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THE IMAGE OF THE JEWS IN CATHOLIC TEACHING

A Memorandum to
THE SECRETARIAT FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Submitted by
THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
New York

I. CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

Spiritual Man at the Crossroads

The middle years of the twentieth century have ushered in a period of profound change, unparalleled in the history of mankind.

Titanic forces--technical, intellectual and spiritual--are at work. Atomic energy, new methods of communication and travel, the population explosion and the dawn of space exploration, are remaking our society. Political and economic upheaval is the order of the day, as rich nations, blind and complacent, are faced with the awakening of the world's underprivileged masses. Established religions everywhere are confronted by the legions of those who either deny spiritual values, or else wear a false religious badge while seeking only success, material comfort or power.

Under the impact of these forces, a totally new age has come into being in less than 25 years. Two overwhelming factors dominate this age. First: there are no islands any more; what happens anywhere on earth happens next door to us. Second: man is now able to destroy himself in a matter of minutes.

For these reasons, man's actions today have far wider repercussions than formerly-- for better or for worse. The mighty forces at large in today's world can spell spiritual division and physical annihilation; or they can speed man on his search for unity and spiritual fulfillment.

Catholic-Jewish Tension

The state of the world thus calls for a re-appraisal of values among all those concerned with the spiritual destiny of man. In this grave hour, His Holiness Pope John XXIII has called an Ecumenical Council, the first in nearly a century.

The American Jewish Committee would like to take the opportunity afforded by the calling of this Council to lay before the Head of the Church a matter of deep concern: the question whether Catholic teaching about Jews--particularly in the United States--is fostering prejudice and hostility.

Tensions between Jews and Catholics are centuries old, but the dangers of the present day make the issue more urgent than ever before. Whatever may have been true in past ages, prejudice against any religious group today inevitably weakens the entire fabric of society, degrades both the haters and the victims, and saps the spiritual strength of all mankind. Hostility among believers of different creeds serves only to advance the cause of anti-religious forces. In this hour of peril, all those who share the spiritual heritage of the Bible must stand together if humanity is to survive.

The Christian Conscience and the Jews

Jews have lived in the Christian world since its beginning, yet their status among the Christian majority has almost always been precarious. On one hand, the Church has protected them; Popes and Church Councils, in medieval and modern times, have condemned anti-Jewish propaganda, violence and persecution, and

for five hundred years (from the 11th until the 16th century) Jews enjoyed safety in the Papal states. But, on the other hand, Jews in nearly every century have undergone untold suffering and degradation at the hands of supposed Christians, sometimes with the acquiescence of ecclesiastical authority.

This ambiguous attitude of the Christian world toward the Jews has persisted into our own time. When Hitlerism -- an essentially pagan movement generated chiefly by social and economic forces unrelated to religion -- unleashed the most terrible of all persecutions, some devout and valiant Christians courageously saved Jewish lives; but the majority of Christendom stood indifferently by. The Jews will not forget their rescuers, but neither can they forget the six million whom no one rescued.

How could this diabolical crime have come to pass, in a country of ancient Christian traditions, unless the Christian conscience had been numbed -- unless a strong undercurrent of anti-Jewish feeling ran through the Christian culture? In the days of the death camps as in those of the Black Death, many nominal Christians must have felt that the Jews were outside the human community, that they somehow deserved their fate, and that the rest of mankind was not responsible for them. It was this hostility, contempt and indifference which made possible the greatest mass murder in history.

Teachings About the Jews

It is appalling, therefore, to find that fifteen years after the catastrophe our culture still is permeated by

religious prejudice -- the result of a variety of social, psychological and political forces -- and that the old hostility, contempt and indifference are being transmitted to a new generation.

Churches must share some of the responsibility for this state of affairs. Religious bodies invariably condemn anti-Semitism in principle, but often give sanction to it by some of their teachings. Thus, Catholic religious teaching today contains defamatory misstatements and omissions which may encourage hostility and contempt for Jews.

Such teachings appear in all their monstrous absurdity when read against the true relationship between Catholicism and Judaism. The close historical and spiritual ties between the two faiths were forcefully recalled in 1938 by Pope Pius XI:

"Anti-Semitism is ... a movement in which we, as Christians, cannot have any part whatever.... Spiritually, we are Semites."^{1*}

Among the influences by which anti-Semitism is perpetuated, faulty religious teaching is one of the most insidious, because it permits the erroneous belief that anti-Semitic ideas have the approval of the highest moral and spiritual authority.

For this reason, the American Jewish Committee considers it a duty to bring the matter to the attention of the Head of the Church, and to add its voice to those of others who ask for a

* Sources of quotations are listed at the end of this memorandum.

re-examination and revision of Catholic teaching materials concerning Jews, insofar as they violate the precepts of love and brotherhood.

We do so without accusation and without rancor, moved solely by the belief that eradicating religious antagonism will greatly benefit both Christians and Jews, and will strengthen the spiritual forces in the world.

II. AMERICAN ASPECTS

Prejudice a Danger to America

Because of certain historical and ethnic factors in American society, the problem of Catholic attitudes toward Jews in the United States has important civic and social implications in addition to its spiritual ones.

The immense variety of religious faiths and national backgrounds among the American people makes it necessary to work steadily and rapidly toward the elimination of intergroup tensions -- not by persuading anyone to abandon his religion for that of the majority, nor by preaching syncretism in any form, but by creating a climate free from prejudice.

To accomplish this end, Americans of all faiths in recent years have made special efforts to do away with all religious sanctions of bigotry. The election of a Catholic to the Presidency of the United States is in part the result of these efforts.

Anti-Semitism in America

Jews have always lived peacefully in America, even though they have been, and to some extent still are, subjected to certain unofficial forms of discrimination, such as quota restrictions in college admission, and ineligibility to some clubs and residential areas. Occasional expressions of flagrant anti-Semitic prejudice -- an epithet hurled at a Jewish child on the street, an anti-Jewish slur in conversation among Gentiles -- are usually dismissed as trivial.

Yet, even in America's open, pluralistic society there runs an undercurrent of anti-Semitism. In times of political, economic and social stress, this current sometimes comes to the surface in irrational outbreaks that are far from trivial. Thus, in 1957-58, anti-Semitic violence accompanied mob resistance against the Negroes' demands for equality. Another series of outbreaks occurred in 1959-60, with some 800 acts of Nazi-style vandalism against synagogues, homes and other property.

Possible Sources of Bigotry

We believe the persistence of anti-Semitism thus evidenced cannot be explained solely in social and economic terms. Such explanations cannot by themselves account for the fact that the Jewish minority has been singled out as a target of prejudice in the most varied circumstances; when they were many and when they were few; when they lived apart and when they were assimilated; when they were capitalists and when they sided with the working classes. There is at least a strong

possibility that anti-Semitic attitudes are strengthened by misguided religious notions.

We note, for example, that racist agitators in America often pose as Christians and base their anti-Jewish appeals on such themes as God's alleged rejection of the Jews and the myth of the "cursed people." These and other defamatory notions are still widely current in religious publications. By propagating them, churches give unintentional sanction to false prophets.

Traditional notions of a kind likely to breed distrust and dislike of Jews may be repeated by writers of religious publications and passed by the Censor without awareness of their possible psychological effect. But the damage they can do to America's spiritual strength is no less for being unintentional. Of all the forces that might seriously impair America, none is more destructive than the prejudices that set citizens against one another.

More Than a National Problem

Because America's inner strength is of critical importance to the destiny of mankind, religious prejudice in the United States is not merely a national problem, but a danger to the world.

If the American nation is to remain united by bonds stronger than materialism, religious groups must not be content merely to condemn violent bigotry. They must recognize and correct erroneous teachings that keep bigotry alive, and thus strip prejudiced beliefs of any semblance of religious

sanction. We think many Catholics in America, as elsewhere, would be eager to assist in this task if they were assured of the Vatican's support and encouragement.

III. WHAT CATHOLICS LEARN ABOUT JEWS

Sources of Material Cited

What are the false charges against the Jews which still distort Catholic teaching, spreading old hatreds among a new generation of Americans? We find that such charges are similar to those identified by investigators in other countries. They are documented below, in extracts from current Catholic teaching materials.

The extracts quoted are not an exhaustive collection. They are merely examples encountered by the American Jewish Committee's Institute of Human Relations in surveying a random selection of approved parochial-school textbooks, plus a few other publications. However, the large number of objectionable passages found in these few, presumably typical, texts would seem to indicate that the problem is widespread.

A comprehensive study of the ways in which Catholic teaching materials portray other religious, racial and ethnic groups is now in process at St. Louis University under the supervision of Father Trafford P. Maher, S.J. Self-studies of Protestant and Jewish teaching materials have also been undertaken, the former at Yale University, the latter at Dropsie College.

Portrayal of the Jews

Many of the Catholic textbooks we have examined take an exemplary attitude toward other groups in lessons on the social or civic responsibilities of Catholics. In this context, the tone is friendly and positive; human brotherhood and the contributions made by persons of different cultural and religious backgrounds are stressed. For example:

"A considerable number of Jews have made original contributions to American culture. Through newspaper and book publishing, the theater, motion picture production, and radio, others have assisted in the popular dissemination of information and culture. There is hardly a national group or a voice in the world that has not in some way left its mark upon our arts or daily living."²

The difficulties arise in passages that interpret Scripture or doctrine. When the discussion turns to such topics as the birth of Christianity, the conflict between the early Church and the synagogue, or the relationship between Jesus and his contemporaries, teaching about Jews often becomes uncharitable and distorted. The portrait painted often is so negative as to cancel out well-intentioned statements in other lessons. Jewish contributions to culture will hardly impress a student who is also taught, directly or indirectly, that the Jews are cursed by God as the murderers of Jesus.

Father Louis Hartman, C. Ss. R., General Secretary of the Catholic Biblical Association of America, has stated:

"The New Testament quite clearly lays the chief responsibility for the death of Christ on a small but powerful group of men who could not claim to act as the rightly constituted head of the Jewish people. The rabble which they were able to rouse up to clamor for the death of Christ before Pilate's tribunal could not speak in the name of the whole Jewish people of that time and certainly not in the name of all later Jewish generations. The Gospels show that the vast majority of the Palestinian Jews with whom our Lord came in contact were very favorably inclined towards Him. Moreover, the bulk of the Jews at that time probably lived outside of Palestine, and apparently very few of these had even heard of Jesus of Nazareth until some decades later when the Apostles first preached to them.

"Historically speaking, therefore, there is no basis for the claim that the Jews of that time as a people were guilty of the death of Christ, and obviously there is not the slightest reason for bringing this accusation against their descendants of two thousand years later."³

Yet many of the texts examined by us make precisely that accusation, stating or implying that the Jews as a people are exclusively and collectively responsible for the death of the Son of God, and that they are a cursed people, condemned and rejected by God. A few examples follow:

"The Jews wanted to disgrace Christ by having him die on the cross."⁴

"The vast majority of Jewish people...condemn Him to death as a blasphemer, and deliver Him up to the Romans to be crucified."⁵

"The chief priests took up a cry that put a curse on themselves and on Jews for all time: 'His blood be on us and on our children!'"⁶

"Show that the Jews did not want Pilate to try Christ but to give permission for his death."⁷

"Again the Jews were changing the charge, as they had done in the religious trial. If one accusation didn't work, they would try another."⁸

"When did the Jews decide to kill Christ?"⁹

"He declared the divinity of Christ whom the Jews had crucified."¹⁰

"The curse of Christ and the subsequent decay of the [fig] tree symbolized the condemnation and the destruction of the Jewish people for their empty lives."¹¹

"The Jews as a nation refused to accept Christ, and since his time they have been wandering on the earth without a temple or a sacrifice and without the Messias."¹²

"The Gentiles came to take the place of the Jews in Christ's Kingdom."¹³

"God separated Israel from the rest of the world

and gave it ample protection. He left it in the keeping of the leaders of the people, and from time to time, through His prophets, asked for results. The harsh treatment given these spokesmen of God reached a climax in the willful murder of Christ. As a consequence, these false leaders and their followers were rejected as the foundation of the Kingdom in favor of the Gentiles."¹⁴

"When they (the Jews) would not heed the Prophets, He sent His only-begotten Son to call them to repentance. Him also they put to death. Because of this fact, they were finally rejected by God and their rights to His Kingdom were given to others."¹⁵

Similarly, in the footnotes of an edition of the New Testament we find:

(Commenting on St. Luke 23:31, "If it goes so hard with the tree that is still green, what will become of the tree that is already dried up?":)

"This verse is generally understood to mean, 'If crucifixion is the lot of The Innocent, what is to be expected by the guilty (that is, the Jews)?'"¹⁶

(Commenting on St. Matthew 23:29-32, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees ... it is for you to complete your father's reckoning":) "To complete your father's reckoning? By killing the Son of God as their fathers had killed his prophets."¹⁷

And in a Lenten Missal we read:

"His Jewish nation was suffering an exile of seventy years. In captivity they were atoning for the worship of false gods. In these modern days, the Jews are still dispersed in every nation, in a condition worse than exile. They have been atoning these 1900 years for the greatest of all crimes, committed when an entire nation rejected, crucified, and shed the Blood of the Son of God. Amongst us Christians they are witnesses of a lost vocation, without 'prince, or prophet, or sacrifice,' or a temple in Jerusalem; divine punishment hangs over them until the end of time, when God, because of His promises to the Prophets, will, in some extraordinary way, bring them to believe and live in Jesus Christ."¹⁸

Teachings like these are likely to instill the conviction that the Jews bear a collective guilt and somehow deserve the sufferings and persecutions that have marked their long history. This concept is extraordinarily invidious, because it cuts off the Jews from the common body of humanity and may make Catholics indifferent to the fate of their fellow human beings. If a child is taught that God has cursed and rejected the Jews, who will blame him for doing likewise?

Partiality in the Use of the Term "The Jews"

The suggestion that the Jewish people are guilty in a collective sense is frequently reinforced by partiality in the use of the word "Jews."

Thus, in some books, the enemies of Jesus are identified as Jews, while his firends and followers are not. For example, there is no mention of Jews in these passages:

"Christ chose the twelve men who were to be the foundation of His Kingdom."¹⁹

"All together, numbering well over five thousand, they listened to the Master all day, forgetting even to eat."²⁰

"In the beginning of His public life, Jesus was held in great admiration by the people."²¹

Contrast these passages with the following -- particularly the first, in which history and logic are blatantly twisted:

"It was on the day Christ raised Lazarus from the tomb that the Jews decided to kill him. Nevertheless, they were afraid of the people."²² (Were not "the people" also Jews?)

"Scripture tells us that Judas was watching for a chance to turn his Master over to the Jews."²³

"They were afraid to be seen by the Jews, for fear they might be put to death as their master was."²⁴

"The Jews stirred up the rabble against him ..."²⁵

"For what words of His did the Jews attempt for the second time to stone Him?"²⁶

In the examples just given, and in those that follow, the generic term "the Jews" is freely used in contexts in which actually only some Jews were involved. Merely by correcting these omissions and false emphases, much could be done to

change the erroneous impression that the Jews as a people hated Jesus and conspired toward his death.

The name "Jews," thus generically used, is frequently coupled with alleged evil qualities:

"Since Pilate could not find anything wrong with Christ, he decided to disfigure His pure and beautiful body so that even the bloodthirsty Jews would back down...."27

"Jesus ... was rejected by the leaders of the Jewish people ... because [of] their material and carnal minds ..."28

Time and again we find references to "the envious Jews," "the blind hatred of the Jews," and so forth. The repeated use of such phrases makes it possible for students to associate evil characteristics with all Jews, and to think of Jews as a hate-ridden, cruel and materialistic people.

Many textbooks also show partiality in calling Jews by different names in Old and New Testament contexts. In lessons about the Old Testament, where the Jews are presented in friendly, positive fashion, they usually are named "Hebrews" or "Israelites." In New Testament lessons, where the prevailing attitude is negative and unfriendly, "Jews" is the commonly used term. Since that is the name in use today, the Catholic student is likely to associate Jews with the conflict described in the New Testament, but not with the living people to whom God revealed Himself, who upheld even through martyrdom the faith in the one and living God which made Christianity possible.

The student is not made sufficiently aware that the "Hebrews" and "Israelites," who are praised for their loyalty and devotion to God, are the same people as the Jews.

Sweeping generalization, oversimplification and partiality in the use of names have long been recognized by scholars as stimulants for anti-Semitic attitudes. Thus Father Trafford P. Maher, already mentioned as one of the American Catholics concerned with the impact of such material on the minds of students, quotes an objectionable passage from a Catholic textbook:

"The Jews, on the contrary, by the bad influence of their pride and hypocrisy, hindered the spread of the knowledge of God among other nations."²⁹

Comments Father Maher:

"Patently, the problem here is the broad sweep in the author's statement, his lack of care in the statement of the facts, and his apparent unawareness of what such a statement might do in the formation of the young reader's attitudes toward people in his own world."³⁰

The Pharisees

The treatment of the Pharisees in Catholic textbooks may be questioned on several grounds. No distinction is made among Pharisees, although the New Testament itself distinguishes between those who opposed and those who supported and befriended Jesus. No true religious motivation is ever ascribed to the Pharisees; nowhere is it suggested that Pharisees who opposed

Jesus might have done so out of sincere conviction. It is said, for example, that the Pharisees pretended to be shocked by Jesus' claims; the possibility that they might really have been shocked is never raised.

The Catholic student thus is given a picture of a group utterly debased, completely hypocritical, with nothing but hatred and willful blindness toward Jesus:

"No one has any sympathy for the Pharisees because they deliberately made themselves blind to the inspiring miracles and teaching of Christ."³¹

"The high priest and the rest of the Temple Gang [described as Pharisees and scribes] played the part of hypocrite and looked horrified at what Christ said."³²

"Back of it all was the envy of the Temple Gang -- the better a man Christ was, the greater their hatred of him."³³

In his book on Christian catechetics and the Jews, Father Paul Démann writes:

"The manner in which we approach and judge the Pharisees would seem to constitute a true test of the spirit of our teaching. Too often, instead of seeing in them, and in the reproaches that Jesus directed to them, the mirror of our own hypocrisies, our own narrowness, our own formalism, we are tempted to take exactly the same attitude toward them which

they were tempted to take toward the sinners and publicans. To present the Pharisees in a historically and theologically accurate way means to show that their temptations, their sins, the reproaches addressed to them, are to be taken, not in a collective sense but rather in a permanent and universal sense; it means to understand and to make it understood that the question is not 'they (as against us),' but 'we beside them.'"³⁴

Nowhere in the materials examined by us are the Pharisees dealt with in the manner called for by Father Démann.

Unjust or Inaccurate Comparisons

In expounding Christianity, unjust and inaccurate comparisons with the Jewish faith are often made. Judaism is depicted as a legalistic religion, concerned only with external observances, devoid of love, mercy and compassion. Catholic students are not told that love of God and neighbor was first mentioned in the Old Testament and is just as obligatory there as in the New. Gratuitous slurs on Judaism are introduced to heighten the contrast with Christianity.

"The Jews believed that one should hate an enemy; but Christ taught the opposite."³⁵ (Actually, St. Paul's injunction, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him," Romans 12:20, is a direct quote from Proverbs 25:21.)

"No Jewish rabbi reads the Old Testament scriptures as faithfully as does the priest."³⁶

"The first martyr was St. Stephen ... who was stoned to death for defending the new Faith and the right of Gentiles (Non-Jews) to salvation."³⁷ (The implication is that St. Stephen was killed for preaching salvation outside the Jewish faith.

Actually, Jews did not then and do not now deny that faiths other than their own may lead to salvation. The rabbinic dictum, "All the righteous of the earth have a share in the world to come," was expressed almost a century before Jesus.)

"But little progress has been made in the conversion to any form of Christianity of groups who regard their race or religion as the antithesis of Christianity, such as the Jews and Mohammedans. Both of these large bodies are more anti-Christian than they are pro-something."³⁸ (Jews are not a race; they practice their religion for its own values, not in opposition to another faith; and they do not consider Judaism "the antithesis of Christianity.")

In addition, Catholic history textbooks unwarrantedly accuse Jews of many evil deeds:

"In order to divert the masses from what they believed the true origin of the fire, Nero, perhaps at the suggestion of the Jews*, charged it to the Christians."³⁹

* Underscore is ours.

"The Jews no doubt* had insisted on wreaking vengeance on someone, after St. Paul had escaped their fury by his appeal to Caesar."⁴⁰

"In 726 Leo the Issaurian (717-741), urged perhaps by Mohammedans and Jews* ordered the destruction of all images in the churches."⁴¹

Omissions

What is left out of a lesson may be as important in forming of attitudes and values as what is put in. By ignoring certain facts -- either intentionally or under the influence of unconscious prejudice -- authors of educational literature may stimulate or abet bigotry.

For example, it would be untrue to state that in the Middle Ages many Jews were moneylenders. But the statement would be misleading unless it were explained that Jews had few other ways of supporting themselves, being barred from guilds and forbidden to own land.

Some omissions likely to foster prejudice are illustrated here:

1. The Jewish background of Christianity is often ignored. Many Catholics are largely unaware of Christianity's Jewish roots. Some passages give the impression that the Bible did not exist previous to the Catholic Church.

"/God inspired men whom He chose to write the different smaller books which comprise it /the Bible. There can be no doubt that the world must thank the Catholic Church for the Bible."⁴²

* Underscores are ours.

2. There are no references to Judaism as a religion after the birth of Christianity. Jewish religious practices, holy days, etc., are described only in the context of the ancient past. The Catholic student is given the impression that Judaism as a faith ceased to exist with the founding of Christianity, or with the destruction of the Temple. The Jews of later ages thus are made to appear, by implication, as an irreligious people. Even though Catholics believe Christianity to be the fulfillment of Judaism, is there not a responsibility to mention that Judaism continues as a living faith?
3. Through omission of facts, later phases of Jewish history are presented in a false light. For example:

"The Jews, as religionists, were not subject to the Spanish Inquisition, but only as baptized Christians, known as Marranos. Jews who practiced their own religion were not molested. Jewish scholars admit that many Jews, of their own free will, embraced the Catholic Church, were baptized, followed Catholic practices, yet were insincere."⁴³

(It is not mentioned that Jews who practiced their own religion were severely molested by the civil authorities if not by the Church. Most Marranos converted, not of their own free will, but under pressure and the threat of expulsion.)

Summary

Prejudiced teachings about Jews in the materials examined by us fall into certain categories:

1. Slandorous interpretations (e.g., sole and collective responsibility of the Jews for the Crucifixion; deicide; "cursed people"; Jews rejected by God).
2. Oversimplifications and sweeping statements (e.g., description of the Pharisees; partiality in the use of the term "Jews").
3. Unjust or inaccurate comparisons (e.g., the religion of law vs. the religion of love).
4. Invidious use of language (e.g., "carnal Jews," "bloodthirsty Jews").
5. Omissions (e.g., Jewish roots of Christianity; continuity between Old and New Testaments).

IV. DESTROYING THE ROOTS OF PREJUDICE

The Church's True Position

In the preceding pages we have cited many negative and hostile references to Jews and Judaism, which seem to contradict the Church's precepts of love and charity.

We recognize, however, that these references -- especially those bearing on the central issue of the Passion -- do not reflect the true doctrine of the Church. That doctrine, formulated four centuries ago by the Council of Trent, rejects the view that the Crucifixion was a crime committed by the Jewish people, and places the responsibility on all mankind:

"It was the peculiar privilege of Christ the Lord to have died when He Himself decreed to die, and to have died not so much by external violence as

by internal assent.... Should anyone inquire why the Son of God underwent His most bitter Passion, he will find that besides the guilt inherited from our first parents the principal causes were the vices and crimes which have been perpetrated from the beginning of the world to the present day and those which will be committed to the end of time....

"In this guilt are involved all those who fall frequently into sin; for as our sins consigned Christ the Lord to the death of the cross, most certainly those who wallow in sin and iniquity "crucify to themselves again the Son of God, as far as in them lies, and make a mockery of Him" (Hebrews 6:6). This guilt seems more enormous in us than in the Jews, since according to the testimony of the same Apostle: 'If they had known it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory' (I Corinthians 2:8); while we, on the contrary, professing to know Him, yet denying Him by our actions, seem in some sort to lay violent hands on Him.

"...Men of all ranks and conditions were 'gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ' (Psalms 2:2). Gentiles and Jews were the advisers, the authors, the ministers of His Passion; Judas betrayed Him, Peter denied Him, and the rest deserted Him...."44

Nor are we unmindful of the Catholic forces that are striving today for greater harmony between Christians and Jews. In the following pages, some of these forces and their accomplishments are identified.

Liturgical Changes

That the Church is concerned about her influence on attitudes toward non-Catholics is indicated by certain changes in the liturgy made during the last six years. Thus, in 1955, the Sacred Congregation of Rites reintroduced the Flectamus genua for the Jews during the Good Friday service; and in 1958, after the accession of Pope John XXIII, reference to "perfidia Judaei" and "perfidia Judaica" were removed from the Good Friday prayer. In 1959, the following sentence was dropped from the Act of Consecration of the Human Race (celebrated as part of the Mass of the Sacred Heart, the Blessing of the Holy Sacrament, the Feast of Christ the King, and on the first Friday of each month):

"Look, finally, with eyes of pity upon the children of that race which was for so long a time thy chosen people; and let thy Blood, which was once invoked upon them in vengeance, now descend upon them also in a cleansing flood of redemption and eternal life."

Finally, in 1960, this sentence was dropped from the Baptism of Converts:

"Horresce Judaicam perfidiam, respue Hebraicam superstitionem."

Contributions by Scholars

The Holy See's concern with religious influences on attitudes toward Jews is echoed by the work of Catholic thinkers, both in Europe and the United States.

In articles, documents, lectures and books, scholars and theologians have called for changes in Catholic teaching where it touches upon Jews: for greater emphasis on the close bonds between Judaism and Christianity; for an affirmation of the Jewish roots of Christianity and the Jewishness of Jesus; for a truer interpretation of the Passion, which will place the responsibility in the conscience of mankind, instead of laying it on the Jewish people.

A comprehensive survey of Catholic teachings about Jews, by Father Paul Démann, M.D.S. (La Catéchèse chrétienne et le peuple de la Bible, Paris 1952), has already been mentioned.

Jewish scholars, too, have helped to shed new light on interreligious problems -- most notably the distinguished historian Jules Isaac in France. In the United States, Hyman E. Goldin, Morris Goldstein, Joseph Klausner, Samuel Sandmel and Solomon Zeitlin have published studies of Jesus from the Jewish viewpoint during recent years.

Spokesmen and Organizations

Specific issues bearing on Catholic-Jewish relations have been the subjects of statements by Richard Cardinal Cushing, Archbishop of Boston; Achille Cardinal Liénart, Bishop of Lille; Msgr. Charles de Frovenchères, Bishop of Aix; Father John A. O'Brien of Notre Dame University (U.S.A.); Father John LaFarge, S.J., and others.

Organizations in several countries are working for improved relations between Catholics and Jews -- for example, the Confraternidad Judeo-Cristiana in Argentina, Amitié Judeo-Chrétienne in France, and the Catholic Commission for Israel in the Netherlands.

Publications

Teaching about Jews has been discussed in the United States in at least three Catholic magazines -- America, Jubilee and Social Order -- and in the Annual Report of the Catholic Library Association.

A periodical on Catholic-Jewish relations, Rundbrief zur Förderung der Freundschaft zwischen dem alten und dem neuen Gottesvolk im Geiste der beiden Testamente (Freiburg) is published in Germany.

In Catholic diocesan newspapers the new, positive approach is reflected from time to time. One such publication for example related the Christian Easter to the Jewish Passover, and continues:

"To say -- without reservation -- that the Jews rejected our Lord is to forget the record. The nucleus of every early Christian congregation was Jewish. The bishops of today are the successors of 12 Jews (or 14, counting Paul and Barnabas).... The Popes of the Middle Ages condemned persecutions of Jews -- including persecutions by slander. But enough Catholics, individual clergy included, participated in persecution -- even of the physical

kind -- as to leave a lasting mistrust in the minds of Jews.... To avoid even the appearance of slander, Pope John XXIII dropped the term 'perfidis Judaeis' from the liturgy of Good Friday.... Can the rest of us do less, this Easter time, than try to eliminate slander from our words and ideas about Jews?"⁴⁵

It would not be truthful to suggest, however, that this positive attitude has been adopted by the Catholic press as a whole.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Catholic attitudes toward Jews and Judaism today range all the way from foresight and understanding, as expressed in the efforts of Pope John XXIII and certain Catholic leaders, to age-old hostility, wittingly or unwittingly kept alive in many parts of the Church community.

The moral obligation of religion to inspire love and respect for all the children of God, as well as the need for unity in a world threatened by materialism and totalitarian oppression, demand an end to religious prejudices that have scarred the relationship between Catholics and Jews for many generations.

To ensure that a spirit of good will toward people of other faiths may animate the entire Church community, we respectfully request, in private and without publicity:

That His Holiness, Pope John XXIII, cause precise directives to be issued from the Vatican--through proper channels and according to established methods--for improving Catholic teaching about Jews and Judaism, by cleansing all Catholic educational and liturgical publications of inaccurate, distorted, slanderous or prejudiced statements about Jews as a group.

Such a revision would bring books and teaching materials into line with the precedent already set by recent changes in the liturgy of the Church, made by the present Pope and his predecessors.

We, members of the American Jewish Committee -- an organization devoted to fostering cooperation and understanding among religious and racial groups in the United States -- believe that the improvement of Catholic teachings about the Jews is an urgent task, of equal importance to the spiritual health of America and that of the whole world.

SOURCES

1. Pope Pius XI, address to Belgian pilgrims, September 1938.
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