
Christian Anti-Semitism

By Clarence H. Wagner, Jr., *Jerusalem Courier*, Volume 10, No. 4, 1992

In the perspective of the history of the last 2,000 years, I feel it is safe to say that organizations and individual Christians expressing Christian solidarity with the Jewish people, and educating the Church about the Jewish roots of the Christian faith are an historical rarity. Let me put it in perspective: If a meeting to teach Christians about Jews, Judaism, Jewish roots of Christianity, or to celebrate the Levitical Feasts were to have taken place during approximately 1,800 years of the nearly 2,000 years Church history, Christians would be subject to excommunication at best, and in many cases death. And, any member of the Jewish community participating in the program or just attending would be considered Judaisers and penalized with certain death from Church authorities. Certainly an article of this kind was not allowed either. While history is complex and there were certain historical moments of religious freedom, the above observation can be considered an accurate generalization. Fortunately, today we are free to come together and learn from one another.

I have been given the arduous task of reviewing 2,000 years of Jewish-Christian relations. It would be much easier to do this if we had a whole semester to study the various periods of Church history in the developing Western world. This is not intended to be a mere history lesson, but a lesson in history. Furthermore, I am not trying to impose guilt on anyone, for we are exceptions to the historical rule. On the other hand, I am trying to instill a sense of responsibility so that we will not allow history to repeat itself.

During this presentation, I will be referring to early Church fathers, the Catholic Church, Martin Luther, and other Church leaders and Church edicts. Please don't be offended by the historical facts presented. They are being presented to help us to learn, grow, and move ahead in our faith walk, not to insult any particular denomination or group. So, let's get started on our journey into understanding.

Let's Begin Our Journey With the First Three Centuries A.D.

In the first century A.D. the Church was well-connected to its Jewish roots, and Jesus did not intend for it to be any other way. After all, Jesus is Jewish and the basis of His teaching is consistent with the Hebrew Scriptures. In Matthew 5:17, 18 He states: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished."

It is also known that the writers of the New Testament were Jewish, and the apostles and early disciples were Jewish. They worshipped on Shabbat (Sabbath), celebrated the feasts, and attended Synagogue. Even the membership of the early Church in Jerusalem

and surrounding Judea, Samaria, and Galilee was predominately Jewish, as we know that no non-Jewish names appeared in leadership of the Jerusalem church until after 135 A.D. when a Greek name appears. We will see why this happened in a moment.

Congregations in other parts of the Roman Empire also had relatively strong Jewish or Hebraic roots, as they responded to guidance from the Jerusalem School of Thought, so illustrated by the names of many of the New Testament epistles...the Letters to the Corinthians, Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians. Also, the writers of the other Epistles were connected to the Jewish congregation.

So, what happened to cause such a split between the Christian and Jewish communities? Initially it began as a result of religious and social differences.

Before the first Jewish revolt in 66 A.D., Christianity was basically a sect of Judaism, as were the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. The Christians were also known as Nazarenes. Before the Temple was destroyed, and Jerusalem was razed by the Romans in 70 A.D., there was room for debate within Judaism in the bustling, cosmopolitan city of Jerusalem. However, 1) according to David Rausch in his new book, *A Legacy of Hatred*, the Roman intrusion into Judea, and the widespread acceptance of Christianity by the Gentiles complicated the history of Jewish Christianity. 2) The Roman wars against the Jews not only destroyed the Temple and Jerusalem, but also resulted in Jerusalem's relinquishing her position as a center of Christian faith in the Roman world. In addition, 3) the rapid acceptance of Christianity among the Gentiles led to an early conflict between the church and synagogue. The Gentile Christians interpreted the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem as a sign that God had abandoned Judaism, and that He had provided the Gentiles freedom to develop their own Christian theology in a setting free from Jerusalem's influence.

The Jewish sages who managed to survive the revolt assembled in Jabneh (Yavneh), a city in the Sharon Plains near Joppa, and decided that the Bet Hillel School, most closely linked to the Pharisaic sect of Judaism, would be adopted and practiced as Halacha or Law. (The Pharisaic teachings were most interested in the relationship of each individual to God, and encouraged the masses to holiness based on a scrupulous observance of the Torah.) Even though Pharisaic Judaism had shown tolerance to Judeo-Christians or Nazarenes prior to the destruction, the assembly at Jabneh concluded a separation between Christianity and Judaism. Unfortunately, the Judeo-Christians had disassociated themselves from the war against the Romans and from the tragedy that had come upon the nation. Believing that the repression of the revolt by the Romans was a sign of the end, they ran off to Pella, east of the Jordan River, leaving their fellow Jews to fend for themselves.

Later, in 132 A.D., when Bar Kochba orchestrated the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome, the Judeo-Christians had another reason to not participate. Bar Kochba was named the Messiah by Rabbi Akiva. Since the Christians saw Jesus as Messiah, to participate in the revolt under the leadership of Bar Kochba would be a denial of their beliefs. When the revolt was crushed by the Emperor Hadrian in 135 A.D., Hadrian expelled all Jews

from Jerusalem, allowing them only to return one day each year, on *Tisha B'Av*, to mourn the destruction of the Temple. Thus, the recording of the first Greek name in leadership of the Jerusalem Church, as the Romans allowed no Jews to enter the city. Hadrian also rebuilt Jerusalem into a Roman city and changed its name to *Aelia Capitolina*, and Judea to *Syria Palestina* (Palestine). This was done to erase any Jewish connection with the city of Jerusalem and the land of Israel.

By this time, the Church had effectively separated itself from Judaism. Theological and political power moved from Jewish Christian leaders to centers of Gentile Christian leadership such as Alexandria, Rome, and Antioch. It is important to understand this change, because it influenced the early Church Fathers to make anti-Jewish statements.

As the church spread far and wide within the Roman Empire, and its membership was increasingly non-Jewish, Greek and Roman thought began to creep in and completely change the orientation of Biblical interpretation through a Greek mindset and not a Jewish or Hebraic mindset. This would later result in many heresies, some of which the Church is still practicing.

Once Christianity and Judaism began to take separate paths, the void became greater and greater. The Jews had been effectively suppressed by the Romans; however, Christianity was spreading quickly. This became a major concern to Rome and ultimate political pressure became a third factor in the widening rift between Christians and Jews. Under Roman law, Judaism was considered a *religio licita*, a legal religion, as it postdated Rome. To unify the Roman Empires, everyone was to worship the Roman gods and sacrificed to the Emperor as a god. Obviously, the Christians could not succumb to this pagan worship and refused. It was during this period that we find the Christians being used for sport in the Roman coliseums and circuses, as gladiators, or thrown to the lions. The Emperor Nero even used them as human torches to light up his gardens at night, setting Christians afire after dipping them in pitch. The symbol of the fish, not the cross, and crossing one's finger was used by Christians between one another as an identification sign during this period.

In order to try to alleviate this persecution, Christian apologists tried in vain to convince Rome that Christianity was an extension of Judaism. However, Rome was not convinced. The resulting persecutions and frustrations of the Christians bred an animosity towards the Jewish community who was free to worship without persecution.

This animosity was reflected in the writings of the Church Fathers. For example, Eusebius wrote that the promises of the Hebrew Scriptures were for Christians and not the Jews, and the curses were for the Jews. He argued that the Church was the continuation of the Old Testament and thus superseded Judaism. The young Church declared itself to be the true Israel, or "Israel according to the Spirit" heir to the divine promises and found it essential to discredit the "Israel according to the flesh" to prove that God had cast away His people and transferred His love to the Christians.

In this, we find the beginnings of a Replacement Theology which placed the Church triumphant over the vanquished Judaism and Israel. This replacement theory became one of the main foundations on which Christian anti-Semitism was based, even to this day. Incidentally, the N.T. speaks of the Church being grafted in, adopted sons of Abraham and spiritual Israel, NOT usurpers of the covenant and a replacer of physical Israel.

At the beginning of the 4th century, a monumental event occurred for the Church. In 306 A.D., Constantine became the first Christian Roman Emperor. At first, he accorded Jews the same religious rights as Christians. However, about 312 A.D., he made Christianity the official religion of the Empire. This signaled the end of the persecution of Christians, but the beginning of the persecution of the Jewish people.

In 313 A.D., the Edict of Mila outlawed synagogues, and in 315 another edict allowed the burning of Jews if convicted of breaking the law.

- * The ancient privileges granted to the Jews were withdrawn
- * Rabbinical jurisdiction was abolished or severely curtailed
- * Proselytism was prohibited and made punishable by death
- * Jews were excluded from holding high office or a military career

In 321 A.D., Constantine decreed all business should cease on "the honored day of the sun" and so by substituting another day for worship, he further advanced the split.

Overnight, Christianity was given the power of the state. Instead of the Church taking this opportunity to spread its Gospel message in love, it truly became the Church triumphant, ready to vanquish its foes. After 312, the writings of the Church Fathers changed in character. No longer were they on the defensive and apologetic, but aggressive, and directed its venom at everyone "outside of the flock," in particular the Jewish people.

The Middle Ages

Now let's look at the next 700 years of history, from the time of Constantine to the First Crusade in 1096 A.D.

This period is known as the Middle Ages, or Dark Ages. The Holy Roman Empire was seeking to expand the new faith in the pagan tribes of Western Europe, the Ostrogoths in the North and East, the Visigoths in the West, and the Frankish Empire which extended from the Mediterranean Sea to the North Sea, and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Elbe River, roughly the greater area including and surrounding France today.

Early in this period, we find examples of anti-Jewish bias in Church literature. At the end of the 4th century, the Bishop of Antioch, Chrysostom, a great orator, wrote a series of eight sermons against the Jews. He had seen Christian talking with Jewish people, taking

oaths in front of the Ark, and some were keeping the Jewish feasts. He wanted this to stop in an effort to bring his people back to what he called "the true faith," and the Jews became the whipping boy for his sermon series. To quote him, "The synagogue is not only a brothel and a theater; it is also a den of robbers and a lodging for wild beasts. No Jew adores God."

One can easily see that a Jewish Christian who wanted to hold on to his heritage, or a Gentile Christian who wanted to learn more about the parent of Christianity, would have found it extremely difficult under this pressure. Further, Chrysostom sought to separate Christianity totally from Judaism. He wrote in his 4th Discourse, "I have said enough against those who say they are on our side but are eager to follow the Jewish rites... it is against the Jews that I wish to draw up my battle."

Another unfortunate contribution Chrysostom made to Christian anti-Semitism was in holding the whole Jewish people culpable for the killing of Christ. The label of "Christ-killers" as applied to the Jewish people was to be reaffirmed by anti-Semites for the next 16 centuries.

Let's look at this issue for a moment and squash it once and for all. To justify this label of "Christ-killer," Matthew 27:25 has been cited. In this passage, the Jewish people are shown admitting their collective responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus, "Then answered all the people and said, His blood be upon us and our children..."

First, the collective responsibility of an entire people for all generations cannot be validated by the words of a few. They were speaking for themselves, not all Israel.

Secondly, if they were held responsible for the death of Jesus for their participation, then the non-Jewish world is also guilty of the same responsibility because it was a Roman Gentile soldier who actually carried out the crucifixion and drove the nails. Well, if not all Gentiles, at least we can hold it against all Italians... I think you can see how ludicrous this argument is.

Thirdly, Jesus willingly gave Himself up to the cross to die for the sins of mankind and thus our sin was what drove Him to the cross. Not a Jewish mob or a Roman army.

And, fourthly, before Jesus died, He said, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." If Jesus forgave both the Jewish and Roman players in this event, then who are we to do any less?

Moving ahead in this period of the Middle Ages, we find some Church leaders perplexed. If the Jews and Judaism were cursed by God, as they had been teaching for centuries, then how can you explain their existence?

Augustine tackled this issue. He elaborated on the doctrine that represents the Jews and the nation which was a "witness" to the truth of Christianity. Their existence was further justified by the service they rendered to the Christian truth, in attesting through their

humiliation, the triumph of the church over the synagogue. Witness people - slaves and servants who should be humbled.

The monarchs of the Holy Roman Empire thus regarded the Jews as serfs of the chamber (*servi camerae*), and utilized them as slave librarians to maintain Hebrew writings. They also utilized the services of Jews in another enterprise - usury, or money-lending. The loaning of money was necessary to a growing economy. However, usury was considered as endangering to the eternal salvation of the Christian, and thus forbidden. So, the Church endorsed the practice of lending by Jews, for, according to their reasoning, their souls were lost in any case. Much later, the Jewish people were utilized by the Western countries as trade agents in commerce, and thus we see how the Jewish people found their way into the fields of banking and commerce.

So, by the Middle Ages, the ideological arsenal of Christian anti-Semitism was completely established. From a social standpoint, the deterioration of the Jewish position in society was only beginning its decline. During this early period, the virulent judeophobia was primarily limited to the clergy who were always trying to keep their flocks away from the Jews. However, later, the rank and file growing middle class would be the main source of anti-Semitic activity.

The Crusades

Now, let us move to the year 1096, and the First Crusade. This was a period of strife for the Church. There were two Popes, one being an anti-Pope. When one died, the other, Urban II, needed a unifying cause and called for a Crusade or Holy War against the Moslems in the Holy Land who were persecuting Christians and desecrating the holy places and Jerusalem.

In the summer of 1096, an undisciplined rabble of 200,000 peasants and artisans had assembled in France. However, there were no Moslems near at hand, so the champions of the cross turned their attention to the Jews, who, in their eyes, were just as much "infidels" and enemies of Christianity as the Moslems. They found they could commence the Crusade on the spot. Cruelty, instead of charity, began at home. As the Crusaders marched through Europe on their way to the Holy Land, they literally raped, pillaged, and plundered. Faced with the wild cries of the Crusaders, "The Jews crucified our Savior, and they must return to Him or die," the Jews had the alternative of baptism or death. Thousands preferred the death of martyrs.

While the Church did not officially sanction this activity, it nevertheless took place. Many local clergymen and bishops gave the Jews protection and refuge from the rabble. Unfortunately, others actually participated in the executions.

To share with you just one example, at Mayence, the Archbishop invited 1,300 Jews into his palace for refuge. This proved to be an invitation to slaughter, for under his supervision, they were all killed, and he even shared in the spoils confiscated from the corpses. Incidentally, Emperor Henry IV heard of this massacre, confiscated the property

of the Archbishop, and permitted the Jews who had been forcibly baptized to return to Judaism.

When the Crusaders finally arrived in Jerusalem, they were 600,000 strong. They besieged the city and on July 15, 1099 broke through the walls. They killed the Moslems in the city and herded the Jews into the synagogue. Crusaders with shields decorated with large crosses placed wood around the synagogue and burned alive all inside as they sang, "Christ, We Adore Thee!"

Is it any wonder that the cross is a symbol of hatred and death for the Jewish people, not love, reconciliation, and salvation? The cross has literally been taken and used as a sword against the Jewish people.

In all, there were nine Crusades and they were finished in 1291 when the Moslems once again took possession of the Holy Land.

Fourth Lateran Council

In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council was held. During their council, the doctrine of Transubstantiation was crystallized. Transubstantiation is the doctrine of the flesh and blood of Christ become present in the consecrated host and wine. This doctrine is still prevalent today in the Catholic Church. The result of this doctrine ultimately became a new source of Christian anti-Semitism.

1) For centuries to follow, accusations of host desecration by Jews were circulated. The host desecration libel is that the Jewish people would try to steal a consecrated host and then stab, torment, and burn it in an effort to recrucify Christ. Many illustrated stories showing this fabricated phenomenon were circulated, particularly in Germany, during the 140 and 1500s. This teaching is not dead. As a personal example, in the mid-1970s, a Catholic friend's children came home from Catholic parochial school (in Boston, MA) with this story they were told to teach them respect for the communion host (bread): "A Catholic boy and a Jewish boy went into a Catholic church and the Jewish boy talked the Christian boy into stealing a communion host. They took it home and went into a closet and stuck it with a pin. The host began to bleed, filled up the closet with blood, and drowned the boys!" This is a variation of the old blood libel charge, particularly since the culprit in the story is a Jew.

2) An offshoot of the host desecration libel is the blood libel. The blood libel contends that Jews murder non-Jews, particularly Christians, in order to obtain blood for the Passover or other rituals. It was also purported that Jews needed to drink Christian blood so that their appearance could remain human looking, and Christian blood would also help eliminate the distinctive (*foetor judaicus*) Jewish smell, which was converse to the "odor of sanctity" possessed by Christians. Anyone possessing knowledge of Jewish dietary laws would know that Jewish people are forbidden to eat blood, if it were not already obvious that these accusations are completely ludicrous. Unfortunately, it shows

the complete ignorance of Jewish lifestyle, and lack of Christian-Jewish relations, prevalent in that day.

3) Another canon promulgated by the Fourth Lateran Council required Jews to wear a distinguishing mark. The form of the mark varied in different countries, but usually took the form of a badge, or a three-cornered or pointed hat. In this way, you could be sure not to inadvertently come into contact with Jewish people. Even in Medieval art Jews were depicted with a circle on their clothing or pointed hats.

During this period, many lay and ecclesiastical authorities tried to protect the Jewish community from persecution. Much of the anti-Semitism was now promoted by a rising middle-class.

The Inquisition

The next historical event to blemish world history is the infamous Inquisition. According to Canon Law, the Inquisition was not authorized to interfere in the internal affairs of the Jews, but to seek out Christian heretics who had backslidden. However, this law was rescinded on the ground that the presence of Jews causes heresy to develop in the Christian communities.

In the mid-1400s, the Spanish Inquisition had its beginnings. In Spain, tens of thousands of Jews had been forced to be baptized. Because of this, they were considered Christians and expected to behave as Christians. These baptized Jews were known as *Convers* or New Christians. If a mouse is caught in a cookie jar, this does not make him a cookie. So, too, force-baptizing anyone does not make him a Christian.

These *Convers* were thus still practicing many Jewish customs, such as lighting candles on Friday evening, changing the linen on the Sabbath, abstaining from pork and scaleless fish, observing the Feast Days, etc. To be caught practicing any one of 37 customs was grounds to be brought before the Inquisition court. Christians were to watch for these signs and report any such backsliders. Once before the court, there was no way out of punishment:

- * If you confessed and did not repent, you were burned alive.
- * If you confessed and repented, you were publicly humiliated. Any subsequent slip-ups resulted in certain death.
- * If you did not confess, even if you were innocent, you were tortured until you confessed and then burned.

The Church was not allowed to execute the victim, so they passed them to a secular arm of the Inquisition Court. Blood was not allowed to be shed, thus the burning. This they justified by a text from John 15:6, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

Incidentally, all property was confiscated, enriching the Inquisition Court.

Practicing Jews (not *Converos*) were ultimately brought to the Inquisition Courts, as it was believed that they were Judaizers, and a bad influence on the *Converos*. They too were tried and burned.

The Inquisition in Spain lasted from 1481 - 1820. Over 350,000 Jews suffered punishment.

The Reformation

Finally, a breath of fresh air. Reformers recognized many errors inherent in the Church and challenged the leadership, the Pope, the bishops, the priests - the whole ecclesiastical body. The Reformation had important complex and even contradictory repercussions on the evolution of anti-Semitism.

One branch of Protestantism, namely the Calvinists and their off-shoots, proved less judeophobic than Catholicism until the 20th century.

The other branch, Lutheranism, became increasingly anti-Semitic.

An immediate consequence of the Reformation was to aggravate the position of the Jews in regions which remained Roman Catholic. The Popes were determined to restore order by the strict application of Canon Law. This naturally affected the Jewish people negatively. One result was that from the second half of the 16th century, *GHETTOS* were introduced, at first in Italy, and afterward in the Austrian Empire. The Ghetto was actually the name of an island in Venice which was an abandoned foundry. The Jews of Venice were rounded up and moved to this location where they could be separated and watched. Adolph Hitler reinstated the ghetto in the Third Reich for the same purpose. G.E. Roberti, an 18th century Catholic publicist, stated: "A Jewish ghetto is a better proof of the truth of the religion of Jesus Christ than a whole school of theologians."

Now, let us look at the Lutheran branch of the Protestant Church. Martin Luther is the father of Lutheranism. During the first period of his ministry, 1513 - 1523, Luther often condemned the persecution of the Jews and recommended a more tolerant policy toward them, based on the spirit of true brotherhood. In 1523, he wrote a pamphlet, *That Christ Was Born a Jew*, in which he argued that the Jews, who were from the same stock as the founder of Christianity, had been right in refusing to accept the "papal paganism" presented to them as Christianity. He added, "If I had been a Jew and had seen such fools and blockheads teach the Christian faith, I should rather have turned into a pig than become a Christian."

However, when they did not accept his version of Christianity either, he turned increasingly hostile to the Jewish people. By the 1530s he referred to the Jewish people as "the stiff-necked Jews, iron hearted and stubborn as the devil," in his Table Talk series.

Finally, it happened. He printed two pamphlets: in 1542, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, and in 1543, *On the Shem Hamephoras* (The Ineffable Name). These two pamphlets contain some of the most abhorrent and vile language written against the Jewish people.

Five hundred years later, Hitler found some of his ideas and justifications for the treatment of the Jewish people and the Holocaust in these writings. After all, if the father of the Lutheran Church stated these things, well then...(be sure your sins will find you out).

Enlightenment

As we move into the era of Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries, we find the Jewish people still suffering from a legacy of prejudice. For as long as Christianity held unchallenged sway in Europe, Jews could exist only on the margin of European social life. The term "Wandering Jew" found its definition in the fact that the Jewish people were forced from country to country, and city to city... the scapegoat for the ills of the world, no property, occupations of intellect, nor any wealth with them.

When the people of Europe were dying from the Black Death Bubonic Plague, The Jews were blamed for poisoning the wells. In their lack of knowledge regarding germs and disease, and upon seeing the Jewish people free from infection for the most part (which was due to their dietary habits), their conclusion was that the Jews were the source of the problem.

After all, the Jews were still pictured as evil and prompted by the devil to do evil deeds. Or, they were caricaturized with a pointed tail, horns, and devilish features.

As we move into the era of emancipation, the newer 19th century version of anti-Semitism arose on a soil which had been well-watered for many centuries in Europe by Christian theology, and more important, popular myths about the Jewish people. The Christian centuries had persecuted Jews for theological reasons, but this "teaching of contempt" had set the seal on the most ancient of all anti-Semitic themes: that the Jews were a uniquely alien element within human society.

The Pogroms

From 1881 to 1921 there was a series of pogroms in Russia. The pogroms were a series of attacks, accompanied by destruction, the looting of property, murder, and rape, perpetrated by the Christian populations of Russia against the Jews. Civil and military authorities stood by and watched. The Church was silent at best, and even endorsed some of the attacks. It was during this period that we find the infamous publication, *THE PROTOCOLS OF THE ELDERS OF ZION*. The protocols were first printed in Russia in 1905 as a supposed conversation between Jewish leaders on how they were to take over the world. The original publication was printed under the auspices of the secret police on the press of Czar Nicolas II of Russia who made no secret of his personal membership in the anti-Semitic organization, the Black Hundreds. Even though this booklet has been

proven over and over again to be false, it can still be found in print, even in the U.S., to this day.

It is difficult to assess the scope of the pogroms during the civil war years and the number of victims they claimed. Partial data are available for 530 communities in which 887 major pogroms and 349 minor pogroms occurred; there were 60,000 dead and several times that number of wounded (Dubnow, *History of Russia*).

Holocaust

This brings us to the Holocaust, the culmination of 1900 years of bad teaching in Christian society. The Holocaust was Hitler's Final Solution to the Jewish people.

Germany was the most enlightened, intellectual, cultured society in the world at that time. Yet, the so-called Christian society stood by the watched, and some even participated.

Six million Jews including 2,000,000 children were violently murdered by Hitler and the Nazis. His final solution was to rid the world of the "Jewish vermin." Hitler concluded that there was an evil in society and the common denominator was the Jews who could be found in every city, in every country of Europe. They were an ever-present and evil burden to society. They were the killer of Christ, they needed to be controlled, put to work, their synagogues burned and prayer books burned, their property confiscated, and ultimately killed. Doesn't that sound vaguely familiar?

I do not for a minute believe that Hitler and his agents of death were Christians, but they perpetrated these acts in a historical Christian nation... and there was silence.

Father Neimoeller, writing of this sad chapter of history: "The Holocaust in all of its severity is unique to the Jewish people. While others were killed for political reasons, or social reasons, such as being prostitutes or homosexuals, the Jewish people, mothers, children, peasants, doctors, musicians, rabbis, professors, were all exterminated *JUST BECAUSE THEY WERE JEWS*. Fortunately, there were some Christians who acted, e.g., Corrie Ten Boom, but their numbers were far too few to make a difference.

Hitler is gone, Nazi Germany has ceased to exist, the apple of God's eye, the Jewish people are here and Israel is a fact.

From this historical account, it can be seen that the concept of Christian-Jewish relations is a very recent happening. It can be seen, I will now say, that genuine Christian-Jewish relations have taken place in a serious fashion only during the past 30 years. Thirty years out of 2,000. Much of it is in response to the Holocaust; nevertheless it is happening. Will it last? Only if you are a part of making it last. **THERE IS STILL A BATTLE TO BE FOUGHT. ANTI-SEMITISM ISN'T GONE.**

While some would have you believe the world is becoming a better place and anti-Semitism is on the wane, this is not true. Since 1980, anti-Semitic acts in this country

have doubled and redoubled each year. World-wide it is rampant. Israel receives the brunt of media reporting that is tainted with a perpetual negative bias. Israel has become a bastion of self-determination for the Jewish people, and the world cannot accept it. The weak underdog Israel, on equal par in the world, is intolerable.

In my estimation, world opinion of Israel is trapped in the old pit of anti-Semitism. After World War II, as the facts of the Holocaust came to light, many enlightened individuals and groups began to speak out for the Jewish people, albeit too late to save the 6,000,000 who perished. While it was no longer "fashionable" to be anti-Semitic, that did not make the problem go away... it only drove it underground. Currently, it is showing itself in the world opinion of Israel as people and governments have transferred their anti-Semitic feelings to a national level in the disguise of righteous indignation against the "aggressive Zionist state." The new anti-Israel or anti-Zionist trend is nothing more than the old anti-Semitism in new clothing.

How can we counteract this? We can take a stand, know our facts, and be a collective Christian voice of support and encouragement... This is something that hasn't been done in all church history. Yes, there have been the Christian individuals who spoke out, but now I believe we have a chance to make a difference because we can show solidarity as a group.

Brethren, What Is Our Response To This?

I would hope it would reflect Romans eleven where Paul points out that the Jewish people are "beloved for the sake of the Fathers, and that by our mercy, they will receive mercy."

Oh, how I grieve to think that Satan's greatest tool against God's covenant people, the apple of His eye, has been the Church.

To say that these churchmen were not real Christians is not accurate, for surely many of them were.

Let us learn a lesson from Martin Luther. Some of the greatest anti-Semites started out as great supporters of the Jewish People. Anti-Semitism is sin and we must constantly guard against it in our hearts and lives. I fully believe that anti-Semitism is the epitome of evil, and the fight against it is a spiritual, as well as a physical battle.

So, take up your whole armor of God and get ready for battle. It has been said by Dr. Edward Flannery in his book, *The Anguish of the Jews*, that the only chapters of Christian history known by the Jews were recorded on pages the Church has torn out of the history books and burned.

Now, you have heard. You are responsible to act. Not out of guilt, but in a humble spirit of love. It is time for the Church to grow up and learn to respect God's covenant people, our elder brothers, and Judaism, the parent faith of our faith.

Let us leave here and take up the task of putting away the hatred of generations wherever it may be found around us. Be it in our communities, in our churches, in our families, and yes, even if it raises its ugly head in our own hearts. **YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!!**

(Reprinted from a speech given by Clarence H. Wagner, Jr., International Director of Bridges for Peace)