

American Jewish Year Book

Vol. 67 - 1966

Special Articles

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

(1966)

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

by JUDITH HERSHCOPF

THE YEAR 1965 saw the fourth and concluding session of Vatican Council II. Historically, theologically, even administratively the Ecumenical Council was an impressive event. Over a four-year period, some 2,400 bishops from every corner of the world—from traditionally “Catholic” countries where the church has enjoyed a virtual monopoly over religious and cultural life, from democratic, pluralist nations like the United States, from the emerging nation states of Africa and Asia, from behind the Iron Curtain—representing an enormous range of opinion on a great variety of questions, met 168 times, heard some 2,200 speeches, submitted over 4,000 written interventions, consulted with 460 officially designated experts, discussed and debated questions ranging from liturgy to nuclear warfare and, in the end, adopted 16 documents. Some of these, like the schema on communications, were deemed conservative in spirit; others, like the constitution on the church and the declaration on religious liberty, marked a radical departure from the juridical language and rigid thought patterns of past centuries.

Jews, who had had reason to be apprehensive of ecumenical councils in the past, followed this one with lively interest. Of the 16 documents which emerged from the Council, one had particular relevance for them: the declaration on the relation of the church to non-Christian religions, which included a passage dealing especially with the church’s attitude towards Jews and Judaism. The declaration on religious liberty, while it drew less specific comment from Jewish sources, was also regarded as highly significant.

Like most legislative bodies, Vatican Council II reflected various divisions. The Council Fathers divided into conservative and liberal, or progressive, camps. (In the early days of the Council the prelates resisted the use of these designations, charging that such political terminology did not apply to their various positions, but by the second session they had given up the struggle, accepted the words, and used them them-

selves.) Again, as with most legislative bodies, most of the documents that emerged represented a compromise between liberal and conservative viewpoints. This was true of both the declaration on religious liberty and the statement on the Jews. As a result of objections from conservatives, the text of the declaration on religious liberty was revised in two major aspects before its promulgation on December 7: more stress was placed on man's moral obligation to seek the truth and live according to it, and more emphasis was given to the obligation of Catholics to follow the mandates of the church. Both themes were carried out throughout the revised text, perhaps the most controversial of all the documents from a doctrinal point of view. The passage of the declaration on the Jews, despite a sustained and powerful campaign to defeat or emasculate it, may be considered as a victory for the liberal elements within the church. It is so considered by most Catholics. Nevertheless, the fact that it had been compromised at all, and that the pure and spontaneous spirit which had prompted the late Pope John XXIII to initiate such a statement had given way to the demands of caution and expediency, created dissatisfaction among many Jews. This was due both to the content of the final text and to the maneuvering around it. If there had been no earlier version, the final document probably would have been universally welcomed by Jews. Considered in the perspective of 2,000 years of Catholic-Jewish history, the declaration, as it stands, has profound implications. In years to come, it may well be seen as a definitive turning point in Jewish history and the beginning of a new era in relations between the Roman Catholic church and Jewry. (In the United States there is evidence that it is to be seriously and thoroughly implemented.)

But that is in years to come. In 1965 the intensity—and, at times, the ugliness—of the struggle to abort the document and the Council's partial retreat before the combined onslaught of conservative theology and political pressure left a bitter aftertaste in sections of the Jewish community.

Declaration on Jews Revised

As 1964 drew to a close, and with it the third session of Vatican Council II, those who had hoped for and worked toward a strong, forthright Council statement on Christian-Jewish relations had reason to be reassured. On November 20 the Council Fathers had given their preliminary approval to an unambiguous declaration which condemned hatred and persecution of Jews, admonished Catholics not to "teach anything that could give rise to hatred or contempt of Jews in the hearts of Christians,"

and specifically repudiated the notion of Jewish people as "rejected, cursed, or guilty of deicide." Although the draft had been subjected to many delays and considerable maneuvering, the text adopted on November 20 was stronger than any previous version. From the viewpoint of the Catholic liberals, it appeared the battle had been won.

Still, the text was not final. The 242 *placet, juxta modum* (in favor, with reservations) votes, each enabling the voter to submit textual amendments, left the way open for changes. Despite repeated reassurances from Catholic spokesmen that the basic spirit of the document could not be significantly altered, the final fate of the declaration was still uncertain.

At the beginning of 1965 scattered indications from Rome, bolstered by reports of intensified Arab pressure against the document and belligerent statements from religious leaders in Arab countries (AJYB, 1965 [Vol. 66], pp. 134-36), raised doubts, first whether the text was final and then whether the declaration was even still on the agenda for the fourth session.

The counterattack on the document was rooted at least as much in conservative theology as in political considerations, and one of the bluntest statements of this theology was issued in March by Bishop Luigi Carli, of Segni, Italy, one of the most ultra-conservative voices in the Council. Writing in *Palestra del Clero*, a magazine written by and for the Italian Catholic clergy, Bishop Carli asserted that the Jews of Jesus' day did, indeed, bear collective responsibility for his crucifixion. Carli went even further, charging that to the extent that Judaism today constitutes "the free and voluntary continuation" of the Judaism of Jesus' time, Jews today continue to "participate objectively in the responsibility for deicide." For these reasons, he said, Jews can be called "reprimanded" and "cursed by God" (*Religious News Service*, March 17, 1965).

The Pope's Homily

Such animosity might have been dismissed, by reason of its very excessiveness, as the outer limit of a kind of lunatic fringe of Roman Catholic thought. But a few weeks later the specter of collective guilt, and indeed of deicide, rose again, and this time from a much more authoritative source—or rather from the most authoritative source. In the course of a Lenten homily on Passion Sunday in a Roman church, Santa Maria della Guadalupe, Pope Paul VI remarked that the day's Gospel lesson was a "grave and sad page narrating the clash between

Jesus and the Jewish people—the people predestined to await the Messiah but who just at the right moment did not recognize him, fought him and slandered him, and finally killed him.”

The reaction from the Jewish community in Italy, Israel, and the United States, was immediate and heated.

Sergio Piperno, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, and Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff of Rome expressed their “painful astonishment” in a telegram to the Vatican Secretary of State. Israel’s newspapers spoke out sharply. *Ha-tzofeh*, an Orthodox publication, charged that the Catholic church had not changed since Auschwitz despite the work of Pope John XXIII and that “missionary aims” were concealed in the declaration on Jewish-Christian relations. Pope Paul’s sermon was also criticized by *Ma’ariv* and *Ha-aretz* published a cartoon which showed the Pope nailing the Jewish document to the cross.

In the United States the sermon evoked objections from Jews and both apologies and apologetics from Catholics—depending on the source. The American Jewish Committee said it was “astonished and concerned” that the homily appeared to deviate sharply from the declaration on the Jews which had received such an overwhelming affirmative vote in November 1964. Rabbi Balfour Brickner, director of interfaith activities of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, said:

It is difficult to believe that the man who less than a week ago spoke of removing from the liturgy of the Catholic church words and phrases offensive to Jews and Judaism¹ could be the same person now reported again to raise the issue of deicide.

Since reports of the sermon were still unclear, Rabbi Brickner said:

It is of critical importance that the Vatican immediately clarify both the statement and the meaning of what the Pope said.

Vatican sources, according to the *National Catholic Reporter* (April 14), “tried to tidy up the affair as best they could.” Although both the Associated Press and the National Catholic Welfare Conference News Service reported the Pope as having said that the Jews “finally killed him,” Vatican Radio, as reported by the *Religious News Service*, quoted the Pope as saying “and finally repudiated him.”

The NCWC News Service issued a second version of the Pope’s words, with the insertion:

¹ In March Pope Paul had changed the title of the Holy Week prayer “For the Conversions of the Jews” to, simply, “For the Jews.” It was the fourth change in the church’s prayer for the Jewish people in less than twenty years.

Vatican sources said the Pope was not referring to the discredited deicide issue in his talk, but that he used the historical fact of the killing of Christ by the Jews to illustrate a human phenomenon in today's world.

A Vatican source told the *Religious News Service* that the Pope may have caused a misinterpretation by referring only to the Jews when he meant mankind in general.

Other Catholic spokesmen offered reassurances that the Pope's remark had no antisemitic intent. Augustine Cardinal Bea, head of the Vatican Secretariat for the Promotion of Catholic Unity and primary architect of the Jewish declaration, when interviewed by the Turin *La Stampa*, said that there was "no reason to be worried" about the Pope's remarks, since they had been couched

in the terms used by the Gospels in the way it is customary to preach, not in the technical language of a decree . . . addressed to the entire world and to all kinds of people.

Cardinal Bea issued a similar disclaimer on his arrival in the United States on April 28. He said that the Pope's statement "must be seen as an address to the simple faithful, who would not have understood sophisticated explanations."

In the United States Msgr. John Oesterreicher, director of the Institute of Judaean-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University, wrote that the expressions used by the Pope were "unfortunate" but that they had

no antisemitic connotation whatever. Those who know him well think it altogether impossible that he wished to hurt Jews or . . . anyone else. He is a man without guile. I am sure he used those phrases quite innocently, never suspecting how they sounded to the ears of Jews. . . .

Msgr. Oesterreicher and several other Catholic commentators (e.g., in *Catholic Star Herald*, April 30, and *St. Louis Review*, April 16) pointed to the common literary practice of using expressions such as "the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor" and "the Germans sent Jews to Dachau," and said that the Pope had used "the Jews" in that sense, without indicating a collectivity of Jewish guilt.

The reassurances, however, failed to reassure, particularly as they were unaccompanied by any official Vatican statement of clarification or apology. Especially irksome was the explanation that the Pope's comments had been directed to the "simple faithful." "What can one expect from country priests if the 'Supreme Shepherd' still speaks in such terms?" asked *Israel*, the weekly publication of the Union of Italian Jewish communities.

The Lenten sermon, which obviously embarrassed some liberals, occa-

sioned much labored explanation, but little outright criticism from Catholics. *Commonweal's* approach (May 21) was perhaps most straightforward:

The lapse in referring to the Jews as the killers of Christ was a mistake, and one that coincides with news of a fresh attempt to water down the Council's statement on antisemitism. Though it was followed by many unsatisfactory explanations both in Rome and the United States, it brought no apology from the Pope himself. In view of the delicacy of relations between Catholics and Jews, one should have been forthcoming.

The Protestant *Christian Century* weekly (May 5), was also dissatisfied with the explanations:

Some versions of the Pope's homily used the word "repudiated" instead of "killed," but this does not alter the fact that he identified the whole Jewish people with the crucifixion. . . . It is not the Jew who is now on trial for the crucifixion of Christ but Christians who in vicious bigotry slay the spirit of Christ in their cruel hounding of innocent Jews. Let the church begin its fourth assembly in contrition and repentance.

Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, writing as a columnist for the *National Catholic Reporter* (May 5, 1965), suggested that the real issue was not past responsibility for the death of Jesus, but the continued refusal of Jews to accept him:

"Christ-killer" is a phrase that evokes much emotion, for it stirs among Jews their deepest fears and it reminds Christians of their most shameful guilts. Even the Pope cannot, today, utter the phrase, regardless of what he may mean by it in context, without provoking open criticism even among his own flock. None the less, at their very root, Judaism and Christianity do not divide over the question of who killed Jesus. Not "and they killed Him" but the more irenic "and they rejected Him" is indeed the essence of the matter for Christians and Jews. . . . The ultimate issue is, therefore, not the past. It is the present. It is not who killed Jesus nineteen centuries ago but who accepted him, and who does not today.

But whereas Rabbi Hertzberg implied that Jewish efforts to achieve a Vatican Council statement were justified, other Jewish spokesmen saw the Pope's sermon as definitive proof that it was impossible to enter into religious dialogue with the church. Thus, Rabbi Harry Levitsky of South Orange, New Jersey asked:

How many more incidents of this kind does it require for us Jews to give up our newly acquired penchant for dialogues with cardinals, archbishops, and bishops on theology?

Disturbing as the Pope's Lenten homily was in itself, much of the Jewish reaction was based on the suspicion that it pointed obliquely to a change in position on the larger question of the Vatican Council decla-

ration. Indeed, this was not only a Jewish interpretation. Christian and Moslem Arabs, according to the London *Jewish Chronicle* (April 11), "warmly praised" the Pope's sermon as a "fundamental indication" that the declaration was "doomed to extinction."

Rumored Fate of Declaration on Jews

In fact, the ecumenical grapevine had it that the declaration was in serious trouble, but these rumors remained underground until April 25, when Robert Doty of the New York *Times* broke the story. He wrote that the draft declaration was again "under convergent attack by two powerful forces—reaching up to the highest levels of the church"—i.e., a powerful conservative attack on doctrinal grounds, and Arab diplomacy and the pressure of Catholic bishops in Arab lands.

Doty reported that the conditionally approved document had been submitted to an *ad hoc*, extra-conciliar commission of four, including the ultra-conservative Bishop Carli, for review and recommendations for revision in a conservative direction. Doty's assessment, based "on a series of occurrences, some public, some behind the scenes," was: "It now appears more than likely that this wording will be substantially altered. . . ." A denial of the gist of Doty's report followed in short order. Father Stephen Schmidt, speaking on behalf of Cardinal Bea upon the Cardinal's arrival at Kennedy International Airport in New York (he was en route to Philadelphia to receive an award from the Philadelphia Fellowship Commission), denied reports that the document had been revised or changed in any manner. He noted that the views of Bishop Carli had no bearing on the declaration's text and denied that there was such a thing as "an extra-conciliar commission composed of four persons including Bishop Carli." He added that the document remained in the hands of Cardinal Bea's secretariat, which would be meeting in the early part of May.

Bea's denial was cautiously welcomed, but the prevailing attitude appeared to be wait-and-see. The *Christian Century* editorialized (May 19):

Cardinal Bea's statements raise hopes that in its closing session next Fall the Vatican Council will deal meaningfully with the centuries-old defamation of Jews by Christians. But since Cardinal Bea made no predictions about the future of the Council's draft on the Jews, we'll postpone celebration.

Commonweal warned (May 14) that "there must be no compromise" on giving final approval to the Jewish declaration, and, taking notice of recent rumors, added, "The wisest thing is to assume the worst." The real danger, said *Commonweal*, was not that the 1964 vote would

be reversed, but that the declaration on the Jews would be compromised with ambiguous and murky language to appease the Arab states and the conservative Curia. The editor continued:

The final declaration must be direct and unequivocal. It is shameful enough that the Church has taken 2,000 years to come to grips with its guilt. This shame has been compounded by the long struggle within the Council to achieve a strong position. No wonder many Jews have been pessimistic; they have suffered too long to take an optimistic view. If the Council fails or if it equivocates, the Church will stand condemned. That judgment will be justly deserved.

Skepticism regarding the final disposition of the document on the Jews was furthered by a public statement made by Patriarch Kyrillos of the Coptic church, claiming the Pope's backing for his own position. He told the Middle East News Agency in Cairo, that a verbal message from Pope Paul had informed him that the Ecumenical Council would resume its discussion of the declaration on the Jews in September in the light of the decision of the Coptic church proclaiming "the Jews' responsibility throughout the ages for crucifying Christ." Kyrillos pointed out that his church had "placed on record that no Christian authority, however exalted or powerful, could amend or interpret these facts [of Jewish responsibility for the death of Jesus] in the opposite sense." He also said that he had told the papal legate that, in the view of the Coptic church, the attempt to amend this teaching had political aims. The patriarch apparently had some political aims of his own:

The Pope of Rome, in his solicitude for world peace, must sponsor the cause of the return of the displaced Palestinian people to their homes in order that world tranquillity be restored in the Middle East and the flag of peace be hoisted in the land of peace.

Almost two months after Cardinal Bea's denial that the document had been altered or in any way taken from the hands of his commission, the *London Observer* (June 20) bluntly asserted that the declaration "has been dropped from the agenda for the final session of the Vatican Council." The *Observer* repeated that a four-man commission had been set up by Pope Paul to revise the document on the Jews, that its chairman was Bishop Carli, and that it had been instructed to revise the adopted declaration to omit all mention of deicide.

The *Observer* also charged that the draft declaration on religious liberty was being limited by specific instructions from above:

It must be accompanied by a statement setting it within strict limits so that it will be clearly understood that nothing in its terms trespasses on the claim of the Roman Catholic church to be the one and only true religion. Further, in estab-

lishing freedom of conscience for all men, the impression was not to be created that this puts the different churches on the same spiritual level. On the contrary, the whole object of the declaration must be seen merely to give to non-Catholics a fuller opportunity to examine and so come to appreciate the Catholic faith.

A day later (June 21) the *Allgemeine Zeitung* of Frankfurt also reported that the Pope had sent a written notice to the Vatican Council's coordinating commission instructing it to remove the declaration on the Jews from the agenda. The *New York Times*, somewhat more circumspect, reported on June 20 that the ultimate fate of the draft document was "under study," according to high Church sources. These sources, according to Robert Doty, "declined to confirm or deny reports circulating in Rome and abroad that the declaration had been withdrawn, by order of Pope Paul VI, from consideration by the fourth and final session of the Council. . . ."

The report that the Jewish declaration had been eliminated from the agenda was promptly and categorically denied by Archbishop Pericle Felici, secretary general of the Council. Additional assurance came from a spokesman for Archbishop John J. Krol of Philadelphia, who said that the archbishop had received a copy of the agenda for the Council's 4th session, and that the declaration was on it (*New York Post*, June 21). But the press continued to respond to the rumors.

The *Baltimore Catholic Review* (June 25) referred to the London *Observer* report as "the worst Council rumor yet," but took comfort "in the certainty that any minority tampering with the document already so heavily backed by the majority would be vigorously resisted by that majority." The *Christian Century* (July 7) was less sanguine:

What Christendom and world Jewry need is Felici's prompt, plain, and unequivocal statement that the draft on the Jews as voted by the Bishops will be on the agenda for the Council's fourth session beginning September 14. Such reassurance from the Council's Secretariat General would end the tormenting, pernicious mystery surrounding this issue and would lay rumor to rest.

Despite the official denials from Rome that the declaration had been shelved, uncertainty continued throughout the summer months of 1965, sustained by contradictory rumors about the Jewish declaration and the declaration on religious liberty. Thus, the Rome correspondent of the *London Jewish Chronicle*, Tullia Zevi, reported (June 25) that the mood prevailing in liberal circles within the Catholic church was "pessimistic." She also stated:

Rumors are circulating both inside and outside the Vatican. One is that the Pope sent a letter ordering the dropping of the declaration, but withdrew it when the news leaked out. Another is that the declaration has been placed last on the

agenda. This would have the practical effect of ensuring that there would be no time to discuss it. It would then, according to this school of thought, be issued at a later date, but as a pastoral letter and not an Ecumenical Council document.

America (July 3) welcomed the denial of the rumor that the declaration had been shelved, but admitted the picture was not too rosy:

But opposition is by no means dead, and the upcoming Council discussions may provide more than one dramatic moment. The hurdles yet to be surmounted are both political and theological. . . . Hope is dimming that the declaration will ever be understood [in the Middle East] as anything but a political document. . . . The theological hurdles are more subtle and may prove in the end more fateful. For one thing, the Christians in the Middle East (whether Orthodox or Catholic) do not see eye to eye with Western theologians. . . . It is possible that a real consensus on the declaration may not yet exist within the Council.

America then went on to express an annoyance which, it became apparent, was also felt by many other Catholics:

It sometimes seems as if nothing short of the rewriting of the New Testament will satisfy the demands [of some Jewish spokesmen]. Some commentators argue that the Passion story, notably that portion concerning the part played by the Jewish leaders and the Jewish people, is a historical falsification and should be abandoned by the Council. . . . Jews are entitled, of course, to believe what they wish about the New Testament. But Christians should be able to stand by the Christian revelation as they received it—in its entirety—without being suspected of antisemitism. By the same token, the Vatican Council, in its declaration, cannot legitimately be asked to betray its own theology.

The magazine took some comfort from a statement by Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum of the American Jewish Committee that he had “never suggested the revision of scripture which Christians hold sacred—nor has any responsible Jewish leader to the best of my knowledge.”²

Uncertainty persisted until after the opening of the fourth session of the Ecumenical Council on September 14. One reason was the relative silence of the American hierarchy—relative, that is, to the strong outpouring of opinion from American prelates between the second and third sessions, when almost every American cardinal had firmly predicted the passage of a declaration at the forthcoming session. The

² Rabbi Tanenbaum's statement was made in a letter to the editor of the *Camden Star Herald*, a New Jersey diocesan newspaper. Its editor, Msgr. Salvatore Adamo, a supporter of the Vatican declaration on the Jews, had expressed some resentment and bewilderment over Jewish reactions to Pope Paul's Lenten sermon and, like *America*, had raised the question whether the Jews were asking that the New Testament be rewritten. Rabbi Tanenbaum wrote him (June 18): “What we have asked for, and what we consider necessary and justifiable in the light of centuries of persecution and vilification of Jews, is an appropriate interpretation of those passages of Christian scripture which are most easily open to distortion.”

paucity of firm predictions from the American episcopacy led some observers to speculate that silence on the subject had been imposed from above. The *Observer* (May 2) noted that "a pall of silence, more all-enveloping even than that which surrounds the Pill," had descended on both the Jewish and the religious-liberty declarations.

Another reason was the continued appearance of extremist antisemitic viewpoints, which indicated a sustained campaign. For example, Msgr. George Higgins, a columnist for the National Catholic Welfare Conference's press service reported angrily (St. Louis *Review*, July 30) that Gerald L. K. Smith had written to all American bishops offering to supply them, free of charge, with a copy of an English translation of a "sickening diatribe against the Jews." This long "pathologically antisemitic book," by a pseudonymous Maurice Pinay, entitled *Il Complotto contro la Chiesa* ("The Plot Against the Church"), had been distributed to all of the bishops during the second session of the Council (AJYB, 1965 [Vol. 66], p. 112). Smith's four-page letter, Msgr. Higgins reported, suggested that the American bishops had been taken in by "a fraternity of deceivers too close to the centers of authority in the affairs of the church." Higgins saw the letter as "just one more convincing proof that the Council's proposed declaration on the relationship between Christians and Jews is desperately needed and long overdue."

A pamphlet distributed at a Franciscan sanctuary near Rome, written by someone calling himself Fra Giorgio da Terni, charged:

All of the most famous popes, saints and fathers of the Church . . . have . . . warned against the epidemic Jewish disease, more contagious than the plague or venereal disease. . . . From the first Masonic lodges to the Bolshevik revolution, we find Jews everywhere; from . . . Rome to the ferocious and blood-thirsty Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev. . . . The six million Jews gassed in German concentration camps never existed, except in the distortions of the clever Children of Israel. . . . This truth is beginning to appear in the Egyptian, Syrian, and Jordan press. Go and ask the Arabs who the Jews are, and you will really learn how they hate Jesus.

After protests filed by the Italian Federation of Jewish Youth and the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, Bishop Giuseppe Gori revealed that Fra Giorgio was "neither a priest nor religious" but a layman, Giorgio Trillini, who had "no authorization whatsoever to speak or publish with ecclesiastical approval." Gori added that he was "most sorry" for what had happened.

Protestant Opinion

As the fate of the declaration remained uncertain, Protestant voices were heard increasingly. The Evangelische Kirchentag in Cologne, from July 28 to August 1, adopted a statement urging "all Christians in Germany, regardless of the church to which they belong, to think, speak, and act in the spirit of Cardinal Bea's proposed declaration." Expressing "brotherly concern" over "reports about resistance" to the declaration, the Protestant leaders declared:

What will happen in this matter at the Council is something that concerns all of us; it will make a contribution either to the continuation or to the overcoming of an old, heavy guilt and shame of Christianity.

Recalling that in Germany many Christians participated in antisemitism with such "murderous result," the statement asserted the Evangelical and Catholic churches' responsibility for ending prejudice against Jews and "assertions of a collective guilt of the Jewish people in the crucifixion of Jesus by which, through centuries, the seed was planted for hatred of Jews." The Evangelische Kirchentag was attended by more than 20,000 ministers and laymen, joined by prominent religious leaders from abroad. Among these were Wilhelm Visser 't Hooft, secretary general of the World Council of Churches, and other WCC leaders who had become apprised of the concentrated effort developing within the Vatican against the Jewish declaration.

During the meetings in Cologne Joachim Beckman, president of the Evangelical church in the Rhineland, publicly asked the Roman Catholic archbishop of Paderborn, Lorenz Cardinal Jaeger, about the fate of the declaration on the Jews. He replied that he had worked on it and was satisfied by it, and predicted it would be adopted. "We must tell the truth regardless of possible losses and results," he added cryptically. The remark, according to John Cogley (*New York Times*, August 8), was widely interpreted to mean that the Council Fathers, in the interest of truth, would have to put aside any concern that passage of the declaration would make life difficult for the Christian minority in Arab lands.

Another development within German religious circles was reported by Cogley in the same article. A letter had been sent to the entire Roman Catholic hierarchy of West Germany by the Coordinating Council of the Societies for Christian-Jewish Collaboration in Germany. The letter, signed by a Catholic priest, a rabbi, and a Protestant minister, called upon German bishops to exercise their influence at the forthcoming session in favor of the declaration on the Jews. It reminded the prelates

of a recent poll disclosing that antisemitic prejudice was still abroad in Germany and was furthered "not least by religious teaching and preaching even today." The letter, written late in June, at a time of widespread rumors that the declaration was being abandoned, added that "there is now prevailing a crisis of confidence vis-à-vis the Catholic church." Cogley reported that only five German bishops replied to the letter, and they were noncommittal. One complained that Jewish leaders had been trying to convert the declaration into political capital for Israel.

Arab Pressures

The Arabs kept up their pressure. The Moslem mayor of Jordanian Jerusalem announced that, as a result of a resolution of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant communities, the bells of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre—regarded by most Christians as the site of Jesus' tomb—would toll in protest against Vatican endorsement of the declaration. He also revealed that a cable was sent to Pope Paul, with copies to the seven Oriental Rite cardinals at the Ecumenical Council, reminding the pontiff of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land and "the results of Jewish crimes against Palestine's Arabs."

Revised Declaration on Jews

On September 11 the *New York Times* confirmed what had been one of the most persistent rumors regarding the declaration: that the draft text had been revised to omit the word "deicide."³ The revision was disclosed, Doty reported, by an authorized "leak" from the Vatican, which said the changes in the text were not a change in its essential meaning. The purpose of the changes, according to Vatican sources, was to eliminate "confusions and misunderstandings" that had grown up because of "counteropposed interpretations given to it by Arabs and Israelis." There was also a desire to avoid giving the impression that the declaration was

³ According to *Look* magazine ("How the Jews Changed Catholic Thinking," by Joseph Roddy, January 25, 1966), the changes in the text of the declaration had actually been made back in May, when some members of the Secretariat for the Promotion of Christian Unity met to vote on the bishops' suggested emendations. Roddy strongly implied that both the elimination of "deicide" and the removal of "indeed condemns" from the earlier phrase "deplores, indeed condemns, hatred and persecution of Jews" came directly from the Pope. According to Roddy, the angry insistence from the Vatican in June that the Jewish declaration was still "under study" was "precisely true while completely misleading . . . the study was finished, the damage was done, and there existed what many regard as a substantially new declaration on the Jews."

a "negation of all that the Gospels said." Doty pointed out that the word "deicide" in the statement had taken on a "symbolic importance in three years of bitter behind-the-scenes dispute between conservative and progressive churchmen."

The revised text of the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions was distributed to the Council Fathers on September 30, and an official summary made public. In a great many respects this version was close to the November 1964 text. The references to Hinduism, Buddhism, and the Moslems remained unchanged. So did the substance of the conclusion, which reproved, "as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion." Like the earlier version, the later text implored the Christian faithful to "maintain good fellowship among the nations . . . so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in Heaven."

Only the passage dealing with the church's relationship with the Jews had undergone change. To some, the differences in language between this and the 1964 version seemed minimal, more nuance than substance; to others the nuances added up to a significant difference in content: a generous statement curtailed here, a grudging or legalistic phrase inserted there, appeared to tip the scales of the entire document. A comparison of the text of a few critical passages (not necessarily in order) illustrates the major changes.⁴

1964 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.

The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament *from*^{4a} the [Jewish] people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant.

1965 Text

Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets.

The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament *through*^{4a} the [Jewish] people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant.

⁴ Full text p. 75.

^{4a} Author's emphasis.

1964 Text

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.

All that happened to Christ in His passion cannot be attributed to the whole people then alive, much less to those of today.

Moreover, this synod, in her rejection of injustice of whatever kind and wherever inflicted upon men, remains mindful of that common patrimony and so deploras, indeed condemns, hatred and persecution of Jews. . . .

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.

1965 Text

As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation, nor did the Jews, in large number, accept the Gospel; indeed not a few opposed its spreading. Nevertheless God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers.

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

Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.

All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.

. . . Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. . . .

Explaining the Revisions

Discounting the subtler changes, most observers settled on two points as marking the most significant departures from the earlier text: the elimination of "deicide" and the change from "deplores, indeed condemns" to "decries." At the United States bishops' press panel after the distribution of the revised text, Father Robert Trisco, professor of church history at the Catholic University of America, said that some of the Council Fathers wanted the word "deicide" removed to avoid any notion of collective guilt on the part of the Jewish people, while others thought the word was ambiguous and that it might have implied that the church was abandoning the teaching that Christ was God. Father George Tavard, an Assumptionist from Pittsburgh, said that a large group of bishops opposed the use of the word "deicide" and that the loss of their votes "might have denied the Fathers the large plurality they desire." He added: "The changes were made to satisfy one side without weakening the text. Actually, I thought they strengthened it." Father Thomas Stransky of Milwaukee, of Cardinal Bea's secretariat, said "deicide" had been removed after "serious questioning by the Secretariat itself whether it would substantially change the text." His own opinion was that the text had been "strengthened and the loopholes eliminated" by the changes. It would be wrong to say, he cautioned, that all the objections coming from bishops from the Near East were politically motivated; "Many of their objections contained valid theological arguments." Father John J. King, superior of the Oblates' Rome House of Studies, pointed out that the phrase "moved not by political reasons," had been added to the condemnation of antisemitism in a direct attempt to obviate Arab objections. According to Father John Donnelly, writing for the NCWC press service, the panelists "seemed unanimous in assessing the new text as stronger than the old one in condemning antisemitism." ("Antisemitism" had not been used in the earlier document.)

Commenting on the change from "deplores, indeed condemns" to "decries," Father Stransky said:

Previous Councils of the Church specialized in condemning things or forbidding them, but there has been a practiced effort at this one to be positive, to encourage Christians to do what is right, not condemn what is wrong.

He also pointed out that two-thirds of the people in the world are neither Christians nor Jews, and that hundreds of bishops from Asia and Africa have never met Jews and "thus don't consider this a universal problem." Future generations, he added, will not judge the declaration

on the basis "of these few sentences," but on what the rest of the document says on the need for universal love and respect for all men.

But, in the words of the *Detroit News*,

The ghost of one word, *deicide*, hovers over the most convincing explanations for its absence [October 1, 1965].

Jewish Response

American Jewish leaders expressed disappointment tempered by caution. Morris B. Abram, president of the American Jewish Committee, called the new version less "decisive and satisfactory" than the original draft, but acknowledged that it contained a sharp, explicit condemnation of antisemitism. "While reserving our dissent from some portions of the document, we regard it as a forward step in Jewish-Catholic relations," he concluded. Rabbi Israel Goldstein commented that it "would have been better" if the text had remained unchanged: "It was hoped that the ghost of this specific charge would be laid to rest once and forever."

Joseph Lichten of the Anti-Defamation League also commented that "it would have been better" if the word *deicide* had been retained. Professor Abraham J. Heschel of the Jewish Theological Seminary was bitterly critical:

Not to condemn the demonic canard of *deicide* . . . would mean condoning Auschwitz, defiance of the God of Abraham, and an act of paying of homage to Satan.

Catholic Response

Catholic editorial comment on the revisions was somewhat reserved. *America* (October 16, 1965) said the revised version was "still a good text" which would "stand as an adequate rebuke to antisemitism," but hoped that the document might be strengthened:

Surely, if the Council can deplore hatred, it can condemn it. To do so would add a little to the force of what is already an excellent statement of the Church's attitude toward the Jews.

A public appeal for "a strong, unambiguous statement on the Jews" also came from the Catholic Interracial Council of Pittsburgh in a letter to Cardinal Bea. Declaring themselves "painfully aware of the powerful and bitter resistance" the statement had encountered, the signers emphasized that antisemitism is, to a large extent, the product of false Christian charges that the Jewish people are guilty of *deicide*.

Fourth Session

With the vote on the revised declaration set in the Council for October 14, there were some last-ditch efforts to strengthen the document. One of these was made by Abbé René Laurentin, a Council expert and a journalist for the Paris newspaper *Figaro*. On October 12 Doty of the *New York Times* reported that Abbé Laurentin had distributed to certain bishops a brief stating that the elimination of "deicide" could lead to grave misunderstandings and could sanction continuance of anti-Jewish teachings by bigots. A somewhat different effort was made by Auxiliary Bishop Stephen Leven of San Antonio, Texas, who circulated a suggestion that the Council Fathers vote against the revised draft, in the hope that its defeat would mean the restoration of the original version. Neither of these efforts was successful; the word was out that the revised draft would stand, and that Cardinal Bea himself was reconciled to it as the best possible compromise.

There were last-ditch attempts on the part of the conservatives also, this time to defeat the declaration, even in its somewhat weakened form. The conservatives circulated a petition to block the declaration, among whose signers were Bishop Carli, Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, superior of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, a Frenchman, and Archbishop Geraldo de Proença Sigaud of Diamantina, Brazil. Doty of the *New York Times* (October 14, 1965) felt that its sponsors had no hope of succeeding:

They merely want to muster enough negative votes to destroy any impression of unanimity in favor of the document. . . . One of the desired changes would be to restore the idea that, "in a Biblical sense," there is collective Jewish guilt for the Crucifixion.

In the meantime, Pope Paul VI had made his whirlwind—and in the eyes of most Catholics, triumphal—visit to New York, including an address to the United Nations and a mass celebrated at Yankee Stadium. The Pope's trip was in the interest of promoting peace, a goal which could only elicit high praise from every side. Still, not every aspect of the papal visit went uncriticized. Several Protestant spokesmen considered it amiss, for example, that the Pope used the international podium of the United Nations to combine his plea for world peace with a stricture against birth control.⁵ Others objected to the free coverage given to Pope

⁵ "You must strive to multiply bread so that it suffices for the tables of mankind, and not rather favor an artificial control of birth which would be irrational, in order to diminish the number of guests at the banquet of life."

Paul's Yankee Stadium mass, unlike the meetings of Protestants like Billy Graham.

During the course of the mass for peace at Yankee Stadium—which, as has been noted, received enormous radio and television coverage—a passage from John was read, including the verse:

Now when it was late that same day, the first day of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together for fear of the Jews. . . .

While there were no official Jewish objections to the phrase “for fear of the Jews,” its inclusion was undoubtedly deeply disturbing to many. The New York chancery, which arranged the service, received a number of protests from individual Jews. One discomfited Catholic, the Rev. William Van Etten Casey, S. J., professor of theology at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass., commented:

I too winced when I heard those words, “for fear of the Jews,” ringing out over the airways into millions of homes that evening. . . . The unfortunate thing is that someone did not alert the Pope to the fact that that Gospel text in that Mass was inappropriate for the occasion and irrelevant to the purpose of the Mass. . . . This episode demonstrates clearly the necessity for the Church to conduct a thorough review of all the scriptural texts used in the liturgy and to adopt an approach to the liturgy that is less rigid, less mechanical, more flexible, more reflective of our needs and more responsive to our occasions. If ever an occasion warranted a careful and special selection of biblical texts, it was this Papal Mass. It could easily have been done, but no one thought to do it [*National Catholic Reporter*, October 27, 1965].

The fate of the declaration was soon decided. On October 14 the Council Fathers began voting on the schema.

Before voting began, Cardinal Bea reported on the amended text and made a strong plea for its acceptance, asserting that all changes had been made to make the document “clearer and more accurate in such a way that the substance of the text which you approved last year by a large majority would be faithfully retained.” Concerning the omission of “deicide” Cardinal Bea made three points:

1. The schema completely preserves and presents the truth of the Gospel.
2. At the same time it excludes unjust affirmations and accusations made against all Jews then living, without distinction, and against the Jews of today: namely that all are guilty of the condemnation of the Lord and are therefore rejected by God and cursed.
3. The Council exhorts that in catechetical work or in preaching they conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.

He added: "The substance that we wished to express in the prior text by this word is found exactly and completely expressed in the new text."

On October 15 at their 150th meeting, the Council Fathers voted final approval of the amended document on the Church's attitude toward non-Christians, including the Jews. The schema was approved as a whole by a vote of 1,763 to 250.⁶

At the United States bishops' press panel after the vote, Bishop Francis P. Leipzig of Baker, Oregon, chairman of the subcommission on Catholic-Jewish relations of the United States Bishops' Ecumenical Commission, said that the road of cooperation and mutual understanding which had been helped by passage of the declaration must be a two-way street to be a success. He declared himself "delighted at the approval of the declaration," and held it

of great significance . . . I am sure it will usher in a new era of friendship and cooperation with our Jewish brethren for the benefit of all men.

He noted that there were "in my opinion, minor" implications in the document, but that these carried less weight than its overall spirit.

At the press meeting it was disclosed that the Council Fathers had received an antisemitic document signed by 31 organizations. This "crudely written pamphlet," which "appeared mysteriously in St. Peter's Basilica" on the day the final vote had been scheduled, called on the prelates not to vote for the declaration "because it would betray Christianity to the Jews." In an angry comment, *America* (November 6, 1965) denounced the pamphlet as "skullduggery" and a "fraud." According to the Jesuit

⁶ The votes, by section, were:

Vote 1—on the schema's introduction—yes, 2,071; no, 110; null, 4.

Vote 2—on non-Christian religions in general, with special mention of Hinduism and Buddhism—yes, 1,953; no, 184; null, 6.

Vote 3—on the Islamic religion—yes, 1,910; no, 189; null, 6.

Vote 4—on the first section dealing with the Jews, setting forth the spiritual relationship between the peoples of the Old and New Testaments—yes, 1,937; no, 153; null, 9.

Vote 5—rejecting the collective guilt of the Jewish people for the death of Christ—yes, 1,875; no, 188; null, 9.

Vote 6—declaring that the Jews must not be represented as "accursed" or "rejected" by God—yes, 1,821; no, 245; null, 14.

Vote 7—rejecting antisemitism, persecutions against the Jewish people, and the spreading of anti-Jewish sentiments through preaching or teaching—yes, 1,905; no, 199, null, 14.

Vote 8—a summary on universal brotherhood excluding all discrimination—yes, 2,064; no, 58; null, 6.

Vote 9—a general vote on a number of minor amendments throughout the text—yes, 1,856; no, 243; null, 9.

weekly, at least a half-dozen of the purported signatories to that appeal had not given permission for the use of their names, and three of the Italian organizations on the list "do not even exist."

The last-minute efforts—on one side, to strengthen the document, on the other side, to quash it—failed in the end. On October 28, 1965, in an address referring to "the Israelites, objects certainly not of reprobation or distrust, but of respect, love and hope," Pope Paul VI solemnly promulgated the historic Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions as one of five Ecumenical Council documents.⁷ Given Cardinal Bea's plea for a quick acceptance of the amended document, the lack of discussion on the Council floor, the vote and the promulgation following in rapid succession, the end seemed a little abrupt.

Appraisal

What, finally, did the declaration represent? Was it a victory for the conservatives or a triumph for the liberals within the Church? How did Catholics interpret it? How did Jews respond?

According to an American Jewish Committee survey of press reactions to the declaration in the United States and Europe, the general press, with the exception of extreme rightist and antisemitic papers, greeted the declaration with genuine enthusiasm, at times tempered with caution:

London *Times*:

In spite of all pressures the document remains in its essential part on the Jews a strongly worded condemnation of anti-Semitism, and a clear statement that the responsibility for the death of Christ should not be attributed indiscriminately to all Jews living in the time of the Passion or to the Jews of today.

Guardian:

The Jewish part of the declaration, which will tear at the roots of antisemitism which have been nourished by a kind of Sunday-school, cowboys-and-Indians level of Gospel interpretation, should have a healthy effect in the West, at least among those claiming to be Christians.

In Italy one paper after another voiced approval of the Council's action. *La Nazione*: "A historic vote." *Il Mattino*:

The bishops' long applause put the seal on a phase that one can define as historic for the Council: the phase of the definitive reconciliation among the people of the ancient alliance and those of the New Testament.

⁷ The other documents were 1) Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church; 2) Decree on the Adoption and Renewal of the Religious Life; 3) Decree on Priestly Training, and 4) Declaration on Christian Education.

The influential Catholic *Avvenire d'Italia*:

This action must be considered as one of the most significant of Vatican II, opening the road to a new, more fraternal relationship between Christians and Jews and all other believers.

La Stampa: "After twenty centuries, the Council wipes out the absurd accusation against the Jews." *Corriere della Sera*: "... an event of capital importance in the history of the Ecumenical Council and, more generally, in the history of the Catholic church."

Positive, too, but more tempered in their judgments, were the leading French papers. Taking note of a sharp criticism of the new text by Chief Rabbi Jacob Kaplan of France (who declared on the radio that it "showed that those who amended last year's text were determined not to clear the Jews of the accusation of deicide,") *Le Monde* commented:

Most reactions express the idea that the text will be judged by its fruits, that is to say, the manner in which it will be translated into religious teaching and in the behaviour of Catholics vis-à-vis Jews.

Writing in *Figaro*, Abbé Laurentin remarked:

This dense, limpid text . . . is perhaps the most beautiful success of the Council. . . . The text remains beautiful, like those women at the beginning of their decline, still admired, but of whom those who knew her once say, in a low voice: "If you only knew how beautiful she was! . . ."

If antisemitism disappears, Abbé Laurentin continued, the omission of the word "deicide" will appear to be only a minor incident in the Council. But if the future holds in store new persecutions of the Jews, then the omission will be judged as a grave mistake. Thus, the church must speed up its efforts to expurgate books that implant the seeds of contempt and hatred for Jews in the hearts of children.

Of course there was no change in the viewpoint of right-wing and anti-semitic papers. The neo-fascist *Secolo d'Italia* grumbled that it did "not understand" why this subject was included in the Council at all. *Rivarol*, one of the leading French antisemitic weeklies, berated the Council Fathers for not having had the courage to include in the declaration a call for the conversion of the Jews, as advocated by Bishop Carli.

In the United States the Catholic press was largely enthusiastic. Although a few commentators expressed their preference for the earlier version of the declaration, the great majority interpreted its affirmative statements as a mandate for the improvement of Catholic-Jewish relations.

America (October 30) felt that "the original text would have better achieved the goal intended" but that

Taken as a whole . . . the declaration stood out as one of the great and promising accomplishments of Vatican Council II. It marks a revolutionary departure in attitudes and practices that have deep and gnarled roots in world history.

Similarly, *Commonweal* (October 29) editorialized that the declaration was

neither the best nor the worst of the various drafts to come before the Vatican Council. Nevertheless, it is clear and emphatic and should be of immeasurable help in tearing the roots of antisemitism out of Christian tradition. . . . The Church is, at last, firmly on record in a statement that should have profound influence on the life of Catholics.

An article in the same issue by the Rev. Gregory Baum stated:

If the present text had not been preceded by a previous one, it would have been judged as a great act of friendship. . . . The dogmatic foundation has been laid for spiritual brotherhood between Christians and Jews.

Two of the more popular syndicated columnists of the National Catholic Welfare Conference's press service Father John B. Sheerin and Msgr. George G. Higgins, stressed that the Jewish declaration was a beginning, rather than an end. Father Sheerin wrote that "we must get on with the dialogue." In view of the "terrific pressures" which were exerted on the Council Fathers, "we should salute the tenacity of men like Cardinal Bea and Cardinal Lienart who have brought the document to final approval." Msgr. Higgins commented that the very fact that the declaration had run into so many obstacles and delays "is one more proof that it was badly needed." He called upon Catholics "to take the lead, humbly and penitently" in fostering mutual knowledge and respect in order

to transform the Council's declaration . . . from a lifeless piece of paper into a living document which, in God's good time, can literally change the face of the earth.

With few exceptions, the Catholic diocesan press echoed the same sentiments. While a few expressed regrets that the text had been weakened, all viewed it as a decisive mandate to be taken seriously by Catholics. A typical formulation was that of the *Providence Visitor* (October 22):

Every Catholic should not only heed them [the teachings of the Council] but also try to implement them. . . . Until the Council teaching fully seeps down into the masses of Catholics, and then all mankind, the problems of Jewish-Christian relations will not have been solved.

A thoughtfully analytical article explaining the need for the Jewish declaration came from the Rev. Raymond Bosler (*Criterion*, Indianapolis, Oct. 22):

In the United States, antisemitism is mostly a cultural or sociological problem. . . . In Europe, however, and in the Middle East, in particular, antisemitism is an intellectual and theological conviction. In its extreme form it claims that scripture shows that the Jewish people, as a people, rejected Christ and put him to death and are therefore cursed and punished even to this day for the crime of killing God. This kind of thinking was behind much of the antisemitism which Adolph Hitler used to rise to power.

Ironically, Father Bosler said, it was not so much the effort to placate the Arabs which led to the weakening of the Jewish declaration as "the desire to appease the Orthodox. . . . The Orthodox leaders had let Rome know that if the Council rejected the accusation of deicide all possibility of unity talks would be off indefinitely." And he concluded: "One thing that these four years of struggle over the document made painfully evident is the frightening amount of antisemitism in the Christian church. Here is proof enough for the need of a declaration on the Jews."

The Jewish Community Comments

Jewish reaction in the United States to the document ranged from qualified enthusiasm to bitter denunciation. As analyzed by Rabbi Tanenbaum of the American Jewish Committee in the New York *Herald Tribune* (October 17, and later picked up by various Catholic diocesan papers around the country), Jewish reactions to the document revealed three basic attitudes: Some Jews resented the declaration because "it appears not to have resolved conclusively the ancient ambivalence of love and contempt for Jews and Judaism which has dominated church literature and practice for almost two millennia" and because of "the incredible backing and filling over three to four years trying to carry out an act of elementary justice long overdue." Others, he wrote, were indifferent because "they rely more on the democratic ethos and the power of the secular state to enforce anti-discrimination programs than they do on Christian humanism or piety, whose record in combatting antisemitism in the past has not inspired great confidence." The third group, himself included, "welcome the document, even with some regrets . . ."

In fact, the responses of Jewish organizational spokesmen struck this middle note, welcoming the affirmative aspects of the declaration but expressing reservations regarding those sections which had been weakened. Almost all stressed that the ultimate significance of the declaration

depended upon the manner and vigor with which it would be carried out. Statements to this effect were made by Morris B. Abram, president of the American Jewish Committee; Zachariah Shuster, the Committee's European director; Joseph Lichten of the Anti-Defamation League; Joachim Prinz, president of the American Jewish Congress; William Wexler, president of B'nai B'rith; Nahum Goldmann, president of the World Jewish Congress, and the World Conference of Jewish Organizations.

While most Catholics tended to view the declaration as a blueprint for the future, it was apparent that various Jewish commentators would not allow the past to be lightly dismissed. The negative responses among Jews—some of them very forceful—centered around three themes: the elimination of “indeed, condemns” with regard to antisemitism; the removal of “deicide,” and, perhaps most important, the absence from the Vatican document of any sense of contrition, any expression of regret, indeed, any acknowledgment of the church's role in creating the antisemitism it was now decrying.

“What sort of church is it,” asked the *Reconstructionist* (October 29, 1965), “that equivocates in condemning an attitude and declaring as a heresy a doctrine that has been the source of persecution and bloodshed inflicted upon millions of innocent human beings for 2,000 years? The statement fails to recall the fact that . . . it is the church itself which is chiefly responsible for the spread of Jew-hatred down through the ages.” *The American Zionist* (November 1965) asked “how many more Jewish lives have to be destroyed before the church will feel compelled to take a stronger attitude.” *The Voice* (California, October 29, 1965) wrote: “The honest words have yet to come—they will equate in meaning to ‘forgive us.’ It is not the Jews that need exoneration. It is the church that needs forgiveness.” The *Detroit Jewish News* (November 5, 1965) was sarcastic: “What a glorious day! We are no longer rejected by God nor accursed.”

Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, writing in the November *Jewish Spectator*, criticized the declaration on somewhat different grounds. Until Rome acknowledged other religions, including the non-Catholic churches, as lawful paths to God and dispensers of salvation, she said, there is no hope for a basic change in the Catholic attitude to Jews. Papal references to Abraham and Joseph are “cut out of the same cloth as the usual type of missionary booklet,” she remarked, and expressions stressing the “spiritual semitism” of Catholics “are as much a part of the conversionist strategy of Catholicism as were the harsh measures against Jews instituted by Ecumenical Councils of the Middle Ages.”

Arthur Weyne (Buffalo *Jewish Review*, Oct. 29, and other papers) commented:

As it stands the declaration is an anti-climax. . . . John XXIII would not have settled for a document that rejected the chief stone of the arch that he had sought to build . . . the vigor, the urgency, the tonic of John's *aggiornamento* have been washed out; in place of the spirited and the unequivocal, there is now the discreet, the anemic; there was clarity and exaltation, there is now ambiguity and compromise.

The most widely-read ironic Jewish response was that of Harry Golden, which appeared in his general-press column (October 24, 1965) and was reprinted in both Christian and Jewish periodicals. Golden announced a plan

to call a Jewish Ecumenical Council in Jerusalem . . . for the purpose of issuing a Jewish schema on the Christians. . . . I propose that we forgive the Christians for the Inquisition, the Crusades, the ghettos and the expulsions. I think we can also include the forgiveness for the usurpation of property which continued unabated for sixteen hundred years, the rape of Jewish girls, the world-wide discrimination, and we may also waive our annoyances at the barriers that guard country, city and fraternal clubs.

The Christians have been nice. Now we can be nice. There is no reason to hold bitterness in our hearts because Crusader Godfrey of Bouillon drove the Jews of Jerusalem into the synagogue and set it on fire.

There is no reason in the world why our Christian neighbors today should be held responsible for the wholesale slaughter of the Jews in the cities on the Rhine by the Christians of the Second Crusade. Nor should they be held responsible for the murders perpetrated by Peter the Hermit and Peter of Cluny. . . . For all this terrifying history, let us clear those Christians living today.

Other Jewish publications saw the declaration in a more positive light. *Congress Bi-weekly* editorialized (Nov. 15, 1965):

It would be unrealistic to expect the church to indulge in a flood of confessions about its past guilt to the Jews, but it is heartening to know that it is sensitive to the enormities of the historic persecutions heaped upon the Jews through the antisemitism fostered by Christian teachings.

Similarly, Professor Jacob Neusner of Dartmouth, in the Connecticut *Jewish Leader* (Nov. 4, 1965) said: "The statement as it stands, without regard to its history or to the debates that hovered over it, is . . . affirmative, constructive, and mostly to be welcomed, so far as it goes, by the Jews. Any statement which will lead to a social reconciliation and to harmony among differing groups is to be welcomed, and so is this."

This view was held also by Leo Mindlin, columnist for the *Jewish Floridian* (Oct. 15, 1965), and the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* (Nov. 22, 1965).

Many Jewish reactions were not to the actual content of the declaration but to the misleading headlines in a great many newspapers: "Catholics Absolve Jews" or "Ecumenical Council Exonerates Jews."

Christian Reaction

Some Protestant tempers were kindled as well. The prominent American Protestant leader, Eugene Carson Blake, criticized not so much the declaration as the "assumption so widely held by Christians that it was in the power of the church to absolve Jews. . . ." *Christian Century* (September 29, 1965) was sharper:

What monstrous arrogance is this which assumes that Christians have the right and power to forgive Jews for a crime of which they are not guilty! . . . They should be on their knees in contrition begging forgiveness from the God of Christians and Jews.

Catholic sources responded irenically to these charges. The *Catholic Courier Journal* (Rochester, N.Y., November 19, 1965) chided Dr. Blake for relying on newspaper editorials, and *America* (November 27, 1965) responded to *Christian Century*:

There is no question . . . of the church playing God by presuming to absolve the Jews. This is not at all what the Council statement is about. Rather, it is a document addressed to Catholics, exhorting them to root out misconceptions about Jewish guilt for Christ's death—false views that in the past caused Jews to undergo discrimination and suffering.

Msgr. Higgins, too, expressed discomfort at the popular misreading of the declaration's intentions, and pointed to a possible consequence of such misreadings:

If Jews mistakenly think that the declaration was addressed to them and was meant—insultingly and condescendingly—to "absolve" them from responsibility for the Crucifixion, they will understandably be very reluctant to enter into dialogue with Christians. And, by the same token, if Christians fail to understand that the declaration was meant to be a sincere examination of the Christian conscience—which has so much to answer for in this area—they will be ill-prepared for the kind of dialogue which is so strongly recommended in the document [*St. Louis Review*, March 18, 1966].

To Dialogue or not to Dialogue . . .

Msgr. Higgins put his finger on a key issue. Dialogue, a word loosely applied to a range of interreligious activities and programs, had become an increasingly emotive term within the Jewish community—refracting different positions and attitudes on an acceptable agenda for Christian-Jewish relations.

Undoubtedly spurred by Ecumenical Council developments, interreligious activity accelerated and broadened during 1965. There was an increase in conferences, institutes, and colloquia between clergy and other religious professionals, and more and more participation on the part of the laity. "Living-room dialogues"—the continued meeting of individuals or married couples, designed to bring persons of different faiths together to discuss a gamut of matters—grew considerably. Much of this activity was confined to Protestant-Catholic dialogue, but Jewish participation was increasingly sought by one side or the other. A host of new educational materials was being created to assist these programs.⁸

The increase in dialogue provoked discomfort and skepticism in some segments of the Jewish community. An Orthodox rabbi, Eliezer Berkovits, "Judaism in the Post-Christian Era" (*Judaism*, Winter 1966) wrote:

For Jewry as a whole an honest fraternal dialogue with Christianity is at this state emotionally impossible. . . . In a hundred years, perhaps, depending on Christian deeds toward Jews, we may be emotionally ready for the dialogue.

While interchange of ideas was desirable, Berkovits said, there was no need for a specific Jewish-Christian dialogue. As to a purely theological dialogue, "nothing could be more fruitless and pointless. Judaism is Judaism because it rejects Christianity, and Christianity is Christianity because it rejects Judaism." Rabbi Berkovits even cautioned against joint Jewish-Christian endeavor in ethics and social action, both because Christianity "has been compromised" by the close connection between colonial conquest and missionary activities and because, "it is not always easy to determine what is a humanitarian-ethical deed and what is Christian propaganda." The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menahem M. Schneerson, opposed dialogue because he maintained it was prohibited by the Torah; contributed to the "alarming growing rate of intermarriage," and misdirected "energies and resources sorely needed elsewhere, namely . . . in the spreading among our youths a deeper knowledge of the Torah. . . ." Others were worried not so much by the pace of interreligious activity as

⁸ *Living Room Dialogues* provides guidelines, discussion questions, Biblical readings and joint prayers for Protestants and Catholics. A *Grass Roots Ecumenism* kit put out by the National Council of Catholic Men and the National Conference of Catholic Women includes a pamphlet, *Jewish-Christian Dialogues* (1966), by Leonard Swidler and Marc H. Tanenbaum. Also of interest are various publications based on the proceedings of major interreligious colloquia: i.e., Philip Scharper, ed., *Torah and Gospel: Jewish and Catholic Theology in Dialogue* (New York, 1966); Judith Hershkopf and Morris Fine, *Guide to Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 1966); Thomas Lay, S.J., ed., *Jewish-Christian Relations* (St. Mary's College, 1966).

by its base, fearing that the Jews who were most enthusiastic about inter-religious dialogue were often least grounded in their own tradition and theology. Generally, most of institutional Orthodoxy accepted the position of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik: interreligious cooperation on social problems such as peace and race relations is encouraged, but no dialogue about faith or theology. The underlying assumption often was that the hidden agenda for Christian theologizing with Jews was conversion. Others asserted that it was not possible, in practice, to draw distinctions between civic cooperation and theological dialogue, because the Catholic position on many issues of common concern were so largely predicated on theological considerations and that discussion of them outside a theological frame of reference was not feasible, even if theoretically preferable.

A spokesman for Conservative Judaism, Professor Seymour Siegel of JTS, took sharp issue with Orthodox leaders who opposed Jewish-Christian dialogue. He said the purpose of dialogue was not to destroy but "to understand, to learn, and to love," and charged Orthodox leaders with "unwarranted, ill-considered, and intemperate attacks" on efforts to increase interreligious understanding (*New York Times*, October 11).

The Rabbinical Assembly regarded the dialogue affirmatively, provided the Jewish participants were qualified. It expressed gratitude to the leaders of the Conservative movement for their pioneering efforts in this direction and rejected the criticism "of those who assert that open discussion in matters of faith is inimical to the best interests of Judaism." However, the Assembly maintained ". . . only scholars deeply steeped in the teachings of our tradition should be considered suitable representatives in any discussions which deal with the relations of the Jewish people with any other historic faith. . . ." ⁹

Similarly, the Reform movement's central congregational body, UAHC, urged an "expansion and deepening" of interfaith activities and called on its congregations "to enter more intensively into dialogue with our Christian compatriots, even into those areas which touch on matters of faith." ¹⁰

While the internal Jewish debate over the value of interreligious dialogue was largely substantive and seldom rancorous, a somewhat more heated debate went on within the Jewish community over a different but related subject: Jewish involvement on behalf of the Ecumenical Council statement.

The underlying positions on this matter have been more fully described

⁹ Resolution adopted in May 1965.

¹⁰ Resolution adopted in November 1965 by General Assembly.

elsewhere (AJYB, 1965 [Vol. 66], pp. 129–33). For the most part, Orthodox Jewry and the rabbinical organizations of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Judaism eschewed any official involvement in the Council's proceedings, on the ground that the declaration—and the Catholic teaching about Jews and Judaism, generally—was a matter of internal Roman Catholic policy from which Jews should stand clear. Others, notably the community-relations agencies, considered the adoption of the declaration to be of direct and self-evident interest to Jews, and carried on an active program toward that end. They prepared special documents and sent representatives to Rome (although there were never official Jewish observers at the Ecumenical Council, there was frequent informal consultation between Jewish representatives and many Catholic bishops and *periti*). They also maintained contact with Catholic leaders in the United States, Europe, and South America. Despite the official silence of the rabbinic and synagogal organizations, many rabbis were similarly active in an individual capacity.

The Ecumenical Council has concluded and the declaration has been promulgated, but the internal Jewish debate continues. Its resolution will depend, to a large extent, on how effective an instrument for change the declaration proves to be. If the affirmations of the statement on relations with the Jews—the call to brotherhood, mutual esteem, and the inferences that certain Catholic teachings are to be revised—are largely ignored by Roman Catholic authorities, then those who have criticized Jewish “lobbying” in support of the declaration may feel their case has been proved: nothing will have been affected by these efforts but Jewish dignity, and that for the worse. If, however, the declaration becomes the platform for far-reaching changes in Catholic-Jewish relations, then those active in its behalf may be recognized as having performed a genuine service for Judaism and the Jews.

Only time will settle this question, and it is likely to be a matter of some generations before the effects of the declaration will be fully realized. For the immediate future it would appear that the document will be least implemented where it is most needed. In the words of Léon Poliakov, “Those areas where much or everything still remains to be done . . . prove to be precisely those countries whose bishops show themselves to be reserved and sometimes even hostile in the matter of this new reform.” (*Midstream*, Winter 1966.)

Still, there are indications that the declaration will be taken seriously in many parts of the world. One action, largely symbolic perhaps, but none the less dramatic, was the official exoneration of the Jews who had

been executed in 1475 for the supposed "ritual murder" of the two-year-old Simon of Trent. In a pastoral letter dated October 28 (to coincide with Pope Paul's promulgation of the declaration¹¹ Archbishop Alessandro Gottardi of Trent acknowledged the innocence of the Jews who had been tortured and executed five centuries earlier. The Sacred Congregation of Rites withdrew the status of martyr from Simon and forbade any further veneration of his relics or masses in his name.

In the United States there were several encouraging developments. The United States Bishops Commission on Ecumenical Affairs has appointed a Subcommission on Catholic-Jewish Relations which, at its first meeting in Washington, D.C., on March 1, 1966, pledged itself to fulfill the spirit of the declaration and agreed to begin work on recommended guidelines for relations with Jews.

DECLARATION ON THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS

This is an English translation of the text of the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, proclaimed by Pope Paul VI on Oct. 28, 1965.

1. In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.

One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth. One also is their final goal, God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men, until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City, the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light.

Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men: What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to true happiness? What are death, judgment and retribution after death? What, finally, is that ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?

2. From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrates their lives with a profound religious sense.

Religions, however, that are bound up with an advanced culture have struggled

¹¹ The London *Jewish Chronicle*, however, reported as early as July 16 that the ritual murder libel had been retracted.

to answer the same questions by means of more refined concepts and a more developed language. Thus in Hinduism, men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustible abundance of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry. They seek freedom from the anguish of our human condition either through ascetical practices or profound meditation or a flight to God with love and trust. Again, Buddhism, in its various forms, realizes the radical insufficiency of this changeable world; it teaches a way by which men, in a devout and confident spirit, may be able either to acquire the state of perfect liberation, or attain, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination. Likewise, other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing "ways," comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites.

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ, "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14, 6), in whom men may find the fulness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself.

The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men.

3. The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself, merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.

4. As the sacred synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.

Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ—Abraham's sons according to faith—are included in the same Patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is mysteriously 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 through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles. Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ Our Peace reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one in Himself.

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 the law and the worship and the promises; theirs are the fathers and from them is the Christ according to the flesh" (Rom. 9, 4-5), the Son of the Virgin Mary. She also recalls 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.

As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation, nor did the Jews, in large number, accept the Gospel; indeed not a few opposed its spreading. Nevertheless, God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues—such is the witness of the Apostle. 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" (Soph. 3, 9).

Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of Biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues.

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.

Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecution, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.

Besides, as the Church has always held and holds now, Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation. It is, therefore, the burden of the Church's 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.

5. We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: "He who does not love does not know God" (1 John 4, 8).

No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and man or people and people, so far as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned.

The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion. On the contrary, following in the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this sacred synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to "maintain good fellowship among the nations" (1 Peter 2, 12), and, if possible, to live for their part in peace with all men, so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven.