, "parliamentary government", a consequence of the large degree of autonomy that had become vested in the whole ^{Judean}/ruling class.

The commonality of the Jews was thus enabled to assume the prerogatives which Herod had usurped. They included the right to administer the loyalty oath, to represent the nation in dealings with the Leader, and to conduct the quadrennial Jerusalem Olympics/ in his honor. As official administrator of Jewish law it had already possessed the right to inflict the death sentence. Now it was able to carry out all such penalties without interference from Herodian princes. For proof consult Juster, also a recent article by Paul Winter in ZNW. The Ethnic Assembly continued to perform these and other functions until its demise in A.D. 66. By then the rising tide of revolutionary fervor caused its place to be taken by the war "sanhedrin", to which Josephus refers in his memoirs.

Meanwhile we must think of the anti-Roman Pharisee assembly pursuing throughout this hundred and twelve year period a course aloof from politics. "Seek not acquaintance with the ruling power", was the injunction of Shemaiah; and Abtalion, his associate in the Pharisee assembly, warned "give heed to your words lest ye incur the penalty of exile". Because it lacked official standing, the official activities of the Pharisee assembly were limited to the three functions for which primarily it existed: conserving the text of holy Scripture, building "a fence around the Law" through expanding tradition, and regulating the ritual of worship.

The pertinence of these facts to the trial of Jesus may be summarized briefly as:

First, by its disregard for the niceties of Pharisee legal procedure the Ethnic Assembly demonstrated at once its dominantly Sadducee character and its zeal to demonstrate its loyalty to Rome.

Second, this court had a reputation for cruelty, a notorious example being the way it employed a few decades later in putting to

death the daughter of a priest. It would have punished Jesus with its characteristic severity had it possessed the right to do so. That it did not possess this right proves that the indictments against him lay outside the jurisdiction of Jewish law.

Third, its inability to execute Jesus tends to confirm the historicity of the indictments alleged by Luke. Although exaggerated by his enemies, all three appear to have contained an element of truth. As I have shown elsewhere*, this includes the charge concerning obstruction of the tribute; Jesus had indeed discouraged voluntary payment by the issue of one of stewardship and his satire concerning the denarius. The charge of a messianic purpose included the others and thus became the one on which he was put to death.

Fourth, the ^{dramatic} reaction reaction of the high-priest should also be accepted as historical. A Hellenistic interpretation of theocratic sonship, which is ^{erroneously} imputed to Jesus by the Evangelists, is not required to have evoked the cry of "blasphemy". To Caiaphas, the inspired Leader had been chosen by God to be the agent of his peace. Hence for Jesus to assert that he had been called to that office was presumption against God.

For these reasons Jesus was handed over to the personal representative of the Leader to receive the punishment to which he was entitled under Roman law.

* Render to God, Oxford Un. Press, N.Y., 1950

November 9, 1962

The Guilt of the Jewish People for the Death of Christ

by Ludwig v. Hertling S.J.

In order to treat this question without getting lost in senseless slogans, one must separate the various elements of it: (1) What kind of guilt is involved here? Can one describe the execution of Jesus as "deicide?" (2) Who were the guilty ones at that time? (3) Can one speak of a collective guilt and accordingly describe the people of Israel as being "accursed by God?" --- These questions have to be answered primarily in a theological way, but also the Exegete and the historian have something to say about it.

1. "Deicide": According to Catholic teaching Jesus Christ is/one and the same person - the true God and the true man. Both natures, the divine and the human, are united hypostatically in Christ, as the technical term is used. Between the divine and the human nature in Christ there is what is described in theology as *Communicatio Idiomatum*. This means that the same things can be said about Christ the son of God as about Christ the man. We also call Mary the Mother not only of the man Jesus but as the Mother of God. We do not say only that the man Jesus died on the cross, but that God died for us on the cross. Conversely, we say that homage is due to the child Jesus in the manger, or the blood of Christ or the heart of Jesus. It is therefore dogmatically correct, although it may sound unusual to say, that God was executed, and considering that it was an unjust and violent execution, that God was murdered.

Thus, while according to Christian belief the murder of God is an objective fact, it does not mean to convey that all or some who took part in the murder of Jesus, thereby took upon themselves the subjective guilt of deicide. This would have been the case only if the executioners had clearly realized that Jesus was God. Otherwise, their subjective guilt could be described as the murder of an innocent, or as legal murder, but not as deicide. The question to be posed is therefore: to what extent have those who took part in the crucifixion of Jesus recognized the divine nature of Jesus?

In his sermon after the healing of the lame person (Acts 3, 15) Peter reproached the Jews of Jerusalem by saying: "You have killed the very source of life," but added: "I know, brothers, that you did not know what you were doing, any more than your leaders did." Similarly, in his address to the Jews of Antiochia in Pisidien, Paul said: "For the people of Jerusalem and their leaders refused to recognize him and condemned him, thus fulfilling the very utterances of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath." (Acts 13, 27). The expressions used here "agnoia" and "agnoesantes" signify not recognizing as well as not knowing and not understanding.

More difficult is the text of the First Corinthian letter (2, 8): "It is a wisdom unknown to any of the authorities of this world, for otherwise they would never have crucified our glorious Lord." It is not certain who was meant by the Archontes (Great or authorities) of this world, whether Caipha, Annas, Pilate and Herod or the non-worldly powers which stood behind them at that moment or both sides together. At any rate, the Apostle expresses here the same thought, namely, that all those who contributed to the crucifixion of Jesus were lacking in the realization of his true nature.

In this concept the Apostles only followed the example of Jesus himself who prayed at the crucifixion: "O Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23, 24).

It should be further noted that Jesus as well as the Apostles speak of "ignorance" generally, not only of ignorance regarding the divinity of Christ. In the passage of Acts 13, 27, Paul seems to refer primarily to the non-recognition of the Messianic dignity. Now, when Jesus as well as the Apostles have attributed to the Jews ignorance regarding matters which are easily conceivable as the glory of the Messiah, certainly a fortiori they attributed such ignorance with regard to the two natures of Christ which are more difficult to grasp.

In studying these texts one may ask whether we have here a deliberate act of benevolent excuse but which does not quite correspond to the truth. For one cannot speak about a real ignorance of the Jews from that moment on when Jesus spoke clearly and unequivocally of his divinity and reinforced this statement by miracles accomplished.

Regarding this one must say that the passages in question do not eliminate every subjective guilt. The words of Jesus and the Apostles are by no means a judicial verdict of acquittal, by which the full innocence of the accused is stated; but they are that kind of exoneration which aims at forgiveness. The term "ignorance" in this case does not simply mean not knowing, but incomplete realization. Only thus could Jesus ask the Father for forgiveness. If there were no subjective guilt at all, then no forgiveness was needed. Jesus even says in the farewell speech in the Gospel of John (15, 22): "Thus they have no excuse for their sin." This was said after they heard his sermon and saw his miracles. He said the same to Pilate: "Therefore the one who delivered me committed a great sin." (John 19, 11).

Thus, in the texts where the Jews are excused we have, on the one hand, no elimination of any guilt and, on the other hand, no empty expressions of friendship which simply glosses over the existing guilt. For such phrases there was no place at that time. What concerns Jesus himself he unequivocally pleaded for forgiveness. That he based his plea on extenuating circumstances shows, on the one hand, that there was a real guilt and, on the other hand, that it was not so great as to exclude any forgiveness.

What Jesus said about his dignity as the Son of God was clear and not liable to misunderstanding, and furthermore confirmed by miraculous deeds. One should not ignore, however, that his contemporaries had to overcome serious difficulties, and which hindered particularly the leading spirits, in obtaining a full understanding of his utterances as well as having a full realization of the forceful evidence of his miracles. In this connection one should think not primarily of nationalist and political premises or prejudices, although this too existed, but of the difficulty of understanding in the purely religious sphere. For an Israelite who grew up in the spirit of the Old Testament, i.e., in strictest monotheism, it would have been actually too much to demand that he should understand what Jesus meant by his assertions that he is the "Son of God" and "one with the Father;" that he should understand how this God who revealed himself in the old alliance as a purely spiritual and invisible being and who even prohibited his representation in any image should now become identified with a simple man who hailed from Nazareth and whose parents were known. He who grew up in the Christian belief, in the old tradition of nineteen centuries, can hardly conceive the inner resistance which an Israelite of that time had to overcome in order to face such truths. Jesus certainly has not failed to make his teachings understandable and to reinforce them by the holiness of ^{his} life and his miracles. But we ought not to forget that credal truths can never be demonstrated with mathematical certainty and that belief must be reinforced by a free act of will and the influence of grace. Not that God failed the Israelites of that time in bestowing upon them such grace; but as always God has then not applied violence to the power of man to make a free decision. In this sense the Apostles can even say of the representatives of the Sanhedrin that they did not have full insight into what they had been doing.

Thus if one cannot speak of the guilt of deicide it remains true, however, that at least the High Priests and the members of the Sanhedrin were guilty of the condemnation of an innocent person, of legal murder. They have caused the condemnation of a great teacher and prophet, a man "mighty in word and deed," (Luke 24, 19) "who went about doing good," (Acts 10, 38) a man whose course of life was above suspicion.

To this one should reply: Actually this is without doubt correct, and nobody of the Catholic Church is thinking of questioning it. But the actual events here too do not reflect the degree of subjective guilt. That there was a subjective guilt there can be no denial; but here too one must consider the extent to which the Jews of Jerusalem, including their representatives, had at that moment the full realization of what they had been doing and what was the role of confusing passions and timely circumstances. The "ignorance" referred to by the Apostles and Jesus applied not only to the non-recognition of Christ's divinity, but is of a general nature. We ought not to demand recognition and insight, which are to us retrospectively self-evident, from the witnesses of the moment, when passions and confusing circumstances could have obscured some things and affected not only insight but also the

freedom of decision. This will become immediately clearer when we take an example from a period closer to us -- the Reformation in the 16th Century. Who would undertake to determine the degree of responsibility or guilt of each individual in the chaos of cross currents of genuine religious movements, human passions, personal and political intrigues and interests?

2. The Guilty Persons: No matter how many reasons for exoneration and extenuating circumstances we admit, there remains, however, a real guilt, a subjective heavy responsibility on the part of all those who against better judgment contributed to the execution of Jesus. Leaving aside Pilate and the Roman soldiers, the really guilty ones remain the High Priests and the other members of the High Council who issued the verdict of death, and obtained its execution from Pilate; the servants of the Temple who captured Jesus on the Mount of Olives; the mob who by their cry: "Crucify him," so intimidated the Procurator that he yielded to the High Priests. Finally, there must be counted among the guilty ones Herod who gave the trial free rein when he could have prevented it, and the traitor Judas. This however closes the circle of those who are guilty for the death of Jesus. One cannot consider as accomplices in the crucifixion all those who in some way and at some time adopted a hostile attitude toward Jesus or showed resistance to him, e.g., the Pharisees and Scribes who thought to "entangle him in his speeches," or the inhabitants of Nazareth who wanted to throw him off from the mountain (Luke 4, 29) or the people who threatened to stone him (John 10, 31), even though they acted on certain occasions against better knowledge and thus in a guilty fashion.

Among those who were more or less active participants in the execution of Jesus, numerically the strongest group was the mob who by the cry: "Crucify him" had a decisive influence on the condemnation. The Evangelists do not show how many they were, but from the location it is reasonable to assume that they did not count hundreds of thousands. There did not exist gigantic free place in Jerusalem for such large masses to gather, except in the Temple region which does not come into consideration in this case. That the square or the road of Burg Antonia where this shouting took place was not very spacious, can be seen from the fact that individual speakers, Pilate and the High Priests or their representatives had, it seems, been understood everywhere. The mob could therefore not have counted more than several thousand individuals. How these calls and shouting were organized we do not know, but it is probable that individual agents of the High Priests shouted the slogans, "We want Barabbas!" "We need no King, we have enough of Emperors!" "Crucify him!" "It involves your position with the Emperor!" and that the masses repeated these slogans or simply gave their approval by saying "Yes." That this course was organized and was not a spontaneous affair is explicitly stated by the Evangelists (Mark 15,2; Mathew 27, 20). It is therefore not necessary to assume that all without exception shouted these slogans. But even if all understood what

is involved and all without exception shouted, the maximum number was a few thousand. Jerusalem then had a population of 50,000 residents. Thus one cannot say that the inhabitants of Jerusalem in their overwhelming majority approved the death of Jesus.

One is still less entitled to assert that the Jewish people as a whole took part in the execution of Jesus. Although we do not have any statistical information about the number of Israelites who lived in Palestine and the Diaspora at that time, we can presume that no less than half a million lived in Palestine. With regard to the Diaspora, the Jewish community of Rome is estimated by archeologists to have numbered 30,000, which is probably somewhat exaggerated. At any rate, when one considers that in all large cities, also in the West, there were Jewish communities and that in addition there existed such communities in many smaller localities, as we know among others from the Acts of the Apostles, then we are entitled to assume that the totality of Diaspora Jewry was at least another half million, even if the individual communities did not number many thousands. All these were not only Israelites by origin, but they had their own civic organizations, practised the Jewish religion and Jewish customs and felt in every respect members of the Jewish people, although they used in daily life the local language; mostly Greek.

If, thus, the Jewish people then numbered at least a million members and of these about three or five per mille shouted "Crucify him" on Good Friday, then one can hardly reasonably state that the Jewish people demanded the execution of Jesus. One can also not say that the rest of the Jews only abstained from shouting "Crucify him" because they were not present and that if the Jews of Galilee or Tarsus or Ephesus were on the spot they too would have shouted the same. This is possible. But when we speak of responsibility and guilt we must retain only what actually happened and not what could have happened.

The collective form of expression which we find in certain passages of the Evangelists, particularly in John, and even outside of the Passion Story, does not represent any serious difficulty. "The Jews answered, 'Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and are possessed?'" (John 8, 48). Or during the healing of the blind: "His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already made an agreement that if anyone acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, he should be excluded from the synagogues." (John 9, 22) "Then the Jews brought stones in order to stone him." (John 10, 31) Such passages do not indicate with any clarity whether all or many or few or one was involved. The passage about the blind refers to the leaders of the Sanhedrin. Otherwise the expression "The Jews" means simply the same as "someone."

One may attempt to declare guilty the entire people inasmuch as it was represented by its heads. Actually the High Priest and the High Council,

the Sanhedrin, were the only authorities or body which had something in the nature of central power also outside of Jerusalem. Saul desired to imprison Christians in Damascus with the authorization of the High Priests (Acts 9, 1). The Synagogue representatives in Rome told the Apostle Paul that they had not received any instructions from Jerusalem regarding Christians (Acts 28, 21). At any rate, this authority involved only religious matters. One could, however, attempt to consider the Sanhedrin as exponents or as representation of the entire Jewish people and therefore reach the conclusion that because the Sanhedrin condemned Jesus, therefore the Jewish people condemned Jesus, for in a certain sense it was in solidarity with the Sanhedrin. Such a conclusion, however, would be based on the premise that the Sanhedrin was a kind of parliament to which the Jewish people from all over the world sent men of their confidence. However, this was not the case. The Sanhedrin consisted of prominent men and a judgment of the Sanhedrin could under certain circumstances influence public opinion. The Sanhedrin could issue ordinances (Acts 5, 28, 40) but it could not speak in the name of the people; it had not received its power from the people. Therefore one cannot make co-responsible the people for the individual acts of the Sanhedrin, as one cannot make responsible the people of the Roman Empire for a decision of the Roman Senate.

Thus no matter from what angle this subject is considered, nowhere does a collective guilt emerge, as though the Jewish people as a whole would have contributed to the execution of Jesus. The only thing one can say is that the really guilty ones with the exception of Pilate were members of the Jewish people. But one cannot make out of a crime that was committed amongst a people the crime of a people.

3. Rejection and Accusation of the People of Israel: The less we can assume historically a collective guilt of the Jewish people, the more difficult it becomes to explain the texts of the New Testament in which it is clearly spoken about collective punishment. Jesus bewails the fate of the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Kephernaum as punishment for their obscurantism. "The land of Sodom will fare better on the Day of Judgment than you will." (Mathew 11, 24) "Jerusalem will be destroyed as punishment because you have not recognized the time of the warning" (Luke 9, 44). Or the passage in which Jesus says: "You shall suffer for the innocent blood that was shed beginning from Abel the upright to the blood of Zechariah." (Mathew 23, 35).

These and other texts which appear to contradict our thesis only show again the objective burden of the men's resistance against the creator and his revelation. To demonstrate this objective difficulty is one of the major tasks of the Evangelical message, but one should not draw conclusions from such passages about any subjective collective guilt which would embrace also those who took no part at all, or even subsequent generations.

At any rate, Jesus spoke of punishments which apply to the Israelite people as such, in its totality, but here there appears a new angle. The Israelite people were chosen to transmit God's Revelation to the whole of mankind. This mission was not intended to be effected as much by words as primarily through its own history. According to St. Augustin (*Contra Faustum* 13, 14) the entire Chosen People is to be recognized as the Prophet of Messiah and His Kingdom. This is clearly evidenced by the books of the Old Testament. Their authors often consider it their task not as much to write a history of their People in the sense of a chronicle, but primarily to present God's rule amongst his People and for his People, so that God could be recognized in this rule, and by the whole of humanity to whom the Scriptures were finally directed. The Apostle Paul says it explicitly when he writes: "This all came to the Jews as an example. It was written as a warning for us who live in the last period." (I Corinthians 10, 11). "Everything that is written is written for our instruction." (Romans 15, 4).

This mission of his was carried by the Jewish people also during the time of Jesus; furthermore, it reached its summit at that time. What God effected in Israel at that time served then as before the one purpose: The Revelation of God to humanity. As during the old alliance, so during the time of Jesus, the history of Israel and God's rule in it was destined to make known the great message of Redemption to humanity; and therefore the objective weight which lies in a rejection of this grace. This entailed God's severity as expressed in tangible events as a punishment for the rejection of his grace. The fate that befell the Jewish people was a real punishment for a real subjective guilt, because such a guilt existed at least of the leaders. But it was a punishment with a long-range redemptive goal and should therefore not be compared with any kind of individual punishment, and certainly one should not judge from the severity of the punishment the degree of subjective guilt. Here one should recall what Paul said as written to the non-Jewish Christians living in Rome. "Observe then the goodness and the severity of God -- severity to those who have fallen, but goodness to you, provided you abide by his goodness, for otherwise, you in your turn will be pruned away. Those others too, if they do not cling to their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God has the power to graft them in again." (Romans 11: 22, 23).

A difficulty is represented by the text of Mathew 8: 11, 12: "I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such faith as this. And I tell you, many will come from the east and from the west and take their places at the feast of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven, while the heirs to the kingdom will be driven into the darkness outside, there to weep and grind their teeth!" Here there seems to be an implication of a pronounced rejection of the entire people, but this is only apparently so: we really have here a manner of expression which is alien to us but was current in the New Testament.

One should compare Luke 13, 18: "The last will be the first and the first will be the last." The sense of this is obviously not that everything will be turned about but that there are those who are last who will be in the first place and those in the first place who will be last. In a similar way, one ought to interpret the passage about the Children of the Kingdom who shall be thrown into darkness. "It can very well be that Israelites of origin will not be saved while Pagans will reach Redemption. Do not rely on your physical origin." From this passage too one cannot derive a rejection of the entire Jewish people.

There are some for whom rejection is not sufficient, but want to conclude from the punishment of the Israelite people that this people has been "accursed by God." This, however, would mean that God has become unfaithful to his promise. The Apostle Paul is far removed from such an assumption, and never thought of an accursement by God. He does not even permit the thought of a rejection as a punishment by God of Israel, as though God has withdrawn the promises given to their forefathers. He says: "I too am an Israelite, from the stem of Abraham, from the Tribe of Benjamin. (Romans 11, 1). He meant to say that if they were rejected, particularly if they were persecuted, I myself would not have received the grace I did and furthermore been permitted to spread the happy message throughout the world. "Has God rejected his People? This is far removed." (Idem) In another passage he gives the reason. "If some of them did not believe, would this unbelief remove God's faithfulness? No and never." (Romans 3, 3). "God's grace and his call are not withdrawn." (Romans 11, 29). "With regard to the selection, it remains the beloved people for the sake of their Fathers." (Idem)

Paul could cite also the other Apostles who belonged to the people of Israel the same as he was. Even after the representatives of the Sanhedrin rejected him and put through his condemnation, Jesus built his Church on these Apostles. Paul could point to the 3,000 Israelites who joined him at Easter (Acts 2, 41); this number was increased to 5,000 (Acts 4, 4) so that a few months after Jesus' crucifixion in Jerusalem, Jesus had more followers than the number of those who shouted "Crucify him" on Good Friday, and among them many Levites (Acts 6, 7). He could also have pointed to the other numerous groups of Jewish Christians subsequently in the Diaspora. Furthermore, Paul gives the mysterious assurance that all of Israel will in the end become worthy (Romans 11, 25), again demonstrating that there can be no question of rejection or accursement.

Thus, everything that could appear as simple punishment is removed from God's benevolent intentions. Also in suffering, this people was and is always the bearer of divine revelation. Its history incarnates God's severity as his charity, and also God's goodness towards the other peoples, whom he has permitted, without their having merited it, to take part in the redemption which was at first promised only to Israel. It can be expressed thus: Also under the punishment, the Israelite people remains a valuable instrument with which God is pursuing his intentions for the Redemption of Humanity. It (Israel) still has a mission in the world.

RABBI RAPHAEL H. LEVINE
Congregation Temple De Hirsch
Seattle 22, Washington

July 18, 1961

Dear Rabbi Tanenbaum:

Thank you for your letter. I am happy to learn that you will be at the convention of the UAHC. I am looking forward to seeing you then.

As you requested, I am enclosing a copy of the transcript of "Who Crucified Jesus". If you have any suggestions which might be incorporated I should be very happy to have them and consult with my colleagues about including them.

I do hope that this message can be given a wider circulation because I do feel that it is an important contribution to the better understanding of one of the most difficult problems in Jewish-Christian relations.

Thank you for your interest.

Yours sincerely,

"CHALLENGE"

(WHO CRUCIFIED JESUS)

The question before the jury is this: "Who Crucified Jesus?" So we are quick to point the finger so that the blame won't fall upon us. In a sense we do share the responsibility, are we not part of the factors in a society that crucify the best in any age, whether it be the dawn of Christianity or the explosion of the twentieth century? Good evening, the program is "Challenge" - It brings together a Rabbi, a Minister, and a Priest, who offer their counsel to many of the challenges we face in today's complicated world. Tonight we explore the subject "Who Crucified Jesus?"

Now may I introduce the Catholic, Father William Treacy, Director of the Catholic Information Center; the Rabbi, Raphael Levine, Senior Rabbi of the Temple De Hirsch; and the Minister, Doctor Martin Goslin, Pastor of the Plymouth Congregational Church.

Goslin: Thank you, Don. As we enter what the Christians call "Holy Week", it is well for us to stop tonight and consider this question of "Who Crucified Jesus?" Across the ages this has stood as one of the tragic moments in all of human history. A crime perpetrated against the best, and yet as we look at it across these nearly two thousand years we are conscious that the same elements are in our society today, which basically were the cause of the crucifixion of Jesus.

Tonight as the three of us talk about the basic responsibility I hope that you will understand that we are conscious always of our own problems in our life today in relationship to that tragic event so many centuries ago. As we think about those who were involved in this affair, we know that the Pharisees and Sadducees had their part. We also know that the Imperial Government had its place, we know that a King Herod Antipas, was responsible in a way as was Judas, the disciple of Jesus. The crowd that took part in the last scenes before the cross and the

Roman soldiers who actually carried out the crucifixion. The people the city were not without responsibility too. Who Crucified Jesus? the question before us.

Father Treacy and Rabbi Levine, I'm sure that you too have your opinions as to the responsibility and it is in this regard that we are to talk tonight.

Treacy - First of all, I'm very happy to sit down and discuss this subject with you. In spite of all the emotion that has surrounded the discussion of the relation of Jews to Christians in the past it is indeed a milestone in human relations that we can sit down here tonight and calmly discuss it. The trial of Christ is a more important one than the trial of Dreyfus, Joan of Arc, or the trial of Socrates. It is more important than any of the other great trials in history, because Christ claimed to be God. Today almost two thousand years later He is regarded by millions of people as having validly established that claim.

In the course of tonight's discussion, I for one would like to go back to the remark of the first Pope, when he was speaking to the Jews, some of whom may have been present at the death of Christ. St. Peter, in speaking to them of the crucifixion in the Third Chapter of "Acts of the Apostles", said "I know that you acted in ignorance as did your rulers." The trial of Christ is a continuing thing and no century must dissociate itself from it and no one people can be assigned full responsibility for the death of Christ.

Levine: That's true. I would like to suggest in this connection that if we can possibly place ourselves in the frame of reference of the people who lived during that period two thousand years ago, and realize first of all that to those people there was no recognition of what Jesus ultimately became in the Christian tradition.

Goslin: Not even among his disciples.

Levine: No, not even among his disciples. To most of the people of his day Jesus was just another itinerant preacher who was travelling through the country preaching and teaching. Some of the things he taught some people liked very much, and some didn't like what he said because they either didn't understand his message or if they did, they regarded some of his observations as radical and unorthodox interpretations of the Judaism they knew. The established religious authorities saw in his new interpretations and attitudes a threat to the established religion even as the Orthodox of every age and generation resist change in religious interpretations and practice. If we understand Jesus in the light of the time and the environment in which he lived I think we will understand the whole problem of his life and death in truer perspective.

Goslin: In most of our Christian teachings we are conscious of the fact that Jews are played up as the villains of the crucifixion story and this is rather tragic because we know, for instance, that the strongest sect among the Jews in the time of Jesus were the Pharisees. They were the great middle class group; among them were the greatest of the rabbis and leaders of the Synagogue. They were the heirs to the best in the Jewish tradition and in an earlier day were the most courageous in their resistance to paganism. They were the custodians of the religion of the Synagogue, the creators of its rituals and practices. It was probably because Jesus seemed to them careless about the rituals which to them seemed important that they rejected him.

Levine: That is true, Dr. Goslin. But there is perhaps another reason why they didn't accept him as the Messiah they were looking for. In their opinion Jesus did not fulfill their expectations of ~~what the~~ ^{domination} Messiah. They expected the Messiah to free Judea from Roman/ to usher in the Kingdom of God, a world of justice and peace and love and brotherhood. And they did not see Jesus accomplishing these things. The world seemed little different and no better as far as they could see. We must understand their

attitudes in terms of their own age not in terms of what developed centuries later.

Treacy: Of course there is something different about the death of Christ that we must keep in mind and that is the fact as St. Peter pointed out, everything about Him had been foretold and that it might have been possible to identify or recognize Him as such. He was in the Christian viewpoint clearly recognizable "approved of God by miracles".

Levine: I am glad you said "in the Christian viewpoint", Father Treacy. For you know that from the Jewish viewpoint the question whether "everything about Jesus had been foretold that it might have been possible to identify him or recognize him as the Christ" is the very question at issue between Judaism and Christianity. The fact is that the majority of the Jews of his day did not recognize him as the Christ.

One thing that many people fail to understand is that among the people of his day Jesus did not hold the position which he has since assumed in Christian theology and tradition. To those who knew him and heard him he was a good, kind and wise teacher who emphasized the moral and the spiritual values of Judaism more than the ritualistic, even as the great Hebrew prophets before him stressed "to do justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly before God" as the essence of the religious life.

Treacy: You know, Rabbi Levine, we Catholics are grateful for the Jews who did accept Christ; for if they had not accepted him in those early days of his ministry we Irish would not have had St. Patrick who brought the faith to Ireland, and March 17th, wouldn't be the great day it is for us.

Levine: I'm glad that we made the Irish happy, Father Treacy, and I am glad you pointed out this historic fact. It is too often forgotten that all who were involved in the story of Jesus were Jews, except the Romans who actually executed the crucifixion. Jesus was a Jew; all his disciples were Jews. Those who were for him were Jews and those who criticized him

were Jews. The epic film "Ben Hur" brings this out vividly. When Jesus was on his way to Calvary the people standing on the street watching the Roman soldiers leading him to the cross and the many who were weeping to see this innocent man led to his execution, were all Jews.

Goslin: It is important to understand that the whole of the early Christian Church was Jewish; in fact, it was only under St. Paul that it was led into the Gentile world. What about this other group, the Sadducees the rather elite church men, the broad-minded traditionalists, the culturally elite of this community? I have an idea that they were not unlike some of the people of today. They felt that any change was dangerous. They looked upon Jesus as a radical or subversive. They were probably afraid of the threat that he would destroy the Temple. They were politicians as many people with vested interests are, and they were looking to their own particular balliwick to keep it protected. We have people like that today who are willing to sacrifice principles and ideals for the protection of their own little nook and cranny. . .

Treacy: That's true; I mean it's true that not just of rulers, it's true of individuals. We have a devotion that probably Dr. Goslin is familiar with, you may not be familiar with unless you visited a Roman Catholic Church Rabbi Levine. It is concerned with fourteen paintings or representations of events in the last days of Jesus depicted on the walls of every Catholic Church. They are called the "Stations of the of the Cross". We meditate on these fourteen incidents in the life of Christ leading from his condemnation to the crucifixion and death. Here is just one brief meditation we make before the first station composed by Bishop Sheen. It brings out the point of Dr. Goslin that it's not do much the Pharisees or Herod or anybody else that crucified Christ. It says: "My conscience is the tribunal of Pilate. Daily and hourly and every minute of the day, Christ comes before that tribunal as virtue, honesty and purity. Barrabas comes as vice, dishonesty, and uncleanness. As often as I choose to

speak the uncharitable word, to do a dishonest act, or consent to an evil thought, I say in so many words, 'release unto me Barrabas' and to choose Barrabas means to crucify Christ." , . .

Goslin: And this goes on day in and day out; this is a thing that we fall into inevitably in our choices, simple and unimportant though they be.

Levine: Dr. Goslin, I would like to make a comment on what Father Treacy just said, I think that is a beautiful thing that you have just now quoted. When you said whenever we choose the wrong, the hateful, we are actually choosing Barrabas, as you say, instead of Christ. In other words, Christ represents everything that certainly you Christians regard as the true, the beautiful, the good and the holy. And every time, any of us, Christian or Jew, expresses a hateful thought towards another person, we are in a very real sense crucifying goodness and truth and beauty.

Goslin: You're not preaching Judaism, you're preaching Christianity.

Levine: No, I am preaching Judaism, There is a poetic fantasy in our Jewish tradition that carries a message not unlike your fourteen "Stations of the Cross", Father Treacy.

It tells that in front of the throne of Glory is a cup into which God sheds a tear every time man turns against his fellow man in anger, in hate, in persecution in war. And the fantasy goes on to say that when the cup in front of God's throne of glory is filled with the tears which God sheds for his children's suffering because of man's inhumanity to man, then the Messiah will come.

Treacy: One of our greatest theologians, Bishop Sheen, in a book of his entitled "The Life of Christ" makes this comment on the Crucifixion of Christ: "The guilt for the Crucifixion is not to be fixed on any one nation, race or people or any individual. Sin was the cause of the crucifixion and all mankind shared in the sin; Jew and Gentile, shared in the guilt. However, the important thing is that both shared in the fruits of redemption, and it is wrong for us to try to pinpoint extra blame on any one race or

nation."

Goslin: Well, this is a continuing experience, but as we look back across the centuries, we find in certain aspects of that which took place then, some of the things that happen in the life of today. For instance, the Imperial Government represented in a sense by Pilate is partially responsible, the over-rule of any people by another group of people is bad for both parties. Yet today across the world we have many instances where this is still true. We find this trouble showing up today in Africa because of colonialism, which is basically wrong when one people attempt to dominate another people.

It is probable that Pilate would have released Jesus through expediency because he did not want to get involved. He tried to shift the responsibility by sending Jesus to Herod Antipas to have him pass sentence on him but when it came to the final decision, Pilate's loyalty was primarily to Caesar rather than to the ideas of justice or righteousness. He was concerned with his own position. We are constantly seeing in the world about us that when a man is pushed into a corner, where a decision has to be made on principle if possible, he often will put the principle behind him and decide for his own advantage.

Treacy: One of the great challenging things about the subject that is under discussion tonight, "Who Crucified Jesus", is how we can best present the answer, upon which we have more or less agreed here, to the young Christian, say the first grader or the pre-school child. This is one of the things that causes uneasiness in the minds of Christians today. They feel that some of the misunderstanding and bigotry toward the Jews in the past may have been the result of the seeds of prejudice that were sown in those early years in the life of a child.

Back in 1947, in France, a noted French Jewish historian, Jules Isaac, wrote a life of Christ, "Jesus and Israel". Part of it was written in the homes of Protestant ministers when he was hiding from the Nazis, part when

he was with priests, and in it he analyzed some of the ideas that he had come across. He also had an audience with Pope Pius XII in 1947, who encouraged him to write it. He presented the Pope with a copy of it. It caused quite a bit of misgiving in France, so much so that there is a special commission now studying the Catechism used in the French schools. In 1960, as a result of this book, a new Catechism, called "Jesus and the People of the Bible", was produced. It presents a more understanding picture of the role of the Jews in the crucifixion of Christ. We in the Church can understand their role but it is very important not to label them as a guilty nation or race responsible for the death of Christ to the little child who is learning for the first time the crucifixion story.

Levine: Thank you very much, Father Treacy, for making that statement. It is a great statement, a statement that is urgently needed in our troubled world.

I would like to recommend an article which appeared in the March 14 issue of Look Magazine. It is called the "Roots of Bias" and was written by Bishop James Pike, Episcopal Bishop of the San Francisco Diocese. Bishop Pike reviews a book by a Protestant Minister, Dr. Bernhard E. Olson, who analyzed the educational materials of four Protestant groups, classified as fundamentalists, conservative, liberal and "neo-Orthodox".

The book entitled "Victims and Oppressors: Intergroup Relations in Protestant Curricula" points out that there is much anti-Jewish and anti-Catholic teaching in this material, often unconscious and unwitting, but because it is used often by inexperienced or biased teachers has been very harmful to a fair understanding of non-Protestant groups. And now you tell us, Father Treacy, that the Catholic Church is making a similar study of Catholic Textbooks....

Treacy: I read the article, Rabbi Levine, and I think that article also

points out that St. Louis University is conducting a special study of our catechism. I would also like to refer to the fact that we have a chair of Judeo-Christian studies at Seaton Hall University in New Jersey.

In 1952 the French hierarchy made a study of French catechism as a result of the book by Jules Isaac to which I referred, with an introduction by Cardinal Salee. As a result of this study many catechisms were withdrawn and a new one came out last year.

GOSLIN: I dare say that this same kind of action is under way in Judaism.

LEVINE: Yes, Dr. Goslin, There is a study being made to eliminate from Jewish textbooks whatever prejudiced attitudes against other groups may be found in them either directly or by implication.

GOSLIN: We are all guilty of this prejudiced thinking regardless of our particular backgrounds. We do this so easily by using a word like Jew as an epithet or "Mick", or whatever you call us Protestants. We use the word Dago, Gringo or half a dozen other words that are common to us all and it is this derogatory kind of thing that carries on our bias and prejudices through the years.

Looking at some of the other aspects of the Crucifixion, I think it is well to realize that the man who perpetrated it directly, Judas, is to be found in the society of which we are a part today. We have the disillusioned idealist, the repeated incidents where people have betrayed their country, primarily because the objectives for which they had hoped or for which they have worked, seem to have been frustrated, and in a sort of a rebound they turn around and say "Well, if they won't do it my way, I will force the issue". We have people like that in our own community, if things do not go their way, they will have no part of it.

LEVINE: May I say in connection with the Last Supper. I hope you don't mind my speaking of an event sacred to Christians.

GOSLIN: It's quite all right, Rabbi, They were all Jews at the Last Supper.

LEVINE: I am glad you understand. When Jesus was with his disciples at the Last Supper, one of them, Judas, informed against him; but there were eleven other Jews there who were his devoted followers, his brothers, who looked to him as their leader and Master.

TREACY: One of the Popes(Pius XI) said we are spiritually Semites as we have Abraham as our Father. One of the most encouraging events of our times is the movement for greater understanding between the Jew and the Christian. There have been mistakes in the past certainly on the Christian side which led to misunderstanding. But one of the bright stars of a new day is that though Christian is a dividing point between us, yet we can agree in His spirit which is a fulfillment of the law, that in charity we can live as brothers with respect and understanding for each other as children of the same heavenly Father and spiritual descendants of Abraham.

GOSLIN: What about the aspect of the mob in the Crucifixion? Obviously it was the pressure and the shouting that influenced at least Pilate who had the final word on the decision to crucify Jesus.

LEVINE: May I explain my understanding of the mob. To understand why the mob chose Barabbas instead of Jesus one must understand the political situation in Judea in the time of Jesus. Judea was a Roman province ruled by a procurator, Pilate, and there were those among the Jews who were very restive under Roman domination and were carrying on a constant guerilla war. They might be called the underground fighters who wanted to free their country from foreign(Roman) rule. Barabbas was a leader of this underground movement and to many of the Judeans he was a popular hero. So when Pilate gave the mob the choice between Jesus and Barabbas the mob cried for their underground fighter hero.

GOSLIN: Isn't this often so with any mob, they do not think, they act on their emotions and instincts and of course unconsciously we become a part of such mobs today, with communications as they are, T.V. or radio.

We become a part of a mob so that misinformation and distorted viewpoints and half truths can set us off.

TREACY: That is right and, of course, the story brings out that it was not the mob sitting down and thinking things out but some of the leaders stirring up the mob to ask for Barrabas instead of Christ. This brings out in a way the famous dictum of Lenin, that revolutions are made by militant minorities. It is the individuals who control mobs. However, one of the most beautiful paintings of Christ, Rabbi Levine, that is known to me is one that I came across recently in a book called "The Bridge". It is published at Seton Hall University and dedicated to promoting better understanding between the Jews and Christians. It is a painting of the Crucifixion by Marc Chagall.

He painted the Crucifixion in 1947, and according to some it may be the first time in two thousand years that a Jew painted Christ, which shows progress for good in our relationship. In this particular painting Christ is wearing the Jewish prayer shawl. The artist has laid down his brushes and to the left of him is a clock and the hands of the clock have slowly come to three, the hour that Christ died. Beside him is a sad faced donkey, the donkey who had so often been mistreated, but perhaps had memories of the kind master who had ridden on his back at some particular time. It is painted with reverence and respect and brings out in a very special way a new spirit of understanding. Other paintings by Chagall show a ladder beside the Cross which has perhaps various meanings, but some artists think it may mean for a brother Jew to take a brother down from the Cross. But it is to me a very heart-moving painting of the Crucifixion.

GOSLIN: This whole affair brings us to a consciousness of our personal responsibilities as individuals in the community. One would wonder what the people of Jerusalem were doing the day of the Crucifixion, the indifferent folk who carried on business as usual, who allowed something to take place

In their city by ignoring it, by failing to be concerned, maybe by not wanting to get involved. We have folks like that today.

TREACY: There is one individual in it, Dr. Goslin, who brings out that point of yours very well, the one who did not want to get involved and became famous for his reluctant cooperation. Simon of Cyrene was going back into the city to get ready for the Passover when he met the procession of the condemned with Jesus on the way to Calvary, and the last thing he wanted to do was to be involved in it. The story goes that the Romans constrained him to take up the Cross, which gave him the opportunity to help Christ. This brings out the fact that when we least expect it, the opportunity is given us to do something good, to do the virtuous, kindly, helpful thing rather than to selfishly turn down the opportunity because it is not convenient for us at that time. In helping a fellow human being we are helping Christ to carry His cross to Calvary.

GOSLIN: It is a continuing thing.

LEVINE: May I make a comment? As a Jew this is, of course, a very delicate subject to discuss, particularly before Easter, but I think that the spirit which has been expressed here tonight by you, Father Treacy, and you, Dr. Goslin, and I know that you are expressing the feelings of multitudes of Christians, especially thinking Christians, is one of the most hopeful things that has happened in many, many years. It is indeed good that we can sit here and discuss this problem with as much understanding and real love for one another.

GOSLIN: This is the way it should be and I think we are all conscious of our shortcomings. One of D.A.Kennedy's brief poems that I think will live down the years expresses this in a real sense.

"When Jesus came to Golgotha they hanged him on a tree,
They drove great nails through hands and feet, and made a Calvary;
They crowned him with a crown of thorns, red were his wounds and deep,
For those were crude and cruel days, and human flesh was cheap.

When Jesus came to Birmingham, they simply passed him by,
They never hurt a hair of him, they only let him die;
For men had grown more tender, and they would not give him pain,
They only just passed down the street, and left him in the rain.

Still Jesus cried, "Forgive them for they know not what they do."
And still it rained the winter rain that drenched him through and
through;

The crowds went home and left the streets without a soul to see,
And Jesus crouched against a wall and cried for Calvary."

G.A. StuddertKennedy

LEVINE: What a beautiful thought and so eloquently expressed!

GOSLIN: Maybe we should know that many of us crucify Jesus day in and day
out by our own moral callousness and spiritual blindness.

So back to you, Don.



How can this be? How can the institutions of our great religions, which are committed to the teaching and practice of love of God and neighbor, support negative and distorted attitudes toward other groups? Noted psychologist, Gordon Allport has suggested, "The chief reason why religion becomes the focus of prejudice is that it usually stands for more than faith-- it is the pivot of the cultural tradition of a group." Or, put another way, we are all somewhat the victims of polemical histories. At ~~sixt~~ critical periods over the past 2,000 years our separate religious communities have clashed in serious conflicts, both theologically and historically rooted, often accompanied by great bitterness, persecution and bloodshed. In the heat of argument, many hostile or negative comments were made regarding one another, and, unfortunately, these have become embedded in our historic traditions, uncritically carried forward from generation to generation, and may still be found in religious teaching.

This, plus a somewhat defensive tendency to view our own group as the victims of persecution and oppression inflicted by the others, can lead to totally polarized and polemical views of one another. Read a typical Catholic Church history textbook, for example, on the Crusades. They are almost invariably presented as noble and chivalrous efforts on behalf of a holy cause. If slaughter is mentioned, it is the slaughter of Christians by Turks. Seldom will you find the information that for Jews, the Crusades meant a blood bath, the first systematic massacres of Jews in Europe. On the occasion of the capture of Jerusalem in 1099--a glorious victory in Christian textbooks--Jewish textbooks will relate that the Jews of Jerusalem were driven by the victorious Crusaders into a synagogue and burned alive.

Similarly, read Protestant and Catholic lessons dealing with the Reformation, or with certain areas of contemporary competition. The same thing happens --not only vulgar name-calling ("obstinate heretics" or "Luther's unrestrained passions" from the Catholic side, and the Catholic Church "teeming with legalism like a filthy kitchen teems with vermin" from the Protestants)--but something much deeper and more difficult to correct because less obvious to see: a refusal to identify with the plight of others, a defensiveness which sacrifices charity and sometimes justice to the interests of an unreflective group loyalty. When this happens, as William James puts it, "piety is the mask, the inner force is tribal instinct."

The task of freeing the vital core of faith from the cultural and temporal encrustations which have accumulated around it over the centuries is not an easy one. It requires honest self criticism on that part of all our religious communities, diligence and skill. But it is a task that must be accomplished. Otherwise, we will find that our professions of noble moral teaching about the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God, when contrasted against the daily behavior and entrenched biased attitudes of "religious" people will sow the seeds of secularism and skepticism.

Fortunately, the process has long since begun here in the U. S. There is evident a new openness, a willingness to examine educational materials, teacher training procedures--the total process through which the religious message is promulgated and transmitted to young and impressionable minds. Responsible, Protestant, Catholic and Jewish scholars have undertaken serious and objective studies of the religious education materials used in their respective communities, to see how other racial, religious and ethnic groups are portrayed in these materials, where the problems lie, and what improvements must be made. I am pleased that my own organization, the American Jewish Committee has stimulated and encouraged these impartial research projects. The Protestant self study, undertaken over a seven year period at Yale Divinity School by Dr. Bernhard E. Olson, was published last year by Yale University Press under the title Faith and Prejudice. The Catholic research, undertaken at St. Louis University under the direction of Trafford Maher, S.J., included an analysis of Catholic literature materials by Sr. Mary Linus Gleason, social studies

textbooks by Sr. Rita Mudd, and religion textbooks by Sr. Rose Albert Thering. The findings of the latter study have recently been made public. The Jewish self study, carried on at Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning under the direction of Dr. Bernard Weinryb has just been completed and its findings will be announced in the near future.

These studies provide us with important insights regarding the way we teach about one another. First of all, they indicate that our religious textbooks are very favorably disposed toward racial and ethnic groups. Bias and distortion occurs when other groups are written about. As might be expected, the negative and hostile references tend to intensify around certain critical conflicts between our various faith communities. Thus, Protestants and Catholics tend to write negatively about one another in lessons dealing with the Reformation, doctrinal differences on such questions as the authority of the Church, etc. Both Protestants and Catholics tend to write negatively-and sometimes with shocking distortions about Jews in lessons dealing with the Crucifixion, the Jewish rejection of Christianity, the struggle between Jesus and the Pharisees, etc. While all of our textbooks stress charity and love of neighbor in general terms, and include many expressions of general good will, this charitable and loving attitude is often forgotten in writing about specific groups and particular situations. Since I am a rabbi, and honestly believe that the Jewish people, beyond any other group, have suffered throughout history from the consequences of distorted and unreflective Christian teachings, I would like to direct my remarks to the question of Christian teaching about Jews, and to point to some of the more serious problems as I see them.

In reviewing the findings of the St. Louis study, and in much of my own reading of Catholic education materials, it seems to me that there are certain repeated patterns and themes which are prejudicial. I should like to identify and illustrate these problems for you.

First and foremost, there is a very strong tendency in Catholic textbooks to place upon the Jews exclusive and collective responsibility for the Crucifixion of Jesus. I need not tell you that the cry of "Christ killer" against the Jews has been used by anti-Semites throughout the ages to excuse or justify the most violent and brutal persecution. Moreover, authentic Catholic teaching on this question ^{is} clearly and forthright. I refer you to the words of the Fourth catechism of the Council of Trent:

"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 assentShould any one inquire why the Son of God underwent His most bitter passion, he will find that besides the guilt inherited from our first parents, the principle 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 makes a mockery of Him. 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; while we on the contrary, professing to know Him, yet deny Him by our actions, seem in some sort to lay violent hands upon Him....Men of all ranks and conditions were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. Gentiles and Jews were the advisers, the authors, the ministers of His passion; Judas betrayed Him, Peter denied Him, and the rest despised Him...

Despite this splendid and authoritative teaching, despite the statement of Fr. Lewis Hartmann, ~~XXXX~~ Csr. Gen. Secy. of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, that, "historically speaking...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 2,000 years later," and despite many similar statements by contemporary Catholic authorities, a number of Catholic teaching materials persist in stating or implying that the Jews as a people are responsible for the death of the Savior and are consequently condemned and rejected by God. Let me give you some verbatim examples from textbooks used in Catholic secondary parochial schools.

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

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

When did the Jews decide to kill Christ?

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

In a Lenten miscel we read the following:

His Jewish nation was suffering an exile of seventy years. In captivity they were stoning 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 stoning these nineteen hundred years for the greatest of all crimes, committed when an entire nation rejected, crucified, and shed the blood of the Son of God. Among such Christians they are witnesses of a lost vocation without prince or profit 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.

Statements like these are likely to instill the conviction that the Jews bear a collective guilt and somehow deserve the suffering 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.

A second problem I have noted in the textbook materials is partiality in the use of the term "the Jews." In many instances, the enemies of Jesus are consistently identified as "the Jews," while his friends and followers who were also Jews are not. Contrast the following sets of excerpts:

Altogether numbering well over five thousand they listened to the Master all day, forgetting even to eat.

The Jews stirred up the rabble against Him.

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

With what words of His did the Jews attempt for the second time to stone Him?

A particularly vivid example of this kind of partiality is found in the following statement: "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." Who were "the people?" Martians? Jesus lived his entire life among his own people, and scarcely addressed a word to a non-Jew. "The people" who loved, revered and followed him as well as specific religious authorities who opposed him and plotted against him were all Jews.

Another example of partiality is the frequent use of the generic term "the Jews" applied to situations where only a few individuals, comprising an insignificant proportion of the population were involved. Unfortunately, expressions such as,

"the blood thirsty Jews," "the carnal Jews," "the envious Jews," "The blind hatred of the Jews" do not make these distinctions. I ask you to consider the impact on young and impressionable minds of the repetition of such phrases without proper distinctions and interpretation of the material. Is it not possible for students to associate these evil characteristics with all Jews?

Another interesting example of partiality in terminology --and I do not think this is deliberate, but is a question of style rather than intent--is that Jews are often referred to differently in New Testament and Old Testament contexts. In Old Testament lessons, where Jews are presented in a very positive fashion, they are often designated "Hebrews" or "Israelites." In the New Testament lessons, "the Jews" appears to be more frequently used. In a recently published textbook for children--and I wish to emphasize strongly that it is one of the best textbooks I have seen--there is an example of this. One passage reads:

This kind of statement is not a source of serious concern, but it is interesting if only because it appears in such a splendid and sensitive childrens' book. Of course God chose Abraham! But Abraham is not a people. A people are the Jews. Christian students must never lose sight of the fact that "the Jews" of the New Testament lessons are the same people who are praised as Hebrews ~~xxx~~ or Israelites, the same living people to whom God revealed Himself, who upheld even though martyrdom the faith in the one living God which made Christianity possible.

Another sore point, in much of the teaching matter is the treatment of the Pharisees. Naturally, we can not expect that Christianity must share our views of the Pharisees as, for the most part, saintly devote and courageous men on whose moral and scholarly interpretations of the Law normative Judaism rests today. In recent years, outstanding Christian scholars have presented a more balanced and affirmative view of the Pharisees, but we must understand and accept that our evaluation of this group will continue to be different. But all too frequently the Pharisees are described as absolutely inhuman. No true religious motivation is ever ascribed to them. Seldom if ever is it suggested that some of them might have acted out of sincere conviction. The student is given a picture of a group of people utterly debased, completely hypocritical, motivated by nothing but blind hatred and vengeance. The words of Fr. Paul Demann, the French Catholic scholar, are ~~perhaps~~ particularly relevant here:

The manner and spirit of approach with which we 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 hypocrisy, 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 an historically and theologically accurate way means to show the very temptations, the sins, the reproaches directed 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 besides them.

In expounding Christianity, unjust and inaccurate comparisons with the Jewish faith are often made. Occasionally, gratuitous slurs to Judaism are introduced to heighten the contrast to Christianity. In consequence Judaism emerges as a legalistic religion concerned with external observances devoid of love, mercy and compassion. For example: "The Jews believed that one should hate an enemy but Christ taught the opposite." (I cannot resist the comment that St. Paul's injunction, "If your enemy is hungry feed him" Romans 12:20, is a direct quote from Proverbs 25.21.

Similarly consider the following statement from a textbook:
~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ "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." How uncharitable--to say nothing of inaccurate--a generalization. I practice my religion for its own values and in full appreciation of the richness and depth of its tradition, not in opposition to ⁹⁰other faith. And I do not consider Judaism the antithesis of Christianity. 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 true 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 the selves, being barred fr guilds and forbidd to

own land.

Some omissions likely to foster prejudice are illustrated here:

- XX 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."

There are few, if any, 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 may 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?

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."

(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.)

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

JUDAISM, by Father Paul Demann
(Hawthorn Press)

A richly perceptive and factually reliable introduction to the main doctrines of Judaism, Jewish worship and prayer, and the highlights of Jewish history, written by a Roman Catholic priest.

BRIDGE TO BROTHERHOOD by Stuart E. Rosenberg
(Abelard-Schuman)

In popular non-technical language, the author, a rabbi, outlines the shared and the differing views of Christianity and Judaism towards sacred times and seasons, and sacred ideas.

THE JEWS AND THE GOSPEL - A Reexamination of the New Testament
by Gregory Baum, O.S.A.
(The Newman Press)

Examines in detail the teachings of gospels and the letters of St. Paul to support the author's contention that "there is no foundation for the accusation that a seed of contempt and hatred for Jews can be found in the New Testament."

THE TEACHING OF CONTEMPT - Christian Roots of anti-Semitism
by Jules Isaac
(Holt, Rinehart and Winston)

A great French historian traces certain "themes of contempt" in historic Christian teaching about the Jews and calls upon Christian leaders to redress these teachings.

REPRINTS AND ARTICLES: All of the following may be obtained
from the American Jewish Committee,
165 East 56th Street, New York 22, N. Y.

VATICAN MOVE: A BOON TO JEWISH-CATHOLIC DIALOGUE

by Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum

The meaning of the Ecumenical Council's proposed
pronouncement on Christian-Jewish relations.....05¢

ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT JEWS AND JUDAISM

by Rabbi Barnett R. Brickner

Questions and answers about Jewish tradition
and religious ritual.....10¢

THE JEWS

by Hartzell Spence

One of a series of articles on religions in America.....10¢

WHAT IS A JEW?

by Morris N. Kertzer

Questions and answers on the beliefs, traditions,
and practices of Judaism.....05¢

May 11, 1964

David Danzig

Lucy S. Dawidowicz

The Illegal Trial of Jesus

We recently learned that the Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., published in August 1962 in its series Charter Books ("modern masterworks" in paperback) Earle L. Wingo's The Illegal Trial of Jesus.

The Illegal Trial of Jesus is a crude Fundamentalist version of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, in effect antisemitic. Educated Fundamentalists today, for instance, the so-called neo-evangelicals (those associated with the National Association of Evangelicals and opposed to the diehard American Council of Christian Churches), would likely be embarrassed by the historical and theological illiteracy of this book. Yet the blurb on the back cover (attached) talks of this book's "totally new insight."

The book shows how evil, brutal, degenerate, hypocritical, selfish, mean, carnal, usurious, narrow-minded, and smug the Jews were (and still are?). Wingo is also sure that the Jews were more to blame than the Romans for the crucifixion. Some extracts are attached which illustrate the quality of the text.

Earl L. Wingo first published this book himself in 1954 in his home town of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, where he is regarded as a "prominent lawyer" and a "Christian gentleman," according to the pastor of the Baptist church he attends. (This testimonial, in the original edition, was omitted in the Bobbs-Merrill version.) Wingo is a past president of the Mississippi Bar Association. The Bobbs-Merrill book appears to be a photo-offset edition of the 1954 original, with only the testimonial omitted and some of the front matter rearranged.

Efforts should be made to have this book withdrawn from further distribution.

cc: Milton Ellerin
Edwin J. Lukas
Marc Tanenbaum ✓

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THE ILLEGAL TRIAL OF JESUS

Earle L. Wingo

It was Paul of Tarsus, the great convert, who described the two Jewish religious groups [Sadducees and Pharisees] in this manner:

"Being filled with unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debase, deceit, malignity; whisperers, back-biters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable and unmerciful!"

What a stinging and yet truthful indictment against the so-called religious groups and leaders in Judea in the time of Christ! And Paul knew whereof he spoke, for he lived among and preached to them for several years. Yes, Paul had seen the evidence of that with which they stood accused by him [p. 8]7.

What the Jews had hoped and prayed for was a Kingdom of God -- not in righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Ghost -- but in meat and drink! They cherished the thought of and insisted upon a kingdom on earth which would, beyond doubt, rival all others; and one which would also produce a miraculous triumph over their despised Roman rulers [p. 11]7.

While the Sadducees were never very friendly with the opposing religious group, the Pharisees, the two were ever ready to combine their miserable talents in any conspiracy to embarrass and humiliate the Christ -- as well as the final plan to destroy Him! Enmity toward Jesus was the one, main thing which they had in common. All that Jesus was teaching, and all that He preached, ran counter to the thoughts and creed and teachings of both the Sadducees and Pharisees [p. 31]7.

The Pharisees taught that fasting for long seasons, with mournful countenances, was most pleasing in the sight of God. With them it was a great sacrilege and crime for one to partake of a single meal without having first washed his hands to the elbows; and they never failed to condemn any person found to be ignoring that tradition of theirs. Of all the people ever to inhabit this earth, since the time of Adam and Eve, to the present day, there has never been a more egotistical and thoroughly hypocritical group! They were haughty, narrow-minded,

overbearing, self-satisfied, and strong in the belief that they, alone, were infallible, impeccable, and better than all the rest--including the Christ!

One could easily recognize them anywhere, for they invariably wore the loudest colored, flowing robes with enormous hems, so as to attract others by their presence. Loud and long were their prayers in public places, as they sought to impress the bystanders with their pretended righteousness and false piety! Moreover, they were quick to sharply condemn and criticize all who failed to do the things which they preached and taught, but did not themselves practice. Their list contained a very limited number of things which one must do, but set forth hundreds of acts which were by them condemned as unlawful, and contrary to tradition and custom!

The above explains their persistence in regarding Jesus, with His great message of brotherly love and eternal salvation, as an enemy of their society and their school of thought. Their harboring of malice toward Jesus came, primarily, because of divergence of teachings and thinking. They could never approve of what Jesus had ever said or done. They would never follow His leadership, because He brushed aside, as being of no consequence, the countless, absurd traditional practices to which they clung with abiding devotion and unswerving faith [pp. 33-34].

The records of court proceedings, in all the world, from the days of Adam to the present time, reveal that there can be found no parallel and no precedent for condemning one upon his own confession, without supporting witnesses. Civilization just would not tolerate such a practice. And, where it has happened before, it was outside of courts, and, in limited and isolated instances, only where mob-rule prevailed! So, then, the only exception can be found in the "trial" of Jesus before the Jewish highest court in Judea, in the year A.D. 30! And the pages of that record are so dark, and so disreputable, that, for the next almost two thousand years, none have dared to exemplify such tactics, or to use them as justification for taking human life [p. 72]!

February 17, 1959

Mr. Arnold Forster
Anti-Defamation League
515 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y.

Dear Arnie:

Following is a list of objections to specific scenes, character portrayals, emphases, etc., in the film "Crown of Glory". They have been pulled together from telephone talks with a number of the individuals who saw the picture last Friday morning. May I emphasize as strongly as I can that they should be read in light of the following basic points:

1. Those who attended the screening did so as individuals and are reacting as such and not on behalf of any organization.

2. Everyone found the picture shocking and abhorrent.

3. This film is harmful to good Christian-Jewish relationships and is likely to foster anti-Semitism.

4. They believe this is a hopeless situation in the sense that the picture cannot be made acceptable by cuts or deletions.

5. They are not urging that the specific suggestions which follow should be adopted and if those connected with the film should make deletions, this does not imply any approval on the part of those who made these suggestions.

6. We are opposed to censorship as a violation of the principle of free speech. We recognize the right of producers to make films of their own choice is a constitutional right, but like all other rights, entails corresponding responsibilities to exercise care not to do anything which will increase religious or racial tensions. While we would not question the legal right of those who produce the film or the right of any exhibitor to show it, by the same token, we would be remiss if we did not exercise our right to express our opinion that the picture is harmful to good human relations.

Keeping the above in mind, following is a summary of thoughts regarding particularly objectionable portions of the film. They are listed in no special order and I have tried to the extent possible to avoid repetition:

1. A number of those who saw the picture objected particularly to the mob scenes. Comments were made particularly regarding the sadist, bestial expressions and the Sturmer-type stereotyping of some of the characters in the mob. The comment was also made that some of these mob scenes were too long, with too many close-ups.

2. The scene between Joseph and the rabbi pertaining to the vow of chastity is a mis-statement of Jewish law. I understand that Jewish law requires married couples to strive for children and a vow of chastity for married couples is contradictory to Jewish law.

3. I am also informed that the Torah does not permit stairs to the altar in the temple. The Torah calls for an incline and proscribes stairs.

4. You may remember the scene and dialogue pertaining to the breaking of Jesus' legs to insure his death before sundown. Again, I am given to understand that Jewish law prohibits the breaking of limbs of human beings.

5. Crucifixion is prohibited by Jewish law. ✓

6. The portrayal of Pilate is historically inaccurate. Pontius Pilate was unquestionably a corrupt, wicked, cruel, villainous person who at one time was recalled to Rome because of his villainy. In this picture, he is sympathetically portrayed as a hero. ✓

7. The dialogue between Pilate and the Roman in which Pilate calls the Jews a queer lot is a figment of a writer's imagination and an unnecessary scene.

8. The same applies to the scene in which the Jewish mob watching the crucifixion objects when the soldier raises the water soaked sponge to Jesus' lips.

9. The Romans are pictured as victims of circumstance and as sympathetic characters. The villains throughout are the Jews.

10. There is no theological basis for the over dramatization of many scenes in this picture

11. The scene in which the mob calls for the release of Barabbas is particularly bad.

12. At the beginning of the picture there are words to the effect "the world was in darkness from the time of Abraham to Jesus". This casts an unfair and unnecessary doubt upon Jewish Scripture and the rise of monotheism. Also, it is historically incorrect.

13. Many scenes are unnecessarily protracted particularly those which show Jesus bleeding. A number of those who saw the film found this particularly shocking.

14. The Sanhedrin is inaccurately portrayed and unnecessarily placed in a bad light.

15. At least one viewer found the portrayal of the rabbi whom Joseph consults to be objectionable. Granting the portrayal was unintentional, he nevertheless believes the features of the rabbi are not in keeping with the personality portrayed.

16. The impression is given that the Jews watching the crucifixion seem to be enjoying themselves. It is unbelievable that no one was disturbed by the torture.

17. Depicting Jews at the crucifixion wearing tallesim and tephillin is wrong on religious grounds, offensive and without justification.

18. It is religiously wrong to portray Jews going to the temple to see the rabbis. The temple was for the priests only.

19. Early in the picture, a remark was made with reference to Moses. This was considered particularly objectionable although the exact language could not be recalled.

20. A question was raised as to why Jesus was nailed to the cross while the two thieves on each side of him were tied to the cross with rope.

21. The sign which was nailed to the cross just above Jesus' head seemed to have language both in Hebrew or Aramic and in Latin. I believe this is incorrect even according to non-Jewish history.

22. As one viewer put it - other crucifixion films have blamed the Jews, but this is the first one which portrays the Jews as enjoying it.

It is obvious both from the overall reaction and the number of particular objections that we wish the picture had not been made and would not be shown, although for civil liberties reasons and out of respect for the other fellows religious beliefs, we would not do anything beyond making our views known.

Thanks for the invitation to the screening.

Cordially,

JULES COHEN
National Coordinator

JC:SL

[7 based on H. J. Condon's F-Film

MEMORANDUM

1. The complete absence of "a middle section" in which there is presented Jesus the Man, the Scholar, the Teacher and the Miracle Worker who had great prophetic stature among a large group of Jews in Palestine. Because of this omission, the total impact is that of Jesus and his twelve Apostles pitted against "the Jews."
2. Showing merely the birth of Jesus and then jumping to the last day of his life obviously omits motivation for the trial and punishment. This makes the Crucifixion the result of wild, unreasoned mob brutality by Jews.
3. The sheer cruelty and bloodiness of the film - all the ostensible fault of the Jews. Many of these instances have been detailed:
 - a. The inhuman brutality of the scourging and the bleeding that ensues.
 - b. The infliction of the special cruelty: seeing the nails set to be driven into flesh, and then hearing the hammer blows.
 - c. The special treatment imposed upon Jesus, intensifying the cruelty by having him nailed to the Cross while the two thieves are only bound by ropes.
4. Shifting responsibility for the death of Jesus from the Romans to the Jewish mob. This is the clear intent of the movie manuscript. In a religious civilization where capital punishment was rare (and then only by stoning) modern scholarship, in interpretation of the Gospels, makes the Romans responsible since all the methods used were Roman forms of punishment. Flaying, the imposition of thorns and nails into the flesh, the breaking of limbs, and prolonged suffering by crucifixion are all strictly forbidden by Jewish law.
5. The obvious relish and enjoyment by the Jews who watched the suffering. As one viewer put it, "Other crucifixion films and passion plays have blamed the Jews but this is the first one which portrays the Jews as enjoying it." Only the Disciples, the friends, the family of Jesus, and the stolid Romans who performed the acts of torture, are moved to pity in the film, thereby convincing the audience that an unregenerate lack of mercy appears to be a universal Jewish trait. Particularly unfortunate is the appearance of Jews on the screen wearing tallesim (prayer shawls) and tephillim (phylacteries). Not only is this religiously inaccurate, but it invidiously gives religious sanction to the cruelty.
6. The picture begins with an assertion that the world was in darkness from the time of Abraham to Jesus. This derides the Old Testament, throws doubt upon the Hebrew Scriptures and deprecates the rise of ethical monotheism.
7. The failure of the film to show that the high priests, Annas and Caiaphas, were not the properly constituted heads of the Jewish people. They had obtained their lucrative office from the Roman governor through bribery and had, through connivance, secured control of the so-called Sanhedrin and therefore were able to help engineer the death of Jesus. They, the high priests, were as much the minions of Rome as was Pilate and yet this relationship never appears in the film. Furthermore, the film does not show that these high priests, actually venal politicians, had usurped power. They organized and controlled a small mob which they produced before Pilate to agitate for them against the man who had protested their illegal seizure of power.

8. Nowhere is the fact made plain, although it constantly appears in the Gospels, that a vast number of the Jews in Palestine were favorably disposed towards Jesus. Here again, the absence of a "middle section" of the film is important; there is no record of Jesus' travel and teaching of the multitudes; there is no reference to his triumphal entry into Jerusalem and to the hosts of Jews who had spread palms before him as he entered the city. This enhances the impression that Jesus was crucified by "the Jews."

9. The mob who gathered to watch the agony is never identified as a small band of Caiaphas' henchmen. There is no suggestion that the Jews of Jerusalem and Palestine, aside from this tiny band, were not involved. [There is no recognition that at that time the vast majority of Jews lived outside of Palestine and that few of them had ever heard of Jesus of Nazareth until later when the Apostles came to preach to them.]

10. The casting of the picture. Those who are destined to be the followers of Jesus, together with the members of his family, are all portrayed by the same admirable physical types as are used to play the Roman officials and soldiers. In contradistinction, those who are the enemies of Jesus or who occupy specific roles as Jews (for example, the rabbi with whom Joseph confers) are all distinguished either by selection or makeup as "caricature Jews." These stereotypes are particularly unfortunate; it is natural to assume that Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, Zechariah and the Apostles were all Palestinian Jews who would normally have appeared to look no different than any of their neighbors.

11. Specific unfortunate scenes:

- a. The mob scene in front of the palace of Pilate and the second mob scene before Pilate's seat of judgment.
- b. The undue repetition of the outcry "crucify him" in those scenes.
- c. The torture in the prison yard performed by those who had obvious "Jewish casts of features" although the Gospels show that the torture was performed by the Romans.
- d. The dialogue of the Roman soldiers in which they discuss "the queerness of the Jews."
- e. The reference during the Crucifixion to the Laws of Moses which enhances the attempt to give religious sanction to the Crucifixion.
- f. The scene in which the Roman soldier raises the sponge to the lips of Jesus. The Book of John describes the liquid as vinegar. The Book of Luke describes the scene - "The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him vinegar..." Yet in the film the liquid is changed to refreshing water in order that the Jews watching the scene can protest the kindness of the Roman soldiers who attempt to give Jesus succor.

In essence, the distress about the film resolves itself into three main categories: The first, the excessive depiction of cruelty on the screen; the second, the unrelieved responsibility of "the Jews" for the trial, agony and death of Jesus; the third, the virtual innocence of Romans in the context of the story. The last two points, of course, are contrary to the works of the Apostles' Creed in the Roman Catholic Church: "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried." In this connection it is interesting to note the brief summary of the personal opinion of Father Louis Hartman, C.Ss.R, general secretary of the Catholic Biblical Association of America:

"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. This group of men was the High-Priestly clique of 'the House of Annas,' who had no legitimate claim to the Aaronic priesthood but who had bought their lucrative office from the Roman authorities in Palestine. Humanly speaking, it was our Lord's interference with their unjust Temple traffic that sealed His fate. The control which the party of Annas and Caiphas had of the Sanhedrin made the judicial condemnation of Jesus a foregone conclusion. 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 preach 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."

PAUL WINTER

THE TRIAL OF JESUS

THERE MAY still be people who think, or pretend to think, that no such person as Jesus of Nazareth ever existed. One hears them saying that the story of Jesus was invented to account for the emergence of a strange salvation myth, intended by those who invented it to bring hope to the oppressed masses living under the sway of imperial Rome. No doubt, there are in the New Testament mythical features, but the persons who figure in the story, Jesus and his disciples, are not mythical characters; they are historical persons. Jesus of Nazareth lived, and he died. He died on the cross.

This much, at least, is confirmed by two ancient historians, Josephus and Tacitus, both of whom record that Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judaea, condemned Jesus. Josephus explicitly mentions the mode of execution—crucifixion; Tacitus does not say in what manner the execution was carried out. However, neither the reason for the execution of Jesus nor the character of the penal proceedings which preceded it, is disclosed by either of the two historians, who, moreover, show a marked difference in their manner of referring to Jesus. Josephus, the Jew, speaks rather respectfully of him, calling him “a wise man,” “a teacher of people.”¹ By contrast, Tacitus, the aristocratic Roman, is full of scorn for one whom he considers to have been “the originator of a pernicious superstition,” an agitator among barbarian orientals, and an enemy of the law and order introduced and upheld by Rome in a distant province. (He seems to connect the teachings of Jesus and the activities of Jesus’s disciples after their master’s death with the outbreak of the great Jewish revolt in the year 66.)

What we also know for a fact is where Jesus was arrested. Visitors to the Arab part of Jerusalem will be shown a grove on the Mount of Olives called “the Garden of the Agony.” There, or somewhere not far from that place, Jesus was apprehended. He was then taken to the house

of the Jewish high-priest, and from there, according to the Gospel of Luke, to the meeting-place of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Council, before being handed over for trial to Pilate. We do not know where the high-priest’s house stood. The locality shown by Jerusalem cicerones as “The House of Caiaphas” is certainly not the spot; it is the ruin of a large building from Byzantine times. As for the location of the Sanhedrin’s meeting-place, we have conflicting reports; it seems, however, to have been situated on the Temple Mount, in the area known today as the Haram-esh-Sherif. And the residence of Pilate, when the governor stayed in Jerusalem for official or for private reasons, was the Herodian Palace which was located in the southwestern sector of the present-day walled city, near the Jaffa Gate.

We do not know the exact year of Jesus’s death; nor do we know the day. All that is certain is that he was crucified while Pontius Pilate held office as Prefect of Judaea—that is,

¹ Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 18:63,64. Scholars are divided in their opinions on the authenticity of this passage. The text in our editions of the *Antiquities* certainly contains insertions which do not come from Josephus’s own hand. The passage appears to have been tampered with by a Christian copyist, probably in the 3rd century. Nevertheless, there are good reasons for assuming that Josephus did relate the death of Jesus. When writing about James the Just (*Jewish Antiquities* 20:199, 200), Josephus casually mentions that James was the brother of “Jesus who is called Christ.” It thus seems that Josephus, before he referred to James, had already informed his readers about Jesus. Furthermore, the *testimonium* displays features which can scarcely be attributed to a Christian interpolator. Jesus is here called “a wise man,” a designation not in keeping with 3rd-century Christian notions about who and what Jesus was. The immediately following words, “if it is permissible to call him a man,” may have been added; they show that the copyist felt uneasy about an expression Josephus had used. The *testimonium* distinguishes between the roles which the Jews and which the Romans played in Jesus’s trial. It refers to an indictment that was drawn up by Jewish nobles, yet states that the death sentence was passed by the Roman governor. It was not customary for Christians in the 3rd century to make such fine distinctions; they flatly charged the Jews with responsibility for everything—arrest, trial, sentencing, and crucifixion. Ultimately, the adherents of Jesus are in the *testimonium* called “the tribe of Christians,” a phrase not used of Christians by people who were Christians themselves, but credible in the mouth of a 1st-century Jew who was steeped in the Old Testament and would be accustomed to describing internal divisions within the body politic of the Jewish nation by the word “tribe.”

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some time between 26 and 36 of the current era—and that his crucifixion took place shortly before or on the feast of Passover. Since Jesus is popularly supposed to have been born in the year 1, since the Gospel of Luke reports that he was approximately 30 years old when he began to preach, and since the Gospel of John seems to lend some support to the assumption that his preaching activities lasted three years, the year of his death has widely been thought to be 33. But all the premises on which this calculation is based are wrong. In recent times, the year 30 has been suggested by an increasing number of scholars, notably continental Roman Catholic scholars, but I believe that we have to go still further back, to 29 or even 28.

Three arguments favor this earlier dating. First of all, a 2nd-century tradition, preserved by Clement of Alexandria, states that Jesus died forty-two years before the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus—that is, in 28. Secondly, Josephus places the crucifixion among those events which occurred close to the beginning of Pilate's governorship. The third reason, and in my opinion the decisive one, for dating the crucifixion before the year 30, lies in the chronology of the Apostle Paul's missionary travels. Fourteen years after his conversion, Paul attended what is traditionally called the "Council of Jerusalem," a meeting of the elders of the Church which is believed to have taken place during the reign of Agrippa I. If this Council met as late as the year of Agrippa's death, 44, Paul's conversion would fall somewhere around the year 30. Paul was not one of the original disciples of Jesus, but on the contrary an opponent of the messianist sect whose members he is said to have persecuted in the beginning. Hence, we must assume that some time elapsed between the death of Jesus and Paul's conversion. How long this time was, we do not know. But it pushes the year of Jesus's crucifixion back before 30.

We do not know the exact day. The fact that all four Gospels place the trial either on the eve of Passover or on the day of the actual festival, makes it virtually a certainty that Jesus was arrested and tried around that time, but it might well have been a few days earlier or later. It would appear that one group of his followers drew a comparison between the death of Jesus and the slaying of the paschal lamb, and therefore had the moment of the crucifixion coincide with that event. This tradition, mentioned already by the Apostle Paul, was preserved by John, who dates the crucifixion on the fourteenth of Nisan. Another early group of Christians connected the festive Passover meal, the *seder*, with the establishment of the New Covenant, the institution of the Eucharist, and to allow Jesus to partake of the *seder*, his crucifixion had to be dated after it. This tradition influenced the Marcan dating. Since both datings are inspired by religious motivation, there is little to choose be-

tween them from the historian's point of view. All we can say for sure is that the trial and subsequent crucifixion fell on a day close to the Passover.

ALL FOUR Gospels report that Jesus was arrested at night. According to Mark, Matthew, and Luke, his arrest was carried out by a team, some men being armed with swords, others with staves or cudgels. According to John, the arrest was carried out by a detachment of soldiers under the command of a Roman officer, and accompanied by Jewish policemen. At first sight, these reports conflict with each other, but the conflict is resolved if we remember that Roman soldiers carried swords, while the Jewish police carried batons. Thus the men who are mentioned in Mark as having been armed with staves are Jewish policemen, while those members of the crowd whom Mark describes as carrying swords are identical with the detachment that is specified as a cohort of soldiers by John.

Mark, we must remember, was written in Rome, at a time when Christians were exposed to attack by the Roman mob, and were subject to suspicion on the part of Roman officials. Therefore, the evangelist may well have had cogent reasons for not wishing to draw attention to the fact that Jesus had been arrested by Roman soldiers or mercenaries in the service of Rome; and this may well have made him substitute the vague and colorless expression "a crowd with swords" for the more definite designation of his source—a source which still comes to the fore in the Johannine account. Jesus was arrested by Roman soldiers who were accompanied, probably as guides, by some Jewish policemen.

None of the evangelists tells us in plain language the reason for the arrest. But Mark, Matthew, and Luke reproduce the gist of a conversation which Jesus is reported to have held with the people who came to arrest him: "You have come," Jesus complains, "with swords and batons to arrest me as a rebel. I stayed with you in the daytime [or daily] on the Temple Hill and I taught. You did not arrest me then."² The Greek word which the synoptic evangelists use (*leisteis*) can be and usually is translated "robber" as well as "rebel." In the 1st century, however, this term was not exclusively used of bandits, but was applied to persons who in any of the Roman provinces resorted to armed resistance against Roman rule. In Roman eyes such people were bandits, robbers; in the people's estimate of themselves, they were patriots, perhaps guerrillas, partisans, freedom fighters. When Jesus, on the Mount of Olives, said to those who were taking him into custody, "You come with swords and batons to arrest me as a rebel. Was I not with you, teaching openly in the light of day?"—he was defending himself by asserting his peaceful

² Mark 14:48, 49; Matthew 26:55; Luke 22:52, 53.

aims as a teacher. In Pilate's court, the charge was the same as that for which he had been arrested: he was accused of being "King of the Jews." And the cause for which he was sentenced to crucifixion was again the same, as the inscription on the cross confirms. Jesus was arrested by Roman troops as a Jewish rebel.

After his arrest, Jesus was brought to the house of the Jewish high-priest. All four Gospels agree on this. But why was he not immediately taken to the Jewish law court? Because it was night, and the court was closed. Then why was he not immediately taken to the Roman prison? Because a preliminary investigation was required for which the Romans used local officials, Jews, who, by reason of their knowledge of the local conditions and language, were better equipped to carry out any necessary inquiries. Up to the moment when Jesus arrived in the house of the high-priest, the four reports of the Gospels are more or less in agreement; from that moment on, they differ profoundly in their accounts of the proceedings. According to John, Jesus was led to Annas, who interrogated him privately. There is no accusation, no witnesses are heard, no court assembles. It is a private conversation, or at the most a preliminary hearing. In the morning Jesus is sent, via Caiaphas, to the procurator Pontius Pilate. Thus, in John's account, no Jewish law court deals with the case. Yet at the very time at which John presents Jesus as conversing with Annas, Mark and Matthew arrange for him to be tried in a plenary session by the whole Sanhedrin. Mark does not mention the name of the presiding high-priest; Matthew gives his name as Caiaphas. The Sanhedrin meets at night in the high-priest's house—surprisingly, for this body, as the Parliament cum High Court of the Jewish nation, had a meeting-place of its own, its proper Council Hall, and there exists no record besides the accounts of Mark and Matthew from which it might be guessed that it ever met in a high-priest's residence to hold its consultations; especially not at night, and not on a feast day. Nevertheless, according to Mark and Matthew, Jesus is tried before an official session of the Council held in the high-priest's residence; witnesses are examined, their testimony is dismissed; Jesus is then closely interrogated by the presiding high-priest, convicted on his self-incriminatory reply—without corroboration—by all the assembled councilors, and sentenced to death for the crime of blasphemy.

Luke has nothing of that. No session of the Sanhedrin takes place at night. Jesus spends the rest of the night in the custody of the guards who had arrested him.

Early in the morning the Sanhedrin convenes—for the second time, according to Mark and Matthew; for the first time according to Luke; John reports nothing of a session. From the Lucan wording it can be concluded that the morning session of the Sanhedrin was held in a locality

other than the place where Jesus had been detained during the night. At their morning session the Jewish councilors decide to conduct Jesus to Pilate, to be tried by the Roman authority.

HERE WE are faced with a problem. If Jesus, as Mark and Matthew have it, was sentenced during an earlier session by the Sanhedrin, we would expect to find a reference to the verdict in the report of the Sanhedrin's second meeting. No word of it. As if they have forgotten that they themselves had sentenced Jesus for the crime of blasphemy, the Jewish magistrates hand Jesus over to Pilate for trial, on another charge—the charge, it turns out, on which he had been arrested in the first place! Pilate is not asked to confirm a sentence for blasphemy; he is not even told that Jesus has been tried and found guilty of such an offense; and he acts throughout as a magistrate who is presiding over the first stage of judicial proceedings, not as one who has been called to confirm a sentence passed by some other court of law. He demands to know whether Jesus has claimed to be the king of the Jews. The reply of Jesus, "You have said it," may be taken as an affirmation, though there are scholars who dispute this. In any case, it is not a direct reply.

All four Gospels agree that Jesus appeared before Pilate in the early morning. It must have been at a very early hour indeed, if the Marcan statement that Jesus was crucified at 9 A.M.³ is correct. For even if we leave out the amplification of the trial scenes in Luke and John, Mark himself places quite a few events between the examination of Jesus by Pilate and the execution: a protracted parley with the accusers, Pilate's indecision, the Barabbas episode, the clamor of the mob, the death sentence, the scourging and the mockery of Jesus, the journey to the place of execution outside Jerusalem. Such early preparedness on the governor's part to sit in judgment would have been impossible unless Pilate had been given prior knowledge that his presence would be required in the court. The early hour thus tends to confirm the reliability of the Johannean report concerning the arrest of Jesus by military personnel under the command of a Roman officer.

The evangelists—all four of them—describe Pilate as convinced of Jesus's innocence and anxious to acquit him. But instead of using his supreme authority as the highest judge and governor of the province, and simply passing a verdict of acquittal, Pilate offers to let Jesus go as an act of grace. The Gospels refer to a habit of Pilate, or a Jewish custom, of releasing a prisoner on the Passover; in accordance with this, Pilate asks the Jews whether he should release Jesus or another prisoner called Barabbas. Here the evan-

³ Mark 15:25.

gelist actually contradict themselves. On the one hand, they say that the Jewish citizens of Jerusalem were free to demand the release of *any one* prisoner; on the other hand, they report that Pilate limited the people's choice by offering them only the alternative of freeing Jesus or Barabbas. We read later on in the Gospels that Jesus was not crucified alone, but together with two other men. Hence when Jesus stood before Pilate there must have been at least two more accused or condemned men in the governor's custody. If the Jews of Jerusalem were free to demand the release of any prisoner, why should Pilate have limited them to Jesus or Barabbas? In actual fact, no custom of releasing a prisoner at the Passover season ever existed, either in Jewish or in Roman law. Barabbas, however, seems to have been a historical person, though "Barabbas" is only part of his name. There exist Gospel codices which give the name in full as *Jesus bar Abba*. If two persons, both called Jesus, had been arrested instead of one, the Roman magistrate might have asked which of the two was to be tried. In that case, endeavoring to present Pilate as being favorably disposed toward Jesus, the writer of the Second Gospel might have construed the Barabbas episode as we have it in his book, making it appear that the governor was not asking about the identity of the accused, but rather offering one of the two for pardon: "Which one of the two shall I release, Jesus who is called Bar Abba or Jesus who is called Messiah?" Yet Pilate had no need to resort to a presumed paschal custom of granting amnesty; nor did he have any reason to leave the decision to the crowd. He was the judge. If he found Jesus to be guiltless, and the stubborn Jews insisted that Barabbas should be granted a pardon, all Pilate had to do was pronounce Jesus innocent and release him along with Barabbas. Nobody in Jerusalem—no high-priest nor any other Jew—could have prevented the imperial governor from setting Jesus free, if he had ever been inclined to do so.

The evangelists, however, report that Pilate's kindly gesture to set Jesus free by an act of grace proved of no avail. The Jews prefer Barabbas. He is released and the proceedings of the court come to an end.

IF WE WISH to understand what lies behind this version of the story, we have to remind ourselves once again that Mark—the oldest Gospel, though the second in the Canon—was written in Rome at a time (around the year 70 of the current era) when the small community of Christians living there was in constant danger of persecution. Already in the 40's, Christian missionary preaching had provoked the Emperor Claudius to expel all Jews from the capital city, those who believed that the Messiah had appeared and those who did not share such a belief (the Romans

were as yet unable to distinguish between messianist Jews—that is, Christians—and other Jews), and in Nero's reign the persecution of the Christians took an even grimmer form. Since Mark was composed either at the end of Nero's reign or shortly afterward, the evangelist had every reason to try to ingratiate himself and his co-religionists with the Romans. The fact that Jesus had been sentenced to the cross by Pilate—a death penalty which carried opprobrium in Roman eyes, as being reserved for the most heinous crimes, and for slaves and despised foreigners—could not be concealed. But the evangelist could portray Pilate as having been unwilling to pass a death sentence and as having recognized the innocence of the man whom Christians now worshipped. For this purpose Pilate had to be presented as acting under Jewish pressure against his own better conviction. The evangelist's tendency was not "anti-Semitic," as some might say; it was defensive and apologetic. He was concerned with promoting the fortunes of his little group, and was anxious to avoid suspicion and counter hostility on the part of the authorities. Accordingly, he presented the Roman authority of Jesus's own day, Pontius Pilate, as professing that he had found "no fault in this man." The writer of the Second Gospel and those who came after him never realized what results this shift in the responsibility for Jesus's crucifixion would have in future generations.

In this connection, it is instructive to look at how the various evangelists refer to the governor's final decision. Not one of them is prepared to state plainly that a sentence of death was passed on Jesus by the Roman magistrate. In Mark and Matthew we read that "Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified"—an oblique manner of reporting a judicial verdict. Luke and John are even more reticent. The former states that Pilate gave in to the demand of the Jews and allowed Jesus to be crucified, while the latter goes so far as to say that Pilate relinquished Jesus to the Jews who themselves took him away and crucified him. All the evangelists are at pains to avoid putting on record the passing of a death sentence by the Roman magistrate. But the fact remains that crucifixion was a Roman punishment, not a Jewish one.

Jesus is crucified, according to Mark at nine o'clock in the morning, according to John in the late afternoon. Together with him two other prisoners are executed by crucifixion, of whose trial and sentencing the New Testament gives no information. But there is one small, perhaps significant, detail: the two men are designated as *leestai*, rebels—the same appellation which is applied to Jesus in the synoptists' account of his arrest. On Pilate's order, an inscription is attached to the cross stating the reason, the *causa*, or *aitia*, for pronouncing the death sentence. This inscription reads: "King of the Jews." In the tangled mass of evangelical accounts of Jesus's trial, one

point stands out with clarity: he was arrested as "a rebel," accused before Pilate as "King of the Jews," found guilty as such, and executed as such. None of the later accretions which in the Gospels overlay the original primitive account, and none of the editorial modifications from the hands of successive evangelists, can hide or disguise the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was arrested, accused, tried, sentenced, and executed on a charge of insurrection against Roman rule in Judaea.

CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS, Catholic and Protestant, generally do not dispute this. But many of them, the great majority perhaps, will say that the political accusation was a "trumped-up charge," invented by the Jewish authorities of the day who had found Jesus "worthy of death" for religious reasons, but who could not act on their own authority because while the Sanhedrin had the right to pass sentences of death, it had no right to carry out such sentences. This argument is faulty. At the time when Judaea was under procuratorial rule, from the year 6 to the year 66 C.E., Jewish law courts *did* pass death sentences upon Jewish inhabitants of Israel, and *did* carry out such sentences on their own authority, without referring the cases to the Roman political administrator of the country.

There is evidence for this in the New Testament itself. The Acts of the Apostles (a book which has as its subject the growth of Christianity in the first three decades or so after Jesus's death) mentions several cases in which the Sanhedrin either intended to exercise its power to pass and carry out capital sentences, or actually did so. For example, there is the description⁴ of how Stephen, denounced for his preaching, was brought before the Jewish magistrates, led into the courthouse for his trial and, after being taken out again, was immediately carried off to his execution. He was executed in the Jewish manner, by stoning, in strict accordance with Jewish law as laid down in Deuteronomy.⁵

Certain exegetes explain away the execution of Stephen on the Sanhedrin's orders as an irregularity, an illegal act of lynching carried out by an excited mob. But these exegetes commit the error of concentrating primarily on the contents of the so-called "Speech of Stephen" to his judges⁶ instead of on the factual account of how Stephen was taken into the Sanhedrin's council-hall and executed after he re-emerged. The author of the Acts of the Apostles was in a position to obtain factual information only concerning what happened before Stephen was taken to the courthouse and what happened after he left it. He had no minutes of the court proceedings, no information about what went on inside the council-hall, and knew nothing of what Stephen might have said to his judges. The diatribe he attributes to Stephen is not a defense plea; it bears no connection

with the case at all; and except for the additional final words⁷ is not even "Christian" in its content. It is a violent denunciation of the Temple ritual—and Jewish Christians took part in the Temple cult until the Temple was destroyed in the year 70—such as might possibly have originated among members of the pre-Christian Dead Sea Covenanters or a kindred Jewish group. The writer of the Acts could have found some transcript of a homily with an anti-cultic tenor, restyled and adapted it, and then used this material to amplify and enliven his meagre account of the trial of Stephen.⁸

Once we recognize that what the Acts presents as Stephen's speech is in no way a transcript of the actual words Stephen said to his judges, we shall not fall into the error of contending that Stephen so enraged his audience by this speech that they seized him and carried him off to be stoned without awaiting the court's proper verdict. Stephen was not stoned by an excited mob. He was executed in pursuance of a legal sentence, legally passed by a court competent to try him.

Another reference to the Sanhedrin's power to pass and carry out sentences of death is in Acts 5:27,33, where it is reported that the Sanhedrin, when investigating the activities of some of Jesus's disciples, intended to sentence them to death and execute them. According to the Acts, the Jewish councilors were persuaded to abstain from carrying out this intention by Gamaliel's counsel of moderation.⁹

In chapters 13-26 of the Acts, we also have an account of a conflict of competence between the Jewish and the Roman authorities concerning the question as to whether the Apostle Paul—a Roman citizen!—ought to be tried by a Jewish or a Roman court. Acts 26:10 puts the following declaration on the lips of Paul: "On the authority of the senior priests, I sent many of the saints [Christians] to prison. When they were put to death, I cast my vote against them." The relevant point, when appraising the significance of this declaration, is not whether Paul actually uttered these words or not. Nor does it matter much whether the statement here ascribed to him is historically correct. Of significance is the fact that the author of the Acts, writing in the latter part of the 1st century, had Paul make this statement. If jurisdiction in capital cases was in Judaea reserved to the Roman governor, it would have been common knowledge among the readers of the Acts of the Apostles that Jewish criminal courts had no right to carry out capital sentences and that Paul the Apostle could not have taken

⁴ Acts 6:12-7:59.

⁵ Acts 7:58b; compare Deuteronomy 17:5-27.

⁶ Acts 7:2-53, 56.

⁷ Acts 7:56.

⁸ Compare my remarks in the *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*, Vol. 82, 1961, columns 790-792.

⁹ Acts 5:34-40.

part in proceedings of this sort. Would the author of the Acts have deliberately invited contradiction by attributing a statement to Paul that his readers must have known to be incorrect?

EVEN IN LATER centuries, several Fathers of the Church preserved knowledge of the fact that in the time of Jesus Jewish law courts in Judaea exercised unlimited jurisdiction over Jews who were being tried for capital offenses. Origen describes the condition of the Jewish judiciary after the year 70, and explains that it lost its capital jurisdiction as a result of the victory of Roman arms in that year.¹⁰ In another passage,¹¹ Origen mentions that Jewish law courts continued to administer the death penalty even after the year 70, but were now compelled to do so clandestinely in order not to risk a conflict with the Roman rulers whom they were defying.

Origen wrote in the early 3rd century. Still later, Augustine of Hippo, when commenting on the passage of the Fourth Gospel which denies the Jewish leaders any right to carry out sentences of death,¹² offers the following explanation: "This is to be understood in the sense that the Jews could not carry out an execution because they were celebrating a festival."¹³ Thus according to Augustine, the Jews of Jesus's time were not deprived of the right to put sentences of death into effect; they voluntarily refrained from exercising it on a holy day. John Chrysostom of Antioch has the same explanation.¹⁴

Those who contend that the Sanhedrin lacked the power to administer the death sentence it is alleged to have passed on Jesus¹⁵ are therefore giving inadequate weight to the evidence which the New Testament itself provides. What is more, they fail to draw the logical conclusion from their argument when they maintain that the Sanhedrin was authorized to pass a sentence of death, yet not authorized to carry out this sentence without endorsement from the Roman procurator. For if it were indeed the procurator's duty to confirm or set aside a death sentence passed by a Jewish court, he would have been required to review the case in terms of Jewish law—the law that had been applied by the inferior court when passing sentence. Unless the procurator were an expert in the procedures and substance of Jewish law, it would have been quite impossible for him to do this. The Romans, however, true to their maxim not to become embroiled in the religious affairs of other nations, did permit the Sanhedrin jurisdiction in all cases, including capital ones, where Jewish religious law came into question.

But even supposing that the Jews were prevented by constitutional limitations from putting into effect a death sentence which they had passed on religious grounds, they would still not have needed to invent a political charge of sedition. It is ridiculous to assert, as some quasi-scholars

do, that Pontius Pilate would have taken no cognizance of an accusation on religious grounds, that he might have "shrugged his shoulders" if the representatives of the Sanhedrin had asked him to confirm a sentence passed for blasphemy. When Rome took over the political administration of Judaea (at the wish of the Jews themselves, who hoped to enjoy a greater measure of autonomy under Roman dominion than they had done under the misgovernment of the Herodian dynasty), the Emperor recognized Rome's obligation to uphold the ancestral Jewish law and religion in the country. And Roman law provided the death sentence for religious offenses. We know from Josephus that a Roman procurator sentenced a Roman soldier to death because that soldier had shown disrespect for a scroll of the Torah.¹⁶ In other words, the Jewish religion, to use a modern expression, was "the religion of the State" in Judaea, even in procuratorial times. Hence, supposing that the Sanhedrin was not in a position to put into effect its own judgment and therefore referred Jesus's case to Pilate, the Jewish councilors could simply have accused Jews of a religious offense.

IT MAY BE argued—and not without justification—that the charge of sedition on which Jesus was tried and executed was made by his enemies, Jewish or Roman, and that it says nothing about his own aims or of the state of his own mind. Owing to their nature and their origin, the Gospels are unsuitable as documents that would allow access to the mind of Jesus. The Gospels do contain, however, traditions of undeniably Christian origin which assert a claim to kingship on behalf of Jesus. In two of the Gospels, for instance, we find the genealogies of Jesus, intended to trace back his descent to David¹⁷ and thus establish the legitimacy of his royal right as David's heir. In one Gospel, we find the solemn announcement of Jesus's birth, made by an angel, who promises Mary that Jesus will inherit his royal ancestor's throne and reign over the house of Jacob. In two of the Gospels, we find on Jesus's lips a declaration to his twelve disciples that they will sit on thrones

¹⁰ Origen, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans* 6:7 (Patrologia Graeca, Vol. 14, columns 1072, 1075).

¹¹ Origen, *Letter to Africanus* 14 (Patrologia Graeca, Vol. 2, column 84).

¹² John 18:31.

¹³ Augustine, *On John*, Tractate CXIV 4 (Patrologia Latina, Vol. 35, column 1937).

¹⁴ Chrysostom, *Homilies on John*, LXXXIII 4 (Patrologia Graeca, Vol. 59, column 452).

¹⁵ Mark 14:64b; Matthew 26:66.

¹⁶ Josephus, *The Jewish War* 2:231. For similar instances of Roman deference to the susceptibilities of the Jewish population, see *The Jewish War* 3:246 and *Antiquities* 20:136.

¹⁷ Matthew 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-31. The two "family trees" were manifestly revised before being incorporated into the Gospels. In the evangelists' presentation, the line of Jesus's descent from David is broken (in Matthew 1:16 and Luke 3:23) as a result of rewording.

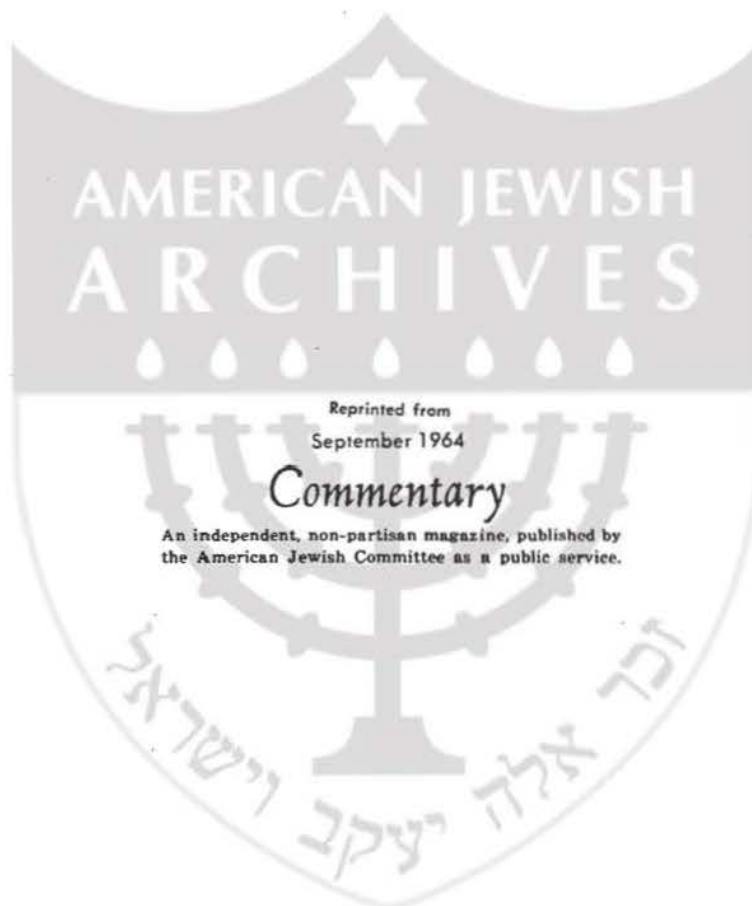
and judge the tribes of Israel. In one of the Gospels we also read that Jesus's followers, after the shattering experience of their master's death, voiced their despair in the words, "We had hoped that it would be he who comes to redeem Israel."

Now the Gospels (all written two and three generations after the death of Jesus) reflect a great variety of traditions that developed in different surroundings and at different times. These traditions express divergent concepts of the character and function which various groups of people, all in some way attached to the memory of Jesus, assigned to him. The clearest indication of the differences in their outlook lies in the titular designations they gave to him. Sometimes he is called "teacher," sometimes "the Son of Man," sometimes "the Prophet," sometimes "the Son of David," sometimes "the Messiah (Christ)," sometimes "the Son of God"; he is also called by several other names. These titles are by no means synonymous. Each describes a distinct social status or a specific theological concept, pointing to a different role in the eschatological drama of history which the followers of Jesus expected to unfold.

The title which in due course came to supplant all the others is, of course, *christos* ("Christ" in English) which is Greek for the Hebrew "Messiah," meaning "The Anointed One." Anointing was in ancient Jewish custom the formal act of investing the holder of the highest office in the Jewish polity with authority over those under his command, the act by which his legitimate appointment to the leadership of the nation was made known to one and all. What coronation is in British constitutional law, anointing was in Jewish law. The Anointed One, the Messiah, the Christ, was thus a title of honor, due to the highest functionary of the Jewish state. By the time of the Apostle Paul, however, the concept of messiahship, or rather christhood, had already advanced far beyond its primary connotation and toward the meaning which it now holds for Christians, denoting to them a Being of supra-historical significance and of transcendent character. This change resulted—to simplify a complex process—from the gradual amalgamation of two distinct eschatological concepts which were in vogue among Jews in the New Testament era: the expectation of a messiah who would re-establish Israel's political independence; and the ex-

pectation of the coming of the Son of Man, a mythical figure who would restore man to the primordial glory that was his before Adam fell from the friendship of God. A certain group of Jews, who believed that Jesus of Nazareth would take on a paramount role in the impending last act of human history, thought and spoke of him as the *Messiah*; another group of Jews, no less convinced of Jesus's vocation, thought of him in terms of the apocalyptic *Son of Man*. The two groups mixed, their members coalesced, and the combined group continued to use for their cult-hero the designation "Christ" (a title borrowed from legal-political terminology) while now attributing to the Christ the characteristics and functions of the transcendent, supra-historical Son of Man. The spread of Christianity to parts beyond Galilee and Judaea and the influx of converts with pagan antecedents accelerated the process of change, for to converts from the Gentile world the primary meaning of the word "Christ-Messiah" was unknown. There is already in the New Testament, the Gospels as well as the Epistles, a difference between what Christians meant when they used the expression "Christ," and what "Messiah" meant in Jewish usage. Yet the fact that certain of his followers chose the title "Messiah" for him, and that their choice prevailed over others, indicates that an influential section among the early Christian fellowship connected with their belief in Jesus the expectation of political independence from foreign domination. In no other way can their choice of the title "Messiah" or "Christ" be explained.

But if the Gospels make it clear that it was Christians who harbored hopes of Israel's emancipation from political subjection, of re-establishment of the ancient Jewish dynasty, and who believed that the final triumph of Israel over Rome would be the triumph of Good over Evil, the victory of God over Satan—the Gospels do not tell us whether the hope arose in the lifetime of Jesus or only after the disciples' experience at Easter. We can say without hesitation that Jesus's followers cherished aspirations of Jewish national independence. We cannot say whether they were encouraged to such aspirations by Jesus himself. Only what his followers hoped, what they thought and expected, finds expression in the Gospels. What Jesus himself thought, what his aims were, what he asserted or what he expected, we simply do not know.



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By JUDITH HERSHKOFF

THE great significance of the document dealing with the Roman Catholic Church's attitude toward Jews and Judaism which was recently introduced into the present Ecumenical Council by Augustin Cardinal Bea, president of the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity, is that it explicitly repudiates the charge that Jews are "deicides" or "Christ-killers." The decree also condemns anti-Semitism and affirms the Church's Jewish origins and the Jewishness of Jesus, his family and his apostles. (These latter sentiments, however, do not represent striking innovations, since the Church has condemned anti-Semitism on various occasions, and Catholic theologians have repeatedly affirmed the Church's debt to Judaism.)

The rejection of the deicide charge, however, coupled as it is in the decree with the affirmation that the sins of *all* men are responsible for the death of Jesus, can provide enormous leverage to the efforts to purify Catholic teaching — including textbooks, sermons, liturgical

commentaries, etc. — of distorted and prejudiced references to Jews. And Christian literature has not lacked for such references.

God has forsaken the Jews. They have denied the Father, crucified the Son... Henceforth their Synagogue is the house of demons and idolatry.

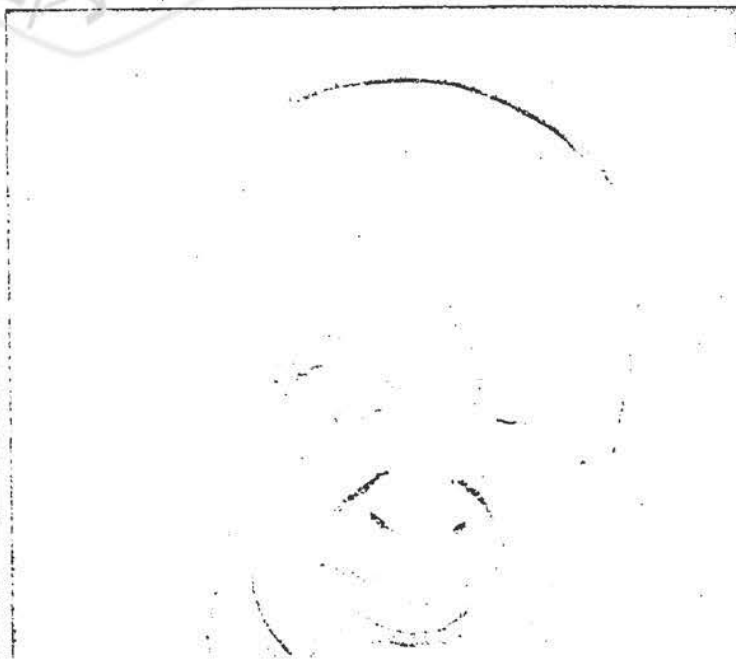
Thus wrote St. John Chrysostom, perhaps the most renowned Father of the Greek Church, described as "the greatest preacher ever heard in a Christian pulpit," in the fourth century.

And more than 1500 years later, in the middle of the 20th century, we find a similar accusation in a Catholic parochial school textbook:

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

BETWEEN these two quotations, each depicting, "the Jews" as an accursed people, rejected by God, lies a long and bitter history of Jewish persecution. To most Jews, the connection between teachings such as the ones quoted above, and the

Delicious? Kosher? Pareve?



and the Jews

persistency of anti-Semitism in Western civilization, is obvious. While acknowledging that anti-Semitism has complex causes, political as well as religious, scholars and social scientists have long been convinced that certain teachings deeply imbedded in Christian tradition have served to sanction hatred and persecution of Jews across the centuries by lending the supposed authority of religion to the support of anti-Jewish attitudes and behavior. Perhaps most invidious of all these teachings has been the charge that the Jews are a people of "God killers" or "Christ killers," a race of murderers whose sufferings are visited upon them by God in each generation for the sin of having crucified the Messiah.

The deicide charge has potent implications. It tends to cut Jews off from the family of mankind, and to create not only indifference to their fate, but expectation of Jewish suffering. As one perceptive Catholic writer (Father George Tavard, in *The Church, the Layman and the Modern Man*, pp. 79-80) has put it:

To the mind of anti-Semitic bigots [the idea that Jews are

cursed because their ancestors crucified the Lord] explains a good deal of history. God would periodically "visit" the murderers of Christ and incite them to penance through persecution. All the anti-Semitic excesses of times past and present can thus be cheaply excused. They are freely granted the blessings of Providence . . .

WHERE did it come from, this tradition of hostility and contempt on the part of Christians for the people from whom came their faith in God, their sacred scriptures and their savior? How did it start?

There are many interpretations. Some scholars have claimed that the sources of the charge of continuing Jewish guilt may be traced back to Christian scripture, most specifically, a passage in Matthew (27:25) which states that when Pilate declared his innocence of the death of Jesus, the whole people, answering, cried: "His blood be upon us and our children."

Commenting on this passage in his book, *The Jews and the Gospel*, Father Gregory Baum, O.S.A., writes:

To read over the commentaries and interpretations to which this verse has been exposed in the past is a sad and terrible experience. If one were to make a collection of the most vitriolic opinions, the result would be a veritable anthology of hate.

Father Baum insists, however, that "there is no foundation for the accusation that a seed of contempt and hatred for the Jews can be found in the New Testament." He goes on to comment:

Certain texts, in fact quite a few of them, do sound as if the author wishes to make the Jew appear as a castaway people to be despised, but this is only so because we read them in the light of a later historical development; we tend to project into the text what is not contained in them.

Whether or not Christian scholars agree on the roots of anti-Semitism in the New Testament, there is little disagreement that the sermons and writings of later Christian spokesmen abound with hateful and distorted references to Jews. Professor Jules Isaac, a remarkable French historian whose writings created a major impact in Europe has termed this tradition "the teaching of contempt,"—that is, a systematic effort to debase the Jewish religion, accompanied, throughout the ages, by a secular legislation of social, political and economic repression against Jews.

Professor Isaac maintains that the doctrine of contempt is rooted in the conflict between the early Church and Synagogue, and the fierce competition between the respective communi-

ties. At that time, the Church was striving to convince the gentile world that Jesus was the promised redeemer predicted in Hebrew scripture. The fact that the great majority of Jews did not themselves accept Jesus as the Christ (Greek for Messiah) and that the religious leaders of Judaism rejected his claim, stood as a serious obstacle.

If the Jews from whom he came did not accept Jesus as the Messiah, why should the gentiles do so? Thus, according to Professor Isaac, the Fathers of the Church felt it necessary to discredit Judaism—whose Law had a great attraction for some pagans, and was sympathetically regarded by much of the pagan world—and began the systematic work of heaping abuse and villification upon Jews.

Such efforts were intensified when Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire. In an attempt to stimulate the sympathy of Romans, the Roman involvement in the crucifixion was played down, and Jewish culpability emphasized more and more.

Now, after centuries of teaching which make the Jews the villain in the Christian drama of redemption, we may hope for the beginnings of a profound and far-reaching change. Why this change is taking place at this time was partially explained by German-born Cardinal Bea, when he presented his document, or *schema*, to the Ecumenical Council. He said that the Nazis had distorted biblical teachings to justify their "violent

and criminal" outbursts of anti-Semitism, and that this distortion had probably left an evil influence on some Christians, an influence which had to be removed.

CARDINAL BEA disclosed that the late Pope John XXIII had explicitly ordered the preparation of the *schema* denying the guilt of the Jews in the death of Jesus and had later expressed to the Cardinal his "full approval" of the draft, which declares that the biblical account of Jesus' death cannot give rise to "disdain or hatred or persecution" of the Jews.

The *schema* introduced at Vatican Council II is a symbol of winds of change within the Catholic Church. If adopted by the Council Fathers and implemented on every level of the Church, it will indeed bring about a new era in Catholic-Jewish relations.

Within recent years, Christians and Jews alike have worked tirelessly for this goal. The decree, after all, did not arise in a vacuum. It is partly the result of the dedicated efforts of religious leaders, theologians and human relations experts who have approached the problem of prejudice in religious teaching from their respective points of view.

Prejudice and hatred are a perennial problem of man; perhaps they will never be fully overcome. But we may hope that never again will religion—among whose objectives is the teaching of love and brotherhood—be abused to justify them. □

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