



# FAITH & REASON

THE JOURNAL OF CHRISTENDOM COLLEGE

Winter 1988 | Vol. XIV, No. 4

---

---

## CHRISTIANITY, ANTI-SEMITISM, AND THE PAPACY

*Rupert J. Ederer*

---

---

*“Anti-Semitism” is a term which is often used in an ambiguous way. Professor Ederer seeks to clarify the meaning of this term by studying the racial, theological and political aspects of the term and their relation to the Church.*



IN DEALING WITH THIS TOPIC - A GENTILE WALKS ON EGGS! UNDERSTANDABLY perhaps in view of the recent sad history of the Jews, one has to risk the brickbats of those who would prefer to avoid all candid discussion of what has again become an urgent problem in our times, as it has also been at various times over the past 2000 years. Thus, the great British historian, Hilaire Belloc, who dared to analyze the matter in a forthright and charitable manner early in this century, has been denounced as anti-Semitic for what he wrote in his book, *The Jews*. Along with the Vatican II document, *Notra Aetate*, that book provides perhaps the best guidance for a Christian who seeks enlightenment on this thorny issue.

Obviously, we have to deal first with the murky expression: anti-Semitism. The late George Meany, head of the AFL-CIO, once referred to the Arabs quite simply as anti-Semitic - a neat trick since most of the Semites in the world today are Arabs. The word, anti-Semitism, incidentally, did not yet appear in the old Webster Collegiate dictionary on my desk which is dated 1941! Unfortunately, the term itself perpetrates confusion in dealing with this delicate and important issue. It is not generally used to refer to hatred of, antagonism toward, or contempt for an entire race of people - the Semitic one - although there are also people in our midst who harbor such feelings against any race but their own. These are racists, white supremacists, nativist bigots, or whatever, since they are as a rule not opposed only to Jews.

Anti-Semitism, as it has come to be understood in our time, refers to hatred of, antagonism toward, contempt for the Jewish nation, and I am not referring here to the Jewish national-state of Israel which was established in 1948. A more recent unabridged *Random House* dictionary defines an anti-Semite succinctly as: “a person who is hostile to Jews.”

Belloc came to grips with this etymological obfuscation back in 1922 when he wrote about hatred of Jews in this way:

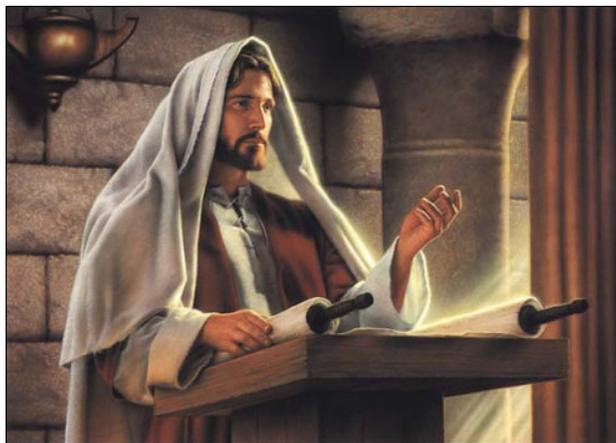
Its modern name of “Anti-Semite” is as ridiculous in derivation as it is ludicrous in form. It is partly of German academic origin and partly a newspaper name, vulgar as one would expect it to be from such an origin, and also as falsely pedantic as one would expect, but the exasperated mood of which it is a label is very real.... The antagonism to the Jews has nothing to do with any supposed “Semitic” race - which probably does not exist anymore than do many other modern hypothetical abstractions, and

which, anyhow, does not come into the matter. The Anti-Semite is not a man who hates the modern Arabs or the ancient Carthaginians. He is a man who hates Jews.<sup>1</sup>

Understood in that way already makes it implicitly impossible for Christianity or for popes, who are its leading spokesmen, to be anti-Semitic. If they remain true to Christianity's Founder they are obviously not anti-Semitic in the sense of harboring hostility or hatred toward Jews. However, we are still left face to face with the important question, which represents the burden of this discussion: *How do Christians and the papacy come to be viewed by some as being at least indifferent to the sufferings and plight of Jews in our times, and at worst as antagonistic toward them?* We must look for the answer to this question by looking at the various faces of anti-Semitism in our time. These various faces include: *a racialist - actually nationalist - aspect; a theological aspect; and a political aspect.*

#### THE RACIALIST-NATIONALISTIC ASPECT

This is the easiest to dispense with since it has the least rational substance. It is stupid to hold against people something over which they have no control, like their race or nationality. That is of the same genre as hating red-heads or cancer patients. Even when the racialist antagonism confuses *cultural* with inherent racial or national traits, as is often the case, this willingness to confuse the two demonstrates a sorry, albeit all too common, lack of intellectual effort. Now the Catholic Church as represented officially by its supreme *magisterium*, the papacy, cannot be accused of such anti-Semitism. In fact it is unintelligent nonsense to do so - inasmuch as the Church follows the greatest *Jewish* Rabbi of all times, Jesus Christ; it venerates the greatest woman ever born, the Jewish maiden, Mary; and it bases its structure on an apostolic succession of *Jews* including Simon Bar-Jona - Peter - its first Pope, and also Paul its first great evangelizer. (A Jewish friend of mine, who converted to Catholicism likes to tease me by saying that the Church's problems really started when it began consecrating Gentile bishops!)



*Jesus in the synagogue*

More recently, a successor of Simon Bar-Jona issued an encyclical in 1938, addressed to the Church in Germany, where the modern racialist nonsense had burst out again in full, thorough, Germanic frenzy. In it, Pius XI condemned the foolish exaggerated nationalism of the Nazis in a document aptly entitled *Mit Brennender Sorge* (trans. *With Burning Anxiety*). That encyclical appeared when the world-at-large still looked with some amusement on Adolf Hitler as a peculiar fellow with a funny mustache. It was also this Pope who stated on one occasion: "*Spiritually we are all Semites.*" St. Paul in essence had, of course, told us that in his *Epistle to the Romans*. In a little remembered encyclical, *Rerum Ecclesiae* (1926) Pius XI, in dealing with native clergy in mission lands, had already made this remarkable statement:

Anyone who looks upon these natives as members of an inferior race or as men of low mentality makes a grievous mistake. Experience over a long period of time has proven that the inhabitants of those remote regions of the East and of the South are not inferior to us at all and are capable of holding their own with us, even in mental ability. If one discovers an extreme lack of the ability to understand among those who live in the very heart of certain barbarous countries, this is largely due to the conditions under which they exist, for since their daily needs are so limited, they are not often called upon to make use

of their intellects. You, Venerable Brothers and Beloved Sons, can bear testimony to the truth of what We write, and We Ourselves can testify to these facts since we have here under Our very eyes the example of certain native students attending the colleges of Rome, who not only are equal to the other students in ability and in the results they obtain in their studies, but frequently even surpass them....

So let us not waste time with that kind of anti-Semitism, which is not the same as saying that it is a thing of the past, or that it is innocuous. It is fair to state, however, that the Catholic Church officially, at least insofar as its papal magisterium is concerned, is free of that kind of taint.

This holds also for our present Polish Pope who in his role as *pontifex*, i.e., *bridge-builder*, recently (1986) made an unprecedented visit to the Jewish Synagogue in Rome where he addressed the chief rabbi and the Jewish community of Rome, and told them, “You are our dearly beloved brothers and, in a certain way, it would be said that you are our elder brothers”<sup>3</sup> That is the same synagogue before which Pope John XXIII had some years previously stopped his car so that he could bless the Jews who were coming out of it. Let us conclude, therefore, that no sensible person, Jew or Gentile, would accuse the papacy of being anti-Semitic in this narrow-minded racist way. So let us turn to the second aspect of anti-Semitism, the theological one, recalling that it was the present Pope who also told the Jews in their synagogue: “So any alleged theological justification for discriminatory measures or, worse still, for acts of persecution is unfounded.”

#### THE THEOLOGICAL ASPECT OF ANTI-SEMITISM

Now obviously there is a deep-seated, fundamental disagreement between important aspects of Judaic and Catholic theology. However, for anyone to regard such theological differences as *anti-Semitism* on the part of Christians makes no more and no less sense than to regard Jewish rejection of Christian beliefs as *anti-Christianism*. The Christian theological position is that Christianity retained the substance of Judaism and established on it the message of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, who appeared on this earth 2000 years ago. We Christians believe what Christ told the Samaritan woman that “... salvation is from the Jews.” It is our view that the Jews unfortunately took a wrong fork in the road when they refused to recognize and accept their long-awaited Messiah. Thus we have kept the Old Testament, but we have also accepted the New Testament as sequential to it and fulfilling it. Personally, it has always been a great mystery to me how the great pride which Jews have in their nation would not somehow spill over into a respect for Jesus Christ. It should be most flattering to them that this Son of Jewish parents, Mary and Joseph, did, after all, turn out to be the most influential person in all of human history. In any case, it is wrong to allow deep theological differences between Christianity and Judaism to degenerate into a bitter animus against the Jewish people. We have agreed to disagree, so to speak; but all false ecumenism notwithstanding, we pray that more and more Jews will eventually be converted to the true religion founded on

ancient Judaic traditions and beliefs by the greatest Jewish Rabbi of all!

It is true, however, and we Christians must own up to this, that there has been a kind of anti-Semitism, even if misguided, which has stemmed from the theological differences between Jews and Christians. It is equally true that Jews have also, down through the ages, harbored bitter anti-Christian feelings, although they were less often, because of their minority status, able to translate these into official or unofficial policies or behavior! But so far as this failing on the part of Christians is concerned, if it were not an implicit contradiction, one might refer to it as Christian anti-Semitism. (The French Cardinal, theologian Henri de Lubac came close to doing so when he wrote in his memoirs about the Nazi thing: “The current anti-Semitism is no longer that which our fathers knew; beyond being degrading for those who abandon themselves to it, it is actually anti-Christian. It opposes the Bible, as much the New as the Old Testament, and the universalism of the Church, which it calls the Roman International ...”<sup>4</sup> Indeed, a kind of “Christian anti-Semitism” understood in this contradictory sense, has persisted throughout the history of the Christian era. Christians, in their misguided zeal, have at various times throughout the history of Christendom fallen for the all too common fallacy of *guilt-by-association*, by imputing guilt for the crucifixion of Christ to all Jews past and present.



One might add here, parenthetically, that Jews are not the only victims of this guilt-by-association tactic. For example, there are also those who show a tendency to hold all Spaniards, living, dead, and yet-to-be-born, guilty of the Inquisition. And there are those who like to insinuate that being Italian automatically implies a sinister Mafia connection. Time may yet tell whether Austrian President, Kurt Waldheim, has not been declared guilty merely because of his association with the Nazi war machine. In fact, I often wonder, when we Americans are reminded over and over about the Holocaust, whether our Jewish brethren are not implying guilt-by-association simply because we are a part of the vast Gentile world! As a matter of fact, we not only had nothing to do with it, but American armed might was in large measure re-

sponsible for bringing it to an end. So it seems clear that the guilt-by-association game is a very old one, and anyone can play. Nevertheless the historic fact of the crucifixion, now nearly 2000 years old, has often provided a convenient pretext for opposing and even oppressing Jews, who may have come to be unpopular for a variety of other reasons. In other words, there are expressions, like "Christ-Killers" which we Christians have to own up to and feel ashamed of.

Now the present successor of Simon Bar-Jona reminded his Jewish audience on the occasion of his visit to the synagogue in Rome that the Second Vatican Council (*Nostra Aetate*) has laid that fallacy and related ones to rest once and for all. He pointed out: "... that no ancestral or collective blame can be imputed to the Jews as a people for what happened in Christ's passion." This applies both to the Jews of that time as well as to "those who came afterwards" and "those of today." Mary was present at the crucifixion, was she not? The stations of the cross remind us that the daughters of Jerusalem wept over Jesus. Indeed, one of these daughters, Veronica, displayed uncommon courage on His behalf. Even among the council of the High Priests, what one might call mainline Jewry or, in today's sociological jargon - the Jewish power structure - there were Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus who opposed the sentencing of Christ, with the former providing a decent burial place for the impoverished Galilean carpenter's Son.

The present successor of Simon Bar-Jona also told his Jewish listeners - and since what he said merely recalls the teaching of Vatican II, it is important also for all Catholic Christians to take careful note: "... it is not lawful to say that the Jews are 'repudiated or cursed,' as if this were taught or could be deduced from the Sacred Scriptures of the Old or the New Testament."

As regards the supposedly horrendous treatment of Jews by popes during the Middle Ages, confinement in ghettos, and so on, this statement by a Jewish writer in the article on Jewish history and society in *Americana*<sup>5</sup> should suffice: "Had it not been for the Catholic Church, the Jews would not have survived the Middle Ages in Christian Europe."

Now if some Christians, over the past 20 centuries, have been guilty of twisting history in a clumsy attempt to justify anti-Semitic behavior in the name of theological differences, there have also been attempts by

some Jews down through the ages to contort history in another way. My sympathy for the Jews' problems was put to a severe test a few years ago when I was privileged to attend the world-famed Passion Play at Oberammergau in Bavaria. That was in 1984, and the slanderous campaign against Pius XII, to be dealt with later, had by then poisoned many minds and extended beyond that saintly Pope to the Catholic Church generally. Thus various Jewish groups, including B'nai B'rith and the American Jewish Committee objected to the presentation of the play in its present form. (The play has been performed by the villagers every ten years since 1634.) When they were unsuccessful in getting the officials in charge to distort the Gospel of St. John which was faithfully portrayed in the play, they attempted a boycott by Americans, including members of the armed forces stationed in NATO around Europe. It seems that these Jewish groups had a problem with the fact that the Jews involved in bringing Christ before Pilate were not exonerated. There is a school of thought among them which seeks to fix the blame for the crucifixion of Christ solely on Pontius Pilate and the Romans. That is, of course, patently contrary to the scriptural account which portrays the Roman governor as trying desperately to wiggle out of this nasty scheme. Pilate, in fact, displayed the all-too familiar cowardice of opportunistic politicians who find themselves caught in a bind where they cannot please all of their constituents and their superiors at the same time. This is not the same as saying that all Jews then and ever since were guilty of having Christ sentenced to death. Theologically speaking, we all have a hand in that. The prologue to the Oberammergau play stated that point quite succinctly by the words: "Greetings also to you, brothers and sisters of the people who brought forth the Redeemer. Let no one try to find the blame in others; let each of us recognize his own guilt in these events." To repeat again, Christ Himself and His mother and the few faithful who stayed by his side during the Good Friday tragedy were also Jews! Although Jewish officialdom, representing mainline Jewry, was directly responsible for the crucifixion, there were, as indicated earlier, even some in their ranks, who opposed the sentence. Finally and most importantly, *Christ Himself, from the cross, forgave those who clamored for His execution.*

However, mainline Jewry by and large, or once again - the Jewish power structure - persisted in its attacks against Christ's followers also after His death. Indeed, if scriptural works had subtitles, the *Acts of the Apostles* could almost be called: *St. Paul vs. the Jews*. In other words,

both theologically and historically speaking, *there was and is now still, enough guilt to go around.* In attempting to avoid the egregious mistake of imputing to all Jews *guilt by association*, one need not go to the other extreme and try to exonerate the Jews from their role in Christ's passion and death. It is a sad and obvious fact that they, in the main, continue to share in this guilt by their ongoing refusal to accept the Messiah whom they gave to the world. Ultimately, it was not some bigoted anti-Semite who called the Jews "*a stiff-necked race,*" but God Himself in speaking to Moses. St. Stephen saw fit to remind the Jews of that some 13 centuries later. They took a dim view of it and stoned him, making him one of the first of a long and continuing procession of Christian martyrs following the death of Christ Himself. I cannot help but think our Bible-reading former President Jimmy Carter must have thought of that "stiff-necked" reference when he dealt with Menachim Begin; and that Ronald Reagan must have felt the same way when dealing with Shamir, Rabin, and the other leaders of modern Israel! And that brings us to the final aspect of Anti-Semitism.

#### POLITICALLY BASED ANTI-SEMITISM

If the racist basis for anti-Semitism is totally unfounded, and if the theological basis is generally invalid, politically based anti-Semitism presents us with what may aptly be described by that unappetizing figure of speech, a real "can-of-worms." And the recent successors of Simon Bar-Jona, including now Pope John Paul II, have gotten themselves tangled up in this more than in the other aspects of anti-Semitism. That should not surprise anyone, including the Pope himself, because Christ too got ensnared by politicalized Semitism! His rejection by mainline Jewish officialdom was based on the kind of expectations which they had developed for the hoped for Messiah - a grand, pompous, conquering type - who would establish Jewish dominion not only in their own land, but eventually over Rome itself. There is, of course, significant irony in the fact that Christianity did finally make Rome its "footstool"! It is also worth noting that some mystical writers have attributed Judas' defection to his sad, gradual realization, and his inability to accept the fact, that this Christ whom he followed was

not to come up to his grandiose secularized expectations. There has been a persistent tendency present in the Jewish nation to pervert its chosen-status into a vision of political dominion, and their hoped for Messiah into a great political liberator. In other words, they have been bedeviled by what may be termed a kind of Davidic-complex! That, of course, presented the Romans and other sectors of the Gentile world with a problem, the resolution of which has time and again been hard also on the Jews.

Now it is clear that the Jews' *chosen* status, like all of God's choices, is irrevocable. But it is also necessary that this choice not be perverted into a Nazi-like superman myth! God chose the Jews to carry the message of the one, true, living God through history among religiously backward Gentiles who were worshipping human and animal gods man-crafted of wood, stone, or bronze. And the Jews fulfilled this mission throughout antiquity, albeit with some lapses when they took to worshipping the world's various golden calves. They were also chosen for the inestimable function of presenting the Anointed one, the Messiah, the Christ to the world. This was done with the consent of the Jewish maiden, Mary, even though mainline Jewry then as now

rejected the Messiah when He appeared. "Art thou he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" Subsequently Jewish Messianic aspirations came to be more and more politicalized to the point of becoming despiritualized and ultimately even frivolous. This perverted chosen-people syndrome has time and again triggered animosity against Jews since they live as "aliens" among Gentiles among whom they also generally happen to be a small minority.

Thus, the more the role of the Jewish nation became desupernaturalized *the more it became merely a nationalistic and even chauvinistic thing.* Now Jews in the modern era have, in the main, favored and contributed to the secularization of society, because they always felt themselves handicapped in historical situations where political states officially established Christian religions. Nevertheless, their Judaism has also been a prime victim of this secularization process, inasmuch as the Messianic aspirations of the majority of modern Jews have been reduced to

  
*"God chose the Jews to carry the message of the one, true, living God through history among religiously backward Gentiles who were worshipping human and animal gods man-crafted of wood, stone, or bronze."*  


purely naturalistic dimensions. A majority of Jews will candidly admit that their hope for a Messiah, where it survives at all, no longer involves a personal Messiah but some state of affairs where justice prevails. In other words, we are talking now about one more secularized Utopian vision of society. One might add that not only has the ancient Judaic religion suffered from this secularization process, but that the Jews themselves personally have already suffered intensely from it. Adolf Hitler saw himself as, among other things, a secular Messianic figure destined to usher in the Millennium!

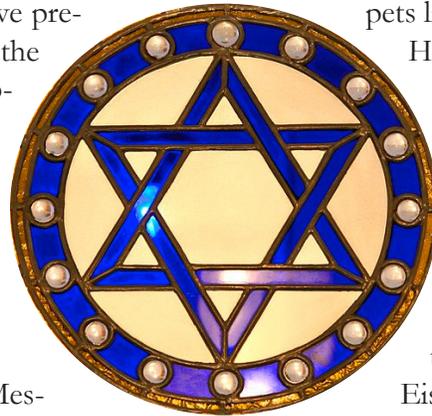
Now, in attempting to untangle the historical complications brought about by the secularized or naturalized Messianic thrust of much of modern Jewry, we come up with various “worms” including especially *Zionism* and *Marxism*. Both of these have presented the world and specifically also the Catholic Church with staggering problems. They have also led the Jews themselves into deep waters with grave implications both for themselves and for the world in which they live.

## MARXISM AND THE JEWS

Marxism promised an earthly “Messiah”. It is an ersatz religion complete with icons, shrines, sacrificial actions, bloody redemption, and a promise of an earthly “paradise.” In other words, Marxism is a diabolical parody of Christianity. Its founder, Karl Marx, was both a renegade Jew and a renegade Christian. His grandfather was a rabbi, named Mordecai; but Karl himself was baptized a Lutheran at age 6. The culturally inherent Jewish Messianic aspiration appears to have lurked in his subconscious personality giving rise to the frenzied drive toward world revolution, the socially just, classless society, etc.

Aside from Marx himself, Jews have been influential and at work out of proportion to their numbers in promoting Communism. It has appealed to many secularized Jews who had abandoned their faith in a personal Messiah, and this seems to hold true especially for those who emigrated from Russia and were embittered by Czarist measures against Jews. Although Lenin himself was probably not Jewish, his influential wife, Krupskaya, was, as was also the co-founder of the Soviet state, Leon (Bronstein) Trotsky. Among other Jewish pioneers of socialism, including so-called democratic socialism

there were Ferdinand Lassalle, Karl Kautsky, and Eduard Bernstein. Stalin’s Jewish henchmen included Maxim Litvinov, even though Stalin himself reverted to his nativistic anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, as Denis Fahey pointed out,<sup>6</sup> 9 out of 12 of the first Central Committee members were Jews, as were 17 of 22 of the first Council of People’s Commissars; 41 of 61 of the first Central Executive Committee; and 23 of 36 of the first Extraordinary Commission of Moscow. Beyond that, the man who directed the assassination of the Czars, and Bela Kuhn who engineered the Hungarian Revolution, along with Gerhard Eisler, who master-minded the Communist Party in the United States behind the front-figure Earl Browder, were all Jews. During the Vietnam protest era, Jews Herbert Marcuse and David Dehlinger orchestrated the protests behind the scenes, managing puppets like Hayden (Fonda), Jerry Reuben, Abbie Hoffman, etc.



In Germany, which was intended as a prime target of Marxist revolution, the Nazis long feasted on the prominence of Jews among the hell-raisers who were trying to promote the Communist revolution in Germany during the post-World War I era. A Jew, Kurt Eisner, actually managed to head up a Soviet Bavaria which lasted just 4 weeks in 1919. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were less successful in Berlin, along with the Jewish Radek, Levine, Axelrod, etc.

What does all of this have to do with the papacy and accusations of anti-Semitism leveled against it? The connection is perhaps subtle, and it is related to accusations which emerged and still persist to the effect that Christians and specifically the Catholic papacy, because of their supposedly obsessive opposition to Communism, sat silently while Jews were eradicated by the Nazis during World War II. An especially vicious campaign was started against the great Pius XII who held down the “hot seat” while the worst Nazi brutality against those deemed racially impure, including Jews, took place. Rolf Hochhuth, a callow playwright, made a large reputation by defaming that Pope in his play, *The Deputy*. It depicted Pius XII as doing nothing to help the Jews, and, in fact, looking the other way during the Holocaust.

That ill-researched nonsense has long since been debunked by serious studies of the actual facts. For ex-

ample, it has been pointed out that it was a direct result of a public outcry against the Nazis by a Dutch Bishop in Utrecht that countless Dutch Jews were rounded up, including Blessed Edith Stein, and sent to Auschwitz and death!

It has also been documented how Pius XII worked mightily behind the scenes to harbor and rescue Jews. For example, over a million Jews, on Vatican orders, were housed in convents, monasteries and other religious houses throughout Europe by 1942. The Pope himself set the example by sheltering 15,000 Jews in Castel Gondolfo, the papal summer residence. The Chief Rabbi of Rome, Israel Zolli, was so impressed by the Pope's actions that he converted to Catholicism and took the name, Eugenio, which was Pius XII's baptismal name! In 1955, before Hochhuth, the Israel Philharmonic appeared in the Consistorial Hall of the Vatican and played for Pius XII his favorite Beethoven 7th Symphony as an act of gratitude.

Perhaps the best testimonial evidence is provided by an Israeli diplomat and journalist, Pinchas Lapide. In his book, *Three Popes and the Jews*, Lapide tells us, “. . . that the Catholic Church, under the pontificate of Pius XII was instrumental in saving at least 700,000, but probably as many as 860,000 Jews, from certain death at Nazi hands.” Anyone who does not trust Catholic sources, like the scholarly work of Robert A. Graham, S.J. would do well to read Lapide's work, since he is not generally sympathetic to Christianity. It lays to rest definitively the nonsensical charge of anti-Semitism in the modern papacy (Lapide also exonerates Pius XI and John XXIII), and also the insidious suggestion that since the Catholic Church and the popes oppose Communism, they secretly supported Nazi efforts to conquer the Soviet Union during World War II.

## ZIONISM

Zionism is the other despiritualized, politicalized, and in this case also, nationalized deviant form of Jewish Messianism. It is in fact far messier than the Marxian thing which has worn quite thin in most parts of the world where Communism has actually been tried. (Marxism, in fact, now seems more rampant among certain kinds of Western intellectuals who have never had to live under it.) Zionism, however, bedevils the contemporary world in a gravely threatening manner, and it causes grave problems also for the present Pope whose country and

whose person were themselves sorely victimized by the Nazis.

Zionism refers to the movement to restore the historic lands of the Bible to Jews; and in its modern mode it began toward the end of the 19th century. Prominent among its promoters was the German Jew, Moses Hess (1812-75), and Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) who is widely regarded as the father of modern Zionism. It is important to note that, while this was a reaction against inveterate anti-Semitism, it was also a secular-nationalistic program, and that socialistic influence remained strong among the early Zionists. Tensions developed early among contending factions, so that religious Zionism was also allowed to play a role.



Thus Zionism, calling for national, political dominion, free from domination by Gentiles, whether they be Romans, Arabs, or whatever, is merely a contemporary revival of the nationalistic fervor which motivated the Zealots in Christ's time and which played no small role in his rejection by mainline Jewry - and eventually in His execution. In our time it has given rise to the modern State of Israel which, let us face it, has since its inception been a burden to the Palestinians, to the Middle East and to the world generally, and specifically to the United States to the tune of some 3 billion dollars a year and repeated bailouts in Arab-Israeli wars. Time alone will tell whether modern Israel may not turn out to have been a transitory thing, burdensome and threatening to the Jews themselves.

After the slow colonization of Palestine by Jews starting before World War I, when Palestine was a Turkish colony, British Foreign Minister Arthur Balfour promised the Jews Palestine for a homeland in return for their support during the War. (The British, in characteristically pragmatic fashion, made the same promise to Lawrence of Arabia for the Palestinian Arabs, in return for Arab help). The Zionist endeavor culminated in the passage of the United Nations Resolution of 1948 which divided Palestine and established Israel as a sovereign state. That was done even though the roughly 700,000 Jews in the part of Palestine which then became Israel comprised only about 33% of the population owning about

5.7% of the land. They thus established dominion over 67% of the population whose forbears had dwelt in the land since as early as 700 A.D. Several wars later, it is the Palestinians who have become refugees, and who have dwelt in squalid refugee camps unable to return to their homeland (1.7 million are classified officially by the UN as refugees). Those Palestinians who chose to remain in Israel are second-class citizens at best in what is intended to be a Jewish national state. This establishes the scenario wherein the modern papacy has a problem in dealing with Zionist Jews inside and outside of State of Israel itself.

## THE PAPACY, ZIONISM, AND ISRAEL

The desire for a Jewish homeland is understandable in view of the tragic history of the Jews ever since the Diaspora, since the literal obliteration of ancient Jerusalem along with Solomon's Temple by Titus and his Roman legions, and more recently because of their treatment at the hands of the Nazis. By, and large, Jews have been scattered about the world, where they live as alien people among Gentile majorities. Unfortunately, the modern recurrence of Zionism has finally born its fruit at a time when the majority of Jews have been largely secularized - one could almost call them *post-Judaic Jews* - just as the powerful modern secularist wave also turned masses of Christians into post-Christian "Christians."

Thus, with Jewish Messianic aspirations more and more despiritualized, the awareness of being a *Chosen People* has also taken on a non-religious chosen-people aspect. This has degraded it into pure nationalistic, racialistic balderdash of the Nazi vintage, which inevitably invites animosity among the Jews' Gentile neighbors. In our time the Jews get upset when someone occasionally compares Israel's behavior to some aspects of the Nazi's thing: e.g., their highly efficient military machine and its successful "lightning wars" which is what *Blitzkrieg* means. Also, Hitler invaded occupied neighboring territories on the pretext that he needed to do so to assure Germany's borders. And the savage attack and aerial bombardment of Lebanon's cities was also reminiscent of Nazi terrorism. Most recently, of course, there is the violent reaction by heavily armed Israeli troops against stone-throwing Palestinian youngsters - where homes are bulldozed and a couple of, Palestinians are killed almost daily. (Genocide?)

Jews remonstrated bitterly against an article appearing in *Civiltà Cattolica*,<sup>9</sup> the Jesuit paper published in

Vatican City, which likened Israeli suppression of the Palestinians to Nazi treatment of Jews. Long forgotten is a letter which appeared in the *New York Times* (December 4, 1948) shortly after the State of Israel was created by a United Nations Resolution. It was signed by 28 prominent Jews, including Albert Einstein. It decried the "emergence in the newly created state of Israel of the 'Freedom Party' a political party closely akin in its organization methods, political philosophy, and social appeal to the Nazi and Fascist parties." The letter denounced the party with its leader, Menachem Begin, as "a terrorist, right-wing, chauvinist organization . . .," as it also deplored the massacre of 240 men, women and children in the Arab village of Deir Yassin by this group. The letter writers proposed that, "This is the unmistakable stamp of a Fascist party for whom terrorism (against Jews, Arabs, and British alike) and misrepresentation are means, and a 'Leader State' is their goal." The present prime minister of Israel, Yitzhak Shamir, who announced recently that the West Bank and the Gaza Strip will remain in Israeli hands "forever," was a member of that terrorist group. It would appear that *Civiltà Cattolica* was not saying anything, after the fact, which these Jewish leaders had not warned about in their letter, 40 years before the fact.

This should help to explain why the papacy and specifically Pope John Paul II has withheld official Vatican recognition from Israel. From the start, the Catholic Church, as represented by its popes, was never enthusiastic about Zionism, it being an essentially secular and often socialistic movement. In this they were simply following in the tradition of Jesus Christ who also disdained a political Messianic Kingdom. Saint Pius X told Herzl himself in curt, non-diplomatic terms that this was not the way for the Jews to go; and Benedict XV told Jews the same thing in more diplomatic language. Pius XII through his secretary of state, Cardinal Maglione (1943) suggested that "other territories would be more suitable." John XXIII, even while helping many Jews to escape Nazis and reach Palestine, expressed fears about this approach to the Messianic dream.

In 1948 when Israel became a reality *L'Osservatore Romano* (May 14, 1948) stated that "Zionism is not the embodiment of Israel as it is described in the Bible." More recently (June 1985) the Vatican released a 12 page statement making clear that, ". . . While Christians are invited to understand the religious attachment of Jews to the state of Israel, the existence of the state of Israel and its political options should be envisaged not in a perspec-

tive which is itself religious but in their reference to the common principles of international law.”<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the current and ongoing reasons for non-recognition of Israel by the Vatican have been based on: 1) the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in the summer of 1982; 2) the Jewish settlements in the Israeli-occupied territories of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip; 3) the fate of the Palestinians who, the Church and most recently Pope John Paul II have continually insisted, are entitled to their own homeland; 4) the unique international and inter-religious status of Jerusalem and the Holy places which Israel has until now not been willing to guarantee.

It is ironic that even though the majority of present-day Israeli leaders are not themselves religious, they are willing to exploit ancient Judaic, religiously-based claims to Palestinian territories as the basis for their political pretensions. Equally ironic is their concern about recognition or non-recognition as a political state by the minuscule Vatican City! Failure to gain such recognition has led some Zionists, therefore, to blur the distinction between esteem for Jews as persons having distinct ancient religious beliefs and national heritage, and a recently established political state; and it has prompted them to accuse present-day successors of Simon Bar-Jona of anti-Semitism.

## SOME CONCLUSIONS

One has to conclude that it is not modern popes who are anti-Semitic in any meaningful, i.e., racist, theological, or political sense of the word. It would appear instead that the Zionists may be pushing their luck and straining the tolerance which they have gained since the barbarous treatment which the Nazis meted out to Jews. Time will tell whether the creation of an exclusivist, nationalist state of Israel may not prove to be to World War II, what the vengeful Versailles Treaty was to World War I. In other words, it could trigger a far wider war involving the major powers, aside from the several deadly small localized wars which have already resulted from it in the Middle East.

One might add that revenge at Versailles was at least directed against those who were partly to blame for the great damage done by World War I. The creation of an Israeli state in a small, poor, bit of geographical territory, which was occupied for many centuries by Palestinian people, has victimized a people *who had nothing at all*

*to do with the harsh treatment of Jews in the short-lived Nazi empire.*

Revenge, as Versailles proved once again, is in any case not a sound basis for political policy. It makes little sense to perpetrate new injustices in order to right old ones. Israel has already been involved in several devastating wars, and it remains a garrison-state with all of the economic hardship which that implies. What is more, it is not now a viable political entity, since it could not exist for long without continued large scale American assistance, both financial and military. Nor can it properly be called the real homeland of the Jews, since scarcely 3 million of the world's roughly 17 million Jews choose to live there. The embarrassing fact is that most of the Jews who clamor to leave the Soviet Union decide in favor of moving to the United States rather than to their “historic homeland.”

One may also be permitted express a legitimate fear that the Davidic-complex which seems to be at large in this diminutive state could, given the right circumstances, turn into a Samson-complex. In other words, the fractious people who run Israel could, if faced by the ultimate threat, unleash their nuclear force in some final desperate willingness to bring the “whole house” down on friend and foe alike. There is already supreme irony in the fact that even the Davidic-complex has become inverted. It is now the Israeli occupiers who are heavily armed and armoured, doing battle with unarmed, unarmoured rock-throwing Palestinian teen-agers, some of them with slingshots!



Finally, returning to the theological dimension once again, whatever may finally be the outcome of this explosive situation, Christians should be mindful that it will not be due to some ancient curse invoked by a handful of the ancestors of present-day Jews on a dark Friday afternoon two millennia ago. What could happen to the hapless Jews would be due to the continued insistence of the main body of their descendents on politicalizing the Messiah, while refusing to acknowledge the real Messiah who told them with tears in His eyes:

*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou who killest the prophets, and stonest those who are sent to thee! How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathers her young under her wings, but thou wouldst not. Behold your house is left to you. And I say to you, you shall not see me until*

*the time comes when you shall say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" (Luke 13:34-35). Cf. also: Luke 19:41-44 and 21:20-24.*

---

## NOTES

1Hilaire Belloc, *The Jews* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1922), p. 147.

2Cf. Claudi Carlen IHM, *The Papal Encyclicals 1903-1939* (McGrath Pub]. Co., 1981), pp. 287-288.

3"Our Relations With Judaism: Address of Pope John Paul II during a visit to the Synagogue of Rome (April 13, 1986)," *The Pope Speaks*, vol. 31, no. 3 (1986), 195.

4Antonio Russo, "De Lubac and the Resistance to Anti-Semitism," *30 Days*, No. 1 (April 1988), 78.

5Salo Wittmayer Baron, "Jewish History and Society: 7. Within the Ghetto Walls," *Encyclopedia Americana*, vol. 16 (1974).

6Denis Fahey, *The Mystical Body of Christ in the Modern World* (Dublin: Brown and Nolan Ltd., 1939), pp. xxxv-xxxviii.

7Pinchas E. Lapide, *Three Popes and the Jews* (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1967), p. 215.

8Robert A. Graham, S.J., *Pius XII's Defense of the Jews and Others: 1944-45* (Milwaukee: Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, 1987).

9Giovanni Rulli, "La Rivolta Palestinese," *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 19 March 1988, pp. 600-610.

10George E. Irani, "The Vatican, U.S. Catholics and the Middle East," *The Link*, vol. 19, no. 3 (August/September 1986), p. 4.

