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**The Church and the Jews:
The Struggle at Vatican Council II**

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THE CHURCH AND THE JEWS: THE STRUGGLE AT VATICAN COUNCIL II

by JUDITH HERSHCOPF

ON NOVEMBER 20, 1964, the assembled Fathers of the Ecumenical Council, then concluding its third session in Rome, adopted, by a vote of 1,770 to 185, a statement on the attitude of the Roman Catholic church toward the Jews and Judaism. This statement was part of a larger declaration on the church's attitude toward non-Christian religions, including Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism; the omnibus declaration was approved by a vote of 1,651 in favor, 99 opposed, and 242 in favor with reservations.

That aspect of the declaration dealing with Jews stated (in unofficial English translation of the Latin text):

With a grateful heart, the church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election were already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ—Abraham's sons according to faith—were included in the same Patriarch's call, likewise that her salvation is typically foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage.

The church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament from the people with whom God in His ineffable mercy concluded the former covenant. Nor can she forget that she feeds upon the root of that cultivated olive tree into which the wild shoots of the gentiles have been grafted (cf. Rom. 2:17-24). Indeed, the church believes that by His cross Christ Our Peace reconciled Jews and gentiles, making both one (cf. Ephes. 2:14-16).

The church keeps ever in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen; theirs is the sonship "and the glory and the covenants and legislation and the worship and the promises; who have their fathers and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:4-5), the Son of Mary the Virgin (Rom. 9:4-5). No less does she recall that the Apostles, the church's mainstay and pillars, as well as most of the early Disciples who proclaimed Christ's gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people.

Even though a large part of the Jews did not accept the Gospel, they remain most dear to God for the sake of the Patriarchs. This is the witness of the Apostle, as is the utterance that God's gift and call are irrevocable.

In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and "serve him shoulder to shoulder" (Zeph. 3:9; Is. 66; Ps. 65(66):4,5; Rom. 11:11-32).

All Persecution Condemned

Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is of such magnitude, this sacred synod wants to support and recommend their mutual knowledge and respect, a knowledge and respect that are the fruit, above all, of Biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues. Moreover, this synod, in her rejection of injustice of whatever kind and wherever inflicted upon men, remains mindful of that common patrimony and so deplores, indeed condemns, hatred and persecution of Jews, whether they arose in former or in our own days.

May, then, all see to it that in their catechetical work or in their preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that could give rise to hatred or contempt of Jews in the hearts of Christians.

May they never present the Jewish people as one rejected, cursed or guilty of deicide.

All that happened to Christ in His passion cannot be attributed to the whole people then alive, much less to those of today. Besides, the church held and holds that Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of all men and out of infinite love.

It is, therefore, the burden of Christian preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.

From the overwhelming vote in its favor, future generations might conclude that the declaration was a routine matter, both substantively and procedurally. In fact, it was from the outset a highly-charged matter which became one of several key issues dramatizing the split between liberal and conservative viewpoints within Roman Catholicism and the

fierce struggle for control between forces representing these viewpoints at the council. Like some of the other controversial subjects on which there was sharp division between a majority of the bishops and a small, but powerful and influential minority, it was subjected to various procedural delays and other tactics designed to prevent it from coming to a vote. Furthermore, the statement on the Jews became involved with political considerations never intended by its authors and the object of intensive diplomatic representations and political pressures.

During the course of its various formulations, it became something of a bone of contention within the Jewish community as well. There was openly-expressed disagreement both as to the intentions and value of the declaration and as to the role, if any, that Jews should play with regard to it, and to the Ecumenical Council generally. On the latter point there was a broad range of opinion, planning, and action among various Jewish religious and communal organizations and representative spokesmen. Some organizations and individuals related themselves to the Ecumenical Council in varying ways, including the preparation of special materials, and correspondence and meetings with Catholic prelates in the United States and abroad. This article is written primarily from an American angle of vision.

Catholic-Jewish Relations: The Background

While the declaration in question was essentially a statement of attitude whose effective implementation would require specific directives and in some parts of the world would need to be undergirded by sustained educational and disciplinary measures, it was immediately seen as a symbol of fundamental change within the Roman Catholic church. Its supporters claimed that it did not enunciate any new doctrine, but that it did remove—in the words of *America* magazine—the source of a “ghastly ambiguity.” Many Jews believed that, new doctrine or not, the authoritative removal of a tradition depicting them as deicides, cursed by God and doomed to punishment in each succeeding generation, would do away with one of the deeply-rooted sources of antisemitism; for the charge had been used to justify many of the hostile policies of the church and of Christian rulers toward Jews throughout history.

The fact that Christianity had its historical beginnings as an argument within Judaism, and that the early church felt compelled to define itself in contradistinction or opposition to the mother faith, indelibly colored the relationship between the two from that time on. The earliest Christians were not anti-Jewish as we understand that term today; most were

themselves Jews, disappointed or angry that the overwhelming majority of the Jewish community, including its religious leaders, rejected their claim that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and fearful that the small group of faithful followers would be swallowed up by the synagogue. To the great misfortune of future generations, many of their bitter denunciations were canonized into the sacred scripture of Christianity and elaborated upon with particular vehemence by the early Church Fathers.¹ And fear of the competitive power or appeal of "the synagogue" persisted as an *idée fixe* in Christianity even after it had become the dominant religion of the West. The ability to perceive a small, powerless, and persecuted minority as an all-powerful conspiracy is common in the psychology of prejudice, but in the case of the Jews this was reinforced—in effect sanctified—by religious tradition. As one Protestant scholar has summed up the process:

The doctrine of the impartial and universal judgment of God was transformed into a particular and irrevocable curse on Jews; the inclusion of the Gentiles into the chosen people became an inclusion of Gentiles to the exclusion of the Jews; what had once been an internal conflict within Judaism was externalized as a conflict between Jews and Gentiles.²

The first restrictive measures against Jews, like the first separatist rulings of the Christian faith—such as changing the day of Sabbath to Sunday and fixing the date of Easter independently of Passover—were probably inspired by a desire to protect the faith of the Christian and maintain its distinctiveness from the parent religion. But what started out as protection for the Christian soon became a policy of harassment of the Jews. The initial hostility compounded by the "stubborn" refusal of Jews to convert, hardened into legislation which increasingly cut the Jews off from normal social and economic life and made outcasts of them. The official church view regarding the Jews, as it developed over the years, was that they should not be killed, because they provided a living witness

¹ E.g., "For . . . you crucified him, the only spotless and righteous man . . ." (Justin Martyr); "Since their deicide, the Jews have been blinded, can no longer lead anyone at all" (Eusebius); "Murderers of the Lord, assassins of the prophets" (St. Gregory of Nyssa); "God has forsaken the Jews. They have denied the Father, crucified the Son . . . their synagogue is the house of demons and idolatry . . . you should turn away from them as from a pest and a plague of the human race" (St. John Chrysostom); "The Jews, they seize him. . . . The Jews, they bind him, they crown him with thorns, they spit upon him, they flagellate him, they heap insults upon him, they hang him from the wood, they pierce his flesh with their spears" (St. Augustine).

² Bernhard E. Olson, *Faith and Prejudice* (New Haven, 1963), 276.

to the truth of Christian history; but that they were to live in degradation, because they had crucified and rejected the Lord—be a witness to the curse of God which they had brought down upon themselves:

... a curse which entered into their very bowels, like water, and into their bones like oil: cursed also in the cities, and cursed in the fields: cursed in their going in, and cursed in their going out: cursed the fruit of their wombs and of their lands and of their flocks. . . .³

Not content to declare the curse on the Jews, the church frequently chose to act it out. "Whenever ecclesiastics . . . wrote about the 'insolence' of the Jews," remarked one observer, "it is safe to assume that the civil powers were treating them as human beings. . . . Jewish prosperity anywhere was regarded by the Papacy as contrary to Holy Writ and a menace to Christendom."⁴ Efforts to reconcile tolerance and subjugation define the boundaries of church legislation (which, for much of Christian history, meant civil legislation as well) regarding the Jews.

On the one hand, the Jews were subjected to humiliating, restrictive legislation: forbidden to appear on the streets during Easter (councils of Orleans, 538 and 545); forbidden to officiate as judges (council of Mâcon, 581). These enactments were made by regional church councils and not universally enforced; but the Fourth Lateran council, beginning in 1215, gave church-wide endorsement to these and other degrading measures, including the order that Jews must wear a distinctive badge on their clothing. Later rulings outlawed the Talmud, authorized the ghetto, affirmed the validity of forced sermons intended to lead to baptism, and denied Jews admission to the universities.

On the other hand, the medieval popes also protected the Jews and condemned violence against them. Pope Calixtus II in 1120 issued an edict, reissued in 1199 by Pope Innocent as the *Constitutio pro Judaeis*, which prohibited the killing of Jews, the use of violence to force baptism, and the desecration of Jewish cemeteries. (This charter of liberties was to apply only to "those Jews who have not presumed to plot against the Christian faith.") Gregory IX protested vigorously against the slaughter of Jews by crusaders in France. In 1247 Innocent IV sent two vehement letters of protest to the archbishop of Vienne (France), condemning the brutal torture and slaughter of Jews following a ritual-murder charge, and commanding that the instigators be restrained and the stolen property restored.

³ From a letter of St. Agobard, Archbishop of Lyons, to the Bishop of Narbonne. Quoted in Malcom Hay, *Europe and the Jews* (Boston, 1960), 34.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 34–35.

It is perhaps a petty point that the archbishop of Vienne ignored the latter order, but it illuminates the larger problem: the church was seldom able to prevent the hatred it inculcated from being translated into the violent slaughter it deplored. If the popes and councils insisted on punishment *with* preservation, the masses (and sometimes the magnates) of Europe did not always make such fine theological distinctions. Thus, from the crusades to the 20th century, from accusations of ritual murder and well-poisoning to charges of international conspiracy, from the *auto-da-fé* to Auschwitz, the Jewish people remained the outcasts and the primary scapegoat of Christendom. Certainly, the institutions of Christianity cannot be held accountable for the entire record of persecution, expulsion, and slaughter, particularly for the racist ideology of the Nazis. But whatever the multiple and complex causes of antisemitism, it was fed by a tradition of religious teaching which cut the Jews off from the rest of mankind, depicted them as inherently base and evil—the “synagogue of Satan”—and viewed their sufferings as punishment visited upon them by a just God.

Religious animosity toward the Jews was compounded by the fact that, from the 18th-century Enlightenment on, Jews and the clergy of the established religions generally found themselves on opposite sides of the political fence in Europe. The church, much of whose secular power had been broken by the French Revolution, was suspicious of Enlightenment and liberalism, and tended to ally itself with the enemies of the French Revolution. The Jews, hoping for entry into secular society after centuries of exclusion and segregation in Christendom, supported the forces of Enlightenment and liberalism. An older image of the observant Jew as the enemy of Christ was overlaid with the newer image of the secular Jew as conspirator against the church. (At the Ecumenical Council, Ernesto Cardinal Ruffini of Sicily asserted that the Jews should declare their affection for the church, rather than *vice versa*, since—he said—the Talmud included passages offensive to Christians, and the Jews have supported Freemasonry, which the church has condemned.)

There were periods when Jewish communities lived in peace with their Christian neighbors and on relatively friendly terms with the clergy. And while the church sometimes supported antisemitism, as in the Dreyfus case, it also spoke out against it, as in Pius XI's famous dictum of 1938, declaring antisemitism “a repugnant movement in which we Christians can have no part.” Still, the religious teaching and preaching which depicted the Jews as accursed, debased, and doomed to perpetual servitude

—a tradition which Jules Isaac termed “the teaching of contempt”⁵—remained in the mainstream of Christian thought.

Developments Since World War II

Dramatic changes in the Roman Catholic church within the last two decades have been noted by many observers. Liberal and conservative factions struggle for predominance in an institution formerly thought to be monolithic. The liberals, including theologians, intellectuals, and prelates from either newly-emerging nations or countries with a pluralist and democratic tradition, have publicly expressed dissatisfaction with the “Roman” mentality of the Curia, and have spearheaded the thrust for collegiality, liturgical reform, recognition of the inherent right of religious liberty, and expanded dialogue with other religious groups. This ferment has itself come about as a result of many causes: the World War II defeat of fascist regimes with which the church had established concordats (Italy, Germany); the loss of Catholic countries to the Soviet sphere (Poland, Hungary, Lithuania); the growing threat of a militantly atheistic Communism; rapid social and technological change; the positive experience of the church in the United States, where—with separation of church and state—it had grown and flourished. This article is confined to one specific aspect of change within the Catholic church: the reexamination and revision of its thinking and teaching regarding Jews and Judaism.

Here again, the reasons are varied. Both internal trends, such as the Biblical Renewal movement, and external events, such as the foundation of the State of Israel, affected Christian thinking about Jews. The Biblical Renewal movement, which emphasized the continuity between Old and New Testaments, brought increased respect and understanding of the Jewish heritage of Christianity. The emergence of the State of Israel shattered stereotypes about the Jews. But first and foremost was the traumatic impact on men’s minds and feelings of the tragic fate of European Jewry during the Hitler era. The reality of that fate could not be denied: in the heart of civilized Europe, in the middle of the 20th century, a group of men had drawn up a plan to wipe an entire people from the earth by systematically rounding them up, transporting them through an intricate network of trains, buses, and trucks to designated death factories, and murdering them to the last man, woman, and child. Further, the success of the plan depended upon the indifference, acquiescence, or active cooperation of great numbers of people. For thinking Christians, the un-

⁵ Jules Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt; Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York, 1964).

avoidable question was, "How could this have happened in nations of Christian tradition?" However pagan, racist, and inherently anti-Christian the antisemitism of Nazi ideology, it fed on themes and attitudes promulgated through centuries of Christian teaching. To overcome antisemitism, acknowledged by major Christian church groups to be a sin against God and man, the distorted teachings must be confronted and revised.

Obviously, the revisions could come only from Christians themselves, out of their own conviction and their own initiative. But the preliminary task of stimulating widespread awareness of the problem, of illustrating and analyzing distortions and bias, fell to Christians and Jews alike. Britons like the scholarly Anglican clergyman James Parkes and the lay Catholic author Malcolm Hay called attention to traditional Christian antisemitism. The distinguished French-Jewish historian, Jules Isaac, made a profound impact in Europe, particularly in France, with the publication of his *Jésus et Israël* in 1948, and he continued to wage an intellectual struggle against the "teaching of contempt"⁶ until his death in 1963. (His subsequent efforts included additional books and lectures, personal audiences with Pius XII in 1949 and John XXIII in 1960, and active leadership in *l'Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*, the French interfaith organization.)

In 1947, at the little Swiss town of Seelisberg, Catholic and Protestant representatives met together with Jews and proposed guidelines as a practical basis for Christian teaching. Known as the Ten Points of Seelisberg, and drawing heavily upon Jules Isaac's suggestions, these proposals, dealing "with the need to emphasize the close bonds which exist between Judaism and Christianity, to present the Passion story in such a way as not to arouse animosity against the Jew, and to eliminate from Christian teaching and preaching the idea that the Jewish people are under a curse," were urged upon the churches together with some practical suggestions.

Investigations of the contents of religious textbooks provided actual examples of distortion and prejudice. Studies by Protestants of their own religious-school materials, initiated by the American Jewish Committee and the National Conference of Christians and Jews in the 1930s at Drew Theological Seminary⁷ and in the 1950s at Yale Divinity School,⁸ and

⁶ Isaac identified three major themes in the "teaching of contempt": that the dispersion of the Jews was a providential punishment for the Crucifixion; that Judaism was degenerate in the time of Jesus, and that the Jews were guilty of the crime of deicide. He argued that these themes were historically and scripturally inaccurate.

⁷ "Jew-Christian Relationships as Found in Official Church School Materials," unpublished, 1936. Also see Frank Eakin and Mildred Moody, *Sunday School Fights Prejudice* (New York, 1953) for later findings.

⁸ Bernhard E. Olson, *op. cit.*

a similar study of Catholic parochial-school textbooks⁹ undertaken at the Jesuit St. Louis University with the Committee's encouragement, furnished significant data and suggestions for improving these materials. A study of French Catholic textbooks, undertaken by a French priest,¹⁰ called attention to similar problems, and stimulated subsequent revisions.

An article by a prominent priest, in the Brazilian counterpart to the American Jewish Committee's *Commentary*, pointed to omissions and faulty generalizations regarding Jews in Brazilian textbooks and missals.¹¹

On the highest levels in the Catholic church there were several positive developments. In 1949 Pius XII authorized *pro perfidis Judaeis* in the Good Friday prayer for the Jews, to be translated into the vernacular as "unfaithful" or "unbelieving." (Actually, the Latin phrase has that meaning, but it had been too frequently translated as "perfidious" in the vernacular.) In 1959 John XXIII did away with the word altogether, both in Latin and in the vernacular. He also did away with two other prejudicial sentences, one in the Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart, recited every first Friday, and the other in the ritual of baptism of converts.

Such changes were encouraging, but progress was still patchy and unequal, varying from country to country—indeed, from region to region. Even those Catholics most active in efforts to purify religious teaching and foster improved understanding between Christians and Jews felt that progress would remain piecemeal unless definitive approval and encouragement were to come from the highest levels of the church, preferably in the form of an official declaration. It was Pope John who gave these hopes the prospect of realization.

Obviously, Pope John did not create the forces of renewal within the church, but he personified them to an extraordinary degree. He gave voice and direction to those seeking an *aggiornamento* (literally, updating) of the church, and he is said to have explained this term to a visitor who asked its meaning by going to the nearest window, opening it wide, and letting in the fresh air. In his very person, as much as by his public statements, he gave his blessing to the expanding dialogue with non-Catholics. When he announced the summoning of an Ecumenical Council and spoke of a renewal that would restore "the simple and pure lines that the face of the church of Jesus had at its birth" it seemed to many a

⁹ Rose Albert Thering, O.P., *The Self Concept Potential in Religious Textbooks* (St. Louis University, published doctoral dissertation, 1961).

¹⁰ Paul Démann, "La Cathéchèse chrétienne et le peuple de la Bible," Paris, *Cahiers Sioniens*, 1952.

¹¹ Bertrand de Margerie, S.J., "Os Judeus na catequese e nos missais do Brasil," *Comentário*, January-March, 1964.

historic opportunity for the Catholic church formally and authoritatively to clarify its attitudes toward Jews and Judaism: to show that it repudiated, once and for all, that part of its tradition whereby Jews had been segregated, degraded, charged with wicked crimes, and valued only as potential converts; and to lift those tensions between Christian and Jew that had engendered hostility and bitterness across the centuries. The time was ripe.

While the preparatory commissions for the Ecumenical Council were going about their work, the nightmarish details of the Nazi genocide against the Jews were being vividly recalled by the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem. The moral questions posed by the revelations of the Eichmann trial were not ignored by religious spokesmen. While the American Catholic press tended, by and large, to ignore the long history of Christian antisemitism when discussing the phenomenon of Nazi antisemitism and to emphasize the aid and assistance given to Jews by Catholics¹² there were also moving and self-critical responses. *Commonweal* editor James O'Gara (May 12, 1961) asked:

Could the Nazi horror have sprung full-blown out of nowhere, without centuries of anti-Semitism to nourish it and give it strength in secret? And when the dark shadow of Nazism appeared over Germany, was the Christian response to this evil even remotely adequate? To my mind, the painful answer to both questions has to be no.

The *Catholic Sentinel* (Portland, Ore., April 20, 1961) pointed out:

Anti-Semitism was not confined to Nazi Germany, or limited to the time that Adolf Hitler ruled the Third Reich. Persecution of the Jews is a black mark on the history of Christendom. . . .

And the *Catholic Star Herald* (Camden, N.J., December 15, 1961) commented:

. . . let us recognize the duty to wash away any traces of anti-Semitism in the hearts of the young. A future generation may forget such incredible cruelties if we are not at pains to instruct them in love for our Jewish brethren.

Preparatory Stages and Early Jewish Involvement

As the church girded itself in preparation for Vatican II, it soon became evident that the key figure with regard to any position concerning

¹² For a detailed examination, see American Jewish Committee, *The Eichmann Case in the American Press* (Institute of Human Relations Press, 1962) and AJYB (vol. 63, 1962), 98-101; (vol. 64, 1963) 258-59.

the Jews would be Augustin Cardinal Bea, named by John XXIII as head of a special Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity. (The secretariat was elevated to the status of commission in October, 1962). The cardinal, an octogenarian, a Jesuit, a Bible scholar, a figure of great personal prestige and influence, proved from the outset to be one of the most articulate and effective architects of renewal and reform within the church—a symbol of the ecumenical spirit. That Cardinal Bea was entrusted with seeking contacts, advancing dialogue, and improving relations with non-Catholic Christians was itself a radical departure from the Curia's mentality, which saw conversion as the only justification for any conversation. But it soon became known that Cardinal Bea had been entrusted with even wider responsibilities, that he and his secretariat had been authorized (later, Cardinal Bea was to state he had been expressly requested) by Pope John to draft a statement regarding Catholic-Jewish relations, and to seek representative Jewish viewpoints. The way was open for communication and exchange of views with Jewish institutions.

Such communication took various forms. Substantial documentation in specific areas of scholarship was provided by the American Jewish Committee. Its concern centered on Catholic teaching about Jews and Judaism in the broadest sense (textbooks, liturgy, sermons, films, etc.) and the desirability of a forceful repudiation of the deicide charge against Jews. These questions had been highlighted through a protracted (November 1960–August 1961) symposium on Christian teaching concerning Jews in *Evidences*, American Jewish Committee's French-language periodical, which included articles by eminent Protestant and Catholic scholars.

On July 13, 1961, over a year before the opening of the Council's first session, the American Jewish Committee submitted to Cardinal Bea, by prior agreement, the first of several comprehensive memoranda. Entitled "The Image of the Jew in Catholic Teaching," the 32-page document identified and illustrated slanderous interpretations, oversimplifications and sweeping statements, unjust or inaccurate comparisons, invidious use of language, and significant omissions in American Catholic textbooks, and cited existing Catholic sources that could serve as correctives. The memorandum did not raise questions on a theological level, but stressed the human-relations implications of various references to Jews. It was submitted after consultation with Jewish scholars representing Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform viewpoints.

On November 17, 1961, a second memorandum, "Anti-Jewish Elements in Catholic Liturgy," prepared for the Committee by an eminent

Jewish scholar, was submitted to Cardinal Bea's secretariat. The document acknowledged recent deletion of anti-Jewish passages in the liturgy of the church, but noted that the concept of Jews as deicides still figured in certain liturgical passages, in popular and scholarly commentaries on the liturgy, and in homiletic literature.

In December 1961, Professor Abraham J. Heschel of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America met Cardinal Bea in Rome, and one of the outcomes of the meeting was an invitation to submit suggestions for positive Ecumenical Council action to improve Catholic-Jewish relations. In May 1962, he submitted a memorandum, prepared in cooperation with the American Jewish Committee, recommending rejection of the deicide charge, recognition of Jews as Jews (rather than as potential converts), promotion of scholarly and civic cooperation, and the creation of church agencies to help overcome religious prejudice.

In March 1962, a memorandum was sent to Pope John, urging the elimination of anti-Jewish references from Catholic texts, liturgies, inscriptions and pictorial representations. Signed by Dr. Nahum Goldmann, chairman of the World Conference of Jewish Organizations (COJO) and president of the World Jewish Congress, and Label Katz, co-chairman of COJO and president of B'nai B'rith, it was endorsed by all the constituent members of COJO with the exception of the British Board of Deputies.¹³ The memorandum charged that allegations of ritual crimes by Jews were perpetrated in inscriptions, pictorial representations, and commemorative services.

Voices opposed to Catholic-Jewish rapprochement were also heard at this early stage from two major sources which were to continue massive efforts to prevent Council action: the Arab nations and a group of ultra-conservative officials of the Curia. Gamal Abdul Nasser's Voice of the Arabs broadcast on November 7, 1963 that there was "a world Zionist plot to capitalize on the Vatican Council to further the oppression of the Palestinian refugees," and Arab states made representations against the creation of any special "under-secretariat for the Jews," when rumors to this effect appeared in Italian papers. Arab opposition was double-barreled, coming from both governments and Roman Catholic prelates in Arab nations who warned of possible reprisals against Catholics in Arab states. Theological opposition from conservative sources was re-

¹³ American Jewish Congress, Canadian Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith, Conseil Représentatif des Juifs de France (CRIF), Delegación de Asociaciones Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA), Council of Australian Jewry, South African Board of Deputies, Jewish Labor Committee, and World Jewish Congress.

flected in an article by Giacomo Lauri Volpi which appeared in *Osservatore Romano* (the quasi-official Vatican paper) on March 8, 1961, describing the Roman emperor Titus, who destroyed the Second Temple, as possibly the "executor of a supernatural will," who knew that the "Jewish people had stained themselves with a horrible crime deserving of expiation."

This early opposition was successfully withstood by Cardinal Bea and his secretariat, reportedly with the active support of Pope John. Other developments also seemed to foster an encouraging atmosphere for growing Christian-Jewish rapport. A forceful denunciation of antisemitism issued in December 1961 by the World Council of Churches, embracing over 200 Protestant and Orthodox denominations, could not escape notice by Catholics. Besides condemning antisemitism as a "sin against God and man," the World Council cautioned: "In Christian teaching the historic events which led to the Crucifixion should not be so presented as to fasten upon the Jewish people of today responsibilities which belong to our corporate humanity and not to one race or community."

A month later, in January 1962, Cardinal Bea presided at an unprecedented event in Rome: an agapé—a feast of fraternal love—in which representatives of 16 different faiths, including Jews,¹⁴ took part. The cardinal declared it was "the primordial duty of all groups of mankind to unite to overcome the hatreds of the past."

By the spring of 1962 Cardinal Bea's secretariat had prepared a draft statement on the Catholic attitude toward Jews and Judaism, and intended to introduce this document during the first session of the Council, with Pope John's blessing. However there occurred an incident which enabled the opposition to prevent consideration of the document during that session—and, indeed during the lifetime of Pope John. The incident centered on the question of Jewish observers at the Council.

Jewish representation at the Ecumenical Council had not been a matter of strenuous public debate. If Cardinal Bea's secretariat had considered it, no affirmative decision had been made. Jewish religious groups were opposed. The American Jewish Committee had communicated its view that there should be no Jewish observers at the Council unless other non-Christian religions were invited. On June 12 Dr. Nahum Goldmann of the World Jewish Congress announced that Dr. Hayyim Wardi, an Israeli government official, would attend the Council as an unofficial observer

¹⁴ Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff of Rome; Sergio Piperno, president of the Union of Italian Jewish communities; Mario Disegni, of the Roman Jewish community, and Zachariah Shuster, European director of the American Jewish Committee.

and representative of WJC, and that he had received a leave of absence from his government for that purpose. Although there were Jewish protests (the Rabbinical Council of America expressed "grave alarm" at WJC's efforts to seek representation) and Dr. Goldmann later (August 1) claimed his earlier announcement had been misrepresented, the damage was done. Arab states protested vehemently, charging that Israel was deviously seeking political involvement in a religious gathering. Conservative elements opposed to the work of Cardinal Bea's secretariat, which was also preparing a draft statement on religious liberty, seized upon this incident as proof that Christian-Jewish relations had become hopelessly politicalized. The commission of the Council charged with determining the agenda omitted both the statement on the Jews and the statement on religious liberty (the latter for different reasons).

Whether, in fact, the Wardi incident was the sole reason for shelving the declaration on the Jews, or whether the conservative opposition might have been able to prevent its consideration in any case, is a speculative question. There was ample evidence that the opposition to any favorable statement regarding the Jews was intense, and that such opposition had access to extraordinary channels of distribution. Thus, a few days before the session ended, every prelate found in his box a privately-printed 900-page volume, *Il Complotto contro la Chiesa* ("The Plot Against the Church"), filled with the most primitive antisemitism. The volume charged that there was a Jewish fifth column among the Catholic clergy¹⁵ plotting against the church, and even justified Hitler's acts against the Jews. No one knew how the book was distributed to the Council Fathers, and it reportedly produced little effect other than indignation. But it showed to what lengths the opposition was prepared to go.

The first session of Vatican Council II (October 11 to December 8, 1962) closed without official consideration of religious liberty or Catholic-Jewish relations. And in November Pope John suffered the first severe attack of the malady that six months later was to bring about his death.

While no great accomplishments appeared to emerge from the first session, and most of the arguments seemed procedural, the fundamental lines of conflict emerged early. The conservative forces, long entrenched

¹⁵ This attack was obviously directed at a few priests associated with Cardinal Bea's commission who were converts from Judaism and who played some role in the drafting of the declaration, such as Msgr. John Oesterreicher and Father Gregory Baum, both of whom have written widely on the matter of Jewish-Christian relations.

in Rome, self-assured, accustomed to giving instructions to the bishops through the Curia, expected to be able to dominate the Council. The bishops coming from lands across the earth did not really know each other, nor as yet their collective will. But from the first vote they broke the bonds the Curia had sought to impose, refusing the Curia-sponsored commissions and sending several schemata back to commissions for re-drafting. Having routed the conservative forces in one vote after another, the progressive elements left Rome at the session's close optimistic and enthusiastic, certain the Council was riding the winds of change. Key issues on which the future battle would be joined, it was clear to both sides, were the collegial powers of the bishops, the schema on the church and the modern world (dealing with such questions as birth control and nuclear warfare), religious liberty, and a declaration on the Jews—a declaration whose fate would now be more closely linked to the general struggle within the Council. The latter two statements, at Pope John's instruction, were attached to Cardinal Bea's schema on ecumenism, for consideration at the next session.

Developments between Sessions

In March 1963, Cardinal Bea visited the United States to lecture at Harvard University on the subject of Christian unity. Subsequently he was honored at an interfaith agapé in New York devoted to the theme of "Civic Unity under God." Cardinal Bea used that occasion—attended and addressed by such personalities as U Thant, Zafrulla Khan, Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller, Mayor Robert F. Wagner, Henry Luce, Dr. Henry Pitney Van Dusen, Richard Cardinal Cushing, Greek Orthodox Archbishop Iakovos and Rabbi Heschel—to issue an affirmative statement in support of freedom of conscience.

Cardinal Bea's visit was also the occasion of an unpublicized and unprecedented meeting with a group of Jewish religious leaders, which was held at the American Jewish Committee on March 31. The Jewish participants represented Orthodox, Conservative and Reform viewpoints, but each attended in a personal capacity.¹⁶ In responding to a series of prepared questions regarding the prospects for Council action on a Jewish declaration, the cardinal declared that the events of the Passion could not be charged against Jewry as a whole; that it was possible, and indeed necessary, to give the right interpretation to dogma to clarify the true

¹⁶ Rabbis Louis Finkelstein, Theodore Friedman, Abraham J. Heschel, Joseph H. Lookstein, Julius Mark, Albert Minda, plus several officers and staff members of the American Jewish Committee.

sense intended by the writers of the New Testament; that there was a need for interreligious communication and cooperation, and that his views were endorsed by Pope John.

Two months later John XXIII was dead. His death, on June 3, 1963, was mourned by Catholics and non-Catholics alike. In his brief pontificate of four and one-half years, he had infused the church with a new spirit and had evoked an exceptionally sympathetic response in the non-Catholic world; he was, as Léon Cardinal Suenens of Malines-Brussels described him, "the pope of dialogue." The election of Giovanni Battista Cardinal Montini of Milan to the papacy on June 21 did not come as a great surprise, but it left many questions unanswered. A close friend and associate of John, Cardinal Montini was expected to follow in his predecessor's footsteps. His prompt announcement as Pope Paul VI that he would continue the Ecumenical Council, and at the unexpectedly early date of September 29, was seen as reassuring by those interested in the progress of *aggiornamento*.

On the specific question of the Jewish declaration, however, pessimistic voices were heard. In June a much-respected Catholic theologian, Father Gustave Weigel, S.J., declared at the convention of the National Community Relations Advisory Council that a declaration on Catholic-Jewish relations had been prepared for the first session of the Council but not introduced because of Arab pressure. He also predicted that the Council would continue to avoid the issue. (There was a rapid denial from sources in Rome and Father Weigel declared himself happy to stand corrected.)

Meanwhile a totally unexpected development, which would strain Catholic-Jewish dialogue over the next year or more, exploded on the scene. On February 20, 1963, a play entitled *Der Stellvertreter* (variously translated as "The Vicar," "The Representative," "The Deputy") opened in a Berlin theater. Written by a young German Protestant named Rolf Hochhuth, the play was a stinging and bitter indictment of the late Pope Pius XII for his failure to protest, publicly and officially, against the mass murder of Jews under Hitler. The pope was depicted as a cold and calculating figure, more interested in protecting the financial and institutional interests of the church than in his moral responsibility as the Vicar of Christ on earth.

The play launched a furious controversy, and its opening in several European cities was accompanied by riots or other disturbances. No less a personage than the present pope commented. In an article written before his election to the papacy but published soon afterwards in the

British Catholic *Tablet* (June 29) Cardinal Montini defended Pius XII as a pope who tried "so far as he could, fully and courageously to carry out the mission entrusted to him," and accused the author of "an inadequate grasp of psychological, political and historical realities."

Passionate as was the controversy aroused by *The Deputy*, in Europe it did not become a Catholic-Jewish issue. In the United States, however, it began to take on the overtones of interreligious conflict. In New York City, Jews are prominently associated with the theater, and the first announced producer, Billy Rose (who later withdrew), and director, Herman Shumlin, were Jews. Thus there was pressure from some Catholic sources (notably *America*, a national weekly published by the Jesuits)¹⁷ for Jewish organizations to repudiate the play and come to the defense of Pius XII's memory. Most Jewish organizations refrained from comment on the play, except as a civil-liberties issue.

The Deputy turned out to be a greater occasion for comment and controversy in the American religious press before it opened than after. It opened in New York on February 26, 1964, to mixed reviews, and in the ensuing months rapidly waned as a source of friction. In the United States, as in Europe, comments on the merits of the play did not run strictly along religious lines. Some Protestants and Jews criticized it as drama and as history, and several Catholics, while taking exception to the portrait of Pius XII, nevertheless said the author had performed a service by raising critical issues of conscience too often evaded.

How the Hochhuth play affected the fate of the Ecumenical Council declaration on the Jews is questionable. Very possibly it made no difference at all. Those who supported the declaration may have been strengthened in their resolve by the self-critical reactions of Catholics and Protestants alike. Those opposed may have claimed that the Hochhuth play was a reason for delaying or sidetracking the declaration, lest it appear that the church felt the need to defend itself against the charges of the author.

An occasional insinuation that the Jewish declaration was somehow related to the play was effectively disposed of by Catholic and Jewish spokesmen who pointed out that the declaration had its beginnings long before *Der Stellvertreter* made its first appearance in Berlin.

¹⁷ Questioned why Jewish leaders had not spoken out in protest against the play, Msgr. John Oesterreicher wrote in the November 9, 1963 issue, "In the end, the Jewish human-relations agencies will have to speak out against *The Deputy* in unmistakable terms. Otherwise they will defeat their own purpose."

Second Session

The second session of the Ecumenical Council opened in Rome on September 29, 1963. Though no official report had been made by Council authorities, it was widely rumored that a statement on Catholic-Jewish relations had been prepared. Then, on October 17, the *New York Times* reported that the draft resolution—part of the schema on ecumenism—would acknowledge the Jewish roots of the church, reject the idea that the Jews were exclusively or collectively guilty for the death of Jesus, and would vigorously condemn antisemitism.

The story reportedly stimulated strenuous protests from conservative elements and from prelates from Arab countries. Nevertheless, the draft document was printed and distributed to the Council Fathers on November 8, as chapter 4 of the draft schema on ecumenism. The text was not publicly released, but an official Vatican communiqué summarized its main points:

—A deep bond ties the church to the chosen people of the Old Testament. The church has its roots in the covenant made by God with Abraham and his descendants.

—The responsibility for Christ's death falls upon sinful mankind and not upon the Jews. "Therefore, it is unjust to accuse this people of deicide or to consider it cursed of God."

—There is no scriptural justification for disdain, hatred, or persecution of Jews. Preachers and teachers are admonished never to present "a contrary opinion," and are urged to promote mutual understanding and esteem.

The communiqué firmly disclaimed any political intent, stressing that the declaration was neither pro-Zionist nor anti-Zionist, and rejecting "any use of the text to support partisan discussions or particular political claims" as wholly contrary to the framers' intention. The document was distributed at that time, Father Thomas F. Stransky, O.S.P., an American member of Cardinal Bea's staff told newsmen at a briefing session, "because some misunderstanding (regarding its purely religious nature) had appeared in the Arab press."

The announcement on November 19 that Cardinal Bea would introduce chapter 4 of the schema on ecumenism and Bishop Emile de Smedt of Bruges chapter 5 (a statement affirming religious liberty) was greeted with great enthusiasm within the Council. Observers reported that this announcement generated more spontaneous applause than had been heard theretofore. Cardinal Bea declared that he had prepared a state-

ment on the Jews by the "express command" of the late Pope John. He pointed out that "there is no national nor political question here . . . There is only treatment of a purely religious question." He stressed the content of the declaration as summarized above, and stated that the declaration was necessary in the light of the violent and criminal persecution of Jews which had taken place during the Nazi era. Since the Nazi propaganda might have an unfortunate effect on faithful Catholics, it was important to root out any ideas remaining through the influence of that propaganda. He declared that neither the Jews of our time nor even all the Jews at the time of Jesus could be accused of the crimes committed against him, and ended with a plea that the church follow "the example of burning charity of the Lord Himself upon the Cross."

The draft statements on religious liberty and on the Jews were widely noted in the American Catholic press, and there were many affirmative editorial comments on the Jewish declaration. The introduction of chapter 4 also evoked positive responses from spokesmen for Jewish religious and community organizations and from the Jewish press.

Nevertheless, it was apparent that there was strong opposition to both declarations within the Council. The Oriental prelates were unanimously opposed to the statement on the Jews. Some bishops, while not opposed to a declaration on relationships with Jews, felt such a declaration must also refer to Moslems, Buddhists, and other non-Christians. There were prelates indifferent to the Jewish question, but strongly opposed to the statement on religious liberty for fear it would be used to undermine the authority of the church and encourage indifferentism or Communism. The ultra-conservatives were opposed to both.

As in the first session, so during the second also, an antisemitic publication was privately distributed to the Council Fathers. *Gli Ebrei e il Concilio alla luce della Sacra Scrittura e della Tradizione* ("The Jews and the Council in the Light of Scripture and Tradition") by a pseudonymous Bernardus, cited authoritative Catholic sources supporting the deicide charge against Jews, proclaimed that Jews could only wipe out the curse upon them by converting to Christianity, and insisted that efforts to change the traditional view were the result of a conspiracy in the Council by Jews and Freemasons working on behalf of Communism.

While those opposed to chapters 4 and 5 were in the minority, they nevertheless exercised powerful control. Indeed, they successfully maneuvered to detach these chapters from the schema. On November 21 the Council moderators suddenly announced that there would be an immediate vote on acceptance of chapters 1-3 as a basis for discussion. The

secretary general added that voting on chapters 4 and 5 would take place "in a few days." The days came and went, and the Council's second session ended on December 4 without an opportunity for the Council Fathers to vote, in principle, on either chapter. (A vote of acceptance in principle meant that the present text would be the basis for debate. The lack of such a vote meant that both draft statements were again open to revision, including scrutiny by the Theological Commission and the Central Coordinating Commission, headed respectively by Cardinals Ottaviani and Cicognani, both leaders of the conservatives.)

Despite Cardinal Bea's assurance that "what is put off is not put away," and despite Pope Paul's dramatic announcement of his forthcoming pilgrimage to the Holy Land, there was a widespread, if muted, discontent among the liberals at the outcome of the second session. Paul's trip to the Holy Land and his meeting with Patriarch Athenagoras of the Greek Orthodox Church were unprecedented and newsworthy events, but the widespread publicity and enthusiasm they evoked did not prevent Catholic observers and commentators from asking what had gone wrong at the Ecumenical Council.

Reaction in the United States

In the United States the question was asked openly in the Catholic press by several journalists who had covered the Council. Msgr. James Tucek, official correspondent for the National Catholic Welfare Conference, wrote that the fate of the chapters on religious freedom and the Jews was "one of the mysteries of the second session" and that "something had happened behind the scenes." The explanation that the two chapters had not been submitted to a vote because of lack of time was "not convincing, especially in view of the fact that this same day's assembly closed a half hour earlier than usual."

Many other Catholic observers expressed disappointment at the outcome of the second session, and the fact that a small minority among the bishops appeared to have thwarted the will of the majority. A few commentators suggested that political and economic considerations underlay the liberal-conservative clash within the church. Gary MacEoin, a syndicated columnist, wrote that some bishops might balk at reform of the Curia because it would mean "the dismantling of the economic empire which is a big part of the Curia's power structure," and a prominent Catholic author, Michael Novak, suggested that the commitment of Vatican funds in Italian industry, and the fear of nationalization of some industries which might result from the shift to a left-center coalition in

Italian politics, could not be ignored in discussing positions at the Ecumenical Council.

Others commenting on the second session asked why the American bishops had not assumed greater leadership in pressing for the positions they supported. Unlike some other groups, they had not lobbied in support of chapters 4 and 5, although the American hierarchy generally favored them.

If the American hierarchy had not marshalled its collective strength during the second session, however, it began to speak out firmly and forthrightly in the months that followed. Expectations that religious liberty and the declaration on the Jews would be approved at the third session were voiced by American prelates on numerous occasions, and in some cases Jewish meetings provided the forum for such statements.

Albert Cardinal Meyer, addressing a group of Protestant ministers at the Chicago Theological Seminary in January 1964, stated that "the ecumenical movement cannot be securely founded until a clear statement on religious liberty is fully developed." Richard Cardinal Cushing, speaking at St. Peter's College in February, declared that without a Vatican Council endorsement of religious liberty the ecumenical movement would "fall on its face." Archbishop Robert Lucey stated in San Antonio in March that "the American hierarchy should take the lead to procure adoption" of a decree proclaiming freedom of religion. Bishop Robert E. Tracy of Louisiana wrote in an article published in several Catholic journals in January, "I do not believe that even the best-contrived obstructionism can keep considerations on the church, the bishops, ecumenism, the Jews, and religious liberty from coming to a vote on the floor at the next session."

Speaking before a meeting sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League and the Federation of Jewish Agencies in Philadelphia in March, Archbishop John J. Krol said that the statement pending before the Council "should help to eliminate future attempts to pervert the Gospel of love into a Gospel of hatred." Archbishop Krol declared that the Gospel account of the Crucifixion had been distorted and used "as a pretext for persecuting the Jews," but that the New Testament gives "no basis for hate and anti-Jewish feeling." Archbishop John F. Dearden of Detroit predicted approval of the chapters on religious freedom and Christian-Jewish relations at the third session of the Council. So did Bishop John Wright of Pittsburgh.

A powerful condemnation of antisemitism was made by Cardinal Spellman at the annual meeting of the American Jewish Committee in

April 1964. Cardinal Spellman stated that antisemitism "can never find a basis in the Catholic religion" and that it was "simply absurd to maintain that there is some kind of continuing guilt which is transferred to any group and which rests upon them as a curse which they must suffer."

There were also initiatives from the Jewish side. In March 1964 a B'nai B'rith delegation of three¹⁸ met with Pope Paul VI and communicated the "profound interest" of the Jewish community in the proposed declaration on religious freedom and Catholic-Jewish relations. In May reports were received from Rome that the draft decree on Jews had been watered down, and that the specific repudiation of the deicide charge had been eliminated. On May 30, an American Jewish Committee delegation of six¹⁹ met with Pope Paul VI. In a statement subsequently published in the Vatican paper, *Osservatore Romano* (May 31, 1964), and picked up by the Catholic press in many parts of the world, the Pope expressed his hope that ethnic differences "should never be for you, or for any other ethnic group, a reason for undergoing any diminution in your human rights," and firmly disassociated himself from the "political question" (understood as reference to the State of Israel). Discussing the religious aspect, the Pope declared his "particular consideration for the Jewish religious tradition with which Christianity is so intimately linked" and strongly deplored "the horrible ordeals of which the Jews have been the victims in recent years." He declined, however, to comment specifically on the deicide question, except to say that he had read Cardinal Spellman's address and that Cardinal Spellman had spoken his sentiments.

Also in May, Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum of the American Jewish Committee and Joseph Lichten of the Anti-Defamation League were invited to speak before the Catholic Press Association in Pittsburgh. Both addressed themselves to the importance of a clear and forthright Ecumenical Council statement specifically repudiating the deicide charge. The Catholic press responded to these concerns with a strong outpouring of editorial opinion; over the next months, diocesan newspapers and other Catholic journals made editorial appeals in behalf of a strong Jewish declaration.

¹⁸ Label Katz, international president; Maurice Bisgyer, executive vice president, and Saul E. Jofstes, secretary-general.

¹⁹ Morris B. Abram, president; Ralph Friedman, chairman of the executive board; Philip E. Hoffman, chairman of the board of governors; Zachariah Shuster, director of the European office; John Slawson, executive vice president; Mrs. Leonard M. Sperry, member of the executive board.

There were some comments from the Protestant side as well.²⁰ In an "open letter" to the American Catholic bishops, in *Commonweal* on June 26, 1964, and in a similar article in *Look* magazine on October 6, 1964, Robert McAfee Brown, a Protestant theologian and delegate-observer to the second session of the Council for the World Presbyterian Alliance, urged "vigorous advocacy" of the statement on religious liberty and stressed the "urgency" of a statement on the Jews which would condemn both antisemitism and "any notion of the Jews as a deicide race." Failure to adopt a statement on the Jews that would not contain both of these crucial emphases, he wrote, "would be a bitter blow indeed to the non-Catholic world."

The blow, however, was half-struck already. Rumors that the draft declaration on the Jews had been watered down were reported in the *New York Times* on June 12. On August 25 Joseph Cardinal Ritter confirmed that the condemnation of the deicide charge against Jews had not been retained in the revised draft. Moreover, on September 3, the *New York Herald Tribune* published an unauthorized version of the text of the revised draft, which differed from Cardinal Bea's earlier version in several other critical particulars. In addition to avoiding the term "deicide"—and thus the rejection of this term as applied to the Jewish people—the new document contained what seemed to many Jews a clear call to conversion:

It is also worth remembering that the union of the Jewish people with the church is a part of the Christian hope. Accordingly, and following the teaching of the apostle Paul (cf. Rom. 11:25), the church expects

²⁰ It should be noted that Protestant groups were clarifying their own theological perspective on the Jews during this same period. In Løgumkloster, Denmark, in April and May 1964, the Lutheran World Federation's Department of World Mission denounced antisemitism as "spiritual suicide" and urged the member churches of the federation to examine their publications and remove and oppose false generalizations about Jews: "Especially reprehensible are the notions that Jews, rather than all mankind, are responsible for the death of Jesus the Christ and that God has for this reason rejected His covenant people."

In June the General Board of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA also passed a resolution branding antisemitism, "no matter what its origin, as absolutely irreconcilable with the profession and practice of the Christian faith" and recalling the World Council of Churches' statement in 1961 that "the historic events which led to the Crucifixion should not be so presented as to fasten upon the Jewish people of today responsibilities which belong to our corporate humanity and not to one race or community."

Similarly, in November 1964, the bishops of the Protestant Episcopal church, in a strong unanimous statement, called the deicide charge against the Jewish people "a tragic misunderstanding of the inner significance of the Crucifixion."

in unshakeable faith and with ardent desire the entrance of that people into the fullness of the people of God established by Christ.

Everyone should be careful, therefore, not to expose the Jewish people as a rejected nation, be it in catechetical tuition, in preaching of God's word or in worldly conversation, nor should anything else be said or done which may alienate the minds of men from the Jews. Equally, all should be on their guard not to impute to the Jews of our time that which was perpetrated in the Passion of Christ.

While the original version had stated that neither the Jewish people of today nor the Jewish people of the time of Jesus could be held accountable for the Crucifixion, the revised draft spoke only of the Jews of today, thus leaving open the question of collective guilt in earlier times. Perhaps most objectionable from the Jewish viewpoint, however, was the "therefore"—that is, the implication that respect for Jews was motivated only by missionary interest, and contingent upon Jewish conversion. Predictably, there were immediate negative responses from Jewish sources.²¹

Third Session

When the third session of the Council opened on September 16, it was evident that prelates supporting a stronger statement on the Jews would fight to get it on the floor of the Council. Archbishop John C. Heenan of Westminster, Primate of Great Britain, publicly expressed astonishment that the text had been changed without the knowledge of the commission charged with its preparation. On September 16, 170 out of 240 American bishops, meeting in Rome, said they would press for a declaration on religious liberty and a stronger declaration on the Jews. Editorial support was also forthcoming. *America* (Sept. 19, 1964) commented:

The passages that seem to have disturbed Jewish commentators most, however, referred to Christian hope for the eventual approach of the Jewish people to a full gathering of the People of God. Here, regrettably, the translation in the press imparts to these carefully phrased statements a tone that understandably might cause a Jewish reader to question the sincerity of the document's earlier insistence on promoting "mutual understanding and esteem between Catholics and Jews through theological research and brotherly conversations." It may well be that this controversial passage will also meet with sharp questioning in the Council.

²¹ A description of Jewish reactions to the Ecumenical Council and the internal debate within the Jewish community may be found in the final section of this article.

Similarly, the Providence *Visitor*, a diocesan weekly, editorialized, (Sept. 25, 1964):

The failure of the new draft to restrict the absolution from the deicide charge to only the Jewish people of today leaves room for the belief that the Jews *as a people* in the past were the guilty ones. And yet we know by faith, and from the Scripture, that Christ walked freely to his death. . . . The Jews, despite all, have been employed as a handy scapegoat for us to unload our part of the guilt in the death of Christ by casting it on someone else.

And the Protestant *Christian Century* commented (Sept. 23, 1964) that the changed draft

. . . is not adequate atonement for the crimes Christians have committed against Jews and defended with the charge that Jews are God-killers. The first business of the church is not to evangelize the Jews but to repent of its sins against them.

The Jewish declaration, introduced on September 25, came up for debate on September 28 and 29. Predictably, it was opposed by prelates from Arab nations. Ignace Cardinal Tappouni, Syrian-Rite patriarch of Antioch, speaking also in the name of four other Oriental prelates,²² declared that adoption of the document would create "the most serious difficulties for the hierarchy and the Roman Catholic faithful in many localities," because of the hostility of the Arab world to such a declaration.

But the sentiment of the great majority of Council Fathers was clear. The most frequent and energetic demand to be heard during 35 interventions was for the restoration of those aspects of the original text which dealt with the relationship of the Jewish people to the death of Jesus and the specific, unambiguous condemnation of antisemitic movements. A forthright appeal for justice echoed repeatedly in the Basilica of St. Peter's. The statement must be made "more positive, less timid, more charitable," declared Cardinal Cushing. "There is no Christian rationale—neither theological nor historical—for any inequity, hatred or persecution of our Jewish brothers. . . . If not many Christian voices were lifted in recent years against the great injustices, yet let our voices humbly cry out now." "The Jews expect from us, first of all, words of justice," said French Bishop Leon Elchinger of Strasbourg. It cannot be denied, he said, that in this century and past centuries as well, sons of the church—

²² Coptic-Rite Patriarch Sidarouss of Alexandria, Melkite-Rite Patriarch Maximos IV Saigh of Antioch, Chaldean-Rite Patriarch Paul II Cheikho of Babylon, and Armenian-Rite Patriarch Ignace Pierre XVI Batanian of Cilicia.

not infrequently in the name of the church—committed crimes against the Jews. “Why should we not find in the spirit of the Gospel the courage to ask for forgiveness in the name of so many Christians for so many serious injustices?” Bishop Sergio Méndez Arceo of Cuernavaca, Mexico, and Archbishop Patrick O’Boyle of Washington, D.C., urged that the church not only condemn antisemitism, but also expressly deplore and interdict all persecutions, especially those of Christian origin. Archbishops Lorenz Jaeger of Paderborn, Germany, Franjo Seper of Zagreb, Yugoslavia, and Bishop Jules Daem of Antwerp, Belgium, agreed that the only effective way to deprive persecutions and discriminations of their theoretical basis was for the Council to make the joint heritage of Revelation with Israel unmistakably clear. Franziskus Cardinal Koenig of Vienna asked why the revised text, in condemning persecution of the Jews, omitted the words “formerly or in our own times” which had appeared in the original.

A majority of the Council Fathers who spoke urged either a return to the original text or the addition to the present text of an express rejection by the Council of the deicide charge. American Cardinals Cushing, Meyer, and Ritter were especially vigorous in this demand,²³ as were Cardinals Joseph Frings of Cologne, Achille Liénart of Lille, Giacomo Lercaro of Bologna, Paul-Emile Léger of Montreal and König; Archbishops Seper, Philip Pocock of Toronto, and Heenan; Bishops Elchinger, Méndez-Arceo and Pieter Nierman of Groningen (on behalf of the Dutch Episcopate), and Stephen Leven of San Antonio, Texas. Archbishop Heenan and Bishop Leven were particularly forthright. The original text, stated Archbishop Heenan, had become known everywhere. If, after a full-scale debate, the rejection of the deicide charge were dropped, it would seem that the church was still convinced that the Jews were deicides. “I humbly plead,” he concluded, “that this Declaration of ours shall openly proclaim that the Jewish people as such is not guilty of the death of our Lord.”

Replying to the suggestion that the statement on deicide had been suppressed because of the word “deicide” is philosophically and theologically absurd, Bishop Leven declared, “We are not dealing here with some philosophical entity, but with a word of infamy and execration which was invented by Christians and used to blame and persecute the Jews. For many centuries, and even in our own, Christians have hurled this word

²³ Cardinal Spellman was hospitalized in New York at this time, but he had privately communicated his support of a strengthened declaration, and expended his efforts on behalf of it.

against Jews and because of it they have justified every kind of horrible excess and even their slaughter. . . . We must tear this word out of the Christian vocabulary so that it may never again be used against the Jews."

As for the formulation of the church's aspiration regarding Jewish conversion, several speakers wanted it rewritten. "The paragraph on the conversion of Jews must be changed, and less offensive wording must be chosen to express the hope of the union of all mankind," said Cardinal Ritter. Archbishop O'Boyle said that the passage in question "brought to the minds of many Jews the memories of past persecutions, forced conversions and forced rejection of their faith. . . . There should be no hint of pressure or of the means that would disrupt fruitful dialogue between the Church and the Jewish people."

(Several Fathers from Asian and African countries urged that the declaration be enlarged to include reference to Hinduism, Buddhism and even paganism.)

With such a mandate behind it, Cardinal Bea's commission was now free to rewrite the document in its original spirit. The opposition intensified its efforts to block action. On September 30, speaking before leaders of the Eastern-Rite communities in Damascus, Syrian Premier Salah el-Bitar assailed the draft statement, and asked the heads of the Catholic communities to urge Pope Paul to thwart the attempt to exonerate the Jews from deicide. *Al-Baath*, the official newspaper of Syria's ruling party, said the Syrian government would bring the issue before a conference of neutralist heads of state in Cairo in order to enlist wider opposition to the proposed declaration. Other diplomatic interventions also took place, reportedly from President Sukarno of Indonesia and Nasser's plenipotentiary ambassador, made directly to Pope Paul. Once again, antisemitic pamphlets were circulated among the bishops, charging that the Jews had masterminded the declaration and that Cardinal Bea was himself Jewish. In addition, last-ditch attempts to block progress were made by the conservative minority within the Council who were disturbed by the general direction the Council was taking and for whom the document on the Jews was just another example of a dangerous departure from established tradition, with the declaration on religious liberty even more threatening.

On October 9 a letter came to Cardinal Bea from the secretary general of the Council, Archbishop Pericle Felici, acting, he said, on behalf of high authority, announcing the appointment of new mixed commissions to review both the document on religious liberty and that on the Jews.

This maneuver was seen as an attempt to delay or prevent Council

action despite the will of the majority, and the progressives responded with immediate action. A group of the leading progressive cardinals drew up a petition to Pope Paul firmly protesting the violation of conciliar independence. They charged that the conservatives were attempting to cut the Jewish document to one insignificant paragraph, to rewrite the declaration on religious liberty, to weaken the statement that the bishops share in the full authority of the church, and to bring the Council to a close before such controversial topics as birth control and nuclear weapons could be discussed.

Pope Paul supported the progressive cardinals on this occasion. Gaston Cruzat, head of the press office of the Latin American episcopate, announced that the Pope had expressed support for the progressives on all four points.

The document that was finally issued by Cardinal Bea's commission and distributed to the Council Fathers was entitled "The Relationship of the Church to non-Christian Religions" and dealt with Moslems, Buddhists and Hindus, as well as with Jews. The section devoted to Jews was even stronger than the initial draft decree of November 8, 1963. The specific repudiation of the deicide accusation had been restored. The implication that respect and esteem for Jews was contingent upon their conversion had been replaced by an expectation of "that day, known to God alone, on which all people will address the Lord in a single voice and serve Him shoulder to shoulder." It denounced hatred and persecution of Jews, and recommended mutual respect and fraternal dialogue.

The vote on the religious liberty declaration was set for November 19 and on the new text regarding Jews and other non-Christians for November 20. On November 19 Eugene Cardinal Tisserant announced in the name of the Council presidency that no vote would be taken on the religious-liberty document since certain Fathers had requested more time to read the new version. This announcement set off a serious disturbance on the floor of the Council. In less than a half hour more than 800 bishops, their number later increased to 1,400, signed a petition requesting the Pope "urgently, more urgently, most urgently" to change the decision of the presidency. Pope Paul refused to set aside that decision, but he promised that religious liberty would be the first order of business at the next session of the Council. It was in an atmosphere of tension and resentment that on the following day the long-awaited text on the Jews—now part of a more comprehensive declaration dealing with the Catholic attitude toward all non-Christians—came up for a vote after three years of struggle and procedural and political opposition. It passed with

the overwhelming margin noted above, and more than one commentator has suggested that the conservative minority might have maneuvered to delay it, too, if not for its reluctance to risk a repetition of the openly-expressed resentment over the postponement of the vote on religious liberty.

Debate within the Jewish Community

As previously noted, the declaration on the Jews, in its various formulations and through its ups and downs within the Council, stirred up a spirited debate within the Jewish community. There were two basic questions: the declaration itself and the role of Jews in relation to it.

As for the declaration itself, did it spring from a moral impulse to correct the failures of the past and purify the church's relationship to Jews, or was it an expediency, an easy way of glossing over centuries of abuse without accepting responsibility? Was the declaration intended to create respect and esteem for the continuing Jewish people, or to encourage their conversion? Was our generation witnessing a sincere effort by the church to overcome a long tradition of prejudice, or was it trying to pretend that the tradition had never existed?

Sharp differences of opinion regarding the intentions of the document and the motivations of the church were not immediately apparent. When the first announcements were made in the fall of 1963 that the Ecumenical Council would consider a document repudiating the deicide charge against Jews, the information was publicly welcomed by major Jewish organizations and criticized by none. There were a few dissenting individual voices, such as Rabbi Harry Essrig of Temple Emanuel in Grand Rapids, Mich., who called the document "too little and too late" and described it as "a sop to the rising intelligence of mankind," but such critical responses were exceptional at this early stage. Affirmative reactions were more characteristic, and expressions of gratification came from many Jewish spokesmen, including A. M. Sonnabend of the American Jewish Committee, Dore Schary of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Nahum Goldmann of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), Rabbi Theodore Friedman of the Rabbinical Assembly, and Elio Toaff, chief rabbi of Rome. It was hailed by the general assembly of the Council of Jewish Federation and Welfare Funds.

But when the second session of Vatican Council II ended with no action on the declaration, criticism was more common. Behind this criticism could be sensed a mistrust of the church's motives, a suspicion that theological dialogue was the honeyed approach to conversion, and simple resentment over the prospect of some 2,500 bishops debating the extent of

Jewish culpability in the death of Jesus. Before the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) in February 1964, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, a leading spokesman for Orthodox Jewry, attacked the proposed declaration as "nothing more or less than evangelical propaganda." He also discouraged religious dialogue with Catholics. Others charged that the "absolving" of Jews from a crime that they never committed was condescending. At a National Community Relations Advisory Council (NCRAC) meeting in July, (Orthodox) Rabbi Shubert Spero charged that the declaration was calculated to absolve the Jew "of some mythical guilt without the majority religion accepting any responsibility for the historic suffering and agony of the Jewish people." Remarked another rabbi "I don't feel that I have to be exonerated. I didn't crucify anyone."

With the publication of the revised text on September 3, when it became clear that the repudiation of the deicide charge had been omitted and the statement containing what Jews considered a conversionary appeal inserted, the document came under additional attack, this time including Jewish sources which had previously welcomed the declaration and which had, in various degrees, worked cooperatively with Catholic authorities here and abroad. Such spokesmen argued that Jews could not welcome a document which did not recognize the validity and integrity of Judaism, not merely as the mother faith of Christianity, but in its own right. Thus, Morris B. Abram, president of the American Jewish Committee, stated with regard to the expectation of Jewish conversion "inevitably such an appeal must be rejected by Jews, for any declaration, no matter how well intended, whose effect would mean the dissolution of the Jewish people as such and the elimination of Judaism as a religion will be received with resentment by Jews throughout the world."

Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan, writing in *Jewish Spectator* (January 1965), stated that dialogue based on the expectation or desire of Jewish conversion was "unthinkable" and that it was tragic for the church to forget that "throughout the centuries it manifested 'its unshakeable faith, its ardent desire and its expectation' regarding the Jewish people by means of unspeakable atrocities against our forebears."

Rabbi Heschel described the revised draft as "spiritual fratricide" and said that he would rather go to Auschwitz if faced with the alternative of conversion or death—a reaction, which, according to Catholic journalist John Cogley, "struck even the most 'progressive' Council Fathers as somewhat extreme." Joseph Lichten of the ADL, then in Europe, commented that the chief objection to the revised draft was that "it fails to

state clearly that the Jews are not guilty of deicide," and foresaw an "unhappy result" if the present draft were adopted.

While it is true that there was some Jewish criticism of the declaration, the Ecumenical Council, and the church, it is also true that Jewish leaders reserved much of their criticism for one another. Jewish debate on the question of the role of Jews in relation to the declaration, and to the Catholic church in general, was passionate and at times acrimonious, and revealed basic differences in philosophy and policy.

The convening of an Ecumenical Council, so dramatically announced by Pope John in January 1959, shortly after his election to the papacy, was seen by many Catholics and Jews as a historic opportunity for the church to set its house in order regarding the Jews. Antisemitism had been condemned before, but here was the possibility for the church officially and authoritatively to repudiate the traditional interpretations of Catholic doctrine which have stimulated or rationalized persecution of Jews across the centuries: foremost among them, the notion of the Jews as a deicide race.

Obviously, such an action would be welcomed by all Jews. But, some felt, the Ecumenical Council being a totally Catholic internal affair, Jews should seek no relationship or involvement with it. Antisemitism, the argument went, is a Christian problem, and both the initiative and the means for overcoming it should come from the Christian community. It would be unseemly and undignified for Jews to plead in their own behalf. Others, particularly Jews associated with organizations which had over the years built up sustained, cooperative relationships in the Catholic community and had actively promoted interfaith dialogue, felt that Jews had not only the right, but also the responsibility to pursue certain aims.

Antisemitism might be a Christian problem, they reasoned, just as anti-Negro prejudice is a white problem; but Jews, after all, were its victims and must advocate their own cause, just as American Negroes had taken the lead in the struggle for racial justice. In so far as antisemitism found sanction in Christian teachings about Jews, it was a problem of direct concern to Jews. In so far as the Ecumenical Council might put an end to such teachings, that was a legitimate goal to pursue. Obviously, certain initiatives would have to come from the Christian side, but Jews could and should point to the problems, appeal to the conscience of Christian leaders, and communicate their hopes for effective Council action.

Accordingly, some Jewish organizations devoted substantial time and energy to this end, publicly—in books, studies, articles, and radio and

television programs; by raising the issue before a whole variety of Church-related groups, or by providing forums for authoritative Catholic spokesmen to express their views—and privately, through correspondence and unpublicized meetings with Catholic leaders here and abroad.

The American Jewish Committee and the ADL were perhaps most heavily committed to this kind of program, but B'nai B'rith, WJC, and the World Conference of Jewish Organizations all, at one time or another and in diverse ways, became involved.

The American Jewish Committee not only submitted research memoranda on Catholic teaching and liturgy regarding Jews to Cardinal Bea's secretariat, and arranged for the confidential meeting of Jewish leaders with Cardinal Bea, as previously described, it also maintained communication with various Catholic prelates and experts. Articles by its European director, Zachariah Shuster, and its interreligious-affairs director, Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, dealing with various aspects of the deicide charge, appeared in scholarly and popular publications. Particularly noteworthy was Mr. Shuster's participation in a symposium (London *Observer*, August 11, 1963) in which Lady Barbara Ward Jackson presented a Catholic point of view. Rabbi Tanenbaum and Mr. Shuster were present in Rome during parts of the Council's sessions and conferred with Catholic authorities. In the summer of 1964 an American Jewish Committee delegation visited Latin America and met with several cardinals and bishops with regard to the pending declaration. The Anti-Defamation League was also actively involved in discussions with Catholic prelates and its representative, Joseph Lichten, was present in Rome during two of the Council's sessions. A summary of an ADL-sponsored survey indicating some relationship between antisemitism and the deicide charge was reprinted by the Dutch Documentation Center of the Council and widely distributed. Both the American Jewish Committee and ADL carried on extensive interfaith activity. Many of these programs, such as ADL-sponsored institutes on Catholic-Jewish relations and AJC-sponsored conferences on religious textbooks, provided the occasion for an exploration of Catholic teachings about Jews, and these events were frequently noted in the religious press, and used as the basis for constructive editorial comment.

The European representative of B'nai B'rith, E. L. Ehrlich, was also in communication with various Catholic prelates, as was Gerhart Riegner of the WJC, and Fritz Becker, the director of its Rome office.

Synagogal and rabbinical groups eschewed any organizational relationship with the Council, as did NCRAC; but a number of rabbis and com-

munity-relations professionals in America, Europe, and Latin America communicated with members of the Catholic hierarchy, exchanged views with Catholic friends and colleagues, and wrote or spoke out on the subject in their individual capacities. Some Jewish laymen were similarly active.

Since key Jewish religious leaders, Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform, had been kept informed regarding the activities and efforts of the various communal agencies and had frequently been consulted in the preparation of specialized documents, there appeared to be a consensus within the Jewish community regarding the usefulness of these efforts. However, in the summer of 1964, when it appeared that the declaration had been emasculated, tempers began to fray and some Jewish organizations expressed open criticism not only of the draft declaration, but also of Jewish efforts on behalf of it. Officers of the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), RCA, and WJC attacked "pressure" tactics on behalf of the declaration. CCAR was reported (*New York Times*, June 21, 1964) to have expressed a consensus that the Vatican statement was a Christian problem and Jews need not press for its adoption. Its president, Rabbi Leon Feuer, said in a presidential report that an "obsequious appeal for a statement by the Ecumenical Council can only be revolting to the Jewish spirit and an insult to the memory of Jewish martyrdom." Later, in an interview reported in the *New York Times*, he criticized Jewish secular groups for "undignified pressure."

In June, Orthodox rabbis assailed lay Jewish groups for having involved themselves on behalf of the proposed declaration. Rabbi Abraham avRutick, president of RCA, and Rabbi Israel Klavan, executive secretary, argued that such groups were concerning themselves with questions of theology, in which they had no competence.

Similarly, before WJC in Jerusalem in July, Nahum Goldmann, criticized Jewish "pressure" on the Vatican and stated that "Jews as a people should maintain a position of self-respect and dignity and not try to raise the issue with too much intensity." (To whom these strictures were addressed was not entirely clear, inasmuch as Dr. Goldmann himself had been involved in several approaches to the Vatican. *Civiltà Cattolica*, the leading Jesuit publication in Rome, recalled Dr. Goldmann's visit to Cardinal Bea, and the memorandum submitted to Cardinal Bea by Dr. Goldmann and Label Katz.) There were similar criticisms (not unanimous) before NCRAC in July, which reported "an extensive feeling . . . that the overtures made by some Jewish groups toward the church for a statement on Catholic-Jewish relations have been excessive and unbe-

coming." *Viewpoint*, the periodical of the (Orthodox) National Council of Young Israel, commented tartly on July 19: "With all the Jewish secular leaders vying for audiences with the Pope, the Vatican must be subject to a virtual traffic jam."

Since the American Jewish Committee, whose delegation had recently met with the Pope, was the obvious target of some of these attacks—indeed, was so named by Rabbi Israel Miller of RCA—its president, Morris B. Abram, replied in a public statement that its activities in Catholic-Jewish relations were based on intergroup-relations considerations, not theology, and that where theological matters were involved it had consulted eminent Jewish theologians.

Jewish efforts on behalf of the Ecumenical Council declaration had their defenders as well as their detractors. Rabbi Jacob Neusner, writing in the Connecticut *Jewish Ledger* on November 19, said there was "nothing to condemn and much to praise, in the dignified and well-informed efforts" to do away with the decide charge. He went on to state:

With a sad heart we have seen vilification of meaningful and honest efforts to secure the good name of Jewry and Judaism among a vast and influential segment of mankind . . . We continue to hope that these efforts will bear fruit, and we continue to feel deep gratitude for the devotion of the men and institutions who currently labor for Israel's welfare despite Israel's complaint.

Despite differences of opinion and cross-criticism within the Jewish community, there was still considerable sentiment in the Jewish community that a strong declaration without evangelical connotations would be of great value, and that Jewish organizations should agree on a joint statement expressing a representative viewpoint. Accordingly, 14 major Jewish organizations joined, on Oct. 6, in issuing the following "Statement to the Jewish Community":²⁴

Throughout our history we Jews have been the bearers of a distinctive religious commitment. No matter how great the pressures, no sacrifice has been too great for us to maintain our unique religious character.

A concern with the common destiny of all men is deeply rooted in our spiritual heritage. We, therefore, note with satisfaction the develop-

²⁴ American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress, B'nai B'rith, Canadian Jewish Congress, Jewish Labor Committee, National Community Relations Advisory Council, Rabbinical Assembly of America, Rabbinical Council of America, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, United Synagogue of America, World Jewish Congress, Central Conference of American Rabbis, Jewish War Veterans of the United States.

ment of increasingly harmonious relationships among the great faiths that have engendered common positions and actions on vital humanitarian issues. The ever increasing contact between peoples in the modern world has created new dimensions in human relations which Jews have welcomed and in which they have fully participated. Yet today, no less than in the past, the Jew remains steadfast in his historic commitment, determined to preserve his faith and heritage.

The Ecumenical Council currently meeting in Rome is a convocation of the religious leadership of the Catholic church, concerned with the problems of Christian unity and the definition of Catholic religious doctrine. It would, therefore, be improper for the Jewish community which is not a part of Christianity or its ecumenical movement to offer suggestions concerning religious doctrine to this Council. However, it is our hope, that this Council will further harmonious relationships among the religions of the world to seek solutions to the problems of mankind.

All men of good will are encouraged by the concern of this Council with the fact that certain teachings of the church have been used at times as a source of antisemitism. It is to be hoped that the final determination of the Council will contribute to the effective elimination of antisemitism and all sources of bigotry and prejudice and will lead to better understanding amongst all peoples.

The declaration as finally voted at the Ecumenical Council, with the objectionable passage changed and the deicide accusation firmly rejected, was welcomed by the same organizations. When the Council Fathers have voted its promulgation, they declared in a joint statement, "the Catholic church will have made a historic contribution to the advancement of harmonious relations among the peoples of the great faiths." The statement went on to "reiterate our belief in the distinctive role of Judaism as a separate faith community in making its contributions to the achievements of the common goals of humanity." The declaration was also welcomed by President Zalman Shazar of Israel. Receiving a delegation of archbishops and bishops from Africa, Asia, and South America, he stated that "all honor is due to the Ecumenical Council" for having voted "the daring and purifying pronouncement that explicitly forbids hatred of the Jews and abrogates that ancient accusation for which there is no ground in fact, but which has drenched my people's history with blood."

Acclaim was not unanimous among Jews. Rabbi Emanuel Rackman of Yeshiva University stated in November that there could be no worthy discussion (with the Catholic church) until Jews were regarded as equals; but while the declaration speaks of a common patrimony, "not once does

it accord Judaism recognition as an equal. . . ." Leo Pfeffer, special counsel to AJCongress, dismissed the declaration as "not an act for the preservation of the Jews, but for the preservation of the Catholic church."

The Future of the Declaration

The declaration, although accepted in principle, continues to be the target of a sustained campaign by Arab nations to prevent its final adoption. The Vatican correspondent of the Roman news magazine, *Il Punto*, (quoted in London *Jewish Chronicle*, January 22, 1965) reported that President Charles Helou of Lebanon, the only Christian Arab head of state and a former ambassador to the Holy See, had been charged by the Arab League with expressing officially the opposition of Arab leaders to the Jewish document, and that Arab diplomatic circles did not exclude a visit to the Vatican by President Nasser of Egypt. The Arab governments have also communicated their views to papal nuncios and asked Catholic and other Christian leaders in their various countries to communicate their opposition to the declaration to Pope Paul.

Patriarch Kyrillos VI of Alexandria, head of the Coptic Orthodox church in Egypt, branded the Council's preliminary approval of the declaration "an imperialistic plot that has nothing to do with religion" and went on to say: "The Holy Bible convicted the Jews and their children of Christ's crucifixion and to absolve them of that crime would be open to refutation of the Bible." (*Religious News Service*, New York, November 20, 1964.) The patriarch extended invitations to patriarchs, archbishops, and bishops of the Coptic Orthodox churches in Ethiopia, Sudan, Jordan, and other Arab countries to attend a summit conference to register disapproval of the declaration. The Greek radio reported that Greek Orthodox Patriarch Chrisophorus of Alexandria also strongly protested the draft declaration (*Religious News Service*, December 4, 1964).

In an article which appeared in all Jordanian newspapers on November 23, 1964, a leader of a Protestant church in Amman called on Jordanian Catholics to boycott services held in churches belonging to various monasteries and to say their prayers at home in Arabic "in order to force the Vatican to cancel its decision absolving Jews." A meeting of Jordanian Christian notables sent a cable to the Pope asking that the declaration be dropped from the agenda of next year's session of the Council (*Religious News Service*, November 20, 1964). A Syrian government news bulletin reported that Chaldean-Rite Bishop Stéphane Bello of Aleppo has dispatched "tens of telegrams" to the Vatican in protest (*Providence Visitor*, October 9, 1964).

Despite repeated public assurances from Cardinal Bea and others that the purpose of the declaration is purely religious, Arab leaders continue to claim it to be Zionist-inspired and part of a plot "to mobilize world Catholic opinion against the Arabs for reigniting the Palestinian question," in the words of Syrian Premier Salah el-Bitar. (*Providence Visitor*, October 9, 1964.)

A final observation might be made regarding the extent and intensity of Arab efforts to prevent and then to overturn that section of the declaration which deals with Catholic-Jewish relations. When the late Father Gustave Weigel announced in June 1963 that the proposed Jewish declaration had been sidetracked at the Ecumenical Council because of Arab opposition, the Arab Information Center was quick to issue a disclaimer. Saadat Hasan, chief of press and public liaison of the Arab Information Center, stated that the Arab nations would welcome "a clear and forthright statement by the Ecumenical Council on antisemitism." Arabs make a distinction between Judaism and Jews on the one hand and Zionism and Israel on the other, he declared, and are anti-Zionist but not anti-Jewish. Yet by October 1964 Arab political opposition to the Jewish declaration had led Moslem government officials into Christian theological debate, and a Syrian government radio broadcast (as reported by the National Catholic Welfare Conference) declared: "When the Jews dipped their hands into the innocent blood of Jesus Christ they were in fact trying to assassinate Christ's principles and teachings" (*Providence Visitor*, October 9, 1964).

Patriarch Maximos IV Saigh of Antioch issued a communiqué intending to reassure the Arab world that the declaration was not, in any sense, a political document. Referring to the Arab press response as an "orchestrated uproar," the patriarch stated that the declaration "is a purely religious statement, which pertains to the position of the Catholic Church toward the non-Christian religions." He cautioned Arab critics of the declaration to differentiate clearly between Judaism as a religion and Zionism as a political movement. This effort to pacify Arab hostility, however, was marred by some hostilities of its own. The patriarch said that "there certainly remains on the forehead of the Jewish people, as long as it is far from Christ the Redeemer, what the prophets of the Old Testament prophesied: a stain of shame. But this stain of shame does not constitute a personal crime . . ."; he continued that "because of their propaganda skill, the media which are in their hands and under their influence, the Jews can clothe reality as they wish. They exploit the least word that is said to serve their political interests"; and he concluded by

alleging that the great majority of the Council, and notably the American prelates, voted for the declaration for personal reasons and interests: "The personal reasons are dictated by a sentiment of pity due to the massacre of millions of Jews by Nazism and the interest is due to the fact that the great number of Americans have commercial interests with Jews."

(Replying to this communiqué, Msgr. George Higgins, director of the Social Action Commission of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, wrote in January 1965 that the theological accusation "did not reflect the spirit or the tone of the Council's declaration and most certainly would have been rejected by the Fathers if it had been put to a vote on the floor of the Council." He also said that Jews would legitimately resent the inference regarding their propaganda skill and influence, and that the motives attributed to the vote of the American prelates were "demonstrably unfair to the American bishops and, however unintentionally, . . . calculated . . . to fan the flames of anti-Semitism. . . .")

The interest of the Arab world in the charge of deicide against Jews cannot be attributed to religious concern: the question is of little or no consequence to Islam. The Arab opposition to any statement expressing esteem or affection for Jews, suggesting a special relationship between Christianity and the Jewish people, deploring specific acts of persecution against Jews, and removing a theological basis of antisemitism is politically motivated, and this opposition has been carried out on the highest political and diplomatic levels. Whether the Catholic church will respond to these pressures, and in what ways it may respond, are questions which will affect not only the ultimate disposition of the declaration but also the future of Catholic-Jewish relations.

Cardinal Bea, in a statement published in *Osservatore Romano* on November 30, cautioned against "arbitrary and twisted" interpretations of the declaration. "This is a religious question in which the Council aims at nothing else but the promotion of peace everywhere; it hopes that a religious matter will not be misused in order to justify political discrimination and prejudices."