

Vatican Accepts Jewish Belief: The Messiah Has Not Come

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE: ADVENTIST LEADERS TEACH PAGANISM TO CLERGY

For purposes of closer political alliances, Roman Catholic Church leaders have officially entered into an agreement with the Jews, which they would prefer not to be widely known.

The following is an article in a Jewish weekly journal, *The Jewish Week*. The article, dated July 23, 2002, is titled, "Rome Strikes Deal with Jews." It was written by Eric J. Greenberg, a staff writer for the weekly.

There are several startling news items here. According to Vatican teaching:

- **The Jews are right in not believing the Messiah has come yet.** (Jewish belief includes the concept that Jesus is not that Messiah.)

- **Jews and Catholics both believe in the same Messiah.** (Amazing.)

- **The Catholic Church will no longer work for the conversion of Jews, since they are already converted** (i.e., Protestants and Adventists are not converted, but Jews are).

In 1967, during the early thaw of Catholic-Jewish relations, **Rabbi Irving "Yitz" Greenberg** addressed a Catholic audience about the conflicting Messiah beliefs.

The Orthodox rabbi noted that one difference between Jews and Catholics is whether the Messiah is coming for the first or second time. Christians believe the Messiah—a Jew from Nazareth called Jesus—came 2,000 years ago and, after dying and being resurrected, will someday return to redeem the world.

Jews say the Messiah has yet to arrive—a belief that led to centuries of Christian anti-Semitism and killings of Jews who refused to accept the Christian view.

Rabbi Greenberg suggested the dispute be tabled until the Messiah arrives. When the Messiah comes, Jews and Christians "can ask him if this is his first coming or his second," finally putting the issue to rest.

But this week, the Messiah debate suddenly took center stage in Jewish-Catholic relations, in an appropriately bizarre and mysterious manner.

It follows the revelation last week, that **the Vatican's top biblical scholars recently issued a report that for the first time in nearly 2,000 years apparently**

validates as legitimate the Jewish wait for the Messiah.

A 210-page document, titled "*The Jewish People and the Holy Scriptures in the Christian Bible*," **by the Pontifical Biblical Commission and authorized by the Vatican's top theologian Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger**, reportedly states that "the Jewish messianic wait is not in vain."

It reportedly says Jews and Christians share their wait for the Messiah, although Jews are waiting for the first coming and Christians for the second.

The new document also reportedly contains an apology to the Jewish people for anti-Semitic passages contained in the New Testament and also stresses the continuing importance of the Torah for Christians.

The book comes to light as anti-Semitism appears to be increasing around the world from Christian and Muslim sources.

For example, the Associated Press reported this week that Russian prosecutors are investigating an anti-Semitic Russian Orthodox Church priest, Sergei Nilus, who allegedly openly calls Jews the antichrist and enemies of Christianity.

But despite the potential significance of the new Vatican document, it was seemingly buried upon publication, quietly placed in bookstores in Rome last November. **There was no press conference or public announcement**, unlike many other important Vatican documents, such as the 1999 "*We Remember*" Holocaust report.

In fact, the world was unaware of the new "Messiah doctrine" until last Friday [September 20, 2002], when the *New York Times* published a story about it, based on a short report two days earlier by the Italian news agency ANSA.

"Everything in the report is now considered part of official Church doctrine," Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls acknowledged after it became public.

Despite its potential significance, **the document still was unavailable in English this week, being translated only in Italian, French, and Polish. Further, the Vatican did not post it on its web site in any**

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language.

“For the time being the document . . . will not be available [on] the Internet,” the Pontifical Biblical Commission told one American rabbi Monday, adding, “An English translation will be available [in] days.”

That left American Jewish and Catholic interfaith leaders scrambling this week for any information.

Initial speculation generally was positive, even as the interfaith leaders stressed that they were speaking without having seen the text. **They also all questioned the “strange” behavior of the Vatican in failing to publicize such a significant document.**

“The way it was released is extremely strange,” said Father John Pawlikowski, director of the Catholic Jewish Studies Program at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. “Normally they launch these things with fanfare and press conferences. Also the lack of an authorized English translation is particularly disturbing.”

“It’s very strange,” said Michael Signer, professor of Jewish Thought and Culture at the University of Notre Dame. “This is not the most salutary way this could have been done.”

In Rome, Vatican officials denied they tried to hide the document, fearing criticism from right-wing Catholics who oppose theological change.

“There was no intention to hide it,” said a Vatican spokesman, the Rev. Ciro Benedettini.

In the United States, Eugene Fisher, ecumenical director for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, blamed a Vatican leadership that is understaffed and “clueless” about what is important to world interest.

But Fisher, who said **he saw an English draft of the text last year**, expounded on its importance. He noted that **the theologically conservative Cardinal Ratzinger—the second most powerful person in the Vatican after the Pope—signed off on it.**

Ironically, it is the same Cardinal Ratzinger who alarmed Jewish leaders last year when he declared that the Church is waiting for the moment when Jews will “say yes to Christ.”

Asked if Jews must, or should, acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, Cardinal Ratzinger told an interviewer, “We believe that. The fact remains, however, that **our Christian conviction is that Christ is also the Messiah of Israel.**”

How that declaration squares with the new “Messiah document” was a source of much speculation this week. But Fisher contended it’s a major positive development.

“If you put off the moment that Jews will come to recognize Jesus as the Messiah until the end of time, then **we don’t need to work or pray for the conversion of Jews to Christianity,**” he said. “God already has the salvation of Jews figured out, and they accepted it on Sinai; so they are OK.”

“Jews are already with the Father,” he continued. “We do not have a mission to the Jews, but only

a mission with the Jews to the world. **The Catholic Church will never again sanction an organization devoted to the conversion of the Jews.** That is over, on doctrinal, biblical, and pastoral grounds. Finito.”

Signer, also a Reform rabbi said, **“What’s really new is the validation of the Jewish position as truth, that the Jewish waiting for the Messiah is a correct theological viewpoint.** If the document says what we think, **it is another very important theological step in the respect for Judaism as a living tradition.**”

“It’s a very important, critical statement,” said Rabbi Jack Bemporad, head of the Center for Interreligious Understanding. **“Up until now they were saying Jews are completely and absolutely wrong and we are waiting in vain and blind to the truth.”**

Others were more cautious, noting continued significant differences in Messiah beliefs—particularly that Christians believe that their Messiah is Jesus who is also God while for Jews the Messiah is not a divine being and cannot be Jesus because he died before bringing the redemption.

Rabbi James Rudin, senior interreligious adviser to the American Jewish Committee, raised several concerns.

“Does the new book instruct Catholics to fully accept the fact there is not only theological space in God’s universe for Jews/Judaism, but **they must also affirm that the identity of the long awaited Messiah, so ardently prayed for by Jews for centuries, is unknown and will remain unknown until the Messiah appears?”** he asked.

“That is a clear affirmation of Judaism with no theological strings attached, **no Jesus** waiting for Jews at the end of the theological day. If this is the book’s message, then it is an important step forward on the part of the Catholic Church.”

Father Pawlikowski stressed that **the new document also appears to affirm the importance of the “Jewish Bible,”** a new term for the Vatican that he said would be highly significant if it replaces the traditional “Old Testament,” which has a negative implication as being replaced by the “New Testament.”

“The document seems to say that Christians should never deprecate or see the Jewish Bible as inferior, which coming from major Vatican biblical scholars could have profound implications for Catholic religious and educational material,” Father Pawlikowski said.

All the scholars said the next step is for the Vatican to make available the English translation as soon as possible, so it can be studied.

“We hope to see it before the Messiah,” quipped one frustrated interfaith expert.

End of article.

We live in an age when many denominations are softening—even compromising—their beliefs in order to obtain greater acceptance by other denominations. Unfortunately, we are doing it also.

THE NEWEST THEOLOGY:
IT IS NO LONGER NECESSARY TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN TO BE SAVED

Adventist Leaders Teach Paganism

TO ADVENTIST AND NON-ADVENTIST CLERGY

Because he had some very wealthy donors pouring in lots of money, in the early 1970s, Robert Brinsmead began mailing his monthly doctrinal magazine, *Verdict*, free of charge to thousands of Protestant ministers. They really did not need his teachings, since he had by that time been converted by Geoffrey Paxton, an Anglican minister, to a form of “salvation by profession of faith in Christ, without obedience to the law of God.”

Soon after, our church leaders in Takoma Park decided that our *Ministry* magazine should begin doing the same thing. Because our world headquarters, and all its projects, are funded solely from world tithe contributions, a large amount of money was made available from the yearly Adventist World Budget for this costly project. Every other month, the magazine would contain soothing ecumenical fluff, and would be mailed at no charge to hundreds of thousands of non-Adventist clergymen.

Over the years, these bi-monthly mailings have avoided anything of a doctrinal nature that might offend Protestant pastors. Because of this, instead of being an evangelistic tool, the project became an ecumenical device to help other denominations accept us as a harmless fellow traveler, free from the oddities of historic Adventism.

This *Ministry* mailing project dovetailed nicely with our other ecumenical efforts to be accepted by the other denominations: Bert B. Beach’s chairmanship of a primary interfaith doctrinal committee at World Council of Churches (WCC) headquarters in Geneva (on which he had sat as a voting member since 1967), our “personal representatives” at the WCC, the full membership of some of our foreign conferences and unions in the WCC, and our increasing participation in local ecumenical gatherings. By the early 1990s, our leaders found they had to be increasingly circumspect as to our public statements and activities, so we would not lose our standing with the other churches.

By the mid-1990s, we had successfully completed an extended theological “dialogue” with the Lutherans. By the late 1990s, we had entered into an agreement at Geneva, with representatives of other denominations, to publish and preach less about the Seventh-day Sabbath—a very embarrassing topic to the other churches.

At about the same time, as an expression of our continued good will, our GC Ministerial Association began publishing books by Protestant ministers for sale in Protestant bookstores and in our own ABCs. All of

the books have been listed on the Ministerial Association bookstore list on the internet.

(A wealth of data on the the Evangelical Conferences and our ecumenical connections will be found in the books listed on page four.)

When the September 11 tragedy occurred, our leaders conceived a plan to greatly increase our popularity with non-Adventist ministers: We would provide them, free of charge, a booklet they could carry around with them and use to help dying people get to their form of heaven: the Islamic heaven, the Buddhist heaven, the Jewish heaven, or whatever. It was thought that this would be a wonderful way to demonstrate our tolerance for (frankly, even confidence in) the values of all the world’s religions.

So the idea for the “*Emergency Ministry*” packet was born. The plan was somewhat costly, since it was to be mailed to hundreds of thousands of Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Islamic, etc. ministers, priests, gurus, etc. But, since the General Conference no longer had the heavy expense caused by its lawsuits against small Adventist groups, it could now afford to put some of the extra money into these packets.

The 14-page “*Emergency Ministry: Information and Resource for Clergy*” packet consists, first, of an opening cover letter by James A. Cress (GC Ministerial Association Secretary), on his General Conference letterhead. The next 12 pages contains nearly 20 prayers, readings, or incantations, acceptable to one or the other of seven large world religions.

Many of the ministers who received the packet made photocopies and shared them around. The copy sent to us had obviously been xeroxed several times. The original had been mailed to an Adventist minister.

Here are samples of what you will find in this packet, mailed free of charge to tens of thousands of ministers:

“Catholic emergency ministration: If a dying person desires ministry, repeat with him/her the following: 1. The Hail Mary. ‘Hail Mary, full of grace . . . Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death . . .’

“Islamic: If a dying person desires ministry, repeat with him/her the following: 1. The Allah Ekber. ‘There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is God’s apostle.’ ”

—On and on it goes, for Protestants, Jews, Buddhists (“Repeat with him the Tisarana: ‘Buddham saranam gacchami; I take refuge in the Buddha.’ ”), Hindu, and Orthodox

A mixture of Protestantism, Catholicism, and paganism is being mailed out in great quantity to religious leaders around the world, unknowingly paid for by faithful Adventist believers—and the material is to be used in the last hour or minutes before death, not to bring them to Christ, but to confirm them in the hope that their pagan god will save them after they expire.

The packet concludes with a page explaining its source as the Seventh-day Adventist Church and offering additional free copies. Tragically, this material has been approved for distribution by our church headquarters for widest circulation! Distribution is paid for from the tithes (the only source of income from the Yearly Budget for the General Conference).

Many decades ago, our evangelists and journals

taught the people about Jesus Christ and the importance of returning to obedience to the law of God, through Christ's enabling grace.

Then we graduated to aping the teachings of Protestants and Catholics, that behavior and conduct has nothing to do with salvation; we can all be saved in our sins as long as we keep trusting in Jesus.

Now we have descended to a new level: instructing ministers of other faiths, that it is no longer necessary to even lead people to Christ before they die; they can be saved by their statues and pagan gods.

In the name of ecumenism and tolerance, we are exchanging Adventism for universalism (universal salvation)—because it is more acceptable on the cheap market of public acceptance.

EVANGELICAL CONFERENCES AND THEIR AFTERMATH

198 pp., 8½ x 11 \$15.00 + \$3.00

The Beginning of the End [DH-101-118] (1983). The complete story of the 1954-1956 Martin-Barnhouse conferences with our denominational leaders, which resulted in the 1957 book, *Questions on Doctrine*, and partially changed our beliefs. Aftermath to 1983. p. 5

Letters to the Churches—Part 1-9 [DH-151-159] (1983). M.L. Andreasen, our leading Sanctuary scholar at the time, wrote this protest against the errors of the Evangelical Conferences in 1957. Strongly opposed by leadership for so doing, he died of a broken heart in 1962. p. 77

An Evangelical History of the Adventist Theological Split—Part 1-3 [WM-852-854] (1998). A non-Adventist theologian writes about how we compromised our beliefs during those conferences and afterward. p. 113

Seventh-day Adventists Believe—Part 1-8 [DH-301-308] (1988). An analysis of doctrinal problems in this second Adventist doctrinal book. p. 125

Sequel to Questions on Doctrine—Part 1-4 [DH-311-314] (1989). Comparing our new Adventist doctrinal book with *Questions on Doctrine*, our book published in 1957 as a result of our conferences with Walter Martin. p. 157

The Martin-Johnsson Debate—Part 1-2 [WM-111-112] (1985). Walter Martin debates William Johnsson on TV. p. 171

Walter Martin and the SDA Church [WM-249] (1990). Brief history of Martin's momentous influence on our doctrinal beliefs, written shortly after his death. p. 179

Walter Martin and the Scholars: Historic Adventism and Hebrews Nine [WM-250-251] (1990). p. 183

The Atonement: Finished or Unfinished?—Part 1-2 [WM-727-728] (1996). p. 191

Second Evangelical Conferences [WM-1002] (2001). p. 197

SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST/VATICAN ECUMENICAL INVOLVEMENT

80 pp. and 132 pp., 8½ x 11

Seventh-day Adventist/Vatican Ecumenical Involvement. Book 1 - History: 80 pp., \$6.00 + \$2.50. // ***Book 2 - Documents***: 132 pp., \$11.00 + \$2.50 (1999). History of our contacts with the WCC and its branches, in America and worldwide, from 1957 onward.

RECENT ADVENTIST ECUMENICAL INVOLVEMENT

138 pp., 8½ x 11 \$12.00 + \$3.00

HISTORY OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

A Hundred Years of Ecumenism—Part 1-6 [WM-358-363] (1991). A study of the entire modern ecumenical movement and Protestant/Catholic involvement. p. 7

National Council of Churches Nearing Bankruptcy [WM-971] (2000). A brief report: The NCC is losing favor with its supporting denominations. p. 31

THE HUNGARIAN UNION SPLIT OVER ECUMENISM

The Hungarian Crisis—Part 1-8 [WM-84-91] (1984). Over a thousand faithful believers are ousted from the Hungarian Union because they are opposed to its membership in a subsidiary of the World Council of Churches. p. 33

The Hungarian Crisis: Additional Documents—Part 1-5 [WM-91-A-E] (1984). Additional documents. p. 65

OUR CONNECTIONS WITH THE LORD'S DAY ALLIANCE

Hands Across the Gulf: The Lord's Day Alliance and Seventh-day Adventists [WM-1024] (2001). An insight into our involvement with the leading Sunday-Law advocacy group. p. 85

THE EVANGELICAL/CATHOLIC DOCTRINAL AGREEMENT

Evangelicals and Catholics Join Ranks [WM-541] (1994). The remarkable doctrinal statement linking the two groups. p. 89

The Christian Coalition / The Catholic Alliance [WM-723-725] (1996). Objectives of two different religious organizations. p. 91

Catholic Coercion of Adventist Books [WM-720] (1996). Part of the reason our denominational books are changing. p. 103

OUR SECRET SABBATH AGREEMENT AT GENEVA

The Secret Interchurch Planning Meeting [WM-906] (1999). Our leaders have agreed to tone down their presentation of the one doctrine which embarrasses Protestants the most. p. 107

Update on the Secret Interchurch Planning Meeting [WM-914] (1999). Additional details. p. 111

THE INCREDIBLE STORY OF NOMADS

Adventist Nomads [WM-1001] (2001). Our Ministerial Association publication, web, and ABC sale of a Baptist book with two chapters advocating Sundaykeeping. p. 115

Nomad Removed from ABCs—Part 1-2 [WM-1006-1007] (2001). Despite earlier protests, the book was not removed from our ABCs until WM-1001 was released. p. 123

RECENT ECUMENICAL COMPROMISES

Vatican Accepts Jewish Belief: The Messiah Has Not Come / Adventist Leaders Teach Paganism to Non-Adventist Clergy—Part 1-3 [WM-1108-1110] (2002). In order to win more friends, the Vatican and Silver Spring make concessions. p. 127

Adventist Leaders Teach Paganism

TO ADVENTIST AND NON-ADVENTIST CLERGY

In former decades, when a person was nearing death, our ministers would try to lead him to Christ.

But times have changed. Now we are to leave him hopelessly mired in the erroneous religious beliefs he may have.

The following 12-page *Emergency Ministry* packet has been sent to tens of thousands of Seventh-day Adventist ministers around the world. It

has also been sent, compliments of our General Conference Ministerial Association, to tens of thousands of non-Adventist clergy. It seems we want every minister in the world to leave people, who are without Christ, to die in their sins—thinking that their false religion will save them.

The 12-page packet was sent out with a cover letter, which we will also include.

“It is an undeniable fact that the hope of immortal blessedness at death has led to a widespread neglect of the Bible doctrine of the resurrection . . . There is not a doctrine in the gospel on which more stress is laid; and there is not a doctrine in the present system of preaching which is treated with more neglect! . . . This has continued until the glorious truth of the resurrection has been almost wholly obscured and lost sight of by the Christian world.”—*Great Controversy*, 547.

“And this is the evidence that the incestuous, drunken Amnon was at death immediately transported to the abodes of bliss, there to be purified and prepared for the companionship of sinless angels! A pleasing fable indeed, well suited to gratify the carnal heart! This is Satan’s own doctrine, and it does his work effectually. Should we be surprised that, with such instruction, wickedness abounds?”

“The course pursued by this one false teacher illustrates that of many others. A few words of Scripture are separated from the context . . . It is thus that doubters, unbelievers, and skeptics turn the truth into a lie. And multitudes have been deceived by their sophistry and rocked to sleep in the cradle of carnal security.

“If it were true that the souls of all men passed directly to heaven at the hour of dissolution, then we might well covet death rather than life.”—*Great Controversy*, 539.

“If the dead are already enjoying the bliss of heaven . . . what need of a future judgment? The teachings of God’s Word on these important points are neither obscure nor contradictory; they may be understood by common minds . . . The theory of the immortality of the soul was one of those false doctrines that Rome, borrowing from paganism, incorporated into the religion of Christendom.”—*Great*

Controversy, 549.

Oftener, however, it serves the tempter’s purpose best to lure men to destruction by flattery. The teaching of the demon-gods, in ancient times, fostered the vilest license. The divine precepts condemning sin and enforcing righteousness were set aside; truth was lightly regarded and impurity was not only permitted, but enjoined. Spiritualism declares that there is no death, no sin, no judgment, no retribution . . . The barriers that God has erected to guard truth, purity, and reverence, are broken down, and many are thus emboldened in sin. Does not such teaching suggest an origin similar to that of demon worship?”—*Evangelism*, 608.

“Even sickness and death are of less consequence than the salvation of souls for whom Christ made so immense a sacrifice . . . One soul is of more value than the entire world.”—*2 Testimonies*, 540-541.

“How terrible it is to stand by the coffin of one who has rejected the appeals of divine mercy! How terrible to say: Here is a life lost! Here is one who might have reached the highest standard and gained immortal life, but he surrendered his life to Satan, became ensnared by the vain philosophies of men, and was a plaything of the evil one! The Christian’s hope is as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, and entereth into that which is within the veil, whither Christ the forerunner is for us entered. We have an individual work to do to prepare for the great events that are before us.”—*Messages to Young People*, 89.

“Had the law of God never been transgressed, there would have been no death and no need of a Saviour.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 363.

—Comfort for those dying in Christ and those left behind: *2 Selected Messages*, 246-276.