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A DECLARATION ON KEY '73

Key '73 is a Christian ecumenical response to the spiritual and moral crises of our time, in which more than 140 church bodies of the United States and Canada have caught the vision of a common mission in 1973: Calling our continent to Christ.

However, since many evangelistic Christian crusades of the past have been accompanied by harassment and persecution of the Jewish community, it is certainly not our intention, in promoting Key '73, either to proselytize our Jewish neighbors or to denigrate, directly or indirectly, the faith they hold dear.

We wish to reassure our Jewish brothers and sisters that we appreciate and respect their spiritual patrimony and the vitality and relevance of Judaism today.

The primary aim of this year-long endeavor is to intensify the faith of individual Christians. It also affords an opportunity for speaking clearly of that faith to the millions of Americans who are "un-churched", that is, who have no formal religious association at all.

We, the undersigned, urge Christians to cooperate with the spirit and activities of Key '73, recognizing however, that if Key '73 were to endanger the developing respect and understanding among Christians and Jews, Key '73 would indeed be a failure.

Rather, it is our hope that Key '73 will lead Christians to a better appreciation of Jesus' command that everyone love his neighbor as himself and, in this way, serve to deepen a real love and respect between Christians and Jews.

Rev. Paul H. Ferrin

The Rev. Paul H. Ferrin
Key '73 State Chairman for the American Baptists of Mass.

Charles W. Griffin

The Rev. Charles W. Griffin
Key '73 Coordinator for the Council of Churches of Greater Springfield

John A. Koontz

The Rev. John A. Koonz / 0
President of the Franklin County Clergy Association and Vice President of
the Laymen's Academy for Oecumenical Studies (LAOS)

JW Z Neil

The Rev. Joseph F. O'Neil
Editor of The Catholic Observer

Ronald W. Whitney
e Rev. Ronald G. Whitney

The Rev. Ronald G. Whitney
Associate Executive Director of the Council of Churches of Greater Springfield

Jews and Jesus

Except for occasional differences over Arab-Israeli tensions, relations between many U.S. Christians and Jews have progressed over the last decade from a somewhat wary fellowship to joint social witness, scholarly collaboration and, in some cases, acknowledgement of mutual dependence. Encouraged by declarations from Vatican Council II and the World Council of Churches, a number of Christian scholars have even arrived at a new "theology of Judaism" that places Jews off limits to Christian proselytizers. Their theory is that the promises made by God to Israel in Biblical days constitute an eternally valid covenant that, for Jews, was not abrogated by the "second covenant" established through Jesus Christ.

Evangelical Christians, however, still insist that there is only one way to reach God—a solid belief in Jesus and his teachings. And through "Key 73," a massive, year-long crusade to "call our continent to Christ," the evangelicals hope to harness 100 million Christians from 140 participating church organizations into a "troop-like movement of messengers" for Jesus. Not surprisingly, many Jewish leaders regard Key 73 as a return to a muscular Christianity that seeks to discredit their faith. "They're saying we are rejected by God and need salvation," complains Rabbi Norman Frimer of New York. "I'm insulted by that kind of presumption."

Crusade: Although Key 73 is not aimed only at Jews or any other religious group, guidelines for phase three of the crusade, which was launched on Ash Wednesday last week, include special directions for "sharing Messiah" with potential Jewish converts. Part of phase three's strategy is a doorbell-ringing campaign, developed by the Campus Crusade for Christ, in which messengers use the pretext of taking a religious survey to invite non-Christians to pray for faith in Jesus. "We don't interpret this campaign as coercive," says evangelist Bill Bright, director of Campus Crusade and national chairman of Key 73's phase-three program. "If anybody loves the Jew, it's the true believer in Christ."

In somewhat the same spirit, a significant number of Christians in Key 73 have issued statements assuring their Jewish brothers that they will not be proselytized. In a memorandum from the U.S. Bishops' Ecumenical Committee, Catholics in the 40 dioceses that are participating in Key 73 have been told not to look for converts within the Jewish community. Similarly, nearly two dozen local church councils and other Key 73 agencies have publicly assured Jews that

they are not regarded as conversion fodder. Still, many Key 73 stalwarts resist any hands-off policy toward Judaism; they argue that to make any exceptions in spreading Christ's message is to undermine the universal validity of Christianity. The Jewish question, observes Dr. John Anderson, an amiable Southern Presbyterian who sits on the Key 73 executive committee, "touches a very sensitive nerve among Christians. We're at the point of a great theological debate on the subject."

In one effort to win some kind of peace with honor, a Jewish delegation headed by Rabbi Mark Tanenbaum of the American Jewish Committee recent-



Jews picketing Jews: Beware the evangelists

ly journeyed to the North Carolina home of star evangelist Billy Graham. Following their meeting, Graham issued a statement declaring that "gimmicks, coercion and intimidation" have no place in evangelism. "I believe," he declared, "that God has always had a special relationship with the Jewish people."

Last week, Graham acknowledged that he was "giving a lot of thought" to what that special relationship between God and Israel might imply for evangelists who want to proselytize Jews. When he returns from his own current crusade in South Africa, Graham told NEWSWEEK's Kenneth L. Woodward, he plans to go before a Jewish audience with a fuller statement on Judaism. "The fact that in God's providence 16 million Jews have survived as Jews, despite scattering throughout the world," Graham allowed, "is a very mysterious thing to me."

Although Graham is not personally

involved in Key 73, any change in his attitude toward converting Jews would certainly affect morale within the crusade. "Billy would never accept a two-covenant theory," insists the Rev. John Streeter, a close friend of Graham and the Baptist head of Key 73 operations in the San Francisco area. "A Jew is just like everyone else. If he does not accept Jesus as his savior, he cannot be right with God."

That sort of stand helps explain why several Jewish organizations are taking precautionary steps. Agencies serving both Conservative and Reform Judaism have mailed to Jewish families special materials that are to be used to counter claims by Christian crusaders. Meanwhile, secular Jewish defense agencies are closely watching Key 73 for civil-rights violations. In some instances, zealous Christian evangelists have gained platforms in colleges and high schools, and some Jewish students have complained of mandatory assemblies at their schools, that are aimed at countering supposed political radicalism with conservative Christianity.

Sky: "Everybody has the right to proselytize," says Reform Rabbi Balfour Brickner, "but people also have the right to resist." Brickner distrusts, as do many Jews, the evangelical spirit that they see in Christianity just now. "This coming together of religious and political conservatism, especially this looking to the sky for salvation," he feels, "is exactly the kind of environment which led to the advent of Jesus 2,000 years ago."

Indeed, the only kinds of Christianity that seem to appeal to young Jews are those messianic Jesus cults that offer ecstatic religious experiences and the promise that Christ is in fact about to reappear in the Second Coming. To adult Jews, the most abhorrent of these groups is "Jews for Jesus," which pickets outside of synagogues and teaches converts that they can accept Christ without giving up their Jewishness. "We believe there are two ways to become a Jew," says 31-year-old Moishe Rosen, a spokesman. "You can put yourself under the Mosaic covenant and obey the laws, which most Jews don't. Or you can let Jesus make you kosher."

Billy Graham and Key 73 officials have publicly lauded "Jews for Jesus." But as Christian evangelists they have not yet responded to the question put to them by the renowned Jewish scholar, Abraham Joshua Heschel, who died two days before Key 73 was inaugurated. "Do Christians really believe," Heschel asked, "that it is God's will that every synagogue throughout the world be closed?" The strain between tolerance and evangelism has always been a problem in Christianity, and Key 73 has now brought it back into prominence, along with all its dangers and sensitivities.

RELIGION COMMENTARY
RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM* OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

"BILLY GRAHAM AND JUDAISM"

"I believe God has always had a special relationship with the Jewish people...In my evangelistic efforts, I have never felt called to single out the Jews as Jews...Just as Judaism frowns on proselytizing that is coercive, or that seeks to commit men against their will, so do I."

Those words were written and just issued to the press by Dr. Billy Graham. When you consider the fact that Dr. Graham is the leading evangelist in the nation, and probably in the world today, they assume unprecedented importance. Dr. Graham returned recently from a trip throughout sections of the United States and became concerned about reports over growing acts of psychological harassment, deception, and intimidation carried out by fervid young evangelists against Jewish young people on public high school and college campuses. In addition, there were episodes of disruption of Jewish religious services by Campus Crusade for Christ types, as in the recent case of Portland, Oregon, and Dr. Graham became troubled about the deteriorating effect of such incidents on Christian-Jewish relations.

At the request of Billy Graham, I visited with him recently at his lovely mountain-top home in Montreat, North Carolina, and we spent three hours together reviewing virtually every aspect of relationships between Christians and Jews here and abroad. Finally, Dr. Graham decided on his initiative to issue his statement clarifying for the first time publicly his opposition to proselytizing the Jewish community, his commitment to American pluralism in which all religious and racial groups are full partners, and his conviction that Judaism, as he told me, possesses a covenant from God which is "eternal, forever," and not subject to abrogation. Dr. Graham makes a distinction between conversion and proselytization which I find sensible. Conversion involves an act of private conscience; proselytization calls for a concerted strategy to undermine the religious commitments of another group. In an open democratic society conversion is inevitable, and is a two-way traffic between Christians who become Jews, and individual Jews who become Christians. But proselytization against an entire group is absolutely off-limits and impermissible, Billy Graham declares.

Dr. Graham has also taken firm positions in the past condemning anti-Semitism; he has been a strong supporter of Israel on the basis of deep Biblical conviction; and he has been extremely helpful to the cause of Soviet Jews. Based on his most recent statement on the permanent value of Judaism, and other positive convictions that he shared with me during our meeting in Montreat, I am persuaded that Dr. Graham is destined to make a fundamental and lasting contribution to the improvement of Jewish-Christian understanding that may well become a historic turning point in relations between evangelical Christians and Jews.

*Rabbi Tanenbaum, who is the National Interreligious Affairs Director of the American Jewish Committee, presents a weekly religion commentary.

March 25, 1973

WINS RELIGION COMMENTARY
RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM* OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
"MISSIONS IN ISRAEL"

While American Jews and Christians are actively sorting out their relationships over the issues of evangelism and proselytization in this country, the problems raised by certain forms of Christian missionary activity in Israel have become even more complicated. For reasons related to fundamentalist theology that holds that all Jews must be converted before the second coming of Christ will take place, Israel reputedly has become the scene of more missionaries per capita than any other place in the world. In recent months, that missionary population has been augmented by the arrival of a reported 1,200 so-called Hebrew Christians who are aggressively seeking to evangelize Israeli youth.

In some cases, marginal evangelists as distinct from established church groups, are practicing deception and are operating under false pretenses. The daughter of a Dallas Pentecostal evangelist, Shira Lindsay, for example, became converted to Judaism in Boston, migrated to Israel under the Law of Return, and then under the guise of being a Jew started proselytizing young Israelis. Other fringe missionaries have been using material inducements to woo poor, sick, ignorant, or

* Rabbi Tanenbaum, who is the National Interreligious Affairs Director of the American Jewish Committee, presents a weekly religion commentary over WINS-Westinghouse Broadcasting System.

vulnerable children into their evangelical folds. So aggressive have become some of these missionaries that a Franciscan priest, Father Joseph Cremona, recently wrote a letter to the Jerusalem Post complaining about what he called the raiding of the Catholic flock in Israel by these proselytizing groups.

Orthodox Jewish groups have now demanded that Israel adopt new legislation to curb the missionary activity, and some self-appointed Jewish fringe groups have resorted to violent responses. Significantly, Prime Minister Golda Meir and most members of her government are strongly opposed to such legislation on the grounds that a democratic Israel must uphold the principle of religious liberty and freedom of conscience. That conviction, I believe, is shared by the overwhelming majority of American Jews who feel that in Israel, as in America, ideology must be combatted with ideology and education, not by legislation. Nevertheless, established Christian churches have a moral and spiritual obligation to seek to influence their evangelical co-religionists, in the words of Father Cremona, not to be so fanatical and aggressive, but to respect the freedom of conscience of everyone.

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AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

THE JEWS, FAITH AND IDEOLOGY

THE anti-Jewish trends present in Christian preaching have been discovered only fairly recently. It was only when Christians were confronted by Hitler's violent anti-Semitism that they were driven to examine their own teachings on Jews and Jewish religion and found the courage to face up to an enormously destructive aspect of their own past. In the Catholic Church, Petersen, Maritain and Journet led the way in this self-examination. At first it was held that the anti-Jewish trends present in the Church's preaching were distortions belonging only to certain periods of its history; more detailed scholarship and a more fearless look at the past, however, revealed that these trends were present in the Church almost from the beginning and pervaded its entire life. Even the New Testament contains passages of anti-Jewish bias. The Christian Church, understanding itself as the true and authentic Israel,

tried from the very beginning to make credible, and give reasons for, the substitution of one people by another.

These matters are today well known among Christian scholars. At Vatican Council II, under the leadership of Cardinal Bea, the Catholic Church as a whole took a first step in clearing itself of the ancient anti-Jewish trends present in its tradition. The conciliar statement on the Church's attitude to Jews and their religion provided guidelines for a more truthful and more just presentation of the Church's relationship to the Jewish people. Since then, many catechisms, school books, sermon materials, and theological works have been reviewed and amended, and while it would be unrealistic to suppose that the tendency to belittle Jews and despise their religious tradition has altogether disappeared from Catholic life and teaching, a significant and, I

believe, irreversible step has been taken in the right direction.

These matters have been treated in many articles and books. It is not my intention to repeat them in this article. What I wish to do, rather, is to draw some theological consequences from the Church's recovery of a new conscience in regard to the Jews.

Ideology in Religion

We must ask how it was possible that the Christian Church, professing love as the highest value never to be surpassed, could generate a profound bias against a certain people, embody this concept in its teaching, and promote unjust social practices. Were the Christian writers of antiquity imbued with a hatred toward Jews? Were they anti-Semitic? In many cases, if not in most, the tendency to spread contempt of the Jews and berate their religion was produced by unconscious processes. In the terminology commonly adopted today, it was "ideological". It was the unconscious tendency, present in any social group, to produce views and values that legitimate and reinforce the present order and protect it against competing groups.

Inherent in any division between people into "Us" and "Them" is the possibility of a destructive social trend. The group that calls itself "We" is tempted to elevate itself above the others and regard "Them" as inferior human beings. This sinful trend, unless consciously resisted, will make the we-group look upon itself as superior, virtuous, the adequate expression of what it means to be human, and consider the others as inferior, as outsiders to truth and virtue, as being just a little less than human. This trend will express itself first of all in the language used to speak about us and the others. In subtle ways at first, and then more drastically, we shall speak of ourselves as the measure of humanity and of others as below the norm. We make jokes about them, we exclude them when we think of truth and justice, we expel them from the sphere of our concern. This language has been called "a rhetoric of exclusion". This rhetoric, if unchecked, has devastating consequences. It will eventually taint the entire culture of the dominant group,

produce spontaneous yet untruthful judgments about the others, lead to the creation of institutions that embody the widespread contempt, and since the others are looked upon as less than human, the dominant group will eventually feel justified in treating them as less than human, possibly even to destroy them altogether.

In the Christian Church this rhetoric of exclusion was operative against the Jews almost from the beginning. It began when the Jews as a whole refused to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah and was aggravated when the Christians regarded themselves as replacing the Jews as God's chosen people. This rhetoric of exclusion seems to have been grounded in central Christian teaching.

The discovery of the anti-Jewish trends in Christian preaching has profound consequences for the Church's own self-understanding. We have come to realize, possibly for the first time in overwhelming fashion, that the Christian Church is subject to ideology. Ideology, in the sense in which the term is used in the sociology of knowledge, refers to the set of teachings or symbols unconsciously generated by a society to protect itself against others, legitimate its power, and defend its privileges. After the discovery of anti-Jewish bias in the Christian tradition, no talk of the Church's holiness will ever be blind to the possibility of ideological deformations affecting Christian life and teaching. We have come to realize that woven into the language we use, the teachings we propose, and the institutions in which we live, may well be trends that aim at protecting and promoting the power we hold as a group and keeping those under our power in their position of subjugation.

Karl Marx was the first author who made ideology a central theme. For Marx there was only one ideology. He thought that the economically favored classes produced, by a largely unconscious process, a culture, a set of laws, and a world of ideas that would legitimate and defend the system that gave them power and affluence, while persuading the disadvantaged classes to remain in their inferior position. What Marx failed to realize was that there are other ideologies, apart from the economic one. It is interesting to note, in the context of our topic, that Karl Marx failed to be aware of the

anti-Jewish ideology of Christian society. When he was asked, in the forties of the last century, to support the emancipation of the Jews in Germany, he refused to do so. He explained that there is only one significant oppression, and hence only one ideology, namely that produced by the economically favored class, the bourgeoisie, and that therefore the emancipation of the proletariat would inevitably bring with it the liberation of men from all other forms of alienation. Because Marx failed to face the anti-Jewish ideology of the dominant society and passed it off as an instance of the alienation produced by the class conflict, he did not discover his own anti-Jewish prejudices inherited from the Christian environment. This inability to understand the complexity of ideology has remained with official Marxism.

In the twentieth century the pressures of history have awakened us to the manifold ideologies that riddle our culture and our religion. We are beginning to become aware of the white man's ideology, the ideology of the European who has invaded the continents, conquered the non-European races and peoples, introduced them to cultural institutions that brought them into the white man's sphere of influence and offered them an economic system that benefited his own market and expanded his industries. This is the historical development we call progress. We present human history from a viewpoint that justifies our aggressions. This ideology is deeply woven into our values, our culture, our institutions, even our religion, and it will be the painful confrontation with the other races that may eventually enable us to face the whole truth about ourselves and others.

Many other examples of ideology may be given. The women of today have discovered that woven into the present culture, secular and religious, is the dominance of the male. Language, laws and customs legitimate the superior position of man in society. Again it is necessary to repeat that ideology is created unconsciously: it is due to a social process of which the individuals are not aware, and which may be stopped once they become aware of it. Male dominance at present still determines the consciousness of men and women.

A good illustration of this ideology is found

in the customary marriage service. Here the man is regarded as a fully responsible person capable of handing himself over into marriage. The woman, on the other hand, is regarded as a minor. She is not capable of giving herself away. She is led into the Church under the protection of her father, given away by him, and handed over to the protection of her husband. In the whole ceremony the woman never stands on her own. This ritual corresponds so deeply to the consciousness we have of the relationship between man and woman, that most people, be they male or female, do not find it offensive. Those who have discovered the ideological character of the service become sometimes quite unable to go through with it.

Religion, then, like any other social or cultural movement, is vulnerable to ideology. It is necessary at all times to purify religion from its ideological distortions. It is precisely God's Word, the theologian would add, operative in the Church, that discloses the self-seeking and self-elevating trends in religion and delivers men from the hold of ideology over them.

There is also, it should be noted, a psychological phenomenon that may be called "personal ideology". The fear of facing unresolved personal problems may induce a person, by largely unconscious processes, to create illusions for himself. We often erect defenses against seeing the truth that is painful. Our projections protect us from the reality we fear. While ideological projections of this kind are found in all realms of culture, they also exist in religion. Religion may become, in part at least, the bearer of our illusions and a screen cutting us off from reality. Even divinely revealed religion may become for men a defense of their prejudices, their superstitions, their position of power or their fear of life. Religion will always remain in need of being delivered from ideology in the socio-political meaning as well as in the personal one.

Truth in religion as well as in other contexts is always threatened by ideology. This describes the sinful situation of mankind. Because we are sinners we are tempted to make truth an instrument of domination. Truth becomes an occasion of triumphing over others: we rejoice that we are right and they are wrong. Even the Christian affirmation of the Gospel can easily become a claim to power over others.

The story of the Church's mission gives us many examples of this. The recent discovery of anti-Jewish trends in Christian preaching has revealed to us the hidden power of ideology in the Church. We have learned to listen to our own religion with new ears.

In the Church, and indeed in every social system, truth and ideology are in conflict. It is God's Word addressing us who redeems us from ideology. It is possible to say that the struggle between true and false religion refers to a dynamics that goes on in the Christian Church as well as in the other world religions. It is possible in every one of these religions to attach oneself to the ideological elements, to the various disguises of truth, to the aspects that protect personal and social advantages, and thus to live out what may be called false religion. It is also possible, thanks to God's powerful Word, to be delivered from these ideological elements and be open to the truth. In each religion, we may add, there is a wisdom tradition that offers to the faithful critical tests against the ideological distortions of the truth. This wisdom introduces them to the possibility of superstition, superficiality, self-elevation, group egotism, and idolatry, operative in their own religion. But it is especially the modern discovery of the more hidden nature of ideology that has enabled us to detect in every religion, including the Christian Church, the struggle between true and false religion.

As Christians we believe that it is God's Word that liberates us from ideology. Good teaching in the Church, therefore, frees men from the ideological distortions of the truth.

Religious Pluralism

A second issue raised by the anti-Jewish trends in Christian preaching, related to ideology, is the Church's openness to religious pluralism. How useful and effective are Christian declarations of friendship in regard to the Jews if the Church is unable to acknowledge the independent validity of Judaism and other religions? If the Church upholds the one true religion and makes an unqualified claim to absolute truth, then it is inevitable that despite assurances of dialogue and brotherhood, the Christian community will generate a world

view and a language for dealing with the world, in which there is no room for other religions. The claim of absoluteness will inevitably translate itself into social attitudes and actions. If this were the only Christian position, then the Church would be the necessary enemy of religious pluralism and have to identify itself with the political regimes and cultural trends that try to preserve something of the traditional hegemony of the Christian West.

The preceding remarks on true and false religion suggest that the Church may well be able to reconcile itself with religious pluralism. The Christian zeal for true religion need not exclude the recognition of God's presence in the world religions. It follows from the preceding that by acknowledging other religions present-day Christians do not imitate the optimistic, superficial liberalism characteristic of the nineteenth century; they recognize, rather, that the struggle between true and false religion goes on in all religions, including their own. The Church's mission may then be understood as an on-going dialogue with other religions, designed to liberate all partners, including herself, from the ideological deformation of truth. Through conversation and action men may learn to attach themselves to the authentic, life-giving and humanizing elements of their religious traditions. Can such a viewpoint be reconciled with the traditional doctrine of Christ's unique mediation?

This, it seems to me, is precisely the issue raised by the Jewish-Christian dialogue as well as by the present world situation which demands a new appreciation of pluralism. In the early Church, the universal claim of Christ referred to the then known world, the civilized *orbis terrarum*. Christ brought the light of Israel to the nations. He was the one who delivered the people from their superstitions, their idolatries, their illusions and their ignorance. He brought them a new and unexpected freedom from the manifold religio-cultural oppressions of the Empire. There was no salvation apart from him.

At the same time the early Church felt the need to relativize its language about Christ. Christians probably knew very little of the ancient religions of India. But while they regarded Christ as the one mediator of truth in the civilized world known to them, they did not

wish to exclude from truth and grace the wise men of Israel and even of Greece. The famous Logos-christology, the roots of which are found in the Fourth Gospel, enabled the ancients to affirm that the Word of God, embodied and revealed in Christ, had from the beginning made itself known to men, to the prophets of Israel and the wise men of Greece, and to this day was operative in man's conversion from blindness to truth. It is basically this Logos-christology, revived and refined by modern theologians (Blondel, Rahner), that provided the theological basis, on which Vatican II was able to formulate its important teaching on the universality of divine grace, God's saving presence in the world religions, and the Church's openness to religious pluralism. The *Declaration on the Church's Attitude to Non-Christian Religions* invites Catholics to enter into conversation and collaboration with members of the other religions. For "the Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. 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 that Truth which enlightens all men".

But is this Logos-christology adequate for the present day? Does it leave enough room for other religions? While it acknowledges God's saving Word to be present in the world religions, it does suggest that these religions find their fulfillment only in the Church and hence are destined to disappear from the face of the earth. They are but preparations for Christianity. Religious pluralism may be tolerated, but it is an interim state, an anomaly, an imperfection. In particular, does this universal view of Christ leave enough room for an honest acknowledgment of Judaism? Is the Church committed to regard itself as the completion of the ancient covenant, as the true Israel, in whom the promises recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures are fulfilled? If Christianity is committed to such a theology of fulfillment and substitution, then it can appreciate Jews and members of other religions only as potential Christians and is not capable of acknowledging religious pluralism as part of the divine dispensation.

Since the great mass crimes over the last

twenty-five years have all been due to the incapacity of dominant social systems to acknowledge and protect particular traditions, and since the present revolutionary ferment in the world promotes the survival and unfolding of particularities, the question posed to the Christian Church is a serious one indeed. As the ancients were willing to relativize the doctrine of Christ's universal mediation in correspondence with the spiritual sensitivity of their day, so must the contemporary theologian be open to new ways of reconciling God's self-revelation in Jesus with religious pluralism. He must entertain the possibility that the unqualified absolutizing of the Christian religion was an ideological trend, a hidden power-game to assert the Christian community's superiority over others.

I venture to propose that what God has revealed in Jesus Christ once for all, and in this sense uttered himself in an unsurpassable way, is that the crucial decision regarding the divine is made by man in his relationship to the community of men. The locus for man's trusting surrender to God is the love of one's neighbor. What has been revealed in Christ is that true religion humanizes and reconciles. A man does not relate himself to God in worship and then, as a second step, seek the right relationship to his brother; what is revealed in Christ is precisely that in his relationship to the human community, in friendship, solidarity, conversation and fellowship, man is open to the divine, is addressed by the divine, and commits himself to it. In other words, God is love. And he who does not love does not know God. He is the saving interconnectedness between people that draws them and impels them toward a more human future. The ultimate test in the struggle between true and false religion, then, is the reconciliation of men.

This understanding of Christ's universality does not demand that the members of the world religions become Christian. They are summoned to live out the divinely induced redemptive dynamics between true and false religion in their own particular traditions. The Christian struggles for it in the Church. But the universal test for all is the love of neighbor.

The universal brotherhood of men, we conclude, is not to be created by the entry of all into a single, worldwide Church. Such an ideal inevitably leads to the depreciation of particu-

lar religious traditions and to social attitudes destructive of them. What is to be hoped for, rather, is the conversation and collaboration of world religions to assist one another in the dynamics that liberates them from ideology. Here the individuals belonging to different religions will be united by a common struggle, each in his own tradition, to be saved from ideology and open to the truth. If people are engaged in their own religious community in the on-going liberation from false religion, then they find it easy to be friends across the boundaries; they then have much in common, share many important experiences, feel united in the same basic struggle, and never think that anyone should change from one religion to another.

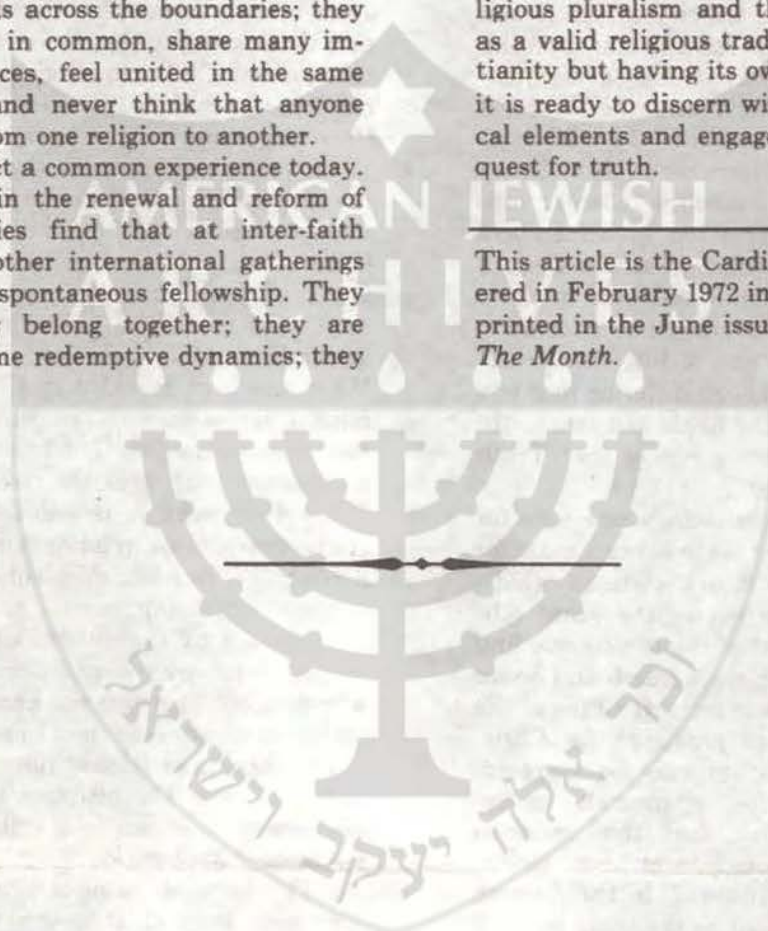
This is in fact a common experience today. People engaged in the renewal and reform of their communities find that at inter-faith meetings or at other international gatherings they experience spontaneous fellowship. They know that they belong together; they are caught in the same redemptive dynamics; they

understand one another's hopes and pains even though they define themselves out of different religious traditions. Each one tries to purify his community from ideology and make the most spiritual and authentic values of his tradition the dominant factors in the common life. Each one hopes to make his religion an element that serves the humanization of men. While they belong to diverse traditions, they seem to be ruled by a common norm.

The Christian Church can acknowledge religious pluralism and thus recognize Judaism as a valid religious tradition, related to Christianity but having its own *raison d'être*, only if it is ready to discern within itself the ideological elements and engage itself in the on-going quest for truth.

Gregory Baum

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