



Cambridge—(RNS)—Some 70 Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish churchmen, scholars and experts on Jewish-Christian relations from 10 countries attended an International Conference on Jewish-Christian Cooperation at Newham College, Cambridge, England. Among participants (left to right) were: Dr. Siegfried Stedel, assistant professor of theology at the University of Salzburg, Austria; Rabbi I. Levy, director of the Jewish National Fund representing the World Jewish Congress; Sir Seymour Karminski, a judge of the British High Court, chairman of the meeting; Mayor M. W. Bradford of Cambridge; Vice Chancellor A. L. Armistage of Cambridge University; Kurt Pordes, chairman of the International Consultative Committee of Organizations for Christian-Jewish Cooperation (which co-sponsored the meeting with the British Council of Christians and Jews); the Rev. W. W. Simpson, deputy chairman of the meeting, representing the British Council; Dr. Sheila Edmonds, vice-principal of Newham College; and Mrs. Bradford, the mayoress of Cambridge.

Jews, Christians Meet in England

By RABBI MARC H. TANNENBAUM

Rabbi Tannenbaum is national director of the interreligious affairs department of the American Jewish Committee. An authority on Jewish-Christian relations, he served as co-chairman of the Commission on Dialogue of the Cambridge Conference.

Cambridge—(RNS)—The International Conference on Jewish-Christian Relations held at Cambridge University through the initiative of the British Council of Christians and Jews was a notable success, and for a number of substantial reasons:

● First, it brought together a distinguished group of key authorities from international, national and regional Protestant, Catholic and Jewish bodies who have central responsibilities for implementing programs to advance Jewish-Christian relations;

● Second, it faced head-on the thorniest issues outstanding between Christians and Jews, such as conversion, anti-Semitism, the Christian misconceptions about rabbinic Judaism, the chosen people, and pointed toward constructive new possibilities;

● Third, it marked the first time, to my knowledge, that Catholic and Protestant leaders joined in confessing publicly "the part played by Christians in contributing to the anti-Semitic outrages of the 19th and 20th centuries, and called for a more adequate expression by the Church of penitence and contrition in the face of the sufferings inflicted upon the Jewish people." (The quotations are from the final conference message that was adopted unanimously to stirring applause);

● Fourth, it defined a common ground for "dialogue" that steered carefully between the extreme positions of some Orthodox Jewish leaders and Christian traditionalists;

● Finally, it elaborated a variety of specific programs in education and social action to "overcome past misunderstandings" and "to increase interreligious harmony."

One of the potentially most far-reaching proposals adopted by the conference called for "more effective liaison" between Christian and Jewish institutions. On the surface that is quite innocuous, but the background discussion which led to that conclusion would indicate the significance of what was intended and understood.

During several commission meetings and at a plenary session, it was noted that the Vatican and the World Council of Churches had organized a number of joint commissions in social action and in other areas whose purposes were to study global human problems, and to develop a combined Catholic-Protestant strategy to come to grips with these issues. Similar joint structures, it was pointed out, have been created between the Vatican and the world Lutherans, the Vatican and the world Methodists, the Vatican and the world Anglicans, et cetera.

However, strong concern was

expressed because no such relationship exists between the Vatican, the World Council of Churches, and the several representative Jewish bodies which are the most competent, experienced, and creative in Jewish-Christian relations and in social action.

Some Jewish spokesmen at the Cambridge Conference made clear that Jews generally would not presume to raise any questions about such intra-Christian ecumenical relationships which are based on shared beliefs in Christian doctrine. But the expanding growth of such "pan-Christian exclusivism" which tends to ignore Jews or to deal with them as "objects" could well lead to the development of a Christian consciousness in which Jews and other non-Christians would become marginal in the social and cultural societies of the West, it was noted.

A prominent American Catholic priest, Father Edward Flannery (author of *The Anguish of the Jews*), asserted that while Christians had indeed excluded Jews in the past, history need not repeat itself, and present-day Christians were determined that it would not do so.

The importance of the unanimous vote for the "liaison" proposal was that it included the consent of several representatives from the Vatican, the World Council of Churches, and Jewish leaders who have close, but informal, working relations with both Christian bodies. If Jewish groups themselves do not both up the opportunity by clamoring all over each other to become first in queue as "spokesmen" for all world Jewry, but instead find a rational way to make a joint representation, the realization of this development could be of major consequence—especially for the Jews in Latin America and for the State of Israel's technical assistance program in 27 African countries in which the Vatican-World Council of Churches' joint social reconstruction efforts will be of particular weight.

That such liaison between Christian bodies and a broad range of representative Jewish groups is possible was testified to by Dr. Robert Dodds of the National Council of Churches in the U.S.A., who described an "unpublished" liaison with synagogal and lay agencies that has been going on for one-and-a-half years in the States.

One of the most dramatic indications of how basic a change has taken place in this area was the emergence of a clear consensus among the Christian leaders present that Jews were not to be looked upon as objects of conversion, and that proselytism and "missions to the Jews" were to be abandoned. The Rev. K. H. Kroon of Amsterdam reported, for example, that the Reformed Church of Holland "had liquidated her two societies for mission to the Jews, and formed instead a Reformed Council for the Church and Israel, which seeks open dialogue with Jews, concentrating her missionary efforts 'on the gentiles.'"

This transformed view was crystallized in the resolution on "the Christian-Jewish dialogue" that was adopted by the conference. The dialogue, the resolution stated, is to be based

on an unconditional respect for the integrity of the conscience and for the freedom and uniqueness of each participant... and should avoid "any attempt to undermine the beliefs of any of the participants." This did not preclude the right of each participant to "the full opportunity to express his own position in all freedom."

The objectives, as well as the experience of the dialogue is to "dispel many misunderstandings of each about the faith and practice of the other," and to "increase interreligious harmony as we face together the problems and needs of our changing world." The good faith in this position was underscored by the role played in its formulation by Dr. James Peakes, the eminent historian—who, it should be stressed, received the widespread and enthusiastic recognition which his pioneer efforts so greatly deserved.

Numerous Christian as well as Jewish speakers repeatedly asserted that Christian ignorance about and mythologization of Jews and Judaism had bedeviled relations between the two peoples in the past.

To repair this great need, the conference adopted several resolutions which called for arranging "for a continuing study by qualified experts" of such fundamental questions—about which there continues to be so much confusion—as:

- 1) The meaning of the "chosen people" in relation to contemporary Jewry;
- 2) The continuing religious significance of Judaism after Jesus;
- 3) The meaning of the State of Israel as messianic ideal and reality.

During the intensive and searching discussions of these complex and critical issues, it became clear that the Christian participants were prepared to reexamine their conventional views about Jews and Judaism, and to strike out and formulate revised theological conceptions that would be consonant with their present-day thought and reality, especially as confronted in Great Britain, the United States, and Israel.

One began to sense a growing acceptance among the Christian scholars and theologians present of the conviction that Judaism was not "superseded" by Christianity, but that it remains a permanent, living testimony to the Covenant and the way-of-truth for the Jewish people.

At the same time, a number of Christian voices, especially that of the impressive Jesuit scholar, Father Bertrand de Margerie of Rome, were heard addressed to Jews asking for a profound formulation of Judaism's religious position regarding the legitimate role of Christianity's place in the divine economy. It was strikingly evident that Christians were becoming acquainted with Jewish ambivalences on this question, as well as the views of Malmonides, Yehuda Halevi, Rabbi Me'נהם Ha-meiri, Rabbi Moshe Rivkas, and Franz Rosenzweig, all of whom expressed in various ways an affirmative orientation toward Christians and Christianity.

This latter question will become an increasingly pressing one on the agenda of Jewish bodies in the years ahead, and Jewish scholarship will be called up to clarify Judaism's convictions in objective, unambiguous ways. Jews will not be able to sustain the paradox for very long of being full participants with their Christian neighbors in public life, while privately retaining un-Jewish attitudes of hostility that originated in the third century polemics or the 14th Century ghetto experience. It is not a matter of "quid-pro-quo" but rather that of the moral integrity of Judaism that is at stake.

Quite possibly, one of the most memorable aspects of the conference was the public observance of the Shabbat in all of whose rites the Christians participated with obvious marked interest and appreciation. They stood attentively and reverently in the dining hall of Newham College as Mrs. Oliver Montifiori recited the blessings and kindled the Sabbath lights, as Neville Laski offered the Kiddush with commentary, and as Dr. Jacob Agus, rabbi of Baltimore, Maryland, conducted the Birkat Hamazon (grace after meals).

On the following morning, a large number of Catholic priests and Protestant ministers, wearing yarmulkes, sat together with nuns in the Cambridge Synagogue and participated actively in the traditional Shabbat service. A number of the Christians read the Hebrew prayers, and the entire congregation joined in the English readings which Rabbi Agus introduced to help make the service intelligible. It was my privilege to deliver the sermon and I have never had a more receptive congregation. Clearly, the rich experience in Judaism reinforced the new positive perceptions of Judaism.

Hospital to be De-Baptistized

Little Rock, Ark. — (RNS)—The Arkansas Baptist Medical Center board of trustees has recommended that Arkansas Baptist Convention end its control of the hospital so that the hospital so that the hospital may receive federal funds without violating the principle of separation of church and state.

A statement drafted by J. A. Gilbreath, administrator, recommended that "the Arkansas Baptist Medical Center be transferred to a private association composed of Baptists (and that) the Convention relinquishing its control of the institution and transferring the \$85,000 to \$100,000 annual appropriation... to other Baptist causes."

Actually, the Convention's contributions account for only 1 per cent of the operational expenses, an amount which could easily be made up through use of federal grants.

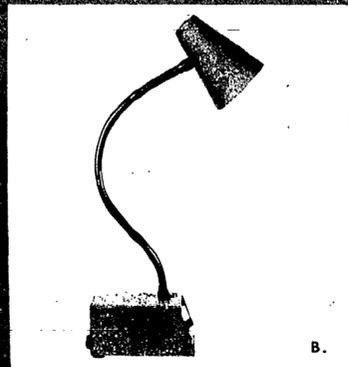
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Pope Stresses Devotion To Blessed Virgin Mary

Castel Gandolfo — (RNS) — Sunday pilgrims welcomed by Pope Paul VI at the papal Summer villa here heard him call for greater devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

"We note with great interest," he said, "that the piety of the people toward the Mother of Christ has usually a decisive influence in the awakening of the religious mentality, in the union of all people of charity and in their loyalty to the Church."

"Examples in Mexico and Poland prove this clearly," the Pope added.

Before leading in the recitation of the noonday Angelus, he said "We shall pray to Our Lady that we might be worthy to venerate her and that through her we might attain to a greater loyalty to Our Lord Jesus Christ."

"We shall pray also for the people of Rome. We shall pray for all our brothers, Christian and non-Christian, and for our brothers who are suffering under atheistic regimes. We shall pray for those separated brethren who see in Marian piety an obstacle to Christian union when actually it is a deep and profound appeal for union."

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