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Article

The Hebrew Catholic Movement and Catholic Eschatological Perspectives on the Jewish People After World War II

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Abstract: This is an examination of the growth of the Hebrew Catholic movement, and how the combination of the Holocaust and Vatican II addressed Jewish converts to Catholicism.

Keywords: Hebrew Catholicism; Church Fathers; Vatican II documents

The complex relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people has numerous layers and components. In the aftermath of both World War II and then the Vatican II Council in the middle 20th century, the Catholic approach to the Jewish people has evolved significantly, even to the point of having specific apostolates in the Catholic Church that are specifically oriented toward Jewish converts. The examination of this movement therefore merits discussion as it is a crucial factor in Jewish/Catholic relations.

There are two aspects to exploring this topic which will form the central thesis of this discussion. The first regards a historical overview of the Hebrew Catholic movement. This includes how Jewish converts have historically been received as well as how events such as the Holocaust and Vatican II contributed to both the inclusion and assimilation of Jewish converts into the Christian Church (in this case, specifically Catholic). Secondly, the issue will be explored as to how eschatology and other related disciplines aided in the phenomenon of Jewish converts to the Church. The Church sees this more holistically, and it does affect theological and soteriological concerns regarding to what degree Jewish converts retain their heritage and/or redefine it to make it more compatible with Catholic faith. This situation entails ethnic vs. religious identity, past issues with persecution, and other factors. Looking at it from that perspective, it demonstrates that Jewish conversions to Christianity (and to Catholicism in particular) tend to come with a unique set of complexities that converts from other religious and ethnic backgrounds do not experience.

An examination of early Patristic and other writings of both Catholic and Orthodox saints, visionaries, and theologians will be examined dealing with specific issues that affected Jewish/Christian relations. This includes looking at various writings of the Fathers and others that encompasses a diverse field. This will constitute the first section of this discussion.

As a mass conversion of the Jews is accepted as part of Christian eschatological thought, the writings of a number of Orthodox and Catholic writers will be examined regarding this. It must be noted here that due to similar convictions, some Catholic and Orthodox writings addressing all these questions will be addressed collectively as traditional Christian discourse on these questions.

In some sources that will be examined, "Jew" is seen as a religious term, while "Hebrew" is seen as an ethnic designation. This distinction is integral to understanding how the Church dealt with the phenomenon of Jewish converts, and fundamentally it has much to do with how Jewish identity is incorporated into Christian faith. This is particularly true in the writings of Fr. Elias Friedman, the founder of the Association of Hebrew Catholics, an apostolate of Jewish converts to Catholicism that dates to the early 1980s. This also addresses the rise of a particular "Hebrew Catholic" movement that has arisen in the Catholic Church parallel to the Messianic Jewish movement among Evangelical

Protestants. Understanding this movement will aid in understanding the current attitude of the Catholic Church toward Jewish people in recent decades.

In addition to earlier sources, more recent Catholic sources will be examined on all these questions including the Vatican II documents *Gaudium et Spes*, *Lumen Gentium*, and *Dei Verbum*. Likewise, the current *Catechism of the Catholic Church* will be referenced regarding how Magisterial teaching reflects these developments. Many of those sources were drafted in part due to awareness of the atrocities of the Holocaust (Pope Pius XII's response) as well as addressing the establishment of the modern State of Israel, the latter of which has a complex assortment of convictions in Catholic discourse.

The major observation from a discussion such as this would be that for positive or negative, the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people is both integral as well as at times controversial. This complexity denotes an inevitable connection between the two.

Early Christian Views of the Jewish People

In examining many early sources of Christian/Jewish relations, there are two issues that drive the discussion. First, the early Jewish opposition and persecution of primitive Christianity has been a source of contention for centuries, and it is reflected in several Christian sources of the first few centuries of the Church. Second, the theological differences between Judaism and Christianity, particularly involving Christological issues, has generated a copious amount of early polemic and apologetic literature. This extends even into the medieval period, as major theologians such as Aquinas addressed these concerns as well. Additionally, there are Jewish converts, notably Petrus Alfonsi and Pablo Christiani, who proved to some of the most polemical voices against Judaism in the medieval era, and their works even provided foundation for the later Inquisitions. To begin, some of the earliest Christian literature will be examined regarding attitudes toward the Jews, and following that the writings of Alfonsi, Christiani, and other polemical figures will be examined.

One of the earliest figures to write about the relationship between Christians and Jews was an enigmatic character named Ambrosiaster. Writing in the fourth century, he authored a commentary on the Pauline Epistles and wrote extensively about the importance of the Jews to the life of the Church. In one passage he writes the following regarding I Corinthians 1:2:

Paul linked them (the Corinthians), as Gentiles, with the true Jews, because salvation is of the Jews, so that wherever there are Gentiles who call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and wherever there are true Jews, both are united in him.¹

Ambrosiaster's position on this sees the Church as essentially an extension of Judaism, not replacing it but rather fulfilling it, and thus he attempts to bridge the divide between devout Jews and Christians. Others who had a less charitable view of Jews based on theological grounds included Tertullian, who in the second century expressed an opinion in his writings that would later be a foundation of the "Replacement Theology" movement that would become prevalent in Christianity in subsequent centuries:

The Jews had formerly been in covenant with God. But being afterwards cast off on account of their sins, they began to be without God.²

It is commonly accepted that the reason for this anti-Jewish sentiment in some of the early Christian writers had more to do with the opposition Christians received from Jews in the earliest centuries of the Church, and thus it also provided impetus for the position that the Church is now the "New Israel" and that by rejecting Christ, the Jews forfeited their covenantal status with God. St. Augustine, in his discourse *Eighty Three Different Questions*, connects the forfeiture of the covenantal promises to the Jews with "impiety" but says this essentially was part of God's plan of salvation for

¹ Gerald Bray and Thomas Oden, eds., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture – New Testament Vol. VII: 1-2 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999): 5.

² David W. Bercot, ed. *A Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998): 376.

Gentiles.³ The general idea here is that many Christian writers were castigating the Jews for rejecting Christ, which they saw as illogical and even foolish on the part of the Jews as they denied the very fullness of the covenant God gave them. However, this was also seen as a part of the divine plan of God for the ages, in that the forfeiture of the covenant by the Jews would lead to their realization and eventual salvation as a people. Therefore, the evidence for antisemitism in the early Biblical commentaries and theological writings of the Church is lacking because many of the same authors who gave such harsh criticism to the Jews also felt that if they did accept Christ as their promised Messiah they should be welcomed like anyone else. This premise is based upon the Scriptural premise in Galatians 3:28 that there is “neither Jew nor Greek” as far as being in communion with Christ was concerned. However, in later centuries it would not prevent many episodes of persecution against Jews in the name of the Church, as that would become a stigma applied to Christianity later.

Despite persecutions, the *official* stance of the Church towards the Jewish people was charitable in tone. One individual who states this in detail is St. Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), who notes in his work *On Layman and Secular People* that four things distinguished Jews from heretics:⁴

1. The Jews never accepted the Christian faith.
2. The Jews follow the religious tradition God established.
3. The Jewish faith is useful for the Church, primarily regarding sacred texts as well as rituals that prefigured sacramental acts in the Church.
4. Jews do not try to corrupt Christian doctrine as heretics tend to do.

Because they could not be considered a heretical sect due to predating the Church, Jews were seen by some theologians as meriting the protection of the Church against persecution. St Thomas Aquinas also noted in Part II-II, Question 10, Article 8 of the *Summa* that forcible conversion of Jews – specifically those who have never received the faith – should be discouraged because it was a violation of free will.⁵ However, in the previous question he also allowed for forcible conquest of a Jewish or heathen territory if they resisted by force, which would fall more under the “just war” conviction rather than anti-Judaism in that case. The conversion of the Jews as part of Catholic eschatology will be discussed more in detail later, as it relates to this.

In Eastern Christianity likewise, there was a charitable attitude towards Jews that was to also be encouraged by Christians, and this is reflected in the 19th century Russian spiritual classic *The Way of the Pilgrim*. The anonymous author of the text recounts an occasion when another pilgrim is disparaging and condemning Jews, and this individual is admonished by a priest to cease this behavior in the following passage:

“You are wrong, my friend, so to rail against the Jews and curse them,” he said. “They too are God’s creatures, just as we are. You should pity them and pray for them, not curse them. Believe me, your loathing of them comes from you not being confirmed in the love of God and because you do not have interior peace...”⁶

The priest (elder) in the story is citing the writings of an ascetic named Mark the Monk who resided in a monastic community in the Judean Desert in the fourth century and whose writings are included in the *Philokalia*, an integral collection of Eastern Orthodox spiritual writings. The ideas Mark was communicating that the elder referenced concerned the universality of the Gospel for all, both “Jew and Greek.” This universality of the Gospel underpins official Church teaching over the centuries regarding how Jews were to be treated. While some were loose with this conviction, somehow justifying persecution by considering it a tool of evangelization, overall, the collective evidence suggests that Jews were to be viewed in the same way as other human beings – they need

³ Bray and Oden, 211.

⁴ Theodore Shoebat, *Christianity is at War: The Manifesto for Christian Militancy* (Top Executive Media, 2016): 371.

⁵ St. Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica, Unabridged Edition* (Claremont, CA: Coyote Canyon Press, 2018): 542.

⁶ Aleksei Pentkovsky, ed., and T. Allan Smith, trans., *The Pilgrim’s Tale* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999): 163.

salvation and thus they should be afforded both a right to free will and to dignity of personhood. This then leads to debates over the Inquisition and other incidents that occurred against Jews in centuries past, and there are two individuals who will be discussed at length regarding this – Petros Alfonsi and Pablo Christiani

Alfonsi and Christiani – Inspiration for Inquisition

The Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition are tied together by polemical sources to justify some charges of antisemitism as an official sanction of the Catholic Church. There are major responses to these charges regarding the Crusades that are stated by scholars who have researched it, including the following:

1. No Crusade was ever initiated by the Church against Jews in particular.⁷
2. Any atrocities committed against Jews during the Crusades were perpetrated by rogue factions, and such actions were strongly condemned by the Popes at the time.⁸

However, while this does not excuse excesses of some rogue elements among Crusaders, it also does not state that the Church agreed with the Jews on crucial theological issues such as the person of Jesus Christ. This led to some major polemical material which circulated as an impetus for the Inquisition, and specifically it entailed two figures, Petros Alfonsi and Pablo Christiani.

Petros Alfonsi (d. 1116) was a Spanish writer of Jewish heritage who converted to Christianity in 1106. He was the godson of the King of Aragon, Alfonso I, after whom he also took part in his name after his conversion. His most noted works included *Dialogi contra Iudaeos* and *Disciplina Clericalis*. The first work is his polemical treatise against Judaism, and he constructs it in the form of Socratic dialogue and in a sense is debating himself as pre-Christian Jew (identified by his birth name Moses) and post-conversion (identified as Peter). The argument Alfonsi makes in the treatise is essentially that the sin of denying and persecuting Christ was ancestral, then grace is given to the descendants who recant of such transgression and thus they are not to be liable for the sins of their ancestors. This is a theological issue rather than an ethnic one however, and it connects the sufferings of the Jews to their rejection of Christ, and only by accepting Christ as their prophesied Messiah can these things be alleviated:

Because you have slain Christ, the Son of God, saying that he is a magician, born from fornication, and that he led the entire people into error. Your elders proclaimed these things and others like them, until they caused the entire people to share in their depraved will, and they led a just man to a very unjust punishment—they crucified, and they slew him. The magnitude of a crime is so great as the cause of such a long captivity. And if you abide in your paternal faith just as in their will, you will without any doubt remain in the same judgment of damnation.⁹

Further, Alfonsi does affirm that grace would be dispensed to those Jews who, like himself, would come to believe, and he notes this in the following passage:

To be sure, he saw that, at some time, some of your seed would believe in him and that they would be saved. For this reason, he did not want to destroy your stem altogether, just as Isaiah said: “As if a grain be found in a cluster and it be said: ‘destroy it not, because it is a blessing,’ so I will do for my servants’ sake and not destroy them all.” But the testimony of divine compassion that was extended to you, which you proclaimed was promised to Moses in the book of the law, does not

⁷ Jonathan Riley Smith, “Rethinking the Crusades,” *First Things* 101, no. 1 (2000): 22.

⁸ Thomas F. Madden, “Crusade Myths,” *Catholic Dossier* 8, no.1 (2002), Crusade <https://www.catholicfidelity.com/apologetics-topics/crusades/crusade-myths-by-thomas-f-madden/> Myths by Thomas F. Madden :: (catholicfidelity.com) (Accessed 9/12/2024).

⁹ Petros Alfonsi, and Irvn M. Resnick, trans. *Dialogue Against the Jews* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2006): 106.

concern the present captivity but has to do with the Babylonian captivity that has already passed, since already he led you forth from it at some time.¹⁰

Alfonsi's concerns were with the Jewish rejection of the deity of Christ, in other words, and he affirmed historic teaching that the grace of salvation was available to anyone who seeks it regardless of who they were. However, he asserts that the Jews' rejection of Christ had a significant factor in their suffering and diaspora, and this would be used later to justify acts, both well-intentioned and violent, against Jews during the Inquisition period. In later centuries, as the Catholic Church began to take a more conciliatory view of the Jews, this situation would be allegorized in another way – the Holocaust, for instance, would be seen by writers such as Fr. Elias Friedman as a picture of the Passion of Christ, while the establishment of the modern state of Israel would be allegorized as a picture of the Resurrection in order to aid in evangelization efforts of the Jews in the 20th century in particular. This will be discussed in more detail later.

The second figure of note relating to this was Pablo Christiani, a 12th-century Dominican friar of Sephardic Jewish heritage who also played a pivotal role as an influential figure regarding the later Spanish Inquisition. The contribution made by Christiani originates from a debate in 1263 in Barcelona that he engaged the rabbi Moses Nachmanides over Christology. In this debate, Christiani asserts four major points:¹¹

1. That the Messiah the Jews have anticipated was Jesus Christ, and that he had already come.
2. This Messiah was both divine and human.
3. This Messiah suffered and died for the entire human race.
4. This Messiah did away with the ceremonial precepts of the Old Testament.

Christiani was making this a debate about the person of Christ and how the Jews viewed him, and asserted their rejection of Christ as their promised Messiah was a grave error on their part. Further, he asserted that the Talmud was the source of that rejection, and throughout his career he sought to have it banned by royal decree in Spain. The debate with Nachmanides also was meant to discredit rabbinical authority by asserting there was nothing inherently Judaic about it. These issues surrounding the person of Christ would be later impetus for the Inquisition, but it must be noted that these concerns were theological and not ethnic in nature, and as such they could be seen as more of polemical actions rather than outright antisemitism.

Regarding the influences of both Alfonsi and Christiani upon the Inquisition, their works were used as justification to enact the measures later that would characterize the Inquisition, and due to the perception that the Jews refused to convert, such measures were taken to ensure that they would be minimized in influence. There is no record of any official sanction by the Church to execute or otherwise carry out atrocities against Jews during the Inquisition, but rather to legally restrict any influence that they could assert due to a more favored position many Jews had under the Muslim rulers of Spain. The extreme actions of some who participated were later condemned officially, and overall, the Inquisition was more of an extension of the Crusades against Islamic expansion than they were a targeted action against Jews. Also of note is that the major figures who influenced most Inquisition policies were themselves converts from Judaism, and thus the ethnic element could be justifiably dismissed.

The special status of the Jews in Biblical history also led of recognition regarding eschatological matters, and although the Church often disputed the religious aspects of Judaism, at the same time they were also seen as a people meriting special protection in God's greater plan. This eschatological dimension will constitute the next part of the discussion.

¹⁰ Ibid., 109.

¹¹ Jeremy Cohen, *A Historian in Exile: Solomon ibn Verga, "Shevet Yehuda," and the Jewish-Christian Encounter* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017): 31.

The Jews in Catholic and Orthodox Eschatology

The special status of the Jewish people in Catholic theology inevitably encompasses an eschatological dimension. While fundamental Catholic eschatology is simple – it encompasses the four basic topics of death, judgment, heaven, and hell- there have been over the centuries a number of Church Fathers, theologians, and visionaries who have noted that within those four fundamental areas are details which either lead up to each or are integrated into the greater diorama of eschatological observations. One of these details which has been given a copious amount of attention in both Catholic and Orthodox traditions is a future mass conversion of the Jews, as it is seen as integral to Christ's *Parousia*. This discussion will begin with the Western (Catholic) ideas surrounding this future mass conversion, and follow with Eastern (Orthodox) ideas, all noted from a variety of writers over the centuries. From the outset however, it must be noted that these ideas are not synonymous with much of the popular dispensationalism which comprises a significant percentage of religious broadcasting these days, as it is notably different. An important distinction to make would be a general rejection of both modern Zionism as well as the "two covenant" sentiments which suggest that Israel and the Church are two separate entities with equal covenantal status. Catholic and Orthodox eschatology has always maintained that the Church is the "New Jerusalem," and thus the "Chosen People" of the Covenant. The attitudes toward Jewish conversion, in that context, are that because of the specific role Jews played in soteriological history, God will "graft back in" the Jewish people to the Covenant at the end of days shortly before the return of Christ. This is a very integral distinction to keep in mind.

To begin, the Scriptural premise for the conversion of the Jews is based upon passages such as Romans 11:25-27, and Galatians 3:28. The belief based on these passages is that at some point in time, there will come a "Great Apostasy" in which many Gentile Christians will apostatize from the faith and that God will allow for the conversion of the Jews to revive his Church and carry out the final acts of history. But the Jews will need to be "grafted into" the Church and become one with the faithful remnant of Gentile Christendom. Among Western writers who addressed this issue were St Jerome, who noted that the mass conversion of the Jews will take place during an "Age of Peace"¹² that would precede the Antichrist and the Great Chastisement (Tribulation). St Jerome notes in his commentary on Romans that this conversion of the Jews will directly be in response to Gentile "incredulity" of the message of salvation.¹³ This ties into the allegory of the "wheat and tares" parable of Matthew 13:24-25 and does not just relate to a general decline in faith among Gentile nations, but something unparalleled in recorded history. It also implies, as Desmond Birch notes, that the temporary rejection ("blindness") of the Jews is also contingent upon how Gentile Christians persevere in their faith.¹⁴ This is likewise stated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (hereafter referred to as CCC), where it is stated that the Messiah's coming is suspended until his recognition as such by "all Israel."¹⁵ This means that Magisterial teaching on the part of the Catholic Church

¹² The "Age of Peace" as it relates to Catholic eschatology is to occur after a traumatic worldwide crisis in which many people will apostatize and to control the chaos a "Great Catholic Monarch" will be raised up by God to restore godly order. This is a sort of reversal of the "Millennium" that many Protestant Dispensationalists believe, in that this period would *precede* the events of the Antichrist and the Great Tribulation and would be necessary for not only the conversion of the Jews, but to provide one last chance for the nations to accept the truths of Christ. There are many variations on this theme as to specifics, but it has been an accepted part of traditional Magisterial teaching on eschatology for many centuries.

¹³ Desmond Birch, *Trial, Tribulation, and Triumph: Before, During, and After Antichrist* (Santa Barbara, CA: Queenship Publishing, 1996): 418.

¹⁴ Birch, 418.

¹⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana) (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994): 176.

would assert that a conversion of the Jews is necessary prior to the Second Coming of Christ, rather than after.

Similar convictions were held by the Christian East in many writings from that period, of St. John Chrysostom, who also stated in a commentary on Romans that the conversion of the Jews will be prior to the Second Coming but also close to it in proximity¹⁶. One writer, Blessed Theophilact of Bulgaria, writes that a figure he describes as “Elijah” based on the passage in Malachi 4:5-6 will preach to the Jews and convert many, which in turn will target them for persecution by the Antichrist later.¹⁷ The Armenian writer Vardan Aygekc’i (1170-1235), another example, quotes another Armenian writer, St. Vardan, in his work as he lays out a type of agenda that happens at the rise of the Antichrist:¹⁸

1. The Remnant saints recognize the various names of the Antichrist.
2. The Antichrist subsequently persecutes and martyrs those who recognize who he is.
3. The Jews, who had previously suffered the deception of the Antichrist, recognize his deception and a mass conversion takes place.

The difference here between the Armenian eschatological writings and those of Western Catholic writers is that the latter view the conversion of the Jews as coming *before* the Antichrist and because of an apostasy. In the Armenian writings of those such as Aygekc’i, this conversion is seen happening *during* the reign of the Antichrist. Despite this difference, the outcome is still the same – the Jewish converts will be “grafted in” due to a series of events that lead to the “fulness of the Gentiles,” meaning an unparalleled falling from the faith of the latter. This will be an important impetus later for the rise of the Hebrew Catholic movement in the Roman Catholic Church, as some writers will note this as a significant step toward an eschatological end.

A couple of more recent Eastern Orthodox writers have also had some significant insights on the conversion of the Jews prior to Christ’s return. The first is the Greek lay theologian Apostolos Makrakis (1831-1905). In his 1885 commentary on Revelation, Makrakis makes the premise that the conversion of the Jews will happen prior to the “first” resurrection of the dead before Christ returns.¹⁹ While Makrakis does not give an exact timing of this event, he does note that this will be a catalyst in the re-Christianization of the civilized world, and thus the “ingrafting” of the Jews will be integral to eschatological timelines. A second modern Orthodox writer who addresses this topic is the late French Orthodox convert and monastic Lev Gillet (1893-1980). Gillet’s 1942 book *Communion in the Messiah* was written on the topic of Jewish-Christian relations, and unlike prior Orthodox writings who often viewed Jews in a polemical light, Gillet was much more conciliatory in his approach, and he raises several points regarding this relationship. First, he notes that a question should be raised as to whether current Jewish rejection of Christ could be due to sacred jealousy, and he notes that a future conversion of the Jews en masse would constitute what is called the *corpus mysticum* (mystery of incorporation).²⁰ Gillet views this as less of an allegorical interpretation but rather as an organic and visible unity.²¹ Similar to earlier writers in both the Eastern and Western Christian traditions, Gillet also attributes the current rejection of Christ by the Jews as a “temporary blindness” until a fulness of the Gentiles is complete, and he proposes (6 years before the birth of the modern state of

¹⁶ Birch, 418.

¹⁷ Archbishop Lazar Puhalo, ed., *The Beginning, and the End* (Dedney, BC, Canada: Synaxis Press, 1990):41-42.

¹⁸ Kevork B. Bardakjian and Sergio La Porta, eds., *The Armenian Apocalyptic Tradition: A Comparative Perspective* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2014): 531-532.

¹⁹ Apostolos Makrakis, and A.G. Alexander, trans. *Interpretation of the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Chicago: The Orthodox Christian Educational Society, 1972): 493.

²⁰ Lev Gillet, *Communion in the Messiah: Studies in the Relationship Between Judaism and Christianity* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co., 1942): 214.

²¹ Gillet, 215.

Israel) that this will be realized as a physical restoration of Israel as a nation.²² While he is careful to separate this possibility from actual Christian Zionism, he does note that the existence of an actual Jewish homeland could play a role in the future conversion of the Jews as a nation.²³ In subsequent decades after Gillet penned his text, this sentiment would be echoed by early pioneers of the Hebrew Catholic movement such as Fr. Elias Friedman, as will be seen later.

The atrocities of the Holocaust would cause many Christian traditions, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, to begin to re-examine their relationships to Judaism and its people. The Vatican II Council would be an impetus for this and will comprise the next part of this discussion.

The Holocaust, Vatican II, and the Rise of the Hebrew Catholic Movement

The defining aspect of the Catholic relationship with Jews in the 20th century was the Holocaust, which subsequently led to certain positions regarding Catholic-Jewish relations during and after the Vatican II Council in the 1960s. Two key areas will be discussed here, followed by a brief overview of the Hebrew Catholic movement that resulted in part because of evangelization shifts in the wake of Vatican II. This will also be reflected in mainstream Catholic thought as well, particularly with the publication of *The Jerusalem Bible* in 1966 and new perspectives on the Hebraic dimensions in sacramental theology.

• Pius XII and the Holocaust

An area of intense debate among historians in recent decades centers around the Pontiff who served during the time of the Third Reich, Holocaust, and a portion of World War II, St. Pius XII (1876-1958). Born Eugenio Maria Giuseppe Giovanni Pacelli, Pius XII assumed the Papal office in 1939, six months before the beginning of the war. As a Cardinal, he served as the Vatican's Secretary of State to the Third Reich and negotiated the *Reichskonkordat* treaty in 1933 which was supposed to guarantee the rights of practicing Catholics in the Third Reich and included a prohibition of clergy being involved in politics as well as bishops taking an oath of loyalty to the leader of the Third Reich. However, the Nazi regime did not uphold its end of the agreement, and it led to the issuance of *Mit brennender Sorge* in 1937, an encyclical from Pius XI which protested Nazi violations of Catholic rights. At the death of Pius XI in February 1939, Pacelli was consecrated his successor as Pope Pius XII one month later. Given Pius XII's tenure as Pope during the war, it is conceivable that he would gain a controversial status, particularly as it related to Jews and the Holocaust.

A significant amount of the controversy surrounding the role of Pius XII and the conditions the Jews experienced under the Third Reich was generated some years after the war ended and Pius XII had passed on. Most sources cite the beginning of the controversy as being initiated by a play produced in 1963 entitled *The Deputy*. The writer, a left-leaning German by the name of Rolf Hochhuth, depicted Pius XII as essentially a Nazi collaborator who used moral cowardice as an excuse to be silent on the plight of Jews in the Holocaust.²⁴ However, due to the fact that other writers have pointed out that Catholics and other Christians were also targeted for persecution (particularly in occupied Poland, which would later lead to the martyrdom of St. Maximilian Kolbe as well as the Georgian Orthodox priest Grigol Peradze among others), it has been argued that Pius XII was necessarily more nuanced in his response to Nazi atrocities. One writer who points this out is Ethel Mary Tinneman, a former history professor at Holy Names College. Tinneman notes that Pius XII attempted to strike a balance between speaking out against Nazi atrocities while at the same time not endangering Catholics who were under Nazi rule – he rather addressed the horrors of war and a compassion for Polish Catholics and Jews in a 1942 Christmas address delivered via radio by noting some people “without any fault on their part, sometimes only because of their nationality or race,

²² Gillet, 216.

²³ Gillet, 171.

²⁴ David G. Dalin, *The Myth of Hitler's Pope* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2005): 2.

have been consigned to death or to slow decline.”²⁵ Another writer, Fr. Killian McDonnell, notes that even the German Jews themselves protested open condemnation of the German government’s actions by American and European Jewish groups due to fear that their own situation would worsen, and McDonnell makes the point that Pius XII was paying attention to this and acted accordingly with more nuanced measures than open condemnation in fear of reprisals by Hitler against both Catholics and Jews.²⁶ Another writer, William Patch, notes that from the earliest days of the Nazi Party as a fringe movement in Bavaria, then-Cardinal Pacelli expressed opposition to them by noting their tendencies toward violence against Catholics, their racism, and their associations with *völkisch* occultism which was in direct opposition to Catholic faith.²⁷ Pacelli was opposed to both the Marxist and Nazi forms of totalitarianism, as is the consensus of all the aforementioned authors, but his supposed “silence” on the atrocities of the Holocaust still sparks debate, particularly in recent decades.

A number of sources implicating Pius XII as a “collaborator” with the Nazis has been authored in the past 40 years, and some notable volumes merit mention. Of note is John Cornwell’s *Hitler’s Pope* (New York: Viking, 1999). Cornwell (b. 1940) is a British journalist and author who also was a former Catholic who had left the faith earlier. A significant percentage of Cornwell’s thesis was rebuffed by a book authored in 2005 by a Jewish rabbi, David Dalin, entitled *The Myth of Hitler’s Pope*. Dalin contends that Cornwell was relying on erroneous translations of texts attributed to Pacelli’s schoolmaster alleging that this individual instilled antisemitism into the future Pontiff, and he contends that rather than viewing Pius XII as an enemy, many Jewish leaders of the time considered him an advocate of Jewish rights based on a statement released by his predecessor, Pope Benedict XV, in 1915.²⁸ Other writers who have alleged that Pius XII was complicit in the Holocaust include Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair* (New York: Knopf, 2002) and James Carroll, *Constantine’s Sword: The Church and the Jews – A History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001). Goldhagen is an associate professor of government and social studies at Harvard, while James Carroll is a journalist and former Catholic priest who has been noted and criticized for expressing bias against the Catholic Church and Christianity in general – notable criticisms have come from historian Eamon Duffy, as well as from Robert P. Lockwood, who calls Carroll’s book a series of personal ruminations that build upon the allegations of others (such as Cornwell) as well as giving theological underpinning by referencing controversial liberal Catholic theologians such as Hans Küng.²⁹ These books and others like them are essentially authored from personal grievances in many instances rather than historical data, and they are generally not considered proper scholastic sources for academic inquiry.

For those who refute the antisemitic charges against Pius XII, the evidence cited is his general rejection of both Marxism and National Socialism, as well as his own efforts to protect Jews, particularly after Mussolini began under Hitler’s guidance to institute antisemitic measures in Italy. When a 1943 order to round up and deport Rome’s Jews to concentration camps in the Third Reich was implemented, an eyewitness and Holocaust survivor named Michael Tagliacozzo documented that 477 Jews were given refuge by the Pope inside the Vatican itself, and another 4,238 found refuge in a number of convents and monasteries within the city.³⁰ According to Tagliacozzo, this constituted

²⁵ Ethel Mary Tinneman, “The Silence of Pope Pius XII,” *Journal of Church and State* 21, no. 2 (1979): 268

²⁶ Killian McDonnell, “Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust: Fear of Reprisals and Generic Diplomacy,” *Gregorianum* 83, no. 2 (2002):314-315

²⁷William Patch, “The Catholic Church, the Third Reich, and the Origins of the Cold War: On the Utility and Limitations of Historical Evidence,” *The Journal of Modern History* 82, no. 2 (2010) :399

²⁸ Dalin, 55-56.

²⁹ Robert P. Lockwood, “Constantine’s Sword – A Review,” (2001) Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights website, <https://www.catholicleague.org/john-cornwell-constantines-sword-2/> (Accessed 9/23/2024).

³⁰ Dalin, 83.

approximately 80% of the Roman Jewish population then. Other documentation, including the encyclical *Mit brennender Sorge* which he contributed to as well as his reports reflecting criticism of early Nazi activists in the early 1920s, demonstrate that Pius XII was not friendly toward the Nazi regime. However, although his nuanced approach drew accusations of complicity and collaboration from critics, historians view Pius XII's response one of measured opposition to protect Catholics as well as Jews, and thus the debate and discussion over his legacy continues.

• Vatican II Documents on Jewish/Catholic Relations

In the subsequent years following the aftermath of World War II and the Holocaust, the Catholic Church was compelled to redefine its mission in the world, and as the Church did so, this would lead to the Vatican II Council called by Pope St. John XXIII in 1962. The roots of the Council rested for some time prior when John was elected Pope in 1958 after Pope St. Pius XII had passed on. Pope John XXIII felt the Church needed an “updating” for it to function in an increasingly secularized world, and in doing so an important aspect was how to relate to other religious communities. The Jews were viewed as special due to the fact they were the immediate predecessors to the Church, and he had a history of working with Jews who were fleeing Nazi persecution, particularly in his capacity as Apostolic Delegate to Turkey and Greece beginning in 1935. This led to a position adopted by both John XXIII and his successor, Pope Paul VI, in which the objective to reject any theological basis for antisemitism – including the “cursed by God” argument used by some polemicists – was prioritized as a schema of the Council itself.³¹ This would be further elaborated on two pivotal constitutions which were products of the Council, *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium*.

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church and the Modern World, under its Latin title *Gaudium et Spes*, is the most pivotal document that comes from Vatican II that establishes the goals of the rejection of antisemitism as well as respecting Jews as fellow human beings with subjectivity to rights. The central aspect of this document is personalist in approach and reflects the thinking later espoused by Pope St. John Paul II as a Personalist philosopher in his own right. A passage in the document itself expresses this sentiment on a more universal level:

Therefore, although rightful differences exist between men, the equal dignity of persons demands that a more humane and just condition of life be brought about. For excessive economic and social differences between the members of the one human family or population groups cause scandal, and militate against social justice, equity, the dignity of the human person, as well as social and international peace.³²

The evangelization aspect of the document is also evident as well, as is noted in this passage:

By virtue of her mission to shed on the entire world the radiance of the Gospel message, and to unify under one Spirit all men of whatever nation, race or culture, the Church stands forth as a sign of that brotherhood which allows honest dialogue and gives it vigor.³³

While these passages and the document itself does not address Jews specifically, it includes them in a greater universal context, as can be seen in other more specific documents. One of those, the declaration *Nostra Aetate* issued by Pope St. Paul VI in 1965 talks about the significance of the Jews to the Church. It notes that although the Church is theologically understood to be the “new Israel,” it by no means nullifies or forfeits the special status the Jews have in God's plan for humanity. The following passages from the document express this, as well as openly condemning antisemitism on religious grounds:

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 of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues.

³¹ John W. O'Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2008): 219.

³² *Gaudium et Spes* 29 (1965).

³³ *Gaudium et Spes* 92.

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ;(13) 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, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.³⁴

It should be noted here as well that Paul VI reiterated a sizable number of his predecessor's sentiments as expressed in *Decretum et Iudaeus* in 1961, and it was further elaborated and affirmed by Pope St. John Paul II in a meeting in Rome when he was quoted in adding a clarification to *Nostra Aetate*:

"you yourselves were concerned, during your sessions, with Catholic teaching and catechesis regarding Jews and Judaism' We should aim, in this field, that Catholic teaching at its different levels, in catechesis to children and young people, presents Jews and Judaism, not only in an honest and objective manner, free from prejudices and without any offences, but also with full awareness of the heritage common" to Jews and Christians.³⁵

As will be noted later, this would take a practical application regarding both sacramental theology as well as evangelization. This is particularly true as more Jewish converts to the Church began to show an appreciation for their heritage, and the Church would make provisions based on these stated positions for Jewish converts to Catholicism to retain their Jewish patrimony while still being fully Catholic.

The final document to examine here would be *Lumen Gentium* (The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church). While this Constitution addresses the specifics of the Church, it is also worth merit in that it stresses the *universality* of the Church as God's institution embracing people of all ethnicities. However, it notes the prominent place of the Jews in soteriological history in the following passage:

At all times and in every race, God has given welcome to whosoever fears Him and does what is right. God, however, does not make men holy and save them merely as individuals, without bond or link between one another. Rather has it pleased Him to bring men together as one people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness. He therefore chose the race of Israel as a people unto Himself. With it He set up a covenant. Step by step He taught and prepared this people, making known in its history both Himself and the decree of His will and making it holy unto Himself. All these things, however, were done by way of preparation and as a figure of that new and perfect covenant, which was to be ratified in Christ, and of that fuller revelation which was to be given through the Word of God Himself made flesh. "Behold the days shall come saith the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel, and with the house of Judah . . . I will give my law in their bowels, and I will write it in their heart, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people . . . For all of them shall know Me, from the least of them even to the greatest, saith the Lord. Christ instituted this new covenant, the New Testament, which is to say, in His Blood, calling together a people made up of Jew and gentile, making them one, not according to the flesh but in the Spirit.

³⁴ *Nostra Aetate* 4

³⁵ Pope John Paul II, "NOTES ON THE CORRECT WAY TO PRESENT THE JEWS AND JUDAISM IN PREACHING AND CATECHESIS IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH" <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/it/commissione-per-i-rapporti-religiosi-con-l-ebraismo/commissione-per-i-rapporti-religiosi-con-l-ebraismo-crre/documenti-della-commissione/sussidi-per-una-corretta-presentazione-degli-ebrei-ed-ebraismo/en.html> (March 6, 1982).

This was to be the new People of God. For those who believe in Christ, who are reborn not from a perishable but from an imperishable seed through the word of the living God, not from the flesh but from water and the Holy Spirit, are finally established as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people . . . who in times past were not a people but are now the people of God”.³⁶

The significance of this document is that it affirms two earlier convictions held over the centuries by the Catholic Church:

1. The Jews were a foreshadow of the Church.
2. God’s eternal promises to natural Israel will be realized in the future by their ingrafting into spiritual Israel (the Church).

The language of the documents is also covenantal in a real sense as well, given that the future conversion of the Jews during the final days would be understood as the fulfillment of God’s covenant with them. Likewise, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirms similar statements without deviation from historical context. It states that over the centuries following Christ’s Incarnation the Jews were given a “hardening of heart” in regard to the true identity of Christ until such a time called “the fulness of the Gentiles” is fulfilled – this is based on the Scriptural premise in Romans 11:12 as well as Luke 21:24.³⁷ This is also recognized as an objective toward similar goals on the part of both the Jews and the Church, primarily the coming (or return) of the Messiah. This is because unlike other religious traditions, the Church affirms that the Jews have already had a response to God’s revelation.³⁸ Therefore, the attitude of the Church after Vatican II was one of fraternity and charity towards the Jews, especially since the horrors of the Holocaust were still fresh in the minds of its victims.

This new conciliatory tone towards the Jews by the Church in the post-conciliar period was one that both revised classic positions on the Jews the Church had held for centuries while still maintaining the core conviction of those positions. The Jews were still seen as having incomplete revelation, but they were recognized as having revelation regardless which gave a more positive approach to the issues. This new openness on the part of the Church to the Jews would soon be reflected in Catholic theology as well, Scott Hahn’s emphasis on covenant in his writings.

Another theologian who in recent decades began to make connections between the Church and Jews regarding both Eucharistic theology as well as Mariology is Brant Pitre. His 2011 book, *Jesus, and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*, was a study that sought to highlight the connection between the Passover *Seder* and the Eucharist. Capitalizing on certain early Jewish writings of the Messiah, Pitre noted that they were not looking for just a king, but rather a prophet and worker of miracles as well. He notes that much of this literature, as well as a central theme of the Old Testament, was for both the restoration of natural Israel as well as for the ingathering of Gentile nations as one under a single Messiah.³⁹ This emphasis on the rediscovery of the Jewish roots of the Catholic faith initially gained momentum with the publication of *The Jerusalem Bible* in 1966, and in time it would also begin to attract Jewish converts who would organize formal apostolates beginning in the 1980s.

• Overview of the Hebrew Catholic Movement

While there have been Jewish converts to Christianity throughout Christian history, there was not any organized effort to retain Jewish identity while being fully integrated into the Church. While there were millions of “Crypto-Jews” during the Inquisition period, many of them would not be considered converts but rather took an outward affirmation to Christianity while retaining their Jewish practices to protect themselves from the “Inquisitors.” This was due to the writings of Petrus Alfonsi mentioned earlier, which communicated the sentiment that Jewish practices were anathema and somehow opposed to Church dogma. This began to change in the 19th century when a concerted

³⁶ *Lumen Gentium* 9.

³⁷ CCC 674.

³⁸ CCC 839-840.

³⁹ Brant Pitre, *Jesus, and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* (New York: Doubleday, 2011): 41-42.

effort began initially among Protestant denominations to evangelize Jews. Those efforts would later evolve into Messianic Judaism.

Although initially called “Hebrew Christians,” Jewish converts began to assert a more Hebraic identity due to the efforts of John Toland (1670-1722), an Irish rationalist philosopher who was also a convert to Protestantism from the Catholic Church. Although Toland was by no means an orthodox Christian (he identified as embracing a sort of “Christian pantheism”) he nonetheless enunciated the position that “Jewish Christians” should be recognized as such in his 1718 book *Nazarenus*. In this volume, Toland cites St. Justin Martyr’s assessment of Jewish converts and suggests based on observation that a Jew may observe the ceremonial laws and traditions of his or her faith while following Christ, provided they do not attempt to force those on their Gentile Christian brethren.⁴⁰ Messianic Jewish scholar David Stern elaborates on this by noting that what Toland was suggesting is that Jews who became Christians should continue Torah observance to preserve their identity.⁴¹ Stern also credits Toland’s observations as marking the beginnings of the Messianic movement.⁴² Three other pivotal factors also helped to define Messianic Judaism: the Messianic teachings of Hungarian rabbi Isaac Lichtenstein in the late 19th century, the founding of one of the first Messianic congregations in Ukraine by Josef Rabinovitch, and the publication of B.Z. Sobel’s book *Hebrew Christianity: The Thirteenth Tribe* in 1974.⁴³ However, these early efforts tended to attract primarily marginalized Jews and many other converts of the time were assimilated into various Christian denominations and the Catholic and Orthodox Churches. Major changes began to happen in the mid-20th century however that would transform Jewish evangelism.

A combination of factors – the vivid recall of the Holocaust, Vatican II reforms, and the rise of the Charismatic movement in all denominational traditions of Christianity and the subsequent “Jesus People” movement that evolved from that – led to a rethinking of Jewish/Christian relations, and a number of Jews began to examine Christianity more seriously due in part to the proliferation of parachurch organizations such as Jews for Jesus. The publication of *The Jerusalem Bible* in 1966 was also a factor in these developments, specifically in the Catholic Church. As the Catholic Church began experiencing a revival of Hebrew studies and a Hebraic connection to sacramental theology, there also grew from that a new interest in Jewish evangelism based upon the premise noted earlier that there was to be a mass conversion of the Jews prior to the rise of the Antichrist. This led to two notable apostolates coming into existence within the Catholic Church which were specifically oriented toward Jewish converts.

The first of these was the establishment of the Saint James Vicariate for Hebrew-Speaking Communities established by the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem in 1955 as the “Association of St. James.” It became an autonomous Vicariate in 2013, and now constitutes several communities of Jewish-heritage Catholics as well as Arab Catholics throughout Israel.⁴⁴ The work of this began much earlier under Fr. Josef Stiassny (1920-2007) of the Fathers of Sion,⁴⁵ as well as with an earlier Jewish convert to Catholicism, Miriam Rookmaaker-van Leer (1914-2010), who in the unusual position of being a Catholic Christian Zionist responsible for winning over Monsignor Anton Ramselaar to the

⁴⁰ John Toland, *Nazarenus* (London: J. Brotherton, J. Roberts, and A. Dodd Publishing, 1718):41

⁴¹ David Stern, *Messianic Judaism: A Modern Movement with an Ancient Past* (Clarksville, MD: Lederer Books, 2007): 58.

⁴² Stern, 74.

⁴³ Stern, 74-75.

⁴⁴ Piotr Zelazko, “What Is the St. James Vicariate for Hebrew-Speaking Catholics?” *Studium Theologicum Salesianum* website, <https://jerusalem.unisal.it/what-is-saint-james-vicariate-for-hebrew-speaking-catholics/#:~:text=Since%202013%2C%20the%20Saint%20James%20Vicariate%20constitutes%20an,The%20Vicariate%20includes%20communities%20of%20Russian%20speaking%20faithful>, October 13, 2021 (Accessed September 26, 2024).

⁴⁵ <https://www.catholic.co.il/?cat=sjv&view=article&id=10171> (Accessed September 26, 2024).

idea of a unique Jewish Catholic movement.⁴⁶ Father Stiasny was himself a convert of Jewish heritage, and co-founded the Society of St. James in 1955 with another priest of Hebraic heritage, Fr. Roger Hene (1918-1979).⁴⁷ Today the Vicariate of St. James is led by its Patriarchal Vicar, Fr. Piotr Zelazko, and in addition to Hebrew-speaking communities it also encompasses a number of Russian-speaking communities throughout Israel as well. It is currently headquartered in the St. Simeon and Ann House in Jerusalem.⁴⁸

A second apostolate that came into being is the Association of Hebrew Catholics, founded in 1979 by Fr. Elias Friedman, a South African Carmelite priest of Jewish background who was received into the Catholic Church in 1943 while serving as a doctor in the South African Medical Corps during World War II. Four years after his conversion, he became a Carmelite priest and authored his first book, *The Redemption of Israel*.⁴⁹ His most noted book however is *Jewish Identity*, published in 1987. A couple of specifics will be discussed from this book later as they relate to the religious vs. ethnic identity of Jewish Catholics.

Although membership statistics of the AHC are not currently available, it does publish a bimonthly journal, *The Hebrew Catholic*, as well as operating Miriam Press, which publishes literature specific to the movement. It also initiated in the early 21st century a network of home fellowships called *Havurahs*, as well as creating a *Haggadah* for Hebrew Catholics to utilize as a Passover resource. It remains the most prominent organization of Catholics of Jewish heritage, and in recent decades it has also initiated a dialogue with its Messianic Jewish counterparts in 2018 at the First International-Interconfessional Congress of Jewish Disciples of Yeshua in Dallas, convened under the auspices of the Helsinki Consultation on Jewish Continuity in the Body of Christ. The participants adopted the Dallas Resolution at this congress, which affirms the following:

1. Intercommunion among Jewish believers in Christ is integral to strengthen faith and witness.
2. The loss of the Hebraic dimension of Christian faith is a wound that must be healed.⁵⁰

The interconfessional aspect of Jewish Christians is in the spirit of *Gaudium et Spes* and *Nostra Aetate*, and it represents a new dimension in both Jewish/Christian relations as well as among Jewish Christians of different traditions within Christendom. Given this historical background, it is now integral to examine how Hebrew Catholics view themselves as a conclusion to the discussion.

Conclusion – Jewish Identity and the Culmination of Centuries of Catholic Teaching Regarding Jews

In evaluating the Catholic (and by extension Eastern Orthodox) response to Judaism, there are two things that become apparent. First, a percentage of the allegations of antisemitism were theological disputes that many Church writers had with Judaism as a religion. While it is certainly true that there were pogroms and other atrocities committed under the name of Christianity against Jewish communities, no evidence suggests that the Church encouraged such actions. On the contrary,

⁴⁶ Marcel J.H.M. Poorthuis, "The Diplomat and Pioneer in Jewish-Catholic Relations Prior to *Nostra Aetate*: Jo Willebrands and Toon Ramselaar," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 49, no. 3 (2014):474.

⁴⁷ Poorthuis, 479.

⁴⁸ Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, "St. James Vicariate," <https://www.lpj.org/en/the-patriarchate/diocese/vicariates/saint-james-vicariate-1> (Accessed September 26, 2024).

⁴⁹ Association of Hebrew Catholics website, "Brief Introduction," <https://www.hebrewcatholic.net/brief-introduction/> (Accessed September 26, 2024).

⁵⁰ Deborah Pardo-Kaplan (2018), "First International/Interconfessional Congress of the Jewish Disciples of Yeshua, Dallas, TX, August 27-30, 2018," Helsinki Consultation Website, <http://helsinkiconsultation.squarespace.com/jsessionid=1C65E80EB99787A8CC7E4211B738DBF3.v5-web019> (Accessed September 26, 2024).

the evidence shows that certain perpetrators of such atrocities utilized religious language as a justification for their actions. Upon reading the source material, however, there are two conclusions which can be drawn.

First, a sampling of the polemical literature that was promulgated throughout the centuries of the Church had more to do with theological disagreements than they did condemnation of the Jews as a people. The rejection of Christ as Savior and God incarnate, the Trinity, and other theological topics were often the focus of polemical discourse. However, the Church has always affirmed that the Jews were not to be hated as a people, and that conversion was possible and an act of charity regarding Jews.

Second, despite the actions of certain politicians and theologians who used the name of Christianity as a means of persecution, for the most part many Patristic and other writers of the Church saw the Jews as occupying a special place in the divine plan. The idea of a future mass conversion of the Jews was seen as a sign of God's grace and part of the eternal promises of salvation, given the pivotal role the Jews played in soteriological history. Therefore, prophetic literature existed which affirmed this special place for the Jews in God's plan.

The realities of the atrocity of the Holocaust, the re-establishment of the state of Israel, and the more ecumenical focus of Vatican II have also impacted Catholic attitudes toward Jews in particular. Judaism is viewed as the "older brother" of the Church in Church documents after Vatican II, and Jews are viewed as participating in the divine revelation of God to humankind. Thus, a more conciliatory and charitable approach to Judaism has been the standard in Catholic ecumenical dialogue in recent decades. This openness has also encouraged a number of Catholics to re-examine their own traditions considering Hebraic heritage, and more emphasis on the Jewish contributions to sacramental theology has been displayed in recent literature (notably Brant Pitre's work) and thus it gives a more nuanced appreciation of the Old Testament links to Christian spirituality. This also has aided in the conversion of a number of Jews to both Protestant and Catholic faiths in recent years, leading to the rise of the Hebrew Catholic movement and to Messianic Judaism among Protestant Evangelicals. Even in Eastern Orthodox traditions, notable converts (Alexander Men, James Bernstein) are worth merit of explanation. Those who study eschatology see this as a sort of "first fruits" of the conversion of "all Israel" to its Messiah.

The complexities of Jewish/Catholic relations are worth further discourse, and they will continue to generate dialogue as well as potential debate as movements such as the Hebrew Catholics grow in coming decades. This is significant in the fields of both eschatology and in Sacramental Theology and demonstrate that there has been a shift in Catholic/Jewish dialogue in a more positive dimension. This shift is growing and will merit more study and discourse in the future.

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