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The Church and the Jewish People, 1967.

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THE CHURCH AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

The Temple Sunday, February 19, 1967

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver

Jules Isaac was born in 1877. For the first 63 years of his life he was a Frenchman by nation and culture; a classicist and historian by profession, a skeptic and agnostic by theology; and a Jew by chance of birth. His grandfather had fought in Napolean's Grande Armee. His father was a French career officer. His son an Admiral in the French fleet. Jules Isaac had every reason to believe that he was accepted. In his career he rose step by step in the Education Ministry until in 1936 he became Inspector General for Education, a post which is roughly equivalent to that of the United States Commissioner of Education. Judaism was tangential to his life, yet Isaac was to play an interesting, if minor, role in contemporary Jewish history.

Hitler brought this Jew in out of the cold. a When Hitler first appeared Isaac, along with most French intellectuals, looked upon him as the arch-enemy of civilization. He looked upon Hitler's anti-semitism as no more than the prejudice of a few paranoid individuals. France fell.

Isaac fled to Vichy. There he met his fellow bureaucrats and fellow teachers who, to his shock and dismay, spewed the ugly words of prejudice. He had worked in what he believed complete amity and fraternity for almost forty years with these men yet he had not known their souls.

Isaac had to confront the simple truth, that anti-semitism is a wide-spread prejudice and that few in Europe were free of its poison.

After the war this man, who had believed that anti-Jewish feeling was the insanity of a few, wrote:

There is a Christian anti-semitism that is always alive and active, consciously or unconsciously. It can be said without danger of error that the great majority of Christians, or those who are recognized as Christians, are outspoken anti-semites. Even among the best Christians, and including many who participated in general against Nazi anti-semitism, we can find traces of an anti-semitism of a subconscious nature.

These are harsh words. This is a broad and bitter indictment. But Europe in those violent years of the Second World War offered ample proof that this testimony was, in fact, fact. There has grown up since the Second World War a myth designed to exculptate and pardon millions of Europeans for their complicity in the German enterprise. The myth says in effect that anti-semitism was the prejudice of a confused, perverted Nazi few; and that anti-semitism was an artificial creation, a political platform, designed by Nazi leaders to make the people forget their domestic failures. If this be true, if anti-semitism was artfully conceived for its political value, it remains still to be explained why it was so conceived. The answer is self-evident. Anti-semitism was

offered as a political program because the people as a whole were receptive to these stereotypes and familiar with these hates. The ground had been well prepared.

What had prepared the psychological and emotional environment of hate? Isaac came to the conclusion that Church teachings, cathechism, commentary, preaching, were largely responsible for what he called l'enseigment du mepris, the teaching of contempt. Anyone who can recall being five or six and having another child his age turn on him and taunt him as 'Christ killer' will know exactly what Mr. Isaac had in mind. Of course, there is nothing fresh in this finding. Many had understood the complicity of Christian teaching in the phenomenon we call anti-semitism. Professor Isaac went on to search for some solution, some way to spare Europe another outbreak of violence, viciousness and hatred. His studies led him to a rather unique conclusion. He came to feel that this teaching of contempt was not part of the authentic teaching of the Church and was not reflected in the basic documents of the Church, that is in the New Testament, but, was, in fact, a subtle brew of commentary which had subtly but inexorably misconstrued the original teachings to reflect anti-Jewish feelings. He called upon the Church to return to the original documents; to cease to be an accessory before the fact by teaching its doctrine in its pure and classic form.

Isaac wrote voluminously in this field after the war. His volumes would have remained dusty and shelved if the Church itself, or to be more accurate, a goodly number of soul-sick clerics had not been thinking along similar lines. They too had been terribly disturbed by

what they had seen of Christians and of Christendom before and during the Second World War. For generations the Church had preached the Gospel of love, yet almost overnight this Gospel of love had been transmuted by millions into the words of violence and the acts that are vicious They had taught men to love thy neighbor as thyself and they and vile. had seen men spit on their neighbor and elbow the Jew off the sidewalk and drag him through the streets to the camps. These men had been chagrined by the silence of their Church and dismayed by the institutional predispositions of the Church which often seemed more envolved with its temporal power than with the responsibility of standing up against governments which stood for all that was evil in the world. These men understood how the teachings of the Church had contributed to the stereotypes which fed the fires of anti-semitic hate. Isaac's books and their faith suggested to them a way of opening windows and letting in fresh air. Isaac's books were sent on by some of his French clerical friends to the Vatican. They were read there. A meeting was had with Pope Pius - a vague rather meaningless meeting. Then some years later a far more significant meeting was had with Pius's successor, John XXIII.

John XXIII, as Cardinal of Milan, had been one of the few high churchmen in Europe who acted actively in defense of the Jews in his diocese. This aging Christian mystic had, by diligent spiritual cultivation of his soul, raised himself beyond the institutional horizons of the Italian Church. He saw the need for making the Church stand for virtue rather than for the Vatican, for ideas rather than for institutions. He understood the unintended but real complicity of the Church in the violence of anti-

Jewish hate which had blooded Europe. Shortly before his death he is reported to have spoken a prayer which concluded in these words:

We are conscious today...that many centuries of blindness have cloaked our eyes so that we can no longer either see the beauty of thy chosen people nor recognize in their faces the features of our privileged brethren. We realize that the mark of Cain stands upon our foreheads. Across the centuries our brother Abel has lain in the blood which we drew, or shed tears we caused by forgetting thy love. Forgive us for the curse we falsely attached to their name as Jews. Forgive us for crucifying Thee a second time in their flesh. For we knew not what we did.

John XXIII as Pope, brought the Second Vatican Council into being as a statement of Catholic openness to its ethical and religious responsibilities in this century. He saw in Isaac's proposal a reflex of his own feelings and an opportunity to disembarrass once and for all Church teaching of the teaching of contempt. He felt distinctly that if the Church would return to its roots - it could not teach hate nor prepare the soil in which the seeds of hate grow. He summoned Augustine Cardinal Bea, the head of the Commission for the Promotion of Christian Unity, and suggested to Bea that his group prepare a schema on the Jews, which would make the Church's position unmistakably clear, for the first session of the Vatican Council. Both of these men were convinced that the task could

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be accomplished easily. Catholicism was, after all, a teaching of love, and all that they intended was to make the Church bespeak these teachings.

This program so easily suggested proved to be perhaps the most difficult stumbling block before the Vatican Council. What John XXIII proposed some traditional and orthodox theologians on the Commission Some could not disembarrass themselves of cherished stereodisposed. Some revealed in their speeches a rich tradition of anti-Jewish types. feeling. In any case, such was their opposition that the schema could not be presented to the Council at its first session. Only the intercession of the sick and ailing Pope saw to it that any proposal on the Jewish question was resubmitted to the Second Council. Again there was a furor by Churchmen from Arab lands, by Churchmen of anti-semitic attitudes, by Churchmen who had somehow come to believe that the traditional legends of the Church were in fact Church teaching. Nothing came of this second proposal and the whole issue was returned to the drafting Commission. Pope John died. This man of great spirit was followed by a man of a narrower spirit - the present Pope, Paul IV, whose concerns seem largely those of the institution rather than those of the great ideals for which it stands. Under the leadership of the new Pope a schema was drafted for submission to the Third Session of the Council, which in effect did little more than repeat the old traditions on which the teachings of contempt thrive. The Catholic historian of the Vatican Council, Xavier Rynne, described this schema with a simple sentence.

The sponsoring of the bastardized text was probably Pope Paul's greatest single mistake.

Shortly after he submitted his schema to the Council, Paul arose on a

Passion Sunday and said:

"That people - the Jews - predestined to receive the Messiah, who had been awaiting him for thousands of years...when Christ comes...not only does not recognize him, but opposes him, slanders him and finally kills him."

By this time the schema on the Jews had acquired a symbolic force in the deliberations of the Council. The Council could not pass such a document as Paul proposed, and continue to insist that its major thrust of its interest was a statement of brotherliness and of common concern with other peoples and other faiths. Led by a number of American clerics who had caught something of the vision of John, this Pauline schema was returned to the drafting Commission. At the fourth and final session of the Vatican Council the original schema, in a compromised form, was finally passed. Even in that compromised form, one Churchman in eight voted against it. John Cooley, the Catholic Reporter on religious news for the New York Times commented succinctly:

"The never-ending controversy over the Jewish statement in the Council has already blunted its intended effect. It was meant to be a word of love and friendship. It has already been the source of bitterness and disappointment, a reason for shame and anguish on the part of many Catholics, and of suspicion and rancor

on the part of many Jews."

What can be said of the promulgated schema? Will it open windows? Will it clear the air? Will it see to it that the old cannards and stereotypes are not repeated to yet another generation of Christendom's children? It can be said that it is narrowly drawn and that unless the priests or the presiding Bishop has the spirit of John, that large, great, unusual spirit, there is every reason to believe that the old teachings will continue in some attenuated form to be taught. There are so many neverthelesses and despite-it-all's in this schema, that the simple statement of the brotherhood of our interests and our shared faith in God loses its impact. Those who want to split logical hairs in order to maintain old-fashioned prejudices will find every opportunity to do so.

How shall we judge this schema? Dr. Isaacs suggested that there are three main areas in which the commentaries and cathechism's of the Church tend to influence, what he called the teaching of contempt. The first area concerns the dispersion of the Jews; the Diaspora, we call it. It is the teaching that the dispersion was the direct result of our involvement in the Crucifixion and was, in fact, punishment for that involvement. Jesus was crucified arount the year 30 of the Common Era. In the year 68 of the Common Era Judea rose in rebellion against Rome. After three ydars of bitter fighting this rebellion was squashed - Jerusalem was razed, the Temple was destroyed and the Church went on to teach succeeding generations that the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews was punishment of the Jews by God. Presumably God had ordered this verdict because of the Jews complicity in the Crucifixion. As penalty we were to be ceaseless

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wanderers on the face of the earth. We wore the mark of Cain and were pariahs and were to be known as outcasts and to be treated as such. A contemporary Jesuit Manuel said it clearly:

"Jesus had foretold it: the Jewish people was
to be scattered... The Christian tradition had
made no mistake about this. It regards...
the dispersion of Israel as a divine punishment:
having rejected Christ in order to save their
country, the Jews have been rejected from
their land, and their persistent nonassimilation
in the midst of other races remains the indelible
proof of their providential punishment."

What does the schema say about this tendentious history?

"The Jews should not be represented as
rejected or accursed by God....As if it
followed from Holy Scripture."

What if it follows from history? What if a cathechist chooses to make a connection between the Crucifixion in 30 and the destruction in 70? What if he forgets to tell the children that the original dispersion occurred not in the year 70 but almost 800 years before, in the year 722 Before the Common Era when Sennacherib led off the ten tribes of Israel into exile in Babylon.

Augustine Cardinal Bea, the man who piloted the schema on the Jews through the Vatican Council, recently published a book called: The Church and the Jews, in which this gentle man insists that the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 was a result of the acts of the Jews who sponsored the

Crucifixion. He goes on to make it clear that he speaks not of all the Jews only of the Jerusalem Jews, but the connection is still made, and as long as that connection is made, I am afraid that the legend of the wandering Jew and the assumption of the cursed Jew, will, in fact, remain creditable.

The Church has a simple way of remedying this teaching of contempt if it wishes to do so. It need only recognize the state of Israel. The Vatican is one of the few governments in the world today which refuses to recognize the new state. When Pope Paul visited Israel just two years ago not only did he refuse to cross through the Mandelbaum Gate because that is an official Israel port of entry, but never in his three days in Israel did he refer to the state of Israel by its proper name, only to the Holy Land. Why? Because to recognize that the wandering is at an end assumes that the punishment has been concluded and presents theological questions the Church prefers not to face. Yet, until it does this teaching of contempt, this assumption that the punishment was God-ordained and is endless will be spread. By showing their unwillingness to recognize this mistake the Church shows with actions that are larger than words, that it has not yet broken with its ancient feelings.

The second teaching which Isaac conceives as a basis of instruction in contempt has to do with the assumption that by the time of Jesus Judaism had degenerated into a cold legalism. We were a fossilized relic. The spirit which had infused the prophets had been drained from us and we were only the followers of a law which we no

longer understood. We obeyed God out of fear and not out of love. You have heard all of the phrases.

I have spoken to you during these past weeks about some of the great Pharisaic teachers, about Hillel, Akiba, Meier, men of grand spirit and profound wisdom. Let me read to you a description of the Pharisees from a man ual published by the Sisters of Bernadette:

The Pharisees are hyprocrites, their religion is farce. They overload the law of God with countless minutiae and with elaborate rights, but underneath their hearts are full of pride, ambition, and malice.

What does the Vatican shema say about this second teaching of contempt?

Here it is most hopeful.

Since then the spiritual patrimony, common to Christians and Jews, is so great, that the Council wishes to foster and commend mutual understanding and esteem. This will be the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies and of brotherly dialogue.

No longer is our religion a fossil. No longer are we spoken of as pecple who follow countless minutiae, elaborate formal rites, without true feeling or spirit. There is a recognition of the vitality and the maturity of Judaism. But how far does that recognition go? Again and again, the Vatican Council

insisted that there is one Church, on the true faith, and on the right of the Church to missionarize any and all. 'It shall not be forgotten, that only the Catholic Church has the right and the duty to evangelize." The reunion of the Jewish people with the Church is part of the Christian "Eagerly and following the teachings of the apostle Paul, the Church expects with unshakable faith and with heartened desire the entrance of the people into the fullness of the people of God established by Christ." The dialogue which the Church proposes is really not a full dialogue after all, the confrontation has within it an element of They will recognize us to a point, but beyond that point affrontation. there is only one way, one truth, one holiness. I am afraid that as long as this arrogance, this ecclesiastical arrogance, remains a dominant theme in the teachings of the Church so long will it remain difficult for the churched to accept the vitality and the responsibility and the wisdom of any other faith. Though the words change, and the Pharisees are no longer unfairly described, nevertheless, it will be difficult for the Catholic child to see the beauty, the grace, the insight, the fullness and the wholesomeness of any other approach to religion.

The third teaching of contempt to which Mr. Isaac points has to do with the charge of deicide - -"Christ killer." Originally the Vatican Council Schema submitted by John castigated any teaching of deicide. In the final document the very word was omitted.

In recent Church manuals you will find such phrases as these:

The vengeance of God will fall without mercy on the deicide people.

This murderous people, eternally nailed up to the crossroads on which the descendents of mankind, meet and intercept.

Deicide, of course, is a logical impossibility. God can not die; and, if God dies, he dies willingly. Even within Christian doctrine God dies voluntarily to free man of the burden of sin. He dies as a free-will offering for man.

The New Testament history of the Crucifixion is historically highly suspect. The various accounts were written many decades after the event and for many reasons which had nothing to do with an accurate accounting of the events. Arer such simple statements made in the schema? No! What is said is simply this:

"True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in his passion can not be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today."

The implication of the Jew as the principle catalyst in the murder of the Christ remains. It is circumscribed, not all Jews in that day and not the Jews of today. One wonders what the average Catholic will make of all of this logic splitting.

And here we come to the root of the problem. Isaac's proposal and the Church's purpose simply to go back to scriptures, is basically

not helpful. As long as Catholicism rests on the foundations of a historically literalist understanding of the New Testament, so long must some kind of paragraph, such as the present schema, be written. As long as the Church looks upon the New Testament as a statement of historical truth, so long must the Jewish people be implicated in the death of Jesus whether there is any actual historical foundation for that fact or no. It is the New Testament and not the later manuals, and not the later commentaries, which insist upon the responsibility of the Jew for the murder of Jesus.

I read to you from the Gospel according to John: Jesus was lead into the governor's headquarters. It was now early morning, and the Jews themselves stayed outside the headquarters to avoid defilement so that they could eat the Passover meal. Pilate went out to them and asked: 'What charge do you bring against this man? ' 'If he were not a criminal, ' they replied, 'we would not have brought him before you. ' Pilate said, 'take him away, try him by your own law.' The Jews answered, 'we are not allowed to put any man to death.' Pilate then went back to his headquarters and summoned Jesus. 'Are you the King of the Jews?" he asked, and Jesus said, 'is that your own idea, or have others suggested it to you? 'What am . . I a Jew? ' asked Pilate. ' Your own nation and chief priests have brought you before me. What have you done?' And Jesus replied, 'my kingdom does not belong to this world. If it did, my followers would be fighting to save me from arrest by the Jews. My kingly authority comes from elsewhere. ' 'You are a king, then? ' said Jesus answered, ""King" is your Pilate. word. My taks is to bear witness to the truth. For this was I born; for this I came into the world, and all who are not deaf to truth listen to my voice. ' The Pilate said, what is truth?' And with those words went out to the Jews. 'For my part,' he said, 'I find no case against him. But you have a custom that I release one prisoner to you at Passover. Would you like me to release the king of the Jews? ' And the clamor arose, 'not him; we want the bandit Barabbas!' The Pilate now took Jesus and had him flogged. The soldiers placed a crown of thorns upon his head and robed him in a purple cloak. And time after time they came up to him, crying, 'Hail, King of the Jews, ' and struck him on the face.

Then once more Pilate came out and addressed the Jews. 'Here he is, I am bringing him out to let you know that I find no case against him. ' Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak. 'Behold the man, ' said And the chief priests and Pilate. their henchmen saw him and shouted, 'crucify, crucify!' 'Take him and crucify him yourself' said Pilate, 'for my part I can find no case against him. ' But the Jews answered; 'We have a law and by that law he must die because he has claimed to be the son of God. ' When Pilate heard that he was more afraid than ever. Going back into his headquarters he asked Jesus, 'where have you come from?' But Jesus gave him no answer. 'You refuse to speak to me?' said Pilate, 'don't you know that I have authority to release you but I also have authority to crucify you. ' 'You have no authority over me at all, said Jesus, 'had it not been granted you from above. Therefore the deeper guilt lies in the man who handed me over to you. From that moment Pilate shouting, 'if you let this man go, you are no friend of Ceasar, and any who claim to be a king, are defying Ceasar.' But Pilate heard what they were saying. He brought Jesus out and he took his seat on the tribunal. It was the eve of Passover, about noon, and the Pilate said to the Jews, 'here is your king.' They shouted, 'away with him, away with him, crucify him.' 'Crucify your king?' said Pilate. 'We have no king but Ceasar' the Jews replied. Then at last to satisfy them he handed Jesus over to be crucified.

It is all there in the New Testament. Jesus was crucified to satisfy the Jews. Of course, this story was written perhaps 80 to 100 years after the event. It was written specifically to clear Rome of the onus of having crucified the Christ. This charge was proving embarrassing to Christian missionaries directed towards the Romans. The point is, that as long as the New Testament is looked upon by the Church as the literal revelation of God, the exact truth, so long will it be impossible for the Church effectively to expurgate the teachings of contempt.

Let me conclude with two observations. The first has to do with what has become one of the games people play - the game of dialogue. It seems that every time a Jew, a Catholic and a Protestant get together, they have to have a theological dialogue. What are the problems with

dialogue? In the first place it is generally an exchange of ignorance. In the second place the Jew quickly finds himself way over his depth in Thomist philosophy, in Augustinian psychology, in texts which deal with ideas he vaguely appreciates but does not quite understand. In our tradition the teachings, the people, the practices, and the history is one. There is really no separate area of theology. Judaism is not a magisterium, but a way of life. Often the Catholic finds himself exposed to a liberalism which he can only label humanism and therefore atheism, and therefore outside the pale. Finally, let it be remembered, that the name of the game is still baptism. Dialogue, as the Church conceives it, is permissible only up to a point. The end of Church activity is still missionary and the acceptance of Christ.

Parlor conversation is not serious study. If you want to understand Catholicism go to the library, pick out the classic texts written by their writers, involve yourself in them. You will learn, you will understand and you will appreciate. Those who want to learn of Judaism have only to come to our library, and we can give them a reading list which will keep them busy for many years. But let them learn that which is true, and accurate. Let them get a whole understanding of the tradition, not just your particular understanding or misunderstanding of it. Finally, we can cooperate in this world without being privy to the theological privacies of all other human beings.

This is my second point. Though I find little that is theologically comforting in this schema of medieval world, and though I am concerned

that the Church will seed the ground in which anti-semitism grows despite the fine language in which the schema is phrase, I, nevertheless, find in the Council pronouncements a welcome openness; the statement, we do not want the Catholic Church to be a nation apart, a people interested only in their own preservation, only by the united concern of all men, can war and poverty and injustice be successfully attacked. Let us join together in that attack.

I only wish that the openness with which the Church found it possible to confront the Eastern religions had found its way into their confrontation with us. Listen, for instance, to the way in which they dealt with Islam.

"In the course of centuries their have been indeed many quarrels and hostilities between Christians and Moslems but now the Church exhorts everyone to forget the past and to make sincere efforts for mutual understanding, and so to work together for the preservation and fostering of social justice, moral welfare, peace and freedom for all mankind."

Fine, simple, straightforward. Let the past be forgotten. Let us maximize our present social concerns. With the Jew the Church is tortured and indrawn. There is not a note of the mea culpa of John's prayer. "Forgive us for the curse we falsely attack the name of Jew." Indeed, time and again in the schema, the Church finds a chance to point to our defects.

"As Holy Scripture testifies Jerusalem did not recognize the time of his visitation, nor did the Jews in large number accept the Gospel. Indeed, not a few opposed its spreading." The past is not forgotten. It is very much alive. This is not the Messianic age. Jews can not live with the happy innocence that other generations in Christendom will grow up without having been conditioned to the teachings of contempt. But there is great hope that we can work together in common cause, for justice, for righteousness, and peace. There are many within the Church who desire this. There are many within our faith who desire this. These ought to be the areas of meeting and of dialogue. Perhaps in the next Council the needed words will come more readily.





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QUOTES

There is a Christian anti-semitism that is always alive and active, consciously or unconsciously. It can be said without danger of error that the great majority of Christians, or those who are recognized as Christians, are outspoken anti-semites. Even among the best Christians, and including many who participated in general against Nazi anti-semitism, we can find traces of an anti-semitism of a subconscious nature.

"We are conscious today...that many centuries of blindness have cloaked our eyes so that we can no longer either see the beauty of thy chosen people nor recognize in their faces the features of our privileged brethren. We realize that the mark of Cain stands upon our foreheads. Across the centuries our brother abel has lain in the blood which we drew, or shed tears we caused by forgetting thy love. Forgive us for the curse we falsely attached to their name as Jews. Forgive us for crucifying Thee a second time in their flesh. For we knew not what we did."

The sponsoring of the bastardized text was probably Pope Paul's greatest single mistake.

"That people - the Jews - predestined to receive the Messiah, who had been awaiting him for thousands of years... when Christ comes... not only does not recognize him, but opposes him, slanders him and finally kills him."

"The never-ending controversy over the Jewish statement in the Council has already blunted its intended effect. It was meant to be a word of love and friend-ship. It has already been the source of bitterness and disappointment, a reason for shame and anguish on the part of many Catholics, and of suspicion and rancor on the part of many Jews."

"Jesus had foretold it: the Jewish people was to be scattered. A few dozen years after the death of Jesus...scattered to the four winds of the earth... The Christian tradition has made no mistake about this. It regards...the dispersion of Israel as a divine punishment: having rejected Christ in order to save their country, the Jews have been rejected from their land, and their persistent nonassimilation in the midst of other races remains the indelible proof of their providential punishment."

The Jews should not be represented as rejected or accursed by God. As if it followed from Holy Scripture.

The Pharisees are hypocrites, their religion is farce, they overload the law of God with countless minutiae and elaborated rights but underneath their hearts are full of pride, ambition and malice.

Since then the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews, is so great, the Counsel wishes to foster and commend mutual understanding and esteem. This will be the fruit above all of biblical and theological studies and of brotherly dialogue.

It

It shall not be forgotten that only the Catholic Church has the right and duty to evangelize.

The reunion of the Jewish people with the Church is part of the Christian hope. Eagerly, and following the teachings of the apostle Paul, the Church expects in unshakeable faith and with heartened desire the entrance of the people into the fullness of the people of God established by Christ.

The vengeance of God will fall without mercy on the deicide people.

This murderous people, eternally nailed to the crossroads where the descendents of mankind meet and intercept.

"True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in his passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today."

"From Caiaphas Jesus was led into the Governor's headquarters. It was now early morning, and the Jews themselves stayed outside the headquarters to avoid defilement, so that they could eat the Passover meal. So Pilate went out to them and asked, 'What charge do you bring against this man?' 'If he were not a criminal,' they replied, 'we should not have brought him before you.' Pilate said, 'Take him away and try him by your own law.' The Jews answered, 'We are not allowed to put any man to death.' Thus they ensured the fulfilment of the words by which Jesus had indicated the manner of his death.

Pilate then went back into his headquarters and summoned Jesus. 'Are you the king of the Jews?' he asked. Jesus said, 'Is that you own idea, or have others suggested it to you?' 'What! am I a Jew?' said Pilate. 'Your own nation and their chief priests have brought you before me. What have you done?' Jesus replied, 'My kingdom does not belong to this world. If it did, my followers would be fighting to save me from arrest by the Jews. My kingly authority comes from elsewhere.' 'You are a king, then?' said Pilate. Jesus answered, ' 'King' is your word. My task is to bear witness to the truth. For this was I born; for this I came into the world, and all who are not deaf to truth listen to my voice.' Pilate said, 'What is truth?', and with those words went out again to the Jews. 'For my part, he said, 'I find no case against him. But you have a custom that I release one prisoner for you at Passover. Would you like me to release the king of the Jews?' Again the clamour rose: 'Not him; we want Barzbbas!' (Barabbas was a bandit.)

Pilate now took Jesus and had him flogged; and the soldiers plaited a crown of thorns and placed it on his head, and robed him in a purple cloak. Then time after time they came up to him, crying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!', and struck him on the face.

Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, 'Here he is; I am bringing him out to let you know that I find no case against him'; and Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak. 'Behold the Man!' said Pilate. The chief priests and their henchmen saw him and shouted, 'Crucify! crucify!' Take him and crucify him yourselves,' said Pilate; 'for my part I find no case against him.' The Jews answered, 'We have a law; and by that law he ought to die, because he has claimed to be the Son of God.'

When Pilate heard that, he was more afraid then ever, and going back into his headquarters he asked Jesus, 'Where have you come from?' But Jesus gave him no answer. 'Do you refuse to speak to me?' said Pilate. 'Surely you know that I have authority to release you, and I have authority to crucify you?' 'You would have no authority at all over me', Jesus replied, 'if it had not been granted you from above; and therefore the deeper guilt lies with the man who handed me over to you.'

From that moment Pilate tried hard to release him; but the Jews kept shouting, 'If you let this man go, you are no friend to Ceasar; amy many who klaims to be a king is defying Caesar.' When Pilate heard what they were saying, he brought Jesus out and took his seat on the tribunal at the place known as 'The Pavement'

(Gabbatha' in the language of the Jews). It was the eve of the Passover, about noon. Pilate said to the Jews, 'Here is your king.' They shouted, 'Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!' 'Crucify your king?' said Pilate. 'We have no king but Caesar', the Jews replied. Then at last, to satisfy them, he handed Jesus over to be crucified."

Forgive us for the curse we falsely attach to the name of Jew.

As Holy Scripture testifies Jerusalem did not recognize the time of his visitation nor did the Jews in large number accept the gospel, indeed not a few opposed its spreading.

In the course of centuries their have been indeed many and hostilities between Christians and Moslems but now the Church exhorts everyone to forget the past and to make sincere efforts for mutual understanding, and so to work together for the preservation and fostering of social justice, moral welfare, peace and freedom for all mankind.