



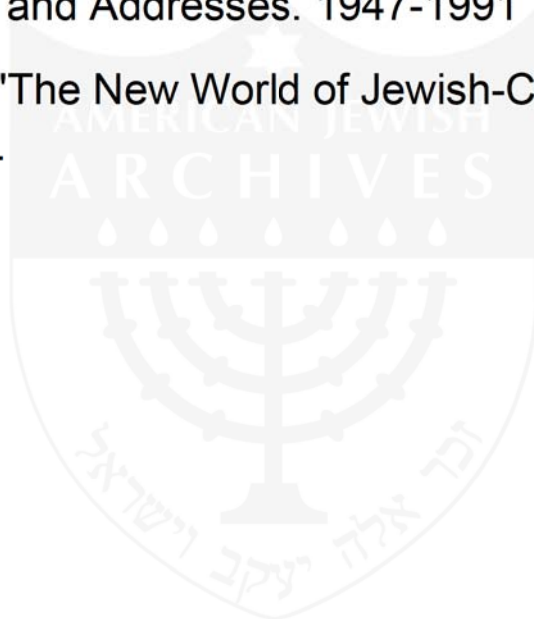
THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Preserving American Jewish History

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

Series A: Writings and Addresses. 1947-1991

Box 1, Folder 49, "The New World of Jewish-Christian Relations",
8 December 1967.



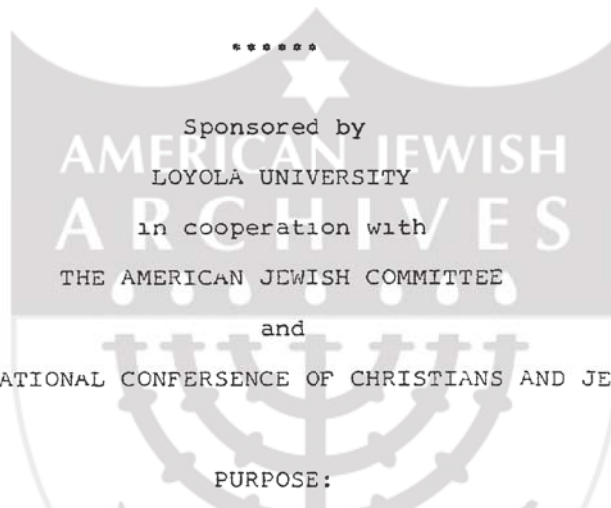
FOURTH ANNUAL INTERRELIGIOUS INSTITUTE

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY

Los Angeles, California

December 8, 1967

"The Christian-Jewish Encounter"



PURPOSE:

Pluralism undergoes what is perhaps its greatest test in the area of religion, where man's basic attitudes and patterns of faith are involved. In recent years impressive interfaith pronouncements have been made nationally and internationally to foster meaningful interreligious communication. The real challenge, however, faces us at the community level where the interaction of the major faith groups is focused on local issues. The Institute provided a vehicle for lay and religious leaders to exchange views and to develop meaningful programs.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Rev. Willis J. Egan, Chairman

Rev. Carroll N. Anderson
Rev. Richard O. Bass
Dr. Richard W. Cain
Rev. Joseph P. Carroll, S.J.
Rev. Myron Cole
Rabbi Paul Dubin
Rev. Willis F. Erickson
Rev. Maurice D. Fulkerson
Rev. Frank Gray
Rev. William H. Hervey
Mrs. Rita Hoffman
Mr. Robert M. Jones
Rabbi S. H. Levey
Rev. Don Lindblom
Dr. Clarence McCall
Rev. Harry A. McKnight, Jr.
Rev. Charles Milburn
Dr. James H. Parrott
Mrs. Arthur Piantadosi
Sister M. Richard Reif
Mr. Neil C. Sandberg
Dr. Carl W. Segerhammer
Mr. Emil Seliga
Rabbi Matthew Simon
Rev. Robert T. Stellar
Rev. D. DeWitt Turpeau, Jr.
Rev. Loyal Vickers
Rev. Robert C. Walker
Dr. Forest C. Weir
Mr. Horace B. Williams
Rabbi Aaron M. Wise
Rabbi Alfred Wolf

THE NEW WORLD OF JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

by

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
National Director of the Interreligious Affairs Department
The American Jewish Committee

We meet together virtually one year after the promulgation by the Vatican Council Fathers of the Declaration on Non-Christian Religions, sometimes called the "Jewish Declaration". We also meet after the adoption by the National Council of the Churches, representing the major Protestant and Orthodox bodies in this country, of its own declaration on Christian-Jewish relations. Many of the themes and the accents that were contained in the Vatican Council Declaration and earlier in the World Council of Churches Declaration were also reflected in that adopted by the National Council of Churches.

Looking back over the events of recent years, culminating in what has happened over the past year, one can see the changing outlines of Jewish-Christian relations. It is my assigned task to evaluate these patterns and to discuss the significance of these developments. Certain fundamental issues regarding relationships with Judaism and Jews have been resolved in the major centers of Christian teaching and authority. A number of critical issues still call, urgently, pressingly, for resolution.

I would begin by pointing to three major issues that have been resolved by the action of the world Catholic and Protestant bodies in recent years, exemplified by the various declarations during the past year. Number one: a decisive resolution on the part of the highest authorities of the Christian world finally and decisively to repudiate anti-Semitism. Whatever the reservations one might have about the final form of the Vatican Council Declaration as against earlier versions, one must clearly recognize the resolve to place the churches on record against "displays of anti-Semitism against the Jewish people by any one and at any time" -- a verbatim quotation from the Declaration. Critics and skeptics might say that such language represents merely Christian rhetoric, of which there have been two millennia of the same. But these words have been followed by deeds, important both in themselves and for the future. A forceful example of the commitment of Christian authorities to uproot the religious roots of anti-Semitism is the fact that immediately after the promulgation of the Vatican Council Declaration, the Congregation of Rites instructed the Bishop of Trent to abandon the practice of the veneration of Simon of Trent. As you know, since the 15th century, the veneration of the child Simon was an occasion of abuse and contumely against the Jewish people, an annual reiteration of the infamous blood libel, or accusation that Jews used Christian blood for the baking of matzos for Passover. In the year 1475, a number of Jews were slaughtered in Trent because someone found a Christian child dead by the side of a stream. We might say that the incredible charge of ritual murder could only come from a medieval mentality, but year after year the libel was kept alive by public celebration in the city of Trent. For generations Jews had petitioned bishops to put an end to these acts of public debasement of the Jewish people, but even into the early decades of the twentieth century there was no response to these appeals. Yet, literally overnight, and within a week after the promulgation of the Declaration, this vicious practice was put to an end,

and the innocent Jews so cruelly burned to death were finally vindicated.

Less dramatic than the Simon of Trent episode, but equally important, is the preparation of new catechetical materials such as textbooks, teachers' manuals, etc., in which many of the ancient stereotypes regarding the Jewish people, Judaism, and the synagogue are drastically revised. The Bible, Life and Worship Series being prepared by the Pius XII Religious Education Center, the new Sadlier textbooks, the "To Live is Christ" textbooks being produced by Henry Regnery, are some of the examples with which I am familiar, but I am sure there are others. These materials show a genuine reverence and esteem for Jewish tradition and a conscientious effort to handle with sensitivity and awareness those themes and incidents in the encounter between Christianity and Judaism which might lead to negative attitudes and feelings. Moreover, this spirit of understanding has been further promoted in teacher training institutes, in conferences at major Catholic and Protestant seminaries, colleges and universities, such as Woodstock, Harvard Divinity School, and Cambridge University in England. All of these developments have taken place as a result of the momentum provided by Catholic and Protestant leadership over the past few years. I hopefully conclude that we have seen a turning point within the Christian world -- certainly on high levels of authority -- regarding the repudiation of anti-Semitism, the elimination of any Christian sanction for bigotry against Jews.

A second major issue to have been resolved during recent years, is the two-millennial ambivalence with regard to ancient Judaism. One finds, throughout the whole of the patristic literature, through the statements of medieval popes and bishops and through much of the Reformation tradition, this profound ambivalence of love and contempt with regard to Judaism. Even within the writings of individual church fathers, such as St. Athanasius and St. Jerome, this same ambivalence prevails. The tendency to see Judaism as a form of inferior religion and the God of Israel as a God of vengeance or hatred, juxtaposed against the "Christian" God of love may be viewed as a form of Marcionite heresy, but it found frequent expression in Christian tradition. I believe that both the Vatican Council Declaration and the World Council of Churches statement tried to put an end to this incipient gnostic tendency.

Thirdly, these Christian bodies publicly and explicitly took initiatives to call for fraternal dialogue.

There had been Christian-Jewish dialogue for some years in this country, but most of the initiatives in the past came from Jews. And obviously for defensive reasons. Jews first of all wanted to be in touch with the centers of reality in Christian life, and at the same time, Jews were very much concerned about the impact of anti-Semitism and the negative attitudes in Christian teaching with regard to them, and sought out those few liberal Christians who were prepared to talk with them. The situation has changed. It is now Christians who are seeking out Jews for dialogue. As one of the victims of the ecumenical explosion I can testify to the seriousness with which Christians are engaging in this quest for understanding, and I am sure that many of my colleagues can offer similar testimony. Within the Jewish community, there are hardly enough of us to go around to respond to Christian invitations.

In my judgment these are not insignificant gains. In the perspective of the Nazi holocaust, they may not seem like much to proclaim about, but in the perspective of 2000 years of Jewish-Christian encounter, these are enormous advances. I can see the contrast in official Christian attitudes even within the life span of my own organization, the American Jewish Committee, which came into being as a result of the Kishinev pogroms in Russia from 1903-1906. At that time a Jewish delegation called upon the man who was responsible for establishing policies with regard to the Jews, Count Pobyedonostev, to ask that the outrages against Jews be put to an end. Pobyedonostev was the procurator of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. His reply to that Jewish delegation was, "The policy of my Church and my government with regard to the Jewish people is very clear; it is threefold. A third of the Jews must be expelled from Russia, a third of the Jews must be killed; and a third of the Jews must be converted to the Holy Russian Orthodox Church." And that was the classic formula. The relationship between Christians and Jews was to be on the basis of Christians engaging Jews either as dead Jews or as converted Jews.

Christians are now prepared to talk to living Jews, perhaps for the first time since the emancipation. By that I mean they are prepared to accept Jews in the fullness of their own distinct tradition, with respect and esteem for that tradition. This new openness, which has manifested itself in a virtual explosion of dialogues and conferences around the country, is certainly to be welcomed, but points to some of the remaining unresolved problems on the agenda of Jewish-Christian relations.

First is the incredible mutual ignorance we have about each other. So often we talk about Jews and Judaism, Christians and Christianity, and our talk is largely abstractions and stereotypes. We invoke easily generalizations about each other that have no depth and very little content in terms of the reality of our existence, the true nature of the life of our peoples and our faith. One needs only to look at the history books that are used in our respective communities to recognize how we continue to perpetuate this mutual isolation, this mutual ignorance.

Take, for example, the work of some great Christian historians--and I speak of the finest and esteemed scholars such as Father Philip Hughes, whose popular "History of the Catholic Church" has sold in the hundreds of thousands of copies, or Kenneth Scott Latourette, an outstanding Protestant historian. If we compare the treatment of key episodes in the historical encounter between Christians and Jews with the way in which Jews regard these same episodes, it's as though we were living in different universes. Father Hughes, for example, describes the Crusades of the 11th and 12th centuries as "Holy Wars, to free the Holy Land and Jerusalem from the Infidels". "Never before," writes Father Hughes, "had Europe known such a vast and successful propaganda as the preaching of the first Crusade, and its success is the most eloquent proof of the reality of the new reform papacy's hold on the average man and of its popularity with him." In his treatment of the Crusades, Father Hughes does not refer to the fate of the Jews in the Crusades, not even once. Now, if you compare accounts of Jewish historians such as Heinrich Graetz, Marx and Margolis, and Solomon Grayzel, the picture of the Crusades is drastically different: a gory story of pillaging Jewish settlements, killing Jewish people, looting Jewish goods. Such serious restrictive legislation as the humiliating garb, the ritual murder charges,

the most desecration libels, and confinement to the ghetto, were not the heritage of the Dark Ages but the heritage of the Crusades.

Indeed, as Father Flannery has written in his extraordinary book "The Anguish of the Jews", most Christians have torn out of their history books the pages the Jews have memorized. What this means is that a child, a student, a seminarian, a university student, in the Hughes' tradition of historiography, develops a certain conception of the western world and of the Christian role in the western world that completely leaves the Jew out of the picture and renders him insensitive to the situation of the Jew, while a Jewish student raised on the Grayzel-Graetz account (or that of other Jewish historians) learns that the overwhelming burden of Jewish experience in the Christian west was a tradition of tragedy, oppression, persecution and expulsion, despite the occasional protection and assistance of individual popes, cardinals and bishops. An individual raised on this perception of history is understandably sensitive to potential victimization. When Christians and Jews, fed by these separated, perhaps isolated traditions, encounter one another in the contemporary world, the Christian frequently suspects the Jew of hypersensitivity or paranoia about anti-Semitism. The use of the swastika, the symbol of Nazism -- which unfortunately was also adopted by a few extremists as a symbol of white backlash during the summer riots in Chicago -- was enough to create panic in the hearts of many Jews. There were Christians who regarded the external signs of security of such Jews -- their fine homes, their financial status -- who simply could not comprehend the emotional insecurity triggered by the swastika. There were Jews, on the other hand, who could not understand the insensitivity of their Christian neighbors. Did they really not know the history of Jewish persecution across the centuries, culminating in a blood bath of such magnitude that even today we cannot assimilate its dimensions, a nightmare of which the swastika was sign and symbol?

I would like, in the words of Arthur Cohen, not to be excessively preoccupied with how we have failed to do God's will in the past, but to look forward to how we can seek to do God's will together. Nevertheless, all of us in our human natures cannot step out of our histories or our skins, and until Christians are prepared to confront the blank pages, we cannot really advance on the basis of genuine community and genuine understanding.

And therefore, I should like to suggest that one of the really significant "ecumenical" activities outstanding before us is that of bringing together Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish historians to approach in an objective, scientific fashion the writings of those chapters of history which have been so distorted in both of our communities. I believe, for example, the Jews have a great deal to learn in this dialogue, in terms of the way Jews have perceived certain chapters of history which we have tended to glorify for our purposes with some of the same triumphalism as Christians have tended to in other chapters of history, and I would make the case that our version of the French Revolution and of its meaning to the western world is not the only version.

I would say that a Jew has a great deal to learn if he reads Father Philip Hughes on what the emancipation of the French Revolution meant to the Catholic Church. the liquidation of Catholic universities on the continent, the destruction of many convents and monasteries in France. Many of the orders of sisters and priests in this country today are here by virtue of

that expulsion, an experience which was almost as terrifying for Christians as the Nazi holocaust was for Jews. This kind of historical empathy, it seems to me, can only come about as a result of our openness for each other, and this kind of serious, scholarly academic work which will bring together historians, not perhaps to write a whole history book together -- that may be a somewhat eschatological hope -- but even to write monographs together on the Crusades, what they meant to Catholics, Protestants, Jews -- and Muslims, which is another part of this picture.

I think we have a second area of unresolved concern and that is the whole area of Biblical scholarship and interpretation. It seems to me today that Vatican Council II, building on the Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* of Pius XII, set the stage for something of the same kind of critical examination of how scripture is taught with particular reference to its meaning for Jewish-Christian relations. There is still need of a very urgent kind for the writing of commentaries on the New Testament, which deal in historically and theologically precise ways with the role of the Jews in the Passion.

Much progress has already been made in this area on the level of textbooks and teachers' manuals, but much remains to be done on other levels of scholarship. Catholic and Protestant scholars can literally transform the entire teaching process by the way in which Christian children learn about the place of "the Jew" in the Crucifixion.

Similarly, there is a need to deal with a tradition of unfair accusations and unjust comparisons between Judaism and Christianity: the Jewish God of Wrath as opposed to the Christian God of Love; the distortions about -- or dismissal of -- the whole post-Biblical period of Judaism, particularly the pejorative treatment of the Pharisees, a term which has become a classic insult and epithet and is a prime example of Christian bias reflected even in our dictionaries.

In addition to these two critical areas -- historical scholarship and Biblical interpretation -- I would point out a third unsolved problem on the agenda of Jewish-Christian understanding. That is the need for Christians to develop an adequate theology of Israel in salvation history. By "adequate" I mean a theology that will not regard the ancient covenant as a cancelled contract, or Judaism as a fossil, but which will come to grips with the reality of a continuing and vital Jewish religion. At the very least, Christians should seek to understand how Jews see themselves in terms of their election and of God's promises and call to the people of Israel, to whom He has said, as Isaiah reminds us, "Thou art My servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." Perhaps nowhere is the covenantal bond with God more meaningfully expressed for Jews than in Psalm 89: "My mercy will I not break off from him, nor will I be false to my faithfulness. My covenant will I not profane nor alter that which has gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my Holiness surely I will not be false unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established forever as the moon and be steadfast as the witness in the sky."

One has found that there is significant growth on the part of Christian theologians and scholars in approaching Jews as they see themselves, have seen themselves across the millennia, not as an old Israel that has been superseded, not as a *preparatio evangelica*, but as the living people of Israel who began their journey at Sinai and continue as a pilgrim people

Unto this day. One finds this manifested, for example, in the writings of Father Henry Renckens, the Dutch theologian, in his book "The Religion of Israel" (Sheed and Ward), when he says that Christianity would be unthinkable without Judaism and the Old Israel is a work of the Holy Spirit as is the New. If we take the church and Holy Scripture seriously, Father Renckens adds, then we are bound to take Judaism and its literary activity down to this day seriously. Monsignor John Oesterreicher, who of late has begun to think seriously about this issue for himself, has written: "It is simply not true that because the Synagogue did not accept Jesus as the giver of a new life that she is a dead tree carrying dead leaves; God's grace is at work in the Synagogue; the worshipping community of Israel is alive to Him." Father Gregory Baum, writing in the Ecumenist (May-June 1965) on the meaning of the Vatican Council Declaration with regard to the question of the theology of Israel and the life of the Church, declares that "the Apostle tells us that the Jews of the Synagogue remain dear to God for the sake of the Fathers. Their election stands. Why? Because God is faithful; His gifts and call are irrevocable; His election cannot ultimately be undone by human decision against it. The scriptural theme is invoked in the conciliar text of Vatican Council II. What does this mean for the understanding of the Jews of our day? Giving this Pauline theme its weakest possible meaning, it asserts that God continues to be present and to address Jewish believers in their Synagogue services; that testimonies of God's mercy in the past as celebrated in the Synagogue worship remain a way of divine action. For His gifts and call are irrevocable."

"We have here the answer to a question crucial to the Jewish-Christian dialogue. What is the present synagogue worship before God? Is the Christian forced to regard present Jewish worship as an empty form, as words and gestures without meaning, or is he able to acknowledge in Jewish worship the presence of the living God? The conciliar text answers this question by its adoption and use of the Pauline theme. God remains present in His gifts to Israel."

This is not a one-way street for Jews, nor is it a matter of quid pro quo when I say to my Jewish colleagues, here and elsewhere, that the problem of the theology of Israel for Christians finds its equation in the problem of an adequate formulation in Jewish religious thought of the place of the Church and Christianity for Judaism. Jews are faced with a similar tradition of historic ambivalence with regard to Christians and Christianity, ranging from a position which saw Christians in the ancient world setting of Judaism as being part of a pagan world, to another position elaborated by some of our greatest teachers like Rabbi Moses Rivkas and Rabbi Menahem Hamuri and many others who declared that the Christians share the same conviction and belief in the one God. They believe in the Exodus; they believe in divine revelation; in creatio ex nihilo; and they have many of the same outlooks and world views based on Biblical traditions as we have. And that indeed on this level we share a common patrimony which can be justified in Jewish theological terms.

Finally, I believe that one of the critical, unresolved questions, not alone for Christians, but for Christians and Jews together, is the way in which we encounter the present 20th century world, which if it has any characteristic at all is that of a global pluralist society, in which the one human family is a greater reality than at any time since the days perhaps of Adam and Eve. And this finds all of us inadequate in

our theologies of interreligion and our theologies of pluralism. Western religion has been stamped historically by claims to exclusivism and monopolies and triumphalism and imperialism; and all of these claims, as elaborated now on the global scene, elicit, as Gerald Cook writes in his book "As Christians Face Rival Religions", these claims to exclusivism; these human claims to exhaust God's revelation in our human institutions have no effect other than to elicit equally exclusive claims on the part of the Muslims, the Buddhists, the Hindus and others.

The issue before us is whether we do not have resources within our theological traditions, immature and undeveloped, that can help us to develop a theology that is genuinely, Biblically based, one that enables us in terms of the prophet Jeremiah to say as Jews have said at their noblest moments -- "The Lord God is the Lord God of Israel", but He is also the Lord God of Hosts, the Lord of all flesh, and that God is in a double relationship with Israel and with all the nations of the earth (Jeremiah 32). The classic formulation in Jewish tradition with regard to this theology of interreligion is one perhaps that provides a basis for us to begin to examine together; "Behold you children of Israel are to me like the Ethiopians, sayeth the Lord. I brought Israel out of Egypt and the Philistines from Caphtor." Such thinking produced the classic Rabbinic view about non-Jews expressed both in doctrine and in law.

The doctrine is "that salvation is not a monopoly of the Jews. The righteous of all peoples have a share in the world to come. One can develop this at greater length, and perhaps during the course of the day we will have an opportunity to confront this question: The inadequacy of our theological exclusivism in terms of the present global situation, and the expression of that inadequate theology, manifesting itself in a form of institutional exclusivism, side by side with an openness toward the rest of the world. I have been troubled by a very strong movement to reconceiving the world primarily in terms of Christian ecumenical relationships in social action and social reconstruction. There are joint Vatican Council commissions and World Council of Churches commissions. There are inner-church parishes, which include Catholics and Protestants alone, such as in Kansas City, where the people who are serving the Negroes and the Puerto Ricans are the Christians, and the people who are now being placed in a situation of being the exploiters of the Negroes are the Jewish businessmen of the community. This kind of Christian institutional exclusivism represents a problem that it seems to me all of us need to face together. (P.S.-The latest encyclical of Pope Paul represents a major contribution to the resolution of this problem by virtue of its appeal to Christians to join with all men of good will in a common assault against the global problems that afflict mankind.)

I have talked rather long, and you've been very patient; thank you very much.