



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 17, Folder 6, Evangelicals, 1978.

c.c. Marc Tanenbaum
Jim Rudin

January 3, 1979

Harold Applebaum

Karen L. Osborne

Christian Evangelization -- New Perspectives

Your Memo of December 27, 1978

This piece has already been used in a couple of ways and will be used in others. It appeared, with Michael McGarry's statement, on the front page of the JEWISH ADVOCATE, and also was sent (see attached format) to local rabbis. It will be distributed to other Anglo-Jewish papers, and has been placed on the agenda for our January 11 Executive Board meeting where it will be distributed and, if warranted, discussed.

Regards.

KLO/jmg
encs.



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

NEW ENGLAND REGION • 72 Franklin Street • Boston, Massachusetts 02110 • (617) 426-7415

December 15, 1978

Dear Colleague:

YOU ARE
CORDIALLY
INVITED

. . . . TO BE ON YET OTHER MAILING LISTS.

WHY? Because AJC frequently publishes thoughtful reports, studies, opinions which can be helpful to you in your areas of interest: Jewish-Christian relations; quality of Jewish life in the United States; concerns of Jews in Israel; the Soviet Union and around the world; civil liberties and rights for Jews and other minorities in this country.

Because we would like to enhance your appreciation of the Committee's work.

WHAT? We maintain key lists in the specific areas indicated on the return card. It's simply impossible to send everyone every mailing but we can help service your interests, if we know of them.

HOW? Return the response card at your earliest convenience. Please feel free to check as many interest areas you desire.

Shalom,

Herman J. Blumberg, Rabbi
Director, New England Region

Note: We are enclosing three pieces which may be of interest to you:

1. A background piece on the Iranian Jewish community whose security is seriously jeopardized by the current unrest in Iran.
2. A piece by Fr. Michael B. McGarry, Executive Director of the Paulist Center, Boston, which addresses the issue of Jews and Evangelization within the Catholic Church. Many within the Roman Catholic Church are thinking and writing with this perspective, a development which can only enhance genuine dialogue between Jews and Christians.
3. A flyer describing AJC's "Academy for Jewish Studies Without Walls". The Academy offers syllabi and supervision for serious adult study of Jewish themes.

The archdiocese has taken exploratory steps in a program of evangelization for the Boston area. Marshalling the many and great resources of Boston Catholics, we have set out to respond to Pope Paul's challenge that "the Gospels must be preached." The enthusiasm of so many people is indeed amazing and may be a very hopeful sign that we Catholics love and want to share our faith with those about us--with those who may have given up hope that there is a place to worship and a place which calls Jesus brother and Lord. But amid our hope and enthusiasm, we should be guided by the qualifications of recent Church documents and authorities.

Pope Paul VI's exhortation "On Evangelization in the Modern World" includes a section entitled "The Beneficiaries of Evangelization." With the nuance characteristic of the late pontiff, the document points out that we are all in need of evangelization. The next beneficiaries of evangelization are those who have strayed from our family, and then those of non-Catholic religions. Notably missing in the exhortation is any reference to the Jewish people. Indeed, with close reading one notes that this section seemingly describes the numerous non-Christian and non-Jewish religions of the world. This is not surprising since it was also Pope Paul who changed the Good Friday liturgical prayer from "For the Conversion of the Jews" to simply "For the Jews." And he did this not because we are good neighbors and do not want to offend our Jewish brothers and sisters, but because these prayers do not reflect what we Catholics believe. Conversion is not part of the Catholic posture vis-a-vis the Jews.

In 1975, under Pope Paul VI, the Roman Commission for Religious Relations with Jews issued "Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration 'Nostra Aetate' (No. 4)." Once again, the Vatican did not mention proselytizing as part of the Catholic attitude towards the Jews, although the document did say, while dialogue is our position with regard to the Jews, the Church still must preach the Gospel to the world. And most recently, Professor Tomasso Federici, Professor of Biblical Theology at the Pontifical Urban University in Rome, delivered an important paper on the "Mission and Witness of the Church" in which he noted that the Church thus rejects in a clear way every form of undue proselytism." This paper was delivered under the auspices of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee which is a consultative body to the Vatican's Committee on Catholic-Jewish Relations (cf. Origins 8:18).

Some of the recent enthusiasm about evangelization in our archdiocese, if it is not informed by these declarations from the Vatican and other Church authorities, may be a legitimate cause for worry among our Jewish brothers and sisters, and also, a source of misunderstanding of evangelization for us. Indeed, many Jews have been wary of dialogue because they have suspected that we Catholics are not ultimately interested in dialogue at all but in conversion. Therefore we must make it clear that we are not interested in converting the Jews, but we are interested in sharing the gospel with "the unchurched."

But who are the "unchurched?" For us Catholic Christians, we think a Catholic becomes "unchurched" when he/she separates him/herself from going to mass and receiving the sacraments. We apply this criterion as well to our Protestant brothers and sisters. Therefore, the "unchurched"--the object of our evangelizing efforts--are those who do not practice their faith or who have no faith. But does this same reasoning apply to the Jews? Does one stop being a Jew if he/she does not "practice the faith?" We must be very careful here because if we are true to a fundamental rule of dialogue--allowing the other to define him/herself with his/her own criteria--then we have to hear how Jews define themselves. As the 1975

Vatican Guidelines state, "Christians...must strive to learn by what essential traits the Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious experience." Strangely enough for us Christians, a Jew does not cease being a Jew even if he/she ceases practicing, indeed, even if he/she ceases to believe in God. This may strike us Catholics as supremely hard to understand; yet, to be true to the spirit and letter of the Vatican Guidelines, we must respect the Jews in their own self-understanding. Therefore, we Catholics, in our evangelizing efforts, must treat the Jews as a special exception and not seek to convert them.

Some may say, are we not thereby compromising the centrality of believing in Jesus Christ for salvation? An important fundamental belief for us to remember in all our evangelizing efforts is that salvation is God's work, not ours. Evangelization announces God's work in our lives, and we already believe--as Jesus believed--that Jews are the object of God's irrevocable election. (Cf. Rom 11:1, 29). What we announce is God's faithfulness to His promises; in order to be true to our belief, we respect God's choice of the Jews. As I have written in another place, we refrain from proselytizing the Jews, not out of convenience, not out of embarrassment because of the Holocaust, not out of a liberalism which says it doesn't matter what you believe; we refrain from trying to convert the Jews out of our passionate conviction that God our Father has called the Jewish people out of his love for them and as a sign of his abiding, never-to-be-broken sacrament of election. It is this conviction which we Catholics hold so dear that we cannot compromise it by "converting the Jews."



AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE - GREATER BOSTON CHAPTER
72 Franklin Street, Boston, Mass.

CHRISTIAN EVANGELIZATION - NEW PERSPECTIVES

Karen L. Osborne
Assistant Area Director
American Jewish Committee -
Greater Boston Chapter

The Archdiocese of Boston has recently publicized a plan for a program of evangelization within the Greater Boston area. News reports of this planning, which have sometimes projected that unaffiliated Jews might be included in the effort, have caused concern not only among Jews but also among members of Boston's Catholic community.

Father Michael McGarry, a member of Boston's Catholic-Jewish Committee, has responded to these reports with the accompanying statement, a strong and eloquent challenge to the validity of any possible inclusion of Jews in the evangelization process. In this statement expressing his deep commitment against any evangelization of Jews, Father McGarry articulates the perspective of a growing number of Catholics, a perspective which stands as a highly important example of one way in which Catholic-Jewish relations have begun to change significantly since the early sixties.

In the past decade and a half dialogue has developed extensively between Catholics and Jews (and between Protestants and Jews). We have asked Christians, among other things, to understand us. Many within the Christian community have responded to this request.

As partners in this dialogue, it is equally important that we come to understand Christianity, especially fresh responses to Judaism and Jews that are coming out of the various Christian communities.

In the context of dialogue generally, and Father McGarry's statement specifically, three points require our understanding:

The first of these is that the call to evangelization is central to Christian commitment, albeit in greater or lesser degrees among the various Christian denominations. What we need to understand beyond this is that evangelization has varied meanings to different Christians and Christian groups.

We know only too well from history and from some contemporary movements the offensive forms that evangelization can take. However, Jews must distinguish among evangelization efforts. Father McGarry believes in evangelization. But he believes equally strongly that it is wrong and inauthentic from a Christian stance to attempt to convert Jews. An integral part of his Christian commitment is the belief in the eternal validity of G-d's Covenant with His chosen people, the Jews.

Secondly, we must understand that as our Jewish community is not monolithic, neither is the Catholic community -- especially following Vatican II. While there may be those within the Catholic community and the Catholic hierarchy who perceive Jews as among those to be (included in the evangelization process), we must realize that this is not the Catholic stance. Father McGarry's beliefs are representative of a strong and growing segment within contemporary Catholicism.

Thirdly, we have to appreciate that since Vatican II Catholicism's attitudes toward Judaism have moved in a positive direction. That work remains to be done should not obscure the improvement that has occurred and is continuing to occur.

The commitment expressed in the accompanying statement and the theology from which this commitment derives represent a major fruit of the present dialogue and stand at the center of future Jewish-Christian relations.

We welcome this expression. It signifies a break with the past, and great hope for the future.

December 20, 1978

From the Catholic View

New Perspective on Evangelization

By KAREN L. OSBORNE

Editor's Note: Karen Osborne is assistant area director of the American Jewish Committee - Greater Boston Chapter.

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See PERSPECTIVE

(Continued on Page 19)

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See Page 14

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Boston Jewish Advocate 12/28/78

(Continued from Front Page)

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The complete text of the statement of Father Michael McCarray follows:

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JUDAISM

INTERFAITH AT FIFTY

**An Evaluation of the Movement by Catholics,
Protestants and Jews**

Eliezer Berkovits

Solomon S. Bernards

Alice and Roy Eckardt

Jessica Feingold

Edward H. Flannery

Israel Goldstein

Robert Gordis

David Hyatt

William Sanford LaSor

Martin E. Marty

John B. Sheerin

Leonard Swidler

Alfred Wolf

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The Interfaith Movement

DAVID HYATT

IN 1934, IN A TOO-LITTLE-KNOWN BUT significant book entitled *All In the Name of God*, Dr. Everett R. Clinchy, the first president of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, wrote that

The historical approach to the question of intergroup relations is all-important. The present course of Protestant-Catholic-Jewish dealings is not intelligible unless we see the picture in its setting. Old ways of behaving hold people in their grip. For example, many Christians adopt as their own without examination ancient dislikes and anachronistic appraisals of Jews, even as many Jews fail to reconsider traditional opinions and medieval conceptions about Christians.

He went on to say that "It will be a manumitting experience to realize how archaic are the settings of many of our abhorrences and discriminations. *The American record, plainly stated, certainly should startle every reader as he sees how generation after generation has repeated monotonously the same old inhumanities in the same old way*" (italics mine.)

To put today's interfaith movement in perspective, we should understand our roots. The early American colonies were made up of self-conscious, closed groups whose controlling policies were those of *exclusion*. They escaped religious tyranny and persecution only to establish their own religious tyrannies and very special systems of apartheid. The rights of outsiders were recognized unwillingly, *if at all*. The rare exceptions among the early colonial leaders were men like Roger Williams, Lord Baltimore and William Penn, who truly believed in religious freedom.

In 1630, in most of the colonies then in existence, citizenship was limited to conforming church members. Peter Stuyvesant, the Dutch Protestant ruler of New York, had a particularly vicious attitude toward Jews, and, in the 18th century, Catholics and Jews in many states were still barred from the rights of citizenship. During the 1800s, there were countless documented incidents of the burning of Catholic convents and churches and of reigns of terror against Catholic groups, initiated by the Know-Nothing party. The persecution of the Jews was equally awful, but less publicly noted because their number was far less than that of the Catholics.

In the 1890s, the American Protective Association was as vicious in its

DAVID HYATT is president of the National Conference of Christians and Jews and the lay president of the International Council of Christians and Jews.

attacks upon Catholics as was the Ku Klux Klan, later, in the 1920s, in brutal attacks upon Blacks and Jews and Catholics. Indeed, unbelievable though it seems, when the National Conference of Christians and Jews was founded, in 1928, the Klan had six million members. At that time, anti-Semitic restrictions in employment, in housing and in colleges and universities were standard practice, many married women were considered property by their spouses, and Blacks in both the North and the South were not only continually oppressed and degraded and sometimes treated worse than animals, but were frequently lynched!

My own personal memories as a teen-age Ohio farm boy in the late 20s dramatically illustrate the extent of prejudice in heartland America. I remember reading about "The Protocols of Zion" in *The Dearborn Independent*, an anti-Semitic newspaper that was mailed, free of charge, by Henry Ford, Sr. (who was a revered hero to many in the area) to all the farmers who had purchased his Model T and, later, his Model A Fords. I saw the Klan burn crosses in the cow pastures around the little town near our farm, and I heard them spew out hate against Blacks, Catholics and Jews even though there were no Blacks, only a handful of Catholics, and but one Jewish family in the neighborhood.

When the sexton (an old word for janitor) of the Congregational Church died, hooded klansmen occupied the three front pews at his funeral. When Jack Dempsey fought Gene Tunney, practically everyone I knew was for Dempsey because Tunney happened to be a Catholic. And when Alfred E. Smith ran for President in 1928, the pastor of that little Protestant church pounded the pulpit on the Sunday before Election Day and, in a thundering voice, warned: "If Al Smith is elected President, the Pope will be running the White House!"

Such was the mood of heartland America at that time. And it was this vicious wave of hysterical anti-Catholicism which was sweeping the country during the Presidential campaign that motivated Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes, former Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, industrialist Roger Williams Straus, Methodist churchman Dr. S. Parkes Cadman, historian and Ambassador Carleton J. H. Hayes, and Rabbi Israel Goldstein to organize the National Conference of Christians and Jews—a fusion of Catholics, Protestants and Jews dedicated not only to combat anti-Catholicism, but any form of bigotry which sought to turn one group of Americans against another.

So what has changed in 50 years?

Catholics and Protestants are now killing each other in Northern Ireland, Hindus and Moslems continue to murder one another in Pakistan and India, thousands of Arabs remain committed to the proposition that Israel has no right to exist and await the day when they can drive their Jewish enemies into the sea, and, in South Africa and Rhodesia, the white elitist ruling minorities are courting genocide by their medieval practices

of oppression and government-sanctioned apartheid—a modern name for slavery.

Have we moved ahead at all in instituting and promulgating the Judeo-Christian dicta, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" without regard to race, creed, color or ethnic origin—the great two-part Commandment of both the Old and New Testaments? The answer, despite the crimes against humanity that are still being committed all over the world and also, unfortunately, within the United States, is: *Yes*. Christians and Jews are today considerably closer to living by, and practicing, this most fundamental moral law of their faiths than they were half a century ago! And that has to be, at least in part, because of the interfaith movement of the past fifty years.

Today, millions of Americans are involved in this effort. A recent program audit of the work of the National Conference indicated that, *in a single day, its programs reached and involved nearly 900,000 people*, and the Conference is but one of many organizations working for ecumenism, interreligious understanding, and the living practice of the Judeo-Christian principles of interracial justice. The United States Catholic Bishops Conference has a Secretariat for Christian-Jewish Relations. So has the Vatican. Although often considered primarily as defense agencies, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League have important and far-reaching programs dealing with Christian-Jewish relations and, like the NCCJ, are as deeply concerned with racial justice as they are with interfaith harmony. The National Council of Churches has a department devoted to Christian-Jewish understanding. The American Zionist Federation has an Interreligious Commission involving many Christians. None of these departments and programs existed fifty years ago—indeed, a majority of these efforts came into existence only in the past two decades and some only within the past ten years.

In 1933, the five-year-old NCCJ had as its major program what was called "The Tolerance Trio." Dr. Everett Clinchy, a Presbyterian minister, together with Rabbi Morris S. Lazaron and Father John Elliot Ross, embarked on a nationwide tour of 38 cities in 21 states in the interest of promoting understanding—at that time an unheard of idea. For the first time in their lives, more than 54,000 people at 129 meetings saw a rabbi, a priest and a minister speaking on the same platform together. It was a spectacular, indeed, astounding event—but it was also indicative of the depths of the parochialism and of the lonely separation that afflicted not only the average church and synagogue attendant, but also the clergy of practically all religions and, indeed, their very top leadership. The neighbor whom you were called upon to love in the great Judeo-Christian Commandment, if he or she was of another faith, or even another denomination within one of these faiths, was, instead, a total stranger.

The first trip, headed by Dr. Clinchy, covered 9,000 miles; in 1936,

25 different teams covered 38,000 miles. During World War II, trios reached 7,000,000 fighting men with the brotherhood camp show. Today, the familiar sight of priest, rabbi and minister together, while a significant symbol of unity in American life, is so commonplace that it is no longer news.

Three other programs of the 30s are noteworthy: 1) the founding of the Religious News service, 2) the inauguration of National Brotherhood Week, and 3) the development of national seminars on Religious Liberty and Mutual Understanding at Williamstown, Massachusetts.

The world's only interreligious news agency was begun in 1933 as an independently managed service within the NCCJ. Dr. Clinchy deserves great credit for listening to the idea of a dedicated former British journalist and editor, Louis Minsky, who was convinced that objective, truthful reporting of religious news could increase interreligious understanding and help eliminate prejudice. By 1945, the award-winning RNS began a daily photo service. On Minsky's death in 1954, Lillian Block took over as Managing Editor and has made the RNS an important factor in the increasing ecumenism that we are experiencing today, supplying more than 800 media outlets with foreign and domestic news, features, weekly radio scripts, and a television package.

Also during the early 30s, at the suggestion of a Catholic priest in Denver, Msgr. Hugh McMenamin, NCCJ launched a nationwide media and public awareness campaign called "Brotherhood Week." Although in certain portions of the deep South "Brotherhood Week" was an all-white interreligious celebration, these meetings, this "breaking of bread together," these "good-will" dialogues had the effect of at least defanging Protestant, Catholic and Jewish hostilities at the public level.

The programs emanating from Brotherhood Week were largely devoted to awakening people to the similarities of the ethical aims of various religious groups and the need to respect one another's differences—still an unrealized goal. But much of the Brotherhood Week "goodwill" and "tolerance" efforts were just that—one week during the year when Catholics, Protestants and Jews celebrated and broke bread together, with Blacks invited only occasionally to join in the celebration. As Dick Gregory used to lament, "If only some white folks would ask me to dinner when it wasn't Brotherhood Week!"

On the positive side, it has to be said that, were it not for Brotherhood Week, the parochial and separated individuals who comprise our major religious bodies (and among the most separated were the clergy themselves) would not have gotten together at all! Today, the NCCJ spends very little of its budget on Brotherhood Week programming, taking the stand that Brotherhood Week is 52 weeks of the year. Yet, like the 4th of July, Brotherhood Week is now permanently on the calendars and built into the programs of most of our public schools, service clubs, and other civic and community organizations.

The Williamstown Institutes were the third major program of NCCJ during the 30s. In 1935, 685 leaders of religion, business, education, and labor met at Williams College for a seminar billed as "An American Adventure in Promoting Understanding and Community Cooperation." Subsequent seminars in 1937 and 1941 drew even larger groups from our national leadership to discuss "Citizenship and Religion" and "The World We Want to Live In."

The growth and development of NCCJ tells, in part, the story of the whole interfaith movement. NCCJ's programs in the 30s were groundbreaking, pioneering and, although they dealt in generalities and emphasized goodwill more than specific problems, they were important steps toward building a more ecumenical nation and world. A comparison of its programs then and now is, in itself, an indication of how far we have come as a nation in interfaith communication and interreligious understanding.

The NCCJ, in its original bylaws, was given a mandate, amazingly enough, to attack the whole spectrum of intergroup prejudice. Article II under the heading "Purpose" stated that

... the Corporation exists to promote justice, amity, understanding and cooperation among Christians and Jews and to *analyze, moderate and strive to eliminate intergroup prejudices which disfigure and distort religious, business, social and political relations, with a view to maintaining at all times a society in which the religious ideals of brotherhood and justice shall become the standards of human relationship* (italics mine).

As a result, the NCCJ has now grown into a nationwide operation with 70 regional offices, more than 200 chapters, a staff of over 250 skilled human relations personnel, and an annual budget of \$6.6 million, almost all of it raised through corporate and individual support and with 87% of its total income invested directly into educational programs for better human relations and for human rights.

By contrast with its program of the 30s, NCCJ's program today is concerned with all of the major moral and spiritual problems dividing America—desegregation, quality integrated education, equal job and housing opportunities, affirmative job action, minority recruitment and promotion, women's rights, the religiously divisive issue of abortion, police-community relations and the administration of justice, the inequities of our criminal justice system in dealing with Blacks and other minorities, bio-medical ethics, youth leadership training in moral and spiritual values, the whole gamut of the various forms of the disease of anti-Semitism, Christian-Jewish relations as affected by the Middle East crisis, the false equating of Zionism with racism, the plight of Soviet Jewry, the meaning of the Holocaust in today's times, the teaching about the Holocaust in our children's classrooms, and the deep misunderstanding among many of my Christian brothers and sisters (I happen to be Catholic) about the profound meaning of Israel as a land, as a people and

as an essential part of the Jewish faith to the Jewish community throughout the world—with all of these programs having, as their ultimate goal, a single nation and a unified America.

The Christian silence, with some notable exceptions, regarding the Holocaust during the 30s is an unfortunate and abysmal blot on the record of the interfaith movement. So is the record of a number of Catholic Bishops and other Catholic clergy during the 1940s, 1950s and even into the 1960s, prior to Vatican II, who mistakenly believed that "interfaith" meant "a watering down" of their own faith and, therefore, refused to cooperate with NCCJ in its interreligious programming. While this made NCCJ operations quite difficult in some parts of the United States, the enlightened voices of such Jesuit philosophers as Father John Courtney Murray and Father Gustave Weigel, and the participation of many others of the Catholic persuasion, both laity and clergy, who believed the word "catholic" also meant "universal," enabled NCCJ to program effectively during this period.

In 1960, when John F. Kennedy ran for president, many people, remembering the campaign of Alfred E. Smith, were positive that no Catholic could ever be elected to the highest office in the land. The anti-Catholic propaganda, while not as virulent or as voluminous as during the Al Smith campaign, was still sufficiently strong to move the NCCJ to launch a nationwide media campaign calling upon U.S. citizens to "vote for the best man, not because of his religion, but because he is most qualified through experience and knowledge to serve in the presidency." The fact that Kennedy did win, albeit by a very small margin, certainly has to be chalked up as a victory for the interfaith movement. When Senator Edmund Muskie ran for president in 1968, the fact that he was Catholic was scarcely mentioned. Kennedy's election would appear to have settled for good the issue of religion in a presidential campaign.

In 1960, substantially aided by a \$325,000 grant from the Ford Foundation, the NCCJ launched a nationwide ecumenical project, "Religious Freedom and Public Affairs," to deal with all of the major issues dividing religious groups in this country. Rabbi Arthur Gilbert was its executive director.

It would be too great a task to enumerate the vast number of significant publications—books, pamphlets, essays, articles, bulletins, bibliographies—that NCCJ has put out and distributed as a part of this project, in addition to the many important national conferences that it sponsored. Books like *Homework for Christians*, by Dr. Bernhard Olson, and *Homework for Jews*, by Rabbi Gilbert, have received wide circulation and are still highly relevant. Dr. Olson conducted a research study of how Judaism is presented in Protestant Sunday School literature. His 1963 landmark book, *Faith and Prejudice*, drew wide acclaim while revealing some shocking facts. An inaccurate and un-Biblical portrayal of the Jews, in general, and of the Pharisees, in particular, was found to exist to some

degree in all of the literature studied. In an NCCJ publication ten years later, Dr. Gerald Strober surveyed what had happened to the Sunday School literature in these same groups, and though there had been great improvement, much more had yet to be done to erase anti-Semitism completely from Protestant Sunday School literature.

When Vatican II was initiated by Pope John XXIII, Father Weigel and Father Murray played important roles in preparing the groundbreaking documents which came out of the Council. Father Murray was the architect of the Declaration on Religious Liberty, whose theme was that "All individuals and groups have a right to be exempt from all manner of coercion in matters of faith, whether from society, government, or the Church itself." The declaration insisted that the major duty of any government is not to serve the particular interests of one faith or other faiths, but to protect the religious liberty of all.

Father Weigel's most significant contribution was in the development of the Decree of Ecumenism which recognized that the Holy Spirit is authentically at work in non-Catholic Christian Churches and encourages bonds of fraternal love between Catholics and other Christians.

There were two other statements of great significance to the interfaith movement. One is the Vatican Declaration on the Jews, which makes the point that,

Since Christians and Jews have such a common spiritual heritage, this sacred Council wishes to encourage and further mutual understanding and appreciation. This can be obtained, especially, by way of biblical and theological enquiry and through friendly discussions.

The statement stresses that "neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his (Christ's) passion." The document further says that the Church "deplores all hatreds, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism leveled at any time or from any source against the Jews."

The Vatican Council's statement regarding Relations with Other Non-Christian Religions was perhaps even more pioneering for the Roman Catholic Church. Referring specifically to Hinduism and Buddhism, the document says:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men . . .

The sacred Council now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding; for the benefit of all men, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values.

After Vatican II, interreligious programming increased greatly. A

majority of those of the Catholic clergy who had been hostile to NCCJ and the interfaith movement, turned full circle and dutifully emulated the example set by that great ecumenist, John XXIII, in embracing interfaith activities within their domain.

Another most significant event took place in the 60s. Many Jews were moved and many Protestants touched when, at the pleading of Dr. Jules Isaac, author of *The Teaching of Contempt and Has Anti-Semitism Roots in Christianity?* (which the NCCJ published in 1961), Pope John eliminated the references to the *perfidy Judaei* and *Judaica perfidia* in the Good Friday prayers, at the same time reinstating the *Flectamus Genua* for the Jews.

During the 1960s, the interfaith movement and the NCCJ also made giant steps forward in the work for interracial justice. The National Conference on Race and Religion was as important a standard in the racial field as Vatican II was for interreligious cooperation. The great marches on Selma and on Washington, led by Martin Luther King, Jr., united the great religions as never before in drives for racial justice.

Less spectacular but equally important in the struggle for interracial justice was NCCJ's mounting of a program, during the 60s, in more than 60 communities, for police officers and community leaders, on the problems of minority groups and the necessity for equal treatment of all Americans before the law. Similarly, its many summer week-long leadership camps for concerned youth and its national program, in the 70s, on behalf of quality integrated education (aided by \$300,000 in two grants from the Ford Foundation and over \$1,000,000 in U.S. Government HEW grants to NCCJ regional offices), made it possible for the NCCJ, working closely with many other interfaith agencies—as well as the NAACP and the Urban League—to play an important role in facilitating desegregation without violence or turmoil.

At the same time that these major thrusts in behalf of racial justice have increased, so have our interreligious efforts. There are four relatively new program thrusts which I think are highly significant:

1. *Development of Conferences on the Holocaust*

Dr. Franklin Littell, Chairman of the Department of Religion at Temple University and long-time consultant to NCCJ, working closely with Dr. Olson, launched NCCJ's first Annual Conference on the Church and the Holocaust, in 1974. Thanks to the vision and dedication of these two men, this program has taken on nationwide proportions. At least half a dozen conferences on the Holocaust are now held annually in different parts of the United States, and, during the past twelve months, at least 25 of NCCJ's regional offices have sponsored conferences exploring the Holocaust, how it happened, what actually happened and, most important of all, *what we must do to make sure that it never happens again!* A Holocaust survivor attending our four-day scholars' seminar in San Jose last year was moved to say, "This has changed my life. I know I'll never be

the same person again. Until now I did not believe there were Christians who cared."

2. *Development of Seminar-Tours on Christian-Jewish Relations in the Holyland and Related Statements in Behalf of Human Rights*

In the past three years, the NCCJ has sponsored for its leaders and staff six intercultural seminar tours on Christian-Jewish-Moslem relations in the Holyland. These projects have given the participants the opportunity to witness Arab-Israeli problems and Jewish-Christian-Moslem relations during an intensive 10-day study-dialogue in the Middle East, and have resulted in an increased understanding of those relations in the United States as they are affected by the Middle East situation.

Furthermore, on countless occasions in recent years, the NCCJ has spoken out strongly and clearly in behalf of Israel and her frequently-challenged rights: when the Yom Kippur War broke out, I issued a strong statement for the press on behalf of all NCCJ's constituency; and when, in November, 1975, the U.N. passed a resolution equating Zionism with racism there were condemnatory statements made by both the national organization and the regional directors and regional boards. On the problems of Soviet Jewry, the NCCJ has an Interreligious Task Force on Soviet Jewry; regarding the tragic persecution of Soviet Jews the NCCJ has spoken decisively, and, to insure that there shall be no collaboration of silence, NCCJ offices in many parts of the country are now holding conferences focusing the spotlight upon these heinous violations of human rights.

3. *Inauguration of a Bio-Medical Ethics Program*

In the fall of 1975, the NCCJ, under the direction and leadership of Senior Vice President Donald McEvoy, began a new dialogue project, engaging physicians, lawyers and ethicists in discussions of the interreligious and intergroup implications of new developments in biomedical technology. The current public debate over abortion is only the tip of the iceberg of serious interreligious disputation which may confront us in the immediate future. More and more, people are facing ethical dilemmas for which they have no precedents or models in decision-making. We must weigh such values as the sanctity of life against the quality of life, the rights of society against the rights of the individual, or the ability to function as "normal" in society against the loss of individual character traits.

4. *NCCJ's Partnership with the International Council of Christians and Jews*

The National Conference is now an integral part of the International Council of Christians and Jews, a 14-nation body of similar groups in Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Spain and Switzerland. Most of these national councils are primarily concerned with Christian-Jewish relations and, thanks to their highly competent lay leaders who do most of the work on a voluntary basis, they operate quite effectively on very modest

budgets. As early as 1948 an attempt was made formally to organize this international council, but it was necessary to overcome a variety of objections. Finally, in 1974, it did get established.

Among the important programs that the ICCJ has sponsored, all since its founding (and in which the NCCJ participated) have been: an international youth conference in Austria in 1975, co-sponsored by the *Aktion gegen den Antisemitismus* in Austria, and the ICCJ; the first international conference on the Holocaust to be held in Germany, in Hamburg, in 1976; an international conference in Jerusalem, in 1976, on "Israel: Its Significance and Its Realities," co-sponsored by the Israel Interfaith Committee and the ICCJ; an international conference for college youth on "Aspects of Violence and Terrorism," held in South Wales in December, 1976, with the co-sponsorship of the British Council and the ICCJ; an international conference on anti-Semitism and its eradication, at Southampton University in England, in 1977, co-sponsored by the British Council, the University of Fullerton (of the State U. of California), the University of Southampton and the ICCJ; an international conference, in May, 1978, in Vienna, on neo-Nazism, co-sponsored by the Austrian *Aktion gegen den Antisemitismus* and the ICCJ.

As I noted earlier, the growth, expansion and increasing concerns and responsibilities which the National Conference of Christians and Jews has taken on in the past few years are a good barometer of the state of interfaith relations in our nation today. We have, indeed, come a long, long way in 50 years. However, as Robert Frost put it so well, "But we have promises to keep/And miles to go before we sleep!"

The great Commandment to love God and, regardless of religion or race, to love our neighbors as ourselves, is still far from achievement.



WHAT IS THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS?

The NCCJ is a non-profit human relations organization engaged in a nationwide program of intergroup education to eliminate prejudice and discrimination. Founded in 1928, the NCCJ works to build bridges of understanding among all groups, to bring the forces of enlightenment and education to bear upon racial and religious prejudice, and to achieve implementation of the moral law: giving to others the same rights and respect we desire for ourselves. It enlists all those, who without compromise of conscience or of their distinctive commitments, work to build better relationships among persons of all religions, races and nationalities.