



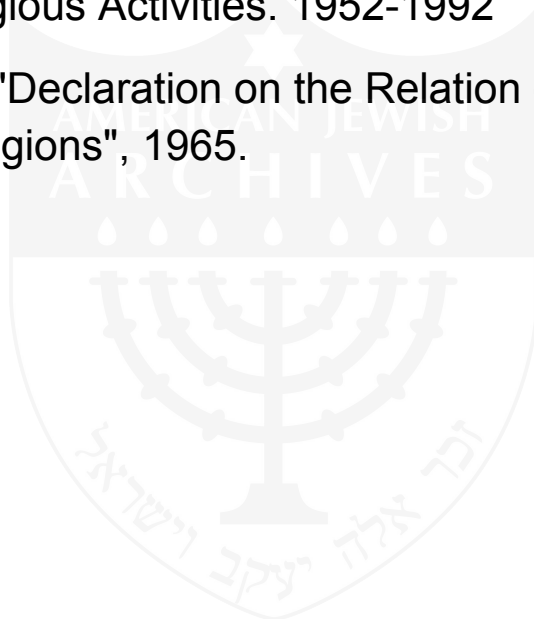
THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
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Preserving American Jewish History

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

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 16, Folder 9, "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions", 1965.



DECLARATION ON THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS



1. In our times, when every day men are being drawn closer together and the ties between various peoples are being multiplied, the Church is giving deeper study to her relationship with non-Christian religions.¹ In her task of fostering unity and love among men, and even among nations, she gives primary consideration in this document to what human beings have in common² and to what promotes fellowship among them.

UNITY OF MANKIND

For all peoples comprise a single community,³ and have a single origin, since God made the whole race of men dwell over the entire face of the earth (cf. Acts 17:26). One also is their final goal: God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, and His saving designs extend to all men (cf. Wis. 8:1; Acts 14:17; Rom. 2:6-7; 1 Tim. 2:4) against that day when the elect will be united in the Holy City ablaze with the splendor of God, where the nations will walk in His light (cf. Apoc. 21:23 f.).⁴

QUESTIONS ALL MEN ASK

Men look to the various religions for answers to those profound mysteries of the human condition which, today even as in olden times, deeply stir the human heart: What is a man? What is the meaning and the purpose of our life? What is goodness and what is sin? What gives rise to our sorrows and to what intent? Where lies the path of true happiness? What is the truth about death, judgment, and retribution beyond the grave? What, finally, is that ultimate and unutterable mystery that engulfs our being, and whence we take our rise, and whither our journey leads us?⁵

RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD

2. From ancient times down to the present, there has existed among divers peoples a certain perception of the hidden power that hovers over the course of things and over the events of human life;⁶ at times, indeed, recognition can be found of a Supreme Divinity, and of a Supreme Father, too. Such a perception and such a recognition instill the lives of these peoples with a profound religious sense. Religions bound up with cultural advancement have struggled to reply to these questions with more refined concepts and in more highly developed language.

Thus, in Hinduism men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustible fruitfulness of myths and a searching philosophical inquiry.⁷ They seek release from the anguish of our condition through ascetical practices or deep meditation or a loving, trusting flight toward God.

Buddhism in its multiple forms acknowledges the radical insufficiency of this shifting world.⁸ It teaches a path by which men, in a devout and confident spirit, can either reach a state of absolute freedom or attain supreme enlightenment by their own efforts or by higher assistance.

Likewise, other religions to be found everywhere⁹ strive variously to answer the restless searchings of the human heart¹⁰ by proposing "ways," which consist of teachings, rules of life and sacred ceremonies.

KEEP WHAT IS TRUE

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions.¹¹ She looks with sincere respect upon those ways of conduct and of life, those rules and teachings which, though differing in many particulars from what she

holds and sets forth, nevertheless often reflect a ray of the Truth that enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims and must ever proclaim Christ, *the way, the truth and the life* (Jn. 14:6), in whom men find the fullness of religious life, and in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself (cf. 2 Cor. 5:18-19).

The Church therefore has this exhortation for her sons: prudently and lovingly,¹² through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness of Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these men, as well as the values in their society and culture.

THE MUSLIMS

3. Upon the Muslims, too, the Church looks with esteem.¹³ They adore one God, living and enduring, merciful and all-powerful, Maker of heaven and earth¹⁴ and Speaker to men. They strive to submit wholeheartedly to His inscrutable decrees, as did Abraham, with whom the Islamic faith is pleased to associate itself. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin mother; at times they call on her, too, with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment, when God will give each man his due after raising him up. Consequently, they prize the moral life, and give worship to God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Although in the course of the centuries many quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Muslims, this most sacred Synod urges all to forget the past and to strive sincerely for mutual understanding. On behalf of all mankind, let them make common cause to safeguard and foster social justice, moral values, peace and freedom.

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

4. As this sacred Synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it recalls the spiritual bond linking the people of the New Covenant with Abraham's stock.¹⁵

For the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to the mystery of God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are already found among the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ, Abraham's sons according to faith (cf. Gal. 3:7), are included in that patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church was mystically foreshadowed by the



Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (left) and Augustin Cardinal Bea (right). Two outstanding scholars - one Jewish, one Catholic - who were the principal architects of the "Nostra Aetate". This document was the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on the Relations of the Catholic Church to Non-Christian Religions, proclaimed by Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965. Both of these saintly men are now deceased.



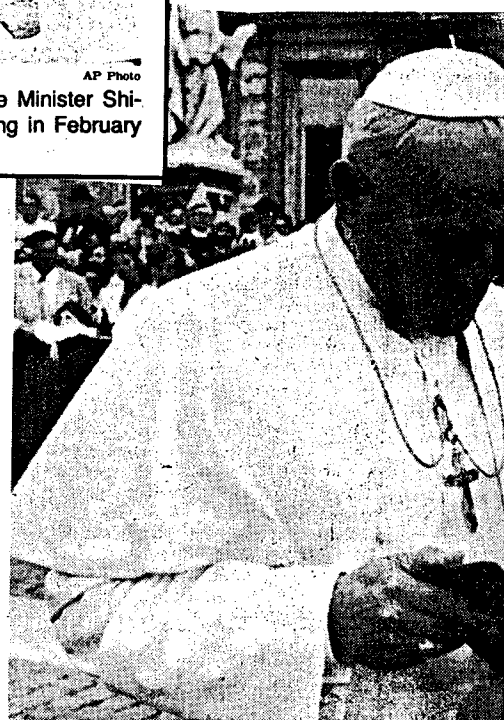
Pope John Paul II and Prime Minister Shimon Peres at Vatican meeting in February

On October 28, 1965, the Second statement entitled "Nostra Aetate" changed Catholic-Jewish relations. Books, sermons, and liturgy which Judaism have been condemned. The spirit of the Vatican II document. National Interreligious Task Force. Jews work together on such as preventing a nuclear holocaust, help for religious liberty and human. Significant differences still exist, where we can come together to importance to us.

On this occasion, Dr. Cohen presented the Pope with a facsimile leaf from a newly discovered edition of the Talmud which the Seminary will publish shortly. The portfolio of 550 leaves from editions of the Talmud printed in Spain and Portugal at the end of the fifteenth century has been assembled by Professor H.Z. Dimitrovsky of the Seminary faculty, who has also written a critical commentary to the text.

The chancellor was in Italy for the filming of the television special, "A Talent for Life - Jews of the Italian Renaissance." The program, second in the Eternal Light's Jewish Civilization Series, will be aired on the NBC network on December 2.

The Pope presented Dr. Cohen with a papal medal.





Pope John Paul II, shown with Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum at a meeting at the Vatican.

Historic Visit Made To Auschwitz by Pope



Pope John Paul II places a wreath of flowers and kneels to pray at the Wall of Death in the Auschwitz concentration camp during his historic visit to Poland.

Religious News Service photo

Accompanied by a half million persons, with a world audience of millions, Pope John Paul II visited Auschwitz and spoke with compassion about the victims of the Holocaust.

The Pope viewed the Hebrew inscription on the memorial wall and condemned the murder of millions, including Jews, and the destruction of the renowned spiritual creativity of Polish Jewry and the Jewish people of the entire world.

With camp survivors at his side, wearing the former striped uniforms of inmates, the Polish-born Pontiff spoke with much emotion about the Jewish victims: "They, they were the main victims. Innocent people killed for no reason except their religion."

At Birkenau, a mile from Auschwitz, the Pope donned his vestments in the blockhouse where the SS once watched the victims selected for the gas chambers.

PRAISE FROM SURVIVORS

The Pope's forthrightness was praised by Solomon Zynstein, president of the American Federation of Jewish Fighters, Camp Inmates, and Nazi Victims. "Pope John Paul II demonstrated a nobility of spirit at Auschwitz," he said. "The sincerity and eloquence about the Jewish victims will long reverberate throughout the world. It is a tragic irony of history that the religious leaders during the Holocaust were not of the moral fibre

Chosen People's exodus from the land of bondage.

The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy deigned to establish the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that good olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild olive branches of the Gentiles (cf. Rom. 11:17-24). Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ, our Peace, reconciled Jew and Gentile, making them both one in Himself (cf. Eph. 2:14-16).¹⁴

A PEOPLE STILL LOVED

Also, the Church ever keeps in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen, *who have the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenant and the legislation and the worship and the promises; who have the fathers, and from whom is Christ according to the flesh* (Rom. 9:4-5), the son of the Virgin Mary. The Church recalls, too, that from the Jewish people sprang the apostles, her foundation stones and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ to the world.

As holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation (cf. Lk. 19:44), nor did the Jews in large number accept the gospel; indeed, not a few opposed the spreading of it (cf. Rom. 11:28).¹⁵ Nevertheless, according to the Apostle, the Jews still remain most dear to God because of their fathers, for He does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues (cf. Rom. 11:28-29).¹⁶ In company with the prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and *serve him with one accord* (Soph. 3:9; cf. Is. 66:23; Ps. 65:4; Rom. 11:11-32).¹⁷

PLEA FOR MUTUAL LOVE

Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred Synod wishes to foster and recommend that mutual¹⁸ understanding and respect which is the fruit above all of biblical and theological studies, and of brotherly dialogues.¹⁹

NOT A REJECTED RACE

True, authorities of the Jews and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ (cf. Jn. 19:6);²⁰ still, what happened in

ican Council in Rome issued a landmark ("In Our Times"), which fundamentally for the better. Catholic teachings, text- suggested contempt for the Jews or d changed in accordance with the new today, a Roman Catholic nun leads the on Soviet Jewry. American Catholics and ncerns as immigration and refugees, ping the poor and the homeless, working rights, and combating hunger. While ican II created a positive atmosphere share those concerns that are of vital



His passion cannot be blamed upon all the Jews then living, without distinction, nor upon the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God,³³ as if such views followed from the holy Scriptures.³⁴ All should take pains, then, lest in catechetical instruction and in the preaching of God's Word they teach anything out of harmony with the truth of the gospel and the spirit of Christ.³⁵

The Church repudiates³⁶ all persecutions against any man. Moreover, mindful of her common patrimony with the Jews, and motivated by the gospel's spiritual love and by no political considerations, she deplures³⁷ the hatred, persecutions, and displays of anti-Semitism directed against the Jews at any time and from any source.³⁸

Besides, as the Church has always held and continues to hold, Christ in His boundless love freely underwent His passion and death because of the sins of all men, so that all might attain salvation.³⁹ It is, therefore, the duty of the Church's preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.



POPE JOHN PAUL II receives a mezuzah from Nathan Perlmutter, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, during a private audience with ADL leaders. ADL co-sponsored a two-day colloquium in Rome on the 20th anniversary of the Vatican II declaration that Jews were not responsible for the death of Christ.

Pope assails Nazi genocide

ROME, (JTA) — Pope John Paul II has assailed Nazism as "a mad imperialist ideology" and condemned the atrocities that it bred, including the killing of the Jewish people who were "condemned to extermination."

In an Easter message delivered to more than 200,000 persons in St. Peter's Square, the pope invoked the 40th anniversary of the conclusion of World War II. He praised "the men and women in each country who offered their lives in sacrifice for the right cause; the cause of the dignity of the human person."

"They faced death as defenseless victims, offered in Holocaust, or defending with their arms the free way to life," the pope said. "They fought not to answer violence with violence or hatred with hatred but to affirm a right and a freedom for themselves and others, also for the children of those who were then the oppressors."

"For more than five years, humanity had lived a horrendous experience. Tens of millions of people massacred, on the battlefronts, cities razed, slaughter in the air and on the sea, populations ruined by hunger and privations."

In addition, he said, "other tens of millions of human beings" were "decimated and destroyed in the concentration camps. The Jewish people were condemned to extermination."

The pope also sent a Passover greeting in Hebrew to the Jewish people.

A UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

5. We cannot in truthfulness call upon that God who is the Father of all if we refuse to act in a brotherly way toward certain men,⁴⁰ created though they be to God's image. A man's relationship with God the Father and his relationship with his brother men are so linked together that Scripture says: *He who does not love does not know God* (1 Jn. 4:8).

The ground is therefore removed from every theory or practice that leads to a distinction between men or peoples in the matter of human dignity and the rights that flow from it.

NO RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION

As a consequence, the Church rejects,⁴¹ as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion. Accordingly, following in the footsteps of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, this sacred Synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to *maintain good fellowship among the nations* (1 Pet. 2:12), and, if possible, as far as in them lies, to *keep peace with all men* (cf. Rom. 12:18), so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven (cf. Mt. 5:45).

Each and every one of the things set forth in this Declaration has won the consent of the Fathers of this most sacred Council. We too, by the Apostolic authority conferred on Us by Christ, join with the Venerable Fathers in approving, decreeing and establishing these things in the Holy Spirit, and We direct that what has thus been enacted in synod be published, to God's glory.

Rome, at St. Peter's, October 28, 1965

I, Paul, Bishop of the Catholic Church

PAX VOBISCUM

SHALOM ALAYCHEM

