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

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 37, Folder 11, Louvain studies, 1972.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date December 20, 1972
to Marc H. Tanenbaum
from Judith Banki
subject Meeting with Mrs. Claire Bishop

This is a brief progress report on my meeting with Claire Bishop regarding revisions in the manuscript on the Pro Deo-Louvain Studies. I shall set down some areas of agreement and disagreement encountered as we worked through the material.

1. We agreed with Sonya Kaufer's observation that basic information about the studies themselves should be incorporated into the beginning of the first chapter, rather than restricted to the preface, because many people simply do not read a preface. Information about the various other studies which provide a historic and scholarly background--such as the work of Jules Isaac, Paul Demann, Bernhard Olson, the St. Louis Studies, etc.--will be worked into the end of the introduction.
2. In editing the first chapter, I had taken the list of particulars with which Claire had originally ended the chapter and placed them up front, largely because I felt that there was so much hedging and explanation around the deicide issue, that the chapter lost its tempo at the outset. Claire wishes to perserve the original format, concluding with the list of indictments as it were, but agreed that all the qualifications related to the deicide issue did slow the book down. She will, therefore, not start with those illustrations, but with the excerpts illustrating collective guilt and perhaps malediction and subsume the deicide quotations under that. I am perfectly agreeable to this.
3. Our major area of disagreement, which came up frequently in the course of our meeting, is what Sonya and I consider her tendency to scold or moralize after a great many of the quotations she gives. Sonya and I feel strongly that the scolding will only turn people off. Claire feels very strongly that the readers must be told how terrible these quotations are--or what terrible things they have led to, because they will not be able to see it for themselves.

Claire's moral fervor and passion for justice have made her a great and dependable ally over the years. Yet it is this same passion which impedes the "cool" tone necessary for a book of this kind. When she reads some of the really ugly excerpts, her blood boils (her own words) and she simply cannot resist the impulse to moralize, or occasionally to be sarcastic. I stressed the need for her to restrain this impulse, because when people are continuously scolded, they simply stop reading. Anyone who remains unimpressed with the evidence itself will not be moved by the denunciation.

I assured Claire that we did not want her to be "soft" on these materials, but that we must maintain the critical distinction between analysis and moralizing. She can be as tough as she wishes, but the criticizing must be related to the substance of the material she is dealing with. Instead of invoking the Holocaust after every third or fourth excerpt quoted, she must show how the excerpt itself both reflects and promotes anti-Semitism. I believe if this distinction is maintained, we will have less difficulty in editing the manuscript.

JHB:isg

cc: Mrs. Claire Bishop
Sonya Kaufer

Judy

