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## CONTENTS

### ARTICLES

#### JEWES AND JUDAISM IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

##### → INTRODUCTION

by *Marc H. Tanenbaum*

419

#### RESEARCH ON CHRISTIAN TEACHING CONCERNING JEWS AND JUDAISM: PAST RESEARCH AND PRESENT NEEDS

by *Eugene J. Fisher*

421

#### THE IMAGE OF JEWS IN CHRISTIAN TEACHING

by *Judith H. Banki*

437

#### THEOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS TO CHANGING THE IMAGE OF JEWS AND JUDAISM IN EDUCATION

by *Ruth Kastning Olmesdahl*

452

#### CATEGORIES FOR A CORRECT PRESENTATION OF JEWS AND JUDAISM IN CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS TRAINING

by *Peter Fiedler*

470

#### THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FOR THE CHURCH'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE

by *Paul M. van Buren*

489

#### JUDAISM VIS-A-VIS CHRISTIANITY: HOW TO MAKE CHANGES

by *John Carmody*

507

#### INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS GUIDELINES ON THE PORTRAYAL OF JEWS AND JUDAISM IN EDUCATION AND IN TEACHING MATERIALS

523

### EDITORIALS

#### TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST AND ITS LESSONS

by *Franklin H. Littell*

531

## JEWES AND JUDAISM IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

### INTRODUCTION

On October 28, 1965, the 2,500 Fathers of Vatican II adopted almost unanimously the Declaration on Non Christian Religions, generally known as *Nostra Aetate* ("In Our Time") Thus, twenty years have passed since that historic action was taken by Roman Catholic leaders from throughout the world to set relations between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people on a new and productive course In January, 1975, the Vatican issued comprehensive *Guidelines on Catholic Jewish Relations* which provided concrete guidance for implementing the affirmative policies of the Vatican Declaration in the vital areas of religious education, liturgy, preaching, teacher training, and social action

These important Catholic actions had been preceded by the adoption in 1961 by the World Council of Churches of a far reaching declaration on Christian Jewish relations that contained a number of themes later taken up and developed by the Vatican Similar declarations on Jewish Christian relations—all of which condemned Antisemitism and called for mutual respect between Christians and Jews—had also been adopted in the 1960's and 1970's by a number of American, European, and Latin American Protestant and Catholic church bodies

What have been the effects of these widely heralded declarations? Have they been just more pious declarations, or have they resulted in actual changes in Christian teachings and images about Jews and Judaism—and in Jewish images and teachings about Christians and Christianity? How extensive and meaningful have the revisions of the formerly negative or hostile images been? What still remains to be improved? What educational tools and theological resources are available for bringing about future progress?

This special issue of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* contains six major essays by leading specialists in Jewish-Christian relations that provide informed answers to these critical questions Their papers, plus the appended guidelines of the International Conference of Christians and Jews, are probably the most up to date summary of what has been taking place in interreligious education during the past two decades

Dr Eugene J Fisher, executive secretary of the Secretariat on Catholic Jewish Relations of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, has furnished an incisive summary of the major changes that have taken place in American Catholic textbooks and teaching materials regarding the images of Jews and Judaism

Ms Judith Hershcopf Banki, associate director of interreligious affairs of the American Jewish Committee (my colleague for nearly twenty five years), has

written a thorough survey of content analyses in Protestant and Catholic textbooks since the inception of various studies beginning in the 1930's

Dr Ruth Kastning Olmesdahl, based on her teaching experiences in West Germany, has probed suggestively the linkage between "the history of anti Judaism in the primitive church and the psychology of antisemitic prejudice"

Dr Peter Fiedler, also of West Germany, integrates the new insights of contemporary biblical and historical scholarship into fresh teaching approaches toward the relationship of Christianity to Judaism

Dr Paul van Buren of Temple University has composed a challenging essay calling for a radical rethinking of Christian identity in the presence of a living Judaism and the State of Israel

Dr John Carmody summarizes the findings of a research project that suggest methods for catalyzing the process of revising anachronistic methods for teaching about Jews and Judaism in Christian education

The I C C J Guidelines crystallize the state of the interreligious condition and point to what productive work is yet to be done

The first three articles and the I C C J guidelines emerged from an international consultation held by the International Conference of Christians and Jews at the Martin Buber House in Heppenheim, West Germany, April 7-10, 1983, on "The Image of Jews and Judaism in Teaching Materials Evaluation of Past Research and Determination of Future Tasks" Dr Fiedler's criteria were published in German, with a special English translation prepared for the Heppenheim consultation Dr van Buren's essay was originally delivered to Christian and Jewish seminarians at a conference at Holy Trinity Seminary, Irving, Texas, in January, 1983, cosponsored by the American Jewish Committee and the Council of Southwest Theological Schools Dr Carmody's project was commissioned by *J E S* and the American Jewish Committee

The publication of this vital collection of essays has been made possible by generous grants from the Nathan Appleman Institute for the Advancement of Christian Jewish Understanding and the Ruth U Samuel Institute for International Programs in Interreligious Relations, both of which are affiliated with the American Jewish Committee I am privileged to serve as director of both institutes

This document would not have been possible without the commitment and encouragement of my long time friend and colleague, Professor Leonard Swidler, editor of *J E S*

*Rabbi Marc H Tanenbaum*  
Director, International Relations  
American Jewish Committee  
New York, NY