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ROMAN CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL

ATTITUDES TO JUDAISM SINCE 1945

CATHERINE HODGSON

Thesis submitted for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Theology at  
Durham University 1988

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## ABSTRACT

The period since 1945 has witnessed profound and far-reaching changes in Christian theological attitudes to Judaism. The terrible suffering of the Jewish people in the Holocaust prompted Christian theologians to re-examine their attitudes, their beliefs and their teaching with regard to Judaism. The thesis centres on the responses of the Roman Catholic Church to the theological problems which this issue provoked, although attention is also given to the work of Jewish and Protestant scholars as the process of dialogue developed.

The thesis begins with an examination of how the Second Vatican Council defined itself with regard to Judaism. The events preceding the promulgation of the fourth section of the 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions' (Nostra Aetate) issued in 1965 are examined and the text is analysed. The implications as well as the limitations of the Declaration are considered, and reactions to it, by both Christian and Jewish scholars, are discussed.

The second section outlines the pioneering work in this field by Karl Rahner and Hans Küng. It compares and contrasts their theological writings on this issue and pays particular attention to the ways in which they strove to develop ideas which had been implicit in the Declaration of Vatican II.

The final and longest section of the thesis is concerned with four of the major areas in this field which both Christian and Jewish scholars have debated and researched: the charge of deicide against the Jewish people; the problems surrounding the position of the Pharisees in the New Testament; the religious problems posed by the Holocaust experience for both Christians and Jews; and (briefly) the theological and political problems posed by the position of the State of Israel. All these issues have been related to contemporary biblical scholarship as well as changing relationships between Judaism and Christianity.



## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In the period since 1945, major changes have taken place in relationships between the Roman Catholic Church and Judaism. The sufferings of the Jewish people during the Second World War and the events of the Holocaust undoubtedly prompted feelings of pity, revulsion and even guilt. For all Christians, there was no escape from the harsh reality of the results of anti-Semitism. The assertions that Christianity is the religion of love and compassion seemed a mockery when faced with the evidence of the persecutions which the Jewish people had endured. A vague sense of pity was seen by many Christians to be a totally inadequate response: changes were needed at both a theological and a practical level. Ignorance needed to be dispelled and Christians needed to be made more aware of the problems and their possible solutions; there was a need to promote recognition of and respect for the differences between the two religions, as well as an appreciation and understanding of each faith, for both Christians and Jews.

This thesis centres on the theological problems faced by the Christian Church in its attempts to change and modify its attitude to Judaism in the post-war period. It is concerned mainly with the work in this area by Roman Catholic theologians, although there is extensive reference to Jewish scholarship in this field, as well as reference to the work of Protestant theologians.

Before 1945, the Roman Catholic Church had maintained an exclusivist position: "no salvation outside the Church". In 1965, the Second Vatican Council issued a major Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate) part four of



which was concerned with the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. The thesis begins by tracing the steps by which this declaration emerged, for this was the first major impetus towards a radical change in Catholic theological attitudes. The declaration is examined in detail and its strengths and limitations are discussed. A chapter is then devoted to an examination of the important pioneering work of Karl Rahner and Hans Küng. Finally, the thesis considers some of the major issues which have concerned, and are still concerning, theologians in this field: the charge of deicide against the Jews; the problems concerned with the Pharisees in the New Testament; the difficulties involved in facing up to the problems posed by the whole Holocaust experience; and finally a brief examination of the issues involved with the State of Israel.

During the post-war period, there have been more radical changes in Roman Catholic attitudes than there have been for centuries. Many problems remain but important moves have been made and, as one Jewish scholar has stated:

"The gulf between Jews and Christians that Hitler succeeded in creating can be bridged only if it is recognised. But to bridge it is of incalculable importance for the future of both Judaism and Christianity."(1)

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(1) E. Fackenheim, 'Holocaust and the State of Israel: Their Relation' in E. Fleischner, Auschwitz: Beginning of a new era? (New York, 1977), Page 207.

CHAPTER ONE

VATICAN II

## Introduction

Major changes in Christian theological attitudes to Judaism were initiated, after the Second World War, by the Second Vatican Council. This Council, summoned by Pope John XXIII, met in four sessions from 1962 to 1965(1). To a great extent it was convened, organised and governed by the same laws as its predecessor, Vatican I, (1869-1870)(2) and before that the Council of Trent (1545-1563)(3). However, Vatican II(4) was unique in its theological attitudes to Judaism. It intended to eradicate seeds of discord and promote peace and the unity of all humankind, thus establishing itself as the first truly ecumenical council.

"it marked a turning point in the history of the Roman Catholic Church in the twentieth century. It initiated major changes in the Church's liturgy and opened up new attitudes to Christians, to other religions and to the secular world."(5)

More specifically, the second Vatican Council signalled a radical change in Catholic theological attitudes to Judaism from exclusivism to inclusivism. The 'Declaration on the Relationship of

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- (1) F. L. Cross, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. (Oxford University Press, 1974), page 1428.  
(2) Ibid, page 1427.  
(3) Ibid, page 1392.  
and A. Richardson and J. Bowden, A New Dictionary of Christian Theology. (S.C.M., 1983), page 580.  
(4) The Council is commonly referred to as 'Vatican II'. For example, see  
E. Fisher, Faith Without Prejudice: Rebuilding Christian Attitudes Toward Judaism. (Paulist Press, 1977), page 7.  
and J. T. Pawlikowski, What are they saying about Christian-Jewish Relations? (Paulist Press, 1980), page vii.  
(5) J. Hick and P. Hebblethwaite, Christianity and Other Religions. (Collins, 1980), page 235.

the Church to non-Christian Religions' (Nostra Aetate) was promulgated in 1965 and part four was concerned with the relationship of the Christians and Jews (6). This declaration has had a radical effect on contemporary theological attitudes to Judaism, for,

"both in tenor and tendency, this entire declaration is something of a real innovation in the official Church." (7)

In order to understand contemporary Catholic theological attitudes to Judaism, it is necessary to use part four of the 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions' from Vatican II, as a starting point, for, as Professor Halpern says:

"The twentieth anniversary of Nostra Aetate calls for more than a timely glance. A mere celebration will not suffice. It must and should be a starting point for a search into the implications of the document, the developments that have ensued and what could or should be done from the perspective of dialogue in the decades to come."(8)

It is necessary to set Vatican II in the perspective of both past development and present trend in order to interpret the meaning and the relative importance of its decisions, and thus to understand

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- (6) The declaration was promulgated by the Vatican Council on October 25th, 1965. It was published by W. Abbott in 1965. See W. Abbott, Documents of Vatican II, (Chapman, 1967), page 660. (Quotations of the declaration will be taken from this translation). The declaration is also reprinted by Hick and Hebblethwaite, op.cit., page 80 and by The Catholic Truth Society, "Nostra Aetate". (Holy See Publishers, 1981). Both of these translations entitle section 4 "The Jewish Religion".
- (7) E. Schillebeeckx, Vatican II: The Real Achievement. (Sheed and Ward, 1967), page 38.
- (8) J. Halperin, "Nostra Aetate Twenty Years On", Christian-Jewish Relations, 18, 3, 1985, page 19.

the development of Catholic theological thought related to Judaism throughout the Council. My aim in this section on Vatican II is to consider three main areas. The first is an examination of events which led up to part four of the 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions'. This will include an investigation of the motives which prompted the declaration; the aims of the Council; the theological ideas of the main people involved in producing the declaration; and an inquiry into the mystery that surrounded this section. Secondly, I intend to consider the fourth part of the text of the declaration in order to understand the theological problems it identified and the doubts and issues that it raised. Thirdly, I propose to provide a review of what has happened as a result of the declaration. I shall outline some of the Catholic and Jewish responses to the declaration, as well as some of the effects it has had upon the world at large.

The impact of Vatican II is well summarised by Cardinal Manning:

"... windows, long-shut, were opened, doors, long-closed, allowed a traffic of understanding and updating, reconciliation and renewal to flow in transforming waves for religious enrichment the world over."(9)

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(9) T. Cardinal Manning, "Nostra Aetate Twenty Years On", Christian-Jewish Relations, 18, 3, 1985, page 29

Section 1: An examination of the events which led up to the fourth part of the 'Declaration on the relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions' (Nostra Aetate)

In any examination of Roman Catholic theological attitudes, the authority of the Papacy obviously provides a main core of material. It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of Pope John XXIII in promoting a new theological understanding between Catholics and Jews, but his work has to be seen in context; so I will make some reference also to his predecessor, Pius XII. Following an examination of Pope John's work, I shall analyse the theological attitude to Judaism promoted by Cardinal Bea and the initial stages of the Declaration. Finally, I shall consider the years 1962 to 1965 and the problems Pope Paul VI faced in refining the declaration until it was eventually promulgated by the Vatican Council in 1965. By taking this chronological approach, I propose to reveal the motives which prompted the declaration, the aims of the Council, the theological ideas of the main people involved and the reasons for the mystery that surrounded the later part of the Council.

POPE PIUS XII (1939-1958)

It is important to begin this section by looking briefly at the part played by Pope Pius XII in the years that led up to the Second Vatican Council, in order to provide the context of the Council and to give a clear perspective and full impression of the events prior to the 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions'. Butler goes so far as to say of Pope Pius XII that:

"History will probably accord to him an important role in preparing the way for Vatican II."(10)

From the beginning of his reign in 1939, Pope Pius XII had to experience the bitterness of the Second World War, the holocaust and the crises that followed it. His policies on behalf of the Jews under the Hitler regime have often been attacked:

"Pius XII was criticised for not rejecting Nazism more explicitly"(11)

However, Pope Pius followed the traditional teaching of the Church which discouraged the Papacy from taking a position at times of war.(12)

Throughout the war, Pope Pius remained silent about the atrocities carried out by the Nazis. Millions of Jews and civilians were murdered, often in the name of Christianity. Many Catholics believed that the Pope should have used his authority as head of the

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(10) C. Butler, The Theology of Vatican II. (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1967) page 15

(11) J. McKenzie, The Roman Catholic Church. (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1969) page 115.

(12) Ibid, page 115

Church to speak out against such obviously immoral acts. His failure to do so has been condemned:

"His alleged silence in the face of Nazi atrocities has been the subject of criticism."(13)

Criticism of the Pope's silence became acute when it was connected with the time he spent in Germany prior to the war. With his undoubted affection for the German people, Pius XII was often accused of being pro-German and consequently anti-semitic during the war.(14)

After the war, the official justification given for the silence of the Pope Pius in the face of the holocaust was that:

"it was dangerous to speak out."(15)

Pope Pius feared that, if he had spoken out, worse reprisals would have resulted for the victims. Yet, Falconi questions this:

"Far from being a reason, it might, of course, have been a pretext."(16)

Owen Chadwick, on the other hand, maintains that:

"the pontiff was determined to remain neutral in an attempt to enhance his moral authority as mediator."(17)

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(13) F. L. Cross, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church. (Oxford University Press, 1974) page 1099.

See also,

C. Falconi, The Silence of Pope Pius XII. (Faber and Faber, 1970)

(14) C. Falconi, The Popes in the Twentieth Century. (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1967) page 254

(15) C. Falconi, The Silence of Pope Pius XII. op.cit., page 74

(16) Ibid., page 75.

(17) Owen Chadwick, "Britain and the Vatican during the Second World War" The Daily Telegraph, Friday 9th January 1987, page 9



Whatever the reason for the silence of Pope Pius during the war, the fact remains that it had a negative effect, for,

"the unfortunate part of it was that this carefully poised impartiality in the long run benefited the guilty rather than the innocent and so ceased to be impartial."(18)

It is clear, however, that Pope Pius XII did take practical action within the Vatican City to help Jews during the war. He made extensive use of communications available. Using the Vatican Radio, he formed an information service for prisoners of war and missing persons, (including Catholics and Jews). Extensive numbers of letters were sent to Bishops in Germany to encourage the help of a local network for Jews. Pope Pius also organised the provision of shelter for some 30,000 Jewish refugees in the Vatican City State.(19) Thus, Pope Pius excelled in the sphere of 'charity at home' with relation to Jews during the war. This is a point often neglected when assessing the part played by Pope Pius in Catholic-Jewish relations. Nevertheless, because of Jewish perceptions of Pius XII's silence and his failure to condemn Nazi atrocities, it is difficult to envisage him being able to change relationships with the Jews as Pope John was able to do.

In addition, Kaiser asserts that Pius XII's ecclesiology was founded on the old Augustinian dualism and that this was inadequate to meet the exigencies of a new world of increasing tensions and internationalisation. Kaiser states,

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(18) C. Falconi, The Popes in the Twentieth Century, page 254.

(19) Ibid., page 263

"If Pius XII had succeeded in calling an Ecumenical Council (and he wanted to until he was dissuaded by his advisors), the result might well have been catastrophic. Pius would have wanted to reform the Curia and still keep it Roman."(20)

In some ways, however, Pius XII did prepare the way for Vatican II. In the encyclical Humani Generis, released in 1950, he advocated a return of inclusivism. He maintained the basic conviction that unity exists in the Catholic Church and that:

"all ecumenism built up outside the Catholic Church can only be built on sand."(21)

But he did make implicit statements that Jews are, in some invisible way, part of the Catholic Church. This attitude is related to John 10 v10:

"And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also and they will also heed my voice."

Brunner has criticised the theology of Pius XII on this issue on the grounds that it is an

"indistinct longing for membership in the Church, of which even the person himself is often unconscious,"(22)

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- (20) R. Kaiser, Inside the Council. (Burns and Oates, 1963) page 89.  
(21) M. Boegner, The Long Road to Unity. (Collins, 1970) page 122  
(22) E. Brunner in B. Leeming, The Vatican Council and Christian Unity. (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1966) page 98.

but the seeds of a new inclusivist theology do seem to have been sown in Pius' time.

However, despite these tentative steps towards inclusivism, Pope Pius was essentially conservative and, in the area of relationships with the Jews, he was handicapped by criticism of his conduct during the second world war. It was to be left to his successor, Pope John XXIII, to provide the impetus which was needed to make far-reaching changes.

POPE JOHN XXIII (1958-1963)

"It is difficult to exaggerate the role played by Pope John XXIII in the total event known as the Second Vatican Council."(23)

The importance of Pope John XXIII in promoting a new theological understanding of relations between Catholics and Jews cannot be overestimated. The source of part four of the 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions' can be traced to Pope John. The aim of the declaration was set out by him and he provided a supreme example by putting the new Catholic theological attitudes to Jews into practice.

Pope John XXIII announced his intention of calling an Ecumenical Council on 25 January 1959.

"The impact was as profound in the Vatican as it was in various parts of the Christian world"(24)

Pope John believed that a renewal of the Catholic Church was essential. The general aim of the Council was

"the desire, or rather the 'burning aspirations', for unity"(25)

Pope John commissioned a schema specifically on the relationship between Christianity and Judaism.(26) The particular aim of this, he suggested, should be twofold. Firstly, it should aim for the

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(23) R. McBrien, Catholicism (Winston Press, 1980) Volume II, page 666.

(24) M. Boegner, The Long Road to Unity (Collins, 1970) page 265. See also P. Hebblethwaite, John XXIII: Pope of the Council (Geoffrey Chapman, 1984)

(25) Cardinal A. Bea, Ecumenism in Focus (Chapman, 1969) page 46.

(26) R. Kaiser, op.cit., page 46.

rejuvenation of the Church and, second, it should aim to develop a climate of respect, understanding and love, clearing away the centuries of prejudice and misunderstanding. Therefore, Pope John ensured a full discussion of the main theological issues concerning Christianity and Judaism to be carried out by the Vatican Fathers in the spirit of love and understanding. Pope John hoped to

"revise old Catholic myths about the 'deicide people', a myth that has nurtured anti-semitism for centuries."(27)

Pope John XXIII promoted a climate of respect for Jews and aimed to clear away centuries of prejudice. For example, in his 'Good Friday Prayer' of 21 March 1959, he deleted "unbelieving" from the phrase "let us pray for unbelieving Jews". He also deleted "that our God and Lord will remove the veil from their hearts" and replaced it with "that our God and Lord will be pleased to look graciously upon them."(28) Pope John maintained an ecumenical delicacy of feeling here. He stressed the point that man must stand respectfully aside and let God decide when and how to bring His plan of salvation into completion. These changes in theological thought Pope John extended to the liturgy of the Church as a whole by his Papal authority.

In order to bridge the gap from the attitude of anti-semitism to that of tolerance between Christians and Jews, Pope John XXIII suggested that Christians should follow the simple rules of trying to understand and love Jews. Although this may seem simplistic, Pope John stressed the importance of this theological attitude. For

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(27) R. Kaiser, Inside the Council (Burns and Oates, 1963) page 46 (see also footnote 34).

(28) H. Vorgrimler, Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II (Burns and Oates, 1966) Volume 3, pages 4 and 5.

example, the Pope demonstrated this when he said to a group of American Jews visiting Rome, his famous words,

"I am Joseph your brother" (Genesis 45 v4)(29)

In these five words, Pope John emphasized to the world that the tension between Jewish and Christian belief must not degenerate into hostility but should be like brotherhood. Using his real name and a text as applicable to Jews (Jewish Scripture) as to Christians, he acknowledged shared origins with Jews and showed real love and understanding.

Pope John realised that an important part of establishing a new attitude towards Judaism entailed taking note of the Jewish response to this issue. When Jules Isaac, the Jewish historian visited the Pope in 1960, it was a very important event. The detailed issues he raised were to be included in the schema on Christian-Jewish relations commissioned by the Pope.(30) These were crucial issues in this area of theology and are still being discussed today.(31) For example, Isaac asked for a brief correction of false and unjust statements about Israel in Christian teaching.(32) He called for the eradication of the theological myth that the scattering of Israel was a punishment for the crucifixion of Jesus. He asked that it be stressed that there is proof that the accusation of deicide raised against Jews did not belong to the true tradition of the Church, for in the New Testament, the Passion emphasized the guilt of all sinners as the fundamental cause of Christ's death upon the cross. All these issues were taken

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(29) Ibid, page 6

(30) See page 14.

(31) See especially C. Thoma A Christian Theology of Judaism (Paulist Press, 1980).

(32) J. Isaac, The Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism (Council for Christians and Jews and The Parkes Library, 1965) page 2.

up and explored during the Second Vatican Council. It is significant that Pope John began a two-way response between Christianity and Judaism and thus began Vatican II on a positive note. Therefore, the role that Pope John played was one of a catalyst of reconciliation between Christianity and Judaism.

In 1963 Pope John was succeeded by Pope Paul VI. It was to be another two years before the final approval and promulgation of the 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions.'

## CARDINAL BEA

Cardinal Bea not only played an important part in promoting general 'Ecumenical Unity' throughout the Roman Catholic Church in the years 1960-1965; he was also of paramount importance in the specific area of Christian-Jewish relations during this time. It was he who drafted the initial document concerned with the Catholic attitude to Jews, under the authority of Pope John XXIII.

As soon as Bea took up his office as Cardinal to Pope John XXIII in 1960, he expressed his deep interest in the theological issue of ecumenical unity.

"Bea had been a Cardinal just five months when he sent a simple memo - 'Why not a commission to study Christian Unity?'"(33)

Bea sent this memo to Pope John XXIII. On 25 March 1960, four days later, Cardinal Bea had been appointed to the Secretariat for promoting Christian Unity. Pope John had endowed him with a double duty. This was to draft conciliar proposals impinging on unity and to move into the world and establish cordial relations with all Christians and all faiths.

In 1961 Pope John XXIII asked Cardinal Bea to prepare a schema concerned specifically with Christian-Jewish relations for the Second Vatican Council. The Pope hoped that this would change old Catholic myths about the Jews: myths which had

"nurtured anti-semitism for centuries."(34)

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(33) R. Kaiser, op. cit., page 33.

(34) R. Kaiser, Inside the Council (Burns and Oates, 1963) page 46. For a fuller quotation regarding Pope John's intentions, please see footnote 27.



Cardinal Bea was a very competent man to choose for this task. His great understanding and his learning were put to good use. This also increased his authority within the Vatican as a whole.

"The Secretariat rapidly became a powerful force in the Council, and it was inevitably committed to a non-scholastic, patristic and biblical approach to theological issues."(35)

The reasons for needing a document concerned with Christian-Jewish relations were very clear in the mind of Cardinal Bea. He was well aware that,

"the relation of the Church with the Jewish people is a two thousand year old problem, as old as Christianity itself. It became much more acute, particularly in view of the ruthless policy of extermination inflicted upon millions of Jews by the Nazi regime of Germany."(36)

It would seem then that nothing could be simpler than for the Vatican Council to approve a brief and clear document on the Jews, proclaiming its horror of persecution and removing once and for all any possible doubt about the Roman Catholic position. Pawley explains that,

"As Cardinal Bea himself pointed out, the obscene horror of Hitler's 'final solution' may itself owe something to Christian behaviour in the past"(37)

Yet, approving this document turned out to be a long and difficult task for the Catholic Church.

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(35) C. Butler, The Theology of Vatican II (Darton, Longman and Todd 1967) page 17.

(36) Cardinal A. Bea, The Church and the Jewish People (Chapman, 1966) page 7.

(37) B. C. Pawley, The Second Vatican Council (Oxford University Press, 1967) page 234.

Cardinal Bea involved many people in the formulation of the document concerning Christian-Jewish relations. This reflected his deep interest in an ecumenical outlook and ensured that all the necessary theological issues would be raised in the document.

"Back in Rome, Bea began to organise his staff. He retained the services of ... Schmidt, a Jesuit biblical scholar, ... and the two of them discovered what a store of Catholic ecumenists were available to help."(38)

The Cardinal included suggestions from Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Jewish scholars in forming his material for the document.(39) He was careful to express his wish, (in a reasoned article in La Civitta Cattolica 14 January 1961)(40) to steer a 'middle course' between one extreme of self defence and reserve and the other extreme of placing the Catholic Church and other confessions almost on an equal level. He said,

"Little by little, we are trying to create a better atmosphere between the confessions, to help along gradual and progressive approaches between Christians, and to prepare the doctrinal and practical supports for those approaches."(41)

The Cardinal's preparation of the document was both extensive and thorough:

"Pope John XXIII had directed the Unity Secretariat to prepare for the Second Vatican Council a statement on the

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(38) R. Kaiser, op. cit., page 38.

(39) The Cardinal took note of suggestions from such people as Thomas Holland Coadjutor, Bishop of Portsmouth, John Carmel Heenen of Liverpool, Monsignor Jan Willebrands of the Netherlands (who became secretary for the Cardinal) and J. Oesterreicher (a Jewish convert), among many others, when forming the material for the document.

(40) R. Kaiser, op. cit., page 41.

(41) Ibid, page 39

attitude of Catholics towards Jews. After more than two years of preparation a draft document was prepared, which represents the agreements of a large number of leading Catholic scholars and thinkers of various backgrounds and nationalities."(42)

Cardinal Bea aimed to raise many issues in his document on Catholic attitudes to Jews. He stressed the need for a purely religious and spiritual document. He maintained that it should in no way be about political questions or the State of Israel. Cardinal Bea dwelt on the positive links of the Catholic Church with Judaism because of its roots in the Covenant made by God with Abraham. He called the accusation of deicide, maintained by the Catholic Church, unjust. He insisted that,

"Where the New Testament speaks explicitly of responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus, it refers either to the Sanhedrin or to the inhabitants of Jerusalem."(43)

And he concluded that, according to a correct interpretation of the New Testament, the responsibility of Christ's death falls upon all sinful mankind.(44)

Bea maintained continually that anti-Semitism must be rooted out of the Catholic Church and its teaching. He called for a programme of re-education for the Catholic Church, urging preachers to promote mutual understanding and esteem towards Jewish people. The Cardinal isolated the Apostle Paul's attitude towards Judaism for

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(42) Cardinal A. Bea, Unity in Freedom (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964) page 207.

(43) Cardinal A. Bea, The Church and The Jewish People, page 87.

(44) For further discussion on 'the deicide charge' see Chapter 3, Section 1.

special attention, stressing that it should be considered 'in context'. Bea explained that, often,

"when the Fathers make unfavourable or hostile remarks concerning Jews, they do not refer specifically to members of the Jewish people as such but rather to a particular attitude of mind .."(45)

Cardinal Bea stressed the need to interpret biblical passages in their concrete historical context and on the basis of the actual circumstances to which they referred.

However, the document prepared by Cardinal Bea, was not immediately accepted by the Second Vatican Council. The whole process of issuing a declaration concerning the Catholic attitude to Jews lasted from 1961 to 1965. The document put forward by Cardinal Bea had to be refined. This naturally led to the question "Why was this?" Rynne says,

"Nothing the Council had discussed so far generated so much warmth of feeling"(46)

It appears that there were two main difficulties here. First, there were pressures forced upon the document from a small section of very conservative Vatican Fathers and, second, there were political pressures from outside the Council.(47) The title of the initial document had been

"The Attitude of Catholics to Non-Christians, especially the Jews."(48)

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(45) Cardinal A. Bea, The Church and the Jewish People op.cit., page 14.

(46) X. Rynne, The Second Session (Faber and Faber, 1963) page 217.

(47) See B. C. Pawley, The Second Vatican Council (Oxford University Press, 1967) page 234.

(48) Cardinal A. Bea, The Church and the Jewish People, page 24.

However, some of the Vatican Fathers were hostile even to the title.(49)

"The fathers from the Eastern Uniate Churches were unanimous in their hostility towards a special treatment of the Jews .... no matter what the Decree said, it would be interpreted politically in that part of the world."(50)

Added to this, newspapers during this time (1960-1965), gave the impression, even if unintentionally, that the Council could not make up its mind whether or not to condemn anti-semitism.

The hostile pressure upon the document was tremendous and even led to its withdrawal:

"during this last session of the Central preparatory commission (June 1962), political pressure caused the removal of the draft relating to the Church's relationship to the Jews. This had been prepared on Pope John's instructions by the Unity Secretariat. Cardinal Bea could do nothing but accept this decision with patience."(51)

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(49) For a fuller explanation of the hostility of the extreme conservative faction within the Vatican Council see page 21

(50) B. C. Pawley, op.cit., page 235

(51) Cardinal A. Bea, Spiritual Profile translated by E. M. Stewart (Geoffrey Chapman, 1971) page 88.

POPE PAUL VI (1963-1978)

The change of Papacy, the length of time the Second Vatican Council as a whole took, and the unhappy political situation, were all factors in delaying the approval of the document concerning Catholic attitudes to Jews put forward by Cardinal Bea. In 1964, (under the authority of Pope Paul VI), the document was deferred by the Vatican Council and had to be refined. This process took many months and it was not until 28 October 1965 that a revised document was issued as part four of the 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions' (Nostra Aetate)(52). This in turn led to an element of mystery surrounding the declaration which was eventually released.

Pope Paul VI tried to avoid a detailed debate on the Jewish problem from taking place on the floor of the Second Vatican Council because of the tense political situation between the Arab States and the Holy Land.(53)

"The subsequent history of the Declaration was notable because of great difficulties, not all of which were theological, for some were partly due to the unhappy political circumstances of our time."(54)

Some Catholic theologians believe that the revisions made to the

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(52) Cardinal A. Bea, The Church and the Jewish People, page 23.

(53) Pope Paul VI was just about to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Favouring the Jews (and consequently the State of Israel), by discussing this document in detail could have caused the Catholic Church to suffer reprisals from the Arab governments.

See F. L. Cross, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (Oxford University Press, 1974) page 1051.

(54) Cardinal A. Bea, The Church and the Jewish People, page 22.

document under the authority of Pope Paul VI meant that many crucial issues were left out. For example, Kung says:

"There were acts of real Curial sabotage against the Declaration on the Jews.., and only massive protest by Bishops and theologians prevented the resolutions on these important matters from being torpedoed."(55)

McSweeney states the general situation when he says:

"Under Pope Paul VI, the Roman Church was to carry forward the most fundamental reappraisal of its doctrine, liturgy and relationship to the world in its 2,000 year history."(56)

McSweeney goes on to suggest that there was a right wing section of the Second Vatican Council opposed to ideas promoted by Pope John XXIII because they were 'modernist'.(57) There was concern at the Council when,

"the conservatives finally went so far as to publish a special red tome of 640 pages and deliver it to every Council Father at his Rome residence ... the book was an obvious rehash of old anti-semitic literature inside a special introduction and final chapter written for the Council. The special message was that cardinals, archbishops and bishops of the Council's progressive wing are part of a gigantic Communistic, Masonic, Zionist plot to destroy the Church."(58)

However, as the fourth part of the declaration was finally issued in 1965, it must be assumed that this was just an extreme view held by a very small number of the Vatican Fathers.

The solution to all these difficulties took the form of placing

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(55) H. Kung, Infallible? An Enquiry, (Collins, 1971) page 13.

(56) B. McSweeney, Roman Catholicism: the Search for Relevance (Blackwell, 1980) page 135.

(57) Ibid.

(58) R. Kaiser, Inside The Council (Burns and Oates, 1963) page 177.

the document on the Jews in an entirely new context. McBrien explains that,

"this document too, was originally planned as a chapter in the Decree on Ecumenism. It was also to be concerned principally with the Jews."(59)

Yet, the refined document was placed in the 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions' as point four; preference being given to the section on the Moslem Religion. Pawley states that it was

"as though Rome really didn't draw much distinction between other Christians, Jews and adherents of any other religion."(60)

In addition, substantial parts of Cardinal Bea's original version of the document had either been omitted or greatly revised. Mention will be made of these changes in the next section, for, having outlined the events surrounding the creation and publication of the Declaration, I now intend to turn to an examination of the fourth part of the text itself.

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(59) McBrien, Catholicism, Vol II, page 678.

(60) B. C. Pawley, The Second Vatican Council (Oxford University Press, 1967) page 235.



## Section 2: The text of the fourth part of the declaration

The text of the fourth part of the 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions' was issued by the Vatican Council in 1965.(61) In dealing with the subject of the relationship between Christians and Jews, the Vatican Fathers faced many difficult problems. For example, they had to decide how to deal with complex biblical texts, which at first sight, might seem intractable for a positive presentation of Judaism, and how to express the role of the Jewish people in relation to the Church. In order to understand the attitude that the declaration portrays, it is necessary to look at the main declaration and assess its theological content.

The fourth part of the declaration is only seventy-two lines in length, yet it identifies a number of significant points concerning the Catholic attitude towards Jews. It proclaims the Church's spiritual unity with the sons of Abraham and raises the theological issue of salvation. The Vatican Fathers make use of Romans II to illustrate that 'the root' of the Church comes from the Jewish people. The declaration recommends mutual understanding and dialogue between Christians and Jews and it repudiates the theory that Jews are guilty of the death of Jesus.

In the following pages, I have divided the material contained in the text of the fourth part of the 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions' into various sub-sections. I must stress that these are my own: they are not in the text itself. I have done this for comprehensibility. The translation of the text

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(61) W. Abbott, The Documents of Vatican II (Chapman, 1967) page 660.

which I have used is W. Abbott, The Documents of Vatican II (Chapman, 1967) pages 663-667.

i) Unity

The fourth section of the declaration begins in a positive manner, by remembering the spiritual bond which has linked Christians and Jews:

"As this sacred Synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it recalls the spiritual bond linking the people of the New Covenant with Abraham's stock".(62)

The two religions have fatherhood in Abraham as a common factor. The Church here proclaims her unity with the sons of Abraham. Abbott remarks that it is curious that no use of Old Testament texts is made here, for not only would that be less offensive to Jews, it would, he says, prove the unity between Abraham, Moses, the Prophets and the Church in a more conclusive manner.

ii) Salvation

The classical understanding of salvation is deepened and broadened by the declaration. In 258 C.E. Cyprian advocated the attitude 'salus extra ecclesiam non est' (there is no salvation outside the Church). Following this, the traditional Catholic approach to Judaism was one of exclusivism. This approach was accepted in Roman Catholic doctrine

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(62) Ibid., page 663

for centuries. However, the declaration provides a view of salvation which is much more inclusive. It says:

"For the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to the mystery of God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are already found among the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets."(63)

The classic view of salvation is extended here to include those of the Jewish people who 'foreshadowed' Christianity:

"the salvation of the Church was mystically foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage."(64)

The declaration does not forget the people of the Ancient Covenant. It goes so far as to say that:

"as the Church has always held and continues to hold, Christ in His boundless love freely underwent His passion and death because of the sins of all men, so that all might attain salvation."(65)

The Catholic Church explains that salvation can be attained by

all. Abbott says in his notes on the declaration that :

"This sentence, together with the preceding teaching, puts this declaration on the Jews into a doctrinal category".(66)

The teaching that 'all men might attain salvation', means that the bestowal of grace is entirely in the hands of God, for all men are sinners in dire need of God's mercy.

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(63) Ibid, page 664.

(64) Ibid, page 664.

(65) Ibid, page 667.

(66) Ibid, page 667, note 29.

iii) The use of Romans II

The declaration makes use of Romans II v17-24 to illustrate the fact that the Catholic Church has not forgotten its 'root' or origins:

"Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that good olive tree onto which has been grafted the wild olive branches of the Gentiles."(67)

This is the familiar metaphor that St Paul uses in the Epistle to the Romans, when he is explaining the relationship between the Jewish people and the members of other nations with regard to salvation (Romans II v17).

The fact that the 'foundation stones' of the Church come from the Jewish people is recalled in the declaration. It also remembers that Jesus himself was Jewish:

"and from whom is Christ according to the flesh"  
(Romans 9 v4-5)(68)

So too were the Apostles. The declaration states that:

"the Jews still remain most dear to God because of their fathers ...." (Romans II v28)(69)

The Church awaits awaits the day described in Romans II v11 when:

"all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and 'serve him with one accord.'"(70)

Thus the declaration uses parts of Romans II as its basic biblical text in support of this new and positive attitude to Judaism. It is

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(67) Ibid, page 664.

(68) Ibid

(69) Ibid

(70) Ibid page 665

worth noting that this is the first time that the Church has publicly made her own the Pauline view of the mystery of Israel. Cardinal Bea states that the declaration acknowledges, honestly and clearly, what God has accomplished in the Jewish people and through them for the whole human race, and hence all that she herself, in common with all mankind, has received through Israel."(71)

(Modern theologians have found it important to look in detail at the area of Paul and Judaism, in order to form a true picture of the attitude portrayed in Christian teaching towards Jews and Judaism)(72)

iv) Mutual understanding and dialogue

The Vatican, through the text of the declaration, professes that it wishes to foster and recommend mutual understanding between Christianity and Judaism:

"Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred Synod wishes to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit above all of biblical and theological studies, and of brotherly dialogues."(73)

The Vatican Council appears keen for a two-way communication between Jews and Christians, thus marking a new attitude to adherents of Judaism. Cardinal Bea hoped that the declaration would meet with

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(71) Cardinal A. Bea, The Church and The Jewish People, page 64.

(72) For example,

E. P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism (S.C.M., 1985)

W. D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism (S.P.C.K., 1965)

(73) W. Abbott, op.cit., page 665.

approval from 'our separated brethren' as well as from Catholics, for that would provide evidence of increasing Christian understanding and mutual help.(74)

The publication of the declaration has helped to break down the ingrained prejudices of centuries and has been a positive step towards mutual respect, which was sadly lacking in the pre-Vatican II era. Action was taken immediately following the approval of the declaration. As early as 1 October 1965, it was announced in Rome that Catholic Bishops from America had established a commission to discover ways of furthering dialogue.(75) Since then, many organisations promoting dialogue between Christianity and Judaism have emerged.(76)

v) Who is guilty of the death of Jesus?

The theory that the Jewish people are guilty of the death of Jesus is repudiated in the declaration:

"True, authorities of the Jews and those who followed their lead, pressed for the death of Christ (cf Jn 19 v6), still, what happened in His passion cannot be blamed upon all the Jews then living, without distinction, nor upon the Jews today."(77)

The declaration rejects the notion (maintained by Christians for centuries) of a collective Jewish guilt for the death of Jesus. The precise part played by Jewish people in the death of Jesus, at the actual event, and today, is drawn to the attention of Catholics. The

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(74) Cardinal A. Bea, The Church and The Jewish People, page 133.

(75) W. Abbott, op.cit., page 665, note 21.

(76) See Chapter 3, section 3.

(77) W. Abbott, op.cit., page 665.

declaration instructs Catholics to eliminate false views that have previously caused discrimination and suffering for Jews.

The phrase 'or guilty of deicide' was removed from this section of the declaration before the final version was accepted. Abbott states in his notes on the declaration that reason for this was to avoid any ambiguity, rather than because of political pressures from Arab governments concerning such a statement.(78) The declaration states that the Catholic Church,

"... motivated by the gospel's spiritual love and by no political considerations, ... deploras the hatred, persecutions and displays of anti-semitism directed against the Jews at any time and from any source."(79)

Therefore, the declaration attempted to absolve, forgive and exonerate Jews of the guilt placed upon them previously for the crucifixion of Jesus. (Cardinal Bea stresses the point that Christ died voluntarily out of love, Acts 8 v32, and suggests that the theory of a collective guilt for all mankind should be explored as he examines this part of the declaration).(80)

The declaration also "deploras" all acts of anti-semitism.

As a further example of the Vatican Fathers' wish to retract the false blame on Jews for the death of Jesus, the Congregation of Rites issued a decree banning further veneration of Simon of Trent on the same day that the declaration was promulgated. Abbott, in his notes, explains that Simon of Trent was

"a small boy allegedly murdered by Jews in 1475 in order that his Christian blood might be used in the Synagogue during the Pasch," and that,

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(78) Ibid, page 666, note 23.

(79) Ibid, page 667.

(80) Cardinal A. Bea, The Church and The Jewish People, page 87.

"investigation had shown that Simon was probably killed by non-Jews who tried to blame Trent's Jewish community for the crime."(81)

- (81) W. Abbott, op.cit., page 665, note 20.  
See also Cardinal A. Bea, The Church and The Jewish People, page 14.  
Bea explains that in proven cases the Church admits that it has erred. For example, the ecclesiastical authorities did not hesitate to acknowledge the error concerning Simon of Trent.



## Brief Critique

The fourth part of the 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions' promotes new and positive attitudes to Judaism. The exclusivist position maintained by the Catholic Church for centuries is replaced with an inclusivist and much more tolerant theology. The declaration issued by the Second Vatican Council accepts that there are other religions outside the body of Christ which should be respected. Pawley summarises the change in attitudes when he says,

"The Church is anxious not to make those mistakes again, not only because it has suffered the consequences of committing them, but because new attitudes to contemporary knowledge and discoveries are seen to be demanded by the application of the gospel to the problem of modern times. The Council has not so much formulated these new attitudes as brought them out from where they have been hiding"(82)

The basic aims specified by Pope John XXIII for a schema concerning Christianity and Judaism are fulfilled by the fourth part of the declaration.(83) The Second Vatican Council marked the first occasion when an Ecumenical Council considered the Jewish problem as related to Catholicism in such an explicit manner. It offered valuable directives for all Christians (irrespective of denominational diversities) on a profoundly biblical level. The declaration aimed at appealing to 'ordinary' Christians in their every day life (rather than to specialists).

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(82) B. C. Pawley, The Second Vatican Council (Oxford University Press, 1967) page 21.

(83) See page 11.

However, having stated some of the positive benefits of the declaration, it is necessary to look at some of the negative reactions that the declaration provoked. The declaration did not reveal the total amount of theological ground covered by the Catholic Church on attitudes to Judaism. It did not acknowledge the depth of the issues that concerned the Church at this juncture.

Some of the more detailed issues raised by Cardinal Bea were excluded from the declaration released: for instance, Jesus' own attitude to Judaism; an examination as to WHY Jews had been blamed for Jesus' death for centuries; and a stronger call for re-education programmes that would immediately affect Christian preaching. If the declaration concerning Jews had been a little longer, these issues could have been pursued in some detail.

The sharp conflict within the Church concerning this declaration initiated queries and negative criticism about the Catholic approach to Judaism. For example, Bassett suggests that the Council was poor in giving precise answers and accuses it of being 'general and vague'. Wolf states that the declaration had many 'gaps and ambiguities'.(84)

The declaration does seem to reveal a discrepancy between current Catholic teaching and the teaching of the Church Fathers, for example, St John Chrysostom.(85) Some reference to this might have been made in the declaration.

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(84) The views of these scholars are clearly set out in: Nicola Colaianni, "The Criticism of the Second Vatican Council in current Literature", Concilium 167, page 106.

(85) However, St. John Chrysostom (347-407 C.E.) was notoriously anti-Jewish. See F. L. Cross, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (Oxford University Press, 1957) page 282.

Another criticism must be that the declaration does lack sensitivity towards Jews. Although it is concerned with Jews, the declaration has a somewhat condescending tone. Berkovits criticises the lack of sensitivity in the declaration when he says:

Jews should not be impressed. Having persecuted them for centuries, the Church is now kind enough to say the Jews are not altogether guilty. It is difficult to have respect for such a declaration. It is more important, however, to say a few words on the rather ambiguous withdrawal of the deicide accusation."(86)

It must be remembered, though, that this was the first step towards a new attitude. The Declaration was written primarily for Catholics, to promote better attitudes within them: it was only addressed indirectly to Jews as a statement of the relationships between the two faiths.

However, Christian theologians who have evaluated the effect of this declaration and of Vatican II as a whole, in the light of the history of the Catholic Church, are in agreement that a turning point was reached in Catholic attitudes to Judaism. For example, Gavin D'Costa says:

"After the relatively quiet period before Vatican II's important 'Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions', ...Roman Catholic theology has blossomed, or even erupted, into a fruitful discussion."(87)

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- (86) E. Berkovits, Faith After the Holocaust (Ktav, 1973) page 26.  
(87) G. D'Costa, Christian Attitudes Towards Other Religions", The Modern Churchman 27, 1985, page 37.

Section 3: A review of the response to the fourth part of the  
declaration in Christian theology and Jewish scholarship

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In order to analyse the achievement of Vatican II, the immediate and later responses to the declaration must be studied. This should include the Catholic and Jewish response. The aim of the declaration was to break down ingrained prejudices and create an atmosphere of goodwill and respect between Christians and Jews. By observing the response to the declaration it should be possible to see if these aims were achieved. This, in turn, should lead to an examination of how the declaration has affected relations between Christians and Jews today, for,

"any assessment of the positive results of the Second Vatican Council would have to include progress in Christian-Jewish relations."(89)

The Roman Catholic Response

Generally, Catholic theologians who have expressed views about the impact of Vatican II on Christian-Jewish relations are positive, and thus the declaration can be seen to mark an important turning point in forming new theological attitudes to Judaism. Frances Mugavero explains that:

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(88) By 'the declaration' throughout this section I refer to the 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions' (*Nostra Aetate*) part four. See W. Abbott, The Documents of Vatican II (Chapman, 1967) page 660.

(89) D. J. Harrington, "The Jewishness of Jesus: facing some problems", Catholic Biblical Quarterly 49, (1987) page 1.

The response in the theological community has been impressive. Catholics and Jews together have searched out the meaning of the Covenant, the 'scandal' of divine election, the crisis of peoplehood. Jewish and Catholic Scripture scholars share insights and research projects and are learning from each other in a way that could not have been envisioned one generation ago."(90)

The Roman Catholic response to the declaration in Great Britain in 1965 was only very general. Archbishop Heenen of Westminster, speaking for the Bishops of England and Wales, accepted the schema "joyfully". He urged that Roman Catholics in England should not be indifferent to the ecumenical movement and he recommended that dialogue should take place.(91)

Radical or progressive Roman Catholic theologians (such as K. Rahner and H. K ung)(92) saw many positive changes in attitudes to Judaism come into effect as a result of Vatican II. These theologians used the material from the declaration as a base from which to progress to a deeper theological understanding of Christian-Jewish relations. For example, K. Rahner contributed much to Vatican II itself (93) and subsequently attempted to show how the Council opened up doors to a genuinely new stage in the history of the Church, with his theory of anonymous Christianity.(94) The Roman Catholic theologian, Hans K ung, explored and explained the hostilities of the past and went on from Vatican II to attempt to promote a true understanding of Judaism. He affirmed the Jewishness of Jesus and looked hopefully to the future between Christians and Jews. (95)

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- (90) F. Mugavero, "Nostra Aetate Twenty Years On", Christian-Jewish Relations 18, (1985) page 34.
- (91) J. Holmes, The Papacy in the Modern World 1914-1978 (Burns and Oates, 1981) page 209.
- (92) See Chapter 2 on the work of K. Rahner and H. Kung.
- (93) For information on K. Rahner's involvement in Vatican II, see L. Roberts, The Achievement of Karl Rahner (Herder, 1967) and H. Vorgrimler, Understanding Karl Rahner (S.C.M., 1985).
- (94) K. Rahner, Theological Investigations 14 (New York, Seabury, 1966). page 284. and Theological Investigations 5 (Baltimore, Helicon, 1966) page 118.
- (95) H. K ung, The Council and Reunion (Sheed and Ward, 1961)

Contemporary Roman Catholic theologians pursue themes in Christian-Jewish relations which were initiated by Vatican II. Great efforts have been made to integrate the new and positive attitudes in the declaration and to focus on the key issues between Christianity and Judaism. For example, G. Baum went on from Vatican II to propose that the Jewish religion was not meant to be superceded by Christianity. He maintained that Judaism preserves its own value and role in God's plan alongside Christianity, thus advancing doctrinal relativism.(96) C. Thoma focusses on the place of Judaism within a true Christian self-understanding in a challenging way.(97) E. Fisher provides a wealth of insights emerging from dialogue begun by Vatican II, giving a practical guide to a renewed understanding of Judaism and, through it, of Christianity itself.(98)

J. T. Pawlikowski discusses similarities and differences between Christianity and Judaism. He delineates the major issues in this theological area today and how Christians and Jews are tackling these issues (99). In the prologue to Mussner's Tractate on the Jews, Swidler reveals that:

"with Vatican II and its aftermath he underwent a metanoia and ventured forth on the re-reading of the scriptures which are at the basis of Christian teaching with new eyes as far as Judaism is concerned." (100)

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- (96) G. Baum, Foreword in C. Klein, Anti-Judaism in Christian Theology (S.P.C.K., 1978) page xi.
- (97) C. Thoma, A Christian Theology of Judaism (Paulist Press, 1980) page 152.
- (98) E. Fisher, Faith Without Prejudice, Rebuilding Christian Attitudes to Judaism (Paulist Press, 1977) page 89.
- (99) J. T. Pawlikowski, What are they saying about Christian-Jewish Relations? (Paulist Press, 1980) page vii.
- (100) F. Mussner, Tractate on the Jews (S.P.C.K., 1984) page viii of preface

and Mussner himself asserts the importance of this area of theology.

He states:

"the concern here is not with some fringe topic of theology, but rather, with an issue that leads to the centre of theology." (101)

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(101) Ibid, page xi

## The Response of Jewish Scholarship

Twenty years after the publication of the 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions' (Nostra Aetate), by the Roman Catholic Church at Vatican II, the Jewish response continues. For example, the Journal, Christian-Jewish Relations, Vol 18, No. 3, September 1985, is dedicated solely to a documentary survey of both Christian and Jewish responses to Nostra Aetate. Rabbi Dr. Norman Solomon, the editor of the Journal has many positive comments to make in response to Nostra Aetate. For instance, he says,

"We take it for granted that the deicide charge is repudiated, that the Jewishness of Jesus is to be taught, that the New Testament is to be read with care to avoid interpretations that might tend to antisemitism, that the ongoing spiritual vitality of Judaism is recognised." (102)

Chief Rabbi Jacob Kaplan also expresses a positive response. He believes that:

"the Declaration on the Jews was born out of the Church's realization of its share of the responsibility for the greatest moral catastrophe of our time." (103)

Rabbi Dr. Arthur Hertzberg goes so far as to say that:

"In the twenty years since the Declaration of the Vatican Council on the Jews, enormous progress has, of course, been made in the relationship between Catholics and Jews."  
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(102) Rabbi Dr. Norman Solomon, "Nostra Aetate Twenty Years On", Christian-Jewish Relations 18, 1985, page 7.

(103) Chief Rabbi Jacob Kaplan, Ibid, page 27.

(104) Rabbi Dr. Arthur Hertzberg, Ibid, page 21.



However, Jewish scholarship has also had some criticisms and suggestions concerning the declaration. For example, Rabbi Dr. Norman Solomon reminds Christian theologians that 'guilt' is not basis on which to build lasting human relationships.(105) Chief Rabbi Pynchas Brener suggests that the greatest shortcoming of the declaration is its lack of recognition of the meaning of the State of Israel to the Jewish people, both from a theological and national point of view.(106) Rabbi Dr. David Novak believes that:

"In the Catholic community, there are still residues of old triumphalism . . ." (107)

In the Journal SIDIC, in 1984, F. Terracina emphasised the need to look at the differences between Christianity and Judaism as well as emphasising the similarities:

". . . it is not possible to search for similarities with total sincerity if we do not acknowledge what differences there are." (108)

It is apparent that the response by Roman Catholic theologians and Jewish scholars to the fourth part of the 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions' has been

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(105) Rabbi Dr. Norman Solomon, Ibid, page 6.

(106) Chief Rabbi Pynchas Brener, Ibid, page 9.

(107) Rabbi Dr. David Novak, Ibid, page 37.

(108) F. Terracina, "Jews and Non-Jews: What are the differences? A Research Essential for Mutual Understanding", SIDIC 17 (1984) page 21.

continuous since 1965. Most of this response has been positive and has led to a deeper examination of the issues involved in Christian-Jewish relations.

However, as Knitter says, the problem still remains that:

"as much as Vatican II forms a watershed in Roman Catholic attitudes toward other faiths, we cannot deny a residual ambiguity in its understanding of just how effective the truth and grace within the religions are and, especially, how far Christian dialogue with them can go. The ambiguity stems from the same tension between God's salvific will and the necessity of the Church that it is evident throughout the history of Catholic thought." (109)

It is to this problem that we now turn by looking at the work of Karl Rahner. The fourth part of the declaration paved a new way for Rahner to express reciprocal acquaintance with Judaism.

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(109) P. Knitter, No Other Name? (S.C.M., 1985) page 124.

CHAPTER TWO

THE WORK OF KARL RAHNER AND HANS KÜNG:

THEIR ATTITUDES TO JUDAISM

## SECTION A: KARL RAHNER

"This optimism concerning salvation appears to me one of the most noteworthy results of the Second Vatican Council ... This doctrine marked a far more decisive phase in the development of the Church's conscious awareness of her faith."(1)

Karl Rahner's study of Christianity and non-Christian religions broke new ground in the area of Christian theological attitudes to Judaism through the development of his theory of 'anonymous Christianity'. This was an inclusivist attitude, based on the idea of salvation which included both Judaism and other religions.

Rahner contributed to much of the substance of Vatican II in his job as 'peritus' to the Council. His reflections explicate the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and highlight the fact that the Council opened doors to a genuinely new stage in the history of the attitude of the Christian Church towards Judaism. Vorgrimler says of Rahner that he wanted

"to rescue the abiding and in his view, indispensable elements in the content of the church's doctrine of faith. Here he attempted, successfully, to uncover the overgrown and suppressed insights and aims of traditional scholastic theology, the inner dynamic which was hidden even from itself, in order to release new fruitfulness."(2)

I intend to look at four main ways in which Rahner has promoted a new Christian theology that has had a radical effect on Christian-

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(1) K. Rahner, Theological Investigations 14 (New York, Seabury, 1976), page 284.

(2) H. Vorgrimler, Understanding Karl Rahner (S.C.M., 1985) page 21.

Jewish relations. Rahner has explored the area of 'Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions', in which he expounds his theory of 'anonymous Christianity.' He has looked at Jesus Christ in Non-Christian Religions. Rahner has applied his theory of 'anonymous Christianity to the problem of Christian-Jewish relations. Finally, he has clarified the limits of his theory of 'anonymous Christianity' with regards to missionary work among Jews.

## 1. Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions

Rahner approaches the subject of Christianity and non-Christian religions hermeneutically. He stresses the importance of the need for acknowledgement by the Church that non-Christian religions exist. In overcoming the scandal of contradiction they represent, the Church so structures itself that it can comprehend this pluralism by understanding itself as their higher unity.

Rahner offers some basic principles of a 'Catholic-dogmatic' interpretation of attitudes towards non-Christian religions and he proposes several theses. It is necessary to look at these theses in some detail, because they lead to a theory of 'anonymous Christianity', which has played a very important part in changing exclusivist attitudes to Judaism to inclusivist ones, and has opened up the path towards pluralism.

The first thesis is built upon a theological interpretation of Christian belief.

"Christianity understands itself as the absolute religion, intended for all men, which cannot recognize any other religion beside itself as of equal right."(3)

Rahner first acknowledges that, in all considerations of other religions (including Judaism), Christianity maintains absolutely that it is the religion, the one and only valid revelation of the one living God and that therefore pluralism of religions is of the greatest vexation for Christianity. (For God's free self-

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(3) K. Rahner, Theological Investigations 5 (Baltimore, Helicon, 1966) page 118.

revelation to men rests on the incarnation, death and resurrection of the one Word of God become flesh).

From the previous point, Rahner goes on to maintain that, up to the precise moment in which the gospel really enters the individual historical situation, a non-Christian religion contains elements of natural knowledge of God and supernatural moments of grace. Rahner claims that the next stage of thought shows that it is not impossible that grace is at work in the life of an individual of a non-Christian religion. Until the moment when the Gospel really enters into the historical situation of an individual, a non-Christian religion contains elements of a natural knowledge of God. Rahner goes on to say that a non-Christian religion also contains super-natural elements arising out of the grace

"which is given to men as a gratuitous gift on account of Christ. For this reason a non-Christian religion can be recognised as a lawful religion ... without thereby denying the error and depravity contained in it."(4)

Rahner concludes from this it is therefore, a priori, quite possible to suppose that there are supernatural, gracefilled elements in non-Christian religions.

Christianity encounters the non-Christian as a person who must be considered as an 'anonymous Christian' (rather than a mere 'non-Christian'): as someone who must already be touched by God's grace and truth. This grace is understood as the a priori horizon of all his spiritual acts and accompanies his consciousness subjectively, even though it is not known objectively.

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(4) Ibid, page 121.

Finally, Rahner maintains that the Church should recognise itself as the historical expression of what exists outside the visible Church. The covenant of universal salvation is valid for all men. He says that the Church will not so much regard herself today as the exclusive community of those who have a claim to salvation but rather as,

"the historically tangible vanguard and the historically and socially constituted explicit expression of what the Christian hopes is present as a hidden reality even outside the visible Church."(5)

Rahner concludes that Christians must work and pray for the unification of the whole human race, in the one Church of Christ, but that we must nevertheless expect that the religious pluralism existing in our world will not disappear in the foreseeable future.

However, would not non-Christians (and especially Jews) think that the Christian is presumptuous to judge everything in the light of the grace of Christ? Rahner is well aware of this problem. He acknowledges that non-Christians might be offended at being called "anonymous Christians". However, Rahner goes on to say that the Christian cannot renounce this "presumption" which is really the source of the greatest "humility" both for the Christian himself and the Church. Rahner promotes the attitude expressed in Acts 17 v 23: that the Christian should go out to meet the non-Christian, but with a humble and tolerant attitude.

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(5) Ibid, page 133.



Therefore Rahner expands on the views maintained in part four of the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions concerning Jews issued by Vatican II. In doing this, he works out a theory of 'anonymous Christianity' which consequently promoted a more tolerant and understanding Christian attitude to Judaism.

"So what Rahner understands by the phrase 'anonymous Christianity' is really what Vatican II teaches in the Constitution of the Church. According to this constitution, the possibility of being saved exists for all who without guilt have not yet heard the gospel. Presupposed is only what comes from the sight of God, influxus gratiae"(6)

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(6) L. Roberts, The Achievement of Karl Rahner (Herder, 1967) page 280.  
Compare Acts 4 v12, Amos 9 v7, Isaiah 19 v25, Matthew 8 v11, and Romans 1 v19.

## 2. Jesus Christ in Non-Christian Religions

Rahner holds that salvation is possible for the non-Christian while at the same time affirming the central and definite place of Jesus Christ as the irrevocable, authoritative self-revelation of God. What does it mean exactly to say that Jesus Christ is also present in non-Christian religions? For in view of the fact that Jesus is limited in time and space, the profession of his universal salvific significance for all times and for all people is always a scandal for non-Christians.

Rahner looks at the question within the limits of a dogmatic reflection and affirms that "a presence" of Jesus in the history of salvation cannot be denied.

Firstly, he presupposes that a universal and supernatural salvific will of God is really operative in the world. This presupposition is also taught explicitly in the Second Vatican Council. However, as Rahner acknowledges,

"the Council indeed is extraordinarily reserved when it comes to the question of how such a salvific faith in a real revelation of God in the strict sense can come about outside the realm of the Old and New Testaments. But this does not forbid the theologian to ask the question how such a universal possibility of faith can come about."(7)

Secondly, he presupposes that there is no question of making a non-Christian religion equal to Christian faith in its salvific significance. For it is only through the Spirit of Jesus Christ that salvation is truly possible. Therefore Christ must be present and

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(7) K. Rahner, Foundations of Christian Faith (Longman, 1978), page 313.

operative in non-Christian religions from the perspective of Christian dogmatic theology.

However, one must ask if this inclusivist attitude is not a half-hearted attempt at tolerance? Is 'anonymous Christianity' not insulting to those who call themselves Jew, Muslim or Buddhist? Is this not just an attitude to ease Christian consciences? For the inclusivist attitude does not encourage genuine dialogue between Christians and Jews. Dialogue demands respect for the other as he is, and above all respect for his religious convictions.

### 3. Rahner's application of his theory of 'anonymous Christianity' to the problem of Christian-Jewish relations

Karl Rahner's theory of 'anonymous Christianity' refers generally to all 'non-Christians' and therefore includes Jews. Rahner does not devote detailed explanation to the problem of Christian-Jewish relations. However, he does generally apply his theory of 'anonymous Christianity' to Jews and he takes part in dialogue concerning the differences and similarities between Christians and Jews.

Rahner proposes a radically new era of history concerning Christian-Jewish relations:

"Rahner proposed that the Church has gone through two fundamental transitions: the first was the movement from a sect of Judaism, based in Jerusalem, to a Church open to the Gentile West, a transition taking place in the first century. The second transition was from the Gentile Church of the West, based in Rome, to a world Church without a centre, presaged in the worldwide episcopal constituency of the Second Vatican Council."(8)

Rahner foresees an attitude of inclusivism surrounding Christian-Jewish relations.

Rahner applied his theory of 'anonymous Christianity' to the problem of his theological works when he joined in dialogue with Jews. He had conversations with E.L. Ehrlich and F.G. Friedmann in 1969(9), and in 1982 discussed the issues involved in the differences and similarities between Christians and Jews with Pinchas Lapide.(10)

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(8) P. Van Buren, A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality (Harper and Row, 1987) page 171.

(9) The literary exchange is published in Stimmen der Zeit (August, 1966) page 81. See L. Roberts, op.cit., page 299.

(10) P. Lapide and K. Rahner, Heil von den Juden? (Mainz, 1983).

It is regrettable that Rahner did not devote more substantial work to the specific area of Christian-Jewish relations. Vorgrimler comments on this when he says that it is unfortunate that,

"he carried on his discussion with the Jew Pinchas Lapide as an individual, in the light of the theology of Rahner, and not in the context of the Jewish-Christian conversation, which in the meantime had moved on further."(11)

However, Rahner's basic application of his theory of 'anonymous Christianity' to Christian-Jewish relations has been taken up and explored in detail by contemporary Roman Catholic theologians.(12)

In the public exchange of correspondence between Rahner and Friedmann, Rahner agrees with Friedmann that a state of open respect for Christian and Jew must be sought more ardently.

"Both Christian and Jew must recognise their obligation to live in love of one another. And to do this both sides must meet openly, honestly and publicly. Differences can be met and really overcome in love."(13)

Rahner is quite optimistic about future relations between Christians and Jews.

Rahner acknowledges the tragedy of anti-semitism in his dialogue with Friedmann. Rahner confesses to a feeling of sadness which he believes is part of the real problem of establishing a dialogue between Catholics and Jews. Rahner is aware of the two thousand year enmity time gap between Christians and Jews.

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(11) H. Vorgrimler, Understanding Karl Rahner, page 121.

(12) See Chapter 3 on contemporary Roman Catholic theological attitudes to Judaism.

(13) L. Roberts, op.cit., page 280.

"In the matter of Christian-Jewish relations the situation is doubly sad because the power of grace was helpless in a question involving the stock from which incarnate grace comes."(14)

He hopes that Vatican II will promote a more positive attitude to Judaism.

Rahner urges Jews not to relinquish their own religious identity. This, he stresses, is important for both Jew and Christian. Christians and Jews are related in a quite different way than are other peoples. The Christian must remember that the Jew is 'a man from the people of my Redeemer.'

In the last years of his life Rahner began to pay more attention to applying his theory of 'anonymous Christianity' to specific religions. Yet, as Vorgrimler says, Rahner's views specifically on Jewish-Christian relations "need supplementing"(15). Rahner's theory of 'anonymous Christianity' has had an important effect on Jewish-Christian relations, for Rahner's interpretation has helped attitudes move from exclusivism to inclusivism.

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(14) Ibid, page 281

(15) H. Vorgrimler, Understanding Karl Rahner, page 121.

4. Rahner clarifies the limits of his theory of 'anonymous Christianity' with regards to missionary work among Jews

The theory of 'anonymous Christianity' that Rahner promotes demonstrates both the breadth and the limits of the understanding of Judaism by the Roman Catholic Church. Rahner stresses that his theory of 'anonymous Christianity' is meant only for 'Christian consumption'.(16) He insists that it should only be used within Christian theology and not as a tool for dialogue with Jews.

Rahner clarifies the limits of his theory of 'anonymous Christianity' with regards to missionary work among Jews, when he explains that saving grace has to be through Christ. For Christ is the constitutive cause of salvation and the final cause of God's salvific will. Rahner's theory of anonymous Christianity demands a thoroughly different understanding of the mission of the Church and of its relationship to Judaism than was current in Catholic ecclesiology prior to the Second Vatican Council. Rahner states that,

"it is nevertheless absolutely permissible for the Christian himself to interpret this non-Christianity as Christianity of an anonymous kind which he does always still go out to meet as a missionary, seeing it as a world which is to be brought to the explicit consciousness of what already belongs to it"(17)

Therefore, Rahner achieved his main purpose of broadening and instituting a more optimistic Christian attitude towards other believers, including Jews, through his theory of 'anonymous Christianity'. Rahner also succeeded in breaking through the barriers

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(16) K. Rahner, Theological Investigations 5, page 133.

(17) Ibid, page 133.

of Christian exclusivism. The content of Rahner's theory of 'anonymous Christianity' is clearly affirmed in the ecclesiology that has become general Catholic teaching since Vatican II.(18)

I shall now proceed to examine the differences between the ideas of K. Rahner and H. Kung concerning their attitudes to Judaism. For as Butler says, it was these Catholic theologians

"who became, in fact, in large measure the artificers of the theology of Vatican II."(19)

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- (18) See G. D'Costa, "Karl Rahner's Anonymous Christian - a Reappraisal." Modern Theology 1985, page 131 and E. Bleistein, Bibliography - Karl Rahner (Herden, 1974)
- (19) C. Butler, The Theology of Vatican II (Darton, Longman and Todd, 1967) see also, p 5.  
E. Lonergan, Method in Theology (Seabury, 1972).  
R. McBrien, Catholicism (Winston Press, 1980).



## Section B: HANS KÜNG

The Swiss Catholic theologian Hans Küng shared in shaping the revolution in attitudes brought about by Vatican II. However, the theology he expounds is very different from that we have already seen propounded by Karl Rahner. Therefore, in this section, I will begin by looking at the differences between the ideas of Küng and Rahner concerning their attitudes to Judaism. I will then consider Küng's exploration and explanation of the hostilities of the past and his attempts to discover what we can learn from them to promote a true understanding of Judaism. Next, I will examine Küng's affirmation of the "Jewishness" of Jesus and go on to Küng's views of the present tasks facing theologians and his hopes for the future. Finally, I will look at Küng's thoughts about the State of Israel and his opinions about the achievements of Vatican II.

### 1. Differences between the thought of Küng and Rahner concerning their attitudes to Judaism

Hans Küng proposes the same universalist starting point as Rahner when looking at the Christian attitude to Judaism; that of God's universal salvific will. However, he condemns Rahner's theory of 'anonymous Christianity' as 'superior ignorance'.<sup>(20)</sup> Küng urges Christians to abandon their ecclesiocentrism (funnelling grace through the Church) and to take on a more theocentric approach to Judaism. Such an approach recognises the mysterious activity of God, not the Church, within the world outside

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(20) H. Küng, On Being a Christian (Collins, 1977) page 98

Christianity. Kung acknowledges the challenge of the world religions. He stresses that, for the first time in world history, it is impossible for any one religion to exist in 'splendid isolation' and ignore the others.

In 258 C.E. Cyprian advocated the attitude maintained by the Roman Catholic Church, that there is "no salvation outside the Church".(21) However, when we compare this old teaching with the new Catholic teaching from Rahner, Kung insists that we cannot fail to notice an epoch-making reversal of the attitude to those outside the "holy Roman Church". Rahner states that ALL men of goodwill 'somehow' belong to the Church.(22) Yet Kung questions Rahner's attitude. Does Rahner intend to sweep the whole of goodwilled humanity into the back door of the "holy Roman Church"? Kung asks. Kung is sceptical about Rahner's solution to the problem. Kung goes on to state that Jews:

"who know quite well that they are completely 'unanonymous' remain outside."

Nor have they any wish to be inside. And no theological sleight of hand will ever force them against their will and against their desire, to become active or passive members of this Church - which in fact still seeks to be a free community of faith. The will of those who are outside is not to be 'interpreted' in the light of our own interests, but quite simply respected. And it would be impossible to find anywhere in the world a sincere Jew, Muslim or atheist who would

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- (21) F. L. Cross, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (Oxford University Press, 1974) page 367.  
K. Rahner, Sacramentum Mundi, An Encyclopedia of Theology (Burns and Oates, 1970) page 407.  
See also Chapter 1 Section 2 on salvation.
- (22) K. Rahner, Theological Investigations 5, page 118.

not regard the assertion that he is an 'anonymous Christian' as presumptuous."(23)

Kung asks whether Christians would accept being called 'anonymous Jews'. He states that Rahner's theory is a 'pseudo-orthodox stretching of Christian concepts like Church and salvation.' Rahner's theory diminishes the reality of Christianity and condemns dialogue before it has even begun, Kung maintains. If Christians are asserting salvation outside the Church, why can they not honestly admit that fact? Kung asks. What is the point of the Church and Christianity at all if salvation is possible 'outside'?, Kung queries.

Kung maintains that what we should strive for is an independent, unselfish Christian ministry to Jews. Christians should have an attitude of open mindedness which does not deny its own faith but also, which does not impose a particular response from Jews. Christianity should turn criticism from outside into self-criticism, accept 'everything positive' and destroy nothing of value in Judaism. When looking at Judaism, Kung affirms, Christianity should be:

"a dialectical unity of recognition and rejection"(24)

Therefore there would be an inclusive Christian universalism claiming uniqueness for Christianity while maintaining an open minded attitude towards Judaism.

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(23) H. Kung, On Being a Christian, page 98

(24) Ibid., page 112

2. Kung's exploration and explanation of the hostilities of the past and what we can learn from them to promote a true understanding of Judaism

Kung recognises the importance of questioning the centuries of hostility between Christianity and Judaism before any progress can be made in affirming a more positive Christian attitude to Judaism today.

"it is precisely between those who are most closely related that the bitterest hostility can exist."(25)

Kung looks at the reasons for the mutual hostility between Christians and Jews. He considers their history of 'blood and tears'. Kung identifies a variety of factors for the enmity between Christians and Jews. For example, the increasing 'distancing' of the Church from its Old Testament roots as a result of the hellenization of the Christian message and the breakdown of dialogue between the Church and the Synagogue.

The 'original hostility to the Jews', Kung claims, was not based on racial ideas but "resulted from different views of revelation"(26). He goes on to analyse the view of revelation that led Christians to reject Jews, a rejection which caused Jews centuries of sufferings unparalleled in history. Kung criticises the identification of revelation with the infallibility of scripture. He elucidates the problem when he says:

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(25) Ibid, page 167.

(26) H. Kung, The Church (Burns and Oates, 1967) page 133.

"Thus, revelation came to be identified with the production of the words of Scripture as it took place through the unique and once-for-all working of the Holy Spirit in the biblical author ... Every single word of Scripture shared uniformly in the perfection and inerrancy of God himself. The human authors of the Bible had therefore to be exempted from human imperfection and liability to err; ... complete infallibility and inerrancy were attributed to every word it contained."(27)

With this view of 'infallible' revelation, the Jews were seen as the rejected Israel and all the judgements and curses of the Old Testament were applied to them. Küng maintains the need for proper interpretation of biblical texts in order to understand the true meaning of Judaism.(28)

The tragic history of Christian anti-semitism is traced in detail by Küng. He looks especially at the Crusades, Luther, and the Holocaust of Nazi Germany. At this point Küng mentions the 'Declaration on the relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions' and criticises it for sounding weak and vague after all the atrocities carried out in the name of so-called Christian countries or policies. Küng says of the holocaust:

"How could this happen? Shame and guilt must be our silent reply - would we wish to speak above the enforced silence of millions?"(29)

Küng studies both the religious reasons for anti-semitism and the racial arguments which were used with such 'technical industrialisationing' of murder in the Second World War. He concludes that:

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(27) H. Küng, Infallible? An Enquiry (Collins, 1971) page 172.

See also Journal of Ecumenical Studies I, 1964, page 111.

(28) H. Küng, The Church, page 135.

(29) Ibid, page 137.

"After Auschwitz there can be no more excuses. Christendom cannot avoid clear admission of its guilt."(30)

Today, K ng asserts, Christians must follow the example set by humanism and the Enlightenment, and approach Judaism with brotherly love and tolerance.

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(30) H. K ng, On Being a Christian, page 169.

### 3. Kung's affirmation of the Jewishness of Jesus

The very person who seems to unite Jews and Christians also separates them most abysmally: the Jew, Jesus of Nazareth. Kung stresses the importance of assessing the Jewishness of Jesus in Christian theology today.

Jews and Christians might not reach agreement about Jesus, for, if Jews changed their attitude to Jesus, they would no longer be Jews. Kung promotes the advantages to both sides if the Christian readiness for understanding was met on the Jewish side with a movement to break down mistrust, scepticism and rancour towards the figure of Jesus and arrive at a more objective understanding of his person. (The Jewish understanding of Jesus has been taken up by Sandmel in A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament, and Vermes in Jesus the Jew)(31).

From the Christian point of view, there has not been readiness to admit that Jesus was a Jewish human being, a genuine Jew. For this reason, Kung states, Jesus has been only too often a stranger to both Christians and Jews. In recognising his Jewish background, family, worship and prayers and the fact that his message was for the Jewish people, Kung explains, we can understand a great deal about the humanity of Jesus. We can understand Jesus "from below". Kung insists that Christians look again at the question "Who is

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(31) S. Sandmel, A Jewish Understanding of the New Testament (S.P.C.K., 1977).  
G. Vermes, Jesus the Jew (Collins, 1973).

Jesus?"(32). K ng asks Christians to face the question

"whether they have rightly understood throughout the centuries this Jesus of Nazareth as he is originally attested in the New Testament. Or whether they have not perhaps dropped the originally Jewish element, whether they did not hellenize him even at a very early stage."(33)

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- (32) This is being done today. For example, see E. Fisher, Faith Without Prejudice: Rebuilding Christian Attitudes Toward Judaism (Paulist Press, 1980), and J. T. Pawlikowski, What are they saying about Christian-Jewish Relations? (Paulist Press, 1980).
- (33) K ng and Lapide, Brother or Lord? (Collins,1977) page 19.



4. Kung's view of the present tasks facing theologians and his hopes  
for the future

Kung goes beyond previous Catholic theologians when explaining his attitude to Judaism, for he not only promotes dialogue and understanding with Jews, he actually takes part in such dialogue.(34) Kung clearly defines the present task that faces Christians with regard to Judaism:

"Only one thing is of any use now: a radical metanoia, repentance and re-thinking; we must start on a new road, no longer leading away from the Jews, but towards them, towards a living dialogue, the aim of which is simply the understanding of the other side; towards mutual help, to an encounter in a true brotherly spirit."(35)

He goes on to promote increased understanding between Christians and Jews. Kung lays down certain conditions for discussion between Christians and Jews. For example, he calls for an unreserved acknowledgement of the religious autonomy of the undoubtedly rigorous and exacting Jewish partner. He also asks for recognition of the importance of rabbinical commentators for understanding the New Testament. Kung cannot stress too much the importance of Jewish scholars to promote a greater understanding of Judaism and Christianity (because of their close links). Kung refers to Simone Weil, Edith Stein, H. Cohen, M. Buber, Rosenzweig, Schoeps, Brod and Leo Baek to enhance understanding within Christianity itself.(36) Kung calls for a more objective outlook from Christians.

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(34) Ibid, page 15

(35) H. Kung, The Church, page 138 and  
Idem, "Christians and Jews", Concilium, 10, (1969) page 110.

(36) H. Kung The Church, page 140.

"The Church, being the new people of God, must seek in every way to enter into sympathetic dialogue with the ancient people of God"(37)

Kūng encourages Christians to take part in

"an encounter in a true brotherly spirit."(38)

Kūng stresses that serious dialogue between Christians and Jews should be based on the Bible. He explains that it will be a difficult task, for conflict between Christians and Jews cuts across the heart of the Bible and divides it into two testaments, each one preferred by a different group. However, Kūng maintains that this is crucial. For the centre of controversy between Christians and Jews is Jesus of Nazareth, who appears in the New Testament as the Messiah promised in the Old Testament and is rejected by the greater part of Israel. It is the cross that imbues the whole New Testament with a militant, anti-Jewish atmosphere, Kūng maintains. Anti-Judaism is even greater in the writing of Paul the Apostle because he was leading the Gentile Church in the first days of Christianity. However, Kūng only says that we must study Romans 9-11 more thoroughly. Does this promote a more positive attitude to Judaism? Kūng highlights the key problems concerned with the Christian attitude to Judaism and, in doing so, is then able to point forward to hope for the future.

In actual dialogue between Christian Hans Kūng and the Jew Pinchas Lapide, the discussion focuses on Jesus and it is asked whether Jesus should be regarded as brother or Lord. It is apparent

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(37) Ibid, page 148.

(38) Ibid, page 138.

from the dialogue between these two, that the deeper the trust and friendship, the broader the issues. To most Jews, the Jesus of Christendom has yet to be introduced and to most Christians, the Jewish Jesus is equally a stranger and this dialogue aims to change this. Kúng and Lapidé are themselves examples of post-holocaust theologians who want to make a deliberate change in past attitudes and to replace the misconceptions of opponents with the insights of friends.

For example, Lapidé concludes,

"In a word, after living and praying against one another for nearly two thousand years, let us two study with one another and discover the earthly Jesus from below - as you say - and let us then see where God will further guide us both."(39)

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(39) H. Kúng and P. Lapidé, Brother or Lord?, page 44.

## 5. The State of Israel

Küng acknowledges the importance of the State of Israel today in assessing Christian attitudes to Judaism. This is a point often ignored by contemporary Christian theologians for fear of mixing theology and politics.

Küng declares that:

"This is an event which ranks as the most important in Jewish history since the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple and one with religious consequences, both positive and negative."(40)

However, Küng does say that these consequences are:

"as yet, too early to assess."(41)

The setting up of the State of Israel has had the effect of 'shaking up anti-Jewish theology' Küng states. He believes that this is a good thing. Küng explains that the State of Israel illustrates the vocation of Jews to be a people of God in the midst of other peoples. He goes on to say that Israel helps Christians to recognise that Jews are in many ways or respects an enigmatic community, linked by a common destiny and with an amazing power of endurance. Küng looks to the future between Christians and Jews as he acknowledges the

"unexpectedly hopeful new beginning of the State of Israel."(42)

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(40) H. Küng, The Church, page 138.

(41) Ibid, page 139.

(42) Ibid, page 138.

## The achievements of Vatican II according to K ung

The Second Vatican Council was not content with a mere admission of guilt. It sought to recommend mutual understanding and respect between Christians and Jews. K ung looks at the way the Council expressly dismissed the widespread theological misinterpretations which caused much disaster in the Church's history with Judaism. It condemned the idea that the Jews alone bore the guilt of Jesus' death on the cross and stressed that the death of Jesus occurred because of the sins of all men. Vatican II, K ung claims, provides an "all embracing hope" for the future.(43)

K ung condemns the condensing or refining of the Vatican II statement concerning Jews which took place under the authority of Pope Paul VI. K ung stresses that:

"There were acts of real Curial Sabotage against the Declaration on the Jews, ... and only massive protest by bishops and theologians prevented the resolutions on these important matters from being torpedoed. At the last moment the Pope introduced changes into the schema on ecumenism, which the Council had approved many times, that were scarcely friendly towards other Christians and had only ostensibly been approved by the Secretariat for Unity."(44)

K ung claims that the Council was plagued by demands from higher authority which was inspired by Curial theologians and on sundry occasions these led to changes for the worse in the text.

K ung is positive about the contribution of Vatican II overall. He says that

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(43) Ibid, page 146.

(44) H. K ung, Infallible? An Enquiry (Collins, 1971) page 13.

"The Second Vatican Council has begun a new epoch in the history of the Catholic Church and of the whole of Christendom."(45)

Küng looks forward to a positive relationship between Israel and the Catholic Church and, in the next section, I intend to outline some of the ways in which Catholic theologians have attempted to tackle four of the most contentious issues facing the modern church in its relationship with Judaism. One of the most heartening aspects of this work has been the growth in dialogue between Catholic theologians and Jewish scholars.

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(45) H. Küng, The Living Church (Sheed and Ward, 1963) page 421.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTEMPORARY ROMAN CATHOLIC

THEOLOGICAL ATTITUDES TO JUDAISM

## Introduction

More than a generation has passed since the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council issued the fourth part of their important 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions' concerning the Jewish Religion. In this period, a new climate in relations between Christians and Jews has developed. In the past, Judaism was all too often referred to in the Church in a false and distorted way, particularly in sermons and catechisms. False portrayal was the result. Contemporary Catholic theologians felt that a serious dialogue of reciprocal love and understanding must replace the 'anti-semitism' which, to some extent, lives on in Christians. Both commonalities and differences between the two faiths are now being examined carefully. Theological studies have especially revolutionised our view on key New Testament passages, stripping away many of the previous prejudices and misjudgements.

This chapter sets out to examine some of the major issues which Roman Catholic theologians have considered, under four main topics; first, the Deicide Charge; second, the Pharisees; third, the Holocaust; and finally, Israel. It also includes some reference to Protestant and Jewish responses to the Roman Catholic initiatives in these areas.



## SECTION 1

### The Deicide charge

"Probably no other accusation against the Jewish community by the Christian Church is responsible for more Jewish suffering throughout history than the deicide charge."(1)

The deicide charge throughout history has been the verdict that the Jews of Jesus' time, in their blindness, put to death the Son of God; that 'the Jews crucified Christ'. The word 'deicide' is defined in the Concise Oxford dictionary as "killer or killing of a god". This accusation provided the groundwork for the theory which claimed that Jews, for the remainder of human history, would be subjected to continual sufferings as a punishment for their grave sinfulness in killing Christ.

It is very important that contemporary Christian theologians look at the problems of the deicide charge in the area of Christian theological attitudes to Judaism, for the accusation of Jewish guilt for the death of Jesus has been the most far reaching and serious charge which Christians have made against Jews. This distorted Christian theology of Judaism was not simply a product of early Church history, but has been an issue that has persisted well into the twentieth century.

The death and resurrection of Jesus provide the central core of Christian theology. Can the negative assumptions be overcome without recourse to anti-semitism?

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(1) J.T. Pawlikowski, What are they saying about Christian-Jewish Relations? (Paulist Press, 1980) page 1.

"It is not easy to proclaim Jesus Christ without at the same time implying a negation of the Jews."(2)

This crucial problem should be identified in Christian theology for

"It is only when Christians realise how anti-semitic accusations falsely arose that they will be refuted once and for all." (3)

The trial and death of Jesus have been lively topics of discussion in Christian and Jewish theology for the past twenty years.(4) Yet Roman Catholic theologians have only recently begun to devote whole works to Christian-Jewish relations.(5) The deicide charge has been a key issue in these new theological works. It is upon this new Roman Catholic theological material that I primarily intend to focus and I intend to give as clear and as objective an account as possible of how modern Roman Catholic theologians have tackled this issue. For example C. Thoma looks at the issue of 'The Passion of Jesus' in his section on Jesus Christ and his message, in the context of early and Rabbinic Judaism.(6) 'Guilt for the death of Jesus' is identified by F. Mussner as a topic which needs 'theological

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- (2) G. Baum, Foreward of C. Klein, Anti-Judaism in Christian Theology. (S.P.C.K., 1978) page xi.
- (3) C. Thoma, A Christian Theology of Judaism (Paulist Press, 1980) page 152.
- (4) Some influential studies include:  
G. Sloyan, Jesus on Trial (Fortress, 1973);  
P. Winter, On the trial of Jesus (Berlin: De Gruyter 1974);  
S. Zeitlin, Who Crucified Jesus? (New York, 1964);  
S. Brandon, The trial of Jesus of Nazareth (Stein and Day, 1968);  
R. Gordis, "The trial of Jesus in the light of history",  
JUDAISM 20, (1971) page 6;  
W.R. Wilson, The Execution of Jesus (Scribner, 1970);  
P. Benoit, The Passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ (New, York, 1969);  
E. Bammel, The Trial of Jesus (S.C.M., 1970).
- (5) For example, since 1965, C. Thoma, A Christian Theology of Judaism (Paulist Press, 1980)
- (6) Ibid page 152.

reparation'.(7) E. Fisher offers new insights on reactions to the question 'Who killed Jesus?'(8) An analytical account of the deicide charge and New Testament anti-semitism is given by Pawlikowski.(9) The Jewish guilt in the death of Jesus is also dwelt upon by C. Klein (10). Thus there is a wealth of new material by Roman Catholic theologians including the problem of the deicide charge in their research on Christian theological attitudes to Judaism.

What has emerged from the research of these Roman Catholic theologians has been almost a consensus on various points concerning the deicide charge. Jewish guilt for the death of Jesus is strongly repudiated. There is stress upon the fact that the final responsibility for Jesus' death lay with Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, and that Jesus was killed according to a Roman mode of punishment because he was thought to be a political threat. The role of the chief priests and Sandhedrin and their relationship with the Roman government of the time is explored in some detail. With the current biblical research on Matthew's gospel, due attention is given to the problem of explaining how deicide charges came about. The unanimous conclusion of these contemporary Roman Catholic theologians is that eradication of the deicide charge can only come about through proper education on both a theological and popular level, including an awareness of additional historical material along with a proper interpretation of the New Testament.

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(7) F. Mussner, Tractate on the Jews (S.P.C.K., 1984) page 5

(8) E. Fisher, Faith Without Prejudice: Rebuilding Christian attitudes to Judaism (Paulist Press, 1977)

(9) J.T. Pawlikowski, op. cit. page 1.

(10) C. Klein, op. cit., page 92.

## 2. Pontius Pilate

Modern Catholic theologians have paid special attention to the part that Pontius Pilate played in the death of Jesus, raising the question of the extent of his responsibility.

"Gradually a consensus is forming among those scholars who incline to a critical view of history with regard to the persons responsible for the death of Jesus and their motivation."(11)

The responsibility for the death of Jesus is not seen to rest on "the Jews" but rather on Pontius Pilate;

"That the Roman Pontius Pilate had Jesus crucified is without doubt."(12)  
for it was under his instructions that Jesus was condemned to death on the cross about 30CE at the Place of the Skull.

What were the motives of Pilate in sentencing Jesus to death? E. Fisher asserts that Pilate's motives were power-political, not religious. It was not a question of guilt or innocence, true accusations or false. This material also stresses the fact that we remember that it was Pilate ALONE who had the power to condemn Jesus. Compare John 19 v 10:

"Pilate therefore said to him, 'You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have the power to release you and the power to crucify you?'"

All the Gospel accounts make it clear that it was Pilate alone who decided on the death of Jesus. Compare Luke 23 v 24:

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(11) C. Thoma, op. cit., page 116.

(12) F. Mussner, op. cit., page 187. As we have seen, the literature on the trial, condemnation and crucifixion of Jesus is immense.

"So Pilate gave sentence that their demand should be granted."

(and Matthew 27 v 25, Mark 15 v 15).

Contemporary accounts of the Passion of Jesus have provided a new picture of the personality of Pilate and his part in politics. Additional historical material has illuminated a man who was notorious for his cruelty, his greed and his animosity towards Jews, a fact well known among the Romans of Jesus' time.

(Philo, Leg ad Gai 37-39; Josephus, Bellum 2: 169-174; Ant 18: 55-59 and Luke 13 v 1

There were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.")

According to E. Fisher, a letter of the period reveals "his true character".(13) It charges him with being renowned for excessive cruelty. He was known to line the streets of Judea with crucified victims, sentenced to death on the barest hint of 'revolutionary' attitudes, without trials.(14)

This inevitably leads to the question as to why the evangelists then appear to present us with a varnished and moderate historical Pilate. Thoma maintains that it was "because they did not want to endanger unnecessarily the young Christian communities by antagonism with the Roman Empire".(15) For that would have made more acute the antagonism between Romans and Christians of the Early Church period. Variations on the character given to Pilate in the trial of Jesus can be clearly seen from Gospel to Gospel. Pilate is definitely viewed as

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(13) E. Fisher, op. cit., page 83.

(14) See Slovan, Jesus on Trial (Fortress, 1973)

(15) C. Thoma, op. cit., page 116.

a more sympathetic figure in Matthew's gospel than in John's Gospel.

For example: Matthew 27 v 22

"Pilate said to them, 'Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called the Christ? ... Why, What evil has he done?'".

For example: John 18 v 33 f.

"Pilate entered the praetorium again and called Jesus and said to him 'Are you the King of the Jews? ... Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me; What have you done? ... So you are a King? ... What is this truth?' ..."

The Gospels were written at a time when the survival of the Church depended on Roman tolerance. Because of this historical situation Fisher concludes that,

"The Gospel writers must have felt that it was not expedient to condemn Rome just when Christianity was becoming successful in converting Romans."(16)

Therefore it is clear that we should be more aware today in biblical study, of the part played by the hand of the redactor

"Whose theology is partly based on the conflict of Jesus with his opponents from the beginning of his activity to its end, completely regardless of any historical - chronological order."(17)

The Gospel evidence should obviously be viewed OBJECTIVELY. No preconceived a priori ideas should prevail.

Therefore with this new material, new issues have been raised concerning the deicide charge. It is clear from the work of these Roman Catholic theologians that the way in which the death of Jesus

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(16) E. Fisher, op. cit., page 83.

(17) C. Klein, op. cit., page 92.

has been traditionally told should be considerably revised in the future.

### 3. Political or Religious Reasons for the Death of Jesus?

While studying the reasons for the deicide charge, Roman Catholic theologians looked at the problem of WHY Jesus was condemned to death. Was Jesus condemned for religious or political reasons? Traditionally, Christian theology generally assumed the reason to be religious confrontation with Jewish authorities, which in turn led to the offensive charge that 'the Jews killed Jesus'. However, in recent research, Roman Catholic theologians have challenged the traditional material asserting that Jesus was condemned for POLITICAL reasons:

"New Testament scholars are virtually unanimous in agreeing that the death of Jesus was viewed by the Roman government as a political execution."(18)

For crucifixion is well-known as a Roman form of capital punishment, whereas in Jewish law the punishment for blasphemy is death by stoning (Lev 24 v 10). So it is unlikely that Jesus was charged or convicted by Jews of blasphemy (Luke 32 v 2). The charge against Jesus was insurrection as the inscription on the cross showed (John 19 v 19 "King of the Jews").

Much of the 'deicide' anti-semitism of the past has been put into focus for Christianity by these Catholic theologians as they have explained how both political and religious motives were used against the Jews.

There has recently been illumination of the extraordinary need in the Gospels to shift the blame for the death of Jesus from Roman

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(18) J. Pawlikowski, op. cit., page 4.

political authority to Jewish religious authority. For example, B. Vawter asserts the position regarding primary Roman responsibility for the execution of Jesus.(19). He is of the opinion that Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus has been heightened by some of the gospel writers at the expense of Roman culpability,

"in order to lessen the threat of imperial harassment of the early Christian community,"(20)

He insists that the New Testament should be properly interpreted, for the gospels had a fundamentally polemical goal and thus they tend to be misunderstood. Vawter highlights the tendency of the Gospel authors to write in absolute terms about "the Jews" without giving specific qualification.

Another example of a modern Catholic theologian who stresses the political reasons for the death of Jesus is E. Fisher. He maintains that

"Jesus was condemned for political not religious reasons."(21) By threatening the temple establishment, Fisher asserts, Jesus threatened Roman rule. His popularity was seen as a threat to Roman power. Similarly the New Testament scholar Oscar Cullmann highlights the political reasons for the death of Jesus.(22) From his research Cullmann concludes that Jesus was a prisoner of the Romans, arrested by a cohort in the Garden of Gethsemane on Pilate's orders and that Jesus' trial was political:

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(19) B. Vawter, "Are the Gospels anti-semitic?" Journal of Ecumenical Studies 5 (1968).

(20) Ibid. page 481.

(21) E. Fisher, op. cit., page 82.

(22) O. Cullmann, Jesus and the Revolutionaries (Harper and Row, 1970).



"Thus, Jesus suffered the ROMAN death penalty, crucifixion, the inscription, the 'titulus' above the cross named as his crime the Zealotist attempt of having strived for kingly rule in Israel, a country still administered by the Romans,"(23)

At this point reference must be made to the Jewish scholar Ellis Rivkin who has looked at the issue of the causes of the death of Jesus in detail.(24) He rephrases the question of 'Who killed Jesus?' to What killed Jesus? and comes to the conclusion that Jesus died a victim of Roman imperial policy. He stresses the fact that the masses of Jews of the time felt so stifled under Roman domination that they staged an outright revolt against its tyrannical authority 'a few years later'. Rivkin suggests that theologians should improve their understanding of the environment in which Jesus lived and that, by studying what it was which led to his execution, we should also come to understand his life and message better.

"By nailing to the cross one who claimed to be the messiah to free human beings, Rome and its collaborators indicated their attitude toward human freedom."(25)

Rosemary Ruether in Faith and Fratricide(26) strongly asserts political reasons for the death of Jesus (as opposed to religious reasons). She stresses the shifting of blame in the gospels for the death of Jesus from Roman to Jewish authorities. It was not merely from ROMAN to JEWISH authority, she states, but from POLITICAL to RELIGIOUS authority. The gospel writers in her view felt it important to place the blame for the death of Jesus specifically on the Jewish

(23) Ibid, page 34.

(24) E. Rivkin, in L. Edelmann (ed) Parting of the Ways (Washington, 1967).

(25) Ibid, page 7.

(26) R. Ruether, Faith and Fratricide (New York, Seabury, 1974).

religious community. Why should this be? Ruether maintains that the reason for this arose from the wish to engage in a polemic toward the Jewish religious tradition itself:

"The anti-Judaic tradition exists as the negative side of this Christological formation and continues to remain in this form down through the patristic period."(27)

Thus the suggestion is that it is not merely an explanation of apologetics toward the Gentiles but one first of all of polemic toward the Jewish tradition.

Therefore there has been a dramatic 'reversal of reasons' for the death of Jesus in contemporary Christian theology. 'The Jews' no longer receive any 'blame': rather, there has been a shift towards emphasising the political and Roman responsibility. This change of attitude appears to have occurred with the theological analysis of 'historical layers' within the New Testament. What does this mean for Christian theology today? It refutes all charges traditionally made against 'the Jews' and also means that,

"Any victim in our day of political systems should be able to understand that Jesus suffered and died a victim of inscrutable slander and political machinations. His Passion, then should UNITE rather than separate Jews and Christians."(28)

#### 4. The Chief Priests and the Sadducean Aristocracy

To what extent were the Chief Priests and the Sadducean Aristocracy involved in the death of Jesus? In order to refute all guilt on the part of "the Jews", the role of the Chief Priests and the

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(27) Ibid chapter 2, page 65.

(28) C. Thoma, op. cit., page 119.

Sadducean Aristocracy and their relationship with the Roman government of the time should be explored in some detail. For the "evidence" provided for the deicide charge against Jews had traditionally been drawn from the complicity of a handful of particular Jewish leaders of Jesus' time with the Roman authorities, in the trial of Jesus, as seen in the New Testament. From the actions of these leaders in the New Testament, the whole Jewish community throughout history has been blamed for the death of Jesus. Thus modern Catholic theologians have examined the part played by the Chief Priests and Sadducean Aristocracy in the death of Jesus, in order to assess the validity or truth of the traditional deicide charge.

Modern Catholic theologians have attempted to answer the question "Who exactly were the Chief Priests and Sadducean Aristocracy?" by looking at evidence from both the New Testament itself and historical documents of the time. The conclusion has been that the Sanhedrin was the most important government authority and that the temple priesthood and Sadducean party was closely allied with Rome. According to Josephus, Ant 20: 251, since the year 6 CE

"the Jewish state was administered aristocratically, while supervision of the people was in the hands of the high priests."(29)

Their economic position appears to have been dependent upon and sustained by Rome with the high priests as the political-spiritual head of the Jews under the Roman rod. Given this historical situation one wonders if the Chief Priests and Sadducean Aristocracy can fairly be called Jewish leaders at all?

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(29) C. Thoma, op. cit., page 117.

Arrayed against the temple priesthood and Sadducees were the religious movements of the day. For example, the Pharisees who opposed the Sadducees on almost every significant point of doctrine; from the manner of interpretation of the Bible to belief in the resurrection of the body after death. As Jesus' teaching was very similar to that of the Pharisees, critical of the high priesthood, and new, it is clear that the Chief Priests and Sadducean Aristocracy had reason to fear Jesus' teaching as a threat to their own precarious (political) position. Jesus was also tremendously popular, and might have aroused his followers to revolt against the Chief Priests.

Jesus may have exacerbated this situation with the temple priests by his attempts to reform temple worship. His critical words and actions in the Temple (Mark 11 v 15-19) and all his influence among the people must have appeared to the High Priest as a threat to the Temple-national order. Mussner goes so far as to say that

"The cleansing of the Temple appears to have been the immediate occasion for the authorities to proceed against Jesus (Mark 11 v 15), for in the eyes of the Jewish authorities Jesus showed himself with this to be a dangerous trouble maker who could threaten the delicate co-existence with the Roman occupation force."(30)

However C. Klein raises the point that, if the cleansing of the temple was such an important factor in the issue of the death of Jesus, why wasn't it mentioned in the trial before the Sanhedrin?

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(30) Ibid, page 188.

Thus E. Sanders, Jesus and Judaism (S.C.M., 1985) focussed on the action of Jesus in the Temple. He also believed that this led to his death and that the reason for the involvement of Jewish opponents in his death was due to the threat posed to the Jerusalem temple.

"In none of the Gospels is it mentioned as a charge in the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin "although witnesses could have easily been found.""(31)

As Vawter sees it, the gospels did not represent Jesus as rejected by the Jews of his time, but portrayed the circumstances of the crucifixion as precipitated by a small and desperate cabal of men who had to do their work covertly for fear of arousing against themselves a general rebellion of their own people. Although he does feel that there was some complicity by certain members of the Sadducean priestly elite from the Jerusalem Temple in the events leading up to the death of Jesus, he points to the evaluation offered by the Jewish historian Henrich Graetz, who described the Temple as being at that time directed by men whose chief hallmarks were greed and avarice for power.(32)

Therefore, contemporary Roman Catholic theologians have no doubt that the Chief Priests and Sadducean Aristocracy acted against Jesus, not for religious reasons, but chiefly from religio-political reasons. However, at times these theologians do appear to provide some sweeping generalisations in this area in an attempt to 'prove' the innocence of the Chief Priests and thus clear Jews of the deicide charge. They do show that Christian theology has traditionally had some distorted views on the guilt of Jews for the death of Jesus and their work provokes interest in searching for the TRUE interpretation of the historical events of the life and death of Jesus from the New Testament and additional material. As more detailed work is done in this area, Roman Catholic theologians will be able to eliminate the deicide charge from Christian theology once and for all.

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(31) C. Klein, op. cit., page 93.

(32) B. Vawter, op. cit. page 12. H. Graetz, History of the Jews. (Philadelphia, 1941) page 237.

## 5. Saint Matthew's Passion Account

In order to bridge the gap from the Christian attitude of anti-semitism to that of tolerance between Christians and Jews, it is necessary to go back to the roots of Christian anti-semitism and ask from where did this attitude emerge? By studying Matthew's Gospel closely, it can be seen quite clearly HOW the idea of Jewish guilt for Jesus' death began. Modern Roman Catholic theologians are unanimous in agreeing that the gospels must be studied carefully to put the deicide charge into perspective.

Matthew 27 v 25:

"And all the people answered: "His blood be on us and on our children!"

This verse has been used throughout Christian history as a justification for the deicide charge against Jews. It is

"the famous-infamous special material from the gospel of Matthew in which a 'self-cursing' seems to be expressed by the Jewish people."(33)

The first point made by theologians studying this area today is that this verse must be taken within the entire context of Matthew 27 v 11-26, for by using the verse out of context, it has caused serious tensions over the centuries. It is noteworthy that it is found only in Matthew and that in the other Synoptics a sharp distinction is made between the small mob before Pilate and 'the people' who sympathised with Jesus. E. Fisher explains that

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(33) F. Mussner, op. cit., page 194.

(34) M. Wyschogrod in "Faith and the Holocaust", Judaism (1971), page 53.

"Today, scholars' research has shown that this phrase - if used - was a specific legal term, but with a slightly different twist. The original would have been 'His blood be on him and on his children'."(34)

The start of the idea of Jewish guilt for Jesus' death does not appear to come from the historical events of Jesus' life but rather from the later early Church conflicts with the Synagogue. Thus it began because of the date when the Gospel of Matthew was written (some 50 years after the events being described). These later events were probably 'read back' into the accounts of Jesus' life, so that, for example, what was written about the Chief Priests 50 years after Jesus' death came to be gradually applied in Christian circles to refer to all Jewish people without distinction. Mussner says of Matthew 27 v 25

"From the perspective of the time of the composition of the Gospel, it is probable that the evangelist saw this cry fulfilled in the catastrophe of the year 70 CE."(35)

G. Baum, with reference to St. Matthew's Gospel asks,

"Can we be surprised that the mental negation of Jewish existence was turned into legal and political negation as soon as the Church entered into the victorious cultural complex of the ancient world?"(36)

Theologians today have examined the additional material given in Matthew's Gospel to that of Mark in detail. It appears that Matthew based his material on Mark's account but blurred many of the distinctions, causing uncertainty about the part of 'the Jews' in the death of Jesus. For example, Mark 15 v 15:

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(35) F. Mussner, op. cit., page 196

(36) G. Baum in C. Klein, Anti-Judaism in Christian Theology (S.P.C.K., 1975) page xi

"So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas; and having scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified."

Here, the mere addition of 'for them' can be seen to change the whole meaning of the verse (and therefore the whole interpretation of historical events).

Matthew extends a questioning of Jesus by the temple authorities into a formal trial before the Sanhedrin. Could this have taken place exactly as Matthew describes it, or was it 'adapted' to prove the fulfillment of Zechariah 11 v 12? Pilate in Matthew's Gospel is presented as an 'innocent' character in the death of Jesus.

"Matthew's Pilate is wholly convinced of Jesus' innocence."(37)

What is hesitancy in Mark becomes conviction in Matthew. Pilate washes his hands to illustrate his innocence - this in itself is curious for the ritual washing of the hands was a Jewish religious custom and unlikely to be followed by a Roman governor. (It must also be remembered that Romans alone were capable of carrying out the death penalty.)

In Luke (23 v 27) it is clear that the Jewish people as a whole are struck with sorrow over the death of Jesus, yet in Matthew there are many additions not found in the other gospels which paint a very bad picture of 'the Jews', for example, Matthew 27 v 62, 27 v 19 and 28 v 11. Fortunately we have the other Gospels to help balance the picture and by studying the gospels as a whole a true picture of the history of Jesus' life and death can be reconstructed.

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(37 E. Fisher, op. cit., page 85



Therefore it is clear that

"Matthew's additions, dictated by the pressure of his times to the passion account are often small but provocative."(38)

The prayer of Jesus on the cross must not be forgotten (Luke 23 v 34):

"Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

Jesus himself does not charge 'the Jews of all history' with the responsibility of his death. Rather he preached a gospel of love and forgiveness. It is clear from the gospels as a whole, that

"Jesus died for all human beings."(39)

and it is to this thought that we now turn.

#### 6. "All humanity" not "the Jews"

By the sixteenth century, the catechism of the Council of Trent clearly taught that theologically "all humanity" bears the blame for the death of Jesus; that 'the Jews' are not responsible.

"In this guilt are involved all those who fall frequently into sin." (Heb 6 v 6, 1 Cor 2 v 8)

However, this declaration did not put an end to Jews being accused of deicide, and did not end the centuries of persecution of Jews, because of this charge. After the events of World War II, the Second Vatican Council provided a conciliar decree NOSTRA AETATE (1965) in which the Roman Catholic Church makes quite clear that any collective

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(38) Ibid, page 84

(39) F. Mussner, op. cit., page 187.

accusation against the Jewish community then or now for the death of Jesus is contrary to all Christian teaching.(40)

Roman Catholic theologians today declare quite clearly that "all humanity" and not "the Jews" bear responsibility for the death of Jesus according to sacred history. As Fisher explains,

"Sin is universal. The meaning of Christ's death and resurrection is that through Christ's self-sacrifice, our sins have been forgiven. In order for all humanity to be saved through Christ's redeeming Passion, all humanity must be seen as sharing in the guilt for the deed."(41)

Thus if we do not accept the guilt for Jesus' death, we cannot hope to share in the glory of his resurrection. It is only by highlighting this Christian theology that "Christian Churches have moved a long way towards complete elimination of the deicide charge from their teaching."(42)

## 7. Education

It is clear that modern theological research has enabled Christian Churches to change their attitudes toward the responsibility of Jews in Jesus' death, and has moved a long way toward the complete elimination of the deicide charge from their teaching. It is crucial that Christian education continues to refute the deicide charge and be constantly aware of the old prejudices.(43) Continuing education in this area should also affect the more traditional beliefs regarding

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(40) W. Abbott, Documents of Vatican II (Chapman, 1976) page 660

(41) E. Fisher, op. cit., page 77.

(42) J.T. Pawlikowski, op. cit., page 4.

(43) Compare text book research carried out by E. Fisher, 'A Content analysis of the treatment of Jesus and Judaism in Current Roman Catholic Textbooks and Manuals at Primary School and Secondary levels' (New York University, 1976)

the responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus in popular culture. For example, the musical 'Jesus Christ Superstar' continues many false stereotypes against Jews in the Passion of Jesus. The Christian community should be clearly educated to understand that a large portion of the Jewish population of Jesus' time would have endorsed Jesus' struggle against the Roman government and corrupt Temple authorities.

A major problem is that a clear perspective of the historical situation of Jesus' death is not easily developed from a simple reliance upon the Gospel texts. Roman Catholic theologians today insist on the utilisation of ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND MATERIAL from modern scholarship on the Second Temple period. One of the major difficulties of such a study for the Christian scholar is that the materials for our knowledge of the life and teaching of Jesus come exclusively from the New Testament. In contrast, Thoma uses sources from Talmud and Josephus. The theologian D.R. Catchpole looks at the influence of the Rabbinic sources in the Trial of Jesus(44) and Douglas Moo looks at 'the Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives'(45) particularly focussing on Isaiah, Zechariah and the Psalms. J.T. Townsend has even published a version of the Passion Narratives based on modern biblical scholarship to avoid previous distortions.(46)

As a result of 'proper' religious research and education the traditional misconception that the Pharisees bore much of the blame for the death of Jesus has almost dropped out of sight. C. Klein reminds

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(44) D.R. Catchpole, The Trial of Jesus, (Leiden, 1971)

(45) D. Moo, The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives, (Almond Press, 1983).

(46) J.T. Townsend, "Passion Narratives," NCCJ (1977), page 1.

us that in the course of the whole trial there is only one mention of the Pharisees (John 18 v 3). The Pharisees had no political power with the Roman governor. The teaching of the Pharisees bears a remarkable resemblance to that of Jesus. It is encouraging for the elimination of the deicide charge as a whole that this particular misconception has been recognised.

### CRITICISMS

Therefore, it clear that Modern Roman Catholic theologians strive to elucidate the objective truth when studying the deicide charge today. They stress the fact that, according to Christian doctrine, the death of Jesus was necessary and therefore it was not 'the Jews' or indeed any other single group that 'killed Jesus' but more that God sacrificed Jesus for the sins of humanity; so that the death of Jesus is the responsibility of every human being. Their approach to the gospels is very critical. For example, Mussner goes so far as to say that,

"Since only the post-Easter narrations are available, the historical events can no longer be reconstructed exactly (47)".

The work of contemporary Christian theologians contains less of an a priori bias toward an interpretation unfavourable to Jews than in the past. It has also brought to our attention the political aspect of Jesus' death.

However, it must be asked if these modern theologians have provided an adequate response to the question of 'who killed Jesus'? What criticisms must be made about their work? It is evident that

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(47) F. Mussner, op. cit., page 188.

their work does not appear to be conscious of a living Jewish community. The point has not been made that the Jewish community of today follows the Pharisaic line of thought rather than the Sadducean. As some of the work is quite general (and even simplistic at times), the Jewishness of Jesus and his disciples is not stressed within the area of 'the deicide charge'. Little attention is given to the fact that Jesus' death was predicted in Matthew 17 v 9 and Mark 9 v 9, or to the question of whether the crucifixion was Christ's free internal decision. The most obvious and glaring gap in the work of these theologians today is the lack of research on 'the deicide charge by the Christian Church throughout history'. (Although this is a negative response to the question of 'who killed Jesus?', it should be acknowledged because of the anguish and suffering it has brought Jews for centuries.)

Thus there is still much work to be done in this area. It should rightly be called "a theology of Reparation".(48) Yet there has been much positive research done by Roman Catholic theologians recently and a positive changing attitude to Judaism is apparent.

In conclusion, we must hope with Thoma that in the future the Passion story will

"unite rather than separate Jews and Christians."(49)

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(48) Ibid page 187.

(49) C. Thoma, op. cit., page 119.

## SECTION 2

### Jesus and the Pharisees

Having established that there are intimate links between Jesus and the Pharisaic movement, it is necessary to focus attention on the apparent hostility between him and the Pharisees in the New Testament. For, as Thoma states:

"It would be wrong however to make Pharisaic opposition appear quite innocuous. We previously mentioned Pharisaic self-criticism and their occasionally unfavourable reputation; we also indicated their refusal to place the approach of God's kingdom at the heart of their religious thinking. These were inflammable matters in their encounter with Jesus. Not only the final redacted parts of the New Testament but even earlier ones indicate opposition as well as affinity between Jesus and the Pharisees."(50)

What have modern Roman Catholic theologians done about the hostility between Jesus and the Pharisees? From their research, have their attitudes towards Judaism changed? Does this hostility come from Jesus himself or from the evangelists? Baum maintains that,

"Christians are no longer interested in describing Pharisees as legalists and hypocrites."(51)

Is this the case?

The Pharisees have been subjected to a long history of abuse in Christian theology. Pharisees are described in the polemical spirit of the Gospels to this day (even though the evangelists had not intended to write an objective, critical history). 'Pharisee' became a synonym for 'HYPOCRITE' and 'Pharisaic' became a synonym for 'SELF-RIGHTEOUS'. Today, Christian theologians are aware that this is not

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(50) C. Thoma, op. cit., page 113.

(51) C. Klein, op. cit., page X

true.(52)

Mussner looks at the hostile image of the Pharisees in the Gospels and is concerned with redaction critical observations which flow from the questions 'What do the individual evangelists make of the Pharisees?' and 'Do they consciously build a hostile image of the Pharisees which has led to a distorted picture of them?' Mussner explains that,

"In the Gospels the Pharisees, stylised in a hostile image to an extraordinary degree, are burdened with very negative accents."(53)

#### Hostile Attitude to the Pharisees in the New Testament

There are many New Testament texts which display a HOSTILE attitude of Jesus to Pharisees and put them together with Sadducees. Modern Roman Catholic theologians cite many of these texts in the context of New Testament theology: such texts as Matthew 6 v 1-8:

"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the Synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by men" v 5

Here Jesus warns his disciples not to be hypocrites and makes allusions to the Pharisees' hypocritical actions, like doing good works for men rather than for God. In Matthew 15 v 12:

"Let them alone; they are blind guides"

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(52) Sayings of Hillel are routinely cited as evidence that Pharisees were not hypocrites, formalists or self-righteous men (for example, the Golden Rule)

(53) F. Mussner, op. cit., page 161.

Jesus accuses the Pharisees of transgressing the commandment of God for the sake of their tradition. Again in Matthew, 16 v 16:

"Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees"

Jesus' teaching is direct. In Luke the hostile attitude to Pharisees is also apparent, 16 v 14:

"The Pharisees who were lovers of money heard all this and they scoffed at him."

Within Christian theology today, is the term Pharisee synonymous with the self-loving Pharisee praying in the Synagogue? (Luke 18 v 9). In trying to understand the hostility of Jesus to the Pharisees in the New Testament, contemporary Roman Catholic theologians have studied the relevant New Testament texts in some detail.(54)

Mussner claims that the gradual development of a hostile image of the Pharisees is clearly discernable in an ever-growing measure. It is important to look closely at this; for example, in the Gospel of Mark, the Pharisees are encountered 12 times (2 v 16, 2 v 18, 2 v 24, 3 v 6, 7 v 1, 7 v 3, 7 v 5-13, 8 v 10, 10 v 2, 12 v 13). Mark pointedly speaks of "the Pharisees" as if in each case the entire group of Pharisees were involved in the disputes with Jesus.

"This means that there is in Mark a post-Easter tendency to speak of the Pharisees when an opponent from Pharisaism is thought of."(55).

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(54) F. Mussner, Ibid, provides a comprehensive survey of the hostile texts to the Pharisees in the New Testament.  
(55) Ibid, page 166.



Mussner comes to the conclusion that we should be suspicious that 'the Pharisees' have been added or secondarily inserted into the material by Mark himself.

As regards Logia Source (Q) Mussner believes that the anti-Pharisaic accents were inserted later by Matthew (Matt 3 v 7, 12 v 38, 23 v 12, Luke 3 v 7, 11 v 16, 11 v 29, 12 v 39, 11 v 32). He says:

"This can probably be explained from the circumstances that the material of the Logia source had probably been assembled very early and specifically within the circles of the (Jewish-Christian orientated) primitive community which avoided polemic against the Pharisees."(56).

In Matthew's Gospel the anti-Pharisaic polemic is strengthened beyond Mark and the Logia Source; most of all in the 'Woes' against the Pharisees and scribes in chapter 23. (Also compare Matthew 9 v 4, 12 v 14, 15 v 1, 16 v 1). Kummel states that 'this is an enormous distortion of reality'.

The sharpness of the hostile image of Pharisees is toned down in Luke's Gospel (compare Luke 6 v 2, 6 v 11, 20 v 19, 15 v 1, 16 v 1, 18 v 19, 19 v 37).

The Pharisees are the opponents of Jesus in John's Gospel. A harsh image of Pharisees is portrayed here (compare 1 v 23, 7 v 48, 7 v 32, 9 v 16, 11 v 57, 12 v 42).

Thus Mussner elucidates a convincing argument to prove that the gradual development of a hostile image of the Pharisees in the New Testament can be seen. This points the 'origin' of this hostility to the evangelists rather than to Jesus himself.

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(56) Ibid, page 166

(57) Kummel, in Mussner, op. cit., page 169.

In order to understand this area of hostility to the Pharisees in the New Testament more fully, we must examine the issues that provoked such hostility in the New Testament towards Pharisees. Observance of the Sabbath was a key issue

"In the gospels we read of Jesus debating with the religious authorities on the Sabbath and about the Sabbath (Matthew 12 v 1, Luke 6 v 1, Mark 6 v 1) ... One would get the impression from the Gospels that the religious teachers in the Jewish religion with whom Christ had difficulties were most Pharisees."(58)

The Pharisees felt the Sabbath to be an indispensable ingredient for Jewish survival. Was Jesus' hostility an assertion of the primacy of the individual person rather than a deliberate destruction of Pharisaic doctrine?(59)

When studying the hostile attitude of Jesus to the Pharisees as portrayed in the New Testament, Matthew 23 must be examined. For Matthew devotes the whole of chapter 23 to a bitter attack of Jesus against the Pharisees proclaiming "woe" against them. Jesus accuses the Pharisees of every possible transgression and crime. However, modern Roman Catholic theologians have concluded that a closer exegesis of this chapter shows that it originated not so much in the preaching of Jesus as in the historical situation of the Church and Synagogue and their controversies after the year 70 CE. McNamara pays close attention to Matthew 23. He says:

"According to Matthew 23 v 2, Jesus prefaced his most scathing attack on the religious leaders of the people with the words, 'The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' chair;

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(58) M. McNamara, Palestinian Judaism and the New Testament (Veritas, 1983,) page 160.

(59) This is a point that J. Parkes pursues in The Foundations of Judaism and Christianity (London, 1960), page 137.

so practise and observe what they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach but do not practise.'"(60)

McNamara looks at the way the text condemns Pharisees for their personal shortcomings and then (v 16-24) for their halakah on oaths and swearings (v 16-22) tithes (v 23-24) and cleanliness (v 25-26). The teaching on swearing is found in a non-controversial context in the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5 v 33-7) (61)

Charlotte Klein is especially sensitive to the historical background of the final editing of the Gospels. With regard to Matthew 23, she gives a short survey of the way Anglo-American authors view the 'woes' of the Pharisees.(62) For example, J.C. Fenton in The Gospel of St. Matthew succinctly emphasises two main points when he discusses chapter 23:

"First, the experts on the Judaism of the first century tell us that the Scribes and Pharisees have been considerably caricatured here. They were not at all like this picture of them. Indeed many were extremely loving and holy men. Second, the warnings against the Scribes and Pharisees are not meant to be taken as just warnings against those particular men ... but as a portrait of unbelief at any time, anywhere. The scope of this chapter is much wider than it might first seem."(63)

The Jerome Biblical Commentary reminds the reader of Matthew chapter 23 that the gospel evaluation of Pharisees, since it emerged from an apologetic context, is far too negative and does not give the Pharisees sufficient credit for being a constructive spiritual force. John Reumann pursues this outlook. He says,

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(60) Ibid, page 159/160

(61) Ibid, page 160

(62) C. Klein, op.cit. page 88

(63) Ibid, page 147.

"The long tirade in Matthew 23 against the 'Scribes and Pharisees' doubtless reflects the changed situation. It is a fact that ... the Pharisees' criticisms are directed against the followers of Jesus - and hence against the early Christians - rather than against Jesus himself."(64)

Klein maintains that the whole hermeneutical trend in Anglo-American exegesis makes the Gospel relevant for today and that the Matthew 23 passage is fully understood in the context of the situation in which the young Christian community found itself vis-a-vis the Synagogue after 70 CE.

Pharisaism strongly influenced Christianity. This was partly due to the fact that Paul was under Pharisaic influence. Thoma looks briefly at this issue and explains that Pharisaic influence is particularly evident in the book of Acts (Acts 23 v 6, 26 v 5). When studying Paul's Pharasaic past, Thoma goes so far as to say,

"So-called early Catholicism, in so far as it found expression in the New Testament literature, attempted to bring the Christ-event and Pharasaic-rabbinic sprituality and life-styles into harmony."(65)

(However, it is important to note the lack of work by Catholic theologians on the area of Paul and Pharisaism)(66)

Klein emphasises the fact that there are still many Christian theologians who continue to judge 'the Pharisees' as if the New Testament provided an objective description of their mentality and

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(64) J. Reumann, Jesus in the Church's Gospel (Philadelphia, 1970) page 259.

(65) C. Thoma, op. cit., page 130.

(66) Compare two impressive works in this area:  
W.D. Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism (S.P.C.K., 1965);  
E.P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism (S.C.M., 1977)

views. For example, the New Testament scholar Benoit says,

"If we recall the disdainful contempt with which the Pharisees and other scrupulous observers of the law regarded the ordinary people and considered contact with them to be impure, we shall understand the hatred with which the latter paid them back."(67)

Klein goes on to give many such examples. These all have descriptions which are distortions of the reality as known from other sources. They are entangled in contradictions which are not elucidated. The polemical problems involved in the gospel statements are torn from their historical context and understood, we might say, in a fundamental sense, and impose a preconceived interpretation on texts, paying no regard to form or redaction criticism.

The image and work of the Pharisees as they emerge from typical theological works of the last decade are drawn almost exclusively from the New Testament. However, there was no intention, Klein stresses, of giving an objective historical presentation in the New Testament. She says,

"To attempt to understand Pharisees solely in the light of the New Testament is the same thing - mutatis mutandis - as to put together an image of Jesus from the Talmudic sources and to regard this as historically true."(68)

Despite the obvious hostility to the Pharisees in the New Testament, it should be remembered that Jesus' teaching had much in common with the Pharisees.

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(67) C. Klein, op. cit., page 90.

(68) Ibid page 90.

## Was Jesus a Pharisee?

One answer suggested by scholars to the dilemma of hostility to Pharisees in the New Testament has been that Jesus himself was a Pharisee and that his attacks on contemporary practice were from within Pharisaism. Modern Roman Catholic theologians have looked in detail at the evidence put forward for this view and they have come to their own various conclusions as we shall see. There has also been much interest in this suggestion by Jewish scholars leading to interaction of thought on this issue from Judaism to Christianity. On the Trial of Jesus clearly identifies Jesus as a Pharisee.(69). Jesus' ethical teaching is perfectly consistent with the Pharisaic attitude, Winter maintains. He stresses the view that Jesus' teaching corresponds to the Pharisaic posture before the wars with Rome:

"Jesus of Nazareth ... might have been representative of pre-rabbinical Pharisaism not only in his ethical teaching, but also in his eschatology. Of course, this is not to be taken to imply that Jesus did not formulate his views in his own individual fashion. It is the general tenor which corresponds with the Pharisaic pattern; on the ethical side quite obviously and on the eschatological conceivably."(70)

Winter goes as far as to say that there is little real conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees:

"In the whole of the New Testament we are unable to find a single historically reliable instance of religious differences between Jesus and members of the Pharisaic guild, let alone evidence of a mortal conflict."(71)

Pawlikowski looks at the proposal put forward by Winter that the violent opposition between Jesus and 'the Pharisees' depicts a state

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(69) P. Winter, On the Trial of Jesus (Berlin, 1961).

(70) Ibid, page 133.

(71) Ibid, page 133.

of affairs which had come about only several decades after the crucifixion, when the early church and rabbinic tradition had already gone their separate ways.

Another Jewish scholar who looks at the possibility that Jesus was a Pharisee is A. Finkel.(72) He concludes from a study of the Jewishness of Jesus that, on controversial issues concerning religious principles, Jesus adopted the Pharisaic stand; an acceptance of the oral tradition as formulated in the academies, a belief in reward and punishment, in resurrection and the doctrine that the whole creation is under divine care (cf Matthew 13 v 24, 22 v 29). Finkel observes the way that Jesus followed meal time rules (Matthew 14 v 9), attended synagogue and adhered to the Pharisaic code of purity during his ministry (Luke 8 v 46, Matthew 15 v 23). He goes on to look at the way Klausner describes Jesus as a Pharisaic Rabbi with some divergent opinions and declares that his criticism was actually not an attack but a defence of Pharisaism against hypocrisy. Finkel also compares the closeness of Jesus' teaching to Hillel (particularly his preaching of kindness to all men: John 8 v 4, Matthew 11 v 29, 23 v 12).

Falk takes this last view further in his study on the Pharisees and he provides a new insight into the seemingly anti-Jewish passages contained in the New Testament.(73) Falk (a rabbinic writer) demonstrates that Jesus consistently upheld the views of the rabbis of the School of Shammai and their followers. Falk maintains that the Pharisees of Bet Shammai were the ones to control Jewish life and thought during the first century C.E. However, after the School of Shammai disappeared from the Jewish scene following the destruction of

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(72) A. Finkel, The Pharisees and the Teacher of Nazareth (London, 1964).

(73) H. Falk, Jesus the Pharisee (Paulist Press, 1985).

the Jerusalem temple, Judaism then developed according to the teaching of Bet Hillel.

According to the Jewish scholar David Flusser,(74) the Talmud lists seven types of people who call themselves Pharisees. The way that the Talmud handles the Pharisaic movement provides another explanation for Jesus' hostility to Pharisees. Five of these seven types are described in a negative way and even among the 2 positive types (whom Flusser terms the 'veteran' Pharisees and the 'love' Pharisees) there were serious disagreements. Flusser identifies Jesus with the "love" Pharisees. The gospel condemnations, he maintains, were not accusations against the entire Pharisaic movement. Rather, they were directed against certain groups of people who were not living up to the religious ideals of the love Pharisees, considered crucial to the integrity of the Pharisaic ideal. That this explanation is quite possible can be seen by referring to rabbinic tradition. For Pharisees are criticised by the Jews themselves in Rabbinic tradition.(75) Rabbinic tradition makes sharp fun of the various kinds of hypocrisy into which the 'observant' may fall. For example, the "shoulder Pharisee" is the Pharisee who wears good deed on his shoulder.

However, what about the definite instances of conflict or differences of opinion on these precise points? Today, Roman Catholic theologians look to the research of Jewish scholars to answer the question of whether Jesus' harsh admonitions came from within Pharisaism.. Not all Jewish scholars maintain that Jesus was a Pharisee. For example G. Vermes, in Jesus the Jew,(76) put forward the theory that Jesus was one of the holy miracle workers of Galilee

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(74) D. Flusser, Harvard Theological Review 61, 1968, page 126.  
(75, 76) (see over).



and did not belong to the Pharisees, Essenes or Zealots. It is significant that Roman Catholic theologians today use material from Jewish scholars in explaining the background of Jesus and the New Testament. Roman Catholic theologians explain the different views held by Jewish scholars on the Pharisaic nature of Jesus. However, what conclusions do Catholic theologians themselves come to?

Mussner concludes that Jesus was not a Pharisee:

"Historically, Jesus of Nazareth was not a Pharisee; he did not come from a Pharisaic Havurah, but more likely from the am-ha-aretz who, however, before the year 70, in no way stood in absolute opposition to the Pharisees." (77)

He says of the hostility, that the Pharisees were stylised into the special opponents of Jesus; they became the 'type' of opponent of Jesus. According to Mussner, Jesus' Halacha was strongly anti-Pharisaic: thus a tragic collision between Jesus and the Pharisees occurred. Jesus showed an attitude which could be interpreted as a criticism of the strict law of the sabbath, the holiest law of Judaism.

Rosemary Ruether, on the other hand, acknowledges that Jesus' teaching had a similarity in context to the schools of the Pharisees.(78) She gives 'as an example, the fact that Jesus used the familiar Pharisaic principle that "the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath".(79) Some Pharisees recognised the need to modify the Sabbath law to accommodate basic human needs. Yet she puts

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(75) See Montefiore and Loewe, Rabbinic Anthology (Macmillan, 1938), page 5.

(76) G. Vermes, Jesus the Jew (Collins, 1973).

(77) F. Mussner, op. cit., page 176.

(78) R. Ruether, Faith and Fratricide (Seabury, 1974), page 53.

(79) Ibid, page 112.

forward the idea that there was a difference between Jesus and the Scribal schools. Thus we can see the importance of looking at this issue. For, as she explains, it is only by looking at these facts and possibilities that Christian theologians can answer the question WHY there appears to be so much hostile teaching to the Pharisees in the New Testament.

A view in between that of Mussner and Winter is that held by McNamara.(80) He does not commit himself to either accepting or denying that Jesus was a Pharisee. He simply stresses Jesus' contact with the Pharisees:

"It is clear from the Gospels that Jesus was chiefly in contact with one well-defined form of Judaism, not with a multiplicity of groups or sects. Indeed in a real way he himself belonged to this form of Jewish religion even though he could very severely censure it on occasion."(81)

However McNamara is quite general in his use of language here.

Pawlikowski is a little more positive in accepting that it was definitely out of the Pharisaic context that Jesus emerged.(82) However, although explaining the different theories as to whether Jesus was a Pharisee or not, he concludes that this question is somewhat immaterial:

"In a way it is immaterial whether we classify Jesus as an actual Pharisee or not. What we can say without hesitation is that the major ideas of the Pharisaic revolution exercised a profound influence on his teachings and the

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(80) M. McNamara, op. cit. page 160.

(81) Ibid, page 159

(82) J. Pawlikowski, op. cit. page 4.

shape of his ministry. He stood much closer to Pharisaism than to any other Jewish movement at that period."(83)

He does stress the need to study the topic of Jesus and the Pharisees, though, because of the obvious connection with Pharisaism in his theology.

Therefore, it must be remembered that Jesus was very original within early Judaism. Much of his teaching was unique; for example his approach to God and people. D. Flusser says,

"It is important to note the positive love even toward the enemies of Jesus' personal message. We do not find this doctrine in the New Testament outside the words of Jesus himself ... In Judaism, hatred is practically forbidden. But love of the enemy is not proscribed."(84)

#### TIME LAPSE

"Because the evangelists presented the Gospels at the end of the first century C.E. it must be stressed that the New Testament student should identify, in so far as possible, which stage of Jewish tradition is being presented by a given evangelist - whether that of the time of Jesus, that of a later age or of the evangelist's own day."(85)

The time lapse between Jesus' own day and the writing of the Gospels has led modern Roman Catholic theologians to question the hostility between Jesus and the Pharisees and led them to ask if this hostility really began in the early Church.

What really happened between Jesus and the Pharisees? Does the New Testament material testify to the exact historical situation?

What polemical purposes are reflected in the narrative? For much of

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(83) Ibid. page 102.

(84) D. Flusser, op. cit., page 126.

(85) M. McNamara, op. cit., page 164.

what we are told about the Pharisees reflects the situation, interests and viewpoints of the writer, not of the historical Pharisees (a commonplace methodological difficulty).

Pawlikowski maintains that it was because of this time lapse that hostility against Pharisees entered into Christian teaching. He says,

"Those features of Jesus' ministry that placed him apart from the general Pharisaic stance all point in the direction of later Christological developments in the Church."(86)

Clemens Thoma attributes the hostility to misinterpretation due to the time lapse between Pharisees of Jesus' day and Pharisees in the second century C.E. who (as Rabbis) were strongly opposed to the Early Church. Thoma goes so far as to say,

"It is one of the historical tragedies of theology, of the Gospel proclamation and of humanity in general, that the polemics of Jesus against the Pharisees were misinterpreted by absolutizing them and giving them the wrong emphasis. In the Second Century C.E. Gentile Christians no longer understood the genre of Jewish 'polemics' and Christian anti-Pharisaism became one with anti-Judaism. The great Pharisaic achievement in self-criticism was thereby changed into unalloyed reproaches against the Pharisees."(87)

(The Pharisees used much self-criticism. Yet, by the time of the writing of the Gospels, familiarity with the true spirit of Pharisaism had disappeared.)

When, with the adhesion of Gentiles, the Christian church began to realise that its religion was fundamentally different from Judaism, and accordingly drew apart from close association with it, the natural

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(86) J, Pawlikowski, op. cit., page 107.

(87) C. Thoma, op.cit., page 66

result was that, in the later literature of the New Testament, the term "Pharisee" tended to be merged in the general term "Jew". Rosemary Ruether has continued the argument that the hostility to Pharisees really began in the early Church.(88) She suggests that the word "Pharisee" was added to controversy stories where previously there had been unnamed opponents. This she shows was the case in the collection of patristic 'testimonial' where Old Testament extracts were added to New Testament texts. This was to enable, on the one hand, the Church to argue that the true meaning of the scriptures was that of a prophecy of Jesus as the Christ. On the other hand, Ruether states, it was to develop a collection of texts against "the Jews" to show why the authority of the official Jewish tradition should be discontinued, because it rejected the Christological midrash or its own scriptures.

Ruether asks the question,

Why did the Church need to make hostile accusations against the Pharisees? Doubtless there were some among them who were 'hypocrites' she maintains. (However, Pharisees are criticised by Jews themselves, as Montefiore points out: see further the section 'Was Jesus a Pharisee?'). Ruether goes on to ask if it is the case rather that the Church's blanket indictment of the Pharisees reflects a social position in which Christians were so shut out of the observant brotherhoods that they saw them only from the outside. Ruether believes that the Church took the messianic midrash of Judaism and inserted it in a new principle of salvation. She asks,

"Did the prophetic truth of the Church's search for a more spiritual and universal ethic take on an exaggeratedly antithetical view of the legalism of the Pharisees?"(89)

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(88) R. Ruether, op. cit., page 53.

(89) Ibid, page 114.

For Reuther, this is the centre of the conflict between Christianity and the Pharisaic teachers.

It is clear that some of the sources concerning pre-70 CE Pharisaic Judaism were shaped in response to the crisis of the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE. Klein asserts that this crisis led to great opposition between the early Church and Rabbinic Judaism, which was then reflected in the evangelists' writing:

"The more the early Church came up against the opposition of the Jewish communities, the more urgent it became to portray them as the enemies of Jesus, since they were undoubtedly the opponents of the Christian mission and it was largely their opposition which led to the failure of that mission as a whole in the Synagogue."(90)

Thus, as modern Catholic theologians maintain, it is important to note the part played by this time-lapse when looking at the area of 'Jesus and the Pharisees'. The Jewish scholar, Finkel, maintains this view too when he says that,

"Because of the significance of the Pharisaic order at the beginning of Christianity, the important role the order played in the development of the Jewish religion, the nature of the Pharisees became a matter of controversy among Jewish and Christian scholars."(91)

### Descriptions

Christian theology today presents clear and objective descriptions of Pharisees, whereas in theology of the past few decades Pharisees have simply been dismissed as 'hypocrites'. There is a lot more interest in Pharisees, what they believed and why, than in the past. Clemens Thoma describes the way that the Pharisees acknowledged oral revelation alongside the written one (Ant 13: 297) and that their synagogue was their typical institution which, with the

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(90) C. Klein, op. cit., page 67.

(91) A. Finkel, op. cit., page 28

'school', activated a religious life independent of the Temple (Ant 18: 15).(92) McNamara describes the Pharisees after 70 CE and the way that Pharisaism was mediated through Johanan ben Zakkai (School of Hillel).(93)

Jewish schools today also provide much description of the Pharisees in Jesus' time (material used extensively by Roman Catholic theologians). For example, Rivkin redefines Pharisees as

"that scholarly class that created the concept of the two-fold law, carried it to triumphant victory over the Sadducees and made it operative in society."(94)

Neusner, on the basis of his study of all the references in early rabbinic literature, describes the Pharisees as a political sect (previously a 'party sect') (95) Thus, as Sanders explains,

"the question of who the Pharisees were and of how they saw themselves vis-a-vis the rest of Judaism appears quite wide open."(96)

### Distortions

Contemporary Roman Catholic theologians are well aware that the depiction of "the Pharisees" throughout the history of the Church has been distorted. G Baum explains that

"Christians began to recognise that the entire description of the Jewish religion contained in the New Testament, especially the account given of Pharisaism, was generally

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(92) C. Thoma, op. cit., page 66

(93) M. McNamara, op. cit., page 164

(94) Rivkin, op. cit., page 248

(95) J. Neusner, From Politics to Piety (Prentice Hall, 1973) page 46.

(96) E.P. Sanders, op. cit., page 62.

distorted, and thanks to the work done by specialists, the Churches began to correct the prayer books, catechisms and texts of religious instruction."(97)

There is a keen movement in Roman Catholic theology today to rectify this distortion. The topic 'Jesus and the Pharisees' has gained a new importance and consequently has become a major area of study.

Interest in 'Jesus and the Pharisees' has not been restricted to Roman Catholic theologians. For the recent work of both Christian and Jewish scholars studying Second Temple Judaism and Pharisaism in particular, has begun to reach a wide audience.(98)

The previous stereotyping of Pharisees as "self-righteous hypocrites" is obviously inadequate and superficial and constitutes a significant distortion of ancient Judaism. However, in 1975 the Vatican Guidelines on Catholic-Jewish relations specifically mentioned the image of the Pharisees as an aspect of Judaism that requires much correction in Christian education and preaching. It must be stressed that it is only recently that this suggestion has been pursued. For, as Pawlikowski says:

"the depiction of the Pharisees is the one area that has shown the least improvement during the decade since Vatican II although recently there are some promising beginnings."(99)

These 'promising beginnings' in Roman Catholic theology have come, for example, from the work of Mussner, Thoma, McNamara, Fisher, Baum,

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(97) G. Baum, 'The Waley Cohen Memorial Lecture' 1975, page 8.

(98) (See Rivkin, Neusner, Finkelstein, Falk, Flusser, Bowker, Davies, Sanders, Mussner, Thoma, McNamara, Fisher, Ruether, Baum and Pawlikowski in bibliography.)

(99) J. Pawlikowski, op. cit., page 93.



Ruether and Pawlikowski, who all focus special attention on 'Jesus and the Pharisees'.

Two questions arise from the work of these theologians: why should Roman Catholic theologians be concerned to examine the area of 'Jesus and the Pharisees' today, and, once the distortions of the past have been acknowledged, what is the importance of this area to Christian theology? The actual removal of this distorted portrait of the Pharisees is vital in order to enhance the process of Christian self-renewal. For such limitation of view vitiates most of what has been written about the Pharisees by Christian scholars. Secondly, an understanding of the principal themes of Pharisaic Judaism would help Christians to acquire a more complete grasp of the New Testament. Pharisees play a large role in the New Testament as a group in their own right. McNamara explains that,

"there are two main reasons why students of the New Testament should be interested in Pharisaic and rabbinic tradition, namely to understand the elements in this tradition which elicited such condemnation from Jesus (or at least from evangelists in Jesus' name) and also to understand what were the main tenets of these teachers of Israel."(100)

Thirdly, a better acquaintance with Pharisaism will enable the Church to pursue the task of renewing its life as a faith community, for the Pharisees' teaching formed the context of the teachings of Jesus in crucial areas such as the notion of God, ethics and ministry. Fourthly, a better understanding of Pharisees would prevent false views being portrayed in Christian education. For example in Fisher's extensive text-book studies, he concluded that in Christian education:

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(100) M. McNamara, op. cit., page 161

"The Pharisees are painted in dark, evil colours. The danger here lies not only in distortion of history. Deeper is the fact that negative traits ascribed to the Pharisees are likely to be imputed to the Jews as a whole by the uncritical reader or teacher. Legalism, hypocrisy and craftiness are all stereotypes of Jews which owe their origins to a negative portrait of the Pharisees."(101)

Fifthly, it is important to understand the nature of Pharisaism,

"for the sake of dialogue, since most contemporary expressions of Judaism despite their profound variations, fundamentally are rooted in the Pharisaic-rabbinic movement's approach to religion which resulted in genuinely revolutionary changes during the Second Temple period."(102)

So, to portray the Pharisees in a negative manner in Christian theology is in a real way to attack the centrality of modern Judaism.

Thus Christian theologians today want to know about the origins of the Pharisees, to study the sources of information about Pharisees, and to look at the intimate links and hostile attitude of Jesus with the Pharisees of his day, and therefore

"Since they are mostly represented in the gospels as the enemies of Jesus' teaching, in episodes and sayings which often give them a distorted or disfigured appearance. it seems appropriate to devote a special chapter to them."(103)

#### THE SOURCES

Our sources about the Pharisees come from documents written later than the time of Jesus (the time discussed) and thus there is a measure of uncertainty as regards which ideas can be legitimately

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(101) E. Fisher, op. cit., page 137.

(102) J. Pawlikowski, op. cit., page 95

(103) C. Klein, op. cit., page 67.

projected back into time in which Jesus was alive and which refer to the later period. For example, there is considerable disagreement among scholars about the reliability of the work of Josephus on Pharisees: Rivkin relies on Josephus as a prime source, whereas Neusner tends to be more negative about the reliability of Josephus.(104)

There are three separate bodies of information to refer to regarding the Pharisees. First, the historical narratives of Josephus, the Jewish historian (75 - 100 CE) which require interpretation in the light of his own life in Roman politics after 70 CE. Second, The gospels, in the New Testament. However, these show little interest in the Pharisaic movement itself; the Pharisees are referred to rather as a basis of polemic stressing their commitment to keeping the purity laws outside the Temple. Neusner says that,

"the gospels' superficial knowledge of the details of what the Pharisees actually did hardly suggests much interest in the Pharisaic set-in their own terms."(105)

The third source of information on the Pharisees is the Rabbinical Traditions: the complex laws and traditions attributed to pre-70 CE Pharisees by their successors and heirs, the Rabbis of late First century and Second century Palestine.

It is clear that the characters of these separate sources are quite different. Josephus provides a systematic historical narrative, whereas the Gospels are biographical traditions attributed to Jesus, and the rabbinical traditions consist mainly of laws arranged by legal

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(104) Neusner, Understanding Rabbinic Judaism (New York, 1974): Rivkin, 'Defining the Pharisees' Hebrew Union College Annual Cincinatti 40 (1969), page 234.

(105) Neusner, op. cit., page 46.

categories in codes. The purpose of each author of the sources also differs according to his situation.

Traditionally Christian theologians have only referred to the New Testament and Josephus as sources about the Pharisees. Today, Roman Catholic theologians include Rabbinic sources and this extra material has encouraged a change in attitude to "Pharisees". For,

"the picture of the Pharisees given in other historical sources does not correspond to that of the gospel."(106)

By neglecting Rabbinic literature in the past, Christian theologians have drawn only a superficial sketch - honestly intended to represent Pharisaism - but seen at once to be wrong by those who know Pharisaism 'from the inside'. The real contributions have been made by Jewish scholars for they alone have been able to make full use of rabbinical literature (people such as Gratz, Geiger and Finkel). Finkel explains that,

"Jewish scholars who have the advantage to be more intimately acquainted with Rabbinica are devoted to giving a JUST, critical estimate of the Pharisees based on the Pharisaic followers' literary products."(107)

Christian theologians have made different uses of Rabbinical literature in their studies on Pharisaism. Bowker, for example, provides translations of all the main sources about Pharisaism (often without exposition) in an attempt to help the reader to understand all the material available.(108) C. Thoma and McNamara, on the other hand, insert examples of Rabbinical literature into their work:

"We are allowed some glimpses of the Pharisees' manifold and provisional religious views in certain scattered

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(106) C. Klein, op. cit., page 67.

(107) Finkel, op. cit., page 50.

(108) J. Bowker, Jesus and the Pharisees (C.U.P. 1973).

traditions and fragments of rabbinic literature; for instance in the mishnah of the early pious of 'First Mishnah' (T.Y. Ter 8: TB Ned 91a) in rules on membership in the Pharisaic fellowship - Havurah (Mishnah Dem 2: 3, 3::4, Tosefta Dem 2: 3)."(109).

whereas Pawlikowski finds it more useful to use the material of modern Jewish scholars themselves on rabbinical literature.(110) However, most contemporary Roman Catholic theologians are aware of the importance of including Rabbinic literature in their analyses of Pharisaism and certain comprehensive indexes to Rabbinic traditions. This is important, for, as Klein says,

"A committed faith in Jesus as the Christ and as founder of the Church should not prevent us from studying, recognising and respecting the true nature of Pharisaism. This is possible only by drawing also on Jewish literature and considering it as an authentic source... Faith in Jesus as Lord ... should make the Christian particularly sensitive to the values of the Jewish religion: for the latter is in fact the matrix of Christianity."(111)

## ORIGINS

As with most scholarly questions, there is not complete agreement about the Pharisaic movement in every detail. For example, Oesterley looks at the ORIGIN of the Pharisees and concludes that they emerged as a group during the reign of Hyrcanus (135-104 BCE).(112) McNamara does not agree with this theory;

"Josephus' texts indicate that the Pharisaic tradition and power must have been already quite developed by the time of Hyrcanus. This would be in keeping with the developed

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(109) C., Thoma, op. cit., page 65.

(110) J. Pawlikowski, op. cit., page 95.

(111) C. Klein, op.cit., page 91.

(112) N. Oesterley, The Jews and Judaism during the Greek period (S.P.C.K. 1941).

halakah and scriptural interpretation of the Qumran Temple scroll from the same period. It is highly significant that the Mishnah (Ma'aser Sheni 5: 5, Sotah 9: 10) also mentioned the regulations of Hyrcanus' day"(113)

The Pharisees are said to be descendants of EZRA the great champion of the Law (10 v 8, 8 v 2). H. Loewe says that

"It may perhaps not be too hazardous to suggest that the men of the Great Synagogue were the descendants of Ezra's scholars and the forerunners of the Pharisees into whom they shade imperceptibly."(114)

#### The term "PHARISEE"

It is not known exactly how the term 'Pharisee' came about. The word 'Pharisee' comes from the Hebrew 'perushim' meaning 'separated ones'. This could have been assumed by Pharisees themselves, thus implying conscious pride, or it could have been applied by their opponents implying contempt. It could have had reference to their 'interpretation' or expounding of Scripture which is explained in the interests of the Oral Law.

Ellis Rivkin in his research has found that the term "Pharisee" was regarded as a negative term by the Pharisees themselves.(115) He says that they preferred to be known as scribes or the 'wise ones'. 'Pharisee' was a term, he maintains, used by the Sadducees, the opponents of the Pharisees, in a derogatory fashion:

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(113) M. McNamara, op. cit., page 168.

(114) H. Loewe, Judaism and Christianity: The contact of Pharisees with other centuries (Sheldon Press, 1937) page 8.

(115) E. Rivkin, op. cit., page 248

"One of its chief meanings was 'heretic'. Jesus and/or the later Christian community may have picked up this derogatory usage and applied it in a sarcastic fashion to those members of the Pharisaic movement who appeared to them as 'whited sepulchres' in comparison to authentic Pharisaic teaching."(116)

### Intimate Links between Jesus and the Pharisees

In order to look at the relationship between Jesus and the Pharisees it is necessary to focus attention upon every detail of Jesus' involvement with them in the New Testament (despite the obvious passages of hostility.) Instances of friendship can be seen, as can some common features or view-points:

"It is important not to interpret his disputes with the Pharisees in the New Testament as basically anti-Pharisaic",

Thoma states, because of these "intimate links".(117)

Examples of Jesus' friendship with Pharisees as recorded in the New Testament can be found in John 3 v 1 and 7 v 50 (Jesus and Nicodemus), Luke 11 v 37, 14 v 1 (Jesus dined with Pharisees), Luke 5 v 7 (friendly intercourse with Pharisees - 'all' refers to Pharisees) and Luke 8 v 31 (Pharisees warn Jesus of Herod Antipas' persecution). Oesterley says of these few instances,

"In various ways our Lord accepted the teaching of the Pharisees and it may be justly said that the Pharisees had a very real part to play in the preparation of Christianity."(118)

Pawlikowski in particular looks at some of the common links between Jesus and the Pharisees.(119) For example, at the heart of

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(116) Ibid, page 205.

(117) C. Thoma, op. cit., page 113.

(118) Oesterley. op. cit., page 254.

(119) J Pawlikowski, op. cit., page 95.

Pharisaic teaching lay a new perspective on the God-human personal relationship, a relationship far more intimate than in previous Jewish teaching between God and the individual person. This stood in contrast to the intermediary/hereditary elite system that formed the core of the Sadducean Temple priesthood approach to religion.

'Father' was one of the principal names applied to God. With this new personal relationship, the Pharisees attempted to translate prophetic ideals into daily life's realities. (Although Professor Lapidé has uncovered some 'incarnational' ideas on the fringes of 1st century Judaism, mainstream Judaism was not prepared to incorporate such notions, though it might be suggested that the Pharisees seemed to be leading in that direction). This change had a far-reaching influence on the teaching of Jesus, Paul and the Early Church. Pawlikowski says of Jesus,

"There is an obvious connection with Pharisaism in his theology. But there is also a qualitative difference. In the work of Jesus which was a reflection of his intense experience of God as Father which Schillebeeckx perceptively emphasises, the early Church came to appreciate a new dimension of the God-human person relationship. God had become incarnated in humanity. It is this profound conviction that would ultimately lead to the creation of Christianity as a distinct religious tradition despite its continuing deep ties to the Jewish religious tradition."(120)

Another fundamental change initiated by the Pharisees which affected Christianity was the movement of focus from the Temple to the Synagogue as the main religious institution in Jewish life. The temple represented the house of God whereas the synagogue, in

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(120) Ibid, page 107.



contrast, became the house of the people of God. The nuance is crucial. Pawlikowski maintains that,

"Christians have frequently overlooked the fact that that word 'church' basically stems from the word 'synagogue'. So as Christians go about the process of rethinking the contour of the central religious institution of their faith, they can learn a great deal from a study of the Pharisaic conception of the Synagogue and how it differed from the temple model."(121).

The Second Vatican Council placed great emphasis on the notion of the Church as the people of God.

An important Pharisaic movement as concerns liturgical life was the shift from the Temple to a home-meal setting where the head of a Pharisaic brotherhood presided. This was an attempt to place worship within a setting of natural community celebration. (Neusner is inclined to believe that Pharisees in the time of Jesus had become a more elitist table "fellowship". (123) Pawlikowski compares this shift to a home-meal setting to Christian teaching and states that this Pharisaic movement had a great influence on Jesus:

Since it is likely that Jesus presided at the so-called Last Supper in his capacity as head of a Pharisaic brotherhood (i.e. his apostles) exposure to the Pharisaic approach to liturgy would significantly aid a Christian's perception of what the Eucharist was and ought to be in the life of the Christian community."(124)

The notion of the resurrection was a major point of contention between Pharisees who believed in it, and Sadducees, who did not. This notion of Pharisaism is obviously important when viewed from a

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(121) Ibid, page 99

(122) As seen in Chapter One: VATICAN II.

(123) Neusner, op. cit., preface.

(124) Pawlikowski, op. cit., preface.

Christian perspective. Resurrection was a natural outflow of the Pharisaic perception of the heightened dignity of the individual person. This doctrine was developed by Christianity and constitutes a profound statement about the uniqueness and dignity of the individual person. An insight into the understanding Pharisees had of resurrection would enhance the knowledge about Jesus' own resurrection for Christian theologians. It must be agreed with Thoma that

"Their (the Pharisees') belief in a resurrection of the dead, in angels and in human freedom only partially limited by divine sovereignty and fate, as well as their acceptance of written and oral revelation, must be seen within the framework of their religious attitudes and lifestyle."(125)

Thus, it is clear that a complete change in attitude has taken place in Christian theology. Roman Catholic theologians have rebuked the past anti-semitic attitudes associated with the Pharisees, and have examined Christian theology, attempting to separate the true nature of the Pharisees and their beliefs from previous anachronistic interpretations. However, there is still much work to do in the future, in this area of theology. It must be agreed, with Neusner, that the sources concerning pre-70 C.E. Pharisees are crucial to this area. Neusner calls for more historical depth:

"We have many theories but few facts, sophisticated theologies, but uncritical naive histories of Pharisaism."(126)

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(125) C. Thoma, op. cit., page 65.

(126) Neusner, op. cit., page 65.

(127) F. Littell, 'The Meaning of the Holocaust' University of Michigan address (1971), preface.

(128) I. Greenberg, 'Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity and Modernity after the Holocaust', in E. Fleischner, 'Auschwitz Beginning of a New Era?' (New York, 1977) page 29.

### SECTION 3

#### The HOLOCAUST

##### Introduction

The Holocaust was undoubtedly a major event for both Jews and Christians. The destruction of European Jewry from 1933 to 1945 cannot be ignored. The word 'HOLOCAUST' is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as 'whole burnt offering, wholesale sacrifice or destruction'. However, no definition can summarise the horror of the systematically planned and meticulously executed murder of six million Jews. Awareness of this event cannot be taken for granted. Franklin Littell, the Church historian, speaks forcefully of the implications of the Nazi Holocaust, insisting that the Holocaust,

"remains the major event in the recent Church signaling the rebellion of the baptised against the lord of history ... Christianity itself has been 'put to the question' ..."(127)

Rabbi Greenberg has spoken of the Holocaust as an 'orienting event' (128) for Jews and Christians. Christian theology cannot remain unaffected by the Holocaust when examining Christian theological attitudes to Judaism.

The question must be raised as to whether it is immoral to search for meaning in the Holocaust event. Should we look at this issue at all or is it best forgotten? We can only agree with Rabbi Greenberg when he maintains that to make a positive affirmation about any aspect of the Holocaust would be to risk all human sensibility,

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(127) Littell, 'The Meaning of the Holocaust University of Michigan address (1971), preface.

(128) I. Greenberg, 'Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity and Modernity after the Holocaust', in E. Fleischner, Auschwitz Beginning of a New Era? (New York, 1977) page 29.

yet it would seem that only an understanding of the Holocaust as basically a rational event does justice to the monumental challenge it presents for human understanding. However, this section will not even attempt to 'find meaning' in the Holocaust event. Rather, it will examine theological perspectives, after and therefore in light of the Holocaust event.

It has taken much time before scholars could even attempt to provide theological perspectives on the Holocaust. There has recently been growing scholarly emphasis on the significance of the Holocaust for faith and meaning in the modern world. Jewish and Christian scholars have taken many directions in their responses to the Holocaust. This section will begin with the response of contemporary Jewish scholars to the Holocaust, and the different directions taken (in some detail), before progressing to the contemporary Roman Catholic theological response, for it would be presumptuous to do otherwise, because, as Berkovits says,

"those of us who were not there, must before anything else, heed the responses of those who were there."(129)

#### Response to the Holocaust by Contemporary Jewish Scholars

Irving Greenberg, a notable Jewish scholar, insists that the challenge of the Holocaust cannot be ignored, (130) for, implicit in both Judaism and Christianity, is the challenge of historical events which change our perception of human fate. One such event is the Holocaust, the destruction of European Jewry from 1933 to 1945. Greenberg maintains that the holocaust must be confronted:

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(129) Berkovits, Faith After the Holocaust (Ktav, 1973), page 169.

(130) I. Greenberg, op. cit., page 7.

"By and large, both religions have continued since 1945 as if nothing had happened to change their central understanding. It is increasingly obvious that this is impossible, that the Holocaust cannot be ignored."(131).

For Jews, the centrality of the Holocaust is obvious by its very nature. The destruction of the Holocaust cut so deeply for Jewry that Greenberg raises the question of whether the Jewish community can recover from it. To highlight this point, Greenberg compares the view that E. Eichmann maintained when he went into hiding in 1945. Eichmann believed that he had accomplished such devastation that he had thrown the fundamental existence of Jews and Judaism into question. The trauma of the Holocaust, Greenberg states, cannot be overcome without some basic reorientation in the light of it by the surviving Jewish community.

Greenberg does not confine the challenge of the Holocaust to Judaism, but asserts that the Holocaust poses the most radical counter testimony to both Judaism and Christianity.

"For Christians it is easier to continue living as if the event did not make any difference, as if the crime belongs to the history of another people and faith. But such a conclusion and account for this evil would turn both religions into empty pollyanna assertions, credible only because believers ignore the realities of human history."(132)

This challenge has consequently been taken up by contemporary Christian theologians such as Baum, Metz, Thoma and Mussner, who agree with Greenberg that,

"not to confront is to repeat" and that "the nemesis of denial is culpability."(133)

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(131) Ibid, page 8.  
(132) Ibid, page 9.  
(133) Ibid, page 20.

The cruelty, suffering and killing that took place during the Holocaust raise the question whether even those who believe in God after such an event dare talk about a God who loves and cares, without making a mockery of those who suffered. It is not possible to speak easily of God in traditional biblical and theological categories after the Holocaust. Greenberg, however, does tentatively explore possible ways of dealing with the God-human relationship after the tragedy of the Holocaust. He expresses understanding for the questioning of God by those who suffered. For example Elie Wiesel in NIGHT says:

"Never shall I forget the little faces of the children whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky.

Never shall I forget the nocturnal silence which deprived me for all eternity of the desire to live.

Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust."(134)

Greenberg states that, after Auschwitz, there is no faith so whole as a faith shattered. Yet, rather than abandoning faith in God because of the Holocaust, Greenberg sees the Holocaust as 'orientating event' and 'revelation in dialectical moves':

"the Holocaust offers us only dialectical moves and understandings - often moves that stretch our capacity to the limit and torment us with their irresolvable tensions. In a way, it is the only morally tenable way for survivors and those guilty of bystanding to live."(135)

There are times, Greenberg explains, after Auschwitz when faith is overcome so that faith in God includes 'dialectical faith' or 'moment faiths.'(136) This leads to the difference between the

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(134) E. Wiesel, Night (New York, Hill and Wang, 1960) page 43.

(135) I. Greenberg, op. cit., page 22.

(136) Compare the terminology of M. Buber, Between Man and Man (Zwiesprache, 1929) 'moment faith', 'moment God' page 3.

sceptic and the believer being frequency of faith, not certitude of position. Greenberg takes this view on further to explain that the ability to live with the 'moment faith' is the ability to live with pluralism and without the self-flattering ethnocentric solutions which warp religion, or make it a source of hatred for the other.

Greenberg looks at the logic of post-Holocaust faith. He puts forward yet another reason to resist abandoning the divine; that is, the moral urgency that grows out of the Holocaust and fights for the presence of the Lord of History.(137)

The primary alternative to faith in God is faith in secular man:

"After the holocaust it is all the more urgent to resist this absolutization of the secular" (138)

Greenberg says. The victims of the Holocaust, themselves, ask us, above all, not to allow the creation of another matrix of values that might sustain another attempt at genocide. For the need to deny God leads directly to the assumption of omnipotent power of life and death (a power Hitler and Mengele thrived on). Greenberg says of the secular alternative:

"The desire to control people leads directly to crushing the image of God within them so that the jailer becomes God."(139)

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- (137) Compare Fackenheim's work which has articulated this position in terms of not handing Hitler posthumous victories:  
E. Fackenheim, God's Presence in History (New York, 1970)
- (138) I. Greenberg, op.cit., page 29.
- (139) Ibid, page 29.

Greenberg maintains that looking back now, the simplistic nature of Feuerbach and Nietzsche can be observed.

Greenberg explores three positive post-Holocaust theological models for interpreting the relationship between God and man. The first model is found in "Job and renewed divine encounter". Job is the righteous man from whom everything is taken: possessions, loved ones, health. What Greenberg identifies as meaningful in Job's experience is that in the whirlwind the contact with God is restored.

"Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: 'Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man.'" Job 38 v 1-3

Greenberg expresses the theological implications of Job to be the rejection of easy pieties or denials and the dialectical response of looking for and expecting further revelations of the Presence (this includes the reborn state of Israel according to Greenberg). The model of Job has been explored with renewed interest in Christian theology recently, as a result of Greenberg's suggestions.(140)

The second theological model that Greenberg explores is that of the Suffering Servant imagery present in the book of Isaiah. Greenberg hopes to re-introduce this neglected model for Jewish scholarship and bring new meaning to Christian theology. Isaiah describes the concept of vicarious suffering which can be seen as a direct comparison to the Holocaust. Isaiah 53 v 7:

"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgement he was taken away, and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence and there was no deceit in his mouth."

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(140) For example, by Pope John XXIII and W.D. Davies, in E. Fleischner, Auschwitz: Beginning of a new era? (New York, 1977).



Greenberg insists that the Holocaust demands a reinterpretation of the suffering servant model (both in Jewish scholarship and in Christian theology).

There is yet a third model which Greenberg brings to the forefront after the Holocaust; that is the "controversy with God" approach, based on Lamentations 3, a dominant theme in the writings of Elie Wiesel. This model involves a thorough-going self-criticism that would purge the emotional dependency and self-abasement of traditional religion.

"Who has commanded it and it came to pass unless the Lord has ordained it? Is it not from the mouth of the most High that good and evil come? Why should a living man complain, a man, about the punishment of his sins?".  
Lamentations 3 v 37

In this model, Greenberg promotes what he sees to be one of the most fundamental steps Christianity must take after the Holocaust: to 'quarrel' with the gospels themselves for being a source of anti-semitism; to purify the gospels by fundamental critique.(141)

Greenberg finds possibilities in all three models. However he says of all three:

"None of these models can fully articulate the tensions of the relationship to God after the holocaust, and it will take time to develop these models. This suggests that we are entering into a period of SILENCE in theology - a silence about God that corresponds to his silence. In this silence God may be presence and hope."(142)

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(141) Ruether and Baum have taken up this suggestion and pursued it in Christian theology.

(142) E. Fleischner, op. cit., page 35.

What theological response should be given to the Holocaust? Greenberg argues that recreating human life is the fundamental religious testimony that needs to be given. In giving this testimony, the human community may once again find something of the presence of God. To create a life or to enhance its dignity is to offer the only possible effective counter-testimony to the Holocaust.

Greenberg perceives the reborn state of Israel to be for Jews today, the fundamental act of life and meaning. The revelation in the redemption of ISRAEL is an inescapable part of the historical experience in our time.

"For I will bring them back to their own land which I gave to their fathers."  
Jeremiah 16 v 14.

Christian theology has yet to fully grasp and accept the meaning of the State of Israel, Greenberg maintains:

"Yet confession by Christians of Judaism's ongoing life and acceptance in gratitude of a new harvest of revelation would, at one stroke, undercut the whole teaching of contempt tradition in Christianity."(143)

Greenberg has provided many issues of theological importance in his response to the Holocaust. Many of these issue have been pursued by contemporary Christian theologians.

Richard Rubenstein is another important Jewish scholar who has recently grappled in a radical fashion with the significance of the Holocaust for an understanding of God.(144) However, as opposed to

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(143) Ibid page 36.

(144) R. Rubenstein. After Auschwitz - Radical Theology and Contemporary Judaism (Kansas, 1966). He presents the extreme pole of the dilaectical move put forward by Greenberg.

Greenberg, he expresses a deep conviction that it is no longer possible to speak of God in traditional biblical language after Auschwitz. Rubenstein focusses on the problems of evil, Judaism and secularity, the rebirth of Israel in contemporary theology and death of God theology. He insists that only paganism can now guard against the transformation of the new power and creativity discovered by contemporary humanity into forms of mass destructiveness.

The Jewish community has experienced more monumental changes in the Twentieth Century than at any other time in its long history. Rubenstein emphasises this fact but, because of these events, his faith is shattered:

"With the death camps our images of God, man and the moral order have been permanently impaired."(145)

Rubenstein's confession of faith after Auschwitz revolves around paganism. He affirms the death of God and the loss of all hope. Rubenstein states that:

"We learned in the crisis that we were totally and nakedly alone, that we could expect neither support nor succor from God nor from our fellow creatures. Therefore, the world will forever remain a place of pain, suffering, alienation and ultimate defeat."(146)

While Rubenstein's negative theology can be fully understood in the light of Auschwitz, many scholars do reject it as an overly radical reaction. For example, Greenberg takes issue with Rubenstein's death of God theology.(147) Greenberg suggests that

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(145) Ibid, preface.

(146) Ibid, page 39.

(147) Greenberg, op. cit., page 26.

Rubenstein's position gives a definitive interpretation of the Holocaust which subsumes it under known classical categories. Atheism is not adequate to incorporate the 'incommensurability' of the Holocaust, Greenberg maintains. It is not credible alone in the presence of burning children. Rubenstein's definitiveness is part of Greenberg's disagreement with him. Rubenstein concluded that 'Jewish history has written the final chapter in the terrible story of the God of history', that, 'the world will forever remain a place of pain and ultimate defeat, and that the hope of coming to grips with Auschwitz through the framework of traditional Judaism will never be realised. For after the Holocaust there should be no final theological solutions.'

However, Greenberg criticises Rubenstein's conclusions. For, Greenberg says, to claim that the destruction closes our hope forever is to claim divine omniscience and to use the Holocaust for theological grist. Contradicting Rubenstein, Greenberg argues that it is not so much that any affirmations can be made, but that they can be made authentically only if they are made after working through the Holocaust experience. In the same sense, Greenberg explains, the relationship to the God of the covenant cannot be unaffected.

Emil Fackenheim approaches the problem of man's relationship to God after the Holocaust in a different way from Rubenstein.(148) Fackenheim examines the problems that the Holocaust raises for faith in the God of history. He maintains that a response to Auschwitz can be offered, but not an explanation. Fackenheim gives a Jewish

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(148) E. Fackenheim, God's Presence in History (New York, 1970); 'The Holocaust and the State of Israel: Their Relation' in E. Fleischner, Auschwitz: Beginning of a new era? (New York, 1977), page 207.

testimony one generation after the events of the Holocaust. He grapples with the problem of the God of history when faced with the reality of the Holocaust. He acknowledges the temptation to contradict assertions about God's presence in history when man searches for God after the Holocaust. Yet, he feels that the denial of God in history may be due to lack of an in-depth understanding of the approach taken to God in Jewish tradition.

The issue of God in history after the Holocaust must be confronted, Fackenheim explains:

"We have lived in this contradiction for twenty years without being able to face it. Unless I am mistaken, we are now beginning to face it, however fragmentarily and inconclusively. And from this beginning confrontation there emerges what I will boldly term a 614th commandment: the authentic Jew of today is forbidden to hand Hitler yet another, posthumous victory."(149)

New theological problems have arisen because of the Holocaust for both Judaism and Christianity. Fackenheim identifies this:

"The Nazi holocaust has brought Jews and Christians closer together and set them further apart. The gulf between Jews and Christians that Hitler succeeded in creating can be bridged only if it is recognised. But to bridge it is of incalculable importance for the future of both Judaism and Christianity."(150)

This is a positive statement which provides much hope for current Jewish-Christian relations.

Greenberg provides a critique of Fackenheim's theological response to the Holocaust, approving of his view of God in history. Fackenheim does come close to Greenberg in maintaining that Jewish survival in the State of Israel has become a primary religious duty of Jews in the post-holocaust era. Both stress the centrality of Israel.

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(149) Ibid, page 207.  
(150) Ibid

Fackenheim claims,

"it is necessary not only to perceive a bond between the two events, but also to act to make it unbreakable."(151)

Pawlikowski, the Roman Catholic theologian, examines the work of Fackenheim and states that,

"Fackenheim seems to come down on the side of the continued validity of the traditional Jewish notion of God's presence in history, despite the trauma of Auschwitz."(152)

Pawlikowski stresses that Christian theology should wrestle with this notion too.

The Jewish scholar, E. Berkovits, has stressed that Jewish survival testifies to the Lord of history.(153) He also attempts to grasp the centrality of the Holocaust to Jewish thought and faith. He stresses that the decisive question is,

"Who is the one who truly relates to this awesome issue? Is it not the person who actually experienced it himself, in his own body and soul?"(154)

For the responses of someone who actually entered the hell of the ghettos, the concentration camps and the crematoria cannot and dare not be the same as someone who reads about it. Berkovits explains:

"However much and however deeply, those who were not there may identify with the suffering of the victims, their experience remains forever, merely a vicarious shadow of the actual event, as removed from the reality of the holocaust as is the rather comfortable scholarship of the radical theologians of our day from the universe of the concentration camps."(155)

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(151) Ibid, page 209.

(152) Pawlikowski, op. cit., page 135.

(153) E. Berkovits, Faith After the Holocaust (Ktav, 1973).

(154) Ibid, preface.

(155) Ibid, preface.

Those of us who were not there, Berkovits says, must accept our position in relation to those who were there:

"I was not there myself, I am not Job, I am only his brother."(156)

The problem of the absence of God, the so-called death of God, is the problem of the post-Auschwitz generation. Berkovits examines Nietzsche's view that God is dead but rejects it. He quotes M. Eliade:

"God has died as a result of an existential choice made by man. Modern man has chosen the realm of the profane."(157)

The El Mistater, the hiding God, is a Jewish concept; but the idea alone is far from being an answer to God's silence in the face of the agony of the concentration camps. However, Berkovits claims that the search for the redeemer lies in this very hiddenness.

Berkovits asks 'Where was God all the time?' How could he countenance the infliction of so much suffering and degradation among millions in the concentration camps? He stresses that God does make himself known. For example, as in Elie's Wiesel's novel Night:

"Where is God now? Here he is. He is hanging here on this gallows."(158)

Berkovits examines the essence of Job's dilemma. For God at last made himself known to Job. God remained silent right to the very end of

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(156) Ibid, page 4.

(157) Ibid, page 5

(158) Elie Wiesel, Night (New York, Hill and Wang, 1960) page 72.

the tragedy of the death camps. Yet he has made himself known to Israel:

"God confronts Zion through the return of her children."(159)

Berkovits also looks at the suffering servant imagery in connection with post-Holocaust theology:

"God's chosen people is the Suffering Servant of God. The majestic 53rd chapter of Isaiah is the description of Israel's martyrology through the centuries."(160)

Little is said by Berkovits of a positive nature about Jewish-Christian relations today. He says,

"All the friendlier statements about Jews and Judaism made in this new age by the Church and Christianity must be comprehended in the light of the change imposed by external historic development upon Christianity."(161)

Berkovits maintains that the declaration of the Vatican Council concerning Jews reveals how deeply rooted the logic of Chrysostom and the early Church Fathers still is in the Christian Psyche. As for 'dialogue' between Christians and Jews, Berkovits strongly discourages it;

"For Jewry as a whole, an honest fraternal dialogue with Christianity at this time is emotionally impossible. As far as Jews are concerned, Judaism is fully sufficient. There is nothing in Christianity for them."(162)

Jewish-Christian confrontation, Berkovits claims, can only take place in freedom, in the world-historic context of Israel's own messianic

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(159) E. Berkowitz op. cit., page 169.  
Parallels to Greenberg can be noted here.

(160) Ibid, page 124.

(161) Ibid, page 40.

(162) Ibid, page 44



history. Thus, Berkovits is very negative about Christian theology in relationship to Judaism after the Holocaust. However, Greenberg and Fackenheim were more positive, as we have seen.

What is the contemporary Roman Catholic viewpoint on Christian theology after the holocaust? How have contemporary Roman Catholic theologians responded to the issues raised by Greenberg, Rubenstein, Fackenheim and Berkovits? It is to this area that we must now turn.

#### Response to the Holocaust by Contemporary Roman Catholic Theologians

G. Baum is an important contemporary Christian theologian who has looked in depth at the implications of the Holocaust experience for theology within the Church.(163) (He focuses especially on the Roman Catholic Church.) The Holocaust raises so many questions in regard to the nature of modern civilisation and faith that many thinkers flee from serious reflection. Baum stresses that the issues that the Holocaust, the extermination of six million Jews, raises, should today be faced by Christian theologians. He notes that,

"There are a significant number of theologians, Catholic, Anglican and Protestant, who have permitted themselves to be addressed by the Awful Event and whose self-understanding as Christians has been seriously modified by this encounter."(164)

The Holocaust cannot be ignored by the Christian Church because it is written so deeply into Christian history that the Church cannot, Baum states, come to an adequate self-understanding nor proclaim appropriately the Christian Gospel without listening to the message inscribed in the Holocaust.

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(163) G. Baum 'Christian Theology After Auschwitz' Waley Cohen Memorial Lecture 1975.

(164) Ibid, page 7.

Baum examines in detail the Christian guilt involved in the Holocaust. He maintains that the hatred behind the Holocaust was not purely secular, but was generated by the Christian Church which provided an image of Jews that made them a scapegoat for the violent domination. During the Holocaust two trends converged, explains Baum. First, an 'irrational anti-Jewish sentiment originally derived from Christian sources and exploited by the insane imperialistic politics of Hitler'; and second, 'ruthless technological violence implicit in contemporary, value-free scientific spirit'. Baum shows how these two trends were interwoven at the time of the Holocaust:

"the spiritual negation of Jewish existence which was part and parcel of the Church's preaching was translated by an evil, secular cult of race and power into the brutal realities of mass humiliation and mass murder."(165)

Thus Baum accepts the guilt of Christian teaching as a part of the Holocaust.

Auschwitz has revealed to the Christian community the deadly power of its own SYMBOLISM. It is only recently in Christian theology, Baum explains, that Christian theologians began to recognise that the entire description of the Jewish religion contained in the New Testament - especially the account given of Pharisaism - was gravely distorted. The derogatory language about Judaism is deeply inscribed in Christian teaching. Yet scholars are today exploring the reasons for the origin of the anti-Jewish sentiment promoted by Christianity. Baum says:

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(165) Ibid, page 8.

"The anti-Jewish thrust of the Church's preaching has theological roots, it is related not only to sociological and psychological reasons but has to do with DOCTRINE, for it teaches the very formulation of the Christian gospel."(166)

The Church must be willing to confront the ideologies implicit in its doctrinal tradition, Baum asserts. Christian theology must be self-critical. Previously, the evolutionary structure of Christianity has assigned the Jewish religion to an early phase of Christian religion. It distinguished between Old and New Testaments. It put Judaism 'in the past', providing an evolutionary picture of Judaism. Pawlikowski, the well known Catholic theologian in Christian-Jewish relations, has called this a

"Theology of substitution."(167)

According to this ecclesiology, the Church replaces the Israel of old. Yet Baum draws attention to the fact that Judaism still exists today. Although this may seem obvious, the Church does not find it easy to acknowledge Judaism as a religion in its own right.

Catholic theology today, Baum believes, has changed radically in its attitude to Judaism. Following Vatican II, the Christian Church has significantly modified its teaching in regard to other religions and Judaism in particular. Roman Catholic theologians have, with Baum, affirmed the abiding power of the ancient covenant in the religion of Israel and, hence, laid the foundation-stone for a new Christian approach, transcending past teaching, to Jewish existence. Baum maintains that the work currently taking place in Germany

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(166) Ibid, page 9.

Compare the breakaway of the early Church from Judaism in Saunders, op.cit., and Ruether, op.cit., page 117.

(167) J. Pawlikowski, The Challenge of the Holocaust for Christian Theology (New York, 1978), page 26.

recorded by such scholars as Charlotte Klein and Eva Fleischer is especially important in Christian theology:

"While theologians as a whole today repudiate anti-semitism - when dealing with the central Christian doctrines of justification and redemption and fulfilment - they endorse in an unqualified way the old theology of substitution."(168)

Even such theologians as Moltmann are no exception to a deep exclusivism which prevails, Baum exclaims:

"Even though Moltmann writes his theological tracts with great sensitivity to the Jewish Holocaust, it appears that the structure of the Christian gospel is such that the theology of substitution emerges whenever Christians reflect on the central dogmas of their faith. This is the disturbing discovery."(169)

Baum suggests that a critical examination of New Testament theology should take place in order to correct false attitudes. Yet, he wonders whether the attempt to correct anti-Jewish trends might dissolve Christianity altogether. What guarantee do we have, he asks, that the Church's self-purgation will not undermine its very foundation?

What positive steps does Baum suggest for Christian theology with respect to the lessons revealed from the Holocaust? Baum explores the theory of two covenants. He compares the work of James Parkes on two covenants in which the biblical religion expressed itself in history; the ancient covenant for the people of Israel and the more recent in Jesus for the chosen ones of the nations. Baum also looks at the variations of the theory of two covenants put

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(168) G. Baum, op. cit., page 11.

(169) Ibid. page 11.

forward by P. Tillich and R. Niebuhr. Baum goes on to say:

"If this theory is to be successful, it is important to integrate into it an adequate account of the New Testament message that associated with Jesus the expectation of the final days and that his coming into history had universal redemptive significance."(170)

Baum is adamant that salvation theories in Roman Catholic theology should be modified. He promotes Rahner's view that, by living out the important questions courageously, man is already on the way to salvation, so that God's grace can be seen to undergird and guide all human activity. Hence, Baum states,

"it is God's grace that shapes the troubling question about the Holocaust."(171)

Thus, Baum promotes confrontation of ideologies implicit in the doctrinal tradition of the Roman Catholic Church.

What emerges from Baum's theology is a different doctrine of God (compared to the traditional doctrine maintained before the Holocaust), he claims. He examines the God-question after Auschwitz and asks how God could allow such an evil? How can we still believe in a living and loving God after Auschwitz, he asks. Baum agrees with Rabbi Greenberg, that, after the Holocaust, doubt is a proper dimension of faith. However, the language of negation is somewhat foreign to the Catholic theological tradition.

"How can we render a theological account of the religious phenomenon named 'troubled theism'?"(172)

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(170) Ibid, page 14.

(171) Ibid, page 15.

(172) Ibid, page 16.

God should be conceived as the vitality at the core of people's lives, making them ask the important questions and move into authentic existence. Baum emphasizes divine immanence:

"In the light of the Holocaust experience it is no longer possible to assert that God permits evil. Rather, God must now be seen as the personal power at work among people, summoning them to uncover and oppose the evil in human life, to redirect history and to transform the human community."(173)

Baum's doctrine of God can be paralleled to that maintained by Greenberg, for Baum believes that the person of faith can fashion 'new life' out of death experience such as Auschwitz because of his continuing trust that God will help. He says,

" the death that destroys is never the will of God. On the contrary, God is the never-ending summons to life." (174)

In any evaluation of the Christian theology Baum promotes with reference to Judaism, it is inevitable that some repetition of issues already tackled by Jewish scholars will occur. However, as we have seen, Baum takes many of these issues and pursues them with a deep theological analysis. What is very important in Baum's work is that he explores a response to the Holocaust from a Christian theological point of view, and offers many positive steps forward for Christian theology to tackle in the future.

Metz is a Roman Catholic theologian who has also been examining Christian theology after Auschwitz and asking what should be done in

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(173) Ibid, page 20.

(174) G. Baum, Man Becoming God in Secular Experience (Herder and Herder, 1971), page 245.

the future.(175) His theology reveals a new awareness in Roman Catholic theology as a whole. He has taken up themes from Jewish scholars concerning theology after the Holocaust and has interpreted them in Christian theology in such a way that he has promoted a change of Christian attitudes to Judaism in theology today.

'Auschwitz concerns us all', Metz declares, as he confronts the problems raised by the Holocaust:

"The fate of the Jews must be remembered as a moral reality precisely because it threatens already to become a mere matter of history."(176)

In order to prevent this, Metz focusses attention on a moral awareness of tradition after Auschwitz. What makes the Holocaust unfathomable is not only the silence of God but the silence of men. He asserts that history's disasters should not be evaded and advocates the three concepts of memory, narrative and solidarity in complete unity. Matteison identifies the way Metz has diagnosed, as the ill of modern humanity, a serious forgetfulness, a willful forgetfulness of human misery, dependence and past suffering of the voiceless dead.(177)

Metz identifies Auschwitz as 'turning point' rather than 'end point'. He raises the question of whether Christianity has not too strict an interiorisation and individualisation of the Messianic salvation preached by Jesus. He stresses that the traditions must change so that theology can never again be studied without taking

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(175) G. Baum, 'Christian theology After Auschwitz' op. cit., page 18.

Metz, The Emergent Church; the future of Christianity in a post-bourgeois world (S.C.M., 1981).

(176) Ibid, page 18.

(177) Ibid, page 48.

account of Auschwitz. He suggests various revisions that the Christian Church should make in response to Auschwitz. Firstly, it must be guided by the insight that Christians can form, and sufficiently understand their identity only in the face of the Jews. (Romans 9-11). Secondly, it must stress anew the Jewish dimension of Christian beliefs and must overcome the forced blocking out of the Jewish heritage within Christianity. Finally, Metz claims, Christian theology must regain the Biblical Messianic concepts for its ecumenical endeavours. Therefore, Metz provides an example of a new understanding and awareness in Roman Catholic theology. He is prepared to revise Christian theology appropriately in response to the Holocaust, while affirming the distinctiveness of Christianity.

Within Roman Catholic theology a new interest in Judaism is emerging and theologians are beginning to explore the possibilities of a Christian theology of Judaism. For example, this is seen in the work of F. Mussner and C. Thoma. Mussner stresses the importance of a Christian theology of Judaism. He acknowledges that a major element in the long history of anti-Judaism has been specific Christian religious prejudice which climaxed in the Holocaust events, the Nazi murder of six million Jews:

"only after the Holocaust did Christians slowly begin to realise what their anti-Judaic theology - the teaching of contempt as Jules Iasaacs put it - had prepared the way for."(178)

It is because of this theological attitude that a comprehensive rethinking is taking place in Christian theology today. Christians are re-examining the source of this anti-Judaism, the New Testament.

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(178) F. Mussner, Tractate on the Jews (S.P.C.K., 1984) page vii.  
(179) Ibid, page 143.



Mussner claims that within Christian theology,

"one can say that Auschwitz has exercised a hermeneutic function. The rethinking implies a new understanding."(179)

C. Thoma also reviews the problems, criticisms and postulates of Holocaust theology for the Christian Church.(180) He questions WHY it was only after this horrendous war that Christian theologians really reflected Christianity's relationship to Judaism ("when the gas ovens of Auschwitz had ceased to smoke.") Thoma clearly views history as one of the most important aspects of a Christian theology of Judaism. It must, he says, include theological dimensions of reality:

"A theology of Judaism cannot go on as if there had never been a holocaust, as if the State of Israel did not exist."(181)

Thoma acknowledges the Christian failure during the Holocaust and purposes a thorough education in Christian theology. The Christian Church must tackle theology after the Holocaust with frank self-appraisal, Thoma declares.

Gordon Zahn has undertaken a serious examination of the enigma of the Holocaust. He provides an answer to the questions about Roman Catholic involvement in the war. His work demonstrates the new maturity in the Church which enables us to draw valuable lessons from careful self-criticism:

"To understand thoroughly the areas of failure in our immediate past is of vital importance for adult understanding of the Church."(183)

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(180) C. Thoma, A Christian Theology of Judaism (Paulist Press, 1980) page 25.

(181) Ibid. page 28.

(182) G. Zahn, German Catholics and Hitler's Wars (Sheed and Ward, 1963), page 71.

(183) Ibid., preface.

Zahn explores the specific relationships between the Catholic Church in Germany, and the Nazi Church. He questions the sudden change on the part of the German Catholic hierarchy (from opposition to the Hitler movement to loyal recognition of the Hitler regime). Thus he provides an informative background to the Holocaust events and purposes invaluable suggestions for Roman Catholic theology to pursue.

The question of a Christian theological perspective on the Holocaust has been explored in great depth recently by A.T. Davies.(184) (This process appears to be growing in contemporary theology so that the frontiers of theology are being explored). It is important that this specific response to the Holocaust should grow in the future if Christian-Jewish relations are to continue.

Davies gives a specific response to the areas raised by Rabbi Greenberg in particular. The subject material of the Holocaust is itself threatening, Davies explains, because the intrinsic worth of the Christian faith itself is brought under judgement:

"If to speak of the Holocaust is painful for Jews, to speak of the Holocaust is also painful for Christians - because the disaster erupted in Christian Europe - the terrible question of Christian complicity is instantly ventilated."(185)

The interesting point raised by Davies is that generations of Christian theologians have suggested that Judaism "died on the cross". Yet ironically today the dictum can be reversed:

"For with much justification, Jewish theologians are raising the possibility that Christianity died at Auschwitz."(186)

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(184) A.T. Davies, "Response to Irving Greenberg", in E. Fleischner, Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? (New York, 1977). page 72

(185) Ibid, page 57.

(186) Ibid, page 57.

(Berkovits certainly charges the Christian religion with a total moral and spiritual bankruptcy, as the true source of the Nazi genocide.) Thus Davies pursues the Holocaust as a major event in Christian history and a serious challenge to Christian theology.

Davies examines Greenberg's implicit question as to whether the Holocaust, so irrational in the radical absurdity of its evil, can be explained at all. For, throughout the Holocaust, the role of God remains obscure. Davies attempts to understand Greenberg's fragmentary sense of meaning in the dialectical response.

Do the root experiences of Jewish and Christian faiths teach the same lessons about the meaning of HISTORY in the light of its cosmic setting? Davies asks. For Fackenheim speaks of the indissoluble tie between God and history as the midrashic framework of Jewish belief - the meaning of which even the Holocaust cannot destroy. Whereas Rubinstein argues that God's presence in history is seriously contradicted by the vicissitudes of man's experience; God seems to be no longer a possible idea. So how does Davies explain the Christian teaching on the meaning of HISTORY after such an event as the Holocaust?

"Today there is healthy scepticism in Christian theology about interpreting God's presence in the events of History. Its transhistorical significance as a revelation of fragmentary and contradictory character of all historic reality."(187)

This difference between Jewish and Christian perspectives about history, Davies believes, can overcome the contradictions of history: as Israel to Jewish faith becomes a sign out of the whirlwind that in

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(187) Ibid, page 59

some measure overcomes the Holocaust. (Here Davies parallels the teaching of Greenberg on the model of Job.) Similarly, Davies believes that the image of the suffering servant in Deutero - Isaiah (as Greenberg suggests) should acquire a new significance for the post-Holocaust Christian Church:

"the Holocaust adds a new dimension to the cross as a revelatory symbol linked to evil and suffering."(188)

Davies goes on to hope that Christianity can now acknowledge the momentous rebirth of the Jewish people in the modern State of Israel. He concludes that it

"is imperative for Christians to struggle with the Christian sources of the Holocaust. For the Holocaust is a basic event in Christian history and an unprecedented crisis for the Christian conscience."(189)

### Theology of the Cross

Contemporary theological reflection on the Holocaust has taken many directions. Franklin Sherman offers a Christian theological perspective in which he connects Jewish suffering during the Holocaust with the suffering endured by Christ.(190) He says:

"For Christianity, the symbol of the agonizing God is the cross of Christ. It is tragic that this symbol should have become a symbol of division between Jews and Christians, for the reality to which it points is a Jewish reality as well, the reality of suffering and martyrdom."(191)

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(188) Ibid, page 60.

(189) Ibid, page 61.

(190) F. Sherman, "Speaking of God After Auschwitz", WORLDVIEW 17 (1974), page 28.

(191) Ibid, page 29.

This is a Christian theological view that has been explored only recently. Sherman maintains that, after Auschwitz, Christians should recognise the participation of God in the sufferings of the people who in turn are called upon to take part of the sufferings of the God. He suggests that God in the post-Auschwitz age calls all people into a new unity which has a special significance. Within the cross itself, Sherman sees the revelation in the first instance of a profoundly Jewish reality. He thus unites the suffering of Christ on the cross with the suffering experienced throughout the Holocaust.

The Catholic scholar Marcel Dubois focuses attention on the difficulties Christians face in trying locate Auschwitz within a theology of the cross.(192) He perceives a connection between Israel and Jesus' Passion on the cross in their experience of suffering. He says,

"Our vision of Jewish destiny and our understanding of the Holocaust in particular depend on our compassion. The Calvary of the Jewish people, whose summit is the Holocaust, can help us to understand a little better the mystery of the cross."(193).

The immediate objective reaction one has to this perspective, is an uneasiness about how Jews would feel at combining the theology of the cross with the Holocaust. It might come across as an obscenity given the Church's role in the Holocaust. However, more positively, the stress it places on Auschwitz as a starting point leads to a full understanding of the God-human relationship. It also emphasizes that the Holocaust inextricably links Christians and Jews together.

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(192) M. Dubois, "Christian Reflections on the Holocaust",  
SIDIC 7 (1974), page 14.

(193) Ibid, page 15.

## Actual Event

Detailed studies by various scholars have been carried out on the actual events of the Holocaust. These studies have drawn attention to the comprehensive and detailed planning involved in the event. I intend to give a brief account of some of these studies of the actual Holocaust because of the theological analysis that has accompanied them. For example, Hilberg provides a classic study on the Nazi era in which he penetrates the meaning and efficiency of the Nazi system. Giving a detailed understanding of the Holocaust, he draws attention to the ideals that lay behind the atrocities of the Holocaust.(194) The Nazis endeavoured to create the 'new man' that the philosopher Nietzsche had spoken of so forcefully in the nineteenth century. It was pursuit of this so-called 'universal ideal' that led to the elimination of the supposed 'polluters' of authentic personhood, which included Jews, gypsies and the physically and mentally handicapped.

The myth of the Aryan event is further explored by Ryan in his theological analysis of Hitler's Mein Kampf.(195) He examines Hitler's 'salvation history' - where salvation constituted the restoration of heritage through the national programme of biological regeneration which would result in the 'master race'. Ryan says:

"by asserting total power for itself within the limits of finitude, Hitler deified himself and made himself into the Saviour of the German people. It was in this respect that he thought of himself as the child of providence ..."(196)

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- (194) Hilberg, Destruction of the European Jews (New York), Watts 1966).
- (195) Ryan, "Hitler's Challenge to the Churches: A Theological Political Analysis of Mein Kampf" in F. Littell and Locke (ed)., The German Church Struggle and the Holocaust (Detroit, 1963).
- (196) Ibid, page 63.

By examining Hitler's tremendously distorted "theology" Ryan assesses the ways in which the Christian Church can prevent its own theology becoming so distorted.

Another response to the Holocaust has been to chronicle the actual events and then comment on examples of the atrocities that took place. For example M. Gilbert has chronicled the Holocaust week by week, adding testimonies of survivors.(197) This does reveal in detail the crimes of unprecedented and unparalleled bestiality. The chronological narrative method that Gilbert pursues may be the best way of communicating the true nature of the 'final solution'. However, from a Christian theological point of view, it does not comment on the problems raised by the Holocaust. Yet, it is important to face and acknowledge the nauseating realities of the Holocaust before turning to elaborate theological interpretations.

Paul Johnson's History of the Jews also records the horrors of the actual events of the Holocaust.(198) He records general events and comments on them: for example,

"The smashing of babies' heads reflects the extent to which the dualism of anti-Semitic violence persisted, with secret, scientific killing proceeding alongside sudden, spontaneous acts of unspeakable cruelty,"(199)

He also chronicles specific events. For example:

"At the Maulthausen quarry, an Italian Jew was made to stand at the top of a rock already wired with dynamite and was then blown to death as he sang 'Ave Maria'. Hundreds of Dutch Jews were forced to jump to their deaths from the cliff overlooking the quarry."(200)

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(197) M. Gilbert, The Holocaust (Guild, London, 1986).

(198) P. Johnson, History of the Jews (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1987).

(199) Ibid, page 511.

(200) Ibid, page 512.

The importance of these studies (and the many others of a similar nature) for Christian theology lies in the way they reveal how the deep rooted anti-semitism in the Christian faith was used as 'reasoning' for atrocities of the Holocaust. Contemporary theologians such as R. Ruether have explored the anti-semitic attitudes prevalent in the New Testament and have suggested ways to rid Christian theology of anti-semitism.(201)

### Guilt of the Christian Church

The Christian Church has in recent theological reflection attempted to confront her failure in moral responsibility during the Holocaust. Today, investigations of the root causes of the Holocaust are being made by Christian theologians. For example, Edward Flannery has examined the reasons for the silence of the Christian Church during the Holocaust.(202) Even though the forces of modern secularism played a part in the Nazi era, this in no way exonerates the complicity of the Church, Flannery maintains. He strongly expresses that some degree of the charge against the Church must be validated; for the apathy and silence of the Church during this time was excessive:

"The degraded state of the Jews, brought about by centuries of oppression, gave support to the invidious comparisons with which the racists built their theories. And in their evil design, they were able to draw moral support from traditional Christian views of Jews and Judaism."(203)

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(201) R. Ruether, Faith and Fratricide (Seabury, 1974).

(202) E. Flannery, The Anguish of the Jews (New York, Macmillan, 1965).

(203) Ibid, page 174.



Alice Eckardt has highlighted the reluctance by Christians to probe the significance of the tragedy of the Holocaust for Christian self-understanding.(204) In response to the holocaust Christians have been fearful and reluctant to confront the event and the problems it raises. Many Christian theologians have brushed the issue aside as a primarily Jewish problem. Yet, Eckardt affirms that it remains a far deeper problem than Christian theologians have dared admit.

Elwyn Smith also stresses the importance of confronting the Christian guilt in the Holocaust and asks:

"Was not the holocaust a terrible test, which the Church failed? It may be ... that the question whether Christianity is to remember the Holocaust or dismiss it is a question of the ability and the right of Christianity to survive in a form in any way conformable to the Scriptures."(205)

As the living witnesses of the Holocaust tragedy grow old and die, and successive generations arise for whom the cataclysm is increasingly remote, the need for clear statements becomes more urgent. The Church has been reluctant to appreciate the lesson of the catastrophe. The past has not been adequately confronted, the real problems have not been faced, and Christianity has not recognised its role in the creation of a climate of opinion that made the Holocaust possible.

(204) A. Eckardt, 'The Holocaust: Christian and Jewish Responses', Journal of the American Academy of Religion (1974), page 453.

(205) E. Smith, 'The Christian Meaning of the Holocaust', Journal of Ecumenical Studies 6 (1969), page 421.

## SECTION 4

### ISRAEL

"There are two issues that must occupy a central place in the Christian-Jewish dialogue today, and they are interrelated: the holocaust and Israel." (206)

Israel has assumed a primary identification role for the contemporary Jewish community. Hence, when studying Christian theological attitudes to Judaism since 1945, 'Israel' is an issue which cannot be ignored. It is impossible to comprehend the Christian theological implication of the Land, the covenant, the election of Israel, and Israel as the root of the Church, without coming to an understanding of how Jews define themselves with respect to Israel.

Modern Roman Catholic theologians are only just beginning to focus on all different aspects raised by Israel. They are only beginning to accept the rich potential this area has for mutual enrichment of both faith traditions.

C. Thoma declares,

"A Christian theology of Judaism cannot disregard the existence of the State of Israel, which is of significance to Jews everywhere." (207)

However, the area has only been dealt with very sketchily by Roman Catholic theologians so far.

The State of israel has not been officially accepted by the Church. In 1948 the Vatican decided not to recognise the new State of Israel, despite appeals by European Jewry. This lack of Vatican

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(206) J Pawlikowski, op. cit., page 109.

(207) C. Thoma, op. cit., page 176.

recognition is a matter on which many Jews feel strongly. It must be remembered that there was no time in which the memory of the land of Israel was not central in the worship and hope of the Jewish people. Yet the Holy See withheld recognition for the technical reason that Israel is a State of which the boundaries with its neighbours are not agreed by peace treaties.

Can the Roman Catholic Church find a place in its theology for the return of the Jewish people to the Promised Land? Christian theology accepts the role of the Jews in God's providence only as far as the first Easter. This marked the change of the Divine plan: the death of the hope of building salvation on a new chapter in Jewish history, and its rebirth in an alternative faith proclaimed. This meant that Judaism lost its central role and became an anachronism. Therefore, to accept the State of Israel would mean a complete redesigning of Christianity's self-understanding. To date, Roman Catholic theologians have been rather evasive about the issue: Thoma as quoted earlier, states that theology cannot disregard Israel but goes little further; Pawlikowski does not believe that the existence of the State of Israel can be justified on theological grounds and says,

"For insisting on the inclusion of Israel as a major topic on the dialogue agenda does not eliminate the responsibility Christians have to retain a critical sense towards concrete policy decisions of the Israeli government." (208)

In this climate, there is a real danger that the topic of State of Israel could provoke antisemitism in the new form of anti-Zionism.

Traditional Christian beliefs about salvation history and

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(208) J. Pawlikowski, op. cit., page 110.

the Jewish people are called into question by the undeniable fact of the resurgence of the State of Israel. Providing a genuine Christian answer to the problem of the historic Jewish people and the Holy Land is a task which the Church cannot set aside, although Rabbi Dr Norman Solomon states,

"We must be aware of impatience of the all or nothing attitude which, for instance, can see no progress unless the State of Israel is recognised."(209)

The Land tradition has been an integral part of Jewish self-identity since biblical times. It is a theme which pervades the Old Testament, (for example, Genesis 12 v 1, Exodus 6 v 8, Psalms 105, 147, Isaiah 5 v 8) and when Israel is led into exile, the return to the Land becomes a dominant theme (Jeremiah 7 v 5, 2 v 7, Amos 7 v 17, II Kings 17 v 33). The New Testament also makes reference to the biblical promise of the Land (for example, Acts 7 v 33, Hebrews 11 v 9).

Three models of a theological understanding of the promise of the land of Israel are set out by Mussner:

- a) The model of theological implication: the land is "placed in Jesus Christ".
- b) The model of theological indifference to the land of Israel,
- c) The model of symbolic analogy, where possession of the land is a fulfilment of the covenant of God with Israel; this is a sign of hope as much for the Church as for Israel. (210)

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(209) Rabbi Dr. Norman Solomon, "Nostra Aetate: Twenty Years On", Christian Jewish Relations 18, 1985, page 7.

(210) F. Mussner, op. cit., page 16.

W.D. Davies maintains that the New Testament does not clearly rule out Judaism's historic claim to the land and he states that the land remains important for Christian faith, at least to the extent that the process of salvation in Christianity is deeply rooted in the process of human history. (211)

Zionism is the contemporary expression of the land tradition and this offers a challenge to contemporary Roman Catholic theology: how does this situation conflict with the long-standing theological tradition in Christianity that Jews were determined to be perpetual wanderers among the peoples of the earth as a punishment for murdering the Messiah? This links closely with the deicide charge which was discussed in an earlier section but it also calls for further articulation of the land tradition itself among theological scholars.

Christians need to understand Yahweh's election of Israel as his people, in order to take the Bible seriously (Deuteronomy 7 v6, 10 v14, 14 v2). The people of Israel were chosen by God, chosen out of his pure, unfathomable love: this sets Israel apart and makes her unique (Numbers 23 v9, Ezekiel 20 v52). There is also reference to the election of Israel in the New Testament, for example Acts 13 v17-19 and Romans 9 v11:

"in order that God's purpose of election might continue."

Thus, Christian theologians need to ask the question: if God has not rejected Israel as his people, does not Israel exist, even post Christum, as the "people of God" too?

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(211) W.D. Davies, op. cit., page 63.

Paul prepared the ground for Christian theology and he did not allow Israel to be suppressed in the course of history post Christum. It is the "Law" which holds the peoplehood of Israel together despite all adversity; the Torah guarantees the Jewish peoplehood and identity (Romans 9-11). The hardening of Israel lasts only so long and then the Gentiles come in and Israel will be saved. Paul never wrote off his people from messianic salvation: he saw the Gentiles and their salvation always in relation to Israel. ("All Israel will be saved", Romans II v26).

Thus, Israel is the root of the Church. The Church and Israel stand in indissoluble salvific relationship to one another. The relationship between Israel and the Church must therefore be critically tested.

In the context of the developing relationships between Christianity and Judaism, there are thus political as well as theological problems which the Church has to face concerning the State of Israel. It is an area which has so far only been sketchily explored. In contrast to the progress which has been made over such issues as the deicide question, the Pharisees, or the Holocaust, the problems of the State of Israel in Christian theology remain a major obstacle between the two faiths.

## EPILOGUE: CONCLUDING REMARKS

### 1. Organisations and Journals

#### a) Organisations

In the years since Vatican II, many organisations have been founded with the purpose of fostering and promoting better relations between Christians and Jews, and of encouraging dialogue between the two religions. In addition, other established organisations have also concerned themselves with these issues. It is largely through the work of these organisations that Jews and Christians have come together to share knowledge and to work towards a mutual understanding.

The Vatican's own dialogue committee is the Commission for Religious Relations with L'Ebraismo; it is known in England as the Vatican Liaison Committee for Religious Relations with the Jews. It was set up by the Secretariat for Christian Unity. Its President is Cardinal Willebrands in the Vatican City and it has a membership of prelates, clergy and lay scholars from various countries, who meet each year in different parts of the world. The Reverend Graham Jenkins and Bishop Butler were the Catholic representatives when the Commission was held in London. The current British Catholic representative is Bishop Mahon.

The main Jewish dialogue partner to the Vatican Liaison Committee for Religious Relations with the Jews is the I.J.I.C. the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations. This is a world-wide body, concerned with Jewish-Christian dialogue. It was founded in 1967 by the World Jewish Congress and the Synagogue Council of America and it works closely with the World Council of Churches as well as the Vatican Liaison Committee.

"From 1962 onwards Jewish leaders took an active interest in maintaining dialogue with the World Council of Churches and, after Vatican II, the Roman Catholic Church." (212)

The headquarters of the I.J.I.C. is in Geneva. In 1987 there was a joint meeting between I.J.I.C. and Christians in Africa and the organisation is building up a world-wide network of dialogue.

In 1965, S.I.D.I.C. (Service International de Documentation Judeo-Christienne) was founded in Rome, providing an international meeting place for students and priests. Its periodical, also called S.I.D.I.C., appears in both English and French.

In Great Britain, two important organisations must be mentioned: the Council of Christians and Jews and the British Association for Jewish Studies (B.A.J.S.). The former defines its own purpose, thus:

"The Council of Christians and Jews brings together the Christian and Jewish communities in this country in a common effort to forget the evils of prejudice, intolerance and discrimination between people of different religions, races and colours, and to work for the betterment of human relations, based on mutual respect, understanding and good will" (213)

The Presidents of the Council include the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster and the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations. The Council's journal, Common Ground, contains many informative articles and especially good book reviews. The Council also organises many conferences and lectures

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(212) Rabbi Dr Norman Solomon, "Recent Developments in Christian-Jewish Dialogue", British Association For Jewish Studies Bulletin (January, 1988) page 6.

(213) British Association for Jewish Studies Information Sheet (1987)



throughout its network within the British Isles. The B.A.J.S. is concerned with current scholarship in the area of Jewish studies. It too organises conferences and lectures, and it publishes a bulletin of recent developments. It frequently addresses the topic of Jewish-Christian dialogue.

The World Council of Churches has also been continually concerned with the relationship between Christians and Jews and has worked effectively to try and denounce anti-semitism from Christian teaching and to promote Christian-Jewish dialogue. In 1978 the World Council of Churches distributed a "Study Document of Proposals for Guidelines for Christian-Jewish Relations," (214), which contained mainly the report of the Jerusalem conference of June 1977. In 1983, the World Council of Churches issued "Ecumenical Considerations on Jewish-Christian Dialogue", (215), which acknowledged that the teaching of contempt for Jews and Judaism in certain Christian traditions proved a spawning ground for the evil of the Nazi Holocaust. The World Council suggested that responses to the Holocaust by Christians must include the statement that

"The Church must learn so to preach and teach the Gospel as to make sure that it cannot be used towards contempt for Judaism against the Jewish people."

and

"a resolve that it will NEVER happen again to the Jews or any other people."

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- (214) "Study Document of Proposals for Guidelines for Christian-Jewish Relations", World Council of Churches (Geneva, 1978).  
(215) "Ecumenical Considerations on Jewish-Christian Dialogue", World Council of Churches (Geneva, 1983)

The World Council of Churches succinctly expresses very important material that must be understood before any participation in Christian-Jewish dialogue. It promotes the need for dialogue:

"In dialogue with Jews, Christians have warned that the actual history of Jewish faith and experiences does not match the images of Judaism that have dominated a long history of Christian teaching and writing". (216)

The Congregation of Our Lady of Sion was founded in the mid-nineteenth century by two converted Jews, the brothers Ratisbonne, with the aim of the conversion of Jews. However, in the course of time, under the impact of the Holocaust and the ecumenical movement, the aim of the organisation has completely changed. Through the impetus of the influence of Vatican II in particular, the need for a congregation which would remind Christians of their Jewish roots in the Catholic Church has been met by the Sisters of Sion. They promote a fresh understanding of the permanent election of the Jewish people and the validity of the Jewish religion, in both the past and the present, and take part in Christian-Jewish dialogue, promoting the theological importance of Jewish people and religious values. They have formed a study-centre for Christian-Jewish relations in London.

An important organisation involved in promoting Christian-Jewish relations is the 'Centre for the Study of Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations' at Selly Oak, Birmingham. This centre was set up in 1982 with high-level representation from the Chief Rabbi, Archbishops and Jewish-Christian communities. The director of the centre is Rabbi Dr Norman Solomon. The Centre has been very important

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(216) Ibid, page 5.

in recent interfaith dialogue. In answer to the question as to why Jewish-Christian Relations should be given priority, the centre explains:

"Christians will find the study of early Judaism imperative if they wish to come to self-understanding through a knowledge of the historical Jesus. They will ask fundamental questions about traditional Christology and about how Christianity can be taught today to be free from outmoded prejudices." (217)

Two other centres concerned with Christian-Jewish relations today are Manor House, London and the Oxford Centre for Post-Graduate Hebrew Studies. The Oxford Centre for Post-Graduate Hebrew Studies is an institution closely linked with the University of Oxford providing facilities for the advanced academic study of all aspects of Judaism by scholars from any part of the world.

All of these organisations and others like them are working to extend dialogue, to share scholarship and to break down barriers between Christians and Jews. They are concerned that the mistakes of the past are never repeated and that Jews and Christians are able to work together in a spirit of harmony, mutual respect and toleration.

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(217) Information leaflet on the 'Centre for the Study of Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations: Questions and Answers' (Selly Oak, Birmingham).

b) Journals

In order to appreciate the ways in which dialogue has been developed, scholarship has been shared, and information on Jewish-Christian relationships has been disseminated, it is important to mention briefly the contribution of various journals. Some of these journals, such as S.I.D.I.C. or Common Ground, which have already been mentioned, exist primarily to promote understanding and respect between Jews and Christians. In addition, though, mention must be made of other theological journals, which have devoted considerable space to this issue.

Service International de Documentation Judeo-Chretienne publishes a S.I.D.I.C. review three times a year, with articles by Jewish and Christian authors. Perhaps an indication of both the kind of articles and their variety can be gleaned by quoting the titles of three contributions: 'Christian reflections on the Holocaust' by Fr Marcel Dubois (218); 'The link Between People, Land and Religion in Modern Jewish Thought' by Professor Manfred Vogel; (219) and 'Jews and Non-Jews: What are the Differences?' by Fernando Terracina. (220)

One of the chief concerns of Common Ground, the journal for The Council of Christians and Jews, has been to pursue theological perspectives on the Holocaust (221). Another very influential journal is Christian-Jewish Relations, published by the Institute of Jewish

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- (218) Fr. Marcel Dubois, "Christian Reflections on the Holocaust", S.I.D.I.C. Vol 7, No 2, (1974) page 15 ff.  
(219) Professor Manfred Vogel, "The link Between People, Land and Religion in Modern Jewish Thought", S.I.D.I.C. Vol 8, No 2 (1975) page 15 ff.  
(220) Fernando Terracina, "Jews and Non Jews: What Are the Differences?", S.I.D.I.C. Vol 17 No 1 (1984) page 21 ff.  
(221) For example, see B. Yaakov, "Christians and the Land of Israel", Common Ground Vol 3 (1986) page 11 ff.

Affairs in association with the World Jewish Congress. Edited by Rabbi Dr Norman Solomon, this journal aims to advance education in the field of human relationships, with particular reference to the history and social conditions of the Jewish people both past and present, and of the communities of which they have formed or form part and to the causes of racial and religious stress. One recent volume of Christian-Jewish Relations was devoted to 'Nostra Aetate: Twenty Years On' (222). In Briefing 15, 1985, published by the Catholic Media Office, there were reports on the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, examining the Christian attitude to Judaism forty years after the Holocaust and reflecting on the deeper understanding now developing between Judaism and Catholicism: The Journal of Ecumenical Studies, in the period since Vatican II has published a wide range of articles by Jewish and Christian scholars, focussing on matters of concern to both faiths. (223)

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- (222) Rabbi Dr. Norman Solomon (ed), "Nostra Aetate: Twenty Years On", Christian-Jewish Relations Vol 18 No 3 (Sept, 1985) page 5 ff.
- (223) P. Vawter, "Are The Gospels Anti-Semitic?", Journal of Ecumenical Studies Vol 5, (Spring, 1968) page 241 ff;  
 Dr. Hellwig, "Christian Theology and the Covenant of Israel", Journal Of Ecumenical Studies Vol 7 (Winter, 1970) page 49 ff;  
 P. Lapide, "Is Jesus a Bond or Barrier? A Jewish Christian Dialogue", Journal Of Ecumenical Studies Vol 14 (Summer, 1977) page 466 ff;  
 Fr. Edward Flannery, "Anti-Zionism and the Christian Psyche", Journal Of Ecumenical Studies Vol 6 (Spring, 1969) page 183 f;  
 E. Smith, "The Christian Meaning of the Holocaust", Journal of Ecumenical Studies Vol 6 (Summer, 1969) page 421 ff.

Two important Jewish journals in this field are European Judaism(224) and Immanuel (225). The latter is concerned with research in Israel and aims to present to an international non-Hebrew reading audience English descriptions, summaries and translations of recent Hebrew publications in the fields of the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament and Judaism of the first centuries C.E., Jewish-Christian Relations past and present. In America, the Journal of the American Academy of Religion (226) has published several articles on this topic and one can also point to articles in the Union Seminary Quarterly Review (227), Hebrew Union College Annual (228), and the Harvard Theological Review (229), among many others.

These are but a few of the many journals which have concerned themselves with Jewish-Christian relationships or with areas of scholarship common to both faiths. They do, however, give a clear indication of the range of topics and issues which have been given full discussion in the context of a genuine Jewish-Christian dialogue.

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- (224) For example, see A. Friedlander, "The Misuses of the Holocaust", European Judaism Vol 17 (Summer, 1983) page 3 ff; Balic, Magonet, Marshall, Breiner, Cracknell and Cooper, "Dialogue and Identity", European Judaism Vol 16 (Summer, 1982) page 2 ff; H. Maccoby, "Anti-Judaism and Anti-Semitism", European Judaism Vol 19 (Spring, 1985) page 27 ff.
- (225) See S. Ettinger, "Jew Hatred in its Historical Context", Immanuel II (Fall, 1980) page 81 ff; Z. Bacharach, "Christianity and Anti-Semitism: Ettinger's Modern Anti-Semitism", Immanuel 13 (Fall, 1981) page 86 ff.
- (226) See, for example, R. Eckardt, "Jurgen Moltmann, the Jewish People and The Holocaust", Journal of The American Academy of Religion Vol 14 (Dec, 1976) page 682 ff; R. Schreier, "Christology in the Jewish-Christian Encounter", Journal of The American Academy of Religion Vol 44 (Dec, 1976) page 693 ff.
- (227) For example, E. Rivkin, "The Meaning of Messiah In Jewish Thought", Union Seminary Quarterly Review Vol 26 (Summer, 1971) page 383 ff.
- (228) For example, E. Rivkin, "Defining the Pharisees: The Tannaitic Sources", Hebrew Union College Annual 1970, page 25 ff.
- (229) For example, D. Flusser, "A New Sensitivity in Judaism and the Christian Message", Harvard Theological Review Vol 61 (April, 1968) page 126 ff.

## 2. Some Official Responses

In addition to the on-going theological debates regarding issues central to Jewish-Christian relationships it is also important to mention briefly some of the official pronouncements of the Catholic Church on this topic in the years since Vatican II. These pronouncements, from the Catholic Church world-wide, contain many common features: acknowledgements of mistakes of the past; determination to strive for greater understanding, tolerance and mutual respect; and specific changes in the teaching of the Church.

As early as 1967, the American bishops issued Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations in the United States. They acknowledged the

"manifold sufferings and injustices inflicted upon the Jewish people by Christians in our own times as well as in the past" (230)

They also mandated the analysis of Catholic text-books for their treatment of Jews and Judaism and educational courses in Judaism and anti-semitism in Catholic schools and seminaries. In 1973, the Guidelines of the French Bishops' Commission demonstrated on the part of the Catholic Church its willingness to replace the 'teaching of contempt' with that of respect.

On 2nd January 1975 the Vatican issued new Guidelines for implementing the Vatican II declaration. This document marked the progress made in the intervening period and specified much that had been implicit in the conciliar statement of a decade earlier. It

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(230) Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations, U.S.A. 1967 (Holy See Publishers, 1980) page 4. See E. Fisher, Faith Without Prejudice (Paulist Press, 1977) page 151.

spoke warmly of the

"spiritual bonds and historical links binding the Church to Judaism". (231)

Reaffirming Vatican II's condemnation of anti-semitism, it called for a positive reformation of the Christian understanding of Judaism based on the

"essential traits the Jews define themselves in the light of their own religious history" (232)

This last is a crucial point, given the ignorance and misunderstanding that have prevailed for so long between the communities. The Vatican document also notes the many "common elements of the liturgical life" which we share with the Jews. The fact that much of our ritual is based on Jewish liturgy is thus admitted. The Guidelines go on to note that, in essential ways, "the Old Testament retains its own perpetual value". It calls on all catechists and homilists to explain thoroughly "those phrases and passages which Christians, if not well informed, might misunderstand because of prejudice." The document lists and corrects a number of common misunderstandings: for example, the notion that the history of Judaism ended with the destruction of Jerusalem; rather, it went on to develop a religious tradition rich in religious values. Finally, the Guidelines call for joint social action and common prayer that remain sensitive to the uniqueness of each tradition. The document does not advocate joint liturgical

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(231) The 1975 Vatican Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations, (Holy See Publishers, 1980), page 2.

See also, E. Fisher, Faith Without Prejudice (Paulist Press, 1977) page 151.

(232) The 1975 Vatican Guidelines for Catholic-Jewish Relations, page 2.



worship, which would be unwelcome to Jews as well as Christians, since the communities must retain their distinctiveness. It declares that,

"From now on real dialogue must be established" (233)

and

collaboration can do much to foster mutual understanding and esteem" (234)

In November 1975, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in America issued a statement on Catholic-Jewish Relations. Briefly summarizing the history of Catholic-Jewish relations since the Council, the Bishops made contributions to the dialogue and charted a course for future work. It reaffirmed and reflected on the principles and teachings of Nostra Aetate which, it said,

"initiated a new era in Catholic-Jewish affairs." (235)

In 1977, the International Committee for Inter-religious consultations met in Venice, and the Los Angeles Guidelines on Jewish-Catholic Dialogue were issued. In 1979, the Central Committee of Roman Catholicism in Germany considered 'Basic Theological Issues in Jewish-Christian Dialogue' and, the following year, the 'Pastoral Guidelines of the Bishops in England and Wales' were issued. In 1983, in Rome, there was the Synod of Bishops on 'Reconciliation With Jewish People'. Finally, in 1985, there was the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. It dealt with topics such as Religious

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(233) Ibid, page 3.

(234) Ibid, page 4.

(235) National Conference of Catholic Bishops' 1975 Statement On Catholic-Jewish Relations, page 2.

Teaching and Judaism, Relations between the Old and New Testament, and Judaism and Christianity in History. It concluded:

"Religious teaching, catechesis and preaching should be a preparation not only for objectivity, justice and tolerance, but also for understanding and dialogue. Our two traditions are so related that they cannot ignore each other". (236)

From this brief summary, it can be seen that official responses to Vatican II have been on a world-wide basis; that the Church has been concerned to build on the foundations of Vatican II; and that the Church leaders have been at great pains to ensure that the changes have been reflected in all aspects of Roman Catholic teaching.

### 3. Concluding Remarks

It is quite evident that a radical change in theological attitudes to Judaism has taken place within the Roman Catholic Church since 1945. There has been a definite move from an exclusivist to an inclusivist attitude and, among some contemporary theologians, even pluralistic attitudes have been explored. This new theological material has frequently emanated from Roman Catholic theologians, often through dialogue with members of the Jewish faith, and it is also affecting other Christian traditions.

With this radical change of theological attitude, growing concern has been expressed about the long history of persecution which Jews have endured. Both commonalities and differences between the two

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(236) Cardinal Willebrands, "Christians and Jews: Notes for preaching and teaching", The Common Bond (Catholic Truth Society, 1984).

faiths are now being explored by both Christian theologians and Jewish scholars. Through dialogue, many Christians have come to appreciate the richness and vitality of the Jewish faith.

Problems remain, including the status of the Land of Israel , discussed in the last chapter, but it is the changes which are most significant and far reaching. These changes have also altered significantly the response of the Christian Church towards other world religions.

In 1974, F. Mussner wrote,

"Not only moral and economic restitution toward the Jews is required but a theological one is just as urgent." (237)

In 1980, C. Thoma observed,

"Yet we can feel a little encouraged by the fact that in our day animosity toward Jews no longer wears a Christian mask." (238)

One might add that more encouragement may be derived from the on-going dialogue between Christian and Jewish scholars.

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(237) Quoted in C. Thoma, A Christian Theology of Judaism (Paulist Press, 1980) page 25.

(238) Ibid, page 25.

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