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Box 77, Folder 1, "Acts of Peter and Paul" - TV script, 1980.

Messrs. Bruce Cox, Vincenzo LaBella,
Sheldon Stuart
Compton Advertising
625 Madison Avenue
New York, N. Y. 10022

Gentlemen,

At your request, I have read three separate revised versions of the script, "The Acts of Peter and Paul," by Christopher Knopf and Stan ~~Hughes~~ Hough.

To my ~~own~~ knowledge, this is the first major effort to dramatize the life and work of Paul and Peter on television in such a serious way. The script is a powerful, imaginative, and in many ways, deeply moving narrative, certain to have impact on a wide audience.

As I have indicated in three separate memoranda that I have sent to you, there have been a number of serious problems about the portrayal of Jews, Judaism, and Jewish culture in the early scripts. It is gratifying to me, both professionally and personally, that the authors have voluntarily sought to incorporate much of the suggested revisions proposed in my several critiques.

The final product is vastly superior to the earliest text, and has managed to remove much of the most offensive material, especially that of casting Paul in opposition to the Jewish Law. There still remain, however, a number of other problems that could be perceived as anti-Jewish in its effects, and these I am detailing in the fourth memorandum which I am sending to you.

Approached with the same open spirit of cooperation, should these revisions be made, I feel the script could make for strong, constructive TV programming. Rather than contribute to anti-Semitism, with the necessary textual revisions and with sensitive and informed staging, it might even contribute to improved understanding between Christians and Jews.

I stand ready to be helpful to you throughout the preparation of the program so that hopefully it might have the positive consequences that "Jesus of Nazareth" and "Holocaust" had with which I was privileged to serve as consultant.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
National Interreligious Affairs Director

To: Messrs. Bruce Cox, Vincenzo LaBella, Sheldon Stuart.

From: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum

Date: July 18, 1980

Re: FINAL REVISED SCRIPT OF "THE ACTS OF PETER AND PAUL"

At the outset, let me say that this version of the script is a vast improvement over the three other texts that I have read. Much of the worst anti-Jewish material has been removed; it is less in the mold of the medieval morality plays ("type" versus "anti-type" - or stereotyped cowboys and Indians), and is as a consequence, historically and theologically more authentic.

Nevertheless, there still remains a number of problems which I specify below:

Page 8-13 - It is important to make clear that it is the Zealots who are pressing to stone Stephen, and not "the people of Israel" - especially in light of the brutal character of the act which suggests primitive barbarism.

On the bottom of p. 13 a great intensity, a paroxysm, of stoning is suggested in the passage:

"The Crowd bears in, STONING Stephen very quickly, STONING him as he tries once again to rise, STONING him as he tries to lift his head and when it falls."

Repeating a comment in my earlier critique, extreme care should be exercised not to exploit the bloodletting and the violence for inevitably that would establish at the very outset of the production that "the Jews are a bloodthirsty, murderous people.

p. 14 - Gamaliel: "One stone did not kill him." What is that supposed to mean?

p. 16 - Gamaliel: "What are they...if not Jews?" You might consider adding from this authentic teaching of Gamaliel,

"Besides, even if they are not Jews, we are obligated by our Jewish traditions to behave toward Gentiles with peacefulness and humanity as toward fellow Jews. Do not our Rabbis teach that the Gentile poor are to be fed like the Jewish poor, the Gentile sick to be nursed to health like the Jewish sick, and last respects be paid to their dead as to the Jewish dead? Are we not to greet Gentiles with Shalom in order to maintain peace among mankind?" (Talmud Gittin 61a).

p. 16 - Gamaliel - The actual rabbinic quotation of Gamaliel is: "Every assembly (or congregation or movement) that is established for the sake of Heaven will endure; every assembly that is not established for the sake of Heaven, will not endure."

I am suggesting that you add therefore (for the sake of authenticity and for the Jewish viewers) the following in the text:

"But it is from God, you will never be able to put them down - they will endure - and you risk finding yourself at war with God."

p. 20 - "lamenting to his Hebrew God" - what is trying to be said by this phrase? It suggests a pejorative intention about his "inferior" God to be supplanted by his "Christian" and superior God (Manichean? Marcionite?)

p. 22 - Ananias - "to make my name known to Gentiles and kings and to the people of Israel" -

p. 23 - "a young woman" - anticipate criticism from Fundamentalist Christians who insist this must be "a young virgin" - but the correct translation of the Hebrew word in Isaiah is "a young woman" - the translation used in the Revised Standard Version's translation of the Bible.

p. 25 - Paul - "they like to have places of honor at feasts and the chief seats in synagogues, to be greeted respectfully in the street..." - I suggest you leave out "and to be addressed as rabbi..." There is more than enough of an attack on the alleged hypocrisy of "the Pharisees." This phrase might suggest that all contemporary rabbis are lineal descendants of "the Pharisees" and are equally hypocritical - with the possible implication that that is also true of all contemporary Jews.

The same would be true of Paul's statement on the bottom of p. 24. The irony of these two passages of Paul (p. 24 & p. 25) is that he is referring to one of the seven schools of Pharisees - that of the "yoke of the law" or "shoulder Pharisees" - to distinguish from the school of the "Pharisees of Love" with whom Jesus was believed to be associated (see Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 22b). Instead of establishing that critical distinction, these quotations suggest that all the Pharisees are of one mold and all are hypocrites. (And in the modern popular mind, "Pharisees" frequently equals "the Jews.")

p. 48 - Paul - "Until the flogging" - better, "until I was driven out." (It is both wise and decent to minimize the frequent images of the Jews as an angry, ferocious, flogging-happy, stoning people. They were also the loving people of The Song of Songs, the wise and restrained people of Proverbs, and the just people of the Jubilee Year.)

p. 51 - "This is Jerusalem, which I have placed in the middle of nations," sayeth Ezekiel. "She is so perverse that she has rebelled." - check for a less punitive quotation that makes the same point of faithlessness and retribution - same for quote on p. 52 - "for she has rejected my observances and refused to keep my laws."

p. 55 - Beheading of James - "There is a welcoming shriek from the crowd - more bloodthirsty Jews - scene should be handled with great restraint.

p. 60 - John - "like brute beasts?" Is this characterization of Jews without any qualifications necessary?

p. 64 - Paul's voice - "so-called by those who are called "the circumcized..." - ?

p. 78 - (219) Paul's voice - THE PEOPLE OF JERUSALEM"...which are read Sabbath by Sabbath. Indeed, THEY FULFILLED THEM BY REJECTING HIM." Bad and untrue!

- p. 80 - Paul - "But since you reject it...we turn to the Gentiles" How could they reject a Messiah they never saw nor met?
- p. 81 - Women - "Sell your filth elsewhere!" better, sell your propaganda or fantasies - why are Jews everywhere made so hateful and so angry?
- p. 100 - Paul - "Christian faith must not be cramped and hampered by any entanglement with Law!" - more of the anti-Law polemic in its simplistic, one-dimensional caricature.
- same problem (311): - Paul "shows that the Law is no longer necessary to the experience of faith in Christ."
- p. 101 - same problem (313): Paul - "the tutor's charge (the Law) is an end!" (Which means that Judaism is at an end)
- p. 104 - Menahem - "Let him be circumcized at once if he is to mix with Jews!"
- It is simply not true historically that the Jews "did not mix" with uncircumcized pagans - they traded, socialized, and even intermarried. That's why Church Councils passed laws in the 4th century onward to prevent social intercourse between Christians and Jews.
- p. 105 - Paul - "You bring us into bondage!" - more of the caricature of "Jewish Law as bondage." (Read, as an antidote, "Rabbinical and Early Christian Ethics" by R. H. Snape in "The Rabbinic Anthology," Pp. 617 ff.)
- p. 106 - Peter - "Why do you now provoke God by laying on the shoulders of these converts a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear?" - more defamation of the Jewish religion.
- "When they speak, it comes in anger. A WILL TO PUNISH" - more ferocity.
 - Naaman - "We have sat with the Greek in violation of our customs. Let him be circumcized in recognition." - same criticism as on p. 104.
- p. 106 - Paul - "To REDUCE BELIEVERS TO SLAVERY AGAIN" - more of the stereotyping of Judaism as "slavery, bondage, curse."
- p. 107 - James - why "irksome" restrictions - why not just restrictions; see Paul,
p. 122 - "Anyone therefore who flouts these RULES is flouting not man, but God" suddenly "rules" are acceptable!
- p. 113 - Peter - "SHUCK OFF" - isn't that a modern colloquialism?
- p. 136 - Paul - "Love of Heaven and Earth...does not live in Temples" - better "does not live ONLY in Temples." Bible explicitly asserts that God calls, "Build Me a miskhan - a Tabernacle - and I will dwell in your midst."
- p. 144 - Paul - "Love does not gloat over another man's SINS" - a lovely passage, but is contradicted by so much of the foregoing attack by Paul on Jewish Law in which he dwells obsessively on its being a temptation to sin.

p. 148 - Peter- "Christ said to me" - should that not be Jesus said to me?

p. 150 - Paul - "Did you receive the Spirit by keeping the Law." - more anti-Jewish Law polemic. Is it not possible to set forth the virtues of Christianity, without manipulating Judaism as an inferior foil?

p. 160 (478) - "Look! He brings Greeks into the Temple! He defiles this holy place!"

- Gentiles did come to the "Court of the Gentiles to pray"- see Solomon's prayer I Kings 8. The Holy of Holies and the Court of the Israelites were forbidden to Gentiles.

p. 161 - Crowd - "He defiles the Temple!" - same issue

p. 164 - Theodotus - "They do not take heads. They stone them." - more nice people.

