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Franz Wasner

THE POPES' VENERATION OF THE TORAH

*Nondum lucta Lya caret,
levum Jacob femur aret.
O, si Christus hoc sanaret
nullo modo claudicaret.*

*Hic est celorum titulus
atque terrarum oculus,
fit angularis calculus
ut Judeorum populus
se genitili copularet.*

*Lia still waits strife's cessation,
Left thigh withered, Jacob's ration.
But, should Christ grant medication,
Limping knew annihilation!*

*He is the sign, celestial,
Vision of truth, terrestrial,
Stone at the corner, structural.
There that the tribes of Israel
Might make one with Gentile nations!*

(11th century) ¹

A CHAIN of historical events binds Israel, as a people, to those sacred happenings that the Church hails as the Incarnation of the Son of God and the Redemption of the world. Natural reasoning finds no explanation for the bewildering antinomy: On the basis of the Law Jewish officialdom clamored for Jesus' death—"We have a Law, and according to that Law He must die, because He has made Himself Son of God" (Jn 19:7), they declared—yet in that same Law the Church sees Him foretold and prefigured. And it is by clinging to this Law that the Synagogue crosses the centuries, rejecting the claim of Him whom the Church, during the same centuries, cherishing the same Law, adores as her Lord and God. Monsignor Charles Journet, at the outset of his illuminating essay on "The Mysterious Destinies of Israel," calls this link "so intimate . . . that not only Israel's spiritual destinies . . . but even its temporal destinies, with their share of the banal and commonplace, will be forever dependent on the most staggering supernatural mystery it is given us to know."²

1. "Analecta Hymnica 20," *Lieder und Motetten*, ed. G. M. Dreves (Leipzig, 1895), p. 108, no. 129; Gustavus Milchsack, *Hymni et Sequentiae* (Halle, 1886), p. 187, no. 179. Translation by the Reverend Edward A. Synan.

2. *The Bridge*, II, 36.

I

NOWHERE and at no time are these mysterious destinies more manifest than in those moments of contact between the Synagogue and the Church, between the daughter of the Old Covenant, whose time was the time of lovers when the Lord had spread His garment over Israel (see Ez 16:8), and the Ecclesia of the New Covenant, the bride of Christ, who lovingly carries in her bosom the mystery of Redemption through the ages. Some of the most astonishing of these encounters, where mystery touches upon mystery, take place in the liturgy of the Church. One of these, though no longer part of liturgical practice, still merits examination, not in a sterile quest of past events but in search of a deeper understanding of things to come. For history moves incessantly, inexorably, toward the day when the two who are mothers of Abraham's children (see Gal 4:22-31) will lose themselves in a supreme embrace, the force of which will satisfy the world's innermost yearning.

The liturgical meeting between Synagogue and Church I should like to discuss was assigned to the coronation day of the pope, to his introduction into the Lateran basilica and palace, and also to certain annual ceremonies. It is usually called "The Act of Homage" or "The Offering of the Law" but from a more sharply focused point of view I prefer to call it "The Pope's Veneration of the Law." On the occasions mentioned, a deputation of the Jewish community went forth from their quarters, led by their presiding civil officer and their rabbi, the rabbi carrying a Torah scroll covered with a gold-embroidered veil. The delegation stationed itself at an appointed place by which the papal procession was to pass. Upon the pope's arrival, the Jews hailed him with songs of praise in their sacred tongue; the rabbi, on bended knee, unveiled the scroll, offered it to the pope, praised the Law, and requested its veneration by the pope. The pope in turn took the scroll and answered with words that, in the course of time, had become a set formula:

The holy Law, you Hebrew men, we praise and venerate, for through Moses' hands almighty God gave it to your fathers. But your observance and unavailing interpretation of the Law we reject, for the Redeemer whom you await in vain has long since come, as the apostolic faith teaches

and proclaims: our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, world without end.³

After adding his promise of protection, the pope returned the scroll over his shoulder and continued on his way.⁴

II

THE origin of the pope's veneration of the Torah and of the homage offered by the Jews of Rome is shrouded in the historical darkness that covers most of the early Middle Ages. The story of the end of this thousand-year-old ceremony, however, is well known: It took place for the last time on June 21, 1846, when Pius IX solemnly entered the Lateran. The loss of the pope's temporal power over Rome in 1870 and the ensuing voluntary captivity of the popes in the Vatican rendered their introduction into the Basilica impossible.

A ceremony of homage seems to have been performed by the Roman Jews in the days of the ancient emperors.⁵ When the rule of the popes succeeded that of the emperors, the ceremony may have remained essentially the same, but if it did, it certainly acquired a new meaning, for then the religious aspect became the focal point. We know of Hebrew acclamations being offered in other places and on other occasions, as, for instance, at the entry of King Guntram into Orléans in

3. In Latin the pope's answer, as given in Patrizi's *Caeremoniale*, reads: *Sanctam Legem, Viri Hebraei, et laudamus, et veneramur, utpote quae ab Omnipotenti Deo per manus Moysis Patribus vestris tradita est, observantiam vero vestram, et vanam Legis interpretationem damnamus, et improbamus, quia Salvatorem, quem adhuc frustra expectatis, Apostolica Fides jam pridem advenisse docet, et praedicat Dominum Jesum Christum, qui cum Patre, et Spiritu Sancto vivit et regnat Deus per omnia saecula saeculorum.* (See "De Judaeis, et Lege" in Agostini Patrizi's *Caeremoniale Romanum*, lib. I, tit. 2, cap. 21, ed. Josephus Catalanus, *Sacrarum Caeremoniarum libri tres*, Rome, 1751, I, 129.)

4. For a general treatment of the ceremony see Ferdinand Gregorovius, *Das Ghetto und die Juden in Rom*, ed. Leo Baeck (Berlin: Schocken, 1935), pp. 34-44; Hermann Vogelstein and Paul Rieger, *Geschichte der Juden in Rom* (Berlin: Mayer and Müller, 1895-96), I, 264, and the abridged translation of this work by Hermann Vogelstein and Moses Hadas, *Rome* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1940), p. 129. See also Giacomo Blustein, *Storia degli Ebrei in Roma del 140 av. Cr. fino ad oggi* (Rome: P. Maglione e C. Strini, 1921), pp. 55, 68; Ermanno Loevinson, *Roma Israelitica. Wanderungen eines Juden durch die Kunststätten Roms* (Frankfurt: Kauffmann, 1927), pp. 85, 158-159. Most of the historical material on the participation of the Jews in this pontifical ceremony can be found in Francesco Cancellieri, *Storia de' solenni possessi de' Sommi Pontefici detti anticamente processi o processioni dopo la loro coronazione dalla Basilica Vaticana all Lateranense* (Rome, 1802).

5. See Gregorovius, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

585. Again, in a book of ceremonies from the first half of the eleventh century, purporting to represent the ceremonial of the emperor and his court, we read that on the occasion of his coronation the Jews of Rome were obliged to acclaim the emperor in Hebrew.⁶ What we are told is not altogether new but it permits a conclusion of great importance, for the text implies that the Jews of Rome were at that time, and probably had been for a long time, a corporate entity, a *schola*.⁷

There were many *scholae*, each of which had a definite, circumscribed relationship to the religious, social, and political life of medieval Rome. As a *schola* the Jews enjoyed status. Since the above-mentioned book of imperial ceremonies was largely an appropriation of papal rites by an antipapalist of the imperial faction, the obligation incumbent on the Jewish community to acclaim the emperor may well have included that of acclaiming the pope. Although we have no documents from that century about Jewish participation in pontifical ceremonies, this conclusion is entirely in line with historical material from later times in which the function of the Jews at the coronation ceremonies of pope and emperor is invariably mentioned.⁸

The first of these reports known to us was made in 1119 when Pope Calixtus II, having been elected in Cluny and crowned in Vienne, made his solemn entry into Rome. According to a contemporary historian, the Jews offered homage in Hebrew: To "the harmonious chanting of the Greeks and the Latins there were joined the acclamations of the Jews. . . ."⁹ The presentation of the scroll of the Law is first mentioned in connection with a papal ceremony that took place

6. See *Kaiser, Rom und Renovatio*, ed. Percy E. Schramm (Leipzig: Bibliothek Warburg, 1929), II, 101-102. See also Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae. A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Mediaeval Ruler Worship* (Berkeley: University of California, 1946). An important aspect of the acclamations, *laudes*, is revealed in one of the author's footnotes: "The underlying idea . . . was to offer acclamations in the three sacred languages, i.e. Hebrew, Greek, and Latin in accordance with the trilingual acclamation of the Lord (Jn 19:20)." (*Ibid.*, p. 27, n. 44.)

7. See Ferdinand Gregorovius, *Geschichte der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter* (4th ed.; Stuttgart, 1890), III, 455, n. 1. See also Vogelstein-Rieger, *op. cit.*, p. 211; Abraham Berliner, *Geschichte der Juden in Rom von den ältesten Zeiten bis zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt: Kauffmann, 1893), II, 8; Blustein, *op. cit.*, p. 55; Vogelstein-Hadas, *op. cit.*, p. 129. The opinion of these authors that the book of ceremonies derived from the court of Emperor Otto III is now superseded through the studies of Percy E. Schramm, *op. cit.*

8. See Vogelstein-Hadas, *op. cit.*, p. 129; Vogelstein-Rieger, *op. cit.*, I, 264.

9. Uodalscalus, *De Eginone et Herimanno in Vitae Pontificum Romanorum*, ed. Johann B. Watterich (Leipzig, 1862), II, 138-139, whose remarks are far from friendly. See also Vogelstein-Rieger, *op. cit.*, I, 219.

outside the city of Rome. In 1130, Innocent II had been elected pope and installed in the Lateran by a small group of cardinals; within two hours, another group of cardinals elected Cardinal Pierleone, who called himself Anacletus II. He was of Jewish descent, which may explain the silence of contemporary reports on the participation of the Jewish community in his installation.

Innocent II was forced to leave Rome and went to France. That same year, he celebrated Holy Week and Easter in the Abbey of St. Denis in Paris and, according to the description left us by the abbot, "the Synagogue of the Jews of Paris" participated in a triumphant Easter procession through the streets of the city. They offered the Pope "the writing of the Law, that is, a veiled scroll," and obtained from his lips what the chronicler calls a "supplication of mercy and tenderness: May almighty God remove the veil from your hearts."¹⁰ The chronicler does not describe the feelings of the Jews and probably did not know them. It is difficult to assume that they thought the pope's prayer tender and merciful, though that was its spirit.

In 1145, when Eugenius III in the company of large crowds took possession of the Lateran, "the Jews were not missing on this joyful occasion," carrying "on their shoulders the Law of Moses."¹¹ Before Alexander III (1159–1181) made his solemn entry into Rome in 1165, he spent the night in Ostia. The next morning he was met by a great number of clergy and people at "the Lateran Gate," today's Porta San Giovanni. "The Jews, too, came and, according to custom, carried the Law in their arms."¹² Again in 1187, when Clement III, who had been elected and consecrated in Pisa, arrived at Rome, the Jews were of the company of those who received him "with great joy, with song and praise."¹³

At times, historians are silent on the participation of Jews in such solemnities; they simply say that everything was performed "in accordance with the old and established custom," as does the report of the introduction of Innocent III into the Lateran in 1198.¹⁴ "The old

10. Suger, Abbot of St. Denis, is thus quoted in the *Vita Ludovici Grossi* (PL 186:1332). See also Vogelstein-Rieger, *op. cit.*, I, 222.

11. *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Louis Duchesne (Paris: Thorin, 1886–92), II, 387.

12. Watterich, *op. cit.*, II, 401; see also Horace Mann, *The Lives of the Popes in the Early Middle Ages* (London: Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1925–33), X, 79, n. 3.

13. *Annales Romani in Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, II, 349.

14. See *Gesta Innocentii*, V (PL 214:19–20).

and established custom" must have included the Jews, who had become so essential a part of papal ceremonial that their presence and function are mentioned in the liturgical books that both describe and govern pontifical ceremonies.

The Roman *Ordo XI*, compiled by Benedictus, a Canon of St. Peter's probably during the pontificate of Innocent II (1130-1143), speaks of the homage of the Jews at a solemn papal procession through the city of Rome on Easter Monday, as the Pope returned to his residence in the Lateran from St. Peter's where Mass had been celebrated that day.

After the Mass he is crowned in front of the basilica of St. Peter . . . and, wearing the crown, he returns in procession to the [Lateran] palace by this sacred way: through the Gate, over the Bridge [Ponte di Sant' Angelo], underneath the Arch of Triumph of the Emperors Theodosius, Valentinian, and Gratian [today the Basilica of San Celso], and [through the Via dei Banchi] by the Palace of Chromatius [across from the Church Santa Lucia in Gonfalone], where the Jews offer their acclamations. . . .¹⁵

Another source, the *ordo* of Albinus, written between 1183 and 1188, relates that the scroll of the Law was offered on this festive occasion, and speaks of "the appointed place" for its presentation.¹⁶

Cencius de Sabellis, who is usually called Cencius Camerarius and later became Pope Honorius III (1216-1227), compiled the *Ordo Romanus XII* which was in use as early as 1192. He, too, knew of the procession on Easter Monday and of the participation of the Jewish community in it. To this he adds an interesting detail: "For these acclamations they receive from the treasurer twenty solidi as *presbyterium*," a distribution of money made by the pope to the *scholae*, the various clerical and lay associations who rendered services to him and to his court.¹⁷ In a special chapter about this *presbyterium*, we are told that it was given twice a year, at Christmas and at Easter; that seventeen different *scholae* were entitled to it; that the Jews, although

15. *Ordo Rom. XI*, cap. 51, ed. Johannes Mabillon and Michael Germain (Paris: Montalant, 1724), II, 143; *Le Liber Censuum de l'Eglise Romaine*, ed. Paul Fabre and Louis Duchesne (Paris: Bibliothèque des écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 1905-10), II, 154b; see also *ibid.*, 163, n. 51.

16. See *Ordo Romanus de consuetudinibus et observantiis Romanae ecclesiae in precipuis sollempnitatibus*, cap. 37, *Liber Censuum*, ed. Fabre-Duchesne, II, 132b.

17. See *Ordo Rom. XII*, cap. 38, Mabillon II, 188; also *Liber Censuum*, ed. Fabre-Duchesne, I, 299a.

listed last, were paid the highest amount, while the others received various sums, from four to ten solidi.¹⁸ Cencius, then, furnishes final proof of the status of the Jews of medieval Rome as a *schola*. As such, they were a recognized community with appropriate rights and duties which were recorded in the official documents of the Curia; they held, at least as far as their official relationship to the Church was concerned, a place of respect.

Cencius explains that the *presbyterium* was distributed to the different *scholae* "because of the services they rendered to the Roman Curia."¹⁹ According to him, it was the province of the Jews to "present the Law to the pope on the day of coronation, offer him the acclamations, and bring to the treasury three and a half pounds of pepper and two and a half pounds of cinnamon."²⁰ The last service is a rather surprising detail for it indicates that in the Middle Ages certain delicacies of the table could be obtained only through the help of the Jews. When discussing the pope's consecration in St. Peter's, Cencius states that the ritual for the subsequent solemn procession to the Lateran was the same as that for Easter Monday,²¹ and mentions the Jews again as one of the "*scholae* of the papal palace" and thus entitled to the *presbyterium* for their presentation of the Law, as were clergy and laity for the services of "censer and bow."²² He also relates that, should the pope be consecrated outside Rome, the *presbyterium* would be cut in half for most *scholae* but not for the Jews, the priests of the City, and others.²³

Aside from reports of a stereotyped nature, as those of the celebration for Gregory IX (1227-1241)²⁴ and Innocent IV (1243-1254),²⁵ we also owe to the thirteenth century an important text as well as a poetic description of the coronation. The text is part of the *Caeremoniale* of Gregory X (1271-1276), the *Ordo Romanus XIII*, and

18. See *Ordo Rom. XII*, cap. 42, Mabillon II, 195-196; also Emmanuel Rodocanachi, *Le Saint-Siège et les juifs* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1891), p. 129.

19. *Ordo Rom. XII*, cap. 42, Mabillon II, 196.

20. *Ordo Rom. XII*, cap. 56, Mabillon II, 200; see also *Liber Censuum*, ed. Fabre-Duchesne, I, 306b.

21. See *Ordo Rom. XII*, cap. 82, Mabillon II, 213; also *Liber Censuum*, ed. Fabre-Duchesne, I, 312b.

22. See *ibid.*

23. See *Ordo Rom. XII*, cap. 85, Mabillon II, 214; also *Liber Censuum*, ed. Fabre-Duchesne, I, 313a-b.

24. See *Vita Gregorii IX*, cap. 4; also *Liber Censuum*, ed. Fabre-Duchesne, II, 19.

25. See Mann, *op. cit.*, XIV, 281-295.

is the first to mention that a member of the papal family threw coins into the crowd from an elevated spot. It also explains the purpose of the handing of the Law to the pope: that he may venerate it.²⁶

The poetic text is found in Cardinal Gaetano Stefaneschi's hexametric description of the coronation of Pope Boniface VIII on January 23, 1295. In free translation it reads:

*See the Pope, mounted on a horse,
Crossing the Tiber on the Marble Bridge!
Leaving behind the Tower of the Field,
He is met by the Jews, singing, but blind of heart.
To him, the Prince, right here in Parione,
Moses' Law is shown, pregnant with Christ.
Him he adored, in this Law prefigured; over the shoulder
He then returned the scroll with measured words.²⁷*

If in reading the ceremonial text of Gregory X someone should ask: "Did the pope really venerate the Torah scroll?" the poem gives the answer: *veneratus et ille*. . . . If he should ask further: "How did the pope venerate the Torah?" the Cardinal offers no information nor does anyone else. Perhaps the pope bowed to the scroll and kissed it. Though the Cardinal does not describe the manner of veneration, he does give the reason for it. To the pope as to the Church, the Torah is a woman with child, and that child is the Christ. He is hidden in it, enveloped in its words and deeds. It is this center the Church venerates, worships, and adores. Without it, the Torah would be like a frame that

26. See *Ordo Rom. XIII*, cap. 10, Mabillon II, 230; also Michel Andrieu, *Le Pontifical Romain au moyen-âge* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica, 1938-40), II, 537, no. 66. A perhaps ambiguous direction in the ceremonial, to be followed whenever the pope was consecrated or elected outside Rome, has led some Jewish authors to see in its provisions a deliberate humiliation of the Jews. In their opinion the Jewish delegation was obliged to go far outside the city, to a church dedicated to Mary Magdalen who, according to them, was once considered the patroness of lepers (a title for which I have found no support), simply to demonstrate that the Jewish position in medieval society was a degraded one. But the directions given to the Jews also bound the cardinals and the Curia.

27. *Ecce super Tyberim positum de marmore pontem
Transierat provectus equo; turrique relicta
de Campo, Judaea canens, quae caecula corde est,
Occurrit vesana Duci Parione sub ipso,
Qua Christo gravidam Legem plenamque sub umbra
Exhibuit Moysis veneratus et ille figuram
Hanc post terga dedit cauto sermone locutus.*

Gaetano Stefaneschi, "Opus Metricum," *Vita Bonifatii VIII* (lib. II, cap. 5), ed. Franz X. Seppelt, *Monumenta Coelestiniana* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1921).

holds no canvas. The painting is there but Israel, blinded by the beauty of the frame, does not see the greater beauty that it serves.

As far as I know, this is the only text that mentions the pope returning the scroll "over the shoulder." It must have been this passage that gave rise to the interpretation, widely held by Jewish historians and scholars as well as by popular belief, that the pope let the scroll "contemptuously . . . fall over his shoulder."²⁸ How could the pope have treated "contemptuously" what, a moment before, he had praised as having come from God? And did not the scroll contain the same Scriptures the Church in her liturgy had ever treated with the utmost respect? In the absence of more complete information, the intended significance of returning the scroll over the shoulder is impossible to establish. Still, in a way, the pope was doing what the head of the Jewish delegation himself had done: He had carried the scroll on his shoulder and had taken it into his hands; the pope, too, must have taken the scroll into his hands in order to pass it over his shoulder. Possibly, this rite was the central act of veneration: By putting the scroll on his shoulder, the pope may have wished to show that the Church identifies herself with the Torah as much as the Synagogue does, though for the Church it is prophet of and tutor to Christ (see Gal 3:24).

The same Cardinal compiled a book of pontifical ceremonies; it is the substance of the *Ordo Romanus XIV*. For his description of the presentation of the Torah he uses the *Caeremoniale* of Gregory X. Of the pope's "measured words" he has this to say: "Then the pope praises the Law but condemns the way in which the Jews observe or understand it, because He whom they say is to come, the Church

28. Vogelstein-Hadas, *op. cit.*, p. 130. To interpret the meaning of this particular ceremony as "rather a humiliation than a distinction" (*Jewish Encyclopedia*, X, 127; see also Rodocanachi, *op. cit.*, pp. 122, 129-130, 155), is to misunderstand it. Vogelstein-Hadas (*op. cit.*, p. 129) put it well: "The obligation of the Jews to participate in the ceremonial of homage involved nothing degrading; on the contrary, they were on equal footing with the other *scholae* in this respect." Yet they continue: "It was only in the form of the homage and its reception by the pope that the inferior position of the Jews was made plain" (*ibid.*, pp. 129-130). The same misunderstanding blemishes the otherwise remarkable *Roma Israelitica* by Loevinson, which is as essential a guide to the Christian visitor of the Eternal City as the Old Testament is for the understanding of the New. The author considers, for instance, the words of the pope in returning the Torah scroll as a "mocking remark" (*op. cit.*, p. 158; see also pp. 87, 264-265). The present study, I hope, will show that the Jews, at least at the time of their homage to the pope, were treated as equals and regarded with true respect.

teaches and proclaims as already come, Jesus the Christ."²⁹ The Cardinal mentions the presentation of the sacred scroll a second time, in a ritual for the installation of the pope outside the city of Rome; the presentation must have been considered essential since it is prescribed even under these irregular circumstances. He mentions the throwing of coins, adds a touching phrase when describing the arrival of the pope at the place where the Jews stood: "There the Lord Pope tarries for a little while," tells of the offering of the Law "for veneration," and gives the words of the pope as quoted before.³⁰ The veneration of the Law is mentioned a third time in this book of ceremonies: in the *ordo* of the pope's consecration in St. Peter's basilica, which Cardinal Stefaneschi found in a thirteenth-century pontifical of the Papal Curia.³¹

An interesting proof for the unfailing observance of the rite is furnished in accounts of the election and coronation of the last anti-pope, Duke Amadeo VIII of Savoy, who called himself Felix V. His coronation took place in Basel on June 24, 1440. The participation of the Jewish community is one of the few recorded details of that festivity.³² All in all, Cardinal Stefaneschi's *ordo* remained in use until the end of the fifteenth century.

In unpleasant contrast to the splendor of papal solemnities stands the behavior of the Roman people in the days of the Renaissance. They tried, not without violence, to seize the precious objects of the procession, the papal baldachin, for instance, and the pope's white horse, or the gold-adorned Torah scroll of the Jewish community. On

29. *Ordo Rom. XIV*, cap. 20, Mabillon II, 259. The pope's answer is variously quoted as *Confirmamus, sed non consentimus* or as *Legem probo, sed improbo gentem*. The first reading is, for instance, that of Julius R. Haarhaus, *Rom. Wanderung durch die Ewige Stadt und ihre Umgebung* (2nd ed.; Leipzig: Seemann, 1925, p. 173). Rodocanachi (*op. cit.*, p. 122) sees in the second form of the pope's answer (which I think inauthentic because the pope always uses the plural of majesty) *un sobisme*, with the help of which the popes avoided facing the Jewish problem. I found this distorted version of the pope's answer for the first time in the fifteenth century humanist, Jacopo di Scarperia whose *Epistola ad Eman. Crisolarum* was published by L. Mehus in Florence in the year 1743.

30. See *Ordo Rom. XIV*, cap. 39, Mabillon II, 268. The immediately following chapter 40, *De Lege offerenda per Judaeos et responsione Papae* (Mabillon II, 268) is almost identical with the description in cap. 20.

31. See *Ordo Rom. XIV*, cap. 40, Mabillon II, 275.

32. See Johannes de Segovia, *Historia Gestorum Generalis Synodi Basiliensis*, 16, 28 in *Monumenta Conciliorum Generalium saec. XV*, ed. E. Birk (Vienna: Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1883-90), III, 495.

April 20, 1455, when Calixtus III took possession of the Lateran, the people rioted, and the Pope almost lost his life.³³ A similar incident, though less serious, disturbed the procession of Pius II on September 3, 1458.³⁴ Paul II (1464-1471) took measures to prevent any disorder on the day he assumed possession of the Lateran,³⁵ yet violence broke out in 1471, at the beginning of the reign of Sixtus IV, and again a pope's life was endangered.³⁶

On these occasions, the Jews were often victims of the mobs. Thus when Innocent VIII, who had been elected on August 29, 1484, was installed, the Jewish community requested that, for its protection, the ceremony of its homage and of the pope's veneration of the Law be performed at the Castel Sant' Angelo, and Innocent granted the request. So we read in the diary of John Burckard, papal master of ceremonies.³⁷ In his description of the solemnity, which took place on September 12, we are told for the first time what the Jews said to the pope, at least as Burckard understood it: "Holy Father, in the name of our synagogue, we Hebrew men implore that Your Holiness deign to confirm and approve the Mosaic Law, which almighty God gave to Moses, our shepherd, on Mount Sinai, as the other supreme pontiffs, Your Holiness's predecessors, have confirmed and approved it."³⁸ We do not know if the Jews hailed the pope in the manner of the acclamations of the early Middle Ages; it may well be that Burckard gives no

33. See Ludwig von Pastor, *Geschichte der Paepste* (Freiburg: Herder, 1955), I, 671; see also Cancellieri, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

34. See Pastor, *op. cit.*, II, 16.

35. See *ibid.*, II, 304.

36. See *ibid.*, II, 462. As the incidents quoted show, these acts of violence were not directed primarily against the Jews as Jews and do not, therefore, justify the conclusion drawn by Vogelstein-Hadas: "The mob often took such occasions to make the Jews painfully aware of their inferiority" (*op. cit.*, p. 130).

37. See Johannes Burckard, *Liber notarum*, ed. Enrico Celani (Città di Castello: S. Lapi, 1907-13), I, 67. In Cod. 6324 fol. 224 of the Nationalbibliothek of Vienna, the initiative for this change is attributed to Pope Innocent himself, who wished to forestall any violence against the Jews on the part of the Roman people, *ne a Romanis, ut alias factum est, opprimantur*.

38. The Latin acclamation of the Jewish delegation was: *Beatissime Pater, nos viri hebrei, nomine sinagoge nostre supplicamus Sanctitatem vestram ut legem mosaycam ab omnipotenti Deo Moysi pastori nostro in monte Synai traditam nobis confirmare et approbare dignemini, quemadmodum alii summi pontifices, S. V. predecessores illam confirmarunt et approbarunt*. To this the pope replied: *Comendamus legem, vestram autem observantiam et intellectum condemnamus, quia quem venturum dicitis, Ecclesia docet et predicat venisse Dominum Nostrum Jesum Christum*. So, at least, was Burckard's recollection.

account because he did not understand what they sang or said. He does record, however, the pope's answer, which followed the *ordo* of Cardinal Stefaneschi; he also makes clear that it was because of the insolence of the Roman population that the meeting between the pope and the Jewish community was transferred from Monte Giordano to the Castel Sant' Angelo.

By order of Innocent VIII, the ceremonial in use at the pontifical court was revised by Agostino Patrizi, his master of ceremonies, a task finished in 1488. According to Patrizi, the Jews praised the Law in Hebrew; in the same tongue they entreated the pope to venerate it—not merely to confirm and approve it, as Burckard had recorded. It is Patrizi who gives the exact wording of the pope's answer. He also stresses that the Jews, so as not to be oppressed by the large crowds, would ask to take their place at the lower wall of the Castel Sant' Angelo, "on the corner of the road which leads to the [Vatican] palace."³⁹ His are the final instructions the presentation of the Torah received from the pen of a professional master of ceremonies. Theoretically speaking, they are still in force, though they have been abrogated by the law of custom. Until the rite was last performed in 1846, minor changes were made occasionally, but these did not substantially affect it.⁴⁰ Its meaning and impact, however, to some extent still understood at the close of the fifteenth century, soon became obscure.

39. See Catalanus, *op. cit.*, I, 129.

40. Julius II was the first pope who celebrated his coronation and the taking possession of the Lateran on different days (see Pastor, *op. cit.*, III, 702-703, n. 4). On December 5, 1503, during his procession to the Lateran, Pope Julius received the Jewish delegation near the Castel Sant' Angelo—according to John Burckard, who had been present. He comments on the length of the Jewish address (*Judei fecerunt longum sermonem*) and tells us—as far as I know for the first time in history—who the speaker was: the Spanish Rabbi Samuel Zarfati who also was the Pope's private physician. The Pontiff himself answered as the ceremonial required (*prout in libello*). (See Burckard, *op. cit.*, II, 418.) On March 19, 1513, the day Leo X took possession of the Lateran, the Jews were on a balcony and held burning candles in their hands (see *ibid.* I, 67, n. 2). Innocent X, who celebrated this act on October 4, 1644, transferred the function of the Jews to a place near the Colosseum, where it was held from thereon: The choice of this site was probably determined by its topographical closeness to the Jewish ghetto and by the fact that the more open areas there offered to the Jewish delegation a higher degree of safety. Loevinson's assumption that this site was chosen in a deliberate affront of the Jews of Rome, *als ausgemachte Erniedrigung ihrer Menschenwürde* (*op. cit.*, p. 87), who thus were forced to decorate the areas between the Arch of Titus and the Colosseum—both monuments meant to perpetuate the glory of the destroyer of Jerusalem—rests on no historical foundation.

III

HISTORY, liturgics, folklore, sociology, musicology—all may claim interest in the unique ceremony of the pope's veneration of the Torah; this analysis attempts to explore its theological significance.

A salient feature, revealing itself mainly in the ceremonial texts, is this: Rather than representing a mere meeting between the Jews and the Christians of Rome, the ceremony is an encounter between the Jewish community and the Bishop of Rome as the Supreme Pontiff of the Universal Church. At least, this is the impression I gather from the throwing of coins into the crowds and its relationship to the whole ceremony. Although the immediate purpose of this strange custom was to divert the attention of the Roman multitude from the pope as well as from the Jews and thus to guarantee safety for both, it also seems to indicate the pope's wish to be alone with the Jews.

Their meeting was not to be disturbed by the hostility of the ignorant, the conceited, or the bearers of ill will. He wanted to approach the Jews on a new level, unhampered by the past, unhampered by the pain of centuries, and he wanted the Jews to approach him in the same manner. By stopping on his way and tarrying with them for a little while he, Christ's vicar, brought once again Christ's presence to His people. To the Jews, the very existence of the Christian world seems antinomic: The God of Christians is a God of love and their Saviour a man of mercy but, in spite of this, the world of Christians is often a world without charity, a world of injustice and cruelty. The Jews are, and for so long have been, weary of this contradiction, even though it has its counterpart in Jewish life. But for a moment all this was held in suspense so that—if He had willed it—the impossible might have come to pass.

For a moment the pope was close to the Jews, and they were close to him. The scroll of the Torah on the rabbi's shoulder was a symbol of Israel under the Law—the yoke of which St. Peter had said that it lay heavily on him and his brethren (see *Ac* 15:10). After the rabbi took the scroll from his shoulder, he held it in his hands. It was veiled, hidden away from sight, as is the custom of the Orient with anything precious, sacred, and venerable. Within the sight and touch of the pope the rabbi removed the veil and unfolded the scroll. While he

held the Torah at one end, the pope reached for the other.⁴¹ As he looked on the archaic letters, unfamiliar to him, he was aware of Moses on the mountain, his face radiant with the glory of the Lord (see Ex 34:29); he was aware, too, that this document of the Ancient Covenant had been given to the forefathers of those standing beside him—his fathers in the spirit, but not his fathers in the flesh. In awe of the mystery that is Israel and in anguish of heart, he must have prayed for the Jewish people with the love the Church inherited from St. Paul: Even as your rabbi removed the veil from the scroll, "may almighty God remove the veil [of not knowing the Christ] from your hearts." It is recorded history that, in 1130, Innocent II uttered this prayer aloud; one may assume that his successors prayed as he did.

As Burckard reports it, the address of the Jews to the pope was rather matter-of-fact; they were mainly concerned with obtaining the pope's confirmation of the Law as a guarantee of their way of life. His report does not include the words of the medieval acclamations once considered essential, nor does it mention the delegation's request that the pope venerate the Law; it does mention, however, one moving expression of the Jews: the designation of Moses as their shepherd.⁴²

The pope's answer should be analyzed, I think, word by word:

Sanctam Legem: The emphatic inversion of the adjective reveals what struck him first upon beholding the Torah scroll. It is sacred! His *Sanctam Legem* paralleled the words with which he had begun the Gospel at the morning's Mass: *Sequentia Sancti Evangelii*, "The continuation of the holy Gospel." Both, the Law and the Gospel, are holy.

Viri Hebraei: He addressed them by the same honored title with which they had presented themselves to him. His *Viri Hebraei* echoed St. Peter's sermon on Pentecost, when he called the men of Jerusalem *Viri Judaei* (Ac 2:14). They also evoked St. Paul's *Viri Israelitae* at Antioch (Ac 13:16) and his *Hebraei sunt* (2 Cor 11:22),

41. This is the manner in which the homage of the Jews is pictured on the occasion of the coronation of the German Emperor Henry VII in 1312 as found in the *Codex Balduini Trevirensis*. It shows the scroll held on one end by the emperor, on the other by a Jew, and the emperor as inspecting or reading it. (See *Die Romfahrt Kaiser Heinrichs VII im Bildercyclus des Codex Bald. Trev.*, Berlin: Kgl. preuss. Staatsarchiv, 1881, pp. 80-81.) The picture is also reproduced by Vogelstein-Hadas.

42. Loevinson (*op. cit.*, p. 159) maintains that Rome's chief rabbi rendered homage to the pope as the successor of the pagan *pontifex maximus* as well as of the Jewish high priest. It seems superfluous to point out that such thoughts must have been entirely alien to the minds of the medieval Jews of Rome.

to which the pope, however, could not add the Apostle's proud *et ego*.

Et laudamus et veneramur: With praise and reverence for the Law he acceded to their request. For one short moment the Jews of Rome and the Pontiff of the Roman Church were one—sign and pledge of things to come.

Ab Omnipotenti Deo per manus Moysis patribus vestris, the pope declared and thus extolled the Law, the glory of Israel standing at his side. Through the hands of Moses, God's goodness had given it to the fathers of those before him. Yet to stop at this would have meant a shortening of God's saving design.

Vanam Legis interpretationem, the pope continued. He did not reproach the people or argue with them; still he could not remain silent and thus betray the Christ. In remaining silent, would he not also have failed them? Hence he had to speak: The Law is full of Christ, but their vision, fixed on its many regulations, does not see its center.

Frustra expectatis: The pope was convinced that they waited in vain, that no coming would crown their hope, unless it was the return of Him whom they did not expect.

Jesum Christum: Him they must meet, Him they will meet. But this will be in days to come; hence the pope, His vicar, wished to make Him present in their midst by the doxology. In this prayer of praise lay the deepest meaning of the pope's address.

The liturgical *ordo* does not designate that anyone should say "Amen." Israel herself will pronounce it, on the day that God alone knows, at the hour He has appointed from eternity.

IV

THE Church looks at the Jews with the eyes of Christ: "If thou hadst known . . . the things that are for thy peace! But now they are hidden from thy eyes" (Lk 19:42). Thus her great desire that Israel may know peace to the fullest. The attitude, however, of the medieval empire toward the Jews was quite different. As Monsignor Journet explains:

Based on the sacral concept of society, which counted only Christians as citizens . . . but based also on a voluntary withdrawal of Jews from the Christian world around them, the medieval status of the Jews was not

in itself an injustice. Yet the narrowness and evil passions of many Christians . . . at times turned that status into something terrible.⁴³

If the history of the Middle Ages teaches one lesson, it is that the kingdom of God cannot be established by legislation. It was foolish to expect that the Jews would be drawn to Christ through laws that withheld from them their full human dignity, particularly if these laws were enacted in the name of a God who made all men brothers.

The pope's veneration of the Torah, however, cast a ray of light and consolation over the degradation Jews so often suffered; through this rite the relationship between Jews and Christians was brought under the humanizing and civilizing influence of the liturgy. Each time the ceremony took place, freedom of worship and the sovereign right of conscience were affirmed for the Jewish community. Long before the reign of Pius XI, the ceremony proclaimed to Jews and Christians alike: "Abraham is called our father. . . . Spiritually, we are Semites." Though strangers to the world around them, the Jews of Rome knew that they could lead a relatively serene life. In the days of Alexander III (1159-1181), two hundred free and prosperous Jews lived within the walls of Rome; some of them held responsible positions in the pope's own palace, one being that of his private physician.⁴⁴

The great humanists who occupied the papal throne also opposed the inhuman treatment of Jews. In 1448, Nicolas V ruled against forced assistance at Mass, and in 1459, Pius II forbade forced baptism.⁴⁵ But later the old evils thus suppressed were revived and new ones

43. *The Bridge*, II, 75. The legal status of the Jews in the Middle Ages had already been determined by the Roman Emperors Theodosius and Justinian. The Theodosian laws (XVI, 8, 1-18; Const. Sirm. 4; Nov. 3 of Theodosius II) are easily accessible in English translation in *The Theodosian Code*, ed. and trans. Clyde Pharr (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), pp. 467-469, 479, 488-490. For the laws of Justinian see Peter Browe, S.J., "Die Judengesetzgebung Justinians," *Analecta Gregoriana* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1935), VIII, 109-146. These laws, based on what was understood as theological principles, denied full citizenship to the Jews. The medieval emperors renewed and confirmed the laws of Justinian and were just as much convinced that by doing so, they fulfilled the will of God, who was thought to have condemned the Jews to eternal servitude.

44. See Gregorovius, *Das Ghetto und die Juden in Rom*, pp. 29-30. As to Alexander III's protection of the Jews, see Mann, *op. cit.*, X, 235-236. Until the sixteenth century, the papal physicians were frequently Jews. The friendly relations between Jews and Christians in medieval Rome are also stressed by Blustein, *op. cit.*, pp. 59-60.

45. See Peter Browe, S.J., *Die Judenmission im Mittelalter und die Päpste*, Vol. VI of *Miscellanea Historicae Pontificae* (Rome: Gregorian University, 1942), p. 134.

introduced.⁴⁶ Remarkably enough, the gradual decline of the relationship between Jews and Christians in Rome was accompanied by a decline of this ceremony that in the end reduced it to a mere formality. When the pope and the Curia moved to Avignon, the pontifical liturgy underwent a profound change; among the many annual celebrations eliminated was the Easter Monday procession in which the Jews had their part. After the popes returned to Rome, the ancient ceremonies were not restored, the veneration of the Torah taking place only when a new pope took possession of the Lateran.

In 1556, Pope Paul IV ordered that a ghetto be erected in the city of Rome, and it was about this time that Jewish participation in the famous Roman carnival, originally not a degrading act, began to degenerate into a shameful spectacle of humiliation.⁴⁷ Ten years after the erection of the ghetto, St. Pius V, in spite of his personal sanctity, knew so little of the ancient veneration of the Torah that he refused to receive the homage of the Jewish community at all.⁴⁸ His successors reinstated the ceremony as a quaint and colorful memory of the dead

46. For instance the forced attendance at sermons several times a year. About these sermons, see *ibid.*, pp. 14-54.

47. Paul II transferred the Roman carnival entertainments, mostly races of runners with prizes for the winner, to the main streets of Rome and organized groups of participants according to ages, etc. One such group was formed by the Jews. (See Pastor, *op. cit.*, II, 314-315.) That there was no degradation involved was first stated by Vogelstein-Hadas (*op. cit.*, pp. 231-232). That at the end of the race the Jewish participants were kicked by the *conservatori di Roma*, the city's administrators, is a legend. (See Berliner, *op. cit.*, II, 49.) For a description of the celebrations, see Gregorovius, *Das Ghetto und die Juden in Rom*, p. 34, and Blustein, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-140.

48. See *Jewish Encyclopedia*, X, 127. Pastor (*op. cit.*, VIII, 52-53) does not mention this refusal in his description of the beginning of Pius V's pontificate, nor on pp. 243-248 where he treats of the Pope's attitude toward the Jewish people. The change in the attitude of the popes toward the Jews becomes painfully obvious to the reader of a strictly scholarly work like Moritz Stern's *Urkundliche Beiträge über die Stellung der Päpste zu den Juden* (Kiel: Fiencke, 1893). The documents issuing from the popes of the Middle Ages (Stern's collection begins with Gregory X in 1272) are nearly always acts of protection and the granting of privileges, while those of the Inquisition's heyday are mostly measures of oppression. (See also Konrad Eubel, "Zu dem Verhalten der Päpste gegen die Juden," *Römische Quartalschrift*, XIII, 1899, 29-42.) Some exaggerated statements about the plight of the Jews in Rome, for instance, that under papal rule they were abandoned to a fanaticism that gradually became legalized barbarism (see Gregorovius, *Das Ghetto und die Juden in Rom*, p. 29) were censured by Berliner (*op. cit.*, II, 10). For an objective, yet realistic presentation of these regrettable aberrations of the Christian conscience, see Franz X. Seppelt, *Geschichte der Päpste von den Anfängen bis zur Mitte des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts* (2nd ed.; Munich: Kösel, 1959), V, 84-87.

past. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Jews co-operated wholeheartedly in the exterior pomp to which their participation had become an important accessory.⁴⁹ In 1831, Gregory XVI wished to receive the Torah scroll as a gift, apparently unaware that the symbolism of the ceremony was incomplete without the veneration and the return of the sacred scroll, unaware they were a sign of Israel's freedom of worship and a token of papal protection. The Jewish community extricated itself deftly: It offered the Pope a beautifully handwritten book of other Hebrew texts.⁵⁰ By then, the ceremony had lost its last vestige of meaning; the events of 1870, rendering its performance impossible, did away with a corpse.

After the loss of temporal power over the city of Rome, the popes never left the Vatican. Thus Leo XIII, St. Pius X, and Benedict XV were not able to take possession of the Lateran. On February 11, 1929, the "Roman Question" was solved by the Lateran Treaty between Pius XI and the Kingdom of Italy. Article thirteen defines the Lateran, ancient residence of the popes, as part of the papal possessions.⁵¹ But since the rest of the city was not returned to the sovereignty of the Holy See, the solemn procession of the newly elected pope to the Lateran could not be revived. Pius XI in 1929, Pius XII in 1939, and Pope John XXIII in 1958, took possession of the Lateran in a ceremony that, because of the changed historical situation, could not include an encounter with the Jewish community of Rome.

But history is, at times, a powerful genius. On March 2, 1876, Eugenio Pacelli was born in Rome on that same Monte Giordano where time and again, for at least half a millennium, the Jews of Rome had stood to greet the pope who would stay with them for a moment, venerate the sacred Torah, and assure them of his protection. Although the ceremony had not taken place for a century prior to the reign of Pius XII, its spirit was not dead. In the greatest anguish ever endured by the Jewish people, the Jews of Rome found in him a shield greater than any other their chronicles have recorded. Like the veneration of the Torah, his assistance in the days of darkness brightens

49. When on November 23, 1644, Innocent X took possession of the Lateran, the Jews laid out sixty carpets with inscriptions from the Old Testament, stretching from the Arch of Titus to the Colosseum. (See Pastor, *op. cit.*, XIV, 22.)

50. See Vogelstein-Hadas, *op. cit.*, p. 336.

51. See *Church and State through the Centuries*, ed. Sidney Z. Ehler and John B. Morrall (Westminster: Newman, 1954), pp. 382-407.

the history of the relationship between Christians and Jews. Indeed, it has become history, history capable of purifying a painful past and of opening new pathways into the future.⁵²

EDITOR'S NOTE

AS A confirmation of Monsignor Wasner's final remarks it seems appropriate to record here the words of a Jewish writer, Dr. Joseph Lichten, on the compassion of Pius XII.

"When the Fascist regime in Italy started to expel Jewish citizens from governmental and scientific positions, the Pope invited many of them to the Vatican. The president and two professors of the University of Rome and a famous geographer, all Jews ousted by the Fascists, received important positions in the Vatican City. . . .

"When Rabbi Herzog appealed to Pius XII from Jerusalem, the Pontiff answered that he would do 'all in my power to end the persecution of the Jews.'

"Thousands of Jewish refugees poured into Vatican City; thousands of others sought shelter in the basilicas and other buildings of the Holy See outside the Vatican wall. No less than 15,000 were sheltered at Castel Gandolfo. The Pope sent by hand a letter to the bishops instructing them to lift the enclosure from convents and monasteries so that they could become refuges for the Jews. When the Nazis forbade ritual slaughter, the Pope sent *shohetim* into Vatican City to perform the ritual slaughter there and store food for Jews sheltered there. Throughout the city, priests and nuns often at great personal risk smuggled Jews to places of sanctuary in churches, monasteries and other institutions. More than 180 places of refuge were made available in Rome and secret asylum given to more than 7,000 fugitive Jews. . . .

"Once, the Chief Rabbi of Rome was summoned and told that he was expected to deliver to German authorities—by noon of the following day—one million lire and one hundred pounds of gold. If he

52. See the chapter "Protector of the Persecuted" in Piero Bargellini's *Pius XII, The Angelic Shepherd* (New York: Good Shepherd, 1950), pp. 133-143.

failed, the Nazis said, they would order the immediate dispersal of Jews—which meant atrocities and death. The Jewish community of Rome did not have one hundred pounds of gold and the Chief Rabbi appealed for help to Pius XII. The Pope immediately instructed the Vatican treasurer to raise whatever amount was still needed. In less than a day, by melting down religious vessels, one hundred pounds of gold were raised.

“Italian Jews know how much they owed to Pius XII. A prominent Jewish citizen of Rome declared: ‘Our Catholic brothers have done more for us than we can ever do to repay.’ And another Jew, at a meeting of the National Committee of Liberation, said: ‘It was in the name of the frankest feeling of Brotherhood that the Church did its utmost to rescue our threatened people from destruction. The supreme ecclesiastical authorities and all those priests who suffered for us in imprisonment and in concentration camps have our eternal gratitude.’”

(“Pope Pius XII and the Jews,” *Anti-Defamation League Bulletin*, October 1958.)