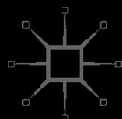




JEWISH CONSCIENCE OF THE CHURCH

Jules Isaac and the Second Vatican Council

NORMAN C. TOBIAS
preface by Gregory Baum



Jewish Conscience of the Church

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For AVA

PREFACE

I am grateful to Norman Tobias for this outstanding biography of the French historian Jules Isaac, the Jewish scholar who set off a theological movement in the Catholic Church and influenced the teaching of the Second Vatican Council (1962–65). This valuable book is more than a biography since its major part offers a detailed study of the theological and exegetical debates stirred up among Catholics by Jules Isaac's provocative intervention. This remarkable man, almost unknown in North America, was well-known in France as the author of the history books used in the public schools in the interwar years. Thanks to this reputation, he was listened to in France in 1948 when he published the book *Jésus et Israël*, analyzing and denouncing the anti-Jewish discourse of Christian preaching almost from its beginning. His voice was given added weight by the tragedy that had befallen his family: his wife Laure, the younger of his two sons, daughter and son-in-law, arrested in 1943, had been sent to the death camps in the East. Only his son was to survive. Absent from his clandestine lodgings at the time, Jules Isaac had not been caught. Hidden by friends, he survived the war, and as a survivor he spoke with authority of Jewish suffering.

Reading *Jésus et Israël* in 1957 had profound impact on my own life. A student in Switzerland, I had just attained my doctorate in Catholic theology at the University of Fribourg with a thesis on an ecumenical topic, when I received an invitation from a theological society to give a number of lectures on the Catholic Church's relation to Judaism and the Jews. I had never thought about this issue. I was brought up as a Christian, but my grandparents had been Jewish, a fact that should have made me

sensitive to this issue, but I was quite ignorant. Turning to the writings of the Church Fathers, the Christian authors of antiquity, I now repeated their theological proposals that the old Israel, the Jews, had been displaced by the new Israel, the Church, and that by refusing to believe in Jesus, the Jews, the first-chosen people, had incurred their rejection by God, a destiny anticipated in the ancient Scriptures by the divine election of the younger son over the older one, Abel over Cain, Isaac over Ismael, and Jacob over Esau. I repeated these and other traditional fables, without any awareness of the cultural impact and the social consequences of this theological discourse. I was as blind as the Church itself.

Isaac's book *Jésus et Israël* opened my eyes. More than that, the book deeply troubled me; it shook the foundation upon which I had built my life. I felt that I could remain a Catholic theologian only if I dedicated myself to the reform of the Church's teaching on the Jews and Judaism. I wrote *The Jews and the Gospel*, a book in which I denounced with Jules Isaac the anti-Jewish rhetoric of the Christian tradition and, at the same time, disagreed with the French scholar on one issue. In none of its passages, I argued, did the New Testament itself foster contempt for the Jews. The anti-Jewish sounding verses cited by Jules Isaac I interpreted differently, thus changing their meaning. The point I wanted to prove was that the hostility to Jews and their religion was introduced not by the New Testament, but by the post-biblical Christian tradition. Ten years later, when Rosemary Ruether asked me to write the introduction to her *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Antisemitism*, I actually changed my mind: I sorrowfully agreed with Jules Isaac and Rosemary Ruether that there were verses in the New Testament that reflected the conflict between the Church and the Synagogue and expressed hostility to Jews.

Altogether remarkable is that Jules Isaac's discovery of the Christian roots of antisemitism did not make him resentful. He did not see himself as an opponent of the Christian religion. On the contrary, he surrounded himself with a circle of Christian and Jewish friends with whom he founded the association the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*, and joined the small movement in the Church that sought to purify Christian preaching of the anti-Jewish rhetoric. He did not designate himself as a believer, neither Jewish nor Christian; reading him, I came to think of him as a spiritual humanist with sympathy for the ethical ideals of biblical religion. In his biography, Norman Tobias sheds light on Jules Isaac's generous approach to Catholicism, despite its intolerance and its prejudices. The

biography documents the great friendship between the young Isaac and the famous Charles Péguy, Catholic poet and French patriot, killed as a soldier in World War I. In Péguy's life and his writings, the young Isaac discovered an alternative Catholicism, at odds with the Catholic establishment, a spiritual Catholicism that embraced the republican values of liberty, equality and fraternity. I remember that North American Catholics in the 1940s and 1950s read Charles Péguy in English translation with great admiration as a prophet of a renewed Catholicism, humanistic and politically progressive. Isaac's friendship with Péguy, beginning in 1897, introduced him to an interpretation of the Christian tradition for which he, a Jewish French republican, had great sympathy. Decades later, when he discovered the seeds of antisemitism in the history of Christian preaching, the memory of Péguy may have convinced him that, despite this destructive past, Christian charity was meant to transcend all boundaries and embrace the Jews faithful to the Synagogue and that therefore Jewish-Christian reconciliation is an altogether realistic objective.

Jules Isaac and some Jewish friends joined the small movement of Protestant and Catholic Christians that sought to purify the Church's teaching and preaching of its anti-Jewish bias. After the Holocaust, these Christians recognized, not without sorrow and shame, that the Church's preaching had created over the centuries negative images of the Jews and their religion, a cultural inheritance that was exploited by the promoters of racist antisemitism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, culminating in the Jewish genocide committed by Nazi Germany. In August 1947, Jules Isaac, accompanied by some Jewish friends, attended the week-long conference at Seelisberg in Switzerland, at which the Christian participants produced a program of Ten Points that, if adopted by the Churches, would eliminate the anti-Jewish bias associated with Christian teaching. The history of this small reform movement, to which the Churches paid little attention at the time, has been carefully documented in John Connolly's *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933–1965*. This small reform movement was to exert a powerful influence 15 years later upon the teaching of the Second Vatican Council.

In 1959, Pope John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council. In June 1960, Jules Isaac, an old man by that time, was received by Pope John in a private audience at which the Jewish sage pleaded for the reform of Christian teaching on the Jews. In response, Pope John undertook to do all in his power to see to it that the upcoming Council would

renew Catholic-Jewish relations. In fact, the Pope asked the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, whose primary task it was to foster the ecumenical movement, to produce a draft document that redefined the Church's relationship to the Jews. By a curious coincidence, because of my doctoral work in ecumenism, I had been appointed an official consultant (*peritus*) at the Secretariat, and now became a member of the small team of theologians asked to make suggestions for correcting the Church's discourse hostile to Jews. We paid attention to the writings of Jules Isaac, the Ten Points of Seelisberg and the studies produced by the above-mentioned reform movement: their insights, overlooked or discarded in the past, now became the cornerstone of the Church's teaching. After a long debate, occasional setbacks and some compromises, the Second Vatican Council promulgated *Nostra aetate*, the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, including in article 4 the statement on the Jews and Judaism that echoed the ideas Jules Isaac had passionately promoted and that Catholic theologians had made their own.

The author of this biography has himself been affected by the spirit of Jules Isaac. With him, Norman Tobias, a believing Jew, is deeply disturbed by the Church's antisemitic utterances, however implicit, and with him, he shows great sympathy for the Church's effort to reform its teaching and respect the Jews as the first-chosen people in an eternally valid divine covenant. Jules Isaac grasped a universal principle when he recognized that religions evolve and reform themselves by the insights and the vitality of their own members, and that he, as an outsider, could have influence on Catholicism only if he initiated, and participated in, a reform movement within the Church.

Today some Muslims, unhappy with the intolerance of radical Islam, leave their religion and write angry books against it, hoping that their accusations will be heard and foster a more generous attitude. Secular critics of Islam often think likewise that their complaints will be heard and foster Islam's openness to modernity. They do not recognize Jules Isaac's insight that religions reform themselves from within their faith through the religious aspirations of their members, and that outsiders can have an influence only if they associate themselves with a reform movement within the religion. Angry voices from the outside will have no hearing. A wide network of religious thinkers in Islam, believing intellectuals in East and West, is actually promoting the renewal of their tradition, its support for human rights and its respect for religious pluralism. Since their work is not

well-known, I engage myself with a good number of Christians to give them greater visibility. We read their writings, engage in dialogue with them and promote the public appreciation of their renewal movement. Reading this biography of Jules Isaac has made me aware that our activity is resonant of his wisdom.

Gregory Baum
June 2015

It is without doubt a sign of the times that a conciliar text, one that we call upon to resound across the globe and that, I hope, will have happy consequences in the life of the Church, should have been inscribed in the program of an Ecumenical Council by a pope, and studied, discussed and adopted by more than two thousand bishops, at the request of a layman – a layman who was not Christian.

*Charles de Provençères
Archbishop of Aix, Arles and Embrun
Address to the Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne d'Aix-en-Provence
11 janvier 1965*

PROLOGUE

“In this age of ours when men are drawing more closely together.”¹ These are the opening words of the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, one of the fruits of the Ecumenical Council convoked by John XXIII within a year of having been elected Pope. It was passed by an overwhelming majority of bishops on 28 October 1965, “surprisingly early”² according to one prelate, following the close of the continuous discussion phase of the fourth and final session. The declaration has come to be known by its opening words in the original Latin—*Nostra aetate*. Its fourth article (*Nostra aetate* [No. 4]) deals with Jews and Judaism. Why not just the Jewish religion? Because Judaism cannot be separated from the Jews, because “[t]he Jewish religion without the Jewish people is a fiction,”³ remarked Fr. John Oesterreicher, one of those who drafted the conciliar statement. By this fourth paragraph, the official Church formally repudiated the teaching of collective Jewish guilt for the death of Jesus. “True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today.”

¹ AAS 58 (1966), 740–4 with English Translation SPCU.

² Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II*, trans. S.J. Henry Traub (New York: Paulist Press, 1966), 179.

³ Quoted in John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews, 1933–1965* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), 264.

Some theologians regard this paragraph as clarifying the role of Israel in salvation history.⁴ Others regard it as espousing the Pauline view of the mystery of Israel.⁵ Still others regard it as propounding a new theological vision of, and corresponding new pastoral attitude to, Jews and Judaism.⁶ “Never before,” observed Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, secretary of the body that worked up this conciliar statement, had “a systematic, positive, comprehensive, careful and daring presentation of Jews and Judaism been made in the Church by a Pope or by a Council.”⁷ The presentation was daring because the new teaching overturned a nearly two millennia old tradition within the Church’s midst regarding Jews and Judaism.

What had been this teaching? In a word, God hates the Jews. “Passages in the New Testament say that those who believe and are baptized will be saved, and those who refuse to believe will be damned. Some passages also say that the hard-heartedness of the Jews leaves them in darkness, deserted by God,” according to Catholic theologian Gregory Baum, another of those who drafted *Nostra aetate* (No. 4). “They say that salvation is in Jesus and in no other name, and that the Gospel is the single offer of redemption for the sinful world. (Of course, there are also passages with a different message.) On the basis of the exclusivist biblical texts, the Church began to teach ‘extra ecclesiam nulla salus,’ (outside the Church no salvation).”⁸ After the Holocaust, the Church, recognizing, not without shame, the cultural impact of its anti-Jewish discourse and the implications this discourse had in legitimating antisemitism, was to read Paul’s letter to the Romans in a new way. The revolutionary new Catholic teaching regarding Jews and Judaism is one whose purpose it is to address Catholics from a Catholic point of view, although the reaction of the Jewish community is not without interest.⁹ What is this new teaching? A conclave of all Catholic bishops in union with the Bishop of Rome (which

⁴ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Many Religions – One Covenant*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999).

⁵ John M. Oesterreicher, “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler (New York and London: Herder and Herder, Burns & Oates Limited, 1969).

⁶ Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, “Christians and Jews: A New Vision,” in *Vatican II by Those Who Were There*, ed. Alberic Stacpoole (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986).

⁷ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁸ Correspondence to the author dated 17 March 2014.

⁹ Generally, “Church” with an uppcase “C” denotes a specific communion, such as the Catholic Church, while “church” with a lowercase “c” denotes the church universal.

has the highest teaching authority in the Catholic tradition), listening to the signs of the times,¹⁰ concluded that the scriptures could no longer be read as if the Holocaust had not happened. The official Church, appreciating that “the theological negation of Judaism and the vilification of the Jewish people that were part of the Christian tradition were translated into genocidal action of monstrous proportions, not indeed by Christians themselves, but by a political party that used for its own purposes a heritage built up by Christianity,”¹¹ declared that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the living God, whose great Name Israel is commanded to sanctify and whom Christians believe to be triune,¹² abides and has never ceased to abide, in (covenantal) relationship *adhuc* (until now) with His first-chosen people, Abraham’s stock.

The Church always keeps in mind the words of the Apostle [Paul] about his kinsmen: “theirs *is* [emphasis added] the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the law and the worship and the promises; theirs *are* [emphasis added] the fathers and from them *is* [emphasis added] the Christ according to the flesh.”¹³

¹⁰Three emancipatory movements of the twentieth century—of the working class, of women and of colonialized people—were alluded to as such signs of the times by Pope John XXIII (*Pacem in Terris* [11 April 1963], 39–43). So far as this author is aware, it was Gregory Baum who first proposed that Auschwitz be identified as an altogether special sign of the times “in which God empowers the Church to correct its past teaching, including its central dogma, to the extent that it distorts God’s action in Christ and promotes human destruction.” Gregory Baum, *Catholic Dogma after Auschwitz*, in *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, ed. Alan Davies (New York, Paulist Press, 1979), p. 142. For Baum, therefore, it follows that the Second Vatican Council reading of Romans 9–11 is a “signs of the times” reading.

¹¹Introduction by Gregory Baum to Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (Minneapolis: The Seabury Press, 1974), 8.

¹²A trinity hinted at, contended Augustine, in the thrice-repeated name of God in the biblical affirmation of His unity “The Lord is our God, the Lord alone [Deut. 6:4],” (an affirmation that Jesus himself considered to be the first of all the commandments); a trinity of persons, Christians believe, by whose power the Son alone assumed human nature, an apparently mysterious exception to Christian belief that the three “persons” of the triune Godhead act in distinctive ways *ad intra*, but in perfect unity *ad extra*, as creator and redeemer in human history and the cosmos.

¹³Philip A. Cunningham, Norbert J. Hofmann, Joseph Sievers, ed., *The Catholic Church and the Jewish People* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), Appendix 1: Preparatory Drafts leading up to the fourth paragraph of *Nostra Aetate* (translated from the Latin by Dr. Maria Brutti).

If *Nostra aetate* (No. 4) has an essence, it is arguably that which is also present in article 16 of the higher-ranking Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, which the former echoes in the following passage:¹⁴

Nevertheless, as the Apostle [Paul] testifies, the Jews are still greatly beloved by God, whose gifts and call are irrevocable for the sake of the Fathers.¹⁵

Yet, Augustin Cardinal Bea, president of the secretariat charged with addressing questions concerning the Jews, evoking the distinction between Israel according to the spirit and Israel according to the flesh, between Israel as a church (*corpus mysticum* Israel) and Israel as a people (Jewdom in Maritainian terms), took pains to emphasize that the Jewish people are no longer the people of God “in the sense of an *institution for the salvation of mankind*.”¹⁶ This Christian belief is expressed in *Nostra aetate* (No. 4) in the following terms:

Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews therefore should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this came from the Holy Scriptures.

The problem confronting the official Church was that a textual reading of Romans 9–11, “however generous in the context of the New Testament,” elaborates Baum, “does not present the ongoing election of the Jews as a source of grace for them in the present: the election simply preserves them in present darkness for a future redemption...grace is offered to Israel only through conversion to Christ.”¹⁷ A new hermeneutic was required, a signs-of-the-times, post-Holocaust hermeneutic, a hermeneutic that permitted the official Church to declare, “against the letter (though not the substance) of the scriptures,” according to Baum, “that [the] Jewish religion

¹⁴Article 16 of *Lumen Gentium* asserts, “There is, first, that people to which the covenants and promises were made, and from which Christ was born according to the flesh (cf. Rom. 9:4-5): in view of the divine choice, they are a people most dear for the sake of the fathers, for the gifts of God are without repentance (cf. Rom. 11:29-29).”

¹⁵Cunningham, ed.

¹⁶Augustin Cardinal Bea, *The Church and the Jewish People: A Commentary on the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, trans. Philip Loretz, S.J. (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1966), 96 (Bea's emphasis). See also note 1 at page 10.

¹⁷Gregory Baum, “Catholic Dogma after Auschwitz,” in *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, ed. Alan Davies (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 138.

remains a dispensation of grace and that Christians should, instead of trying to convert Jews, engage in dialogue and cooperation with them.”¹⁸ In response to what Paul refers to in his Letter to the Romans as the “transgression” of the Jews, the Second Vatican Council drew from the Roman Catechism (the Catechism of the Council of Trent) to declare in the final paragraph of *Nostra aetate* (No. 4): “as the Church has always held and still holds, Christ freely faced His passion and death, because of the sins of all people and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation.” The Roman Catechism, published in 1566 as one of the fruits of the Council of Trent under Pius V, sets out guidelines for orthodox instruction for preachers and catechists. It scrupulously follows the teaching of the Council of Trent. Since it was put together at an express resolution of the Council, it is considered to be a pronouncement of the magisterium.¹⁹

It was the peculiar privilege of the Redeemer to have died when he himself decreed to die, and to have died, not so much by external violence, as by internal assent; not only his death, but also its time and place were ordained by him...for, as our sins consigned Christ our Lord to the death of the cross, most certainly, those who wallow in sin and iniquity, as far as depends on them, ‘crucify to themselves again the Son of God, and make a mockery of him.’ This, our guilt, takes a deeper die of enormity when contrasted with that of the Jews.²⁰

Observed George Tavard, yet another of those who drafted the conciliar statement on the Jews and Judaism, “Logically, this statement [‘when contrasted with that of the Jews’] implies that Jews as a whole have incurred some degree of guilt for the crucifixion of Jesus.”²¹ This implication was rejected by the Second Vatican Council.

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged

¹⁸ Ibid., 142.

¹⁹ The next Catechism to be published by the Roman Church was the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, approved by Pope John Paul II on 25 June 1992 and promulgated on 11 October 1992.

²⁰ *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, trans. Rev. J. Donovan (Baltimore: Lucas Brothers, 1829), 47.

²¹ George H. Tavard, “Nostra Aetate: Forty Years Later,” in *Jews and Catholics Together: Celebrating the Legacy of Nostra Aetate: Proceedings of a Symposium Held in Toronto 10 November 2005*, ed. Michael Attridge (Ottawa: Novalis, Saint Paul University, 2007), 17–18.

against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today.²²

The fourth article of *Nostra aetate* stipulates that it is the task of Catholics to engage in conversation and cooperation with Jews with a view to fostering mutual understanding and respect. In this regard, Secretary of State Jean-Marie Cardinal Villot, writing in the name of Pope Paul VI to Paris Archbishop François Marty on 22 December 1977, considered, “Jules Isaac and his work [...] as a source of inspiration for all those of good will who seek to promote mutual respect, esteem and friendship between Jews and Christians.”²³ On 31 May 1980, in his address in Paris to members of the French Jewish community, Pope John Paul II told them, “I pay homage to these victims [of the Holocaust] whose sacrifice, we know, has not been fruitless. It was from there that there really began, thanks to the courage and decision of some pioneers, *including Jules Isaac* [emphasis added], the movement that has led us to the present dialogue and collaboration, inspired and promoted by the declaration *Nostra aetate* of the Second Vatican Council.”²⁴

Who was this Jules Isaac whose person and work Paul VI, through Jean-Marie Cardinal Villot, described as a source of inspiration in Christian-Jewish dialogue? Who was this Jules Isaac whom John Paul II called a pioneer in the promotion of Christian-Jewish dialogue and collaboration? Who was this Jules Isaac who, asserted French Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, “permitted [the Jewish people] to assert an essential refusal, [who] repulsed the guilt whereby Jews were confined exclusively by a certain theology, a guilt that separated them from all human warmth – the refusal of the Mephistophelean guilt of he who does good while wishing harm, or he who is said to have brought about the salvation of the world because he alone, in all of humanity, is thought to have the soul of an executioner.”²⁵ Isaac himself can answer. He left us a

²² Cunningham, ed.

²³ Quoted in Pierre Pierrard, *Juifs et catholiques français, D'Édouard Drumont à Jacob Kaplan (1886–1994)*, rev. and enl. ed. (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1997), 382.

²⁴ Quoted in Eugene J. Fisher and Leon Klenicki, eds., *Pope John Paul II, Spiritual Pilgrimage: Texts on Jews and Judaism* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995), 10.

²⁵ Allocution d’Emmanuel Levinas lors du Colloque, à la Sorbonne, célébrant, le 15 février 1967, à la fois le vingtième anniversaire des dix points de Seelisberg et de l’Amitié Judéo-Christienne de France in Emmanuel Levinas, “Par-delà le dialogue,” *Sens, revue de l’Amitié*

two-page testament, in his very own script and captioned, “Who is Jules Isaac?”²⁶ It was drawn up by Isaac in 1960 and sent to Reverend James Parkes in connection with Parkes’ publication in English translation in the United Kingdom of a lecture that Isaac had delivered at the Sorbonne on 15 December 1959, published in France by Fasquelle under the title *L’Antisemitism a-t-il des Racines Chrétiennes?*

Of a Jewish family and Alsacien-Lorrainer, though born in Rennes, Brittany (1877). Son and grandson of soldiers, Jules Isaac was a professor and historian, cut from a combative cloth. He never ceased to fight for truth, for liberty, and for peace.

In his youth, during the Dreyfus Affair, he was the friend and companion-in-arms of the great writer Péguy... In his adulthood, by his *Cours d’Histoires* (Hachette), he taught the majority of French youth and he continues to do so.

Combatant in the Great War (1914–18); wounded at Verdun, decorated with the *Croix de Guerre*, he made efforts to extract from the harsh realities of the war its broad outlines, historically and politically. He made efforts to prevent a new French-German conflict, proposing a Locarno Pact of a moral nature (1936), provoking first meetings between French and German historians, and publishing principally two books: *1914, Le problème des origines de la guerre* (Rieder, 1933) and *Paradoxes sur la science homicide et autres hérésies* (Rieder, 1935). From 1934, he was an active member of the *Comité de Vigilance des intellectuels antifascistes*.

After the disaster of 1940, Vichy legislation stripped him of his high office as *Inspecteur Générale de l’Éducation Nationale*. While a refugee in Aix, he wrote under the pseudonym of Junius, *Les Oligarques, essai d’histoire partielle* for les Éditions de Minuit. He then turned his attention to the fight against antisemitism, principally in the religious context, and began to write *Jésus et Israël*. It was during that time that the drama (1943) took place, a Gestapo raid that he avoided by mere happenstance, the majority of his family members arrested and deported.

From that moment forward, that in which he was engaged took on the character of a sacred mission. Continued from safe house to safe house, *Jésus et Israël* was published in 1948. At the International Jewish-Christian Congress of Seelisberg (1947), Jules Isaac contributed to the adoption of a program of rectification of Christian teaching in ten points.

Judéo-Chrétienne de France, no. 9/10 (1996): 372–73. All translations from French into English are the author’s.

²⁶ James Parkes Archives, University of Southampton, UK, File 60/27/4.

In France, he was a founder and facilitator of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*, of which [in 1960] he is, together with Jacques Maritain, *président d'honneur*. He gave to *Jésus et Israël* an addendum: *Genèse de l'antisémitisme* (Calmann-Levy, 1956). His last effort (1960) was to obtain from the leader of the Catholic Church, Pope John XXIII, a position in favour of the rectification of Catholic teaching concerning the Jews. The [papal] reception gave him cause for hope. In France, both in Catholic and Protestant circles, a purifying tendency is making its way with ever more strength.

The fourth article of *Nostra aetate* is understood by most to have been an autonomous, unprovoked post-Holocaust Church initiative. Was Isaac exaggerating when he intimated that he had “obtained from Pope John XXIII a position in favour of the rectification of Catholic teaching concerning the Jews?” John Oesterreicher seemed to think so. Oesterreicher long downplayed Isaac’s role in the pope’s decision to add Questions concerning the Jews to the Vatican II agenda, preferring instead to portray the Pope’s decision as his own. In his *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Oesterreicher wrote, “That Jules Isaac’s visit had a lasting effect on John XXIII cannot, in my opinion, be doubted. On the other hand, it is questionable whether his was the decisive influence in moving the Pope to act, as is sometimes asserted. What he did, however, was to cause the Pope’s intentions, until then but vaguely formed, to mature.”²⁷ Oesterreicher would reiterate this opinion, almost *verbatim*, in a collection of his essays, published in 1986 under the title *The New Encounter between Christians and Jews*.²⁸ As the narrative will evidence, and the evidence will substantiate, Oesterreicher’s contention was wishful thinking; in fact, the item initially titled “Questions concerning the Jews” was a last-minute addition to the Second Vatican Council agenda, an addition made at the behest of, and provoked by, Jules Isaac.

What about historian John Connelly, who in his *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews 1933–1965*, writes,

Because Isaac met with John XXIII in 1960 and successfully urged the pope to commission a statement on the Jew, some historians have assumed a direct link between his ideas and the Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate* of 1965 in which the church formally broke with anti-Judaism and condemned antisemi-

²⁷ Oesterreicher, 4.

²⁸ John M. Oesterreicher, *The New Encounter between Christians and Jews* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1986), 108.

tism. Yet the story is more complicated. If the conversations with Jews in the postwar years opened Christian minds to new ideas, they did not necessitate their acceptance. The ideas had to be tested for theological soundness.²⁹

There may not be a direct link between the conciliar statement on the Jews and Isaac's *ideas*. Isaac was a historian, not a theologian, and moreover, not a Catholic. The official Church needed a new theological vocabulary with which to speak of the Jews and Judaism. The evolution of this new vocabulary by mainly German converts to Catholicism is traced by Connelly in masterful fashion in his prehistory of *Nostra aetate* (No. 4). However, the new vocabulary would have been stillborn if the Council Fathers had not been empowered to address and correct in the first place a certain Catholic teaching and preaching regarding the Jews. But for

- the novel manner in which Isaac chose to frame his research questions, which led him to conclude that the received tradition regarding Jesus in relation to the Jews of his time, and the received tradition regarding the Jews of his time in relation to Jesus, overreach history and even the New Testament text,
- his intuited hypothesis, eloquently and compellingly argued, that it was this received tradition behind which racial antisemites had hidden for centuries in the persecution and murder of Jews,
- his standing to speak for all six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust because he had standing to speak for his own wife, daughter and son-in-law,
- his indefatigable post-war campaign, in word and deed, to alert Christians of the chasm between history and gospel reality on the one hand, and a certain contemptuous tradition regarding Jews and Judaism on the other, a campaign that culminated in a private audience on 13 June 1960 with Pope John XXIII,

the Council Fathers would not have been given the opportunity to rectify Church teaching about Jews and Judaism because the item would not have reached the Second Vatican Council agenda.

Was Isaac the first to mount a “fight against antisemitism, principally in the religious context,” by subjecting the canonical gospels to critical examination? By no means. He was not the first to note that these gospels took shape

²⁹ Connelly, 178.

decades after the death of Jesus. Nor was he the first to posit a relationship between Christian teaching regarding the Jews and modern antisemitism. As early as 1933–34, simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic, Christian theologians were beginning to express these very sentiments. In *The Christian-Jewish Tragedy: A Study in Religious Prejudice*, published in 1933, Conrad Henry Moehlman, James B. Colgate professor of the history of Christianity at Baptist-affiliated Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, was writing,

Until recently Christian historians had not critically examined the canonical gospels. What is worse – few Christians had taken the trouble to notice that these gospels took shape around and subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem in C.E. 70. For three decades after the death of Jesus, Jerusalem Jew and Christian lived on fairly decent terms, the one with the other. Jerusalem Christians visited the temple, offered sacrifices, and even kept the passover. The Christian believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the predicted messiah; the Jew could not. In connection with the catastrophes of C.E. 66–73 and C.E. 132–135, which destroyed the Jewish state, the break between Christian and Jew became more and more pronounced. What occurred? The Christian proceeded to exonerate Pontius Pilate, the judge and executioner of Jesus.³⁰

Moreover, concluded Moehlman, “The tyro in the study of the Christian-Jewish problem soon discovers that the ultimate reason for anti-Semitism, although the term itself is of very recent origin, is Calvary.”³¹ In England, the research of Anglican priest James Parkes was leading him to similar conclusions. In his *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Anti-Semitism*, he argued that Christian antisemitism is dislike of the Jews for reasons that relate more to projection of an image of the Jew created by Church preaching than to reality, and hypothesized that “it is in this conflict [between the Church and the Synagogue] and its issue that modern antisemitism finds its roots.”³² How, then, did it come to pass that the official Church would pay heed to Jules Isaac in particular? What was it about Isaac and the era in which he emerged that

³⁰ Conrad Henry Moehlman, *The Christian-Jewish Tragedy: A Study in Religious Prejudice* (Rochester, NY: The Printing House of Leo Hart, 1933), 16.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

³² James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Antisemitism*, reprint ed. (New York: Atheneum 1934), 374.

destined him to play the catalytic role in paving the way for a conclave of all Catholic bishops in union with the Bishop of Rome to clarify and embrace, in terms of esteem rather than of contempt, the role of Israel in salvation history, and this in the face of scriptural passages that the Jews were responsible for Christ's death (Acts 3:15), lived under a curse (Mt. 27:25) and that God's covenant with the Jews was obsolete (Heb. 8:13)?

Here is his story.

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Motzei Shabbos HaGadol, 5776 Sunday, 17 April 2016.

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On the Threshold of a Sacred Mission

It was February 1946. Eighteen months had elapsed since the liberation of Paris, twelve months since the liberation of Auschwitz; nine months since the unconditional surrender by the German armed forces in Reims and in Berlin; and six months since Marshall Pétain, the embodiment of *L'Etat français*, had been found guilty of treason by a special *Haute Cour de Justice* constituted in 1944 to try Vichy cabinet members. The scale of the crime that had been perpetrated upon European Jewry by the Nazis was only beginning to emerge—the murder of two-thirds of the Jews of Europe. In this context, the first international conference to be jointly sponsored by the National Conference of Christians and Jews,¹ and the Council of Christians and Jews,² was soon to take place. It would be held at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, from 30 July 1946 to 6 August 1946. The conference would emphasize the themes of freedom, justice and responsibility and its fruits would take the form of two resolutions: “to create an international umbrella organization of Christian-Jewish councils of the whole world, as well as to convoke an emergency conference for dealing

¹ Founded in America in 1928 at the joint initiative of Catholics, Protestants and Jews to counter the influence of the Klu Klux Klan when Catholic Alfred E. Smith became the Democratic presidential nominee.

² Founded in the United Kingdom as the pro tanto successor to the London Society of Jews and Christians (est.1928) in March 1942 by Chief Rabbi of the British Empire Joseph H. Hertz and Archbishop of Canterbury William Temple. William W. Simpson, a Methodist minister active in efforts on behalf of refugees, was appointed secretary, an office he held until 1974.

with anti-Semitism in Europe.”³ Both of these goals would be realized in Switzerland—the first in the form of an International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) with an office at 10 rue de la Madeleine in Geneva and an address in London,⁴ and the second in the form of a conference to take place in the summer of 1947 in Seelisberg, Switzerland (canton of Uri). Christian and Jewish members of such joint bodies, as were then known to exist or to be in the process of formation, were invited to attend the conference at Oxford in their personal, not officially representative, capacities, apparently 150 in total. Berlin pastor Dean Gruber and Heidelberg pastor Herman Mass would be permitted entry into England to attend. Theresienstadt survivor and prominent German rabbi Leo Baeck would address the delegates. These 150 attendees would not include Jules Isaac, who, in the matter of Christian-Jewish relations, had yet to emerge into the public sphere as a combatant against antisemitism.

Eighteen months had elapsed since Isaac had emerged from clandestinity, then unaware that he did so bereft of a family life that had seemed of indestructible solidity, returned to a liberated Paris and been restored by de Gaulle to his pre-war function of Inspector General of Public Education for France. “[B]y the autumn of 1944,” he recalled in later life, “I was joyfully reunited with my elder son [Daniel], a commando officer in de Lattre’s army.”⁵ Isaac had retired from public service on 14 October 1944, still ignorant of the fate of other family members. His retirement was made retroactive to 18 November 1942, his 65th birthday. Formally, he would remain Inspector General of Public Education until 30 September 1945; thereafter, he would be *Inspecteur général honoraire*.⁶ “So enduring were my illusions,” he recollected, “that in May 1945 when Germany surrendered, I had not lost all hope, continuing to anxiously scrutinize the lists of returnees posted at *Phôtel Lutétia*. [The *Lutétia*, which had housed the Abwehr offices during

³ Quoted in Martin Klockener, “The International Council of Christians and Jews and the University of Fribourg,” in *A Time for Recommitment: Jewish-Christian Dialogue 70 Years after War and Shoah*, ed. Bernhard Vogel (Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., Sankt Augustin/Berlin, 2009), 48.

⁴ The initial phase of the ICCJ was short-lived. The US member affiliate—the National Conference of Christians and Jews—decided after the Fribourg Conference of 1948 that an international council of Christians and Jews would have an agenda both too narrow and too religious to effectively combat antisemitism. As a consequence of this decision, the ICCJ Geneva office was closed but the London address subsisted.

⁵ Jules Isaac, “Surviv en guise d’introduction,” *Cahiers du Sud* LVII, no. 376 (Feb-Mar 1964): 229.

⁶ In France, the “*honoraire*” is not descriptive, but is part of the title of a retired Inspector General.

the Occupation, was chosen over the *Gare d'Orsay* to receive the survivors.] At last, of the four of mine who had been deported,⁷ one, the youngest, my younger son [Jean-Claude], returned, the only one, and by what miraculous good fortune, after Auschwitz and Dora, a deportee who survived; it was pure miracle. It was then, only then, but not through [Jean-Claude], that I learned the truth about Auschwitz, the monstrous truth.”⁸ Isaac’s wife’s last words to him, in a scribbled message smuggled out of the Drancy transit camp on the eve of her deportation to she knew not where, continued to echo in his mind: *My dearest, take care for our sakes, be steadfast and finish your work for which the world is waiting*. “I attended to [this sacred mission] desperately, with all my diminishing energy stretched to the extreme,” remembered Isaac, “a real race against the clock, for illness coupled with despair was biting at my heels. In my aixoise retreat, a precious helpmate, [Dr. Marie-Françoise Payré],⁹ most particularly allowed me to see to completion *Jésus et Israël*.”¹⁰ Isaac had retreated to “his dear Pergola where the hours silently flow, where the visible and the invisible ever coalesce,” in his words, “where distractions are rare, where my only neighbours are meadows and the familiar mother goat with her two leaping children, this very dear Pergola enclosed in its cypress hedges.”¹¹ It was here, at la Pergola, that he had settled in to see to the completion of his sacred mission of fighting for a wounded Israel, for brotherhood against hatred, by immersing himself in the writing of Part IV, the final part, of that for which the world was waiting.

While browsing in a bookstore in Aix-en-Provence, Isaac’s attention was caught by the recently published 17th edition of *Jésus en son temps*, authored by Henri Daniel-Rops, a Catholic destined for the *Académie Française* and the order of the Grand Cross of Saint Gregory from Pope Pius XII. “Until then,” Isaac would recollect, “we had had cordial relations which had become frayed further to a meeting of *l’Union pour la*

⁷ Wife Laure, daughter Juliette, son-in-law Robert Boudeville and younger son Jean-Claude.

⁸ Isaac: 229. Laure Isaac and Juliette (Isaac) Boudeville were murdered at Auschwitz immediately upon their arrival on 29/30 October 1943. Robert Boudeville, Juliette’s husband, perished at Bergen-Belsen on 4 June 1944.

⁹ Marie-Françoise Payré was a medical doctor in Aix whom Jules and Laure had first come to know, along with her husband (also a medical doctor), in 1941–42. By the time the war ended, Payré was a widow, Isaac a widower. She would become his physician and helpmate. Was it irony or premonition that had led Laure Isaac to remark to her son, Jean-Claude, that Marie-Françoise Payré wore too much lipstick? (as related by Jean-Claude Janet and communicated to the author by Dominique Mazel, conservatrice-en-chef honoraire du Fonds Jules Isaac).

¹⁰ Isaac: 229.

¹¹ Quoted in Marcel Ruff, “Adieux à Jules Isaac,” *Cahiers de l’Association des amis de Jules Isaac*, no. 1 (1968): 3.

Vérité where it had seemed to me [Charles] Péguy had been the object of unjustifiable calumny, and I had come to his defense.”¹² Upon learning that Isaac’s wife, daughter and son-in-law had been murdered, Daniel-Rops had sent not one, but two, handwritten condolence notes, the first dated 22 September 1945, and the second, 19 October 1945, both expressing profound sadness over Isaac’s “grave loss.”¹³ But now, in February 1946, Isaac’s eyes fell upon Daniel-Rops’ commentary on Matthew 27:25: “Then the people as a whole answered, ‘His blood be upon us and upon our children!’”¹⁴ Isaac’s heart skipped a beat as he read, “Perhaps it was necessary for Israel to kill their God, whom they failed to recognize; but since blood mysteriously invokes blood, does it not perhaps belong to the charity of Christians to let the horrors of pogroms compensate, in the hidden balance of the divine intention, for the unbearable horrors of the crucifixion?”¹⁵ In implying that the murder of millions of Jews might be continuing divine retribution for the crucifixion, Daniel-Rops was drawing upon a Christian tradition dating, if not to the first three centuries,¹⁶ to the next succeeding fifteen, a tradition that “is not easy to find... in the Church’s official documents,”¹⁷ contends Gregory Baum.

Isaac returned home and penned a first draft of a letter to Daniel-Rops. On the night of Easter Sunday, he wrote a second draft which he posted. In the closing paragraph, Isaac drew upon the thoughts of his

¹² Jules Isaac, *L’Enseignement du mépris: vérité historique et mythes théologiques* (Paris: Fasquelle, 1962), Annexe I—Quinze ans après, écho très adouci d’un âpre débat, 135–52, at 137.

¹³ Quoted in André Kaspi, *Jules Isaac ou la passion de la vérité* (n.p.: Plon 2002), 186 (out-of-print).

¹⁴ Jakob Jocz, quoted at page 69 of Gregory Baum’s *The Jews and the Gospel* (London: Bloomsbury, 1961), is cited as representative of the better understanding of this verse: in his, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*, Jocz writes, “The behaviour of the crowd before Pilate was by no means vox populi in any sense. The gospels make it clear that the crowd demanding the death of Jesus was the priests’ crowd...Are we to regard (this crowd) as more representative (of the Jewish people) than the thousands of believers who joined the Church?” (p. 3). In his *L’Enseignement du mépris* (Fasquelle, 1962), Isaac wrote, “[Matt 27:25], which has caused so much grief, which has been exploited against the Jewish people for so many centuries by so many Christian writers, is unique to the gospel of Matthew, is more in line with the apocryphal gospels, and is unhistorical (*Jésus et Israël*, pp. 457–515, p. 489 especially). It is intended to discharge the Roman authority from all liability for the crucifixion and to impute the liability for all time to the Jewish authorities and the Jewish people in its entirety (p. 141, n. 1).”

¹⁵ Henri Daniel-Rops, *Jésus en son Temps* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1945), 526–27.

¹⁶ F. Lovsky, *Antisémitisme et mystère d’Israël* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1955), 432–51.

¹⁷ Correspondence to the author dated 19 January 2015.

dear, departed friend, Charles Péguy, thoughts echoed in Part IV of Isaac's yet-to-be-published manuscript of *Jésus et Israël*.

How can I explain what I felt in reading such turns of phrases, sagely balanced, perfidious in their form, deliberately abstruse! I find in them a sacrilegious stench. They express I don't know what secret satisfaction, and a most odious perception of divine justice. Do you really think this God, one with Jesus, the God not only of justice, but also of love and mercy, would refuse to grant the wish of his Son: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do', but instead choose to grant the wish of the 'Jewish rabble': 'His blood be upon us and upon our children!', as if this wasn't the same God who, six hundred years earlier, had spoken to his people through the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel: 'The son will not bear the iniquity of the father and the father will not bear the iniquity of the son...I will judge each according to his ways, house of Israel...'

Do you not see that you are repeating Pontius Pilate's gesture, and that according to the psalmist's formula, you are 'keeping your hands clean from guilt', from the guilt associated with the millions of Jewish martyrs, murdered at Auschwitz and other places of horror, fraternally united with the millions of Christian martyrs.

I don't hold Christianity responsible, far from it, but you, a certain Christian pharisaism that you do not have the courage to repudiate, you who are perpetuating a murderous tradition, yes murderous, I will tell you straight up: it leads to Auschwitz. You speak of Jewish responsibilities; the time has come to speak of Christian responsibilities, or that of pseudo-Christians. The truth is that the Christian faith does not demand this inhuman doctrine, this barbaric conception of divine justice, this negation of the universal fruits of the mystery of the Cross and of Redemption...Jesus's foes in Palestine were the very same encountered in all other countries, in all other times, the same always, amongst all peoples: the leaders, the illustrious, the 'respectable.' The Jewish people are nothing but a metaphor, a metaphor for humanity in its entirety. Péguy, this Péguy who you apparently as little understood as you do the Gospels, Péguy said, 'It is not the Jews who crucified Jesus Christ, but the sins of all of us; the Jews, who were but the instrument, participate like others in the font of salvation.'

This is how a true Christian speaks. It was Péguy who brought us together. It is Péguy who today splits us apart.

Aix-en-Provence

Easter Sunday, 21 April 1946.¹⁸

Isaac awaited a response. None was forthcoming. He decided to publish his letter to Daniel-Rops, "not out of animosity toward Daniel-Rops,"

¹⁸ Reproduced in Isaac, *L'enseignement du mépris*, Annexe I, 138–140.

Isaac later explained, “but for two main reasons: the first was the risk that the resounding success of [the 17th edition of *Jésus en son temps*] would affect and intoxicate its readers by the tens, by the hundreds, by the thousands; the second was the nature of my critique which showed the work of reducing to a soft mass, of deforming, of a tendentious selection of scriptural passages, trends in Christian literature – Daniel-Rops did not have a monopoly.”¹⁹ On 4 May 1946, Isaac left Aix for Paris to persuade a review to publish his letter and to complete the research for his *Jésus et Israël*. On the evening of 7 May, he met with Vercors (writer Jean Bruller, whose *Silence de la mer* (Editions de minuit, 1942) was the first major novel published underground during the Occupation), who was entirely supportive. “My piece on D. Rops is with *Esprit*,” wrote Isaac to Marie-Françoise Payré on 9 May. “If it does not pass muster, as I hope it will, my default will be to give it to *Europe*. Vercors, whom I have seen again, is turning his mind to this very supportively.”²⁰ *Esprit* editor Emmanuel Mounier vetoed the publication of Isaac’s letter; *Europe* editor Jean Cassou agreed to publish it. The letter was published in the July 1946 issue of *Europe* under the title, “Comment on écrit l’Histoire (sainte).” French readers were astonished. Was this the same Jules Isaac, eminent historian from whose manuals they had learned their history as secondary students, they wondered? Was this the same Jules Isaac who had served as Inspector General of Public Education for France from his Popular Front appointment in 1936 until his ouster from office in 1940 during the unfolding of Vichy’s *révolution nationale*?

¹⁹ Ibid., 140.

²⁰ Jules Isaac, “Correspondance inédite de Jules Isaac: Extraits de lettres à son médecin (1946–1948),” *Cahiers de l’Association des amis de Jules Isaac*, no. 2 (1974): 1.

The Formative Years: Péguy 1877–1902

CHILDHOOD

Jules Isaac was born in Rennes on 18 November 1877 into a *Judéo-Lorraine* family, by his own admission “more Lorrainer than Jewish.”¹ He was preceded by two sisters: Laure (1867–1945) and (Lucie) Henriette (1873–1958). Seven years had elapsed since Lorrainers east of the Vosges and Alsatians had lost their French citizenship following Bismarck’s annexation of Alsace and a slice of Lorraine in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War. Young Jules arrived into this world in the year that marked the beginning of the end of the conservative Republic of the Dukes.² The crisis of 1877 settled the question of the locus of the balance of power under the constitution adopted on 31 December 1875. The president of the Republic was compelled to give way to the sovereign voice of France. This was the France into which Jules Isaac arrived, republican for a third time, a republic still in its infancy, fragile and resentful, if not hostile, to Jews.

¹ Jules Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1960), 22.

² The president of the Republic since 1873 had been the Duc de Magenta, Marshall MacMahon. (As a result of the Wallon amendment of 30 January 1875, which passed by a margin of one vote, the term of the president of the “Republic” was seven years.) Three Orleanist Dukes had played a role in government with a view to bringing about a Restoration—the Duc de Broglie who as vice president of the Council was to effectively lead MacMahon’s first ministry, the Duc Decazes, foreign minister from 1873 to 1877, and the Duc d’Audiffret-Pasquier, president of the National Assembly and then of the Senate.

Initially, the family name had been “Isaac-Marx,” probably in response to a Napoleonic decree that required the Jews of France to assume a family name. Jules’ grandfather, Elias Isaac-Marx (1791–1866),³ uneasy with a family name that included as biblical an appellation as *Isaac*, had unhitched the *Isaac* from the *Marx*, becoming Elias Isaac Marx. Curiously, Jules’ father, Isaac Marx (1829–91), opted for *Isaac* over *Marx* as a family name—the only one of his siblings to do so—and added “Edouard” to become Edouard Marx Isaac.⁴ Grandfather Elias, *Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur* and recipient of the medal of Ste. Hélène, had participated in Napoleon’s military campaigns of 1812 and 1815. It had not mattered that he was Jewish. The emancipation of the Jews of France in 1791,⁵ in keeping with the Declaration of the Rights of Man,⁶ had “brought with it the end of legal discrimination in return for ‘regeneration,’ the rapid divestment of all external manifestations of particularism,” according to historian Aron Rodrigue. “Jews were to be made into Frenchmen and Frenchwomen, paralleling attempts at homogenizing regional and local cultures in France, with religion retreating into the realm of the private.”⁷ Jules’ father Edouard, a Lorrainer from Metz, *Officier de la Légion d’honneur*, was an artillery officer in Louis-Napoleon’s Imperial Guard and had seen action in the African campaign and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Jules’ mother, Léonie Massenbach (1844–91), was Strasbourgeoise, the daughter of an Alsatian grain trader. Military discipline pervaded the Isaac household. At table, Jules and his sisters did not speak unless spoken to. Years later, Fadiey Lovsky, a Protestant dialogue partner of Isaac, would describe the latter as “...a great man, grizzled, rather old France; with the look of a retired colonel ... warm, but not easy.”⁸

³ Married to Baccarat Violette (1806–87).

⁴ At the age of 29, Jules himself toyed with the idea of reverting to Marx as a family name; he would sign his first ever published piece, a 1906 review of Georges Sorel’s *Réflexions sur la violence* in the periodical, *Le Mouvement socialiste*, “Is. Marx.”

⁵ On 23 December 1791, in response to a motion presented in the Constituent Assembly by l’abbé Henri Grégoire (1750–1831), a pastor from the village of Emberménil and deputy of the clergy, the Jews of France were granted full citizenship.

⁶ The Declaration of the Rights of Man was a preamble attached to a constitution that was adopted by the Constituent Assembly in 1791. The constitution in question contemplated not a republic, but a constitutional monarchy.

⁷ Aron Rodrigue, “Rearticulations of French Jewish Identities after the Dreyfus Affair,” *Jewish Social Studies* 2, no. 3 (Spring–Summer, 1996): 2.

⁸ F. Lovsky, “Les Premières années de l’amitié judéo-chrétienne,” *Sens, revue de l’Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France*, no. 6 (1998): 261.

It was in the autumn of 1888 that young Jules entered *lycée Lakanal* as a day student *en cinquième*.⁹ *Lycée Lakanal* is bounded by the small towns of Sceaux and Bourg-la-Reine, on the outskirts of Paris. Rain or shine, Jules would make the journey from home to school and back on foot, through the main streets or using a shortcut through the countryside. In that year, the nationalist campaign of populist General Georges Ernest Jean-Marie Boulanger was gathering steam, funded largely by the Royalist Duchess d'Uzès, and would reach its crescendo in January 1889, months prior to the general elections of May/June 1889. A by-election was called for 27 January in the staunchly republican district of la Seine, which included Sceaux and Bourg-la-Reine, where the Isaacs lived. At every opportunity, Boulanger supporters would cover the signage of the republican opponent with signage of their own candidate. Homeward-bound from school, "if the opportunity presented itself," Isaac recalled, "and casting precautionary glances in all directions I was assured of not being seen, my republican sentiments were kindled: in one stroke, I would pull, peel off or tear away the Boulangist sign, almost always brand new, which covered Jacques' signage – a delicious feeling, however brief, since I had to take flight, pursued by those yelling loudly at me."¹⁰ The republican sentiments to which Isaac alluded were informed by a home environment characterized by what he later remembered as "...a staunch republicanism, tricolor, liberal in the manner of the period (but liberal nonetheless), vaguely democratic, perfectly bourgeois, well fitted to the social order, firmly entrenched in its antipathy to socialism."¹¹ Boulanger went on to defeat his republican opponent handily in the Paris by-election, further evidence of nationalist sentiments that augured well for a *coup d'état*. Boulanger chose to hold back, probably anticipating a sweep to power in the ensuing spring general elections. Prior to the elections, tricked into believing that the government had evidence of his treason to the republic and that he was to be tried in the Senate, Boulanger took flight to Brussels and into the arms of his mistress. "Thus," in Isaac's words, "did Marguerite de Bonnemains overcome the Duchess d'Uzès, and Marianne, Boulangism."¹² Thus did the 1889 general election assure the Opportunists—moderately conserva-

⁹ In the French school system of the nineteenth century, unlike the North American, one progressed from higher number grades to lower number grades.

¹⁰ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, 30–31.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

¹² *Ibid.*, 31.

tive bourgeois republicans—another decade in power,¹³ and thus did it legitimize a republic to which Pope Leo XIII in the course of his long pontificate (1878–1903) recommended Catholics should rally.

ADOLESCENCE

In 1890, in the realm of the private, young Jules was *bar mitzvah*.¹⁴ He was called to the Torah by the name given to him at his circumcision—*Yaacov ben Avraham*.¹⁵ But in his fourteenth year, his carefree existence was brought to a sudden and traumatic end with the deaths of both his parents, Edouard from a stroke on 24 September 1891 and Léonie, six days later, from diabetes-related complications. “The blow was so sudden, so unexpected,” Isaac later recalled, “that at the time, it did not fully penetrate into my consciousness. I still retain, however, two indelible memories: one is of the painful moments in which I was led before my father’s deathbed; the other, of that minute – almost timeless – in which my mother made desperate efforts to take me one last time into her arms, as if she wanted (and certainly did want) to make me feel in every fiber the infinite sweetness of a maternal tenderness from which I was about to be forever severed, and for which I would forever thirst.”¹⁶ Custody of young Jules passed to *bourgeois* businessman Salomon Blum, husband of Laure, the elder of Jules’ two sisters.¹⁷ It was decided Jules should become a boarder at *lycée Lakanal*. On 1 October of that *annus horribilis*—1891— young Jules found himself not only orphaned, but wrenched from familial surroundings. In the preceding academic year 1890–91, he had been a day student *en troisième*, standing first in his class. He began the 1891–92 year as a boarder *en seconde*. As fate would have it, five years Isaac’s senior was a boarder on half scholarship by the name of Charles Péguy, the same Péguy who was destined to become one of France’s most illustrious poets, essayists and editors.

“[He]... gave the appearance of having arrived, by what trajectory one knew not, straight out of the French Christian middle ages,” rem-

¹³ Only 38 declared Boulangists won election, including novelist Maurice Barrès.

¹⁴ Marie-Françoise Payré, “Les Idées religieuses de Jules Isaac,” in *Actes du Colloque de Rennes* (Rennes: Hachette, 1977), 134.

¹⁵ Isaac’s Hebrew name, Jacob, son of Abraham, as it appears on his ketubah (Jewish marriage contract).

¹⁶ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie*. Péguy, 36.

¹⁷ (Lucie) Henriette was married to Théodore Picard of Lyon.

inised Isaac, “from the thirteenth century, unless it was the fifteenth, this younger brother and companion of Joan of Arc.”¹⁸ The young Jules was transfixed. “During that academic year 1891–1892,...I watched him frequently, observed him for long periods, without being aware perhaps: proof that he had a certain striking presence, even for the child that I was, not so much by virtue of his reputation as the outstanding *cagneux*,¹⁹ than by a continuous energy that emanated from his very being, imposing itself upon me and upon all.”²⁰ These were Isaac’s first impressions of Charles Péguy, as apprehended by a presumably traumatized, newly orphaned and very lonely 14-year-old, a Péguy invariably flanked at his right—in this most republican bastion of France—by fellow *cagneux*, *lycée d’Orléans* classmate and best friend, *Judéo-Alsacien* Albert Lévy, son of a rabbi,²¹ and at his left by fellow *cagneux* Albert Mathiez. The memories of the three of them were to remain forever etched in Isaac’s psyche. “They would stroll, their strides synchronized in military fashion, engaged in a never-ending conversation,” recollected Isaac, “not in circumambulation around the grounds, but following a straight line, always the same, tracking a paved drainage groove...from the covered gallery to the gate overlooking the park and back.”²² After one rather than the usual two years of *cagne*, Péguy would sit the competitive examinations for entry into *Ecole Normale Supérieure*,²³ falling just short, ending his oral examination but a

¹⁸ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, Péguy en Sorbonne. Discours du cinquantenaire (des Cahiers), 365–75 at 370.

¹⁹ A *cagneux* is a *lycée* graduate enrolled in a structured preparatory program to sit the competitive examinations for admission to the *École Normale Supérieure*.

²⁰ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, 45.

²¹ In 1899, Albert Lévy would begin teaching at Strasbourg, then to the midi for health-related reasons, where he became the doyen de la Faculté des Lettres in Aix-en-Provence. At his death in 1929, he was succeeded in the position by *Lakanalien* classmate, Victor L. Bourrilly. On the night of 24 or 25 June 1943, Mme Lévy-Sec, widow of Albert Lévy, was arrested by the Germans and transported to Marseilles where she remained under house arrest for 5 months until her deportation in November 1943.

²² Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, 46. Unbeknownst to Isaac at the time, he had more in common with Péguy than appeared at first sight, the latter having also lost a parent—his father—in early childhood and both having been steeped in a patriotic, anticlerical republicanism.

²³ *Ecole Normale Supérieure* was founded in 1793 to train the teachers of France’s First Republic. Taking form under the First Empire, its alumni would swell the ranks of *lycée* and university professors in the course of the Second. See Robert Smith, *The Ecole Normale Supérieure and the Third Republic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982) pp. 5–18.

Fig. 2.1 J. Isaac adolescent c. 1893



half point behind the last of the admitted candidates and standing second among the wait-listed. In the next succeeding academic year 1892–93, Jules was *en rhétorique* (Fig. 2.1) and Péguy no longer at *Lakanal*; the latter had decided to complete his year of military service as a member of the 131st infantry regiment in Orléans. In June 1893, at the close of academic year 1892–93, however, Péguy would return to *Lakanal* for a fortnight of compressed preparation in advance of a second attempt to gain admission to the *Ecole Normale*. Isaac recalled the visit.

The image is etched in my memory: toward the end of the [1892-93 academic] year, the sudden appearance in class of an infantryman in uniform; dark blue tunic, red épaulettes and pants; sensational, I shall never forget it! He seated himself in the front row, bathed in our awe; it was Péguy, having returned from the Orléans barracks to do a lap of instruction, *en cagne*, in the company of his competition.²⁴

Cocooned during this first academic year as a boarder at *Lakanal*, young Jules was oblivious to the fact that his co-religionists were under siege in France. On 20 April 1892, the first issue of an antisemitic daily, *La Libre Parole*, appeared on the newsstands. This newspaper was Edouard Drumont's medium for the dissemination of his Jew hatred. Drumont was

²⁴ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, 59. Lakanal buddies, who had completed their second year of preparation, such as Albert Levy, Albert Mathiez and Victor Bourrilly, gained admission to the *École*. Péguy, falling short by one-quarter of a point, ended at the top of the waiting list.

not shy about playing fast and loose with the facts. In 1890, he confidently asserted that the Jews in France numbered 500,000. According to the official census in that year, there were 67,780 Jews living in metropolitan France, of which 43,556 were settled in the Paris Consistory. In addition, there were 44,208 Jews living in Algeria (then an integral part of France) who had become citizens of France with the enactment in October 1871 of the decree sponsored by the then justice minister Adolphe Crémieux.²⁵ Drumont's Jew hatred was based on race, not religion. "In 1790 (sic)," wrote Drumont, "the Jew arrives; under the First Republic and under the First Empire, he enters, he acclimatizes, he searches for his place; under the Restoration and the July Monarchy, he seats himself in the salon; under the Second Empire, he reclines on the bed of others; under the Third Republic, he begins to rout the French from their homes and forces them to work for him."²⁶

At the close of academic year 1894–95, after seven years at *lycée Lakanal*, four of them as a boarder, Isaac received his *baccalauréat* (secondary diploma) with the mention, *Très bien*.²⁷ Isaac spent the next two years preparing for the *Normale Supérieure* entrance examinations—the first (1895–96) at *lycée Lakanal* and the second (1896–97) at *lycée Henri-IV*, where he would encounter Henri Bergson as a teacher (Fig. 2.2). During these two years, he learned Greek and Latin, languages then foundational to the preparation for admission to the *École Normale*. Twice he passed the written exam and twice he fell short on his oral. It was while Isaac was still *cagneux* at *lycée Henri-IV* that he would cross paths again with Péguy, this time with enduring aftereffects. Isaac was then in his twentieth year. No doubt he was aware of Péguy's conversion to socialism in the spring of 1895 (during Péguy's first academic year at the *Ecole Normale*), not a sudden conversion but rather the culmination of at least three years of prior gestation. Péguy and three fellow *Normaliens*—Albert Lévy and Albert Mathiez (who were *en cagne* with Péguy at Lakanal) and Weulersse

²⁵ In 1863, Crémieux became the president of the Universal Israelite Alliance, founded in 1860 to defend the Jews of France from prejudice and discrimination.

²⁶ Quoted in Pierrard, 40.

²⁷ In academic 1893–94, his third year as a boarder at *Lakanal*, Jules was *en philosophie* and Péguy was completing his second year of *cagne*, but not at *Lakanal*; rather at *lycée Louis-le-Grand*, while enrolled on full scholarship at adjacent *collège Sainte-Barbe*. At the close of the 1893–94 year, Péguy gained admission to *Ecole Normale*, sixth among the admitted candidates.



Fig. 2.2 J. Isaac in Henri Bergson's *khâgne* (1897/98) at *lycée Henri-IV*, Paris (third row behind and just to Bergson's left)

(nephew of Georges Renard, director of *la Revue socialiste*),²⁸ experienced what they came to call their *Utopian turn*. Until then, Isaac had paid scant attention to the social question. Yet, as he recalled,

with each passing day of freedom [at *Henri-IV*] reminding me of the family milieu that had become mine – that of the *bourgeoisie d'affaires* – I experienced an increasing aversion (and perhaps also disproportionately so), to the *bourgeois* mentality and egoism, to bourgeois customs and marriages, to the bourgeoisie-ification of religion and of the Churches, to *l'Argent-Roi*. I visited the bible infrequently, even less frequently the synagogue, yet – I still have the precise recollection – the admonitions of the prophets increasingly resonated.²⁹

²⁸ Lévy and Mattiez had been *en cagne* with Péguy at *Lakanal* in the 1891–92 academic year.

²⁹ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie*. Péguy, 97–98.

That the admonition of the prophets resonated in relation to the social question is not surprising. In Third Republic France, the universal human rights and justice proclaimed in the Declaration of the Rights of Man was one with the prophetic message. These same sentiments would be echoed 44 years later by another French Jewish historian—Marc Bloch—in his 1941 *Will*: “In a world assailed by the most atrocious barbarism, is not the generous tradition of the Hebrew prophets, which Christianity in its purest sense has adopted and expanded, one of the best reasons to live, to believe, and to fight?”³⁰ Isaac was not the first socialist for whom the prophetic message resonated. Erich Fromm notes in his *On Being Human*, “If Marx had been allergic to religious words...would the student Marx have attended a course of lectures on the prophet Isaiah as the only non-obligatory course in his study plan? Would he, many years later, have told his wife, who was interested in attending some lectures by a very liberal minister: ‘If you really are interested in religion, read the prophets instead of listening to banalities...’”³¹ Isaac’s discontent with the embourgeoisement of his Jewish middle-class milieu was probably driven by a multiplicity of factors. When he was but 14 years old, brother-in-law Salomon Blum had piled one trauma upon another by banishing the newly orphaned Jules from the family home, which Isaac remembered as “firmly resolved in its antipathy to socialism. The violence of the Commune had left a horrific memory in the minds of the French bourgeois...For the young child that I was at the time, the term ‘communard’, which was often heard in the course of conversation among adults, had a sinister resonance, and seemed to be a synonym for brigand or assassin.”

UTOPIAN TURN

The meeting between Isaac and Péguy was brokered by a mutual friend, Henri Boivin, older brother of Emile.³² The *rendezvous* took place one fine afternoon in May 1897 at the *Luxembourg Gardens*. Isaac recalled feelings of trepidation in advance of his one-on-one encounter with the charismatic Péguy, a Péguy whom Isaac had last set eyes upon at *lycée*

³⁰ Quoted in Carole Fink, *Marc Bloch: A Life in History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 256.

³¹ Erich Fromm, *On Being Human* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 166.

³² Isaac was close to both Boivin brothers—Henri and Emile—fellow Orleanais of Péguy. The younger, Emile, was only months older than Isaac. The brothers Boivin would marry the sisters Crémieux, daughters of Adolphe Crémieux.

Lakanal when Isaac was but in his sixteenth year. “What apprehension at not being on a par with, not sufficiently worthy of, such a dialogue partner,” Isaac reminisced in later life. “No academic examination had ever caused me this state of anxiety. In truth, was this not a test, a test of whether to merit admission into the Péguy elect, an elect akin, I had heard, to a mysterious and religious order?”³³ The Péguy Isaac encountered in May 1897 was a rising star. He was enrolled at the *Ecole Normale* in pursuit of an *agrégation (de philosophie)*, having spent the immediately preceding academic year on leave at Orléans to write his *Jeanne d’Arc*. Within the succeeding 12 months, Péguy would abandon his studies at *Normale*, publish his *Jeanne d’Arc* through *la Revue socialiste*, marry Charlotte Baudouin³⁴ (over his mother’s furious objections)³⁵ and plunge headlong into the battle for revision of the verdict in the Dreyfus case,³⁶ and for social justice generally, as publisher and bookseller via *la librairie Georges Bellais*, “a venture in communist institution and not an achievement in individual capitalist enterprise.”³⁷

Péguy’s economic redemption of man was not an end in itself; it was a means to an end—the redemption of man in the tradition of Karl Marx. “Only a relatively small number of Marxist scholars – among them pro- and anti-Marxists – have pointed out that Marx’s final goal was not *economic* but *human* change; and that the idea of the primacy of the drive for possession is a bourgeois and not a Marxist concept,” notes Erich Fromm. “...His aim was the liberation of man from crippledness, from his loss of himself, from his alienation. The socialist society was not an aim in itself, but a means to the full realization of man.”³⁸ While socialism’s roots in France as political theory were old and deep, it had only recently come into its own as an organized political force, given the repression of the Commune in 1871. At the first socialist workers’ congress of 1879, it was

³³ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, 98–99.

³⁴ Charlotte was the sister of prodigy Marcel Baudouin, fellow *cagneux* with Péguy at Sainte-Barbe. The friendship that evolved between Péguy and Baudouin “...was unlike any other, a fraternal in addition to mysterious friendship, a tight and semi-mystical union, so deeply rooted that it never manifested itself, never expressed itself like the other of Péguy’s relationships...” (*Les Expériences de ma vie I: Péguy*, 83). Tragically, Baudouin passed away in 1896, during his year of military service.

³⁵ Two of the four witnesses to this marriage were fellow *Lakanaliens* Collier and Mattiez.

³⁶ By the close of 1897, it had become evident to E.N.S. librarian Lucien Herr, and therefore to Péguy, that Dreyfus had been the object of a gross miscarriage of justice.

³⁷ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, 237 (Deuxieme cahier, p. 4).

³⁸ Fromm, 132–33.

the Marxian, rather than the Gallic Proudhonian or Blanquist, faction that won the day, under the leadership of Jules Guesde, anticlerical, antimilitarist, internationalist and pacifist in outlook. Péguy's unorthodox doctrine was well developed by the time he met with Isaac. Months later, in August 1897, this doctrine would be committed to print in a brochure, "thin and modest" recalled Isaac, "...with a grey cover, six and one half pages, 'price 10 centimes.'" ³⁹ It was Péguy's first ever published work, under the title *De la cité socialiste* (1897) and under the pen name *Pierre Deloire (de Loire)*. "Péguy's socialism was no mere inclination," according to Isaac, "there was nothing heated or sentimental about it; it transcended nations, was entirely revolutionary; his program was always collectivism as he precisely defined it in his 1897 brochure *De la cité socialiste*." ⁴⁰ It was a socialism whose end was not the socialization of large enterprises, although such socialization was contemplated, but the emotional and intellectual redemption of persons, a redemption that Péguy considered to be precarious without their economic redemption.

Isaac signed on as a disciple without hesitation to become one "...not among a thousand, but among twenty." ⁴¹ So it was that Isaac became the youngest of Péguy's disciples and, after Albert Lévy, the second who was Jewish. ⁴² But it was as a good Frenchman, not as a French Jew, that Isaac was admitted as a Péguy companion-in-arms. "[H]e was, if one may put it this way, a Jewish friend who did not figure among Péguy's Jewish friends," according to Géraudi Leroy. "It was not as a Jew that he entered into and remained in the '*compagnonnage*.' Having received from his mother a meager Jewish education, he considered himself thereafter perfectly agnostic and a stranger to every religious tradition." ⁴³ (44 years later, another French Jewish historian, Marc Bloch, would declare in his 1941 *Will*: "A stranger to all credal dogmas as to all alleged racial solidarity, I have throughout my life thought of myself as a above all and quite simply a Frenchman.") ⁴⁴ Ironically, It would be this stranger to every religious tradition who would one day provoke the leader of the Catholic Church to set

³⁹ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, 99.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Péguy en Sorbonne, discours du cinquantenaire (des Cahiers), 365–75 at 366.

⁴² In the nine *Cahiers* of the fifteenth and last series, five were written by Jews: Edmond Fleg, Joseph Reinach, Julien Benda, André Saurès and Georges Delahache.

⁴³ Géraudi Leroy, "Jules Isaac et Péguy," *Cahiers de l'Association des amis de Jules Isaac, nouvelle série* No 3 (December 2000): 51–2.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Fink, 256.

in motion a train of events that would culminate in a formal denunciation by the official Church of an almost two-millennia-old tradition within its midst regarding Jews and Judaism, a tradition that overreached the bounds of scriptural and historical accuracy. As was the case with many established French Israelites, the Jew in Isaac was one with republican France. “After [the Revolution of 1789],” notes historian Aron Rodrigue, “modern civilization was destined to triumph everywhere as it was doing in France. The identity between the principles of 1789 and of purified Judaism shorn of the superstitions that it had acquired during the centuries of oppression meant that Jews could now partake as full-fledged citizens in the onward path of civilization,”⁴⁵ an onward path that was assumed to be progressive in nature. Péguy adumbrated the practical side of his program for his newest recruit—participation as a companion-in-arms in the struggle for social justice and the payment of monthly dues to finance the establishment of a periodical “*socialistement socialiste*,”⁴⁶ a periodical whose purpose it was to convert those of Péguy’s generation. The one-on-one meeting with Péguy would be forever etched in Isaac’s memory.

The agreement was sealed, the commitment made (by me). I can envision as though it were yesterday the very spot where, before we parted, I said to Péguy, with the total conviction that was invigorating me: ‘You can count on me.’ It was at the exit of Luxembourg, opposite the old *Odéon*, at the corner of the rue de Vaugirard and Rotrou.... On that day, at that hour, it was as if *I had received a sacrament* [emphasis added] ... The imperative of spiritual integrity and social justice that, in my eyes, Péguy incarnated, and which would inform so nobly the first editions of the *Cahiers de la Quinzaine*... this imperative became mine, it took root in me with such force, at such a depth, that even today, on the eve of my eighty years, it remains alive, as alive as on the first day, despite the dissipated illusions, the lived experiences, the vanished hopes.⁴⁷

It was this spiritual integrity and social justice that impelled Isaac to strive for the economic redemption of man. These same values would one day impel him to strive for the redemption of Christians from a certain secular tradition contemptuous of Jews and Judaism.

⁴⁵Aron Rodrigue, “Totems, Taboos, and Jews: Salomon Reinach and the Politics of Scholarship in Fin-de-Siècle France” *Jewish Social Studies*, New Series 10, no. 2 (Winter, 2004): 2. With a view to propagating the normative nature of this French–Jewish path to emancipation, a network of French Jewish schools was created around the Mediterranean basin by the Universal Israelite Alliance.

⁴⁶Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, 101.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 101–102.

Having failed to gain admission to *École Normale*, Isaac could have spent another year *en cagne* at *lycée Henri-IV* and made a third attempt in 1898. He could have succumbed to the entreaties of a cousin and become involved in a family enterprise. He did neither. The competition for *École Normale* in 1897 happened to double as a competition for bursaries to pursue a *licence en Faculté*. Isaac won such a bursary to pursue a *licence* in history (and geography, a then relatively new discipline in France) at the Sorbonne, a university still under renovation that had begun in 1885. Abandoning his dream of gaining admission to the three-year program at *Normale* leading to the *agrégation en lettres*,⁴⁸ he opted instead to enroll at the Sorbonne (deferring his enrollment by one year to complete his compulsory military service) in a two-year program leading to the *licence en Faculté* (a first credential in the march to the *agrégation*, the admission ticket to a professorship at a *lycée*).⁴⁹

In October 1897, Jules Isaac began his year of military service as infantryman, second class, in the 76th brigade headquartered in the barracks in Faubourg Bannier (Fig. 2.3). Within a fortnight, he had been promoted to the rank of *caporal-instructeur*, without stripes. The stripes Isaac would be judged not to merit on the completion of his year of service for reasons having to do with the Dreyfus Affair. It was during the course of his year of military service that Isaac, the son and grandson of military men, would be observed reading Dreyfusard material. In Isaac's own words,

At its beginning, a tragic episode that did not go unnoticed, far from that, but at the time (so it seemed) did not cause any trouble except for the family involved and the small circle of close friends: the arrest, the trial – *in camera* – and the finding of Dreyfus guilty of high treason. This series of events, occurring in 1894, did not constitute strictly speaking (dare I say) the ‘Affair’ the real, the unsavory ‘Dreyfus Affair.’ It did exist, but subjacent, in total obscurity, and for some three years followed a subterranean course. Its sordid flow finally burst forth into the light of day in 1897 and especially in 1898, after the novelist Emile Zola published – 13 January 1898 – in Clemenceau's journal, *L'Aurore*, the resounding *J'accuse*.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Today, *agrégatif*.

⁴⁹ The *licence d'histoire (et de géographie)* was a product of a decree of 25 September 1880; the other two products were the *licence de lettres* and the *licence de philosophie*.

⁵⁰ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie*. Péguy, 114.

Fig. 2.3 J. Isaac during his year of compulsory military service (in Zouave uniform)



DREYFUS AFFAIR

On 19 November 1892, *Judéo-Alsacien* Alfred Dreyfus graduated from the *Ecole Supérieure de Guerre* (ninth out of a class of 82), and, on the basis of his standing, was selected (the first Jew to be so) to work as a *stagiaire* at general staff. On or about 25 September 1894, an unsigned slip (*bordereau*) listing classified military documents and addressed to the German military attaché in Paris, and retrieved in pieces from his waste basket by a cleaning lady in the employ of French counterintelligence, arrived at the Statistical Bureau. On 6 October, suspicions regarding Captain Alfred Dreyfus as the author were transmitted to Minister of War General Mercier, and a rush to judgment ensued. On 11 October, a small council of ministers authorized Mercier to arrest Dreyfus. On 15 October, Dreyfus was summoned for a handwriting test, but despite consistent protestations of innocence, was arrested and sent to Cherche-Midi military prison. On 29 October, following seven interrogations, General de Boisdeffre was advised that the evidence for a conviction was fragile. On 31 October—1 November, Major Joseph Henry, an officer in the Statistical Bureau, leaked details to Edouard Drumont, whose November

1st issue of *La Libre Parole* broke the story, identifying a Jewish officer as the suspected author of the slip and charging that wealthy Jews were attempting to buy his freedom. As Isaac would later note,

[Drumont] milked the story for all that it was worth...supported for the most part by the major newspapers, and by the ‘good *La Croix*,’ published by the Assumptionist Fathers and flanked by the rural *les Croix*.⁵¹ So much so that it is no exaggeration to affirm: without Drumont and *La Libre Parole*, without the outbursts in the press, there would not have been a Dreyfus Affair. Indeed, this claim is made in black and white in its 18 November 1894 issue (prior to the trial) by [*La Libre Parole*] itself: ‘Without the alert that we were the first to publish, Dreyfus would have escaped punishment certainly.’ For in flagrance of fundamental principles of law, Dreyfus was pronounced guilty before having been found so: he was the ideal traitor by virtue of his status as a Jew.⁵²

On 22 December 1894, after but an hour of deliberation, the judges found Dreyfus guilty of treason in a court-martial proceeding in which Major Henry perjured himself and secret documents, forged or altered, were considered by the judges. Dreyfus’ sentence was military degradation and imprisonment for life. The public degradation took place at the *Ecole militaire* on 5 January 1895 in the presence of a crowd of thousands chanting, “Down with the Jews!” On 17 January, he set off for Devil’s Island, off the coast of French Guyana, where he arrived on 13 April 1895 to begin serving his life sentence. Mathieu Dreyfus, Alfred’s brother, and Lucie, Alfred’s wife, would indefatigably wage a campaign for Alfred’s release and acquittal. As early as 1896, they would get the attention of respected *Normale Supérieure* historian, Gabriel Monod, as well as life senator for Alsace and vice president of the Senate, Auguste Scheurer-Kestner, both Protestant and, as Isaac observed, “marked (in face, appearance and dress) by a certain puritan tradition, a touchy and proud solidarity, and – much to their honour even if not shared by all of them – intellectual courage... capable of overcoming this prejudice

⁵¹ The Assumptionist Fathers was a religious order that was founded in 1845, but little heard of until the national disaster of 1871. For two generations, until its expulsion from France in 1901, this order appealed to the mystical, the emotional, the fanatical, among French Catholics. The growth of its journal, *La Croix*, to a readership of 500,000 and 100 provincial (rural) editions, was nothing short of spectacular.

⁵² Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, 116–117.

through the sheer force of probity.”⁵³ Gabriel Monod would raise the affair with fellow Protestant Paul Dupuy, who in turn would raise it with Catholic Lucien Herr, chief librarian at *Normale Supérieure*. The beginning of a doubt about Dreyfus’ guilt followed (i) the publication in Brussels on 6 November 1896 of Bernard Lazare’s *Une erreur judiciaire* (republished a few days later in Paris), in which it was revealed that Minister of War Mercier had acted in violation of the law and had sought to influence the judiciary via the delivery of the secret dossier (unbeknownst to the accused and his counsel), and (ii) the publication of the slip on 10 November 1896 from which it would become possible to infer the real culprit. It was in the summer of 1898, following the spring general elections that returned a majority of republicans to the Chamber, that the Affair would unravel. As a consequence of the dogged persistence and unbreakable integrity of intelligence officer Colonel Marie-Georges Picquart,⁵⁴ it was discovered that Henry himself had forged the documents that led to Dreyfus’ imprisonment, known as the *false Henry* (13 August 1898). Henry confessed, was arrested (30 August 1898) and, within 24 hours of incarceration in the prison of *Mont-Valérien*, had taken his own life. Major Walsin Esterhazy (the apparent real culprit) was released from the army. Lucie Dreyfus demanded the revision of her husband’s case. Cavaignac resigned as Minister of War (3 September 1898) and Esterhazy fled to England via Belgium (4 September 1898). The Affair would continue as Isaac entered the Sorbonne, though it had already left its mark on French society and revealed the thinly veiled scourge of antisemitism within.

THE SORBONNE YEARS

With the onset of the academic year 1898–99, Isaac resumed his scholarly existence as a Sorbonne undergraduate. His bursary was 90 francs per month (in the order of 400 USD today). He lived on the *rue de Tournon* in a small rented flat with low ceilings, perched on the top of two grand multistoried apartments, at an annual rent of 250 francs. Concurrent with

⁵³ Ibid., 121.

⁵⁴ Picquart had discovered that Esterhazy, the apparent real culprit, had been in the service of the German military attaché, that Esterhazy’s script was identical to that on the *bordereau* and that there was no smoking gun in the secret dossier delivered to the judges behind the back of the accused and his counsel.

his studies, Isaac was active as a member of the Péguy elect. During the academic year of 1898–99, when he was not in class or studying, Isaac spent his time ensconced in the *librarie Bellais* in the company of Péguy and fellow comrades-in-arms, fending off the occasional assault by anti-Dreyfusard Sorbonne law students.⁵⁵ The Sorbonne was not exclusively populated with anti-Dreyfusards. Its faculty at the time included a number of distinguished Dreyfusards, most prominent among them *instituteur national* Ernest Lavissee,⁵⁶ by then a household name for his *Petit Lavissee*, the multivolume primary manuals of instruction.⁵⁷ Lavissee did not have much time to fraternize with his students; Isaac was to catch his eye, however, and from then on, Lavissee was mentor, and Isaac, *protégé*. “In his large and tranquil face, eyes of a very pure blue projected a meditative air, of a sensitive and attractive humanity,” recalled Isaac. “This was what I found appealing; he was human, very human, benevolent toward his students.”⁵⁸ The Dreyfus Affair was front and center during Isaac’s first academic year at the Sorbonne. On 29 October 1898, the request for revision was granted by the *chambre criminelle de la Cour de cassation*; on 10 February 1899, a law was passed removing carriage of the case from the *chambre criminelle* to a plenary *Cour de cassation*, and on 16 February 1899, Félix Faure, president of the Republic (and, in Isaac’s view, “of one with the *antidreyfusards*”),⁵⁹ died suddenly. It was on 3 June 1899 that 44 judges of the *Cour de cassation* overturned the verdict of Dreyfus’ guilt and ordered a new court-martial. On 7 August 1899, Dreyfus’ second court-martial opened in Rennes. On 9 September, incredibly, he would be found guilty yet again in a split decision and sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment. His demand for revision was withdrawn on 15 September

⁵⁵ At the time the bookstore was established, 1 May 1898, Péguy was still a boursier at the Sorbonne and, as such, was unable to engage in trade in his own name. Georges Bellais was the former sergeant of Albert Lévy, *lycée d’Orléans* and *Lakanal* classmate of Péguy.

⁵⁶ See Pierre Nora, “Lavissee, instituteur national” in *Lieux de mémoire*, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1984–86), Pierre Nora, “L’histoire de France de Lavissee,” in *Lieux de mémoire*, ed. Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1984–86).

⁵⁷ These *manuels scolaires* were published by Armand Colin beginning in 1884. Hachette was the publisher of Lavissee’s *Histoire de France*.

⁵⁸ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie*. Péguy, 266.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 148. Two days later, Moderate Emile Loubet was elected by a majority of left-leaning parliamentarians.

to allow for president of the Republic Loubet to grant a presidential pardon on 19 September 1899.⁶⁰

In December 1899, the first General Congress of French socialist organizations took place. Isaac was invited to accompany Péguy as a delegate. Both were supporters of former Opportunist Jean Jaurès. “We passed the days together, passionately,” Isaac later recalled, “engaged in passionate debate, where orators such as Guesde, Jaurès, Briand, Viviani would clash in the immense, smoke-filled Japy gymnasium.”⁶¹ In those days, the French socialist movement was split into five organized parties and a rather immense jumble of persons under the rubric, the *Confédération générale des socialistes indépendants*, whose spokespersons were well-known deputies such as Jaurès, Viviani and, until he was invited to join the cabinet, Millerand. The most strictly Marxist party was *le Parti ouvrier français* of which Jules Guesde was founder and leader. The congress approved by a vote of 818 to 634 (Isaac and Péguy opposed) the motion that the class struggle not allow for a socialist deputy to be part of a bourgeois government. “The duel [between Jaurès and Guesde] reached its climax on the evening of the fourth day, Wednesday 6 December [1899] when it came time to vote [on the question of socialist unity],” remembered Isaac, “the tumult grew, turned into a storm, a number of *congressistes* (Péguy and myself included) climbed onto the tables, applauding, crying out, shouting down, (*hélas!* I overturned an inkwell onto my overcoat, but this sartorial disaster did not subdue me).”⁶² On the question of socialist unity, it was Jules Guesde’s dogmatism, “his intolerance camouflaged as discipline,” that prevailed over Jaurès’ “humanized marxism *à la française*,”⁶³ although liberty of discussion and debate on all questions of doctrine and method was preserved, all socialist reporting was to conform strictly with decisions of the congress, as interpreted by the General Committee.

Péguy could not abide by this infringement on freedom of expression. In his view, socialism could not be truly redemptive if it were not libertarian socialism, if it were not nourished by individual conscience. “It is noteworthy,” Isaac remarked, “that Péguy, in reacting thus, was

⁶⁰ On 12 July 1906, the *Cours de cassation* would hand down a judgment declaring that “in the last analysis, of the charges laid against Dreyfus, nothing remains standing and the annulment of the judgement of the court martial (of Rennes) does not leave anything that could be construed as a crime or delit.”

⁶¹ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, 199–200.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 206.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 210.

adhering to the most healthy tradition of French socialism, that incarnated by Proudhon, too little read, too much forgotten in our day, even in France.”⁶⁴ Péguy declared, “Henceforth, socialism must be distinguished from the Socialist Party *in the same manner as Christianity or Christianity from the Church* [emphasis added], in the same manner as the Republic from the various republican parties.”⁶⁵ Péguy assumed the board of the *Société nouvelle* would share his sentiment. But he misjudged his board, whose members interpreted his contemplated initiative as anarchical and contrary to that socialist unity for which they had all been striving. Péguy withdrew, reassembling his elect at 19 *de la rue des Fossés-Saint-Jacques*, the apartment of disciple Charles Tharaud. If liberty of thought and action was to be stifled, Péguy would withdraw from the *Société nouvelle* to struggle against the orientation and decisions of the *Congrès socialiste* through a new medium—*des cahiers libres*. Péguy’s withdrawal from the *Société nouvelle* meant the same for Isaac. “As for myself,” Isaac remembered, “I was one of these elect, fiercely dedicated to Péguy and certain, among the most certain, of his genius, of his creative force, among the most decided to follow him in his struggle against any intolerance, any dogmatism, any Jesuitism, with a view to the triumph of a libertarian socialism of which the maxim was, ‘The social revolution will be moral or it will not be.’”⁶⁶ Thus it was that Isaac severed his connection to *la librairie de la rue Cujas*, as well as his allegiance to Guesde’s Marxism and to state socialism, the whole to support Péguy to found the *Cahiers de la quinzaine*.⁶⁷ Thus it was that these 20 (Isaac included) would be recalled by Péguy as “the twenty poor souls who sustained us during the first and second series.”⁶⁸ The first *Cahier* (*de la quinzaine*) was published on 5 January 1900.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, 209.

⁶⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, 238.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 213–14.

⁶⁷ The first number was published on 5 January 1900. There would be 229 issues, divided into 15 series. The last number would be dated 7 July 1914, two months before frontline soldier Péguy was killed on 5 September 1914 in the Battle of the Marne.

⁶⁸ Robert Burac, ed., *Charles Péguy, Oeuvres en prose complètes I* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), 934.

⁶⁹ In September of that year, Péguy attended the *Congrès national des organisations socialistes françaises*, held in Paris, for the purpose of reporting on it in the *seizième cahier* of the IIe series. Isaac also attended, and would recall in particular the impression that Rosa Luxembourg made on all the delegates. Péguy was still a stockholder of the *Société nouvelle*—he owned 200 shares, all that remained of the Baudouin funds that had backed his original venture, *la librairie Georges Bellais*. The conflict between the board of *Société nouvelle* and

At the close of the 1899–1900 academic year, following the submission of a master’s thesis dealing with mendicancy in the provincial assemblies founded by Necker on the eve of the French Revolution, Isaac received his *licence* and a *bourse d’agrégation*. His monthly income was augmented from 90 to 100 francs. The next milestone was the one-year program leading to the *diplôme d’études supérieures*,⁷⁰ the principal requirement of which was a more lengthy and fulsome historical study. Isaac chose sixteenth-century France as his field of inquiry, and after spending academic year 1900–01 immersed in research and writing, he submitted a lengthy thesis, “supplemented by photographs taken at Lyon of drawings copied at the *Nationale* (by an artist friend who was soon to become my fiancée).”⁷¹ The thesis was successfully defended, and Isaac received a prize of 500 gold francs, a fortune of money in those days, sufficient to enable him to realize his dream of hiking in Austria, Italy and Germany. On his return in the autumn of 1901, he began preparing for the competitive *agrégation* examinations and became engaged in November of that year to artist (in the school of Eugène Carrière) Laure Ettinghausen, whom Jules had first encountered when he was but 12 years of age. Laure was born in Paris in 1878. From a very early age, she was aware that she had artistic talents and wanted to become a painter, much to the chagrin of her nineteenth-century bourgeois parents, who sent her to Russia as an *au pair* under the tutelage of a brother. In short order, Laure returned to France, where it did not take her long to gain admission to the studio of Eugène Carrière.⁷²

The preparation for the competitive *agrégation* examinations was tedious and arduous. “The spiritual climate of the *Cahiers*, the utterances

Péguy culminated in proceedings of an extraordinary general meeting for the purposes of considering “*l’incident Péguy*.” The meeting took place on 17 January 1901. Péguy appointed Isaac as his proxy to attend. “It was against me especially that the most hardened of [Péguy’s] adversaries concentrated all of their fire with an implacable hostility: why? Because they saw in me his agent, Péguy’s representative, his collaborator at the *Cahiers*; also because my insignificance, my timidity seemed only to egg them on. Incredibly timid, I was in effect completely lacking in self-confidence, nonetheless, I was entirely loyal to Péguy, resolved not to retreat, not to concede one inch.” (*Expériences de ma vie*: Péguy, 224).

⁷⁰ Isaac was one of the first to receive the *diplôme d’études supérieures*, which was created in 1886 at the instigation of Ernest Lavisse. From 1894 onward, this *diplôme* was a prerequisite for the *agrégation d’histoire*, the latter defined by decree dated 29 July 1885.

⁷¹ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie*. Péguy, 273.

⁷² She also spent time in the studio of Jean-Paul Laurens.

of Péguy – oral or written – were more than ever necessary to counterbalance, to juxtapose the doctrinaire, soul-destroying Sorbonne instruction,” Isaac recalled. “They were the antidote. Although I had ceased to actively participate in the publication of the *Cahiers*, I continued to see a lot of Péguy; our small group – the Boivin, Deshairs, Tharaud – augmented by André Bourgeois,⁷³ would lunch and sup together, initially at the small *Cluny* restaurant, and next door at the *restaurant coopératif* in the Latin Quarter established in November 1901 at the same time as was established the *boutique des Cahiers* at 8 rue de la Sorbonne; a meal usually followed by a stroll in Luxembourg or on the embankment.”⁷⁴ Beyond academe, all but Barrès and Déroulède had been persuaded to abandon their republicanism in favor of Maurras’ integral nationalism, a “nationalism,” according to historian William Curt Buthman, “not complete...not nationalism in its entirety without royalism ‘since the monarchical institutions alone satisfied all the national aspirations, all the national ends, as the integral reproduced the sum of all the values of an algebraic function.’”⁷⁵ At first, the staunchly Catholic royalist party stood aloof because of Maurras’ atheism but gradually came around. In the words of a priest-member, “If one is not politically a Catholic, one does not join the *Action Française*; metaphysically, you can be whatever you like.”⁷⁶ Bishops by the dozen, with Louis Cardinal Billot leading the way, religious, priests, intellectuals such as Bernanos, Maritain and Massis, Catholic professors such as Louis Dimier, all subscribed to the daily *Action française*.⁷⁷ “[I]t was on the shoulders of Maurras and [Léon] Daudet that Drumont’s mantle fell,” argues historian Eugen Weber, “it was because of the *Action française* and several generations of publicists whom it helped to launch that anti-Semitism spread in France. They provided the theoretical arguments that

⁷³When Isaac was no longer able to function as secretariat for *les Cahiers de la quinzaine*, Péguy tapped *lycée d’Orléans* and *Lakanal* classmate, André Bourgeois, to replace Isaac.

⁷⁴Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, 278.

⁷⁵William Curt Buthman, *The Rise of Integral Nationalism in France* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), 269. By the date of publication of the first number of daily *Action française*, 21 March 1908, newspaper and *comité* had become the alter ego of Charles Maurras.

⁷⁶Quoted in Eugen Weber, *Action Française: Royalism and Reaction in Twentieth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 35.

⁷⁷Even the papal ex-communication of Maurras, in effect from 1926–39, and the placement of the daily on the Index, would not shake Maurras’ hold on Catholic conservatives.

made base prejudice socially acceptable and even, in a sense, defensible... The *Action française* alone, despite occasional denials, kept the anti-Semitic fires burning, maintaining the traditions of Drumont and anti-Dreyfusism.”⁷⁸ This was the France in which Jules Isaac—republican, laic (anticlerical in the realm of the secular), socialist and Jewish—came of age.

⁷⁸Weber, 200.

From Academe to Activism 1902–40

ADMISSION TO THE UNIVERSITÉ

Among the top ten *agrégés des Lycées dans l'ordre de l'histoire et de la géographie* named on 3 September 1902 was Jules Isaac, scholarship student in the faculty of letters of Paris.¹ Following the *concours d'agrégations*, keen to renew the research pursued during his *année de diplôme*, Isaac applied for a bursary with assurances that it would be awarded. In response, the Sorbonne advised Isaac by correspondence dated 5 September 1902, "The Secretary of the Faculty of Letters has the honour of informing M. Isaac, further to direction from the Minister (2 September), that the budget for secondary education does not permit the grant of a *bourse d'étude* or *de voyage* to any *agrégé* in history, living languages and of science."² Isaac made the reasonable inference that the services of all ten newly minted *agrégés d'histoire* were required for secondary teaching and that he and Laure had better marry before the academic 1902–03 was under way. "When [Laure] married Jules Isaac," according to the younger of their two sons, Jean-Claude, "she and he, united by the same goal, established a household animated by this sole religion: 'faith in the divine virtue of creative realization.' No other religion was ever admitted and [the divine virtue of creative

¹ Isaac was not the first Jew in France to attain the *agrégation*. Adolphe Franck had passed the *agrégation* in philosophy as early as 1832, been elected to the *Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques* in 1844 and become the first Jewish professor at the *Collège de France* in 1856.

² Quoted in Jules Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie II. De la paix à la guerre* (unpublished).

realization] was the spiritual formation imparted to their children.”³ On 25 September 1902 (23 Elul 5662 in the Jewish calendar—one week before the onset of 5663), the rabbi of Saint-Étienne officiated at the marriage of Yaacov ben Avraham (Jacob, son of Abraham) to Rachel bat Moshe (Rachel, daughter of Moses). Thereafter, they awaited Jules’ nomination. The news that fellow agrégé Albert Thomas, top-ranked on the list, had departed for Berlin armed with one of these officially withdrawn bursaries, a travel bursary, did nothing to allay their anxiety.⁴ October passed without appointment. “For us,” recounted Isaac, “young and newly-married, for me who had neither bursary nor wages, the situation was becoming catastrophic...until the last days of November [20 November 1902], when I know not by what chance, a vacancy arose for the position of *professeur d’histoire* in Nice and by virtue of the concerted intercessions of Lavis and Gréard, influential persons of the *Université*, I received the nomination, notwithstanding that the position was by no means one for debutants.”⁵ Years later Isaac would muse how different the course of his life might have been had he not obtained a teaching appointment. In 1898, at the close of his year of *cagne* at *lycée Henri-IV*, following his second failed attempt to gain admission to *Ecole Normale*, a certain well-heeled cousin residing in *Elbeuf* had prevailed upon Isaac to come work for the family enterprise as there was no son to succeed him. “In response to my surprise and unease, he made the case how such a life of business, of freely-taken initiatives, of risk but also of large material gains, would be preferable to the meagre existence of a professor,” recalled Isaac, “however, I had not the slightest aptitude for what is called ‘*les affaires*’ while I had great aptitude, already demonstrated, for ‘*les études*’; the spiritual won me over the temporal.”⁶

REPUBLICAN IN THE UNIVERSITÉ

Six weeks after the start of academic 1902–03, Jules and Laure arrived in Nice and he began his teaching. The year 1902 happened to be the centenary of the *lycée* system in France, a system then still reserved for a narrow bourgeois elite. At the turn of the twentieth century, there was but

³ Jean-Claude Janet, “Laure Isaac, (1878–1943) – Juliette Boudeville, (1903–1943),” *Cahiers de l’Association des amis de Jules Isaac* nouvelle series, no. 7 (2006).

⁴ After World War I, Socialist Albert Thomas found *le Bureau International du Travail de Genève*.

⁵ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie II. De la paix à la guerre*.

⁶ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, 111–12.

one *lycée Niçois—Masséna*—whose enrollment barely accommodated the city's large and growing population. Isaac was required to give seven 3-hour classes per week to a class of 200 students. Each class consisted of two hours of history and one of geography instruction. Each of these hours required “a meticulous preparation,” he recalled, “double preparation addressing simultaneously the questions to be raised and the diverse methods of treating these questions.”⁷ Insult was added to the injurious teaching load on his first day at work. Isaac, barely 25 but younger in appearance, was confronted by a professor who mistook him for a student.⁸ Teaching at a *lycée en province* was a solitary activity with few encounters between professor on the one hand, and townsfolk or colleagues, let alone the world, on the other. “Riding a bicycle to the *lycée*,” Isaac remembered, “more often than not, I was escorted by a gaggle of students from the *quartier*; we chatted together, laughed together; sometimes, they would await me at the door of my home, 20 *bis rue Rossini*.”⁹ The city's youth, distracted by the beckoning blue sky and warm temperatures, proved to be more of a challenge than the Parisian students Isaac had encountered during his pre-*agrégation*, two-week teaching session at Paris' *lycée Charlemagne*, a former Jesuit professed house. But Isaac proved to be a quick study and it did not take him long to learn the art of managing students. “The ideal professor was not like a virtuoso soloist before an attentive and passive audience,” he argued, “but rather like an orchestra director, guiding, instructing, stimulating his whole team of musicians, not letting his glance fall away – it is the gaze that captures.”¹⁰

In the spring of 1903, Isaac, the most newly appointed *agrégé* to the faculty of *lycée Masséna*, was invited to deliver the prize-giving address a mid-summer tradition. Generally, these remarks were given by history professors to students, faculty and town notables to mark the anniversary of some republican event or personage. In this case, a ministerial circular had mandated a lecture on the exemplary life of republican Edgar Quinet, a French historian born one century earlier, in 1803, republican and laic like Isaac, and who had fought the good fight to keep the Church out of higher education.¹¹ In retrospect, it is hard not to see the uncanny at work

⁷ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie II. De la paix à la guerre*.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ In Third Republic France, *la grande administration*, through its local executive agents (prefects), was more robust than was the government of the day, which tended to be more fragile.

in Isaac's telling of this story. "What would I have to lose," Isaac mused, "me, a young republican professor, in speaking in a *lycée* of the Republic and recalling the valiant combat waged by Edgar Quinet [for secular instruction, unimpeded by Church influence]?"¹² He would discover that he had much to lose. Although conservatives were no longer in government, they still held an important place in *la grande administration*. In commenting on the actions of Guizot (Louis-Philippe's chief and most trusted minister) against Quinet in 1846, Isaac addressed the assembled guests as follows: "Two years later [in 1848], as the minister Guizot had banned courses given by Quinet, the Parisians banned minister Guizot, banned all the government, banned royalty itself. And Quinet, 'in the name of the Republic' regained his chair [at the *Collège de France*]." A draft of this address, submitted in advance to the Rector, was returned to Isaac with the appended note, "A journalist's pamphlet rather than a professor's lecture." Isaac made some inconsequential changes that did not detract from his republican clarion call and delivered his lecture without reading from the text on 31 July 1903. He recalled that his lecture was met with "a warm response on the part of local republicans, and especially on the part of the students, my own applauding particularly loudly, but a glacial silence and raised eyebrows on the part of those on the dais."¹³ In the days that followed, the complete text of Isaac's lecture was published in the local newspaper, and as Jules and Laure were preparing to vacation in Vence in the month of August, a letter arrived from the Inspector General of Public Education. Reference was made to a prior request of Isaac to be more proximate to Paris, and Isaac was informed that a teaching position had become vacant in Sens. His decision was requested without delay. "Of course, Sens was closer to Paris, relatively speaking," Isaac recounted, "but Sens after Nice, this did not seem like a promotion; rather the contrary."¹⁴ Nonetheless, the couple made the move to Sens.

SOCIALIST IN THE UNIVERSITÉ

The next two succeeding academic years were spent teaching a less burdensome course load to fewer *Sénonais lycée* students. Isaac remembered that these two years left him with "better memories...following the hard

¹² Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie II. De la paix à la guerre*.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

apprenticeship of Nice, I was able [in Sens] to take full charge of my *métier*.”¹⁵ Although the pedagogical environment improved, the Isaacs did not mix well with the *Sénonais*. Neither the left-leaning Jules nor Laure identified with the individualism of the *bourgeois* kind typified by the *Sénonais*, or with the *embourgeoisement* of Third Republic institutions. The Isaacs’ first child, a daughter, Juliette, was born in Sens on 3 September 1903, just prior to the commencement of the 1903–04 academic year. Midway through Laure’s pregnancy, apparently not an easy one, the Isaacs lost confidence in their *médecin de gauche* and replaced him with a *médecin de droit*. In the days following, the left-leaning newspaper ran a piece which included the following rhetoric: “A young, fatuous, so-called socialist has committed the weightiest of sins by peddling the most serious of accusations against a third party that truly amount to defamation... This little imbecile..., this sad individual, when ordered to provide evidence of his claims, has beat a hasty retreat and was not surprisingly met unflinchingly head on with a hail of criticism. By Abraham, we have every reason to believe he is mistaken if he thinks that things will remain there.”¹⁶

LAIC IN THE UNIVERSITÉ

During his two years of teaching in Sens, it would be Isaac’s secularist point of view that would get him into hot water. The occasion was a sympathetic presentation of Ernest Renan in a class to girls at the secondary-studies level, given in the presence of the Principal. Isaac urged his young Catholic audience to familiarize themselves with the writings of Renan, most notably *Ma sœur Henriette* and *Souvenirs d’enfance et de jeunesse*. Ernest Renan had left the church midway through his training for the priesthood to pioneer the secular study of religion, a secular study that had culminated in the publication in 1863 of *La vie de Jésus*, a work in which Jesus had been depicted as entirely human, “a Galilean,” in the words of Susannah Heschel, “who underwent a transformation from Jew to Christian...purified of any Jewishness.”¹⁷ In his *Souvenirs d’enfance et de jeunesse*, which deals with the period of studies at the seminary of Saint-

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Quoted in Kaspi, 48.

¹⁷ Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus: Christian Theologians and the Bible in Nazi Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 34.

Sulpice, Renan wrote that his study of the Bible had led him to conclude that “this book was not any more exempt than any other ancient book from contradictions, inadvertencies and errors. One finds in it fables, legends, traces of an entirely human composition.”¹⁸ Given Isaac’s presentation of Renan to his students, it can be inferred that Isaac shared Renan’s presuppositions when it came to sacred scripture. Renan’s self-declared impetus as a truth-seeker resonated with Isaac, whose goal it was, as a Péguy disciple, to strive for the emotional and intellectual redemption of his students. The day after Isaac had extolled Renan to his students, he received a long letter from the Principal, who cautioned him as follows: “If I did not have the highest regard for you, I would have allowed things to take their course knowing full well that it would not be long before you would have provoked an unending war...You don’t know Sens, you don’t know how much trouble you will bring upon yourself...You should not touch upon the religious question, which you did by extolling Renan and advising that he be read.”¹⁹ Isaac was stunned. “Undoubtedly, it did not appear to be at odds with academic freedom of expression and neutrality to extol a great, and classical, author,” he thought, “this was in no way intended to be a challenge to the Catholic faith of my students and in this regard, I would redouble my vigilance.”²⁰ Isaac was not naïve in his view that he was not intending to challenge the Catholic faith of his students. Laic as he was, he was not anticlerical generally; he was opposed to clerical intrusion into the secular domain. But shake the Catholic faith of his readers Isaac would one day do.

JEWISH IN THE UNIVERSITÉ

In 1905, with assistance from Lavissee, Isaac won funding for two years of Paris-based research to culminate in an essay on the controversial sixteenth-century freethinker and humanist, Etienne Dolet, an essay that had been promised in 1903 for publication in Péguy’s *Cahiers*.²¹ “Disheartened by a certain small-town environment,” Isaac recalled, “desirous of dedicating myself to historical research rather than to teaching, I [wished to throw]

¹⁸ Quoted in Vytas V. Gaigalas, *Ernest Renan and His French Catholic Critics* (North Quincy, MA: The Christopher Publishing House, 1972), 26.

¹⁹ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie II. De la paix à la guerre*.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ While teaching in Nice, Isaac had also undertaken to write a piece for the *Cahiers* on Nice’s carnival, a piece that never saw the light of day.

myself body and soul into the seething sixteenth century [France].”²² These were the words of a true academic. Péguy undertook to assist Isaac to supplement his bursary with remuneration as a sessional lecturer at *Sainte-Barbe*. It was the least Péguy could do to reciprocate for Isaac’s unwavering loyalty and financial support that had been forthcoming since the spring of 1903. By letter dated 31 May 1903, Péguy had reached out to Isaac as follows: “Could you lend us a sum of between 500 and 1,000 francs; it is not that the *Cahiers* are faring badly, but my revenue budget has been adversely affected by Bernard Lazare’s persistent illness.”²³ The Bernard Lazare to whom Péguy alluded, and who was to pass away in 1903, had been the first Dreyfusard in the public sphere. “Bernard Lazare has interested commentators and historians,” writes historian Aron Rodrigue, “for his distinction as the first French Jew to make the transition from an almost self-hating endorsement of total assimilation as a solution to the Jewish problem to a full embrace of the cause of Zionism.”²⁴ Bernard Lazare was apprehended by Péguy as an incarnation of the Jewish mystique. As Péguy recovered his own faith, he would come to see the *dreyfusiste* mystique as a particular example of the Christian mystique. In Péguy’s own words, “Our *dreyfusisme* was a religion, I am using the term in its most precise literal sense, a religious impulsion...I might add that for us, among us, within us, this religious impulse was in its essence Christian... its source was Christian, from a most ancient wellspring.”²⁵ In this regard, Isaac was to part company with his mentor. “Would that ‘our’ *dreyfusisme* had been a mystique, had been a religion; but, it was to [human, temporal] Truth itself at which we aimed our fervour and our cult, it was [human, temporal Truth] alone that inspired our actions, it was out of love for it and to safeguard it that we helped Péguy found the *Cahiers*. A free and honest pursuit of the truth was our law, the essence of *dreyfusisme* in its most pure.”²⁶ Christianity, on the other hand, does not concern itself with human, temporal categories. “In its essence,” Isaac was to muse, “Christianity is religion about grace, religion about love, religion about poverty, religion about hope (in God), faith in the righteousness of God, in the truth of the Incarnation, the Resurrection; our human justice,

²² Isaac, “Survol,” 218.

²³ Quoted in Leroy: 44.

²⁴ Rodrigue, “Rearticulations of French Jewish Identities after the Dreyfus Affair,” 2.

²⁵ Quoted in Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, 162.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 164.

our human truths, concern it not and do not have their roots in its soil: the whole of history proves it, beginning with the Scriptures.”²⁷

Isaac’s research on Etienne Dolet proceeded slowly and the volume of documents increased apace. “[U]nforeseen circumstances, some family-related [a second child, Daniel Edouard Marx, called Dani, was born on 6 January 1907], some *d’ordre public*, would gradually derail me from this trajectory, in any event, launch me in a new direction,” Isaac recollected. “From 1906, I would find myself engaged in publishing – academic publications – that at first served to assist me to simply live, to overcome my budgetary difficulties, to pursue my other work. As it happened, I would find myself increasingly trapped in a vicious cycle from which I would be unable to extricate myself and which would to a greater or lesser extent come to absorb the whole of me.”²⁸ The academic publications for which he was contracted by Hachette were short chronologies and *résumées aides-mémoire* having their genesis in the seven-volume, 3000-page *Cours d’Histoire MALET*, published by Hachette and single-handedly authored by historian Albert Malet, *professeur agrégé* at *lycée Louis-le-Grand* and tutor to King Alexander of Serbia from 1892 to 1894.²⁹ The *Cours d’Histoire MALET* arose from the educational program adopted by the French ministry of education on 31 March 1902. It contemplated the division of the study of history into two cycles: from the *sixième* to the *troisième*, *lycéens* studied the period from ancient Egypt to 1889 (the first centenary of the French Revolution) and, from the *seconde* to the final year, contemporary history was the object of study. The author of the work was Malet; the behind-the-scenes collaborator, Isaac. Each worked independently of the other and hardly knew each other. Little did Isaac then suspect that within a decade, fate would thrust him into Malet’s role.

The resumption in 1907 of his career as a *lycée* professor in *Saint-Etienne* (Fig. 3.1) put paid to the research project on Dolet as well as to a decade of collaboration between Isaac and Péguy, a collaboration marked by visits to one another’s homes and shared meals, not infrequently at the *restaurant coopératif* at the corner of *la rue Thénard* and *la rue Sommerard*, followed by strolls in the Luxembourg Gardens or on the banks of the Seine. Isaac would teach at *Saint-Etienne* until 1910 and thereafter at *lycée Ampère* in Lyon until the onset of war in 1914. By 1911, he had come to terms with

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Isaac, “Surviv,” 218.

²⁹ In 1902, Lavisé, who had no interest in authoring scholarly manuals for secondary students, introduced Albert Malet to Guillaume Breton, then director of Hachette. It was also to Lavisé that Malet owed his tutorial role in Belgrade.

Fig. 3.1 J. Isaac, professor at *lycée Saint-Etienne* (c. 1908)



an antisemitism that was deeply embedded within the French Catholic psyche. “I must tell you that I am repulsed by Romain Rolland’s shameful antisemitism, intertwined with false sociological sympathies,” Isaac wrote Péguy on 30 March 1908, “It is very *à la mode* in the *Cahiers*, well I know. And I detest it. I much prefer the other antisemitism, the real, that of Drumont, that of Léon Daudet. It is more authentic, more intelligent and tidier. I feel myself to be perfectly French, and I have all the rights to so feel, as much as Rolland, as much as all of you. I am unable to abide by being told in an unsupportably sugared tone, ‘The Jews’ affairs are not our own. And as for those of *La France*.’”³⁰ Isaac closed his correspondence with a rare allusion to his Jewishness: “You must come to visit us in this most admirable of countrysides. You will receive under our Jewish roof a most French hospitality, and in the final analysis, you have few friends who love you as do we.”³¹ In the spring of 1911, Isaac received a copy

³⁰ Quoted in Leroy: 47.

³¹ Ibid., 48. To Isaac’s chagrin, one of the first reviews of *le Mystère de la charité de Jeanne d’Arc* and titled, “La ‘Jeanne d’Arc’ d’un ancien dreyfusard” appeared in the 10 March 1910 issue of *La Libre Parole*, under the signature of Edouard Drumont.

of Péguy's *Oeuvres choisies*, with an inscription (destined to be his last to the Isaacs) dated 27 May 1911: "I am more affectionately and devotedly yours than you know."³² Isaac, by then a professor at *lycée Ampère*, replied by letter dated 12 July 1911, "Unfortunately, it is a fact that the milieux that are open to you henceforth will be firmly shut to me... the *milieux lyonnais*—Catholic bourgeois, whether 'liberal' or conservative, nonetheless antisemitic – ...Frankly speaking, they will be with you, my friend, when you are no longer with us. Selfishly, it is my hope that this day never comes."³³

IN THE TRENCHES

On 3 August 1914, Germany declared war on France. The next day, Great Britain was drawn into the conflict following the German violation of Belgian neutrality. On the eve of the war, Isaac was a *lycée* professor in Lyon and in his 37th year. His publications were scant—*résumés aide-mémoire*, the prize-giving address regarding Edgar Quinet, the thesis for his *diplôme d'études supérieures*, as expanded in 1906–07 and published in *la Revue d'histoire de Lyon* (1913)—yet sufficient to earn him an appointment to teach at *lycée Rollin* in Paris, notice of which arrived just prior to his mobilization on 4 August 1914 as *territorial* in the *111^{ième}* territorial infantry regiment.³⁴ In Isaac's view, the seeds of the war had been planted with the *Entente cordiale* of 8 April 1904 between France and England. He would later write,

This [*Entente cordiale*] was too brusque a blow for a Germany, accustomed to exercising command over Europe...from then on, by whatever means (with a preference for bungled means), the imperial government undertook to denounce the bonds of a friendship it considered to be sacrilegious. Looking beyond the complexities of diplomatic discussions and until the eve of the [First World] war, one can trace the tenacious efforts that came to be the predominant element of German foreign policy and gave it coherence from 1905 to 1914... For those of us who lived these events (in France) and

³² Quoted in *ibid.*, 42.

³³ Quoted in *ibid.*, 48–9.

³⁴ The onset of the war caught Laure Isaac flatfooted in Clamart, near Paris. She traveled to Saint-Etienne to join her sister, Rosa, thence to Lyon to see Jules off and then back to Paris to reside with her mother and a sister-in-law. These peregrinations culminated with the lease of an apartment on the boulevard Pereire.

recall our memories...there was not a doubt: the year 1905 was a watershed year...Prior [to 1905], one spoke of peace and war, but (we at least, from the generations born after 1870) one did not know of what one spoke; peace was a given, the air which one breathed without thinking about it; war was a word, a purely abstract concept. When suddenly we had the revelation that this concept could transform itself into reality, we were shocked to the depths of our being, a shock which the passage of time has not erased.³⁵

In September, Isaac's regiment departed for the *Ubaye Valley*, overlooking the Franco-Italian frontier. At his departure, he was unaware that on 5 September 1914 (the eve of the Battle of the Marne), his friend, mentor and leader, Charles Péguy, had been killed with a bullet to the forehead in Villeroy (Seine-et-Marne). Upon receiving the news, Isaac remembered Péguy's own words: "'One is not entitled to be right...if one is not ready at each moment, on all occasions, to pay with one's life to evidence the rightness of one's truth.' Yes, Péguy was ready, at any moment, on any occasion, to pay the ultimate price, to put his life on the line. He said it; he did it."³⁶ But Péguy would live on, in Isaac's psyche. It could not have been otherwise, for there was in [Péguy], as Isaac would remember on the occasion of the semicentennial of the launch of the *Cahiers de la quinzaine*,

a natural superiority, native, visible, a superiority that one might even say as immediately evident to the naked eye. For those who did not know him, how to give an idea of such a personality, completely, profoundly, original, unique in his essence? He was a small unforgettable individual, different from all others, and yet so French, so much a product of his region, of his faubourg, 'deeply rooted' in the French soil, so *peuple français*, not at all bourgeois, finished, without the least trace of vulgarity – nor of elegance; dressed in black, spartanly but properly, at all times *manteau le caban*, cape fluttering behind; his features regular, firm and flexed, obstinate, open, highly-strung, becoming flushed when the cerebral machine, always under pressure, began to vibrate in him.³⁷

³⁵ Jules Isaac, *1914, le Problème des origines de la guerre. Un débat historique* (Paris: Rieder, 1933). All copies on which the Germans could lay their hands were destroyed in 1942. The book is cited in *Expériences de ma vie II: De la paix à la guerre*.

³⁶ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie II. De la paix à la guerre*. The Péguy quote is from Feuillette, no. 26, p. 4.

³⁷ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, Péguy en Sorbonne, discours du cinquantenaire (des Cahiers), 365–75 at 369–70.

From the end of 1914 to April 1915, Isaac was on the *Aisne* front, in the *Soissonnais*, and from the summer of 1915 to April 1916, in the trenches in the *Champagne*. From May 1916 until he was wounded, Isaac was a flash-spotter to the west of Verdun. During his service, Isaac (to his disappointment) was never to rise to the rank of officer, only to that of staff sergeant. While absent from home, he kept close tabs on how his two children were faring. At the onset of the war, Juliette was in her eleventh year; Daniel in his seventh. In correspondence to Laure dated 21 August 1915, Isaac adumbrated his view of history's ebb and flow.

I understand from you that my little Juliette finds herself somewhat disoriented in penetrating the history of the Middle Ages and is having difficulty in understanding (The *Seignobos* or the *Lavis* is clearer). Nothing is more confusing since the Middle Ages begins with a return to barbarism and barbarism is nothing but confusion. Here is what you must try to explain to her: after centuries of civilization,...the Greeks and the Romans became cultivated in spirit...having ideas on the great questions that are not dissimilar to ours...In contrast, the men of the Middle Ages – the first centuries of the M.A. – were semi-barbarians, as difficult for us to comprehend as are the savages and semi-savages of today...Only after centuries did their consciousness evolve to the point where they began to understand the classical tradition, to penetrate its profound meaning and to perpetuate it (*la Renaissance*)....Their consciousness was confused and primitive, everything that proceeded from them was confused and they were thereby difficult to understand.³⁸

It was on 28 June 1917 at or about 17 h 30 that Isaac was flash-spotting, “imprisoned in my concrete cage,”³⁹ as he put it, behind the French line to the west of the Verdun front. “German artillery very active. Shells begin to fall around the lookout post. But too much work to be interrupted. I was at the sighting telescope with headphones...I alerted Central. I told Garnier to cry out, ‘*Attention*’ when the shells landed because between my headphones and the cannonade, I did not hear their arrival. A shell landed not 5 or 6 metres away. We ducked. One minute later, ‘*Attention!*’ At the same moment, I was grazed on the right side of my head. Then, blackness. Thick smoke accompanied by burning particles. My mouth felt

³⁸Marc Michel, ed., *Jules Isaac, Un historien dans la grande guerre: Lettres et carnets 1914–1917* (n.p.: Armand Colin, 2004), 128–29.

³⁹Jules Isaac, “Nous, les revenants,” *La Revue de Paris* (April, 1919): 18.

as if it were full of cinders; that I was going to suffocate. Anguish! I cried out to Garnier: ‘Open the tunnel, we are all going to be asphyxiated...’ Blackness, only blackness. The smoke was not dissipating. Garnier did not know where he was and was not hearing me. I slipped into the tunnel and groped my way to the *Centrale téléphonique* – where I was seated and graciously comforted with a shot of hooch.”⁴⁰ Isaac was hospitalized for the ensuing three months where he was observed to be “persistently chronically fatigued and hyper-emotional,”⁴¹ and spent the next succeeding two months convalescing *en famille* in Paris on the boulevard Pereire. On 14 December 1917, through the intercession of historian Ernest Lavis, Isaac was posted to the foreign intelligence unit of the *Grand Quartier Général* at Chantilly where, as he recalled, “our primary duty consisted of taking cuttings out of newspapers for use by the office of the *général en chef*.”⁴²

By 1 February 1918, he was back in Paris in the *service de l’information* at the Office of Foreign Affairs and shortly thereafter, on 27 May 1918, Isaac’s third and last child, a son, Jean-Claude (called Janet),⁴³ was born. Jean-Claude would be raised in a milieu so radically different from that in which his two elder siblings had grown up that he would have little in common with them but a set of parents. The Great War, not the turn of the century, had brought to an end *la belle époque* in which his two elder siblings had spent their childhood. Two months after his birth, Laure wrote to her husband, “If you see Lavis,⁴⁴ tell him that I would love for him to be godfather to our son, and in any case, I consider him as such, even if [Jean-Claude] does not have the same given name.”⁴⁵ With Jean-Claude’s arrival, Isaac moved his wife and children away from Paris, then perceived to be under threat from the Germans, and returned to a solitary existence. He passed his time writing articles for different newspapers, such as *le Matin*, and renewing contact with Guillaume Bréton, his editor at Hachette. He was demobilized on 14 January 1919 and returned to

⁴⁰ Michel, ed., 287.

⁴¹ Marc Michel, “Lettres de guerre de Jules à sa femme (1914–1917),” *Les Cahiers de l’Association des amis de Jules Isaac, nouvelle série* No 4 (December 2002): 13.

⁴² Jules Isaac, *Joffre et Lanrezac* (Paris: Etienne Chiron, 1922), 8, note 1.

⁴³ On his return from Auschwitz, Jean-Claude would change his family name from Isaac to Janet.

⁴⁴ Isaac was to lose his protecteur in 1922.

⁴⁵ Michel, ed., *Jules Isaac, Un historien dans la grande guerre: Lettres et carnets 1914–1917*, 22.

civilian life with a *citation à l'ordre de la division*, a *Croix de guerre* with silver star and a profound aspiration for an enduring peace. In an article published in April of 1919 in *La Revue de Paris* and titled, "Nous, les revenants," Isaac wrote, "This life of former times, into which we were brusquely reinjected, was liveable no more. We desired to gently pick up where we had left off, the frame unfrozen: it was not possible. An invisible force prevented us. All the distant past, the 'pre-war' past, had uncoupled from us. Behind us, we saw only cinders and ruins; in front of us, we perceived the dawn of a new beginning."⁴⁶

THE MALET-ISAAC

The Great War not only ended *la belle époque*; it also ended the *Cours d'Histoire MALET*. On 25 September 1915, its author, mobilized like Isaac from the onset of hostilities, was killed during an attack from entrenched Germans in the Artois at Roclincourt (Pas-de Calais). With the death of Malet, Hachette's Bréton reached out not to Isaac, but to Malet's colleague Pierre Grillet, *professeur agrégé* at *lycée Louis-le-Grand*, to update the next succeeding edition, to be titled the *A. MALET/P. GRILLET cours complet d'histoire*, and published in 1921. Isaac was relegated to writing a succinct history of the Great War as a chapter in this edition.⁴⁷ "I suspect that the attitude of B. [Bréton] is in part driven by my name: you are aware from which clientele the work of Malet generates his profits," Isaac vented in a letter to Laure written 17 December 1917, "The *MALET-GRILLET* has also been successful among the priests; it is a factor. With a *MALET-ISAAC*, there will be no demand from that market. And this perhaps explains it all. But I much prefer, a thousand times more, that these things are said to my face – instead of being stabbed in the back."⁴⁸ The antisemitism to which Isaac was alluding continued to be the order of the day in interwar France. French Catholics continued to be seduced by the writings of Charles Maurras, in the tradition of Toussenel, Gougenot de Mousseaux, de la Tour du Pin and Edouard Drumont. The message, in a nutshell, was that the Jews, in concert with the Protestants and the Freemasons, increasingly had their hands on the levers of power.

⁴⁶ Isaac, "Nous, les revenants," 24.

⁴⁷ In May 1918, Isaac contracted with Hachette to complete the collection of *résumés aide-memoire* that had been a pre-war work-in-progress.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Kaspi, 88.

In this regard, the Rothschilds were a recurring leitmotiv. In 1926, *Action Française* was the subject of a papal ban, not for Maurras' anti-Jewish rhetoric, but for his heterodox Catholicism.⁴⁹ Many Catholics and clerics were complicit in this anti-Jewish rhetoric by their silence, a silence that would over time anesthetize the French public to the potential consequences. In a review of *Notre cher Péguy*,⁵⁰ published in the 15 June 1926 issue of *la revue Europe*, Isaac wrote, "The first time [the brothers Tharaud] wrote me – as on several occasions– for my recollections of Péguy, I did not reply. Why? It was too close to the end of the war, I had just read *Quand Israël est roi*, and, having just come out of the trenches, I was in no mood to receive this volley of shots in the back, and say thank you."⁵¹ This was a not so subtle reference to the Tharaud brothers' having, in the words of historian Eugen Weber, "left their Catholic middleclass readers with ideas of which the *Action française* was for a long time the most persistent and effective exponent, until overtaken at last by louder, more voracious offspring."⁵²

By the start of the academic year 1920–21, Isaac was supply teaching at *lycée Louis-le-Grand*, Malet's old stomping ground, and again found himself in negotiation with Hachette director Bréton, this time to take charge of the overhaul of the *cours d'histoire* as required by a revised curriculum propounded by the ministry of public education. This time, Isaac was adamant—he must receive credit as author. This time, Hachette would acquiesce—at least in part—"although not without some perceptible hesitation," recalled Isaac, "due to my biblical name, with little consequence for the most part – especially in the free schools. Thus was born the *Cours d'Histoire MALET-ISAAC à l'usage de l'enseignement secondaire*, entirely different from its predecessor the *Cours d'Histoire MALET*."⁵³ Isaac was on his way to attaining celebrity among generations of French secondary students, not by face, but by name.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Into the vacuum came the antiparliamentary leagues, including, but not limited to, de la Rocque's *Ligues des patriotes*, established in 1928.

⁵⁰ J. & J. Tharaud, 2 vol (Plon, 1925).

⁵¹ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, Mes écrits antérieurs sur Péguy, I – D'un livre sur Péguy (J. et J. Tharaud, Notre Cher Péguy), 337–44, at 337.

⁵² Weber, 201.

⁵³ Isaac, "Surviv," 221. The *cours* Malet-Isaac was the offspring of the educational program adopted in 1923 and 1925 which replaced two cycles with one continuous, chronologically sequenced study of history.

⁵⁴ For example, in correspondence to Isaac dated 25 April 1955, Albert Camus would write, "I am among those in effect to whom you taught history." *Le Fonds Jules Isaac, bibliothèque Méjanes d'Aix-en-Provence*.

By the 1921–22 academic year, Isaac had secured a permanent position as *professeur agrégé* at *lycée Saint-Louis*, where he would teach for 15 years. The *A. MALET/P. GRILLET cours complet d'histoire*—complete with Isaac's chapter, "La France dans la guerre"—was published in time for use in the 1921–22 academic year. Isaac's name was buried in the last two lines of the preface: "M. Jules Isaac, professor at *lycée Saint-Louis*, is responsible for the updating and completion of the present work." In the Isaac-authored chapter on the Great War, the view was expressed on page 1064 that "the fundamental cause of the war" was to be found in the German psyche, a point of view not inconsistent with French historiography at the time. (In his rewritten *Cours d'Histoire MALET-ISAAC*, completed in 1930, Isaac would correct himself, not with a view to Franco-German *rapprochement* [though a laudable end to which he was striving], but because his research would lead him to conclude that his initial point of view had been historically incorrect. The fundamental cause of the First World War would be identified as "the [German] fear of encirclement.")⁵⁵

The gargantuan task of revising and updating what had been the *Cours MALET*, and publishing in stages, the *Cours d'Histoire MALET-ISAAC* was to occupy Isaac without distraction for seven long years (1923–30). "Despite precious collaboration,⁵⁶ to which I was compelled to resort in order not to succumb beneath the load," Isaac recollected, "the writing of the *cours MALET-ISAAC* required seven years of exhausting work, all the more exhausting in that it was informed by a root principle that I made my own: a continuous resort to the sources, to textual documents. A knowledge of history, albeit an uncertain knowledge, came at such a price."⁵⁷ The last volume, for use *en philosophie-mathématique*, was published in 1930 and bore only the name of Isaac as author,

⁵⁵ A. Malet/J. Isaac, *Cours d'Histoire MALET-ISAAC à l'usage de l'enseignement secondaire*. Histoire Contemporaine depuis le milieu du XIXe siècle. Classe de Philosophie et de Mathématiques. Avec la collaboration d'A. Alba, Paris (Hachette) 1930, p. 642, as quoted in Rainer Bendick, "La Question des Responsabilités de la guerre de 1914. La Position de Jules Isaac et les Réactions Allemandes," *Cahiers de l'Association des amis de Jules Isaac, nouvelle série* (27/28 March 1997): 63.

⁵⁶ The collaboration to which Isaac refers was provided by Gaston Dez, *professeur agrégé d'histoire* at *lycée de Poitiers* (for the *manuel de sixième*), by André Alba, *normalien*, future *professeur agrégé d'histoire* at *lycée Henri-IV* and Isaac's principal collaborator (for the *manuels de cinquième, de quatrième* and *de philosophie-mathématique*), fellow Lakanalien and Péguy disciple, Charles-Victor Bourilly, professor at *l'Université de Aix-Marseille* (for the *manuel de troisième*) and Charles-Henri Pouthas, *professeur agrégé* at *lycée Janson-de-Sailly* and future Sorbonne professor (for the *manuel de première*).

⁵⁷ Isaac, "Survол," 222.

albeit under the generic, *Cours d'Histoire MALET-ISAAC à l'usage de l'enseignement secondaire*. The MALET-ISAAC would be an overnight success and was to remain in use until the 1970s, as revised and updated to reflect evolving ministry of education edicts.⁵⁸

MOUNTING ROCINANTE

“Having completed this arduous exercise [of publishing the *Cours d'Histoire MALET-ISAAC*],” Isaac recounted, “it became possible for me to regain my *poste de combat*.”⁵⁹

The war had made of me another man, more mature, harder, – more clear-sighted also. I emerged having completed forty years of my life, teeth clenched, all illusions lost, doubly resolved to employ my energies – my creative energies – that I felt well up inside me, to use these energies not as a means to strict erudition, but to action, efficacious and worthwhile action. Having lived through wartime and peacetime, I did not hesitate, I knew what sort of action imposed itself on me; in all directions and with all forces, the struggle against ‘brainwashing’: a good turn of phrase even in its vulgarity.⁶⁰

Isaac would spend the 1930s waging a historically positivist battle to expose the legends of the Great War with a view to preempting its repetition and to making the case for a more nuanced understanding of Germany’s culpability. Given his experience and credentials, he considered himself eminently qualified to be a participant in the debate on the origins of the Great War. For this positivist and disciplined historian, history was neither relative nor subjective; there was no compromising with the facts. In an article titled, “*Quelques aspects actuels de la question des responsabilités de guerre*,”⁶¹ Isaac wrote that historians must be ever vigilant not to “leave out facts that are bothersome or to push them aside into the shadows; to force documents and to convert into certitude the most dubious of hypotheses.”⁶² “One must first determine the fundamental causes, these

⁵⁸ The completely revised MALET-ISAAC was first published in 1933.

⁵⁹ Isaac, “Surviv,” 222.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 220.

⁶¹ Published in the April/May 1931 issue of the journal *La Paix par le Droit*. In the same article, Isaac reported that 35,000 French army archival documents were available for examination, but he was not one of the privileged few (among whom Camille Bloch and Pierre Renouvin) yet allowed to research these archival documents at the *Quai d’Orsay*.

⁶² Quoted in Jacques Thobie, “Jules Isaac et les origines de la Première Guerre Mondiale,” in *Actes du Colloque de Rennes* (Rennes: Hachette, 1977), 45.

underlying forces, before rising to the surface as represented by diplomatic history,” he wrote in 1932,⁶³ a diplomatic history that had begun to express itself in 1929 with the first publication (thence at the rate of three volumes per annum) of *Documents diplomatiques français*. In his research to discover the fundamental causes of the Great War, Isaac was to pioneer a new methodology: *la méthode de deux points de vue*, imprecisely translated as “binocular” or “comparative” methodology. This “methodology... seems to us in our day natural, obvious, unavoidable,” according to historian André Kaspi,

and which nonetheless was most innovative. [Isaac] had recourse to both German and French sources. He would place side by side the German interpretations and the French interpretations. He invited his readers, his young readers, to compare [the competing interpretations], to exercise their critical faculties. ‘After having set out the facts, [Isaac] explained thirty years later, I reproduced at length an excerpt from one among the best of German *manuels [d’histoire]* with a view to demonstrating how the same question appears to German youth.’⁶⁴

As Isaac was distrustful of “official” history, so he was of purportedly “official” tradition. A decade later, he would compare the gospel texts regarding the Jews with a certain secular Christian tradition regarding the Jews and also note discrepancies.

From 30 January 1933, the date on which Hitler was appointed Reich Chancellor by a reluctant, but cornered, President Paul von Hindenburg, “international relations would be ever-deteriorating,” Isaac would later lament, “overshadowed by the terrifying menace incarnated by Hitler.”⁶⁵ In that same year, 1933, Isaac published his 270-page *Un Débat historique: 1914, le problème des origines de la guerre* (Rieder), the first part of which reproduced two articles that had been published in 1932 in the *Revue d’histoire moderne*. The book’s central thesis was that Russia bore the greatest responsibility for the outbreak of the Great War.

Declaration of war against Serbia, partial mobilization on the part of Russia, general mobilization on the part of Austria, *Kriegsgefahrzustand* in Germany,

⁶³ Quoted in *ibid*.

⁶⁴ Quoted in André Kaspi, “Jules Isaac, historien et Citoyen,” *Cahiers de l’Association des amis de Jules Isaac (nouvelle série)*, no. 2 (1997): 16.

⁶⁵ Isaac, “Surviv,” 224.

general mobilization on the part of Russia, general mobilizations on the part of Germany and of France, this would seem to be the normal chronology of events, and that as it appeared in 1914 (and a long time afterward) to the uninformed French people. Entirely different was the unfolding of events in fact. A *coup de théâtre* was orchestrated on 30 July that great pains were taken to keep from us: Russia's general mobilization, ordered by the Tsar, in advance of all the other [general mobilizations].⁶⁶

While not denying the roles of the central powers in the outbreak of the Great War, it was Isaac's view, similar to that argued by American historian B. Schmitt, in contrast to that of Pierre Renouvin, that it was more correct to speak of responsibilities shared in unequal portions than to speak of primary German responsibility. Another collection of essays decrying the risks attendant on the technologization of warfare would be published as a book in 1935 under the title, *Paradoxe sur la Science homicide et autres hérésies* (Rieder).⁶⁷ Isaac's activism was not limited to the printed word. His efforts to promote Franco-German rapprochement included involvement with *l'Union pour la Vérité* and a proposition for a *pacte de Locarno moral*, continuing contacts with German academics, membership in the *Comité de Vigilance des intellectuels antifascistes* (it was at Isaac's home that the *commission de la paix* convened and various *brochures de propagande* drafted) and collaboration in connection with a Franco-German colloquium dealing with the disputed points in the teaching of the history of the Great War. A Locarno Pact of a moral nature was proposed by Isaac in an interview conducted in 1931 at *l'Union pour la Vérité*. The proposal contemplated that the language of German moral culpability implied by the phrase, "imposed upon [the victors] by the aggression of Germany and her allies" in article 231 of the Versailles Treaty (War Guilt Clause) would be deleted, thereby paving the way for objective, scientific study of the causes of the Great War. While attending International Historical Congresses at The Hague in 1932 and at Basel in 1934, Isaac formed relationships with his German historical counterparts, including Dr. O. Reimann, author of the then most widely used history textbooks in Germany. In the mid-30s, Professors Herre and Reimann of Germany and Professors Isaac, Pages, Renouvin and Mantoux of France were to meet in Paris on more than

⁶⁶ Quoted in Kaspi, "Jules Isaac, historien et Citoyen," 17.

⁶⁷ Extant copies of both these books would be destroyed by the Germans in 1942.

one occasion to address the principal divergencies as between France and Germany in the teaching of contemporary history.⁶⁸

The somber mood was broken by the celebration in Paris on 20 March 1933 of the marriage of Daniel Isaac to Juliette Schmidt, great-granddaughter of Charles Schmidt (1812–95), who had taught theology as a member of the Protestant faculty at Strasbourg, and niece of Germanist Charles Andler, who held a chair at the Collège de France.⁶⁹ At the time of the marriage, Daniel was a public servant at the naval ministry.⁷⁰ Seventeen months later, Juliette Isaac married Catholic Robert Boudeville on 14 August 1934 in the church of *Saint-Palais-Sur-Mer*.⁷¹ The seventeen-month hiatus between the two weddings was not devoid of tumult. On 7 February 1934, for the first time in the Third Republic's history, a government was toppled as a result of deaths and injuries resulting from French police efforts on the previous night to prevent a crowd of rightwing demonstrators and veterans' leagues from crossing the Seine and storming the Chamber of Deputies. A fortnight prior to Juliette's wedding, upon the death of German President Paul von Hindenburg on 2 August, the offices of president and chancellor were merged in Hitler's person as leader and chancellor.

In 1935, the Sorbonne approved a doctoral thesis proposal submitted by Isaac regarding the evolution of France's foreign policy under Poincaré's (pre-war) ministry, ("a taboo subject: Poincaré was not yet discussable,"⁷² recollected Isaac), on condition that Poincaré's name did not figure in the title. By letter dated 1 March 1935, Isaac rejected the Sorbonne's terms. "With appreciation to the Faculty and without purporting to take issue with its decision," he wrote, "I am unable to abide by the condition imposed, since such a condition would render the subject

⁶⁸ In early 1938, Isaac received an invitation from Reimann to visit Berlin, together with his French colleagues, at the expense of the German government, for the purposes of advancing their discussions. This meeting was never to take place.

⁶⁹ Andler was married to Juliette's paternal aunt, Elisabeth Schmidt. He passed away 11 days after the marriage, on 1 April 1933.

⁷⁰ Daniel and Juliette had two daughters, Marie-Claire, married to Michel Evdokimoff, and Hélène (called Caty), married to Tuan N'Guyen.

⁷¹ Like her mother, a gifted portrait artist, Juliette had spent time in the studio of Ivanhoé Rambosson. Each year she participated at the *Salon de la Nationale des Beaux-Arts*. Her first exhibit was in 1934.

⁷² Isaac, "Surviv," 223. Advocates of French-Russian responsibility emphasized the offensive nature of the Franco-Russian alliance beginning in 1912 and foreign minister Paleologue's initiatives in inciting Russia during Poincaré's and Viviani's passage at sea.

unintelligible, (for of what significance is the period January 1912-January 1913 if not to the time Poincaré was in power?), and in particular since it seems to me that political correctness is entirely incompatible with the exigencies of scientific inquiry.”⁷³

There was one particularly ironic out-of-academe encounter in the mid-1930s. “As a consequence of an article appearing in *la Revue Historique* (1935),” Isaac recounted, “I received an unexpected invitation: Marshal Pétain to whose defense I had come [in the article] – for his military command – proposed ‘a confidential meeting.’ Could he have found in me [his] historian, [his] dream of apologist? This would have been a grand delusion on his part. But the meeting did take place for two hours [on 22 February 1936], in his spacious office in *les Invalides*. I came away disappointed, my erstwhile admiration in ruins. There was no follow-up on my part. Might it have been a premonition that it would be impossible for me to have acted otherwise?”⁷⁴ Isaac would one day have occasion to follow up with Pétain, but only after the latter became president of *l’Etat français*, and Isaac had been ousted from public service. In April/May 1936, further to the general elections, the Socialists found themselves for the first time in the position of having to form a government, one which came to be known as the Popular Front government. And France found itself for the first time under the leadership of a Jew.⁷⁵ On 30 September 1936, Jules Isaac took office as Inspector General of Public Education for France on the recommendation of Jean Zay, minister of education in Blum’s government. This appointment was the crowning achievement of an illustrious career as professor and author. “One more time, in the year 1936, fate would place me at a crossroads,” Isaac later recalled. “Pushing sixty years of age, I was contemplating taking an anticipated retirement, when I was named *Inspecteur-Général [de l’instruction publique]*. An appointment that would have been unthinkable in ordinary times: not that my credentials were lacking; the problem was my bureaucratic standing [left-of-center republican]. It took a minister [of education] the likes of Jean

⁷³ Reproduced in Jules Isaac, “Connaissances de Jules Isaac,” *Dans L’amitié de Jules Isaac (Cahiers de l’Association des Amis de Jules Isaac)*, no. III (1981): 4.

⁷⁴ Isaac, “Surviv,” 223.

⁷⁵ The cabinet presented by Léon Blum, leader of the Socialists, to the Chamber consisted of 35 members, 16 of whom were Socialists, 13 were Radical Socialists, three were dissident Socialists and three belonged to no party. Twenty-seven were deputies, four were senators and four were non-Parliamentarians.

Zay to transcend.”⁷⁶ The fact that Isaac, Blum and Zay were co-religionists may or may not have been a factor. In any event, Isaac’s left-leaning republican convictions were no secret. In May 1937, Zay decided that the secondary school program should be restored to two cycles, as had been the case from 1902 to 1923. In 1939, Isaac, by then Inspector General, was appointed to chair the *Jury de l’Agrégation d’Histoire*. In his own words,

The fallout consisted of the requirement to put together a new *cours d’histoire* – *Cours J. Isaac* this time. Added to this was the presidency of the *jury de l’agrégation d’histoire*, implying new responsibilities, a new pioneering effort. So many problems to be addressed, experiences lived, obstacles to be overcome, and at the same time, my physical energies, diminished by an illness in remission for a long while, an illness that was to re-express itself in a full blown way within the next ten years...I persisted in struggling until the last minute for the defence of peace, ever more at risk. In extremis, I placed my hope in a new association where one encountered lucid souls such as Detoeuf, Henri Bouche, Simone Weil, whose daring and original views would be expressed from 1937 in the *Nouveaux Cahiers*. Their points of view had yet to be digested when the war broke out, hurling us into a demonic future.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Isaac, “Surviv,” 223–24.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 224.

From Citizen to Leper 1940–43

UNEXPECTED DEFEAT

On 10 May 1940, the Germans invaded Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. By 15 May, the German army had pierced the Maginot Line and entered France. The German invasion of France caught Isaac flatfooted at *La Guitoune*, one of two Isaac vacation homes at Saint-Palais-Sur-Mer (Charente-Inférieure).¹ By 8 June 1940, the German panzers were within 40 miles of Paris. On 10 June, the day the Germans crossed the Seine and with Paris surrounded on three sides, the French government fled, first to Tours, thence to Bordeaux. By 14 June, Paris was an occupied city. Two days later, a majority in the Reynaud cabinet voted to request armistice terms, Reynaud resigned as president of the Council and recommended to president of the Republic Lebrun that Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain be invited to form a government. On 22 June 1940, with Pétain at the helm of a new French cabinet, an armistice was signed in *Compiègne* forest in the very same railway car in which the 1918 armistice had taken place. When the armistice agreement was signed, the consensus view appeared to be that Britain would fall within a matter of weeks and the armistice would give way to a definitive peace settlement under which France would be equal partners with Germany in a new European order. Pending what the French hoped and contemplated would be an early peace settlement, the departments in Alsace and Lorraine that had been German between

¹The other, La Cagouille, had been gifted in 1934 to daughter Juliette and Robert Boudeville on the occasion of their marriage.

1871 and 1918 (Moselle, Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin) were annexed to the Third Reich, the departments of the Nord and Pas-de-Calais placed under Belgian-based German military administration and what remained of France was divided into an occupied and an unoccupied zone divided by a demarcation line. Approximately three-fifths of remaining France north of the Loire valley plus a narrow strip along the Atlantic coast (including St. Palais) were occupied by German troops and administered by a German military governor. France was to defray the costs of this occupation and its forces were to be demobilized. Under the armistice, the French government retained sovereignty over all of France except where its legislation conflicted with German military ordinances in the occupied zone. "From Bordeaux, the French government made its way across the center of France like some bedraggled oriental caravan, through Périgueux and Brive-la-Gaillarde to Clermont-Ferrand in the mountainous Auvergne," writes journalist/historian Adam Nossiter. "But there were too many workers at Clermont's Michelin tire factory, the city was drab, and the hotels were dingy. Dining with Pétain at the Grand Hôtel in Clermont on June 29, the exasperated foreign minister, Paul Baudouin, had an inspiration: 'I suggest Vichy, where the spacious hotels will allow us a suitable installation.' It was a nearly casual thought, flung out between courses at the hotel restaurant. 'The Marshall agrees to this idea,' Baudouin noted in his diary."² On the next day, 30 June 1940, the French government left Clermont-Ferrand for Vichy. On 9 July 1940, Parliament, whose sessions had been suspended during the invasion, reconvened in Vichy's Grand Casino. The following day, a joint session of parliament empowered, as Isaac framed it, "a new government, Pétain at its head, with a Maurras as *directeur de conscience*,"³ to draft a new constitution. *Travail, famille, patrie* replaced the republican trilogy *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*. "The Third Republic was not killed by the Germans," writes historian Susan Zuccotti. "it committed suicide. It died because its elected officials did not believe it [the Third Republic Constitution of 1875] worth saving."⁴ *Travail famille, patrie* would concretize itself by making antisemitism state policy, suppressing individual liberties such as freedom of the press and the right to vote, and ensuring enforcement with an omnipresent police force.

² Adam Nossiter, *The Algeria Hotel: France, Memory and the Second World War* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 104–5.

³ Isaac, "Surviv," 225.

⁴ Susan Zuccotti, *The Holocaust, the French and the Jews* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 43.

The German invasion of France and its tragic consequences for the Jewish community would ultimately serve as catalyst for Isaac's trailblazing work to heal Jewish-Catholic fissures. In particular, it was out of the experience of antisemitism, begun in pre-war France and intensified *in bello*, that Isaac became attuned to a certain tradition, religious in nature, that in his estimation served to nourish and sustain racial antisemitism. The intensification of Isaac's alienation as a Jew began almost immediately. In his role as Inspector General of Public Education and president of various juries, Isaac was granted permission to cross the demarcation line separating occupied from unoccupied zones to make the journey from Saint-Palais-Sur-Mer (in the occupied zone) to Vichy (in the unoccupied zone) for an indeterminate sojourn to perform his duties. On 20 July 1940, chauffeured by his wife, Jules Isaac arrived at Vichy, a spa town whose grand hotels had been hastily converted to government ministries. At the turn of the twentieth century, there were 573 hotels in this spa town - one for every fifty of its inhabitants. At Vichy, Jules and Laure would remain until 24 December 1940, lodged at the *Hôtel de Lucerne*, while Jules performed (until 19 December, his last day in office) the functions of Inspector General of Public Education and president of the *jury d'agrégation*. "[I]t would not be long, however, before I was for many, including some of my own colleagues, a marked man," he lamented, "marked with a flaw ever more visible – a flaw ever more prudent and wise to discard... From the statute of October, I became a 'leper' officially, on two months of reprieve following which I would find myself on the street – with my own, since a return to Paris, where I had my domicile, was not permitted by the occupier."⁵

LOI PORTANT STATUT DES JUIFS

The statute of October to which Isaac refers was the *loi portant statut des Juifs* ("*statut des Juifs*"), enacted on 3 October 1940 and published on 18 October 1940. It contained the usual Vichy preamble: "We, *Marshal of France, head of l'Etat français*, the council of ministers in agreement."⁶ The first article deemed to be a Jew any person having three grandparents

⁵ Isaac, "Surviv." 225–26.

⁶ The *Loi portant statut des Juifs* was signed by Philippe Pétain, maréchal de France, head of *l'Etat français*, Pierre Laval, vice president of the council of ministers, Raphaël Alibert, keeper of the Seals and minister of justice, Marcel Peyrouton, minister of the interior, Paul Beaudoin, minister of foreign affairs, le général Huntziger, minister of defense, Yves Bouthillier, minister of finance, l'amiral Darlan, minister of the navy, René Belin, minister of commerce, and Pierre Caziot, minister of agriculture.

“of the Jewish race” or two grandparents (typically one Jewish parent) if his/her spouse were Jewish.⁷ By this definition, not only were Jules and Laure Jewish, so was their son Daniel, a convert to Protestantism in the 1930s. Article 3 of the *statut des Juifs* in effect excluded Jews from public service, including teaching. The *statut des Juifs* constituted the crescendo of a first wave of Vichy measures that singled out for discrimination a religious or ethnic group in metropolitan France. This first wave of measures had included the revocation of naturalizations accorded subsequent to the law of 1927 (law of 22 July 1940), and the revocation of the right of naturalized persons to practise as licensed medical doctors, dentist-surgeons, pharmacists and midwives (law of 16 August 1940), a revocation extended ultimately to naturalized lawyers (law of 10 September 1940). These last two measures, according to Paxton and Marrus, were applied with particular rigor to Jews, and this notwithstanding that the word *Jew* does not appear in their texts. The *statut des Juifs* was followed by a law of 4 October 1940, authorizing the internment of foreign nationals “of the Jewish race” in *camps spéciaux* or *résidences forcées* (under police surveillance in a remote village) and a law of 7 October 1940 repealing the Crémieux Decree of 24 October 1870 which had accorded French citizenship to the Jews of Algeria, at that time a part of France.

In a telegram to colleague Gaston Henry-Haye, French ambassador to the United States, Jacques Guerard justified the *statut des Juifs* in the following terms: “Accordingly, we have concluded that a condition of national renewal is the exclusion of the Israelites from certain categories of work that would otherwise allow them to exert on our administrations, on public opinion and on our youth an influence that we have come to recognize is harmful. No impulse to revenge has provoked the law just promulgated. On the contrary, it should preempt spontaneous antisemitic activity whose excesses are difficult to contain. Moreover, it should be noted that no measures have been taken against their persons or their property.”⁸ Did the impetus for the *statut des Juifs* originate with the German occupiers of the northern zone? Until American historian Robert Paxton exploded the postwar myth with the

⁷In contrast, the German ordinance issued on 27 September 1940 deemed to be Jewish anyone belonging to “the Jewish religion” or having more than two Jewish grandparents, who in turn were deemed Jewish if they belonged to the Jewish religion. Despite more severe sanctions, there was no mention of “la race juive,” nor of the status of half-Jews (i.e. those with one Jewish parent), nor did the marriage of a half-Jew with a Jew have implications.

⁸Quoted in Andre Kaspi, *Les Juifs pendant l'occupation*, rev. and enl. ed. (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1997), 61–2.

publication in 1972 of his *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940–1944*,⁹ the official history had been that Vichy had been pressured into its antisemitic measures by the German occupiers. In fact, Vichy's antisemitic measures were voluntary and of indigenous origin. "In *Vichy France* [consulting German archives] I had already presented the embryo of the thesis that Michael Marrus [Paxton's student] and I [nine years] later developed with further research [consulting French archives] in *Vichy France and the Jews*," Paxton writes in his Introduction to the 2001 edition of *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order*. "I did not yet understand in 1970, however, that Vichy's initial anti-Jewish measures actually ran contrary to German preferences in the fall of 1940, and that Vichy chose to participate actively in the deportations of 1942 partly in order to maintain the visible signs of its sovereignty."¹⁰ Paxton's *Vichy France* was published in French translation in 1973 under the title *La France de Vichy, 1940–1944* by *Editions de Seuil* as part of its *L'Univers Historique* series. Needless to say, the book in French translation made quite a noise in France.

Werner Best, chief of the civil administration arm of the German military occupation authority in France, attested, "The ordinance of the Chief of the Military Administration in France [i.e. the German ordinance of 27 September 1940, which unlike the *statut des Juifs* required a census of Jews in the occupied zone] was issued on the Führer's order, and it was consciously judged necessary to have it antedate the French law in order that the regulation of the Jewish question appeared to emanate from the German authorities."¹¹ What, then, was the provenance of a *statut des Juifs*? Its principal sponsor was Raphaël Alibert, minister of justice, who in his pre-Vichy incarnation had long been associated with the antisemitic, monarchist *Action Française*. Who were his principal advisers in this regard? Who drafted the text of the statute? What discussion ensued within the ministry of justice? There appear to be no answers. We do know, however, that Alibert was forced to resign from the cabinet at German instigation, further to a leading role played by Alibert in Pétain's ouster of Pierre Laval from the cabinet on 13 December 1940.

⁹ Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940–1944* (New York: Knopf, 1972).

¹⁰ Robert O. Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940–1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), xxvi–xxvii.

¹¹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 13. In 1951, after having been granted clemency and released from a Danish prison where he was serving a five-year sentence (his death sentence had been commuted), Best returned to West Germany and became a lawyer for Stinnes Co., founded by Hugo Stinnes.

Isaac wrote to Maréchal Pétain,¹² at that time both head of state and, as president of the Council of Ministers, also government leader.¹³ “I would respectfully remind you that I am the historian whom you at one time summoned to your office at *les Invalides*, and to whom you kindly showed your esteem... We read in the newspapers yesterday: ‘The Cabinet continued looking at clarifying the status of Jews.’ With this simple phrase, I find myself instantly excluded from the French national community, and along with me – French to the marrow of my bones – so many others, from Bergson, who taught us all, down to the classes of ’38 or ’39, who have served France well with all their genius, or all their blood.”¹⁴ Pétain chose to reply through his secretary. Pursuant to the *statut des Juifs* passed by Vichy, “M. Isaac Jules, *Inspecteur général de l’Instruction Publique (Enseignement Secondaire)*, whose services were terminated on 19 December 1940, is entitled to a pension commencing 20 December 1940.”¹⁵ This reply was a paraphrase of article 7 of the *statut des Juifs*, which provided, “The Jewish public servants contemplated by articles 2 and 3 will cease to exercise their functions in the two months that follow the promulgation of the present law. They are entitled to claim their rights to a pension if they have the requisite years of service.”

It is open to question whether Isaac’s correspondence was even brought to Pétain’s attention. “It is conceivable that the old man was not shown the dozens of pathetic letters from Jewish veterans of Verdun and others who sought to penetrate the screen of the ‘king’s friends,’ unable to believe that the Marshal himself could be aware of what French officials were doing to them and yet do nothing to stop them,” according to Paxton and Marrus. “In any case, he does not seem to have answered any of them personally.”¹⁶ If Pétain read Isaac’s letter, this is the breathtakingly prescient caution he would have seen in its closing paragraph:

¹² An October-dated draft of this letter, which does not give the date in October, is to be found in *Le Fonds Jules Isaac, bibliothèque Méjanes d’Aix-en-Provence*. From Isaac’s correspondence, it can be inferred that the *statut des Juifs* had not yet been published in the *Journal officiel*, which would imply the letter was sent prior to 18 October 1940. It is even possible the letter was sent prior to the adoption of the *statut des Juifs*, which would imply that the version that was sent bears the date of 1 October or 2 October 1940.

¹³ When Laval returned to power in mid-April 1942, he returned not as vice president of the Council but as president of the Council, and therefore as leader of the government. He also held the portfolios of the interior, information and foreign affairs.

¹⁴ *Le Fonds Jules Isaac, bibliothèque Méjanes d’Aix-en-Provence*.

¹⁵ Quoted in Kaspi, *Jules Isaac*, 143.

¹⁶ Marrus, 85.

Whosoever understands Germany, the nazi, his god: Hitler, is aware that there is not a chance to mollify, through successive concessions, the inexorable victor. Let us consider in this regard the following passage from *Mein Kampf*:

Similar historical examples show that people who stop fighting without a compelling reason will eventually accept the greatest humiliation and demands rather than try to change their fate by using force again.

This human quality is easily understandable. If at all possible, a wise conqueror will always impose his demands step by step on the conquered. He can count on the fact that a nation that has lost its strength of character – which is true of every nation that voluntarily surrenders – will not see a strong reason to reach for a weapon as each small separate act of oppression is forced on them, one at a time. The longer such demands are willingly accepted, the less people see them as a reason to resist. When they consider the individual oppression, it seems unimportant when compared to the collective oppressions against them, then they realize they have already tolerated much more and suffered a much greater misery in silence, so one more makes little difference.

The downfall of Carthage is a terrible demonstration of how a people can become the victims of a slow execution brought about by their own fault.

A new sacrifice of Isaac will not appease this Moloch. At the supreme instant, I await with confidence the intervention – human or divine – to restrain the raised arm of the sacrificer.¹⁷

AMONG THE LEPERS

On 24 December 1940, Jules and Laure Isaac checked out of *the Hôtel de Lucerne*, barely a fortnight after Laval's ouster on 13 December as vice president of the Council (Fig. 4.1).¹⁸ "Liberated from oppressive Vichy," remembered Isaac, "I recovered my peace of mind: did I not have still the most important, a family life of seemingly indestructible solidity, and my freedom to work? I could be stripped of my civil rights, of all benefits acquired and recognizable, but not of my very being, not of my soul: I was the same, always the same."¹⁹ By year end, the Isaacs were in Aix-en-Provence, ensconced as interim house guests of Charles-Victor Bourrilly, fellow *Lakanalien* and Péguy peer, a specialist in sixteenth-century soldier and diplomat Guillaume du Bellay.²⁰ Thenceforth, Aix would be "*la petite*

¹⁷ *Le Fonds Jules Isaac, bibliothèque Méjanes d'Aix-en-Provence.*

¹⁸ Pierre-Etienne Flandin was Laval's short-lived successor, until 10 February 1941, when Admiral François Darlan replaced Flandin as vice president of the Council, assuming also the foreign affairs, interior and naval portfolios.

¹⁹ Isaac, "Survол," 226.

²⁰ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, 244.



Fig. 4.1 J. Isaac 1930/1940

*patrie de son coeur.*²¹ Early in 1941, the Isaacs purchased a property in Aix which they named, *La Pergola*.²² Once settled in, Isaac found himself in the eye of a hurricane of correspondence from Jewish *lycée* professors who were out on the street. Until 19 December 1940, Isaac had been Inspector General of Public Education for France, and as such, was the logical lightning rod for disenfranchised Jewish *lycée* and university professors who were confronting the prospect of not being able to make ends meet. Many of these *lycée* professors were corresponding with Isaac directly, others via Rabbi Bernard Schonberg of Lyon.²³ The letter to Isaac from Lob-Deleutre, a *lycée* professor of Greek, is representative.

²¹ Pierrard, 340.

²² Until its destruction, *La Pergola* was one of two houses, surrounded by gardens, on the left side of avenue des Amandiers, a short dead-end street at the top of montée St-Eutrope (renamed montée Jules Isaac in 1965).

²³ Lyon is the second largest city in France, was the largest in the unoccupied zone and the locus of the French resistance during World War II.

15 Boul. Des Villas, 15 23 May 1941
Avignon

Mr. Inspector General,

Kindly excuse my liberty of bothering you in your involuntary and premature retirement to solicit your advice and direction. Former professor of grammar at the lycées of Nice and Avignon, I have had the honour of being put on the street by the Nazi law of 18/10/40. I have learned that you are involved in classifying the *statutifiés* with a view to directing them in their new situation....

Having committed the offense of serving the *Université* for just over 15 years, I am no longer in receipt of remuneration; to date, I have received sums for the months of January, February and March [1941], initially from the lycée d'Avignon, and thereafter from the prefecture of Vaucluse. I understand that henceforth, it is the ministry that will make the payments when *messieurs les chefs du bureau et rédacteurs* (whose hours continue to be 9hr to 15hr) will find the time to examine my file.

To feed my two children, I have applied for an advance; it seems that for such advance to be forthcoming, my pension must have commenced. But they seem reluctant to place me in retirement (I am 39 years old!). Is it true that I must retire? Would you counsel me to do so?

Thanking you in advance for your response, and again with pardon for intruding on your retirement, respectfully yours,

M. Lob-Deleutre²⁴

One Jewish professor corresponding with Isaac who did not need placement was historian Marc Bloch, professor of economic history at the Sorbonne's Faculty of Letters since 28 July 1936. On 23 October 1940, Bloch had been provisionally placed by the ministry at the disposal of the Faculty of Letters of the University of Strasbourg-in-exile.²⁵ On 25 October, the Rockefeller Foundation had committed the necessary funds to enable the New School in New York City to offer Bloch a position as Associate Professor of Medieval History for a two-year term beginning on the earlier of the 1st day of January 1941 and his arrival in America. Bloch had accepted the offer and set about to secure the necessary travel documents for himself, his wife, six children and elderly mother. On 5 January 1941, Pétain, with the concurring advice of his ministers, exempted ten Jewish professors,

²⁴ *Le Fonds Jules Isaac, bibliothèque Méjanes d'Aix-en-Provence.*

²⁵ In September 1939, the University of Strasbourg, including its library, was evacuated to Clermont-Ferrand.

including Marc Bloch, from their otherwise exclusion under the *statut des Juifs*. Bloch was to learn of his exemption on 20 February. By letter dated 7 March 1941, Bloch updated Isaac on Bloch's ongoing efforts to obtain transit visas for nine people to travel to America via Lisbon.²⁶ Other correspondence between Isaac and displaced Jewish lycée and university professors was of a piece with initiatives on the part of the *Association culturelle Israélite* of Lyon.²⁷ The initiative had as its end to place unemployed Jewish academics in the service of Jewish youth. On the afternoon of 5 December 1940, Isaac had participated in a by-invitation-only conference chaired by Grand Rabbi Maurice Liber and held in Lyon. The typewritten minutes of this conference were mailed to Isaac by Rabbi Schonberg under cover of correspondence dated 8 January 1941. This conference was followed by another at the *consistoire* of Marseille. The fruits of these conferences were plans of action to benefit both Jewish professors and Jewish youth.

As France entered 1941, Paxton and Marrus tell us, "[t]hings seemed to be settling into an uncomfortable but not mortally menacing normalcy: foreign and stateless Jews harassed and interned; French Jews forced from public service and teaching by an official discrimination softened by notable exceptions; the rest wounded and humiliated in their feelings, but – as the frequent Vichy phrase went – 'neither in their property nor in their persons.' There was no particular urgency among Jews at this point to leave the country."²⁸ As early as January/February 1941, however, Theodor Dannecker, a 27-year-old SS officer charged with setting up a special police branch for Jewish questions (*Judenreferat*) in the Paris headquarters of the German military administration, began lobbying the Vichy government to create a central Jewish office that would serve to advance the antisemitic program. Darlan, Flandin's successor as vice president of the Council in early February, resisted at first on the basis of concerns regarding native French Jews, concerns he attributed to Pétain. He eventually capitulated. The

²⁶ *Le Fonds Jules Isaac, bibliothèque Méjanes d'Aix-en-Provence*. Marc Bloch's *Etrange défaite* addresses the causes and conditions of France's military defeat in 1940. Tragically, Bloch's efforts to secure the requisite travel documents were complicated by the death of his mother on 27 April 1941 and the bedridden (with pleurisy) state, until mid-May, of his wife, Simonne. In late 1942 or early 1943, Bloch decided to join the Resistance. Tragically, on 8 March 1944, he was arrested in Lyon by the Gestapo, and on the night of 16 June 1944, ten days after the 6 June Allied landings in Normandy, was shot by the Germans.

²⁷ Curiously, the correspondence exchanges to which Isaac was a party regarding initiatives to place unemployed Jewish lycée professors at the service of Jewish youth would come to an abrupt end at about the time of adoption of the second *statut des Juifs* on 2 June 1941.

²⁸ Marrus, 76.

Commissariat for Jewish Affairs was created by a French law of 29 March 1941 “without prior submission to the German military administration,”²⁹ according to Paxton and Marrus. Xavier Vallat (whom Pétain had appointed secretary for veterans’ affairs in July 1940) was named commissioner-general for Jewish affairs, “again without clearing it with the occupiers.”³⁰ This was the same Xavier Vallat who five years earlier, on 6 June 1936, as deputy for the Ardèche (1919–24; 1928–40), had addressed the Chamber as follows: “For the first time, this old gallo-roman country will be governed by a Jew... To govern this rustic nation that is France, it would be better to have someone whose origins, however lowly, are rooted in our soil than a subtle Talmudist.”³¹ Léon Blum, add Paxton and Marrus, “French to his fingertips, represented to Vallat the quintessence of what he hated in Jewry.”³² At his trial before the *Haute Cour de Justice* in 1946, Vallat would elaborate his point of view in the following terms, “The Jew is not only an unassimilable foreigner, whose implantation tends to form a state within a state; he is also, by temperament, a foreigner who wants to dominate and who tends to create, with his kin, a super state within the state.”³³

It was under Darlan’s government, and at Vallat’s initiative as commissioner-general for Jewish affairs, that the *Loi du 2 juin 1941 remplaçant la loi du 3 octobre 1940 portant statut des Juifs* was adopted.³⁴ By its terms, the second statute (*la loi Vallat*), which was published on 14 June 1941, repealed the first. It was, according to Paxton and Marrus, “no mere revision of the earlier statute, it was a new text based upon the experience of the first seven months of official antisemitism as well as upon ‘the study of measures taken abroad.’”³⁵ The earlier *statut des Juifs* deemed to be a Jew any person having three grandparents “of the same race” or two grandparents if his or her spouse was Jewish. The first article of *la loi Vallat* deemed to be a Jew (i) any person, of whatever confessional status, having three grandparents “of the Jewish race,”³⁶ or having two grandparents of the Jewish race (typically one Jewish parent) if his or her spouse had two

²⁹ Ibid., 83.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Quoted in Kaspi, 57–58.

³² Marrus, 91.

³³ Quoted in *ibid.*, 88.

³⁴ By the time Vallat had left office in March 1942, yet a third *statut des Juifs*, never to see the light of day, had been drafted at Vallat’s imitative and under his oversight, and vetted by Darlan and the *Conseil d’Etat* (see Marrus and Paxton at p. 94).

³⁵ Marrus, 98.

³⁶ For this purpose, a grandparent was deemed to be of the Jewish race if the grandparent belonged “to the Jewish religion.”

grandparents “of the Jewish race,” and (ii) a person having two Jewish grandparents (typically one Jewish parent) and belonging to the Jewish religion, or who so belonged at 25 June 1940. In this latter regard, there was but one way for a half-Jew (having two Jewish grandparents) in the right circumstances to demonstrate non-Jewishness: proof of adherence to one of the other confessions recognized by the state before the law of 9 December 1905 which separated Church and State; in effect, by proof of baptism. *La loi Vallat* also set the stage for a purge of Jews from the liberal professionals, trade, industry and finance. Under *la loi Vallat*, each of Jules Isaac, his wife, Laure, and their three children was deemed to be a Jew, since each had three grandparents of the Jewish race (and this notwithstanding Daniel’s conversion to Protestantism in the interwar period).

By a separate statute, adopted concurrently with *la Loi Vallat* and also published on 14 June 1941, all persons who were Jewish as defined by the law were required within one month of publication (the deadline was extended to 31 July 1941) to file with the prefect of the department or subprefect of the *arrondissement* in which their domicile or residence was situated a declaration in writing that they were Jewish according to the law and to disclose their civil status, family situation, profession and the composition of their property.³⁷ The sanction for non-compliance was imprisonment for up to one year and/or a fine of up to 10,000 francs. As the clock ticked down to the 31 July deadline, Jules’ angst grew ever more intense, as reflected in his diary entries. On 15 July 1941, he wrote, “The census forms. Every French person obliged to answer the question: *Are you of the Jewish race?* But to respond is tantamount to endorsement of official racism”; on 19 July 1941, “The declarations [of leprosy], much stricter enforcement in the free zone than in the occupied zone. Paradoxical at first blush, quite normal in reality”; and on 26 July 1941, “Retrieved at city hall the forms for *declaration of leprosy*. We are asked the religion of our grandparents. One is tempted to respond, ‘Are we in France?’ The fact is we are no longer in France by half.”³⁸ Buried in the Aix-en-Provence city hall records is an acknowledgment dated 31 July 1941, evidencing the receipt of three declarations filed by Jules Isaac, one for himself, one for Laure and one for younger son, Jean-Claude, the whole in compliance with the census.³⁹

³⁷ The Jews in the occupied zone had been the object of a census by virtue of a German ordinance of 27 September 1940.

³⁸ *Le Carnet du lepreux, Le Fonds Jules Isaac, bibliothèque Méjanes d’Aix-en-Provence*.

³⁹ With a view to erasing all Jewish influence from the national economy, a law adopted on 22 July 1941 provided for the placing of Jewish property under the control of administrators

FATE OF THE *MALET-ISAAC*

What was the fate of the *MALET-ISAAC*? Since 21 August 1940, professors had lost control of the manuals from which they could teach. Publishing houses were subject to the oversight and control of the Vichy ministry of education, as supplemented from 3 March 1941 by German oversight. Curiously, only two volumes of the *MALET-ISAAC* were included among the 95 proscribed manuals on lists circulated on 25 July 1941 and 31 July 1943.⁴⁰ Hachette commissioned historians André Alba, André Dieny, Maurice Gourzet and Pierre Renouvin (the latter of whom, to his credit, refused to participate) to put together a new series of manuals to replace the *Cours d'Histoire MALET-ISAAC*. The impetus for this initiative was explained by Hachette literary editor René Vaubourdolle. "From one day to the next, the law may expand the bans decreed against French of Israelite race. *Entre nous*, it is illogical to prohibit an Israelite professor from teaching 25 students and to effectively permit him, via the medium of a manual, to teach 25,000 students."⁴¹ Isaac vented in his diary on 25 September 1941:

Received in the afternoon mail from Lyon:

'The Cours Isaac not meeting the new programs, La Librairie [Hachette] intends to publish a new cours that conforms with the new programs. It is M. Alba whom we have asked to take charge of directing the work of the new team... We are ensuring that M. Isaac learns of our intentions from no one but us.'

Should I thank them for their discretion? The [new] programs have yet to be published. They have wasted no time to throw me overboard. Business before all... But Alba, how to interpret his silence? Is he bothered by having to take my place? After so many protestations of fidelity, he has nothing to say. I wait.⁴²

Isaac was vehement in his protestations not only with Vaubourdolle, but also with Alba, whom he suspected of having betrayed him. On 1 September 1942, Vaubourdolle wrote to Isaac, "I understand that your course [manuals] is at risk of excommunication. At the initiative of the

who were empowered to convert the property to cash. The property declared pursuant to the law of 2 June was subject to seizure and sale under the law of 22 July.

⁴⁰ A volume of the third edition published in 1918 and dealing with the period 1789–1912 and the last volume of the edition published in 1930.

⁴¹ Quoted in Kaspi, *Jules Isaac*, 148.

⁴² *Le Carnet du Léproux, Le Fonds Jules Isaac, bibliothèque Méjanes d'Aix-en-Provence*. Postwar, André Alba would assume the direction and editorship of a retitled *Cours d'Histoire JULES ISAAC*.

Marshall's cabinet, the decision has been delegated to the *commission de contrôle des livres en usage dans l'enseignement secondaire*. The assigned reporter is Madame Etienne, professor at lycée Racine."⁴³ The proscription of the MALET-ISAAC would follow in November 1942. In the words of pro-fascist essayist Abel Bonnard, Carcopino's successor as minister of national education, writing in *Gringoire* in 1942, "It is inadmissible that the history of France be taught to young *Français* by an Isaac."⁴⁴

LES OLIGARQUES

The suicide of the Third Republic had deeply wounded Isaac as a republican-patriot. His diary entry of 20 October 1941 reads, "Collaboration = Submission. Submission = Renunciation of all French values, of all that is the most noble of the French tradition. Renunciation = Capitulation."⁴⁵ "Confronted by a hypocritical regime born of defeat and with clandestine goals," this historian-republican-patriot, this believer in the identity of the universal human rights and justice proclaimed in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the biblical prophetic message, steeped in the Péguy-esque struggle against any intolerance, any dogmatism, any Jesuitism, recalled his first reaction. It was to "to affirm, to proclaim, my ardent love for democratic liberties: at a distance of more than 2,000 years, there was a striking parallel between the defeated Athens of 404 B.C. and the France of 1940: without forcing the texts, step by step, without losing sight of historical truths, but juxtaposing openly and faithfully oligarchy and democracy, I wrote *Les Oligarques*, a biased history, a hymn to 'lost divine liberty.'"⁴⁶ This last turn of phrase was inspired by Maurras, no doubt.⁴⁷ According to its preface, *Les Oligarques* was written in 1942, although it was likely in gestation as early as in the second half of 1941. The manuscript was com-

⁴³ Quoted in Kaspi, *Jules Isaac*, 148.

⁴⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, 147.

⁴⁵ *Le Carnet du Lepreux, Le Fonds Jules Isaac, bibliothèque Méjanes d'Aix-en-Provence*.

⁴⁶ Isaac, "Surviv," 226. *Les Oligarques* addresses the causes and conditions of the demise in 1940 of the Third French Republic, while Marc Bloch's *Etrange défaite* addresses the causes and conditions of France's military defeat in 1940.

⁴⁷ A more explicit allusion can be found in Isaac's use of the phrase "divine surprise" to describe the unexpected and disastrous defeat of Athens at Syracuse in 413 BCE (p. 54, n. 1). Maurras had used this phrase to describe the unexpected defeat of France in June 1940, a fortuitous event for adversaries of the Third Republic ("La Grande Besogne," *Candide*, 15 January 1941).

pleted on 17 October 1942, “somewhere in France – or what used to be France,” according to its closing sentence. Isaac had hoped to publish *Les Oligarques* forthwith upon its completion, through a clandestine French press or a non-French publishing house, but the German occupation of the southern zone beginning on 11 November intervened. The book was first to see the light of day in April 1945, just prior to VE Day, and again in the second trimester of 1946,⁴⁸ in both instances through *Editions de Minuit*,⁴⁹ and under the pseudonym of “Junius,” itself a clue to the subversive nature of the work.⁵⁰ An insert included with the 1946 edition reveals the author’s identity and elaborates upon the subtitle, *essai d’histoire partielle* (a biased history), a history in which, Isaac later wrote, “one [knew] that I [was] not much of a specialist.”⁵¹

Without any attempt at impartiality – on the contrary and the subtitle so alerts the reader – the author of *Les Oligarques* has comprehensively dealt with the most striking of historical parallels, the events inside of Athens during the Peloponnesian War, a foreign war complicated by a civil war, and the events inside France during the great debacle that, in our day, opposed western democrats against nazi Germany. The *Oligarques* were the fifth column in Athens, building the triumph of their miserable fanaticism upon the ruins of their country. And the same love, the sacred love for country and liberty, that inspired *la Marseillaise* of Rouget de l’Isle,⁵² *la Marseillaise* of Rude,⁵³ inspires each page, each line of this subversive work, written in clandestinity and for clandestine consumption.

The preface closes, “Rather than in space, being sedentary by nature, [the author] chose to take flight in time,” a noteworthy remark in light of an offer of safe passage to America that had been extended apparently to Jules and Laure Isaac in December 1940 or January 1941.⁵⁴ “Following

⁴⁸ In 1989, it was published by Calmann-Lévy (without the *Prière d’insérer*) along with Isaac’s *Paradoxe sur la science homicide* and “Nous les revenants.”

⁴⁹ During the war, the presses of Editions Minuit were situated in Switzerland.

⁵⁰ No doubt, intended to allude to the Letters of Junius, published in London from 1769 to 1772, against the “personal government” of George III.

⁵¹ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie*. Péguy, 230.

⁵² The national anthem of France, written and composed in 1792 by Claude Joseph Rouget de Lisle (10 May 1760–26 June 1836), a French army officer.

⁵³ A stone relief, 42 feet in height, on the Arc de Triomphe by French sculptor Francois Rude (4 January 1784–3 November 1855).

⁵⁴ As recounted to the author by Hélène (Caty) Isaac, daughter of Daniel and Juliette (Schmidt) Isaac, on Monday 6 September 2010, at *Hôtel Le Pavillon de la Reine, Place des Vosges*, Paris, France.

step by step Thucydides [*The History of the Peloponnesian War*] and Xenophon [*Hellenica*],⁵⁵ Andocides and Lysias [*Against Eratosthenes*],” recalled Isaac, “I wrote *Les Oligarques, essai d’histoire partielle*, imagining the shadow of my *vieux maître* [Sorbonne classicist Paul Guiraud] looking over my shoulder, encouraging me, smiling with his customary affability, enhanced by a generous dose of liberalism.”⁵⁶ Isaac never wavered in his faith in *la France*, as evidenced by the following closing lines of the penultimate chapter of his book.

Athens – it might be more correct to say: the little that remains of Athens – was subjected to dismal, burdensome hours, the hardest that it had ever known. Compared to the recent past, the present seemed even more unbearable...; now, the oligarchy ruled and each knew what it was: hypocrisy and robbery, betrayal and treason, moral degradation and tyranny. The thought of living for much longer in such circumstances was odious for most. Even the former adversaries of democracy – at least the more honest of them – have distanced themselves from a regime in which they saw nothing but a contemptible counterfeit of their ideal. All illusions up in smoke, young aristocrats like Plato have turned their backs on politics in disgust, seeking a refuge in philosophy. The bulk of the population was silent and submissive, but in their heart of hearts, invincible.⁵⁷

A copy of the first edition was sent to General de Gaulle, who responded with a typewritten note dated 15 May 1945, in which he added in his own script, “How fine a general lesson in history!”⁵⁸ Had de Gaulle recognized himself in Thrasybulus, democrat and soldier who, having taken refuge in Thebes with his troops, was destined to liberate Athens from its oligarchic subjugation at summer’s end, 403 BCE? Had he interpreted *Les Oligarques*

⁵⁵ On the death of Thucydides in 411 BCE, Xenophon continued the account of the Peloponnesian wars. They were incomparable as historians, in Isaac’s estimation. “The account [of the Peloponnesian Wars] of Thucydides has an ending: it is by Xenophon... They are of the same blood; but one of them, Thucydides, never forgets that he is Athenian, – the other, Xenophon, that he is an aristocrat” (p. 93).

⁵⁶ Jules Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie: I Péguy* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1959), 267–68. Late nineteenth-century lycéens began their study of Latin in sixième and of Greek en quatrième. Isaac entered Lakanal en cinquième in 1888–89 and in the following year (1889–90), en quatrième, he would have begun the study of Greek.

⁵⁷ Jules Isaac, *Les Oligarques, Essai d’histoire partielle* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1946), 160–61.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Christophe Chandezon, “Les Oligarques: Une Histoire comparée,” *Cahiers de l’Association des amis de Jules Isaac, actes du colloque d’Aix-en-Provence* Nouvelle série, no. 2 (1997): 105.

as an ode to himself? A review of the first edition appeared in the 19 August 1945 Sunday *New York Times*.⁵⁹ The reviewer, still ignorant of the author's identity, speculates that the author is "a specialist in ancient history who is still coquettishly hiding behind a pseudonym," and continues, "The last lines of this fascinating 'Essay in Biased History' clarify the author's intentions: 'In this whole disconcerting story the evildoing of the 'good men' is surpassed only by the clemency of the 'bad men.' I am writing these lines somewhere in France – in what was France – on Saturday, 17 October 1942: the 'good men' are still doing as much evil; it remains to be seen whether the 'bad men' will be as magnanimous." In fact, De Gaulle was to magnanimously spare Pétain from a firing squad. *Les Oligarques* was intended as a pamphlet in opposition to Vichy. "The alert reader," continues the reviewer, "is constantly aware of the parallel between the Cagoule and Vichy on the one hand and the men who wanted so badly to keep Athens for the 'good' Athenians that they called in Sparta's arms. Yet only rarely does the author indulge in so direct a thrust as when speaking of the council of ten ancients he refers to the poet Sophocles, over 80 years old; he adds: 'the revered name of a famous old man looks well on certain wreaking companies,'" a reference to Marshal Pétain, no doubt.⁶⁰ Even without the benefit of the *insert*, the polemical nature of the work was explicit. "A reader will interrupt me:" wrote Isaac, "'You have scarcely learnt from Thucydides...Was it from such a mentor that you picked up the biased nature that is atomized shamelessly throughout, even to the cover of the work, this brazen liberty of interpretation that colours that past with the present, this rhetoric more suited to a pamphleteer than to a historian?'" May I not retort that polemicism also has its time, its place?"⁶¹

JESUS OR ISRAEL?

In his diary entry of 5 October 1941, during the period *Les Oligarques* was in gestation, Isaac wrote, "The Fuhrer's order of the day: the Jews, incessantly the Jews; the never-ending obsession; the effective method which consists of hammering without end on the same nail. He will finish by penetrating the most resistant of minds."⁶² From other diary entries in the

⁵⁹ Justin O'Brien, "A Letter from Paris," *New York Times*, 19 August 1945, BR4.

⁶⁰ The Oligarchy of the Thirty was dominated by Critias, who was not comparable to Pétain. Critias, student of Socrates, was an aristocrat and intellectual, not a war veteran. To find a parallel to Pétain, Isaac reached back to the first step in the dismantlement of Athenian democracy—the replacement of the 500 with a council of 10 "Anciens" that might have included the poet Sophocles.

⁶¹ Isaac, *Les Oligarques*, 92.

⁶² *Le Carnet du Lepreux, Le Fonds Jules Isaac, bibliothèque Méjanes d'Aix-en-Provence.*

fall of 1941, it would seem that Isaac was experiencing a spiritual crisis of sorts, a spiritual turmoil he shared with a Capuchin priest whom he had come to know—Father Marie-Benoît. This priest, whose heroic efforts in France and then in Italy to falsely document and hide Jews, would earn him the moniker *le Père des Juifs* and the Yad Vashem honor, Righteous among the Nations.⁶³ The Vichy oppression of the Jews had confronted Isaac with a dilemma—to adhere overtly to his Judaism or to convert to Christianity (as had Isaac’s son, Daniel).⁶⁴ The state of Isaac’s psyche is evidenced in his diary entry of 3 September 1941. “All religions deny having evolved and being in the process of evolution. Pretensions to a truth revealed once and for all ... This same idea of divine election in space and time, poor human categories. All is in flux. God bears man and man bears God. Will I say that no man has borne God as much as Jesus? (I would say

⁶³ Father Marie-Benoît was born Pierre Peteul on 30 March 1895 in the village of Le Bourg d’Ire, proximate to Angers. On 23 September 1907, in his thirteenth year, he left France for Spy, Belgium, to enroll at the *Ecole seraphique des Capucins*, a Capuchin-run secondary school for boys. On 8 September 1913, Peteul donned the Capuchin robe and began his one year of novitiate studies in Breust-Eijsden, the Netherlands. One year later, on 8 September 1914, at the age of 19, he became Brother Marie-Benoît to pursue a program of formation as a Capuchin. At the onset of World War I, Peteul returned to France and spent the war as an infantryman, receiving numerous citations. In 1919, he was demobilized and returned to the Capuchin monastery and school at Breust-Eijsden, the Netherlands. As a result of his superior performance, he was transferred to the International College of Saint Lawrence of Brindisi in Rome, where he also had occasion to attend the Pontifical Gregorian University. By the time he received his doctorate in theology on 18 July 1925, he had already been ordained a priest and was Father Marie-Benoît. Several weeks before graduation, on 26 June 1925, P. Marie-Benoît was appointed an assistant professor of theology at the International College of Saint Lawrence of Brindisi, Rome, where he taught until the outbreak of hostilities in May 1940. On 19 May 1940, nine days after the commencement of the German offensive into Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands, he returned to France by train, basing himself at the Capuchin monastery, 51 rue Croix-de-Regnier, Marseille. “It is not clear when the first [Jewish] refugees came to him, how they found him or who they were,” writes historian Susan Zuccotti in *Père Marie-Benoît and Jewish Rescue – How a French Priest together with Jewish Friends Saved Thousands During the Holocaust* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014), p.59. “Père Marie-Benoît implies that his rescue activities began after and because of the first *Statut des juifs* in October 1940 or, at the very least, after the second *Statut* in June 1941.” Until the occupation of the southern zone by the Germans in November 1942, P. Marie-Benoît spent his time securing hiding places and false documents for refugees, mostly Jewish. From November 1942 until May 1943, P. Marie-Benoît traveled between Marseille and Nice/Cannes almost weekly with the objective of securing for Jewish refugees in the Italian-occupied zone east of the Rhone hiding places and false documents. On 3 June 1943, he left France for Rome, where he spent the remainder of the war assisting refugees (again mostly Jewish) in escaping the German roundups and deportations.

⁶⁴ Lazare Landeau, “La Religion de Jules Isaac,” *Sens, revue de l’Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France*, no. 7/8 (1977): 24.

if I were Jewish, I would be Christian).⁶⁵ But my most secret attachment is for paganism.”⁶⁶ Isaac would repeat these sentiments in correspondence to his son, Daniel, the first of which is dated 1 February 1942 when Daniel was still teaching classics at *collège Cévenol* in Chambon.

Even in the current circumstances, I am loath to be an observant Jew. If I were a practising Jew, I would be a Christian. It is futile to class me as Jewish: I am not, in any way. I will go further: I give thanks to God that there was a Greek people, not that there was a Jewish people to propagate a religiously exclusivist claim... I prefer Socrates, man of God.⁶⁷

The second letter is dated 31 December 1942, the month in which Daniel traversed the Pyrenees into Spain, thence to Algeria, to join the French forces in North Africa.

You know what my own personal position is. I believe in God as the mystery that man bears within himself and that sustains man, raising him above himself. I feel profoundly that it is the contemplation of this mystery that leads to peace of mind, to which I aspire, without no doubt being worthy of this grace. That which I am unable to conceive is the limitation of divine grace in time and space, and also within the social ladder. [Revelation] is the intervention of an historical event in a sphere where human history is created. Belief in God cannot be but belief in the eternal, universal presence of God.⁶⁸

In the autumn of 1941, Father Marie-Benoît later recalled, Judaism seemed to Isaac as something old, *dépassé*, so Isaac began to delve into Christianity.⁶⁹ This is how Isaac himself would remember 1942, the same year in which *Les Oligarques* took form.

⁶⁵ A not surprising confession given the identity between the principles of 1789 and a purified Judaism, allegedly shorn of the superstitions that it had acquired during the centuries of oppression.

⁶⁶ *Le Carnet du Lepreux, Le Fonds Jules Isaac, bibliothèque Méjanes d'Aix-en-Provence.* Isaac's "most secret attachment" is evidenced in the following words—circled by Isaac—that were uttered by Albert Camus in the course of an interview published in the 21 December 1957 issue of *Le Figaro*: "I have nothing but respect and veneration before the person of Christ and before his history; I do not believe in his resurrection. My preoccupations are Christian, but my nature is pagan...I feel at ease among the Greeks, not those of Plato: the pre-socratics, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Parmenides; my faith is in the values of antiquity, notwithstanding that these have been badly perceived since Hegel."

⁶⁷ Quoted in Kaspi, *Jules Isaac*, 150.

⁶⁸ Jules Isaac, "Correspondence de Jules Isaac à son fils, Daniel," *Cahiers de l'Association des amis de Jules Isaac*, no. 3 (1981): 4.

⁶⁹ Landeau: 24.

In that year, '42, I began rereading the Gospels. Why not the Old Testament, you will ask? I came to the Old through the New. I told this to Pope John XXIII, and he laughed. As a historian, I know that one should not rely on translations. And although I'm enough of a Hellenist to read the New Testament in the original, I am not at all a Hebraist. It was thus to the Gospels that I returned. And after reading them, I wrote a dozen pages that I sent to Maurice Blondel and the pastor Trocmé, in which I noted my discovery, the basis of all my later work: in many respects, there is a gulf between gospel reality and certain traditional Christian teaching.⁷⁰

JESUS AND ISRAEL

When Isaac says, "In that year, '42, I began to reread the gospels," his son, Daniel, clarifies it was between February and June of 1942, by which time it could no longer be said that "no measures [were being] taken against [Jewish] persons or their property." Beginning in 1941, Daniel, no longer eligible to remain in public service at the naval ministry, had moved to Chambon-sur-Lignon (Haute-Loire) to take up employment as a classics professor at *collège Cévenol*, a Protestant secondary school established in 1938 at André Trocmé's initiative.⁷¹ When Isaac says, "after rereading them, I wrote a dozen pages," Daniel adds that it was in June 1942 that these dozen pages were written under the title, "*Quelques constatations basées sur la lecture des Évangiles*."⁷² Protestant minister André Trocmé, whom Isaac and Laure had come to know in the interwar years, encouraged Isaac to persist in his reflection on the matter.⁷³ Eminent Aix-based

⁷⁰ Quoted in Jean Toulat, *Juifs, Mes frères* (Paris: Fayard, 1968), 137. Isaac was wary of translations (from Greek to Latin and the vernacular) and when it came to Jesus' teachings, of translations of translations (from Aramaic to Greek, from Greek to Latin and from Latin to the vernacular).

⁷¹ While in Chambon, Daniel was active in the *Liberation Sud* resistance, principally in assisting Jews in their passage from France to Switzerland.

⁷² Kaspi, *Jules Isaac*, 181.

⁷³ In 1934, André Trocmé, whose uncompromising pacifism had placed him at odds with his own church hierarchy, had begun a one-year appointment as interim minister in the village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in south-central France. Two years later, in correspondence to Isaac dated 5 February 1936, Trocmé wrote presciently, "Men like you can play an important role in the spiritual education of tomorrow. You can inspire [students] with the cult of the truth, a blinding Truth – I add, as a Christian, salvific, charitable for mankind." (*Le Fonds Jules Isaac, bibliothèque Méjanes d'Aix-en-Provence*.) In 1937, at the insistence of the local parish council, Trocmé was appointed senior minister in Chambon.

Catholic philosopher Maurice Blondel,⁷⁴ elderly, hard of hearing and nearly blind, reacted differently. Blondel, to whom Isaac had been introduced on 4 December 1941 by mutual acquaintance Leon Brunschvicg at the latter's home,⁷⁵ and with whom Isaac had taken issue over Blondel's use of the word "unassimilable" in relation to the Jews in Blondel's *Lutte Pour la civilisation et philosophie de la paix*,⁷⁶ paid scant attention to Isaac's dozen pages in his reply to Isaac of 13 June 1942.⁷⁷

Without delay, I wish to assure you on my favourable understanding of the epithet, 'unassimilable' that so perturbs you, as if it evokes a malignant connotation of the French patriotism of Israelites. In contrast, I frequently recognize and laud the fervour of those who are more attached than any other to our country where they feel more welcomed, and more diversely influential than in many other states....When I was appointed *maître de conférence* at the University of Lille, I encountered there a singular professor...this excellent man who wished to mentor me in my role as *correcteur de copies* and in the discernment of the aptitudes of different constituencies in matters academic. Of most interest were the data regarding Israelite candidates. He told me that he was not wrong in his predictions more than one in ten times. When I inquired what the distinctive character traits were that he had discovered, he said: It's quite simple: At the age of 18 years, our young Aryans are still confused, without real goals, without lucidity in thought or conclusion, while at the same age, the Israelites are most resourceful, more thoughtful, more lucid in their expression, more capable of reasoned conclusions, already firm and precocious...

I assure you, I have the best of intentions and express my profound sorrow regarding your plight, confronted by attitudes and measures unworthy of Frenchmen against Frenchmen, unworthy of men of good faith and men

⁷⁴ Catholic philosopher Maurice Blondel (as well as Catholic theologian Karl Rahner), for whom God was immanent in human life and history, would influence theologian and essayist Gregory Baum. (See Gregory Baum, "Jewish and Christian Reflections on Divine Providence" in *Signs of the Times: Religious Pluralism and Economic Injustice* (Ottawa: Novalis, 2007), 99).

⁷⁵ Leon Brunschvicg was an illustrious professor at the Sorbonne until his dismissal in December 1940 under the *statut des Juifs*. Upon the occupation of the southern zone by the Germans in November 1942, Brunschvicg, with the help of Blondel, would find a clandestine lodging and remain in touch with Blondel until his departure for Aix-les-Bains.

⁷⁶ ed. Flammarion, 1939.

⁷⁷ Lazare Landau (1928–2012), Jewish professor of the history of religions, University of Strasbourg, intimates that in his reply, Blondel might have addressed Isaac's attachment indirectly by referring him to P. Gaston Fessard's *Pax Nostra: Examen de conscience international* (Grasset, 1936).

of faith vis-à-vis those who embody the highest of intellectual, moral and religious values. Moreover, it is only under oppression and for a short while that this fanatical barbarism triumphs.⁷⁸

In reading the gospels in their original Greek, Isaac was trodding down a path, then more Protestant than Catholic. Until 1943, the official Church had forbidden Catholic scholars and theologians from reading, let alone critically reading, the gospels in their original Greek; they were required to work from the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible (which dates to the late fourth century). Isaac was to complete his research and the first half of his manuscript for *Jésus et Israël* prior to the release on 30 September 1943 of Pius XII's encyclical (an authoritative papal letter) *Divino afflante Spiritu*. By this encyclical and since 1943, according to theologian Philip A. Cunningham, the pope "required the use of original languages [in the study of the Bible] and urged interpreters to 'go back wholly in spirit to those remote centuries of the East with the aid of history, archaeology, ethnology and other sciences, and accurately determine what modes of writing, so to speak, the authors of that ancient time would be likely to use, and in fact did use.'"⁷⁹ It would seem that Isaac's reading of the gospels in their original Greek was informed more by liberal than fundamentalist Protestant tradition. Fundamentalist Protestants insist "on the inerrancy of 'Scripture' as the most basic of all fundamentals,"⁸⁰ and place undue stress upon the inerrancy of biblical texts, notably regarding historical events or in the face of scientific evidence.⁸¹ There is also a long-standing liberal tendency within Protestantism, however, which does not resist a critical study of the scriptures in the belief that God intended man to use his God-given reason freely and without inhibition. Isaac's rereading of the gospels appears to have been in this liberal Protestant tradition.⁸²

⁷⁸ *Le Fonds Jules Isaac, bibliothèque Méjanes d'Aix-en-Provence*. See also Sens n° 391 (July–August 2014), p. 498–500.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Philip A. Cunningham, *Seeking Shalom: The Journey to Right Relationship between Catholics and Jews* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 4.

⁸⁰ Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy, ed., *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Inc., 1990), 65:51 at 1031.

⁸¹ At the American Biblical Congress in Niagara, New York, in 1895, Protestant exegetes defined "five points of fundamentalism": the verbal inerrancy of scripture, the divinity of Christ, his virginal birth, the doctrine of vicarious expiation and the corporeal resurrection at Christ's second coming.

⁸² The Protestant notion of inerrancy is qualitatively different than inerrancy for Catholics, for a dogmatic biblicism is by its nature less elastic than a dogmatic traditionalism. The most recent Catholic innovation in this regard is set out in 3:11 of Vatican II's *Dogmatic*

Working backward from a theological anti-Judaic tradition at least 15 centuries old and bracketing all post-Easter reflection, Isaac posed the following two foundational questions regarding the interrelationship between Jesus and the Jewish people of his time. “What was my initial concern?” Isaac later wrote, “To know, as current Christian thinking would have it, as a living tradition teaches, if Jesus truly rejected Israel – the Jewish people as a whole – if he declared its fall, condemned and even damned it; conversely, if it were true that Israel misjudged Jesus, refused to see in him the Messiah and Son of God, rejected, ridiculed and crucified him; if Israel deserved nearly two millennia of the heinous stain as the ‘decide people.’”⁸³ The historian in Isaac drew a line in time at Jesus’ crucifixion and would not be drawn into post-resurrectional theological reflection. His inquiry was restricted to the Jesus of history,⁸⁴ to the interrelationship between the *historical* Jesus and the Jewish people of his time (an approach reflected in the post-war *Cours d’histoire JULES ISAAC*).⁸⁵ It is this kind of approach that in 1907 Pope Pius X appears to have denounced in his Encyclical on the Doctrine of the Modernists, *Pascendi dominici gregis*. “For the Modernists distinguish very carefully between these two kinds of history, and it is to be noted that they oppose the history of the faith to *real* history precisely as real. Thus we have a double Christ: a real Christ, and a Christ, the one of faith, who never really existed; a Christ who has lived at a given time and in a given place, and a Christ who has never lived outside the pious meditations of the believer – the Christ, for instance, whom we find in the Gospel of St. John, which is pure contemplation from beginning to end.”⁸⁶

Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum, 18 November 1965). “Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of holy scripture must be acknowledged as teaching firmly, faithfully, and without error that truth which God wanted put into the sacred writings *for the sake of our salvation* [emphasis added].” It was only with the release on 30 September 1943 of Pius XII’s Encyclical Letter Promoting Biblical Studies *Divino afflante Spiritu* that the Catholic Church permitted the historical-critical exegesis of scripture.

⁸³ Jules Isaac, *Genèse de l’antisémitisme* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1956), 14.

⁸⁴ In bracketing the Christ of faith, it is open to question whether Isaac was doing violence to Catholic doctrine, according to which there is a oneness in the twoness of Christ’s natures.

⁸⁵ See, for example, Andre Alba, ed., *Cours D’histoire Jules Isaac*, vol. Classe de cinquieme (Paris: Hachette, 1958), Chapter XV – Une Religion Nouvelle: Le Christianisme, pp.168–79.

⁸⁶ Dean P. Bechard, ed., *The Scripture Documents: An Anthology of Official Catholic Teachings* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 72–3.

The dozen pages under the title, “*Quelques constatations basées sur la lecture des Evangiles*,” were the culmination of a critical reading of the gospels using the methodology pioneered by Isaac during the interwar period in his research to apportion the various responsibilities for the outbreak of World War I. One point of view was the New Testament text; the other, patristic and scholastic Christian commentary. Comparisons of the gospel texts with even the best of the commentators led Isaac to unearth a certain tradition (labeled by Isaac, a “contemptuous teaching”) regarding Jews and Judaism that had been unquestioningly accepted by force of habit for at least 15 centuries, a secular (man-made) in contrast to a sacred (inspired) tradition, according to Isaac, “a custom more than a tradition, a custom made up of deep-seated prejudices and of the most odious habits of mind, heart, and tongue,”⁸⁷ traditions that were no more than “theological myths which overreach everywhere the bounds of historical and even of scriptural accuracy.”⁸⁸

Some examples of these customs:

- the theme of a degenerate, ossified Judaism at the time of Christ
- the notion of the Jews as a carnal people, incapable of discerning the spiritual meaning of their own scriptures
- the notion of the Jews as a reprobate people, damned by Jesus himself
- the notion of a Messiah misperceived and rejected by a stubborn and blind people
- the notion of the Jews as a deicidal people, collectively and forever responsible for the crucifixion
- the notion of the Jewish dispersion as having occurred in 70 CE and as divine punishment for the crucifixion.

These contemptuous teachings had as their corollary a system of restrictions, exclusions, humiliations and servitude (labeled by Isaac, a “system of degradation”). Bracketed by God for their final conversion, wretched witness “of their own iniquity and of our truth,”⁸⁹ in the words of St Augustine, the Jews as a witnessing people had to become so by a visible loss of rights. Under early Christendom, the rights of which Jews were deprived included

⁸⁷ Jules Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism*, trans. Helen Weaver (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), 35.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁸⁹ Quoted in Jules Isaac, *Jesus and Israel*, trans. Sally Gran (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), 240.

the right to own Christian slaves, occupy positions of political authority or marry Christians. But these relatively benign measures would give way to more malignant ones following the call to liberate Christ's tomb from Islam in 1095 by Pope Urban II, a call which sacralized bloodshed for the first time in Christian history and marked a watershed in Christian-Jewish relations. "The real evidence that the origin of antisemitism was *abnormal*," according to Anglican priest James Parkes, "is that it took nearly a thousand years for the ordinary Christian to be convinced of the reality of the theological picture. Religious fanaticism sometimes led to violence in earlier centuries, but it was only with the beginning of the Crusades that the public, profoundly stirred by their appeal, turned upon the Jews who had for centuries been their neighbours."⁹⁰ In the centuries following the First Crusade, it was "the Papacy [who] was responsible for the most fatal blows struck at Jewish life in the Middle Ages," writes Parkes. "The Jewish badge, which exposed the Jews to insult and ill-treatment from the Christian populace; the destruction of Jewish religious books which worked havoc with their intellectual life in northern Europe; segregation in compulsory ghettos; conversional sermons which enabled fanatical priests to enter the synagogues, and compelled the Jews to listen to violent insults to their religion; all these measures decreed by the Papacy, at successive councils, as means of protecting Christians from Jewish influence and converting the Jews, or at least humiliating them as a decided race."⁹¹

THE TIGHTENING NOOSE

Inside La Pergola, the evolution of the manuscript for *Les Oligarques* and the critical comparison of the New Testament with a certain widespread Christian tradition regarding Jews and Judaism were proceeding apace. Outside La Pergola, all was not going well for the Jews of France. On 20 January 1942, the Nazi policy of extermination of the Jews of Europe was formalized at the Wannsee Conference in Berlin. On 27 March, the first 1112 Jews were to leave Drancy for Auschwitz (in third-class carriages—the only deportees to travel in other than freight cars).⁹²

⁹⁰ James Parkes, *The Jew and His Neighbour: A Study of the Causes of Antisemitism*, 2d rev ed. (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1938), 64.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁹² These first deportees included the mostly foreign Jews who had been arrested in Paris in August 1941 and the mostly prominent French Jews arrested in December 1941, all arrested in German reprisals and initially interned in a prison compound at Compiègne (see Marrus and Paxton, *Vichy France and the Jews*, pp. 226–27).

On 16 April 1942, Pierre Laval regained power, this time as president, not vice president, of the council of Ministers, and armed with the portfolios of Interior, Information and Foreign Affairs. On 6 May, Xavier Vallat was replaced by notorious antisemite Darquier de Pellepoix as commissioner-general for Jewish affairs. On 5 June 1942, approximately 700 Jews concentrated in the internment camp at Compiègne (Oise), topped-up by another 136 Jews from the Beaune-la-Rolande camp (Loiret) and 153 from Pithiviers (Loiret), made the journey to Auschwitz in the second convoy to leave France. Beginning 7 June 1942, further to a German ordinance of 29 May, all Jews living in the occupied zone were required to wear a six-pronged yellow star of David on the upper left side of their outer clothing. At a meeting on 11 June, SS Captain Theodor Dannecker, chief of the Gestapo's Jewish office in Paris, promised his direct superior, SS Lieutenant Colonel Adolph Eichmann, that 100,000 Jews between the ages of 16 and 40 from both zones of France would be delivered. On 4 July 1942, the Vichy cabinet acquiesced to the deportation of all foreign or stateless Jews from both zones. In Paris, on the morning of 16 July, 9000 French police rounded up and arrested 28,000 Jewish men, women and children. Six thousand were sent to Drancy and the remainder, including 4000 children, to Vel d'Hiv, which had a capacity of 15,000. On 2 August, Gerhard Riegner, director of the World Jewish Congress Geneva office, would learn of the Final Solution. On 26–28 August 1942, there were major roundups of foreign and stateless Jews, men, women and children, in the unoccupied zone. The arrested Jews were taken to assembly points, thence to concentration camps, thence to Drancy, thence to the death camps. "To find the proper doors to knock on, police used the censuses that Darlan had ordered," write Paxton and Marrus, "After the first day, the police looked for those who had prudently stayed away from home. They searched for concealed children in convents and religious boarding schools. They watched forests where fugitives tried to subsist without food or shelter. For many Jews, the game was up at month's end when they had to renew their ration cards."⁹³

⁹³ Marrus, 258.

The Catastrophe 1943–45

As of 17 October 1942, the date of completion of *Les Oligarques*, Jules Isaac was still spending his days at his desk in his La Pergola study. At his back, keeping him company and with her gaze fixed upon him, hung a portrait of Charles Péguy's mother that had been painted by Laure Isaac. On 11 November, in response to the Allied landings in North Africa, the German army moved southward to occupy the southern zone, and the Italian army, westward into eight departments east of the Rhône River, "ending the relative peace and quiet of our aixoise sojourn,"¹ in Isaac's words. Following the arrival of the German forces in the southern zone, Jules and Laure took flight from their aixoise retreat without notice to neighbors and sought refuge in the Protestant department of Haute-Loire, then a haven for Jews. By 11 December 1942,² the date of adoption by the Vichy government (not the German occupation authorities) of a law requiring all French and foreign Jews in the southern zone to have their identity and ration cards stamped "Juif,"³ the Isaacs had arrived in Chambon-sur-Lignon (Haute-Loire).⁴ This village was home to the courageous pastor and Righteous

¹ Isaac, "Surviv." 226.

² By letter dated 6 December 1942, Celine, who was charged with the maintenance of La Pergola in the Isaacs' absence, began, "It is with much pleasure that I learned by your letter of your arrival in Chambon. I hope your trip was not overly burdensome" (*Le Fonds Jules Isaac, bibliothèque Méjanes d'Aix-en-Provence*).

³ This French law was not enforced in the Italian-occupied departments until these departments (and Italy itself) were occupied by the German forces in September 1943.

⁴ As 1942 drew to an end, the southern zone became even more dangerous for foreign and stateless Jews than for French Jews. On Christmas eve in 1942, Jewish refugees Rabbi Joseph

among the Nations, André Trocmé, as well as to Daniel Isaac, who had begun teaching classics at *Collège cévenol* in 1941.⁵ From Le Chambon, Jules and Laure were temporarily housed in an abandoned farmhouse in Ladret, pending their relocation to a hotel room in the village of Saint-Agrève (Ardèche). Shortly after settling into their permanent lodging, the Isaacs received a visit from Resistance member and rabbinical student, André Chouraqui, who remembered his first encounter with Isaac this way:

On a day in November 1942, someone told me, ‘Nearby Saint-Agrève, a man has need for false identity and ration cards so he can continue to live a clandestine existence,⁶ his name is Jules Isaac.’ I went immediately and there, before my eyes, to my astonishment (having graduated from university), was none other than the author of the books that had been a part of my secondary curriculum. We shook hands. He seated himself at a table

Kanner and his wife, Doris, together with their six-month-old son, (Henri) Alexis, Doris’ parents, and her sister, Ruth, took flight from Bagnères-de-Luchon, where they had been living since May/June 1940, and crossed the Pyrenees into Spain. They were able to avoid detection by French and Spanish border patrols, and on 30 December 1942, to the best of the author’s knowledge, were greeted by agents of the American Joint Distribution Committee in Lerida and transported to Barcelona where they spent the next 15 months. In the spring of 1944, they were able to secure passage from Lisbon to Montreal (via Philadelphia) on the *Serpa Pinto* on one of its crossings laden with Jewish refugees. The *Serpa Pinto* docked in Philadelphia on Friday 7 April 1944, the eve of the Jewish Passover. Over the first night of the Jewish Passover, Joseph and Doris Kanner, their son, and Doris’s parents and younger sister traveled by sealed train, arriving in Montreal, Quebec, on the morning of Saturday 8 April 1944. That second night of Passover, at the Talmud Torah School of Montreal, the newly arrived refugees celebrated their redemption from Hitler’s clutches. How synchronistic that their physical redemption coincided with the celebration of the Jewish Passover. The author’s wife, Ava Kanner, to whom this book is dedicated, was born in Montreal, Quebec, and is the youngest of the three children of Joseph and Doris Kanner. May the memories of Rabbi Joseph Kanner, Doris Kanner, Alexis Kanner and Jack Kanner be for a blessing.

⁵ At the end of December 1942, Daniel would traverse the Pyrenees into Spain, and after a short imprisonment, would make his way to Algeria where he would join de Lattre de Tassigny’s *1ere Armée française* as an *officier de commando*. He participated in the landing on the shores of Provence and in the entry at Colmar into Germany where in he was wounded in action in the Black Forest. *Administrateur général de la marine* for France, recipient of the *Croix de Guerre*, *Légion d’Honneur*, at the time of his death on 11 April 2005 (at the age of 98), he was *Commandeur of the Légion D’Honneur*.

⁶ The identity card of each of Jules and Laure Isaac is stamped “JUIF,” further to a measure introduced by Laval in December 1942, a measure adopted after the Isaacs’ arrival in the Haute-Loire (*Le Fond Jules Isaac, bibliothèque Méjanes d’Aix-en-Provence*). In fact, while in the Haute-Loire, the Isaacs were to use identity and ration cards in their own names and stamped JUIF.

from which he picked up a thin *cahier d'écolier*, which he handed me when he learned that I was a student at the *l'Ecole Rabbiniqne de France*, that I had an interest in the Bible and that I could read Hebrew. I can see in my mind's eye this thin *cahier* whose pages were covered by Jules Isaac's script, so beautiful, so clear, so firm, so honest and so solid. He had penned a title on the cover page of this thin school notebook: '*Christians, don't forget!*'⁷

The thoughts and reflections inside this notebook, prompted by the question of whether antisemitism might have roots in Christianity, represented the earliest stages of what would become *Jésus et Israël*. These thoughts and reflections would also influence the course of Chouraqui's own life trajectory.⁸

"It was in the spring of 1943, on a table in a [Saint-Agrève] hotel room, that I began to write [*Jésus et Israël*],"⁹ Isaac recalled.

With each passing day, I was more and more astonished at the depth of the Jewish roots of the gospel message and of the depth of the Christian roots of antisemitism. I had to communicate this, to all open hearts. The work proceeded slowly – work for which I was ill-equipped – until the furious storm by which my life was to be forever demolished. October 1943... We were aware that our German persecutors, together with their French acolytes, were hardboiled, maniacal, pitiless, without scruples; we had no idea, for much time to come, I did not know, did not believe to what lengths the human bestiality across the Rhine would go, to mass murder: *homo homini lupus*. Without our being aware, our lives hung by a thread; on the French side, we had no protection upon which we could rely, no support, official or unofficial; there was only the devotedness of a handful of men and women of great heart, known or unknown.¹⁰

As 1943 wore on, Saint-Agrève came to attract the attention of the Germans because of its strategic location. The village was perched on the edge of the plateau of Haut-Lignon, forming a crossroad between roads emanat-

⁷ André Chouraqui, "Jules Isaac, Une vie et Oeuvre de Combat," *Cahiers de l'Association des amis de Jules Isaac*, no. 3 (1981): 45.

⁸ André Chouraqui was born in Ain-Temouchent, Algeria. He pursued Jewish studies at the Rabbinical School of France and philosophical studies at the Sorbonne. From 1941 to 1945, he directed the network of resistance in the Haute-Loire. From 1959 to 1963, he was personal adviser to David Ben-Gurion. In 1965, Chouraqui became deputy mayor of Jerusalem. He was a permanent member of the Universal Israelite Alliance.

⁹ Jules Isaac, "Résonance de Jésus et Israël," in *Aspects du Génie d'Israël*, ed. Elian J. Finbert (Paris: Les Cahiers du Sud, 1950), 201.

¹⁰ Isaac, "Surviv," 227.

ing from the interior and roads descending steeply into the Rhône valley. “We ought to have hidden ourselves within the deepest reaches of remote forest,” lamented Isaac, “to have searched for the most inaccessible refuge. Imprudently, we did exactly the opposite.”¹¹ They wanted to be closer to their daughter, Juliette, who had turned 40 on 3 September 1943. Juliette’s husband, Robert Boudeville,¹² was with central service of *Agence Havas*, in Vichy and Clermont-Ferrand. There was a third reason for changing domiciles, personal to Jules Isaac alone. “In the spring of 1943, I had begun to write *Jésus et Israël* of which the first two parts were completed, but to deal with the third part,¹³ I needed material that I did not have, that I hoped could be found in the large libraries of Clermont, a university center made more important since the library of the University of Strasbourg had been transplanted there [prior to the German invasion of France],” recounted Isaac. “We asked the advice of the Boudevilles, who advised that we resettle in Riom, at a good hotel there, well situated – the *Grand-Hôtel* nearby a large square, *place Desaix* – Riom: tranquil and picturesque small town...; by train a half hour from Clermont. It was rather tempting, at least for a stay of short duration.”¹⁴ But Riom was situated in the department of Puy-de-Dôme, proximate to Vichy, especially dangerous geography.

In early October 1943, “not without second thoughts and not without reluctance”¹⁵ according to Isaac, he and Laure departed Saint-Agrève for Riom (Puy-de-Dôme). A car rented at Chambon for the purpose was the medium of transport to a train station “was it Yssigneux, Le Puy, Grioude?”

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Robert Boudeville, a Catholic raised in a conservative, integralist household, had been posted to Berlin in the late 1930s. The Boudevilles had witnessed firsthand Kristallnacht. In November 1940, Boudeville was posted to Bucharest, and it was while in Bucharest that Boudeville was approached by Maurice Nègre (Fabrice) to return to France to work for the allied cause. Boudeville accepted without hesitation. In September 1942, while the Boudevilles were living a relatively carefree existence in Clermont-Ferrand, Nègre asked Boudeville whether he would accompany Nègre to Vichy to gather intelligence about the Vichy government for the resistance. Between October 1942 and the Liberation of France in 1944, wrote Nègre after the war, “more than 80% of the content in the *Bulletin de la France Combattante* originated from intelligence gathered by Super-nap” (“Boudeville et Marzelière,” *L’Agence* (revue intérieure de Agence France Presse), June 1946, 22).

¹³ Part III of *Jésus et Israël* addresses the problem of Jesus and Israel in their reciprocal relations.

¹⁴ Jules Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie IV. 1943: Les heures noires* (unpublished), *bibliothèque Méjanes d’Aix-en-Provence* and published in *Cahiers de l’Association des amis de Jules Isaac*, no. 3 (1981): 9. It is astounding to contemplate this aging historian persisting in his research in the midst of war and roundups of Jews.

¹⁵ Ibid., 9.

Isaac wondered after the fact. “My memory fails in this respect.”¹⁶ The drive on the open roads of German-occupied territory was made more stressful when, after 25 to 30 kilometers of travel, Laure realized that she had forgotten something in Sainte-Agrève for which she had to return. At last, upon their arrival in Riom, the Isaacs checked into the *Grand-Hôtel*, this time “under false identities [M. et Mme Imbert], with false papers entirely in order,” Isaac recounted. “The proximity of our daughter Juliette filled us with joy, especially my wife, a devoted mother. We would telephone her, pay her a visit. It was a short-lived euphoria. All of a sudden, silence. A silence all the more anxiety-producing as the younger of our two sons, Jean-Claude, had also just descended from the mountains to visit the Boudevilles. A visit that was not without good reason and not without danger: [Jean-Claude] was the *agent de liaison* to his brother-in-law Boudeville, a member of Super-Nap – *n oyantage des a dministration p ubliques par le centre, les administrations centrales*.”¹⁷ The silence drove Laure to forget that she was in a German-occupied territory. She kept trying to reach her daughter by phone, recalled Isaac, “telephone calls just of the sort that would alert and inform the Gestapo of our presence and our identity; travel to Clermont and inquiries at the domicile of our children; banging our heads against a wall, or rather throwing ourselves into the wolf’s jaws.”¹⁸

Unbeknownst to Jules and Laure, in the midst of a meeting of the resistance cell chaired by Boudeville (in the absence of Fabrice (Nègre) whose presence was required in Vichy) in the Boudeville apartment, a meeting at which Jean-Claude Isaac was also present, the Gestapo had arrived and arrested all concerned, presumably acting on a denunciation. Isaac remembered the rapidly unfolding sequence of events as follows:

The consequences proved to be not long in coming. The Gestapo came for us, the morning of [7 October 1943].

It happened that I was at the barber. As the morning was so beautiful, after my shave, I took a stroll around *place Desaix*, after which I returned to the hotel, and realized immediately that something was not right. Gently,

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 9. The task of Super-Nap, a branch of the French resistance movement, was to introduce resistance agents into the highest levels of the civil service.

¹⁸ Robert Boudeville, Juliette Isaac’s husband, had not thought, or was too preoccupied with resistance matters, to provide his wife with false identity papers. Or perhaps he was not fully aware of what fate awaited his wife if she were arrested by the Germans.

the hotel manager recounted that the Gestapo had come, searched our room, taken my wife and having given up awaiting my return, had charged the manager to caution me that they would be returning for me in the late afternoon; until then, no one was permitted in the room. The blow was staggering, simultaneously numbing and surreal. For if these policemen wanted to arrest us, how bizarre a protocol than to make an appointment, how offhand or indifferent!

I was overwhelmed in the moment, unable to get a hold of myself, to decide whatever. Then, the thought came to my mind that I had to know whether the Gestapo had taken what remained in our room: my suitcase contained not only my clothes, but two precious manuscripts and some files – the manuscript for *Les Oligarques*, that pertaining to the first two parts of *Jésus et Israël*, notes for the writing of the third part.

By dint of my pleading and a promise not to remove anything, I secured the key to the room and the right to remain there for several minutes. I rushed over to my suitcase; they had touched nothing, these careless policemen; manuscript and files were still there. I removed them and put them in my briefcase...but I dared not take my overcoat, hanging on a hook. Of our luggage, my wife had taken only a small *sac de voyage* and her purse.

Then, I was thrust into the unknown, having lost my mind, not knowing what to do, where to go...I recall walking back and forth on a straight main road that must have been the road to Clermont, then I returned to town and rang at the door of the *Collège*, where I was given the name and address of a professor, Rodolphe Faessel, about whom I had heard as one of Baulig's students and one whom I could trust. He was not home, but I was allowed to await his return inside...Finally, he arrived and it was a great relief to speak to someone in confidence, my true identity having been disclosed. Faessel appeared a very young man, sympathetic, deferential, empathetic and desirous of helping me to the extent he could without placing himself at risk. Since time was passing and I could not be out on the street, he drove me to a farmhouse – on the outskirts of town – where Madame Léon Blum had stayed during the trial of her husband. I was decently received and stayed two nights in Madame Léon Blum's former lodging, where her suitcases still remained.

Through Faessel, I learnt that the Gestapo had returned, taken my suitcases and clothing, and charged the hotel manager to let me know that if I continued to evade, if I did not turn myself in at Clermont, it would be my wife and children who would suffer the consequences. Of course, I had to depart for Clermont at once and deliver myself to the authorities, but only after consulting my friend, Baulig. How naïve of me to have first taken seriously this simple-minded trick of the German authorities, and this in the autumn of 1943, when the death machine put together and overseen by Eichmann was in full swing, the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Birkenau,

Maidenek, Treblinka, Bergen-Belsen; but of this machine, of these atrocities, of the ‘final solution’ adopted as early as 1941, I was ignorant and I was not the only one to be so. Despite the B.B.C., ignorance [of the death camps] was more common than was knowledge.

My host had given me but two nights’ accommodation and I was not informed of the Gestapo threat until the second day. Unable to depart at night for Clermont, I turned my attention to finding lodging. I was told of a modest, but suitable, hotel a little on the outskirts of [Riom]; I went straightway and got myself a room. Tormented, I was unable to sleep.¹⁹

One evening in October 1943, somewhere in Royat, Paul Léon inquired of his wife, Jeanne, “Can we house Jules Isaac, the historian, all of whose family has just been arrested by the Gestapo? He arrived at the Parodi home, but they cannot accommodate him tonight, there is not enough room as they are hiding several people already.”²⁰ Thus, it was that Jules Isaac came to be a guest in the Léon apartment in Royat during the first weeks following the catastrophe. He arrived with just the clothes on his back and his briefcase. “We had to find him clothes, shoes, etc...without attracting attention,”²¹ remembered Jeanne Léon. On the eve of her deportation to Auschwitz—27 October 1943—Laure composed a note (together with messages from Juliette and Jean-Claude) to her husband, a note she succeeded in having smuggled out of the Drancy transit camp. It would appear that none of them had knowledge of their pending fate. “The most precious of all papers,” reads a note in Isaac’s script that is attached to this communication, one he would carry on his person for the remainder of his life. “The letter that arrived during my stay in Royat (at the home of Jeanne Léon), and impelled me to survive.”

Wednesday 27 October

My beloved, we leave tomorrow. It’s very hard, and the greatest suffering is having no knowledge of you since the awful day of separation. My dearest, take care for our sakes, be steadfast and finish your work for which the world is waiting. The three of us are still together, the children support me though they not be near you. But soon we will find each other again, the nightmare will not last, we love you so much, and it is you for whom the test is

¹⁹ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie IV. 1943: Les heures noires*, 10–11 (unpublished).

²⁰ Jeanne Léon, “Jules Isaac lors de l’arrestation des siens (1943),” *Cahiers de l’Association des amis de Jules Isaac*, no. 3 (1981): 11.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

still the hardest, but be patient and careful, I implore you, do not go to Nevers where there are risks of contagion. We shall give news as soon as we can and do not know where we are going. But we must hope, we must find each other again, and we should not be discouraged. My darling, goodbye, I love you and I kiss you with all my soul. Bye for now. We are fine.²²

The work for which the world was waiting is also mentioned by Juliette and Jean-Claude in their respective messages to their father. Juliette alludes to “our faith in your work.” Jean-Claude writes, “for us, the thought of the work you have undertaken supports us,” and, further on, “Our greatest joy is to imagine that you are able to see to completion your work.”²³

The next day—28 October 1943—at 10:30 am to be precise, train 61 bound for Auschwitz and carrying 1000 deportees departed from Bobigny Station in Drancy. The deportees included Laure Isaac, Juliette Isaac and Jean-Claude Isaac. Also included were 125 children under the age of 18 years. The journey took a day-and-a-half. Upon arrival at Auschwitz late on the night of 29 October or in the early hours of 30 October, 613 of the deportees—the number of mitzvot (commandments) in the Torah—were sent to the gas chambers. Among these 613 were Laure Isaac and Juliette Isaac. Only 42 survived, including Jean-Claude Isaac, who managed to escape a death march in January 1945 and return to France in May 1945.²⁴ Jean-Claude survived in Auschwitz by using his mother’s artistic talents, which he had inherited, to paint portraits of German officers. His survival instincts impelled him never to complete one portrait without first having started the next. As for Boudeville, he was tortured by the Gestapo, but he never broke. Jean-Claude Isaac, who laid eyes on his brother-in-law several days after their arrest, informed Maurice Nègre at war’s end that Boudeville’s pummeled face was almost unrecognizable. M. Charles Hauter, professor of Protestant theology at the University of Strasbourg, whom Nègre encountered at Buchenwald and who was a member of the same resistance cell as was Boudeville, recounted to Nègre that in the course of Boudeville’s interrogation, his eyes had been pricked and for one month thereafter, Boudeville’s tears were bloody. Robert Boudeville was deported to Buchenwald, then transferred to Dora and then to Bergen-Belsen where he was to perish on 4 June 1944.

²² *Le Fonds Jules Isaac, bibliothèque Méjanes d’Aix-en-Provence.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ The return date indicated on his identity card is 11 April 1945.

CONTINUED FLIGHT

In November 1943, upon the dismantlement of the Brive resistance network, Germaine Bocquet and her husband, both ordinary *Français*, finding themselves betwixt and between, were staying with her elderly grandmother who had retired to a *bourgeoise* farmhouse in Prault, in a remote and forgotten about corner of the Berry. “M. Pataud, the schoolteacher in the neighbouring village of Segry, asked us whether we could shelter a person whose family had been arrested and who was, himself, hunted,” recalled Bocquet. “Contact to be made in Clermont-Ferrand; the rendez-vous would take place at the home of friends. I did not hide from [my interlocutor] the spartan conditions to which he would be subject: a farmhouse without amenities (we drew water from wells and cut firewood) and extreme isolation. [My interlocutor] was keen nonetheless and about to give me his name, which I considered irrelevant information; the status of being hunted was sufficient. But he insisted. ‘Did you pursue secondary studies?’ he asked me. I nodded. ‘What was your *manuel d’histoire*?’ ‘Malet et Isaac,’ I replied. ‘Well, I’m Jules Isaac.’”²⁵ Thus did the Bocquet acquire an “uncle,” M. Jean Breton, retiree, born in Valenciennes, a town with which Isaac was familiar, having spent part of his childhood there, and whence hailed an in-law of Bocquet. She returned to the Berry to await Isaac’s arrival in Issoudun (Indre). From Issoudun, they made their way ten or so kilometers to the farmhouse in Prault. There was not a single habitation within two to three kilometers of the farmhouse. “Jules Isaac insisted that I disclose his identity [to my grandmother],” remembered Bocquet. “The prospect of offering no more than mediocre living conditions to ‘*Monsieur l’Inspecteur général*’ filled my grandmother, a retired village schoolteacher, with embarrassment. But she was quickly put at ease by the simplicity of her guest who volunteered with good humour to participate in the menial household tasks... There were few contacts with the outside world. My husband, engaged by then with the BCRA,²⁶ made but one or two visits in between missions. From time to time, a schoolteacher friend would bring us mail, a clandestine newspaper, news heard on the

²⁵ Germaine Bocquet, “Jules Isaac dans la clandestinité,” *Cahiers de l’Association des amis de Jules Isaac*, no. 3 (1981): 12–13.

²⁶ The *Bureau Central de Renseignements et d’Action* (Central Bureau of Intelligence and Operations), referred to by the acronym BCRA, as the forerunner of the French Intelligence Service. The BCRA was established by the Free French chief-of-staff in 1940 and it was commanded by Major André Dewavrin, who took the *nom de guerre*, “Colonel Passy.”

BBC that we were unable to make out from the sputtering of our old radio set, all of which would give us an echo of the outside world.”²⁷

It was in the winter of 1943–44, in a *bourgeoise* farmhouse in a remote corner of the Berry, in the company of Germaine Bocquet and her grandmother, that Isaac, bereft of his wife and children and ignorant of their fate, began to write Part III (which addresses the problem of Jesus and Israel in their reciprocal relations) of *Jésus et Israël*. The required sources were procured by Bocquet in the library of the *Sacré Coeur* of Issoudun with the assistance of Fr. Klein, who would bring certain books at his own initiative. Isaac’s discovery of a contemptuous Christian teaching about Jews and Judaism, which overreached the bounds of scriptural and historical accuracy, did not square with what Bocquet had learned in her catechism—that the Jews had given the world the prophets, the virgin Mary, the Christ and the apostles; that the Jews were the people of the covenant and the promise, that Jesus had been entirely observant of the law that he had come not to abolish, but to fulfill, that it was not the Jews, but humanity’s sins that had crucified Jesus, which his passion and death had redeemed. Isaac “listened [to all of this] with great attention and empathy, but not without some skepticism,” remembered Bocquet. “All was made clear when he learned that the instruction I had received had been given by a friend of [progressive Catholic philosopher] Maritain...Jules Isaac made me read certain texts [about Jews and Judaism] that he had assembled, horrible in their virulence, written by theologians – Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox – and I discovered to my astonishment to what extent this commentary on the Scriptures tended to arouse and create a climate of misapprehension, nay hatred, toward the Jewish people....From then on, the urgency and importance of the task which he had assigned himself and which could not but improve and purify our faith became evident to me.”²⁸

One night in the spring of 1944, Bocquet, her grandmother and Isaac were awakened by loud knocking on the front door of the farmhouse. “Lights could be seen at the edge of the forest. We did not budge, in conformity with the intention to give the impression that the house was deserted,” recalled Bocquet. “Again, loud knocks. The lights receded. We never found out who was behind the attempt to gain entry that night, but by the dawn, a decision had been taken to change residences. Jules

²⁷ Bocquet: 13.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 13–14.

Isaac contemplated taking flight to London. The resistance member in charge of liaisons with England, and with whom my husband made contact, replying ‘There are enough Jews in London,’ refused to assume the task. Compelled to find another solution, we called upon a sister-in-law, then living in Levroux (Indre), a small town filled with refugees, and she was able to find, not without difficulty, for our ‘uncle’ a back room in somewhat more comfortable lodging. My husband and I installed ourselves on the village outskirts in the home of two elderly women.”²⁹ It was in Levroux that Isaac would complete Part III of his *Jésus et Israël* “[the part] in which exegesis played the largest role,” according to Isaac. “I was most happy to have had at my disposition, thanks to the generosity of my friend, Gustave Monod, the four classic commentaries of Père Lagrange; these were the solid foundation upon which I was able to construct my work.”³⁰

Continued Bocquet,

Adopted by relatives and friends who saw a close resemblance with [Isaac’s] ‘nephews’...life became somewhat less spartan than it had been at Prault.... For lunch and dinner, we were *en famille* at my mother-in-law’s; afternoons, [Isaac] would take me for long walks. He was indefatigable; confiding about this and that, he would speak about his activism in Péguy’s *compagnonnage*, the Dreyfus affair, the Great War, the responsibilities of a historian, of science...Invariably, we would return to the subject of religious teaching regarding Israel, and the walk would often end with [Isaac’s] invitation, ‘Come, you have to read the commentary of [such and such a commentator],’ or with generosity of spirit, after having read to me the most recently written pages of his manuscript, ‘Does this not offend your Christian conscience? Have I been too heavy-handed?’ Sundays, we would gather in his room to hear him read the classical poets, and especially, especially his dear Péguy.

Then came 6 June [1944], the [Normandy] landings, a day of hope. A restless waiting took hold of us making focus difficult....We followed the advance of the allies day by day on a map pinned to the wall. The summer came and went. On 25 August Paris was liberated. Our day [of liberation] would be 28 August....Alas, our liberation would be shortlived. The quiet of the afternoon of 30 August would be broken by the marching of boots, the rolling of tanks, distant explosions. German troops in retreat passing

²⁹ Ibid., 14.

³⁰ Jules Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, *New Revised Ed.*, new rev. ed. (Paris: Fasquelle 1959), Notes Complémentaires to p. 14.

through the village (elements of the ‘Das Reich’ division, we would later learn). Jules Isaac had left half-open the door and was on one knee endeavouring to ascertain the significance of the troops that were passing no more than 100 metres away. I was standing next to him. Suddenly, I noticed two SS officers emerging from the countryside behind us. As calmly as I was able, I said ‘Uncle, get up and go hide.’ He turned, saw the soldiers and entered the house. They also saw him rise from his kneeling position and shouted, ‘*Maquis, maquis!*’ In the moment, things suddenly fell into place. To turn my back would be risking the worst. I had to advance toward them, which is what I did. They grabbed me and took me into the house. One of them held me against the wall while the other – inexplicably, providentially – opted to walk around and enter by the front door rather than by the back door [to Isaac’s room]. The soldier pinning me was called by his companion. I had very little time to lunge into the house, say, ‘Uncle, save yourself; make a dash for the woods, quickly,’ then return to where [the German soldier] had left me before the two were returning, pushing ahead our two elderly owners. As they rounded the corner of the house, I caught the shadow [of Isaac] disappearing into the woods. [The Germans] saw nothing. They entered the house, this time through the back door leading into the room where Isaac had just been hiding, found no one but my sister-in-law whom they gathered up together with us. (They had not entered – God save us – the room where the children were sleeping). Again, expressions ‘*Maquis, Kaput!*’ the little German I knew came to me: ‘*Nein, nur Frauen, nur Frauen.*’³¹

Their aggression abated. They re-entered the house. We waited our hearts beating. They left again, this time with my bicycle, on which they both perched and then left! They departed! As soon as they were out of sight, we dashed into the countryside to wait until the German troops had passed through. The last retreating soldier having disappeared from view, I hurried back, only to encounter Jules Isaac rushing from the neighbouring house. Without these neighbours – a blessing unto them – who had strenuously prevented Isaac from rejoining us to explain, the outcome might have been different. A few days later, the route to Paris was free. Jules Isaac, restless, was unable to wait any longer and intended on the first opportunity to reach Paris. He told us shortly afterward that he had learned that his elder son [Daniel] was in England,³² but it would be several months before Isaac would learn by telegram that his younger son [Jean-Claude] was the only family member who had escaped from the camps.³³

³¹ Bocquet: 14.

³² Perhaps convalescing, after having been wounded in the Black Forest.

³³ Bocquet: 15–16.

After the war ended, Germaine Bocquet's career would require that she and her husband live outside of France. But they would return almost every summer and each time, they would pay Isaac a visit at his home in Aix. "His legacy to us, his love of truth, the force of his character, his invincible hope, his loyal friendship," Bocquet attested, "will forever remain etched in our hearts. We thank God for having blessed us with the chance to have lived – for however short a time – with a Just."³⁴

³⁴ Ibid., 16.

Gospel Reality

THE SACRED MISSION

It was September 1946. One year had elapsed since Isaac had come to terms with the awful truth that he would never again in his life set eyes on his wife or daughter. His consolation was to be reunited with his elder son, Daniel, in the autumn of 1944, and with his younger son, Jean-Claude, in the spring of 1945. Isaac's letter to Daniel-Rops, published in the July 1946 issue of *Europe*, had become the talk of French Catholic circles. In his letter Isaac had demolished Daniel-Rops' attempt to insinuate that the Holocaust might be understandable on the theological grounds of Matthew 27:25: "Then the people as a whole answered, 'His blood be upon us and upon our children!'" In this reading, the catastrophe of European Jewry was not even a moment of theodicy. It was the fulfillment of invited eternal punishment. Isaac wrote of the controversy, "[Stanislas Fumet]¹ informs me that the note in *Europe* had made a noise and that

¹It was at Christmas 1940 in Lyon that Stanislas Fumet, then editor of *Temps présent*, together with Louis Terrenoire of *L'Aube*, launched the weekly, *Temps nouveau*, whose object it was to defend the Christian position as confronted by Nazism and the influence of *l'Action française*. During France's occupation by the Germans, Lyon became the locus of French resistance. The city was the largest in the southern (until November 1942, unoccupied) zone. It was also peopled by progressive Catholics. At the turn of the century, Lyon had boasted more Catholic Dreyfusards than any other city in France. *Temps Nouveau* was shut down by Darlan on 15 August 1941. In 1945, Fumet published an article in *Bulletin du service central des déportés israélites* entitled, "Les innocents à l'abbatoir" in which he denounced "Pétain's crime, a crime of omission, and the silence kept about the deportations

it was much talked about.” “P. de Menasce had read it,² and even as far as the first paragraph is concerned, had found nothing inconsistent with Catholic faith...Fumet is convinced that they will not be able to suppress [the publication of] my book and that it will have reverberations.”³

The response to Daniel-Rops in *Europe* provoked many Catholics to write supportive letters not only to a Jew (albeit non-confessional) they knew only by reputation, but a Jew with whom contact might expose them spiritually according to long-standing Catholic teaching. As recently as 1938, an encyclical commissioned by Pope Pius XI, to be titled *Humani Generis Unitas* (The Unity of the Human Race) and that never saw the light of day, had alluded to “the spiritual dangers to which contact with the Jews can expose souls.”⁴ In response to one such letter, from Jacques Madaule,⁵ Isaac replied on 29 August 1946, “The support of Catholics, you, Maurice Blondel, Père de Lubac and Père Bonsirven,⁶ are for me

en masse of foreign Jews who had arrived in France seeking refuge from the Hitlerian menace.” “It is breathtaking,” continued Fumet, “that the Church did not rend its garments amidst wailing, and that it did not do public penance after having learned what happened at Auschwitz where God’s image was mocked, covered in refuse and spittle, molested and defigured. For in the last analysis, I listened attentively during the occupation and heard nothing. With few exceptions, Pétain had buttoned the lips of our highest clergy.”

² At pp. 129–30 of *Les relations entre les Juifs et les Catholiques dans la France de l’après-guerre* (Parole et Silence, 2009), Paule Berger Marx writes, “The père Calliste Lopinot would resign and be replaced in the chair of [Seelisberg] commission [III] by Jean de Menasce. The père Démann is down on record to this effect [cf. Sens, 1998 n° 10]. After giving effect to the change, the commission would be presided over by its vice-president.”

³ Isaac, “Correspondance inédite de Jules Isaac: Extraits de lettres à son médecin (1946–1948),” 2.

⁴ Quoted in Cunningham, 143.

⁵ Jacques Madaule, born on 11 October 1898 in Castelnaudary (Aude), historian by formation, essayist by vocation, published at least 30 works. His literary critique of Claudel confirmed Madaule in a disciplined, but progressive, Catholicism. *Agrégé d’histoire et de géographie*, he began his teaching career at Bizerte, then two years at *l’Ecole française* in Rome, and in 1935, was appointed to the *lycée Michelet* at Vanves. A member of the MRP, he worked with Francisque Gay when the latter served as *président du Conseil* (1945–46) and was mayor of Issy-les-Moulineaux from 1949 to 1953. Madaule succeeded Henri Marrou as president of *l’Amitié judéo-chrétienne de France*.

⁶ P. Henri de Lubac was one of three Jesuit theologians who, together with P. Pierre Chaillet and P. Gaston Fessard, expressed the outraged Christian conscience through the medium of *Les Cahiers du Témoignage chrétien*, 15 issues in total of which were clandestinely published between November 1941 and July 1944. Jesuit theologian P. Joseph Bonsirven was a pioneer regarding Catholic-Jewish rapprochement in France. As early as 1927, in *Les Études*, Bonsirven began a *chronique juives*. In 1938, Bonsirven published through Grasset

the most precious of encouragements. This note to [Daniel-Rops] is but a skirmish and it is my hope that the debate will evolve on better foundations when I shall have completed the manuscript for, and published, *Jésus et Israël* – without doubt some time next winter. I intend on travelling to Paris and would be delighted to see you again, not only to erase the memory of the inspection, of so little importance!”⁷ To what inspection was Isaac referring? In the spring of 1938, Madaule had been teaching history at *lycée Michelet* in Vanves. “I had the honour of being inspected... I can’t quite recall the subject-matter of my lesson on that day. What I do recall,” remembered Madaule, “is that taking no account of the inspector general’s presence, I picked up my lecture where I had left off in the previous class and so the lecture pertained to two quite different subject-matters. I finished dealing with the first and then began treating the second. This did not at all please Jules Isaac and he made known to me his displeasure at the end of class.”⁸

“This morning, I shall try to make presentable for Albin Michel my manuscript [for *Jésus et Israël*],” Isaac wrote on 30 September 1946. “I am anxious. Having reread the first few pages, I am of a mind to start all over again for a third time.”⁹ On 2 October, “Late afternoon yesterday, visit of Raymond Lindon, always supportive. He is going to send my article

an essay titled, “Sur les ruines du Temple” in the Maurice Brillant-edited book, *La vie chrétienne*. In this essay, Bonsirven cautioned his Christian readers that the riches of Judaism were “encased in a messianism gone astray and a narrow particularism;” these observations were made with “a sadness, a respect and an empathy for the custodians of these inestimable riches” (quoted in Pierre Pierrard, *Juifs et catholiques français, d’Edouard Drumont à Jacob Kaplan 1886–1994* (Paris: Cerf, 1997), 266). Although a progressive among French Catholics, Bonsirven, like Maritain, believed in mission to the Jews as elaborated in *Juifs et Chrétiens*, published in 1938. As anti-Jewish rhetoric in France was ramping up, from 10 February 1938 to 26 May 1938, P. Bonsirven inaugurated a series of public lectures Thursday nights on Judaism at the *l’Institut catholique de Paris*.

⁷ Jules Isaac, “Lettres de Jules Isaac à Jacques Madaule,” *Sens, revue de l’Amitié Judéo-Christienne de France*, no. 12 (2005): Lettre I, 613.

⁸ Jacques Madaule, “Jules Isaac tel que je l’ai connu,” *Cahiers de l’Association des amis de Jules Isaac*, no. 3 (1981): 58.

⁹ Isaac, “Corrèspondance inédite de Jules Isaac: Extraits de lettres à son médecin (1946–1948),” 3.

[in *Europe*] to Aimé Pallière,¹⁰ and do all he can to expand its audience.”¹¹ In November of 1946, Isaac returned to Aix-en-Provence and threw himself into the revision of the book manuscript with such abandon that he fell gravely ill and was forced to suspend work. After two months of convalescence, he had recovered sufficiently to complete the task, and on 28 February 1947, he delivered the book manuscript to his publisher, Albin Michel. “I had a long, cordial and frank conversation with Sabatier [of Albin Michel],” wrote Isaac on the following day. “He is still eager to publish me and denies seeking a way out, but says he is overwhelmed by difficulties of all kinds, his heavy publishing schedule, and also by not being able to assuage my impatience.”¹² Isaac’s suspicion that Sabatier might be seeking a way out might have had something to do with Mounier’s reluctance to publish in *Esprit* Isaac’s letter to Daniel-Rops.

In the months that followed, Isaac’s clarion call began to find traction among Catholics. While awaiting surgery, scheduled for 29 March 1947, he was a houseguest of son Daniel and daughter-in-law Juliette in the Saint-Cloud suburb of Paris. Jules Isaac was becoming a household name among Christian theologians and personalities, and would receive a regular stream of notables intent on lending him their support. On 8 March 1947, he had a “warm, moving and penetrating” meeting with Jacques Madaule. “We were in agreement on many issues,” Isaac recounted, “most notably that there cannot be a religious life without a persistent effort to renovate and purify.”¹³ Madaule undertook to introduce Isaac

¹⁰ Aimé Pallière (1875–1949), wishing to learn more about Judaism than could teach Lyon-based abbé Augustin Lémann, and scandalized by the suggestion of Dominican priest P. Henri, who regretted that all the Jews had not been burnt at the inquisition stake, made himself a pupil of the grand rabbi of Livorno, Eli Benamozegh, whose last work, *Israël et l’humanité* (Paris: Albin Michel/reprint 1961) was published posthumously by Pallière. The principal thesis of *Israël et l’humanité* has been adumbrated thus: Judaism addresses two messages to two constituencies—one a universalist message to all of humanity, the other a particularist message to the Jewish people. The universal message is comprised of the Noachide laws; the particularist in the mitzvot by which Jews are bound. Since Noachism is a universalist revelation, there is no need for another. Pallière was greatly influenced by Benamozegh and at the age of 25, “converted” to Judaism and thereafter devoted his life to correct the misapprehension of his fellow Catholics that Judaism was but a nationalist, ethnic religion. See Pallière’s *The Unknown Sanctuary: A Pilgrimage from Rome to Israel*, trans. L. W. Wise (New York: Bloch, 1930/reprint 1985) with pref. by David Novak.

¹¹ Isaac, “Corrèspodance inédite de Jules Isaac: Extraits de lettres à son médecin (1946–1948),” 3.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

into certain Catholic circles, such as *Union Catholique Universitaire*. As far as Protestants were concerned, “Today, I met with [Protestant] Jacques Martin (of *Christianisme social*) and P. Gerome, but of most interest,” noted Isaac in correspondence of 10 March, “is a letter that I just received from Samy Lattès (secretary of the *Centre d’information Israélite*), who asked me whether I would participate, with Edmond Fleg,¹⁴ and certain Catholic personalities, in a *comité d’études*, preliminary to a reform of Catholic religious education, which in France is within the jurisdiction not of the Vatican, but the French episcopate. The initiative appeared to be very serious and of course, I accepted. L’abbé Vieillard, secretary of the French episcopate, seems to be favourably inclined. This [initiative] is precisely what I have in mind.”¹⁵

On 15 March 1947, a letter arrived from Dr. Pierre Visseur, who had read Isaac’s published-in-*Europe* letter to Daniel-Rops. Geneva-based, Visseur was one of two executive secretaries of the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCCJ) and requested Isaac to contribute material for an International Emergency Congress on antisemitism to take place in the Swiss village of Seelisberg from July 30 to August 5 of that summer.¹⁶ The initiative for this conference was the second of the two resolutions that had been adopted the previous summer at the joint meeting of the American National Conference of Christians and Jews and the British Council of Christians and Jews in Oxford. Seelisberg Congress participants would include eminent members of the Catholic, Protestant and Jewish communities who, by virtue of their experience, credentials and authority, would be capable of contributing in a substantive manner to

¹⁴Edmond Fleg (Flegenheimer) was born in 1874 in Geneva. His mother and paternal grandparents were Alsatian Jews. Fleg attended *lycée Louis-le-Grand* in Paris and received his *agrégation* in German from *Ecole Normale Supérieure*. Rather than teach, he became a playwright, poet and author. Fleg was in attendance at the Third Zionist Congress in Basel in 1899, and joined the *Ligue des Amis du Sionisme* in 1917. During the interwar years, in 1934, he became president of the *Eclaireurs Israélites de France* which played a significant resistance role during World War II. Fleg, together with Jules Isaac, F. Jean Daniélou, Henri Marrou and Samy Lattès, was an original participant in the *réunions à cinq*, the first meeting of which was held on 4 May 1947 and whose object it was to purify Christian teaching of its anti-Jewish rhetoric. Fleg passed away in the same year as did Isaac—1963.

¹⁵Payré, 136.

¹⁶William W. Simpson, OBE, MA, was to serve as the other executive secretary. In 1938, Rev. Simpson became the first secretary of the newly established Christian Council for Refugees from Germany and Central Europe. In 1942, he was appointed as the first secretary of the British Council of Christians and Jews, a post which he held for more than 30 years.

the themes of the conference. On 18 March, Isaac received a visit from Samy Lattès and Edmond Fleg, both of whom pledged their support for the important campaign upon which Isaac was embarking. On 19 March, they returned with Catholics Abbé Vieillard and Henri Marrou.¹⁷ With the approach of his hospitalization and surgery, Isaac was at peace. “I have been greatly blessed to have been able to complete my book, assure its publication and begin a battle that should bear fruit,” he wrote on 20 March 1947. “I take great comfort from all this. It allows me to contemplate life and death with greater peace of mind.”¹⁸

On 15 April, the day after Isaac’s release from the hospital, he received a visit from Visseur. The purpose of the visit was twofold: to invite Isaac to participate in the Seelisberg conference as well as to create a French affiliate of the ICCJ. While Isaac’s impressions of Visseur were not entirely complimentary,¹⁹ he accepted in principle and undertook to follow up in June with a report that could be translated into English and be distributed to the majority of English-speaking conference participants. Visseur, for his part, undertook to do what he could to persuade the director of Albin Michel to fast-track the publication of *Jésus et Israël*. During a visit on 20 April from Samy Lattès, Isaac showed him the 4 April 1947 issue of *Témoignage Chrétien* in which an entire page had been devoted to reproducing the foul writings of historian Henri Guillemin. Isaac asked Lattès to bring to the attention of *Témoignage Chrétien*’s Père Chaillet²⁰ “the sacrilegious and odious nature of these literary exercises that respect neither history nor scripture,” in Isaac’s words. “A traditional mentality among Catholics that they don’t even

¹⁷ From 1945, Henri Irénée Marrou had held the chair of *histoire ancienne du Christianisme* at the Sorbonne.

¹⁸ Isaac, “Correspondance inédite de Jules Isaac: Extraits de lettres à son médecin (1946–1948),” 5.

¹⁹ In correspondence dated 11 February 1949 to Maurice Vanikoff, Isaac referred to Visseur’s “chatter having no great import,” and in correspondence dated 21 February 1948 to Fadiev Lovsky, “Let’s leave the bla-bla-bla to Visseur.”

²⁰ Lyon-based Jesuit theologian P. Pierre Chaillet (1900–72), with fellow Jesuit theologians P. Gaston Fessard and Stanislas Fumet, launched the clandestine review *Les Cahiers du Témoignages Chrétiens* in 1941. With Pastor Roland de Pury, P. Chaillet founded *l’Amitié chrétienne* whose object it was to save Jews. In August 1942, P. Chaillet saved the children of Vénissieux and was named a Righteous among the Nations in 1999.

realize: their eyes must be opened.”²¹ Seven days later, Isaac wrote “We must not allow ourselves to be intimidated by the massive (Catholic traditional) consensus confronting us. We shall breach it provided we are united, resolved and decisive.”²²

On Sunday, 4 May 1947, the first of the *réunions à cinq* took place. Jesuit priest and *Les Études* editor Jean Daniélou (whose father, minister of the navy, was known to Isaac), stood in for Jesuit P. Chaillet, who was to depart for America later that month and was distracted with other responsibilities. The *cinq* consisted of Isaac, Daniélou, Henri Marrou, Edmond Fleg and Samy Lattès. “I had drawn up a number of exact propositions that were approved and would serve as a basis for the final versions to be transmitted to Abbé Vieillard and thence to the French episcopate,” wrote Isaac on 5 May to his physician and caretaker, Marie-Françoise Payré. “Next meeting at Saint-Cloud on 14 [May]. It is difficult to schedule these *réunions à cinq*. So we shall try to complete it all at the next meeting (I had contemplated two further meetings: one dealing with *Jésus et Israël*, the other with the deicide myth). It is going to be a delicate task to draw up on these two subject-matters a new series of precise demands, framed in a manner to be accepted on the Catholic side. Protestant friends of Daniel [Isaac’s elder son] brought me the issue of *Foi et Vie* about which you had spoken. This issue is on the whole excellent and prior to my departure, I must make contact with professor Lovsky.”²³ Protestant Lovsky had been tasked by Pastor Charles Westphal with editing a first *Cahier d’Études juives* issue of *Foi et Vie*. “My [residential] address appeared [in this issue],” Lovsky recollected. “Now, Jules Isaac had a son who was Protestant [Daniel]. He showed the issue to his father who invited me to come and visit him at Saint-Cloud.”²⁴ The invitation was by letter.²⁵

30, rue du Calvaire, St. Cloud (S. et O)

4 May 1947

Monsieur le Professeur,

²¹ Isaac, “Correspondance inédite de Jules Isaac: Extraits de lettres à son médecin (1946–1948),” 6.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 7.

²⁴ Lovsky, “Les Premières années de l’amitié judéo-chrétienne,” 261.

²⁵ Jules Isaac, “Soixante-Dix-Neuf lettres de Jules Isaac à F. Lovsky,” *Sens, revue de l’Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France*, no. 7/8/9 (1999): 293.

I have just read issue no. 3 of *Foi et Vie*, the first *cabier d'études juives*. Allow me to thank you for your objective and sympathetic piece devoted to my debate with Daniel-Rops and to congratulate you for the whole of the *cabier*, as you were charged in particular with this work. I find in it the resonance that I was hoping for.

As our respective activities are directed to the same end, it would be most pleasurable – and certainly profitable to chat with you. Alas, I contemplate returning to my domicile at Aix-en-Provence in eight days, at the end of a convalescence (following surgery) that required a long rest. I venture out as little as possible and would not be so bold as to ask you to come to see me at Saint-Cloud. Perhaps by telephone we could try to schedule a *rendez-vous*.

With utmost respect, Monsieur le professeur,

Jules Isaac

Inspecteur général honoraire de l'instruction publique

“But we cannot expect decisive results from meetings such as last Sunday’s,” Isaac wrote to Payré on 8 May. “We must have high hopes and few illusions: it is not I who shall cure the Christian world of this antisemitic leprosy. I am not of the sort, I have too much awareness of my unworthiness and inadequacies; it is true, I have faith in God’s help (I say it not without trembling), but the evil is so profound, so old, repeated in so many generations, that it will take generations to cure.”²⁶ On 16 May, Isaac returned to la Pergola and typed up an Eighteen-point program of rectification of Christian teaching about Jews and Judaism. These Eighteen Points were to be translated into English and distributed to Seelisberg Conference participants. From each of the Eighteen Points, one may infer a specific instance of deviation between secular and inspired Christian traditions regarding the Jews. Even the gospel texts themselves, “‘inspired’ evidence for a man of faith, but also incriminating evidence,”²⁷ in Isaac’s words, were not immune from corruption. The challenge was to separate the essential gospel from what Isaac considered its accidental human expression, as he elaborated in what was still then an unpublished *Jésus et Israël*.

In the Christian’s eyes, the Gospels are inspired texts. They are nonetheless texts set down by the hand of man, and for that reason necessarily subject to the laws of criticism, textual, literary, historical, which no exegesis, even

²⁶ Isaac, “Correspondance inédite de Jules Isaac: Extraits de lettres à son médecin (1946–1948),” 7.

²⁷ Jules Isaac, *Jésus et Israël* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1948), 178.

the most orthodox, may evade. One must decipher the manuscripts, collate them, choose between variants, eliminate copyists' errors and suspect interpolations: textual criticism. One must discern the peculiarities of the Gospel Greek, of the Greek of each evangelist, the Semitisms that have more or less penetrated into it: literary criticism. For each Gospel, one must establish (if possible) by whom and when (at least approximately) it was written, in what surroundings, under what conditions: historical criticism. And these three kinds of criticism envisage the same aim: to reach Gospel truth, to extricate it from all the dross, from all human impurities, as the archaeologist, discovering a marvelous buried statue that is stained, battered, broken, sets to work enthusiastically, reverently, to extricate it from the earth that holds it, stand it up in the light, restore its integral and divine beauty. What nobler task, provided that love of God and of truth – the one inseparable from the other – is the deep impulse that inspires it!²⁸

How remarkably ahead of his time was Isaac's biblical hermeneutic when one compares it with the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*),²⁹ which, building upon Pius XII's encyclical, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, pronounced in article 12 of Chapter III:

12. However, since God speaks in Sacred Scripture through men in human fashion, the interpreter of Sacred Scripture, in order to see clearly what God wanted to communicate to us, should carefully investigate what meaning the sacred writers really intended, and what God wanted to manifest by means of their words.

To search out the intention of the sacred writers, attention should be given, among other things, to "literary forms." For truth is set forth and expressed differently in texts which are variously historical, prophetic, poetic, or of other forms of discourse. The interpreter must investigate what meaning the sacred writer intended to express and actually expressed in particular circumstances by using contemporary literary forms in accordance with the situation of his own time and culture. For the correct understanding of what the sacred author wanted to assert, due attention must be paid to the customary and characteristic styles of feeling, speaking and narrating which prevailed at the time of the sacred writer, and to the patterns men normally employed at that period in their everyday dealings with one another.

²⁸ Ibid., 562.

²⁹ A dogmatic constitution is the most authoritative among the categories of pronouncements issued by a council, and an ecumenical council of Catholic bishops, in concert with the bishop of Rome, has the highest teaching authority.

But, since Holy Scripture must be read and interpreted in the sacred spirit in which it was written, no less serious attention must be given to the content and unity of the whole of Scripture if the meaning of the sacred texts is to be correctly worked out. The living tradition of the whole Church must be taken into account along with the harmony which exists between elements of the faith. It is the task of exegetes to work according to these rules toward a better understanding and explanation of the meaning of Sacred Scripture, so that through preparatory study the judgment of the Church may mature. For all of what has been said about the way of interpreting Scripture is subject finally to the judgment of the Church, which carries out the divine commission and ministry of guarding and interpreting the word of God.

THE RECTIFICATION NECESSARY IN CHRISTIAN TEACHING: EIGHTEEN POINTS

The Eighteen Points constituted a summary of Isaac's theses and were set out in paragraph IV of a *mémoire* titled *Christian Anti-Semitism and the Means of Remedying It by the Reform of Christian Education*, this remediation dealing in particular with eighteen clearly defined points. The Eighteen Points had their genesis in the 21 Propositions (chapters) of *Jésus et Israël*, propositions of which the world was not yet aware and with which the Eighteen Points should not be confused. Eight of the Eighteen Points were cast in positive terms to recall long concealed, if not suppressed, truths that: Jesus was Jewish (Point 7); the first apostles were Jewish (Point 9); Jesus was "born under the [Jewish] law" (Gal. 4:4), lived "under the law" and did not stop practising Judaism's basic precepts to the last day (Point 8); moreover, to the last day, Jesus received the enthusiastic sympathies of the Jewish people (Point 10); Christianity was born of a living and not a degenerate Judaism (Point 4); a large part of the Christian liturgy is borrowed from the Old Testament (Point 2); it was to the Jewish people that God first revealed himself (Point 3); and the Old Testament was the scripture of the Jews before becoming the scripture of the Christians (Point 1). The remaining ten of Isaac's Eighteen Points were cast in negative or near-negative terms to address the non-correspondence between inspired gospel reality and a secular anti-Jewish Christian tradition. Jesus had not been personally rejected by the Jewish people as a whole (Point 11), had not been rejected by the spiritual elite of Judaism, but rather by members of a narrow oligarchic caste, subjugated to Rome and detested by the people (Point 12). The Jewish people had not committed the inexpiable crime of deicide, knowingly and willingly

(Point 14). The non-correspondence between history and the myth that the dispersion was providential punishment for the crucifixion was to be kept in mind (Point 5); the faithful were to be warned against certain stylistic tendencies in the gospels, notably the frequent use in the fourth gospel of the collective term “the Jews” in a restricted and pejorative sense (Point 6); the scriptural texts were not to be strained to find in them a universal reprobation of Israel or a curse, *which is nowhere explicitly to be found in the gospels* [emphasis added] (Point 13); the Jewish people as a whole were not involved in the trial of Jesus, played no role in it and probably were entirely unaware of it (Point 16); and the chief priests and their accomplices acted against Jesus unbeknownst to, and even in fear of, the people (Point 15). Jesus was condemned for messianic pretensions, a crime in the eyes of the Romans, not the Jews; his punishment was a Roman, not a Jewish, punishment, his crowning with thorns was a cruel jest of Roman soldiery and not of the Jewish people, and the mob whipped up by the chief priests was not to be equated with the whole of the Jewish people or even the Jewish people of Palestine (Point 17). Finally, one should be mindful not to forget that the cry, “His blood be upon us and on our children!” (Mt 27:25) could not prevail over the Word “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34) (Point 18).

Christian teaching worthy of the name should

1. give all Christians at least an elementary knowledge of the Old Testament; stress the fact that the Old Testament, essentially Semitic—in form and substance—was the Holy Scripture of Jews before becoming the Holy Scripture of Christians;
2. recall that a large part of Christian liturgy is borrowed from it, and that the Old Testament, the work of Jewish genius (enlightened by God), has been to our own day a perennial source of inspiration to Christian thought, literature and art;
3. take care not to pass over the singularly important fact that it was to the Jewish people, chosen by Him, that God first revealed Himself in His omnipotence; that it was the Jewish people who safeguarded the fundamental belief in God, then transmitted it to the Christian world;
4. acknowledge and state openly, taking inspiration from the most reliable historical research, that Christianity was born of a living, not a degenerate Judaism, as is proved by the richness of Jewish literature, Judaism’s indomitable resistance to paganism, the spiri-

tualization of worship in the synagogues, the spread of proselytism, the multiplicity of religious sects and trends, the broadening of beliefs; take care not to draw a simple caricature of historic Phariseeism;

5. take into account the fact that history flatly contradicts the theological myth of the Dispersion as providential punishment for the Crucifixion, since the dispersion of the Jewish people was an accomplished fact in Jesus' time and since in that era, according to all the evidence, the majority of the Jewish people were no longer living in Palestine; even after the two great Judean wars (first and second centuries), there was no dispersion of the Jews of Palestine;
6. warn the faithful against certain stylistic tendencies in the Gospels, notably the frequent use in the fourth Gospel of the collective term "the Jews" in a restricted and pejorative sense—to mean Jesus' enemies: chief priests, scribes and Pharisees—a procedure that results not only in distorting historic perspectives but in inspiring horror and contempt of the Jewish people as a whole, whereas in reality this people is in no way involved;
7. state very explicitly, so that no Christian is ignorant of it, that Jesus was Jewish, of an old Jewish family, that he was circumcised (according to Jewish Law) eight days after his birth; that the name *Jesus* is a Jewish name, Yeshua, Hellenized, and *Christ* the Greek equivalent of the Jewish term *Messiah*; that Jesus spoke a Semitic language, Aramaic, like all the Jews of Palestine; and that unless one reads the Gospels in their earliest text, which is in the Greek language, one knows the Word only through a translation of a translation;
8. acknowledge—with Scripture—that Jesus, "born under the [Jewish] law" (Gal. 4:4), lived "under the law": that he did not stop practising Judaism's basic rites to the last day; that he did not stop preaching his Gospel in the synagogues and the Temple to the last day;
9. not fail to observe that during his human life, Jesus was uniquely "a servant to the circumcised" (Rom. 15:8); it was in Israel alone that he reunited his disciples; all the Apostles were Jews like their master;
10. show clearly from the Gospel texts that to the last day, except on rare occasions, Jesus did not stop obtaining the enthusiastic sympathies of the Jewish masses, in Jerusalem as well as in Galilee;

11. take care not to assert that Jesus was personally rejected by the Jewish people, that they refused to recognize him as Messiah and God, for the two reasons that the majority of the Jewish people did not even know him and that Jesus never presented himself as such explicitly and publicly to the segment of the people who did know him; acknowledge that in all likelihood the messianic character of the entry into Jerusalem on the eve of the Passion could have been perceived by only a small number;
12. take care not to assert that Jesus was at the very least rejected by the qualified leaders and representatives of the Jewish people; those who had him arrested and sentenced, the chief priests, were representatives of a narrow oligarchic caste, subjugated to Rome and detested by the people; as for the doctors and Pharisees, it emerges from the Gospel texts themselves that they were not unanimously against Jesus; nothing proves that the spiritual elite of Jerusalem was involved in the plot;
13. take care not to strain the texts to find in them a universal reprobation of Israel or a curse which is nowhere explicitly expressed in the Gospels; take into account the fact that Jesus always showed feelings of compassion and love for the masses;
14. take care above all not to make the current and traditional assertion that the Jewish people committed the inexpiable crime of deicide, and that they took total responsibility on themselves as a whole; take care to avoid such an assertion not only because it is poisonous, generating hatred and crime, but also because it is radically false;
15. highlight the fact, emphasized in the four Gospels, that the chief priests and their accomplices acted against Jesus unbeknownst to the people and even in fear of the people;
16. concerning the Jewish trial of Jesus, acknowledge that the Jewish people were in no way involved in it, played no role in it, probably knew nothing about it; that the insults and brutalities attributed to them were the acts of the police or of some members of the oligarchy; that there is no mention of a Jewish trial, of a meeting of the Sanhedrin in the fourth Gospel;
17. concerning the Roman trial, acknowledge that the procurator Pontius Pilate had entire command over Jesus' life and death; that Jesus was condemned for messianic pretensions, which was a crime in the eyes of the Romans, not the Jews; that hanging on the cross

was a specifically Roman punishment; take care not to impute to the Jewish people the crowning with thorns, which in the Gospel accounts was a cruel jest of the Roman soldiery; take care not to identify the mob whipped up by the chief priests with the whole of the Jewish people or even the Jewish people of Palestine, whose anti-Roman sentiments are beyond doubt; note that the fourth Gospel implicates exclusively the chief priests and their men;

18. last, not forget that the monstrous cry, “His blood be upon us and on our children!” (Mt. 27:25), could not prevail over the Word, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk. 23:34).³⁰

That “[Jesus’] own received him not,”³¹ in the words of Fr. Léonce de Grandmaison, is unhistorical. “There is not one line of Gospel text that allows us to answer the question [whether the millions of Jews dispersed throughout the ancient world knew Jesus, let alone rejected him],”³² Isaac argues. “If the Jewish world in the Diaspora, or at least those who represented it at Jerusalem during the feasts, had really been touched by Jesus’ teaching, in whatever way, with whatever effect – whether they were offended or attracted – it would be strange that no trace of any sort remained of this for history to perceive.”³³ As far as the Jewish dispersion is concerned, notes Isaac, “that Dispersion perennially offered to Christian thinking – often from the height of the pulpit – as punishment for the crime, took place several centuries before Jesus’ time, before the crime... If there was punishment, it was anticipatory.”³⁴

THE SEELISBERG CONFERENCE

In midsummer 1947, a total of 65 delegates from 19 countries descended upon the village of Seelisberg, in the Canton of Uri, to participate in the emergency conference on antisemitism.³⁵ English and French were the two official languages of the conference, German having too bitter a post-war aftertaste. Participants were inundated with no fewer than 55 documents,

³⁰ As reproduced at pp. 401–404 in the Appendix to the translated-into-English *Jesus and Israel*.

³¹ Quoted in Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 157.

³² *Ibid.*, 165.

³³ *Ibid.*, 167.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 158.

³⁵ International Council of Christians and Jews, “A Time for Recommitment (Preface to the Twelve Points of Berlin),” (Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., 2009), 13.

32 of which were country-by-country reports detailing the situation of European Jewry and of the status of antisemitism in the aftermath of the war. Attentive congress participants might have noted that there were but five papers dealing with the relationship between Christians and Jews, one of which was signed by a French Jewish historian. All delegates attended in their personal capacities, having received invitations from the executive committee, priests, pastors, rabbis, lay persons, from Germany, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the United States, France, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Scandinavia, Switzerland and Czechoslovakia. The composition was international and interconfessional.³⁶ “As a Frenchman, it seemed a shame that the French churches, Catholic and Protestant, were not represented,” recalled Isaac. “Could this have been the result of the conference organizers having aimed too high, extending invitations to the likes of Cardinal Saliège,³⁷ Pastor Boegner, Ambassador Maritain, *académicien* Etienne Gibson, each of whom for one

³⁶ There were no orthodox Christians from the Soviet Union.

³⁷ There can be no passing reference to Jules-Géraud Saliège, archbishop of Toulouse, in whose cathedral in the eleventh century there had been a tradition of publicly slapping a Jew during Holy Week as a reminder of the slap received by Jesus (Baum, *The Jews and the Gospel*, 267 at note 16). There can be no passing reference to this Righteous prelate among the Nations, this Catholic for whom a memorial plaque is affixed to the wall of the oldest synagogue in Toulouse and whom De Gaulle perceived as his ecclesiastical beachhead in the fight against Pétain’s Vichy regime as early as May 1942. Laval had made a Faustian pact with the Germans to trade the lives of 85,000 Jewish French citizens in the occupied zone for the lives of 40,000 stateless Jews in the unoccupied zone. On 8, 10 and 24 August 1942, amidst scenes of Jewish mothers forcibly separated from their children, 1000 Jews were taken from Récébédou. In the midst of this horror and perhaps with foreknowledge of the first roundups (on 26 August 1942) in the unoccupied zone of Jewish men, women and children, on Sunday 23 August, Mgr. Saliège broke the silence of the French episcopate, nay the Vatican itself, with the following words in a pastoral letter read aloud without commentary by priests at masses in all churches and chapels in his diocese.

My very dearest brothers,

There is a Christian ethic. There is a human ethic that imposes obligations and recognizes rights. These obligations and these rights are the products of personhood. They are God-given. They may be violated. No mortal is empowered to suppress them...In our diocese, we have witnessed scenes of the most horrific nature in the camps of Noé and Récébédou [Haute-Garonne] Jews are men; Jewesses are women. They are untouchable, these men, these women, fathers and mothers. They are human beings. They are our brothers [and sisters], like any other. A Christian cannot forget this. France, our beloved country, France that bears in the conscience of all its children the tradition of respect for the human person, chivalrous and generous France, there is no doubt in my mind that you are not behind the perpetration of these atrocities.

reason or another, was unable to make the trip to Seelisberg and did not send replacements in his stead?”³⁸

The French contingent consisted of one Catholic, Marie-Madeleine Davy, lecturer at *l'École des Hautes Études* where she was pursuing graduate study in Jewish philosophy of the middle ages; no Protestant; one rabbi (*grand rabbin* Jacob Kaplan) and Jules Isaac. Notable Protestants from other countries included professors Bickel of Switzerland and Allen from Durham University. Notable Catholics included Rome-based Capucin priest P. Calliste Lopinot, a stand-in for P. Marie-Benoît, who was ill at the time and unable to make the trip,³⁹ and P. Jean de Menasce, University of Fribourg and P. Paul Démann, Louvain (the latter two Jewish converts to Catholicism). Also in attendance was Charles Journet, professor at the University of Fribourg, founding editor of the journal, *Nova et Vetera*,⁴⁰ Maritain correspondence partner and “one who seemed to have the Vatican’s ear.”⁴¹ Jewish participants included Rabbi M.A. Halevy, vice president of the Union of Romanian Jews and president of the Society of Jewish Studies of Romania, and Fabian Herkowitz, Grand Rabbi of Budapest. The conference chairs were Willard E. Goslin, superintendent of the Minneapolis school board, and Neville Laski. “Finally, on Friday 1 August [1947], it was decided that there would be five working groups and the real work commenced,” Isaac recounted. “In truth, and conference members were unanimous in recognizing this fact, the primary task

As did many at the time, Saliège assumed (incorrectly) that Vichy was acting under German pressure. On the following Sunday 30 August 1942, Pierre-Marie Théas, bishop of Montauban, followed suit with a pastoral letter of his own; on 6 September, Lyon Cardinal Gerlier also denounced the arrests and deportations, the same Cardinal Gerlier who had told Vallat at a meeting not one year earlier, “Your law [*statut des Juifs*] is not unjust, ...but it lacks justice and charity in its enforcement.” (Quoted in Marrus, *Vichy France and the Jews*, 200.) Of the 95 archbishops and bishops in France, at best six would denounce the antisemitic measures adopted by the Vichy regime and carried out by the French police.

³⁸ Undated, personal handwritten testimony of Jules Isaac, “L’assemblée judéo-chrétienne de Seelisberg,” *La revue Sens, organe de l’amitié judéo-chrétienne de France*, no. 7 (2004): 361.

³⁹ Paule Berger Marx, *Les Relations entre les juifs et les catholiques dans la France de l’après-guerre: 1945–1965* (n/p: Parole et Silence, 2009), 129.

⁴⁰ Born in Geneva, Charles Journet studied at the seminary in Fribourg before being ordained to the priesthood on 15 July 1917. He did pastoral work in the Diocese of Fribourg until 1924, and taught at the seminary from 1924 to 1965. Journet was elevated to the rank of Cardinal on 22 February 1965.

⁴¹ Pierrard, 345. Journet was unable to attend the full conference because of other commitments.

belonged to Commission III [the Task of the Churches], the only working group that could develop an effective action plan as there was consensus among the Jewish speakers that in the struggle against antisemitism, the Churches had adopted a neutral stance, when in point of view, they were the most qualified to take over the fight.”⁴² Isaac was assigned to commission III (The Task of the Churches). In addition to Isaac, this commission included Fr. Lopinot (Rome), chair, Bishop Miroslav Novak (Prague), vice-chair, Rev. Dr. E.L. Allen (University of Durham), secretary, Prof. Dr. Erich Bickel (Zurich), Professor Dr. Mlle. Madeleine Davy (Paris), Fr. Dr. Paul Démann (Louvain), Pastor A. Freudenberg (Geneva), Rabbi Jacob Kaplan (Paris), Fr. Jean de Menasce (Fribourg), Rabbi W. Rosenblum (New York) and Rabbi Tzvi Chaim Taubes (Zurich).⁴³ Of all the commission III members, it was the son of Rabbi Tzvi Taubes, Jacob Taubes,⁴⁴ who most resonated with Isaac. “The most likeable personality was a very young Jew whose light shone, son of the Grand Rabbi of Zurich and descended from a religious dynasty,” wrote Isaac in correspondence to Marie-Françoise Payré. “What was amusing is that he plays the role of my mentor: I am an old Telemachus. But I listen deeply to him, since despite our differences in age and social background, what matters is our spirits.”⁴⁵

At the opening of the Conference, in a world in which antisemitism was remarkably on the rise yet again, a five-page, typewritten, single-spaced message from Catholic philosopher and France’s ambassador to the Vatican, Jacques Maritain, was read aloud by Charles Journet. Conference participants heard in part the following.

Antisemitism cloaks itself in an infinite number of masks and pretexts, – in fact, it is Jesus Christ in his race that [antisemitism] seeks to strike. Six million Jews have been liquidated in Europe...This bestial hatred has supernatural eyes. The truth is it is their very election, it is Moses and the prophets who are pursued in them, it is the Saviour who came out of them that is sought...As Christianity is hated by virtue of its Jewish origins, Israel was hated by virtue of its belief in original sin and in the redemption, and of

⁴² Isaac, “L’assemblée judéo-chrétienne de Seelisberg,” 362–63.

⁴³ Ibid., 363.

⁴⁴ Jacob Taubes was on the Faculty at Columbia University in the 1960s.

⁴⁵ Isaac, “Correspondance inédite de Jules Isaac: Extraits de lettres à son médecin (1946–1948),” 11.

Christian mercy that was a consequence. In the words of the Jewish writer Maurice Samuel, it is not because they killed the Messiah, it is because they gave the Messiah to the world that the Hitlerian antisemitic rage has dragged through filth and blood the Jews in all of Europe, has snatched children away from their mothers henceforth dispossessed even of their name, has undertaken to drive to despair an entire race. Thus it is that unbeknownst to it, Israel has been pursued by the same hate that pursued in first instance Jesus Christ. Its Messiah has configured it in sorrow and abjection in advance of one day configuring it in the light...Like strange bedfellows, Jews and Christians are making their way together on the road to Calvary. And most mysteriously is that Israel's suffering has taken on ever more distinctly the form of the cross.⁴⁶

Isaac is said to have remarked to Journet that Maritain had "said, from a Catholic viewpoint of course, everything I am putting forth in a book on which I am working."⁴⁷ Were the closing lines of the yet-to-be published *Jésus et Israël* inspired by the closing lines of Maritain's address at Seelisberg? "The glow of the Auschwitz crematorium is the beacon that lights, that guides all my thoughts. Oh, my Jewish brothers, and you as well my Christian brothers, do you not think that it mingles with another glow, that of the Cross?"⁴⁸

Rabbi Kaplan tabled Isaac's Eighteen Points in the hope they would be adopted as framed. The Jewish members of the commission recused themselves from the vote on the basis of their inherent bias. The Christian members of the commission worked up a draft. "In all haste, because there was no time, we addressed the fundamental problem of setting right Christian teaching," recalled Isaac, "and *despite all the clashes* (emphasis mine), we did produce something. To be sure, not the eighteen points that I had submitted to the congress, but nine significant points."⁴⁹ Not six months later, Isaac disclosed in personal correspondence to Fadiey

⁴⁶ Archives, Jacques Maritain Center, 430 Geddes Hall, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana.

⁴⁷ As related by Charles Journet to Jacques Maritain in correspondence dated 2 August 1947 (Journet/Maritain, *Correspondence*, vol III, 1940–1949, Ed. Saint-Augustin, Parole et Silence, 1998), p.576. The book to which Isaac was referring was, of course, his own, to be published in April 1948.

⁴⁸ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 572.

⁴⁹ Quoted in Yves Chevalier, "Des Dix-huit Propositions de Jules Isaac aux Dix Points de Seelisberg," *Foi & Vie* XCVII, no. 1 (January 1998): 20. Ultimately, there were to be Ten Points.

Lovsky, “I think I can confirm that the two principal draftsmen [of the Ten Points of Seelisberg] were Fr de Menasce (Fribourg) and Fr Démann (Louvain),”⁵⁰ both of whom were Jewish converts to Catholicism. The draft of the Ten Points was reviewed and commented on separately by Catholic and Protestant members of the commission and then brought back to the full commission. The Jewish commission members attested in writing that “they took no position on the theological or historical perspectives of the text.”⁵¹ The statement was reported back to the conference plenum for adoption, with the understanding that an abbreviated version would be published immediately following the close of the conference. Prior to its release, the statement was circulated among ecclesial authorities of the various churches for approval.⁵² The full version of the statement was presented to the plenum and affirmed without discussion. Three months after the close of the congress, on 10 November 1947, Fr. Lopinot advised Visseur that there was no theological impediment to the publication of the Ten Points. Whomever Lopinot consulted in this regard, apparently it was not the Pope. Two years later, Pius XII would profess ignorance of the Ten Points of Seelisberg during a short audience with Isaac at Castel Gandolfo.

THE TEN POINTS OF SEELISBERG

The Ten Points of Seelisberg were not created *ex nihilo*; they had their genesis in Isaac’s Eighteen Points, which in turn were derived from the 21 Propositions (chapters) of *Jésus et Israël*, Propositions of which the world was not then yet aware.

1. Remember that it is the same living God Who speaks to us through the Old and the New Testaments.
2. Remember that Jesus was born of a Jewish mother of the seed of David and the people of Israel, and that His everlasting love and forgiveness embrace His own people and the whole world.
3. Remember that the first disciples, the apostles, and the first martyrs were Jews.

⁵⁰ Letter dated 19 January 1948 in Isaac, “Soixante-Dix-Neuf lettres de Jules Isaac à F. Lovsky,” 301.

⁵¹ Chevalier: as quoted at 22.

⁵² Jules Isaac, “Du Redressement Nécessaire de L’enseignement Chrétien Concernant Israël,” (1960), Annexe II. See also Rutishauer, “The 1947 Seelisberg Conference: The Foundation of the Jewish-Christian Dialogue,” at 41.

4. Remember that the fundamental commandment of Christianity, to love God and one's neighbor, proclaimed already in the Old Testament and confirmed by Jesus, is binding upon both Christians and Jews in all human relationships, without any exception.
5. Avoid disparaging biblical or post-biblical Judaism with the object of extolling Christianity.
6. Avoid using the word *Jews* in the exclusive sense of the enemies of Jesus, and the words *the enemies of Jesus* to designate the whole Jewish people.
7. Avoid presenting the Passion in such a way as to bring odium of the killing of Jesus upon Jews alone. In fact, it was not all the Jews who demanded the death of Jesus. It is not the Jews alone who are responsible, for the Cross which saves us all reveals that it is for the sins of us all that Christ died.

Remind all Christian parents and teachers of the grave responsibility which they assume, particularly when they present the Gospels, and particularly the Passion story, in a simplistic manner. By so doing they run the risk of implanting an aversion in the conscious or subconscious minds of their children or hearers, intentionally or unintentionally. Psychologically speaking, in the case of simple minds, moved by a passionate love and compassion for the crucified Savior, the horror which they feel quite naturally towards the persecutors of Jesus will easily be turned into an indiscriminating hatred of the Jews of all times, including those of our own day.

8. Avoid referring to the scriptural curses, or the cry of a raging mob: *His blood be upon us and upon our children*, without remembering that this cry should not prevail against the infinitely more weighty prayer of Jesus: *Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they do*.
9. Avoid promoting the superstitious notion that the Jewish people is reprobate, accursed, reserved for a destiny of suffering.
10. Avoid speaking of the Jews as if the first members of the Church had not been Jews.⁵³

The first three Seelisberg Points correspond with Isaac's Eight Points of a positive character. The Jewish provenance of Jesus and his first apostles

⁵³ Isaac, *Jesus and Israel*, reproduced in the Appendix at 404–05.

in Seelisberg Points 2 and 3 correlate with Isaac's Points 7, 9 and 10.⁵⁴ According to Reverend Henri Monnier, writing in *La Mission historique de Jésus*, "Jesus was not, properly speaking, Jewish; he was Galilean, which is not the same thing."⁵⁵ Not so, reminds Seelisberg; Jesus was born under the law (Gal. 4:4) and was circumcised (Lk. 2:21). "[F]rom [Israelites], according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever,"⁵⁶ according to St. Paul. The genealogy that opens the gospel of Matthew attests to Jesus' Jewishness⁵⁷; so does Hebrews, "For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah."⁵⁸ His very name, notes Isaac in the manuscript of his yet-to-be published *Jésus et Israël*, "is the Greek transcription *Iesous* of the Hebrew name Jeshua (Yeshua) or Jehoshua, which is also transcribed Joshua, and which means 'Yah [weh] is salvation.'"⁵⁹ Writes Joseph Eberle in an article in *Schönere Zukunft*, "the Virgin Mary was removed as it were from the natural context of the Jewish people."⁶⁰ Seelisberg corrects this, stating that Jesus was born of a Jewish mother is scriptural; that the first disciples, apostles and martyrs were also Jewish. "Let us name in the lead '[t]he one who is infinitely queen because she is the humblest of creatures; because she was a poor woman, a pitiful woman, a poor Jewess of Judea,'" Isaac notes in Péguy-esque language. "She was called Mariam or Miriam. Mary is the English transcription of this Semitic name, which was sometimes lengthened to Mariane, or, more often, abridged to Maria.... Joseph, James, Simon, Jude, all English names derived from Hebrew by way of Greek and Latin transcriptions."⁶¹ There does not appear to be a Seelisberg correlate to Isaac's Point 8 (Jesus was "born under the [Jewish] law" (Gal. 4:4), lived "under the law" and did not stop practising Judaism's basic precepts to the last day). That he lived under the law is scriptural; not only did he not condemn any ritual commandment, but on occasion recommended its observance.⁶² "Whether one accepts it or not," writes Isaac, "it is a fact attested to by the Gospels,

⁵⁴ Jesus was Jewish (Point 7); the first apostles were Jewish (Point 9) and to the last day, Jesus received the enthusiastic sympathies of the Jewish people (Point 10).

⁵⁵ Quoted in Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 37.

⁵⁶ Rom. 9:5.

⁵⁷ Mt. 1:1–17.

⁵⁸ Heb. 7:14.

⁵⁹ Isaac, *Jesus and Israel*, 22.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Connolly, 131.

⁶¹ Isaac, *Jesus and Israel*, 15.

⁶² Mk. 1:44; Mt. 5:23–24.

more particularly by the Synoptics, that to his final hour, Jesus did not stop practising the basic rites of Judaism.”⁶³ Philip A. Cunningham, in his *Seeking Shalom—The Journey to Right Relationship between Catholics and Jews*,⁶⁴ writes, “Jesus himself never gave any authoritative instructions about Gentiles and Torah observance,”⁶⁵ and, further on in his book, “Jesus himself spoke no definitive word on these matters [circumcision, kashrut and Sabbath observance].”⁶⁶ One would have thought that Jesus’ Torah observance speaks for itself; if he distanced himself from the Pharisaic tradition, he did not remove himself from Judaism.⁶⁷

The continuity in the scriptures highlighted in Seelisberg Point 1 correlates with Isaac’s Points 1, 2, 3 and 4. The admonition to avoid disparaging biblical or post-biblical Judaism in Seelisberg Point 5 follows from Isaac’s Points 2 and 4. Liturgically (Isaac Point 2),⁶⁸ Christianity was born of a living and not a degenerate Judaism, notwithstanding assertions such as that of Catholic writer Julien Green that “Israel worshiped God, only in a conventional manner.”⁶⁹ Historically, the case was the same, (Isaac Point 4),⁷⁰ notwithstanding assertions by Protestant and Catholic authors that at the time of Jesus, the Jewish religion was nothing more than, in the words of German Catholic theologian Karl Adam, “a world of ossified belief in the letter, of a narrow-minded caste spirit and materialistic piety, a world of skepticism, doubt and libertinism.”⁷¹ That “[t]he religious life of the

⁶³ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 105.

⁶⁴ Cunningham.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 18.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 89.

⁶⁷ The consensus view among historians appears to be that the apostolic era unfolded not as if Jesus had mandated his disciples to go out and preach to the gentiles, but rather had he instructed them to restrict their mission to the House of Israel.

⁶⁸ Isaac notes in particular the correspondences between Mt. 6:6 and 2 Kings 4:33, Mt. 6:7–8 and Is. 1:15 and Eccles. 5:2–3 and Mt. 6:9–10 and Is. 63:16, Ps. 89:26, 146:10, the Kaddish and Talmud, Berakoth 29b “R. Eliezer says, ‘Do Your will in heaven above, and grant well-being to them that fear Thee below,’” and Mt. 6:11–13 and Prov. 30:8, Eccles. 28:2 and Talmud, Berakoth 60b “bring me not into transgression, or into iniquity, or into temptation...And deliver me from evil.”

⁶⁹ Quoted in Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt*, 77.

⁷⁰ See, for example, Marcel Simon’s *Verus Israël*, 2d, 1964. In the post-scriptum to the second edition (p.477), Simon writes, “Most particularly, to my knowledge, virtually no one has refuted the legitimacy of my central thesis: the Judaism [of the period 135 CE to 425 CE], far from having withdrawn into itself, was for Christianity for the whole of the period under study a real, vibrant and often successful competitor.”

⁷¹ Karl Adam quoted in Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 75.

Jewish people, led astray by the Pharisees, was on the road to decadence,” or that “[t]he religious life of the Jews was reduced at the time of Jesus to a mere external formalism,”⁷² as found in manuals of religious instruction for youth, does not correspond to the data of history. That “[t]he scribes and Pharisees had not the slightest concern for moral or spiritual purity,” as asserted M. Lepin, professor at the Major Seminary in Lyon, in his Introduction to *L’Evangile de Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ*, is unhistorical. Equally unhistorical is the assertion that “[t]o a formalism that was strict and detailed to the point of absurdity, [the scribes and Pharisees] brought the most consummate pride and hypocrisy.”⁷³ “The Pharisees ... are hypocrites, their religion is a farce, they overload the law of God with countless minutiae and elaborate rites...but underneath, their hearts are full of pride, ambition, and malice,”⁷⁴ according to the Sisters of Bernadette in *Sainte Bible ou Histoire sainte*, No. 4, p. 73—an overreach of the bounds of scriptural and historical accuracy.

Seelisberg Point 4 is novel. The principal commandment of Christianity, love of God and of neighbor, announced in the Old Testament and confirmed by Jesus, set out in Seelisberg Point 4 has no exact counterpart in Isaac’s Eighteen Points. But Seelisberg Points 6, 8, 9 and 10 can be traced to one or more of Isaac’s Eighteen Points. The admonition in Seelisberg Point 6 (to avoid using the term “Jews” to refer exclusively to Jesus’ enemies and the words, “the enemies of Jesus” to designate the Jewish people as a whole) and Seelisberg Point 10 (to avoid speaking of the Jews as if the first members of the Church had not been Jews) has its counterpart in Isaac’s Point 6.⁷⁵ Seelisberg Point 8 correlates with Isaac’s Point 18.⁷⁶ Point 8 mandates to avoid referring to the scriptural curses, or the cry of a raging mob: *His blood be upon us and upon our children*, without remembering that this cry should not prevail against the infinitely weightier petition of

⁷² Reproduced with sources in Paul Démann and R. Bloch, *La Catéchèse chrétienne et le Peuple de la Bible* (Paris: Cahiers sioniens, 1952).

⁷³ Quoted in Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt*, 78.

⁷⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, 79.

⁷⁵ “Warn the faithful against certain stylistic tendencies in the Gospels, notably the frequent use in the fourth Gospel of the collective term “the Jews” in a restricted and pejorative sense—to mean Jesus’ enemies: chief priests, scribes and Pharisees—a procedure that results not only in distorting historic perspectives but in inspiring horror and contempt of the Jewish people as a whole, whereas in reality this people is in no way involved.”

⁷⁶ Last, not forget that the monstrous cry, “His blood be upon us and on our children!” (Mt. 27:25), could not prevail over the Word, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Lk. 23:34).

Jesus: *Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they do*. "As if God could ratify the outcry of a group of demonstrators, worked up by their ringleaders, and have it descend as a curse upon millions of innocent people,"⁷⁷ John Oesterreicher would one day remark in his account of *Nostra aetate* in Vorgrimler's *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*. Seelisberg Point 9 (to avoid encouraging in any way the opinion that the Jews are a people accursed, reprobated and set aside for perpetual suffering) has its correlate in Isaac's Point 13.⁷⁸ That "God has forsaken the Jews [who] have denied the Father, crucified the Son," as says John Chrysostom, that "the vengeance of God will fall without mercy on this decide people," as writes Fr. Ferdinand Prat, in his *Jésus-Christ*, that "[t]he murderous people eternally nailed to the crossroads where the destinies of mankind meet and intersect," as writes Fr. Fessard in his *Pax Nostra*, is nowhere to be found in the gospels.⁷⁹ That "[f]or hundreds of years, Israel was as though abandoned by God"; as writes Gunther Dehn in the first volume of his *Le Fils de Dieu: commentaire à l'Evangile de Marc* (1936), that "the living God of their fathers had become a God remote and inaccessible," overreaches.

The most significant pronouncement of a theological nature would appear to be Point 7 of the Seelisberg program: "for the Cross which saves us all reveals that it is for the sins of us all that Christ died." This assertion is nowhere to be found in Isaac's Eighteen Points. The statement is theological in nature and therefore, strictly speaking, beyond the bounds of Isaac's expertise. But this perfectly sound Christian doctrine had been buried under two millennia of secular traditions about Jews and Judaism. Did Isaac play a role in its resurrection? In efforts to keep alive the memory of his dearest friend and mentor, Charles Péguy, Isaac had managed to quote Péguy no fewer than 13 times in the manuscript of his yet-to-be-published *Jésus et Israël*. In one instance, which echoes the closing lines of his letter to Daniel-Rops, Isaac had written, "Péguy said: 'It is not the Jews who crucified Jesus Christ, but the sins of all of us; and the Jews, who were but the instrument, participate like others in the font of salvation.' Here, it seems to me, is Christian language, Christian conviction. This is the conviction, I know, of a Christian elite, Catholic and Protestant. But

⁷⁷ Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 15.

⁷⁸ "Take care not to strain the texts to find in them a universal reprobation of Israel or a curse which is nowhere explicitly expressed in the Gospels; take into account the fact that Jesus always showed feelings of compassion and love for the masses."

⁷⁹ Quoted in Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt*, 111–13.

they represent a tiny elite, scarcely heeded, while the murderous tradition continues to be planted in defenseless souls by theologians set in their ways, heedless writers, more concerned with worldly success than with unadulterated truth.”⁸⁰ In the new revised edition of *Jésus et Israël*,⁸¹ Isaac added, “[Péguy’s conviction] is also sound and orthodox Christian doctrine, too often forgotten. The Catechism of the Council of Trent teaches: ‘In this guilt [for Jesus’ death] are involved all those who fall frequently into sin; for...our sin consigned Christ the Lord to the death of the Cross.’ We can relate this to the seventh of the Ten Points of Seelisberg: ‘...The Cross which saves us all reveals that it is for the sins of us all that Christ died.’”⁸² In the twilight of his life, Isaac would express his point of view thus: “From the point of view of theology, Jewish responsibility is subordinated to the collective responsibility of sinful humanity. Or if you prefer a symbolic interpretation, the Jewish people are but an image of humanity as a whole. In either event, who is the real culprit, the real ‘deicide?’ The human race, the whole of sinful mankind.”⁸³

Isaac returned from Seelisberg with a heightened sense of optimism and purpose. A third ICCJ-sponsored conference was planned for Fribourg in the following summer.⁸⁴ On 18 November 1947, he turned 70 years of age. At the time, birth pains of the Jewish state were being played out among the General Assembly members of the United Nations. Pope Pius X had told Theodor Herzl that the land “is sacred in the life of Jesus Christ. As head of the Church, I cannot say otherwise. The Jews did not acknowledge Our Lord and thus we cannot recognize the Jewish people. Hence, if you go to Palestine, and if the Jewish people settle there, our Churches and our priests will be ready to baptize you all.”⁸⁵ “The political

⁸⁰ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 515.

⁸¹ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, New Revised Ed.

⁸² Ibid., *Note Complémentaire* regarding p. 515 at 595.

⁸³ Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt*, 122.

⁸⁴ It would take place from 21 July to 28 July 1948. Approximately 130 participants from over 17 countries would attend. The choice of venue was a function of its position on the railway axis between Lausanne and Bern. Charles Journet and Jules Isaac would address the delegates from the Catholic and Jewish points of view, respectively. Jules Isaac would pose two questions to those assembled. “What in our culture is worth saving? What can we do to save our culture?” His response was to point to the spiritual foundations of human culture: justice, freedom, human dignity and the quest for truth.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Uri Bialer, “Israel and Nostra Aetate: The View from Jerusalem,” in *Nostra Aetate: Origins, Promulgation, Impact on Catholic-Jewish Relations: Proceedings of the International Conference Held in Jerusalem 30 October–1 November 2005*, ed. Neville

resurrection of the State of Israel is the most unexpected of, the most extraordinary of events,” Isaac would remark in an address on 4 March 1951 to the Aix section of *l’Amitié judéo-chrétienne*. “Some would say, I myself would say, miraculous. I am not inclined, old man that I am, to believe too quickly in miracles.”⁸⁶ Daniel-Rops amended the next succeeding edition of his *Jésus en son temps*, without noting the fact of the amendment (an omission that prompted Isaac to publicize the fact of the correction in the December 1947 issue of *Europe*).⁸⁷ “Without addressing the unsolvable question of the responsibility of a people for the acts of its leaders,” read the amended next edition of *Jésus en son temps*, “a Christian cannot help but wonder if, in this drama, the Jewish people, as a metaphor

Lamdan and Alberto Melloni (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2007), 63–4. It has been suggested the Pope’s response was rooted in the Christian theological view that the loss of Jewish sovereignty over the land was a sure sign of transgression in the eyes of God and deserving of punishment. It has even been speculated that the failure of the Vatican to give open and public aid to the Jews during World War II was driven by a concern that the migration of Jewish refugees to Palestine might undermine the status of the Church in the Holy Land. Among the arguments made in an internal Vatican document authored by the Vatican’s Secretary of State, Cardinal Luigi Maglione, in May 1943 in support of the Pope’s refusal to help rescue 2000 Jewish children from Slovakia were (i) the Vatican’s non-recognition of the Balfour Declaration and the British plan for establishment of a National Home for the Jews, (ii) concern that the sanctity of the Holy Places would be at risk by an influx of Jews into Palestine and (iii) the theological view that Palestine was holier to Christians than to Jews. It is therefore not surprising that Pius XII expressed strong opposition to Britain’s plan to withdraw from Palestine and leave the decision about its fate to the United Nations. The struggle in the United Nations which culminated with the vote on 29 November 1947 was marked by a flat refusal on the part of the papal representatives to support the Zionist cause and efforts on their part to lobby Latin American states to adopt the same position. One day before statehood would be proclaimed, *L’Osservatore Romano*, the semi-official daily newspaper of the Holy See, asserted that “modern Zionism is not the true heir of biblical Israel.[...] Therefore the Holy Land and its sacred sites belong to Christianity, which is the true Israel” (quoted in Bialer at p.65).

⁸⁶ Quoted in Marcel Goldenberg, “Chemin D’amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de Jules Isaac,” *Sens, revue de l’Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France* 380 (2013): 450.

⁸⁷ In an interview with *L’Arche* in October 1963, one month after the death of Jules Isaac, Daniel-Rops paid tribute to “the memory of the great Jewish historian ... For Jules Isaac will go down as one of the most moving authors, among the witnesses, one of the most persuaded of the friendship between the Jews and the Christians. One might, on certain points, disagree with him; one could consider that certain Christian positions seemed to him to be closed, which led him to judge with a severity that was not always equitable: one never doubted for a moment the sincerity and the generosity of spirit that he invested in conducting that which he took to be an apostolate: the establishment between Jews and Christians of a climate of truth and of charity.” Kaspi, as quoted at 188.

once again for all humanity, was not expressing the refusal of sinful man to the news of Salvation, and [a Christian cannot help but wonder] if... Péguy was not correct when he wrote, 'It is not the Jews who crucified Christ, but the sins of all of us.'⁸⁸

THE AMITIÉ JUDÉO-CHRÉTIENNE

The Ten Points of Seelisberg remained the most important document of Christian-Jewish relations until eclipsed in 1965 by the Second Vatican Council declaration on the Jews and Judaism.⁸⁹ The Seelisberg Conference sponsors also left an impression on Isaac. In the second quarter of 1948, on 6 May to be precise, the articles of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*, as drafted by Isaac, were adopted. The *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne* was the culmination of feasibility that had begun in 1947. In correspondence to Payré dated 13 October 1947, Isaac had written, "I spoke with Fr Daniélou about the possibility of establishing in France a section of the 'Christians and Jews.'" On 30 October, he wrote, "On Tuesday, I met with Jewish leaders for the purposes of bailing out the *centre d'information* and its bulletin and the establishment of *un groupement 'Chrétiens et Juifs'* (that will be called, I think, the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*)."⁹⁰ On 25 November 1947, a meeting, called on very short notice for the île Saint-Louis apartment (1 *quai aux Fleurs*) of Edmond Fleg, had been convened to formalize the decision to establish the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*. Attendance was so sparse that the decision was deferred until a meeting on 26 February 1948 at Fleg's apartment. The articles were filed in the prefecture on 13 August 1948 and published in the *Journal Officiel* on 22 August. Although the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne* was founded as the French section of the ICCJ, it was not long before the former disengaged from the latter, driven by a concern that the principles for which the ICCJ stood were becoming increasingly vague and inconsistent. At a meeting of the Aix-en-Provence section of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne* held on 29 October 1951, Isaac would allude to the ICCJ in these terms: "In place of a Judeo-Christian organization they have substituted a global Fraternity with an extremely vague nature and purpose and with which we see no reason to affiliate

⁸⁸ Quoted in Isaac, *L'enseignement du mépris*, 142.

⁸⁹ See Appendix "Table of Correspondences".

⁹⁰ Payré, 139.

ourselves.”⁹¹ Armand Lunel of Monaco, first president of *l'Association des amis de Jules Isaac*, recalled the chronology of formation of the provincial sections of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*, in rotation around the Parisian Central Committee, as follows: in Aix and Marseilles in February 1948, in Nice at the end of 1948, in Montpellier and Nîmes in March 1949, in Lyon in May 1949 and in Florence in September 1949.⁹²

In the inaugural issue of its periodical, the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*, the first president Henri Marrou, wartime *ami sûr* of *l'Amitié chrétienne* and participant at Fribourg,⁹³ wrote, “In choosing for this association the name of *Amitié judéo-chrétienne*, we wished to take up [the name] that *l'Amitié chrétienne*, founded in 1941, harboured in its intentions, but which the occupation prevented it from adopting.”⁹⁴ Not so, testified Jean-Marie Soutou (1912–2003), a Righteous among the Nations and member of *Amitié chrétienne*, the Lyon-based group of Christians, founded by Pierre Chaillet and dedicated to manifesting opposition to Pétain’s regime by coming to the aid of its victims, in particular its Jewish victims. Soutou would go on record to this effect shortly before his death.

There was no direct connection between the *Amitié Chrétienne* and the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*... the *Amitié Chrétienne* was established in 1940/41 on the initiative of a Catholic [Fr. Pierre Chaillet, priest and teacher of German theology and philosophy at the Jesuit school at Fourvière] and a Protestant [Gilbert Beaujolin, a silk merchant] of Lyon to assist foreigners in difficult circumstances in France, whether interned in camps or living in relative freedom. In fact they were mostly Jewish refugees. The founders’ goals were to publicly affirm Christian solidarity with these victims of discrimination and treatment incompatible with Christian values. Having regard to its aims, the *Amitié Chrétienne* was not a clandestine organization. On the contrary, it had to be a ‘pigeon on the street,’ engaging openly the Protestant and Catholic Churches. That is why to the knowledge of all, its two presidents were Cardinal Gerlier and Pastor Boegner.

...There was no board of directors, no meetings, no membership. The structure took the form of an ‘office’ in which was to be found the two founders: the *Abbé* [Alexandre] Glasberg [Ukrainian immigrant and Jewish

⁹¹ Quoted in Goldenberg: 440.

⁹² Armand Lunel, “Les Vingt-Cinq Ans de L’amitié judéo-chrétienne,” *Cahiers de l’Association des amis de Jules Isaac*, no. 2 (1974): 16.

⁹³ See Pierre Riche, Henri Irénée Marrou, *Historien engagé* (Cerf, Coll. Histoire/Biographie, 2003).

⁹⁴ Henri Irénée Marrou, “A Nos Lecteurs,” *L’Amitié judéo-chrétienne*, no. 1 (1948): 2.

convert to Catholicism, vicar of Notre-Dame in Saint-Alban, one of the poorest parishes in the suburbs of Lyon], together with the 4 or 5 collaborators of P. Chaillat, who represented Cardinal Gerlier and in [Gerlier's] name, 'directed' things in a most informal manner. On the periphery, and not officially, were Jewish personalities: André Weil, Dr. Joseph Weil, Samy Lattès, who funded the activities. The only other source of funding consisted of gifts received by *Abbé* Glasberg from wealthy Lyonnais... Circumstances dictated that there be a clandestine, illegal aspect to these activities: false papers, networks for passage into Spain and Switzerland.

Having no membership *per se*, the *Amitié Chrétienne* would have occasion to call upon '*amis sûrs*' when it came to hiding, nourishing or secreting [out of France] its '*protégés*,' namely foreign Jews threatened with deportation. Marrou was among these *amis sûrs* and he never failed to respond.

It is in this regard that there may be a virtual connection with the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*: the reasons for Marrou's involvement [in the *Amitié Chrétienne*] were no different, spiritually speaking, from those that impelled him to involve himself in the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*, even if the objects of the latter were not those of the former...I think it is this connection, ontological one might say, that is reflected in [Marrou's] two letters to Jules Isaac following the publication of [Marrou's] '*Apostilles*.'

As far as a connection, strictly speaking, there was none since after the arrest of those involved by the Gestapo, the *Amitié Chrétienne* ceased to exist; thenceforth its illegal activities were carried on by Joseph Rovin who was the principal supplier of false identity cards to several resistance movements.

At no time in 1948 did any person formerly involved with the *Amitié Chrétienne* inform me of the creation of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*, which would not have been expected in the circumstances.⁹⁵

Another for-the-record correction was necessitated further to misrepresentations by French Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas of the genesis of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*. Buried in the archives of the Lille diocese is a letter dated 14 September 1962 addressed to Achille Cardinal Liénart (longstanding Bishop of Lille), in the hand of Mme Marie-Rose Lipman, then secretary-general of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France*. Affixed to the draft of Lipman's letter is Levinas' unsigned, typewritten text titled, *Note sur le sens des Amitiés Judéo-Chrétiennes*. Lipmann writes that she is enclosing "the text of the propositions of M. [Emmanuel] Levinas

⁹⁵ Jean-Marie Soutou, "Note Indédite de Monsieur Jean-Marie Soutou," *La revue Sens, organe de l'amitié judeo-chrétienne de France*, no. 11 (2003): 502-504.

for review and comment ...in connection with the eventual modification of the articles of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*.” The first of Levinas’ propositions describes the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne* as having been “constituted on the morrow of the Liberation.” The second of his propositions refers to the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne* as, “in effect, a Christian initiative, extending the fraternal relations that during the occupation the Jews had found among the Christians of France.”⁹⁶ Jules Isaac was quick to correct the record. In a letter to the secretary-general dated 12 November 1962, he wrote,

I cannot let pass the propositions of M. Levinas without expressing my opinion thereon. I have the greatest of respect and sympathy for M. Levinas, but I am compelled to rectify certain of his propositions that do not seem to me to conform to the facts. Indubitably, one of the catalysts for the *Amitié judéo-chrétienne* was the heroic charity of which certain Christians were witness toward persecuted Jews during the years of the great ordeal, to wit the clandestine journal, *Témoignage Chrétien*. But is it not accurate to say that *les Amitiés judéo-chr[étiennes]* ‘were constituted on the morrow of the liberation at Christian initiative.’ In France, *les Amitiés judéo-chrétiennes* were not founded until 1948–49 and at Jewish initiative. I may speak of this in my capacity as principal founder.⁹⁷

The first vice president of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne* was Pastor Jacques Martin (one of two Protestants, the other being Assistant-secretary Fadieu Lovsky, editor of *Cahiers d’Études juives* and representing Pastor Charles Westphal, editor of *Foi et Vie*), national director of *Christianisme social* and of its journal, served as the editor-in-chief of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne* bulletin. “There was a real friendship between Jules Isaac and [Martin],” recalled Lovsky. “But he left Paris in 1950 [to become a librarian in Chambon], I think. Pastor Elie Lauriol replaced him at the *Comité Central*.”⁹⁸ The first secretary of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne* was Samy Lattès, *chargé de cours en Italien à la Faculté des Lettres de Paris*. His home address, 55 *quai d’Orsay*, served as the first address of the organization. “He was a charming man,” Lovsky recollected, “somewhat skeptical and lacking in organizational skills. He played an important role in the early

⁹⁶ Quoted in Bruno Charmet, “Correspondence entre Emmanuel Levinas et Jules Isaac,” *Sens, revue de l’Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France* 401 (2015): 523.

⁹⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 525.

⁹⁸ Lovsky, “Les Premières années de l’amitié judéo-chrétienne,” 266.

stages in connection with our difficult relations with the ICCJ.”⁹⁹ Henri Bédarida, Sorbonne professor, was treasurer. Maurice Vanikoff, publicist and president of *les associations d’anciens combattants volontaires juifs*, oversaw public relations. “He was at ease with the legislation governing the press and knew how to negotiate with publishing houses,” remembered Lovsky. “Without him, we would never have published our bulletin. Practically speaking, the offices of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne* were really his own...Around 1950–52, he became embroiled in a conflict with Lattès, who gave up the struggle and resigned.”¹⁰⁰

In addition to Isaac, the first members-at-large to the best of Lovsky’s recollection, were composer Léon Algazi, “Was he Fleg’s brother-in-law?” wondered Lovsky. “In any event, he was very close [to Fleg], discrete and contemplative and directed ‘*La voix d’Israël*’ on the radio, a beneficial undertaking for the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*”; Jesuit priest and *Les Études* editor Jean Daniélou, “who played a pivotal role in kickstarting the AJCF,” according to Lovsky, “and knew how to listen to Jules Isaac, to understand what he was saying, to assist him with very good counsel and who transcended his historical and theological doubts in light of his appreciation of importance of Isaac’s interrogation”; Edmond Fleg, “who received us as friend and poet with the simplicity of a great lord,” Lovsky remembered, “who ensured calm and courtesy, as was his own nature, who bore the tribulations of being Jewish with a *noblesse* and a tranquil bearing that spoke louder than his words, who supported Isaac..., made best efforts to preempt or resolve conflicts, and even before the Shoah, was engaged in Christian-Jewish dialogue”; Grand Rabbi Kaplan, who lent determined support to Jules Isaac and the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*, not there for personal reasons or because he had been enlisted, but out of conviction,...listening to the Christians, understanding the circumstances, one of the most ardent of *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne* founding members; Jacques Madaule, who would assume the presidency of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne* on Marrou’s resignation; and Léon Zander, “who spoke rarely, but whose presence had a particularly calming influence on the Jewish members.”¹⁰¹ Missing from the members-at-large in the first issue of *l’Amitié judéo-chrétienne*, “no doubt at his request,”¹⁰² according to

⁹⁹ Ibid., 263.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 264.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 263–66.

¹⁰² Ibid., 265.

Lovsky, was Père de Sion Fr. Paul Démann, editor of the *Cahiers sioniens*. “It was he, together with Father Jean de Menasce, who drafted the 10 Points of Seelisberg. His active intelligence, his theological competence, his capacity to elicit from the work of Jules Isaac an appropriate Christian response, his diplomacy, his authentic friendship with Isaac, all these combined to make the role he played [within the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*] a capital one.”¹⁰³

The establishment of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne* in May 1948 was eclipsed by the publication one month earlier of a book that would have been stillborn if things had unfolded differently for Jules Isaac on that fateful morning of 7 October 1943. By this book, the author and editor of the *MALET-ISAAC* and *Inspecteur général honoraire de l’Instruction publique* would reemerge into the public sphere in France, shorn of his republican, laic, socialist chrysalis, but not of his Péguy-esque fire, to correct the record as it pertains to the Jewish people in general, and one of its own in particular. “I have had [the first copy off the press of *Jésus et Israël*] in my hands since 11:00 o’clock yesterday morning,” he wrote to Payré on 14 April 1948. “I feel somewhat deflated, imagining how much of my past it embodies, even more so in the present and the future.”¹⁰⁴ Deflated, yet, at peace, he wrote three days later, “I am aware of having completed the task that I had set myself. The fruits may not be immediate; they will come sooner or later and other combattants, I hope, will take over from me. What is said is said and cannot be erased.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Isaac, “Corrèspondance inédite de Jules Isaac: Extraits de lettres à son médecin (1946–1948),” 12.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Jésus et Israël

A DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST HATE

Jésus et Israël was the first sustained, wide-ranging, well-grounded and passionately argued intellectual assault upon anti-Judaism in history. The *adversus judeos* tradition “is not easy to find... in the Church’s official documents,” according to Gregory Baum, who had a hand in the drafting of *Nostra aetate* (No. 4). “Since [this tradition] was not a contested teaching, there was no need for the official Church to deal with it.”¹ The contemptuous teaching about Jews may not be easy to find in the Church’s official documents, but what about its corollary, the system of degradation, as concretized in the Jewish badge, the destruction of Jewish religious books, Jewish segregation in compulsory ghettos and conversional sermons? These measures were papal-decreed, at successive councils, with a view to protecting Christians from Jewish influence and converting the Jews, or at least humiliating them, as a deicide race. Anti-Judaism was an ancient tradition, consisting of a seemingly unbreachable complex of interlocking and mutually reinforcing ideas. This complex was akin to a system in the structuralist sense; it subsisted by its own law, preserved or enriched by the combination of its transformations and without need to reach beyond its confines or appeal to external elements.² For example, if there is no collective Jewish guilt for the death of Jesus; if, to the contrary,

¹ Correspondence to the author dated 19 January 2015.

² See Jean Piaget, *Structuralism*, trans. Chaninah Maschler (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971).

the Jewish people as a whole then living did not reject Jesus, does it follow that Jesus posed no challenge to the Judaism of his time, that he was nothing more than one in a line of failed (as opposed to false) messiahs?³ The theological slope is a slippery one. The challenge was not the replacement of one idea by another, but of an entire structure of ideas by another, with attention throughout to questions of history and exegesis.

Albin Michel, Isaac's publisher, proposed to recapitulate the book in a *bande-annonce* this way: *NON, le peuple d'Israël n'a pas crucifié le Christ*. Isaac countered with *NON, Israël n'a pas rejeté Jésus. NON, il ne l'a pas crucifié*. Isaac's book opens with two Forewords. The first is dated 1943,⁴ the year in which the manuscript began to take form while the Isaacs were living under their own identities in Saint-Agrève (Ardèche).⁵ The arrest and deportation of his wife Laure, daughter Juliette, son Jean-Claude and son-in-law Robert Boudeville had yet to occur. Embedded in this first Foreword is Isaac's central thesis—that the taproot of antisemitism is religious in nature,⁶ and one onto which is grafted other forms of antisemitism, including racial antisemitism, to draw their sustenance.⁷

Jewish by birth, the author cautions the reader that it was in no way his intention to write an apology for, or a defense of, Jews and Judaism.

But, convinced that antisemitism is a leprosy,
that the taproot of this malady originates from afar, that this taproot is
religious in nature,

that a multitude of Christians – Protestants as well as Catholics – have
been stricken more or less deeply, more or less consciously, with the after-

³ See Rabbi Irving Greenberg, "The Relationship of Judaism and Christianity: Toward a New Organic Model," *Quarterly Review* 4, no. 4 (winter 1984).

⁴ The 1943 Foreword does not appear in the new revised edition (Fasquelle, 1959).

⁵ The identity card of each of Jules and Laure Isaac were stamped "JUIF," a measure adopted by the Vichy regime on 11 December 1942, after the Isaacs' arrival in the Auvergne. Moreover, Isaac closes the draft of a document that he prepared shortly after the arrest of his wife and children in October 1943 and whose purpose it was to make the case for their release, as follows, "The only offence for which [Jules and Laure] could be found guilty was that they had considered it prudent to change their identities [on their arrival in Riom on 1 October 1943]." (*Le Fond Jules Isaac, bibliothèque Méjanes d'Aix-en-Provence*).

⁶ This opinion is not universally shared. See note 42 in Notes to Part II Chapters 1–4 in Gregory Baum, *The Jews and the Gospel: A Re-Examination of the New Testament* (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1961), 282.

⁷ For a more contemporary, though not necessarily compelling, rebuttal of this thesis, see Marc Saperstein, "Bumps, Forks and Detours on the Road to God's Kingdom," in *A Time for Recommitment: Jewish Christian Dialogue 70 Years after War and Shoah*, ed. Bernhard Vogel (Berlin: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., 2009), 58–9.

effects of a secular tradition that has given rise to the most odious habits of mind and heart, and of language,

his aim was to demonstrate that these habits are grounded in ignorance, in error and in iniquity,

and that the cure is a rational reading of sacred texts, together with a precise knowledge of historical realities.⁸

The second Foreword is dated 1946, the year in which Isaac completed Part IV, the final part of the manuscript, in the tranquility and security of his home in Aix-en-Provence, and by which time he had learned that his wife, daughter and son-in-law had perished in the death camps. In the second Foreword, the reference to Isaac's Jewish origins is no longer explicit, perhaps out of concern that his denunciations of a certain Christian tradition regarding Jews might be perceived as driven by a vengeful impulse. The phrase, "a secular tradition," in the 1943 Foreword has given way to "traditional opinion, current opinion in Christianity" in the 1946 Foreword. In this latter regard, however, Isaac was intending the same thing—traditions that could not possibly reflect gospel truth.

Begun in 1943, in the course of a life already threatened and uprooted, soon to be ravaged and hunted, completed in 1946, in solitude and seclusion...

[The book] was born of persecution. Midway in its writing, a tragedy crossed it. How did the book survive? Who is to say? It is a miracle, from which derives the imperative of a sacred duty – commemoration.

It is not and could not be essentially a textbook, for a discipline like exegesis – the interpretation of Scripture – demands the preparation and consecration of a lifetime.

It is the cry of a conscience outraged, of a heart lacerated. It is addressed to the consciences and hearts of its readers. I sorrow over those who will refuse to hear it...

Yet if it is not a textbook in its essence, it is so in its framework, in its methods of investigation and discussion, and, I believe I can say, in its strict probity.

I am the first to regret that it cites writers of negligible – and sometimes beggarly – learning more often than qualified exegetes, whether a Wellhausen or a Loisy; but this serves my chosen purpose, which is to emphasize not scholarly research but traditional opinion, current opinion in Christianity, and thus to confront the Christian world with its responsibilities, which are grave.

⁸ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 11.

Even in the darkest hours, I found the most valued help on my path. I express my infinite gratitude to all those who aided and sustained me.

The reader may wonder to what religion the author belongs. This is easy for him to answer: none. But his whole book is witness to the fervour that inspires and guides him.⁹

The work for which the world was waiting was, in Isaac's words, "more a historian's work than a work of history."¹⁰ Although written by a scholar, it was not a scholarly work. It was unclassifiable, as was Isaac himself. Two years after the book's publication, Isaac would elaborate.

[H]aving returned to a normal life (or almost), with all the libraries accessible again, I was tempted, terribly tempted to undo my work and then redo it. But no, I resisted the urge. The essence of the work was not an extensive bibliographical, exegetical, and theological inquiry which, given where I was at that point, would have easily filled the years I had left to live. The essence was not scholarship, not science, nor was it courtesy, good manners, or academic weightiness. The essence was the Essence, the Text, Scripture, the Word. And with respect to the Text, the freshness and integrity of human attention, a certain openness of soul, a certain analysis, absolute sincerity, and the truth of the battle waged...

This explains why it has touched hearts, caused upset, or irritation sometimes: in its massive body lives an ardent soul, a flame.

This is not enough to define it: constrained by circumstances, an ever more burdensome constraint, it became something else along the way, more than a book: the life of a being, of flesh and blood, caught in torment, riveted to his task, his oar, his galley bench. And finally something else: an act, an initiated action which willy-nilly I had to pursue, a declaration of war against hate, that nameless hate which, after simmering and making headway for centuries, finally culminated in a cursed place: AUSCHWITZ.¹¹

THE ARCHITECTURE OF JÉSUS ET ISRAËL

The first edition of the book was 585 pages long and included as an annex Isaac's Eighteen Points. The book is divided into four parts: (i) "Jesus, the Christ, a Jew 'According to the Flesh,'" (ii) "The Gospel in the Synagogue," (iii) "Jesus and His People" and (iv) "The Crime of Deicide."

⁹ Ibid., 13–14. In the new rev ed (Fasquelle 1959), Isaac clarified, "fervour regarding Israel, fervour regarding Jesus, son of Israel."

¹⁰ Isaac, "Résonance de Jésus et Israël," 207.

¹¹ Ibid., 201–2.

The first two parts address Jesus' Jewishness and the Jewish matrix out of which he emerged. The third Part, in which exegesis played the largest role according to Isaac, deals with Jesus and Israel in their reciprocal relations. The fourth part deals with the allegation of deicide. The table of contents consists not of chapters, but of Propositions—21 in all—each of which introduces what would typically be styled a chapter, each of which serves to point the reader to a particular scriptural truth.¹² Each proposition addresses an aspect of Christian teaching corresponding neither to the New Testament nor to the data of history, the fruit of the *méthode des deux points de vue* that Isaac had pioneered in the interwar period. This time, instead of noting the discrepancies between the French and German historiographies of World War I, Isaac would note the discrepancies between the gospel texts and a certain Christian tradition regarding Jews and Judaism. "A first read of these Twenty-One Propositions summarizing this work is so distressing that one dares not remain silent while the Jewish people cry these out with such anguish,"¹³ wrote Protestant convert to Catholicism Julien Green in the *Revue de Paris*. The first edition bore a dedication giving witness to what Isaac would later recall in correspondence of 25 August 1954 to his younger son, Jean-Claude: "The final words of your mother gave this mission a sacred character. I will not let go for as long as I have life in me."¹⁴

IN MEMORIAM
A MA FEMME, A MA FILLE
MARTYRES
TUÉES PAR LES ALLEMANDS¹⁵
TUÉES

¹² The use of Proposition in lieu of chapter was not new; it had been employed by Isaac, and fellow historian Renouvin, in their elaboration of 39 Propositions following the 1935 Leipzig conference, Propositions that were incorporated thereafter "into the most widely read of [France's] school books and into the instruction of the better of our teachers," according to Isaac (quoted in Kaspi, "Jules Isaac, historien et citoyen," 17).

¹³ Julien Green, "Jésus et Israël," *Revue de Paris* (June 1949).

¹⁴ Quoted in Kaspi, *Jules Isaac*, 250.

¹⁵ In the dedication of the new revised edition, published in 1959 by Fasquelle (the same year in which Pope John XXIII would convoke an ecumenical council), the words "les Allemands" were replaced with "Les Nazis d'Hitler." Between editions, might it have crossed Isaac's mind that to tar the entire German people with the crime of genocide could be a double-edged sword in efforts to rectify Christian teaching about the death of Jesus? It did occur to Augustin Cardinal Bea, a German, who in 1960 would be appointed by John XXIII to preside over the Secretariat for Christian Unity. In an interview granted to the Jewish Chronicle on 16 August 1962 during a visit to England, Bea would reject the imputation to himself and Germans at large of guilt for Nazi war crimes in the following terms.

SIMPLEMENT PARCE QU'ELLES S'APPELAIENT
ISAAC

Isaac opens his book with a reference to the Germans. He closes his book with a reference to the Germans. But their responsibility, he concludes, is derivative in nature.¹⁶

The German responsibility for these crimes, as overwhelming as it has been, is only a derivative responsibility, grafted like a most hideous parasite on a centuries-old tradition which is a Christian tradition. How can we forget that Christianity, especially from the eleventh century on, practised a policy of degradation and pogroms against the Jews which has extended – among certain Christian peoples – into the contemporary era, and whose survival is observable still in Poland, with its highly Catholic history, whose Hitlerian system was merely an atrociously perfected copy?

...[Latent antisemitism] exists everywhere, and the contrary would be surprising, for the perennial source of this latent antisemitism is none other than Christian religious teaching in all its forms, the traditional and tendentious interpretation of Scripture, the interpretation which I am absolutely convinced is contrary to the truth and love of Him who was the Jew Jesus.¹⁷

A MEMORIAL TO PÉGU

Isaac's work was a memorial to his wife, Laure, and his daughter, Juliette. But there was evidence of yet another memorial in the form of 13 citations scattered about the book. Among the 190 theologians, biblical scholars,

"One of the tasks of the future Council will be to reject that mistake, fraught with consequences, that Jews are collectively responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Even the then population of the city of Jerusalem was not responsible in its entirety for the condemnation of Jesus of Nazareth. Thousands of Jews built the young Church with Saint Peter; only a minority supported the political movement that, for reasons of state, demanded the death of the Messiah. To make the entire Jewish people responsible for it, is as unjust as condemning all Germans for Hitler. I myself am of German blood, but nobody can say I am responsible for Nazi crimes." (Quoted in G. M.-M. Cottier, O.P., "L'historique de la Déclaration," in *Les Relations d'église avec les Religions Non Chrétiennes. Déclaration Nostra Aetate. Texte Latin et Traduction Française*, ed. A.-M. Henry, Unam Sanctam 61 (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1966), 41. The question of collective German guilt for the genocide of the Jews has been the subject of study by not a few philosophers and historians (see p. 267 n. 4 of *Jésus et Israël*.)

¹⁶ Isaac anticipated by half a century *Dabru Emet*, a Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity (15 July 2002) which submits, "Without the long history of Christian anti-Judaism and Christian violence against Jews, Nazi ideology could not have taken hold nor could it have been carried out."

¹⁷ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 572.

Catholic philosophers and exegetes listed in an index of authors cited (including le Père Joseph Bonsirven, Louis-Claude Fillion, le Père Marie-Josèphe Lagrange, Maurice Goguel, Alfred Loisy, dom Guéranger and Edmond Stapfer), there figured 13 times one who was neither theologian, nor biblical scholar, nor exegete nor, arguably, philosopher. A curious inclusion in this list of interlocutors, his name—Charles Péguy—would subtitle the first (and only) volume of Isaac’s published memoirs—*Les Expériences de ma vie: Péguy*. The same had been done by Péguy himself to memorialize a close friend of his, Marcel Baudouin, who had died on 25 July 1896 during his year of military service and whose sister, Charlotte-Françoise Baudouin, Péguy had married. Péguy’s first work, *Jeanne d’Arc*, a play in three acts, had been signed *Marcel et Pierre Baudouin*; his second work, *Marcel, premier dialogue de la Cité harmonieuse*, had been signed *Pierre Baudouin* (alias Péguy) and the name, *Marcel*, had figured in the very title of the work. “It seems that Péguy, by these two works published in 1897–98, by the signature and by the title,” wrote Isaac, “was intent on bearing witness to a friendship stronger than death; that he had [quoting Romain Rolland’s *Péguy*, I at p. 52] ‘made ... a secret vow to prolong in himself the life of the deceased and his thought.’”¹⁸

Daniel-Rops described the phenomenon in somewhat different terms. “Marcel dead would remain present in his life. A never-ending dialogue would go on between the two, of which Péguy’s work bears many traces.”¹⁹ Is it possible Isaac was giving witness to an internal dialogue that was stronger than death, to a wish to perpetuate the life and thought of his mentor and friend, Charles Péguy, when he wrote in the Introduction (Preliminary Observations on the Old Testament) to *Jésus et Israël* that from the Christian point of view, the Old Testament is “the prelude (albeit grandiose), the prologue, the first and necessary stage in humanity’s journey toward God; that it is a preview, a prediction, an annunciation, an advance toward the light?”²⁰ This quotation, as well as the passage from Péguy’s *Mystery of the Holy Innocents* chosen to close Isaac’s Introduction, is reflective of the *Heilsgeschichte* (salvation/redemptive history in which God reveals himself according to a plan of progressive revelation of which Christ is the center and the New Testament, the fulfillment of the Old) overarching hermeneutical principle uniting the Old

¹⁸ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, 84.

¹⁹ Henri Daniel-Rops, *Péguy* (n.p.: Ernest Flammarion, 1933), 54.

²⁰ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 26.

and New Testaments.²¹ Péguy, returned Catholic that he was, appears to espouse this hermeneutic as evidenced in the correspondence of the rising, carnal, temporal rib with the Old Testament and the correspondence of the descending, spiritual, eternal rib, with the New.

...the old testament is that arch which rises in a rib,
 In a single ridge and the new testament
 Is the same arch which falls,
 Which descends in a single sweep.
 And the rising rib begins from the earth and it is a carnal rib.
 But that sweep which falls comes from the spirit
 And it is a spiritual sweep.
 And the rib and the ridge that rises issues from time
 it is a temporal rib.
 But the sweep that falls comes from eternity and it is
 An eternal sweep.
 And the key of that mystical arch.
 The key itself
 Carnal, spiritual,
 Temporal, eternal,
 Is Jesus,
 Man,
 God.²²

In *Jésus and Israël*, the historical is juxtaposed with the theological, the human with the divine, the natural with the supernatural, the temporal with the spiritual. In the confrontation of Jewish monotheism with the Christian dogma of the Trinity “lies the abyss that separates the Christian conscience from the Israelite conscience,” Isaac muses, quoting Nicolas Berdyaev. “I think so too ... But an abyss to regard with respect. It will not be filled by pouring cartloads of insult and calumny into it.”²³ And respect it Isaac did. And elaborate it he would in the last of his books to be published.

²¹ See especially the first three chapters of Mary C. Boys, *Biblical Interpretation in Religious Education* (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1980).

²² Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 27–28.

²³ Quoted in *ibid.*, 77. Berdyaev was an exponent of an important strain in Eastern Orthodox spirituality.

The Christian faith, born of the Jewish faith, is based on the mystery of the Incarnation, a mystery which is the object of infinite respect to all religious people, even if they do not embrace it themselves. The Christian Incarnation means that God was incarnate in the human person of the Jew, Jesus of Nazareth...To proceed still further: Christian doctrine teaches both that Jesus was wholly man during his human lifetime and is wholly God. This dual nature, human and divine, has a momentous implication...Jesus emerges from history during his human lifetime as man and fully man. Assuming that the relevant texts exist, history alone can illuminate for us the respective roles of the Jews and the Romans in Jesus' conviction and his crucifixion on Calvary. In this purely historical inquiry we must work without any preconceptions. On the Christian level – Jesus as Son of God and possessing the fullness of the divine nature – it is theology that illuminates Jesus and gives full meaning to the Crucifixion. The simplest and clearest statement of that meaning is to be found in Point Seven of the Seelisberg program.²⁴

PRINCIPAL THESES OF JÉSUS ET ISRAËL

The implication of Jesus' humanity, a complete humanity, a Jewish humanity as Isaac reminded Christians, was that he, in his human nature, is a legitimate object of historical inquiry, and this notwithstanding the Chalcedonian doctrine that there is a oneness in the twoness of Christ's natures. Isaac considered this Jesus of history to be *sui generis*. "If I am convinced of one thing, it is that Jesus does not lend himself to any scholastic category, any," Isaac writes. "Exactly for this reason, when someone tries to persuade me that Jesus' universalism was not only not Jewish but anti-Jewish, that it carried an exception and that this exception was addressed to his own people, the Jewish people, the only one he knew, the only one he wanted to know, I have doubts, I ask to examine the texts."²⁵ However separate and distinct were the categories of the metaphysical and the historical, there was nonetheless a relationship between the two. History, according to Isaac, is silent on what theology teaches since it is beyond its depth and has nothing to add. It need not come to terms with theology and cannot be disowned by theology. But the converse is not true. Theology must take history into account, must come to terms

²⁴ Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt*, 118–21.

²⁵ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 291.

with objective history, he argued, failing which it must be disowned by history.²⁶ The challenge was to extricate the deposit of historical reality embedded in the texts of the gospels, a historical reality that is sometimes hidden or veiled. And where a particular theological tradition is disowned by history, contended Isaac, “it becomes no more than a theological myth without the slightest foundation. Therefore respect for the truth demands that myth’s condemnation and disappearance.”²⁷ Theological traditions which depart from “historical truth,” which do not correspond to the “data of history,” are at best legend. This point of view is nowhere better expressed than in Isaac’s last book, *The Teaching of Contempt*.

As an historian, and one little given to theological speculation, I am well aware that theology by its very nature goes beyond history in a unique way. But it is also true that in all the great religions, theology has an intimate connection with history. So it is with those three religions which may be said to be members of the same family – the Jewish, the Christian and the Moslem – since the divine revelation, the mystery of faith which is fundamental to these three religions, becomes part of their history...Therefore, history has a right to hold theology accountable for the use the latter has made of the historical data at her disposal. History has a right to ask theology not to distort or misconstrue these data and to remain conscientiously faithful to historical truth, insofar as the latter can be fairly ascertained and determined. It is true that theology goes beyond history, but only provided that theology respects history as its point of departure; this is not only its duty but, I venture to say, its sacred duty.²⁸

Isaac was under no illusion that he could dredge up the life and times of the historical Jesus. “In dealing with the difficult problem of the relations

²⁶ Isaac was under no illusion that there was an objective history, a “what really happened,” schooled though he had been in the positivist method by Charles V. Langlois and Charles Seignobos, both of whom were on the faculty at the Sorbonne when Isaac was a student. Their *An Introduction to the Study of History*, published in France in 1898, was translated immediately into English and published in London in the same year. Scientific history presupposes the existence of objective history. “The historian works with documents. Documents are the traces which have been left by the thoughts and actions of men of former times.” The process of joining document to document with a view to joining fact to fact, however exact, scientific and painstaking, was thought to permit a reconstruction of how things really were. “The document is [the historian’s] starting-point, the fact his goal.” In sum... no documents, no history.

²⁷ Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt*, 71.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 40–41.

between Jesus and Israel [the Jewish people], I did not presume, nor did I intend to presume, that there was an authentic, objective history in this regard, nor was it my goal to retrieve this history,” Isaac writes. “Most often, there were no documents but the gospels, and I was explicit in my doubts about their historical weight, their ‘testimonial’ weight, with all due respect to these venerable texts...I do not purport to tell historical truth, but *scriptural truth, gospel truth* [emphasis added], such as can be discerned from the [new testament] texts, in the light of, to the extent possible (unfortunately infrequent), the weightiest of historical data.”²⁹

It is possible that the first two parts of *Jésus et Israël* (which discuss Jesus’ Jewishness and the rich, vibrant Jewish matrix out of which he emerged) draw upon two inferences made by Isaac’s elder son Daniel, a convert to Protestantism, from Luke 16:17 (“But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one stroke of a letter in the law to be dropped”) in a 61-page essay written in 1941 and titled “*Jésus et le Judaïsme de son temps*.” The essay was read and annotated by Jules Isaac.³⁰ At pages 39–40, Daniel Isaac writes, “From [Luke 16:17], where Jesus is presented to us as faithful to the doctrine of the Torah’s eternity, it may be inferred: 1) that Jesus, if he distanced himself from the Jewish religion, did not take himself out of the matrix of this religion, which he practised until the last day of his life; and 2) that his teaching was *ipso facto* addressed to the Jews.”³¹ Fifteen years later, in a book published in 1956, Isaac wrote, “Everything happened in those first years [30 CE – 65 CE] as if the risen Jesus had not instructed his disciples: ‘Go unto the world and proclaim the good news unto the whole of creation’ (Mark, XVI, 15; Matthew, XXVIII, 19), but rather had he reiterated his prior instructions, ‘Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel’ (Matthew, X, 5–6).”³² Whether Isaac was influenced by Daniel’s scholarship or not, the principal theses of *Jésus et Israël* remain the same.

- Christian teaching ought not to suppress, but rather emphasize, that Jesus was Jewish, a circumcised Jew, born of a Jewish mother, that he exercised his ministry in synagogues and in the Jerusalem Temple,

²⁹ Isaac, “Résonance de Jésus et Israël,” 207.

³⁰ Kaspi, *Jules Isaac*, 182.

³¹ Le Fonds Jules Isaac, *bibliothèque Méjanes d’Aix-en-Provence*, pp. 39–40.

³² Isaac, *Genèse de l’antisémitisme*, 145.

that his disciples were all Jewish and that Jesus himself, born under the Mosaic law, was observant of the law until his final hour.

- Christian teaching ought to teach or remind Christians that Jesus' teaching was grounded solidly in Jewish roots.
- Christian teaching ought to teach or remind Christians that although Jesus' adversaries included the leaders, the illustrious and the respectable, his supporters included a substantial portion of the population in the geography where he preached (Galilee and Judea), keeping in mind that the largest part of the Jewish population, already dispersed at this time, never encountered him.
- Christians ought to be quick to discredit the view that the Jewish people are the object of a divine malediction and reprobation and that they are deserving of misfortune. "The degradation or the malediction of Israel that a certain theology sees everywhere in the gospels because it has decided to see it everywhere," Isaac writes, "is nowhere to be found [in the gospels]."³³
- It is a gross injustice to perceive the Jewish people as deicides, first because a substantial majority of the Jews living in the Roman Empire at the turn of the Common Era never encountered Jesus, and even those in Galilee and Judea who did encounter him knew him not as God, the Son of God, or even as the messiah, but rather revered him as a great prophet.³⁴ Jesus crucified was the victim not of the Jewish people, but of the Roman authority and the Jewish priestly oligarchy, both detested by the Jewish people.

In summary, a tradition more secular than inspired about Jews and Judaism had overgrown gospel reality, giving rise to myths in which "a

³³ Isaac, "Résonance de Jésus et Israël," 204.

³⁴ Augustin Cardinal Bea, in his commentary on *Nostra aetate* (No. 4) wrote in *The Church and the Jewish People* at 161, "Here lies the gravity and the tragedy of their [the Jewish authorities'] action – the exercise of their authority in the condemnation and death of Christ. Yet how grievous was their [the Jewish people's] guilt? Did those 'rulers' of the people in Jerusalem fully understand the divinity of Christ and so become formally guilty of deicide? Our Lord on the cross said in his prayer to the Father: 'Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34). If this reason for forgiveness is no mere empty formula—God forbid—it surely shows that the Jews were far from full understanding of the crime they were committing. St Peter also, addressing the Jewish people on the crucifixion of Christ, repeated: 'And now brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers' (Acts 3:17). So St Peter finds an excuse even for the very rulers! So likewise does St Paul (Acts 13:27)."

few nuggets of truth were intermixed with a number of untruths,” argued Isaac, transcending scripture in order to illuminate it.

Examples included the myth of a degenerate, ossified Judaism at the time of Jesus, the myth of Israel’s dispersion as punishment for the crucifixion, the myth of an underappreciated Jesus during his ministry, rejected (as the Messiah and Son of God) and finally crucified by a refractory and blind Jewish people, and from which arose the insidious myth – more murderous than all of the others – of the ‘deicide’ crime allegedly perpetrated on the person of Christ, God’s Son, committed by the entirety of the Jewish people, and conversely, the myth of the reprobation, rejection and malediction of the Jewish people, uttered from the lips of the Lord himself, Jesus Christ.

Almost every church father has thrown his stone in this moral lapidation of the Jewish people, (and not without practical repercussions). Saint Hilary of Poitiers as well as Saint Jerome, Saint Ephrem as well as Saint Gregory of Nyssa, Saint Ambrose and Saint Epiphanius – this latter Jewish by birth – and Saint Cyril of Jerusalem. But among this illustrious cohort, venerable in other respects, two names merit special mention: the great Greek orator, Saint John Chrysostom...for the abundance and the truculence of his invective, bordering on the outrageous, and the great doctor of Latin Christianity, Saint Augustine, on account of his marvelous (and dangerous) ingenuity in the elaboration of a coherent doctrine [the Jews as a witness people and the consequential system of degradation and debasement].³⁵

According to Isaac’s eleventh Proposition, “Christian writers deliberately omit the fact that at the time of Christ, the dispersion of the Jews had been a *fait accompli* for several centuries. The majority of the Jewish people no longer lived in Palestine.”³⁶ What was the mischief at which this Proposition 11 was directed? Wrote Augustine in *The City of God*, “But the Jews who rejected him, and slew him...after that were...dispersed over the face of the whole earth.”³⁷ Wrote Pope Gregory the Great (590–604), “The apostles had scarcely set foot on the land of exile when Judea fell to Titus; her people, driven forth, were scattered all over the earth.”³⁸ Wrote Father Ferdinand Prat, S.J. whose translated two-volume work, *Jésus Christ*, according to Isaac, was recommended reading for priests and seminarians in many countries, “The vengeance of God will descend with-

³⁵ Isaac, *Genèse de l’antisémitisme*, 160–61.

³⁶ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 155.

³⁷ Quoted in Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt*, 45.

³⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*

out mercy on this decide people...The miserable remnants of Israel will be scattered throughout the vastness of the world, where they must bear until the end of time the weight of this mysterious malediction.”³⁹ Wrote Protestant Reverend Jean Bosc, “The Jews refused to acknowledge their king; they mocked him, condemned him to death, crucified him...They denied God to His face...And God [punished] them. He took away the land he had given them as the sign of his promise...They are scattered over the surface of the earth, without a land of their own...with a religion robbed of its substance.”⁴⁰ Not historical, contended Isaac. “[T]he great Dispersion of the Jewish people, that dispersion perennially offered to Christian thinking – often from the height of the pulpit – as punishment for the crime, took place several centuries before Jesus’ time, before the crime.”⁴¹ And thus was this tradition demoted to the status of legend. But some legends die hard. In later life, Isaac would have to defend this contention.

How deeply rooted such convictions can be [the dispersion of Israel as a divine punishment] is further illustrated by a barb recently aimed at me by one of the Catholic critics of *Jésus et Israël*: ‘To confuse the Diaspora with the final dispersion foretold in Luke 21:24 is frankly laying it on a bit thick... [Abbé Tissier, mimeographed lessons (No. 220, p. 5)].’ This good Father is so shocked by my bad faith that he stoops to vulgarity.

So we must teach him another lesson in exegesis and history. For is it not ‘laying it on even thicker’ to force Scripture and history to say things they do not say, and to continue to force the Christian public to believe them?

First, the exegesis: What does Jesus foretell in Luke 21:24? (He is referring specifically to Jerusalem: ‘But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies...’) ‘For...they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led away captive among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.’ Not a word of this passage implies total or final dispersion. Jerusalem and Judea devastated, Jews killed and taken prisoner, the seizure of Jerusalem by the Gentiles: such are Jesus’ prophecies and nothing more.

And such also is the evidence of history.⁴²

³⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 46–7.

⁴⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, 47.

⁴¹ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 158.

⁴² Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt*, 65–6.

Isaac's overarching hermeneutic, if there is one, is that historical concerns were subordinated to the proclamation of the good news; he presupposed that the drafters of the gospels intended to serve religion, not history.

The Gospels are not "pure historiographical works but teaching works," says Aimé Puech. "The evangelists wanted not to compose a rigorous history, as we understand the term today, but to mount a demonstration," observes Joseph Bonsirven. "The Gospels are not history books... The evangelists were primarily concerned with throwing light on the religious value of Jesus' life through a selection of scenes which brought their teaching with them," writes Daniel-Rops. That is indeed their purpose: teaching, 'catechesis,' not history. It certainly does not follow that the Gospels are denuded of historic value. But it necessarily follows that religious concerns, concerns of 'demonstration,' prevailed over strictly historic concerns in the minds of the evangelists.⁴³

Moreover, surmised Isaac, the canonical Gospels, once reduced to writing, were not secure from alterations, additions or suppressions.

We might recall in this connection, as painful as the words are, the accusation made by the pagan polemicist Celsus in the second century in *The True Account*, which we know through Origen's refutation of it in *Against Celsus*, 2:27: 'It is common knowledge that certain Christian believers, like persons who in a fit of drunkenness lay violent hands upon themselves, have reworked the original Gospel texts as they please, to a threefold, and fourfold, and many-fold degree, and have remodelled it, so that they might be able to answer objections.' And Celsus was not alone in saying this: among the Christian writers contemporary with him, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Dionysius of Corinth recognized that 'the writings of the Lord had been unscrupulously falsified.'⁴⁴

Finally, he kept in mind the historical fact that during the period that the Gospel tradition was being reduced to writing, a gulf was opening up between synagogue and church.

Then took place the divorce between Judaism and Christianity – a wholly deplorable divorce. Church and Synagogue became moral enemies, each anathematising the other, each claiming to be the true Israel of God. Learned

⁴³ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 425–26.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 427.

Jews and Christians engaged in furious polemics. From both sides, such polemics have exceeded all measure, all charity, all respect for God or men. There was bitter competition between the two missionary activities. But it is just here that we discover a fact of great importance for our subject: in pagan eyes the Jewish rejection was the greatest argument against Christian claims, and therefore the principal obstacle to the success of the Christian apostolate. Said the pagans: ‘you tell us that Jesus is the Messiah, the Saviour announced by the Jewish prophets; how is it, then, that Jews are not the first to recognize him?’ Here was an obstacle that had to be removed. And so began the efforts of the Christian apologist to discredit his Jewish adversary, to spread distrust of him, to make him appear contemptible, hateful, odious. In short, here is the reason for the growth, the persistence, the violence of Christian anti-Semitism.⁴⁵

Shortly before *Jésus et Israël* went to press, a doctoral thesis came to Isaac’s attention. It had been completed on the eve of World War II, but its defense and publication was deferred until the war had ended. The doctoral candidate was Marcel Simon, a Catholic whose thesis would eventually be published under the title *Verus Israël, Étude sur les relations entre chrétiens et juifs dans l’Empire romain (135–425)*, in English *Verus Israel: A Study of the Relations Between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire (135–425)*. The thesis was defended before a Sorbonne committee that included Henri Marrou, who would himself refer to the study as “a first class work,”⁴⁶ but whose relationship with Isaac was to rupture following Marrou’s less than favorable review of *Jésus et Israël*. Simon’s uncontested thesis, in his own words in a post-scriptum to the 1964 edition of *Verus Israël*, was this: “Judaism, far from having withdrawn into itself, was for Christianity, throughout the period in question [135 CE–425 CE] a real, active and often effective, competitor.”⁴⁷ Simon closes his Foreword dated January 1947, by which time he was an assistant lecturer at the University of Strasbourg, with appreciation to his mentor, Charles Guignebert (by then deceased), “whose lucid counsel and untiring generosity sustained me throughout my years of study and research.”⁴⁸ The following passage

⁴⁵ Jules Isaac, “The Christian Roots of Antisemitism” (Kings Langley, UK: W. G. Kingham (Printers) Ltd., 1965), 54–55.

⁴⁶ Henri Irénée Marrou, “Trois Apostilles,” *Sens, revue de l’Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France*, no. 12 (2005).

⁴⁷ Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel*, 2d ed. (Paris: Boccard, 1964), 477. In effect, Simon inferred from the vehemence of patristic polemic in the period under study a Judaism that had yet to withdraw into itself.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

in *Verus Israël* was sufficient to qualify Simon for footnote reference in *Jésus et Israël*.

Justin [Martyr], let us not forget, anti-Jewish polemicist, was also Christianity's apologist with a view to influencing Roman opinion and authority... In effect, the thesis that informed his entire plea is that Rome's nascent hostility vis-à-vis Christianity was the result of a misunderstanding. That Christianity was treated as an enemy [by Rome] resulted from an absence of exact information, since [Rome] knew the religion only through malevolent reports. The apologist's intent was to reveal to [Rome] the true face of Christianity. Roman rulers and ruled transgressed through ignorance only. One had to look elsewhere for those responsible for this state of affairs. Why not in Israel? The tactic was not original. Its provenance was primitive Christian preaching, and appears clearly in the gospels. Their authors, anxious to cultivate Rome, set themselves to developing a version of the Passion account such that the Roman authority, represented by Pilate, comes out with almost clean hands, while the Jews are demolished by a freely admitted guilt: 'That his blood be on us and on our children!' Demands of a theological nature, the presenting of the Jews as resistant to the divine message, thus coalesce with preoccupations of political opportunism.⁴⁹

The tactic [of reducing the responsibility of the Romans to a minimum in order to increase the responsibility of the Jews proportionately] is not recent. It dates to the origins of Christian preaching and appears clearly in the gospels. Their authors, eager to court Rome, patently applied themselves to presenting a version of the Passion such that Roman authority, represented by Pilate, would emerge from the affair with almost clean hands, while a freely accepted responsibility would crush the Jews: 'His blood be on us and on our children!' The exigencies of theology, which shows the Jewish people rebellious against the divine message, thus joined with the interests of political opportunism.⁵⁰

In proffering this hypothesis, Simon was but drawing upon his own mentor, Guignebert. Twenty years earlier, in 1927, Guignebert had written in his *Christianity Past and Present*,

According to all appearances, the efforts of our evangelists to absolve the Roman from guilt, and lay upon the Jews the entire responsibility for the crime, are not inspired by a desire to be true to the facts, but by a desire to

⁴⁹ Ibid., 146–47.

⁵⁰ Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel* (Paris: Boccard, 1948), 147.

humor the Roman authorities, for they were writing it at a time when these authorities were the sole support of the Christians against the animosity displayed toward them by the synagogue.⁵¹

Within a century following the death of Jesus, the exoneration of Pilate from blame in the execution of Jesus was complete. Tacitus' "Christus, the founder of that [Christian] name, was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius" had given way to Justin Martyr's "This very Son of God...was crucified under Pontius Pilate by your [the Jew, Trypho's] nation."⁵²

Isaac was not the first to note that the term "Jews" in the gospel of John sometimes designates the Jewish people as a whole, sometimes the inhabitants of Judea and sometimes the clique of Jesus' enemies (those the synoptics designate as "the chief priests, the scribes and the Pharisees"). But he appears to have been the first to hypothesize that the near impossibility for the unalerted reader of the fourth gospel to distinguish "between 'Jews' and 'Jews,' between the 'Jews' who were Jesus' relentless enemies and the rest," was no accident. To make his point, Isaac cites numerous passages from the gospel of John. Here is one of them.

The Jews were looking for him [Jesus] at the feast, and saying, 'Where is he?' And there was much muttering about him among the people. While some said, 'He is a good man,' others said, 'No, he is leading the people astray.' Yet for fear of the Jews no one spoke openly of him [Jn 7:11-13].

Isaac asks his reader to re-read the passage rapidly. What is the dominant note? What unalerted reader would think of distinguishing between and among the ways in which the author uses the word "Jews?" Isaac reproduces the passage inserting the implied 'the Jews' in the phrasing—"the [Jewish] people," and farther on, 'some [of the Jews]' and 'no one [among the Jews].'

The Jews were looking for him [Jesus] at the feast and saying, 'Where is he?' And there was much muttering about him among the [Jewish] people. While some [of the Jews] said, 'He is a good man,' others [of the Jews] said, 'No, he is leading the [Jewish] people astray.' Yet for fear of the Jews no one [among the Jews] spoke openly of him.⁵³

⁵¹ Quoted in Moehlman, 235.

⁵² Quoted in *ibid.*, 64.

⁵³ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 195.

Continues Isaac,

Father de Grandmaison and Father Lagrange consider that the use of the words 'Jews' in this special sense is 'quite natural,' according to one, and 'rather natural,' according to the other; perfectly explainable, they both assure us. I readily agree: explainable, but in a completely different way; explainable, but on one condition and one only: explainable, if it was *intentional*. But what a polemical find, and how far-reaching! Given that it is nearly impossible for the reader of the fourth Gospel to distinguish between 'Jews' and 'Jews,' between the 'Jews' who were Jesus' relentless enemies and the rest, it is likewise nearly impossible for him to read this Gospel, unless he is forewarned against such a stylistic procedure...

And this was why the Jews persecuted Jesus... [5:16].

Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life...' The Jews then murmured at him... [6:35, 41].

Jesus then [spoke] to the Jews who had believed in him... They answered him, 'Abraham is our father.' '...we have one Father, even God.' Jesus said to them, '...You are of your father the devil...' [8:31, 39, 41-42, 44].

The Jews said to him, 'Now we know that you have a demon...' So they took up stones to throw at him... [8:52, 59]

The Jews took up stones to stone him [10:31]

...the Jews sought all the more to kill him... [5:18; see also 7:1; 8:40; etc.].

What Christian heart would not be revolted by this infernal hatred?⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Ibid., 195-96.

The Resonance of *Jésus et Israël*

A representative measure of the first reactions elicited by *Jésus et Israël* is the 10 June 1948 debate that was radio-broadcast by the *Tribune de Paris* and of which we have the transcript. Paul Perronet chaired the session. Participants were Jules Isaac, Jesuit Father Jean Daniélou, Protestant Pastor Charles Westphal, Orthodox Church theologian Léon Zander,¹ and Isaac supporters Jacques Madaule and Samy Lattès. Isaac led off with his conclusions.

A reading and rereading of the Gospels in '43-'44, the hardest years of my life led me to conclude that the received tradition regarding Jesus in relation to Israel and Israel in relation to Jesus, a tradition that in no way impacts upon Christian faith and doctrine, overreaches in many respects the New Testament text, and that this received tradition, taught for hundreds and hundreds of years by thousands and thousands of voices, was, in Christendom, the primal and permanent source of antisemitism, the powerful, secular taproot upon which all the other varieties of antisemitism grafted themselves. It follows that only Christian teaching can seek to undo that which Christian teaching has done; and it seems to me that if it can, it should.²

¹ Professor at the Orthodox Institute of Theology of the Russian Emigration Church.

² Jules Isaac, "Israël et la Chrétienté," *L'Amitié judéo-chrétienne*, no. 1 (September 1948): 2.

It seemed inconceivable to Isaac that his indictment of strands of tradition that fostered contempt for Jews, even those embedded within the gospel texts themselves, could in any way impact upon Christian faith and doctrine since if they engendered hatred, how could they be God's Word? "I agree with Jules Isaac," Gregory Baum would concede in the Introduction to the first edition of his partial rebuttal of *Jésus et Israël*, "that if one were convinced that the New Testament contained an inspiration of contempt and hatred for the Jewish people, or for any people, one could not believe that it embodied divine revelation and the source of salvation for mankind."³

Pastor Westphal then weighed in by acknowledging the correctness of certain historically evident truths about Jesus and Temple Judaism. However, he argued, implicit in *Jésus et Israël* is the supposition that if Jewish Christianity had won the day over Paul, everything would have been different, in which case, Westphal said, "we would have been the dupes of an immense error that would have corrupted Christian thought, compelling us today to reject the epistles of Saint Paul and the gospel of John in order to retrieve the meaning of the revelation of Jesus Christ."⁴ Westphal was not the first to note the non-conformity between a Jewish Christianity on the one hand, and the letters of Paul and the gospel of John, on the other. Crimewriter and no friend of the Jews Dorothy Sayers had noted the same thing, but reversed the chain of causation. Four years earlier, in correspondence to James Parkes of August 1944, she had written, "I have noticed that when anybody starts by throwing St Paul into the waste-paper basket, the next casualty is apt to be St John, and thereafter the rest of the N.T. piecemeal, till nothing is left of the Incarnate Word except a few rabbinical sayings (At which point, no doubt, it becomes easier to equate him with the Torah!)"⁵

Isaac refused to be drawn into post-resurrectional theological speculation. "I stopped at the crucifixion," was his retort to Westphal, "and the question, the problem of how it came to be that Christianity broke forth from Judaism in the period that followed the crucifixion is a problem of great magnitude that cannot be addressed here."⁶ P. Daniélou, a regular dialogue partner of Isaac since May 1947, acknowledged that Christ was "*Juif de race*," that the dispersion of the Jews was not a consequence of Christ's death but a *fait*

³ Gregory Baum, *The Jews and the Gospel*, 5.

⁴ Jules Isaac, "Israël et la Chrétienté," *L'Amitié judéo-chrétienne*, no. 1 (September 1948): 2. In the 14 July 1948 issue of *Le Monde*, Westphal referred to the book as an "*ouvrage accusateur*" which exposed an implicit theology with which the Gospel of John, the Book of Acts and the Epistles of Paul cannot be made to conform.

⁵ Quoted in Colin Richmond, *Campaigner against Antisemitism: The Reverend James Parkes, 1896–1981* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 2005), 15.

⁶ Isaac, "Israël et la Chrétienté," 3.

accompli centuries before his birth, that the milieu into which Christ was born was a richly pious one. However, he contended, “it is undisputable, however – and this you [Isaac] downplay – that Christ desired to break with this milieu and inaugurate into history a different epoch. This you minimize, and as a result, by doing so, you diminish for a Christian the transcendence of Christianity over Judaism... Christ was put to death because he presented himself as God and as the Son of God, and thus the term ‘deicide’ is accurate.”⁷ In effect, according to Daniélou, Isaac had shrunk Jesus from the Son of God to a mere prophet and had called into question Jesus’ divinity and divine sonship with his demonstration that according to the gospels, the Jews were ignorant of Jesus’ status as Messiah and Son of God. “I think this critique can be turned around,” Isaac retorted, “and if I have minimized [certain aspects of the gospels], Christian teaching, Catholic teaching has infinitely more deJudaized Jesus...I also never said that Jesus was put to death as a prophet. What I said was that the people, the great masses, never knew him as God, that they revered him as a prophet – my exact terms – and that Jesus was crucified, a victim of the Roman authority and the priestly oligarchy.”⁸ It was then the turn of Isaac’s supporters to speak. Jacques Madaule, reminding the participants and listeners that on an unbiased reading of the New Testament, Jesus was born Jewish, of a Jewish mother, lived according to Jewish law, his apostles were Jewish, as were the first Christian martyrs, and that “it is impossible to make [the gospels] say truthfully that which they do not say, that is, the Jewish people in its entirety is responsible for the death of Christ. And yet that is what we have incessantly heard for nineteen centuries.”⁹

Isaac’s apparent living contact with, and discernment of, God’s Word in the New Testament texts was not lost on his Catholic reviewers. Jacques Madaule, in a review published in *Témoignage chrétien* (4-6-1948), wrote,

The infinite respect with which [Isaac] has dealt with these venerable [gospel] texts is not lost on us...He asks us to face up to our responsibilities... Is it not correct that a certain tradition, a certain manner of reading and interpreting the gospel texts, that has made its way into our liturgy and to the most basic of catechesis, could have contributed, likely did contribute to promoting hostility toward Israel? Are not the ghettos and the pogroms, the ovens of Auschwitz and other [death camps], in large part, the repercussions? These are the ‘Christian’ responsibilities with which Isaac confronts us ... respectfully, but I repeat, severely, with honesty and with

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

passion...a severity and passion that would be surely less compelling if for the author the name of Jesus were not a name above all other names.¹⁰

In the same vein, *Notre-Dame de Sion* P. Paul Démann, in a review of *Jésus et Israël* published in January 1949, wrote,

It is to be regretted that M. Isaac avoids the question of Christ's divinity and by implication, denies this...Yet the tone in which M. Isaac speaks of Jesus-Christ, referring to him as 'Master' surpasses that of mere veneration and respect for a great man. Without purporting to read into his work what is not there, did not the author himself and for himself draw from Mark, XII, 35-37, the '...lesson that seems clear and can be formulated thus: There is no common measure between the Messiah and human greatness. Lineage has no bearing...' (p. 61), and did not he write regarding the duration of Jesus's ministry, 'That the one year, Jesus' single year, was enough to kindle a flame in the world which would never be extinguished thereafter, is a miracle; there are none more convincing.' (p. 170) ... It behooves us not to scrutinize the spiritual underpinnings, conscious or subconscious, of *Jésus et Israël*. However, it did appear to us that the Christian reader will be unable to truly appreciate this book without taking into account its 'soul.'¹¹

Démann's was the comprehensive and balanced review Isaac had been awaiting and he so informed Démann by letter dated 19 February 1949. In the same letter, Isaac addressed Démann's speculation about the book's "soul."

With the greatest of tact and sensitivity, you have endeavoured to unearth "the soul," "the spiritual underpinnings" of the book, and to capture this "fervour" that animates it. *You are one hundred percent correct: it is impossible to understand me otherwise* [emphasis added]. I recognize that there remains a question mark and an obscurity. You recognize it also. But let us leave this to God. Perhaps it is his will that I remain betwixt and between, an outlier, joining the hands of Jew and Christian that each recognizes in the other a brother awaiting reunion with God. Perhaps a day will come when it will be possible to clarify my religious position. But that day has not arrived....One should evaluate my book and leave me in peace, without attempting to pry into the secret life of the soul.¹²

¹⁰ Reproduced in Jacques Madaule, "La Tragédie juive et le mystère d'Israël," *l'Amitié judéo-chrétienne*, no. 1 (September 1948): 14.

¹¹ Paul Démann, "Aux sources chrétiennes de l'antisémitisme," *Cahiers sioniens*, no. 5 (1949): 22.

¹² Jules Isaac, "Vingt-Quatre lettres de Jules Isaac à Paul Démann," *Sens, revue de l'Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France*, no. 7-8 (2003): 341.

In reading the gospels in their original Greek, how tempting for the historian to venture into exegetical territory. For example, in relation to Mt. 5:17 (“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill”), Isaac comments,

We do not know the Aramaic word Jesus used...For to express Jesus’ thought and will, the evangelist, his interpreter, seems deliberately to have chosen the most concrete and clearest words: *plerosai*, to fill or fecundate, is opposed to *katalusai*, to dissolve, destroy, overthrow. Some Catholic translators, like Canon Crampon and Father Lagrange, have made an effort in this direction by substituting ‘to perfect’ for the usual translation ‘to fulfill.’ ‘To give fullness’ seems to me to express the exact meaning of *plerosai* even more forcefully. ‘The context does not make interpretation easy,’ says Pierre Letringant. But what do you want, then? All you need do is give up the tendentious ‘to fulfill’ for it all to become clear: not only do I not overthrow the Law, said Jesus, or empty it of its content, but on the contrary I increase that content, so as to fill the Law full to the brim.¹³

Writing to Charles Journet on 28 September 1948, French Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain inquired, “Have you read Jules Isaac’s book? Notwithstanding the nonsense as ‘historian,’ his purported critical exegesis of the Gospels and the silly *coups de griffe* to you *en passant*, in my opinion, this book merits serious reflection and is often well-founded against a curiously unthought-through manner of speaking (for example, Père Lagrange).”¹⁴

WHY JULES ISAAC AND NOT JAMES PARKES?

The central thesis that the perennial taproot of antisemitism is a certain received Christian tradition was not new. Anglican priest James Parkes had expressed a similar point of view in his interwar writings, notably in his groundbreaking *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, published in 1934, a work that came to Isaac’s attention shortly before *Jésus et Israël* went to press.¹⁵ Parkes’ thesis is adumbrated in the closing lines of *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*:

¹³ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 118–19.

¹⁴ Reproduced in a footnote in Isaac, “Lettres de Jules Isaac à Jacques Madaule,” 618.

¹⁵ By the close of 1930, the Reverend James Parkes, since 1928 Geneva-based cultural cooperation secretary for the International Student Service, had completed and published *The Jew and His Neighbour: A Study of the Causes of Antisemitism*. The catalyst for the book had been Parkes’ firsthand observations of the cultural and political questions that divided European students, most notably that of antisemitism. According to biographer Haim

the Christian public as a whole, the great and overwhelming majority of the hundreds of millions of nominal Christians in the world, still believe that ‘the Jews’ killed Jesus, that they are a people rejected by their God, that all the beauty of their Bible belongs to the Christian Church and not to those by whom it was written; and if on this ground, so carefully prepared, modern antisemites have reared a structure of racial and economic propaganda, the final responsibility still rests with those who prepared the soil, created the deformation of the people, and so made these ineptitudes credible.¹⁶

Not only were their indictments of the Christian Church similar but also were their respective historical/theological presuppositions. As a matter of history, both Parkes and Isaac understood the coming of Jesus as having produced a tragic schism in God’s people that had left both sides less than whole. In his Eliot Lectures, delivered in New York City in December 1946/January 1947, Parkes said, “Though I recognize Judaism and Christianity as two... different kinds of religion, yet I can only recognise in Sinai and Calvary two closely interlocked and complementary stages of the unfolding of a single divine plan. I cannot carry our present separation from history back to God! The two religions are a historic fact; their separation is not a divine intention.”¹⁷ Like all schisms, this schism had left truth divided. Continues Parkes, “if we do not accept traditional hypotheses which ascribe the whole truth exclusively to one side or the other, they must ultimately come together.”¹⁸ But was this not also Isaac’s thinking as evidenced in a footnote to *Jésus et Israël* that was not carried forward into the English translation? “Relations between Jews and Christians were not marked by as much hostility as originally thought,” wrote Isaac. “One wonders, therefore, in the absence of theologians of both faiths, in the absence of the bishops and the rabbis, if the Jews and the Christians would have gotten along fine and perhaps, who knows, ended up by merging into a *single believing body* [author’s emphasis].”¹⁹ Both Parkes and Isaac understood the anti-Jewish rhetoric

Chertok, Parkes’ next 22 books, including even his magnum opus, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (1934), “may profitably be viewed as extended commentary on this maiden work” (Haim Chertok, “James Parkes: A Final Reckoning,” *Covenant* 2, no. 1 (May 2008): 2).

¹⁶ Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, 376.

¹⁷ James Parkes, *Judaism and Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 30–31.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 37–38.

¹⁹ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 358, footnote 1.

in the New Testament as a reflection of the growing reciprocal hostility between the church and the synagogue in the last third of the first century. In his Eliot Lectures, Parkes says, “I may be asked here: do you ask us to accept the whole Pentateuch as a document given by God to Moses? My reply would be: No...I am not more concerned to prove that any part of the Pentateuch was given to Moses than I would be to prove that any of the Gospels were written by Jesus of Nazareth.”²⁰ In relation to Paul’s letters, Parkes continues, “It is the Paulinists rather than Paul himself who bear the direct responsibility; and at least one can say of Paul that he was not responsible for the doctrine of Scriptural authority which elevated letters, written sometimes in haste and based on local conditions, to so intolerable an inerrancy. At least Paul does not charge the Jews with responsibility for the Crucifixion.”²¹

If Parkes was the pioneer, how did it come to pass that the Christian world would pay heed to Isaac? Why was it Isaac, not Parkes, who was invited to contribute material for the Seelisberg Conference? Why was it not Parkes’ *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, which had then been in print for over a decade, that captured the participants’ attention? Parkes is nowhere to be found among the membership of Seelisberg commission 3. “Why was I overwhelmed by *Jésus et Israël* and not other writings?” wonders Gregory Baum, who as a newly minted doctor of theology spent the 1957–58 academic year at Fribourg writing *The Jews and the Gospel*, a partial rebuttal of *Jésus et Israël*. He offers a first reaction. “(1) [*Jésus et Israël*] is written by a Jew who survived in hiding, whose family had been murdered. (2) It is not written as a scholarly work, but as a manifesto addressing Christians and their Churches. (3) Despite the anti-Jewish bias throughout Christian history, Jules Isaac is not resentful, but turns to Christian friends to start a movement of reconciliation. (4) His book shows that Isaac has great admiration for Jesus. Conclusion: He speaks as a man with authority.”²²

Perhaps Isaac’s non-confessional status was a factor. The central thesis of John Connelly’s *From Enemy to Brother* is that “without converts to Catholicism, the Catholic Church would never have ‘thought its way’ out of the challenges of racist anti-Judaism.”²³ Perhaps the same might

²⁰ Parkes, *Judaism and Christianity*, 25.

²¹ Ibid., 105–106.

²² Correspondence to the author dated 15 December 2014.

²³ Connelly, 287. Examples are Thieme, Oesterreicher, Gurian, Luckner, Démann, Baum, Rudloff, Bloy, Maritain, van Leer, von Hildebrand, Kraus, Vermes.

have been true of Protestantism, in which case, Parkes (as an indigenous Anglican) would have had difficulty being heard. It would not have helped Parkes' case that the first edition of his indictment of the Christian Church, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, was published by a Jewish press—Soncino, from which Christian readers might have inferred that Parkes was a mouthpiece for the Jews. By way of contrast, Isaac was not a border crosser; he was a border straddler, and thereby perhaps less threatening to the Christian Church. Timing was probably a factor. Had Isaac leveled his indictment against the Church in the interwar period, he would not have been heeded in the way that he was by a shocked and horrified post-war Christendom. But he began his campaign after the Holocaust at a time when the Christian Church was recognizing, not without shame, the cultural impact of its anti-Jewish discourse and its implications in legitimating racial antisemitism. Isaac's indictment did not take the form of dense, sometimes tedious, scholarship as did Parkes'. It consisted of an eloquent cry of anguish, concise propositions instead of chapters and a tireless activism. In his standing to speak for his wife and daughter, Isaac acquired standing to speak for all six million Jews who perished in the death camps.

In the final analysis, however, it seems to be in their respective methodologies that the best explanation is to be found. For Parkes, the theologian, scripture came at the *END*, not at the beginning. His first concern was antisemitism in the universities, which led to a study of antisemitism, thence to a study of Jewry, thence to a study of Judaism and lastly to a reexamination of the sources of Christian tradition in which he had been educated. Parkes' research question is set out in the preface to *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*: "That the roots of the present situation lie in the mediaeval past is generally agreed. The present work tries to go a stage further and to answer the question: why was there a mediaeval ghetto? In 1096 there were wild popular outbreaks against the Jews in all the cities of northern and central Europe. What made this possible?"²⁴ In framing his question thus, Parkes would dismiss in all of one page (as follows) the whole of Christian teaching regarding Jews and Judaism: "There is a terrible mystical attractiveness in [this] supernatural explanation [for the Jews as a people apart]...The idea that there is 'a divinity' which shapes our ends is a healthy one. But in this case once stripped of the more than Aeschylean grandeur of the idea of the hand of God pursuing relentlessly for centuries a whole people, it involves a conception of the character of God at variance with both Christian and Jewish

²⁴ Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, vii.

religion.”²⁵ Parkes is here rejecting a supernatural reading of history that interprets misfortune as a sure sign of transgression. But a natural reading of history is no more opinion than is a providential one, which interprets events in order to prove its own assumptions.

For Isaac, the historian, scripture came at the *BEGINNING*. He was not the first to recognize a degree of expansion in the gospel accounts of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus or to remind Christians of Jesus’ Jewishness. But his research question was new, informed by his identification of the essence of the calumny regarding Jews and Judaism. “What was my initial concern? To know, as current Christian thinking would have it, as a living tradition teaches, if Jesus truly rejected Israel – the Jewish people as a whole – if he declared its fall, condemned and even damned it; conversely, if it were true that Israel misjudged Jesus, refused to see in him as the Messiah and Son of God, rejected, ridiculed and crucified him; if Israel deserved nearly two millennia of the heinous stain as the ‘decide people.’”²⁶ In drawing a line in time at the Crucifixion and refusing to be drawn across it into dogmatic terrain, in asking whether it was *scripturally* true, as Christianity had taught for nearly two millennia, that the Jewish people of Jesus’ time were responsible for his death and have since remained so, that as a consequence, the Jewish people of his time and their successors had forfeited their very relationship with God, or worse still, were the object of a divine curse, Isaac was plunging into uncharted waters. He was attempting to question the tradition on Christianity’s own terms. What he unearthed was a patristic and medieval scholastic preaching and teaching regarding Jews and Judaism that overreached the bounds of scriptural and historical accuracy. His method was rigorously scientific; it involved a comparison of the gospel texts with a certain tradition contemptuous of the Jews and Judaism—his *méthode des deux points de vue*. Isaac’s indictment extended to the New Testament itself, or more precisely, to what he believed to be man-made unhistorical interpellations and anti-Jewish polemic that had corrupted the Word in the course of its redaction. That is why Isaac was careful with his language. He condemned not Christianity but rather a certain secular tradition contemptuous of Jews and Judaism. To make his case, Isaac needed 572 pages, not one page, to demolish as gospel untruth what he believed was this secular teaching regarding the Jews and Judaism.

²⁵ Parkes, *The Jew and His Neighbour*, 34–35.

²⁶ Isaac, *Genèse de l’antisémitisme*, 14.

BOOK REVIEWS: LA NEF

Most disappointing were the two reviews of *Jésus et Israël* authored respectively by Jean Daniélou (titled “Jésus et Israël,” *La NEF*, no. 47, October 1948: 117–120) and Henri Marrou (titled “Trois Apostilles,” *Esprit*, June 1949), the latter of which was to rupture relations between Isaac and Marrou.²⁷ Daniélou was a Jesuit priest and *Les Études* editor. Since 1945, Marrou had held the chair of ancient Christian history at the Sorbonne.²⁸ Both reviews drew on a long-standing tradition that the Jewish transgression was not the crucifixion *per se*, but the post-Easter unbelief, the stubbornly persistent refusal of the Jews to believe after the resurrection. “I am accused by [authors such as these] of losing my way, that I break down open doors, that ‘it must be understood’ that these scriptural discussions are futile,” Isaac laments,

that ‘decide does not consist...in putting Jesus to death,’ but in the *ex post facto* refusal to believe in Jesus-Christ, in what the church calls the *Perfidia judaica*, a refusal by which the Jewish people makes itself complicit with Caiaphas, in effect manifests its solidarity with him, as if such a refusal, however serious in the eyes of Christians, justifies or excuses such an accusation repeated thousands upon thousands of times, and which accusation one might say is dripping in blood, the blood of Jews...as if we have not here the most unjustifiable abuse of rhetoric and of thinking, the most contrary to the principal teachings of Christ, and in spite of my denunciation of this murderous obfuscation, that is more or less wished for [in Christian circles].²⁹

These reviews were also reflective of a long-standing tradition that in the chain of causation, the Jewish refusal of Jesus as Christ was the catalyst for the evolution of Christianity from Jewish sectarian movement to autonomous religion. The truth is more complicated, according to Isaac.

I can find this tradition and its expression, it is true, in the most aggressive of critiques of my book, *Jésus et Israël*, and by good Catholic authors at that... As a matter of history, and on the basis of accounts, even those of Scripture (Acts of the Apostles), it is less straightforward, much less straightforward...

²⁷ Marrou was using the word “apostille” to mean a marginal annotation or added recommendation.

²⁸ See Pierre Riche, *Henri Irénée Marrou. Historien engagé* (Cerf, 2003).

²⁹ Isaac, “Résonance de Jésus et Israël,” 207; see *Jésus et Israël*, pp. 292, 358–359, 570–571.

The ‘Christian rejection’ [of the law] and the ‘Jewish rejection’ [of Jesus as the Christ] are inseparable one from the other, and in the last analysis, one, ‘the Jewish refusal’ (of Christ) was conditioned by the other, the ‘Christian rejection’ (of the law). Undoubtedly, the reality is more complicated; other causes operated, doctrinal causes – the evolution of Christology – , circumstantial causes – events within Judea, the flight (of the Jerusalem church) to Pella, the destruction of the Temple. But the law’s rejection itself is sufficient; to demand such of the Jewish people, and not just of the Gentiles, would be tantamount to demanding that they rip out their hearts. There is no precedent in History for such a collective suicide.³⁰

Daniélou opened his review by noting that “M. Isaac does a profound injustice to Christian commentators, Catholic [PP. de Grandmaison, Lebreton, Bonsirven] or Protestant, in accusing them of misrepresenting [the Jewish people]” and that “M. Isaac did not confine himself to the relation of Jesus with Judaism, leaving untouched the gospel accounts. It is against these very accounts that he raises his hand, taking issue not only with the manner in which tradition deformed [the gospels] in their transmission, but with the [historicity of] the gospel accounts themselves....Christianity itself is in question, suspected of a secular deviation.”³¹ Daniélou then administered the *coup de grâce*. “If the initiative for Christ’s death was primarily that of the Sanhedrin, the [Jewish] people, in refusing to confess Christ’s divinity, in effect ratified the judgement of the high priests...If the Jews rejected Christianity, as their leaders rejected Christ, it is because they refused to believe in his divinity, and not because they were asked to abandon some customs.”³²

Isaac’s rebuttal appeared in the following issue of *La NEF* (no. 48, November 1948: 158–160). Regarding the unjust attack on Catholic commentators, Isaac responded, “this accusation is unjust and without merit. I spoke of such respectable authors, of all respectable authors, with

³⁰ Isaac, *Genèse de l’antisémitisme*, 144–145, 147.

³¹ Reproduced as Jean Daniélou, “Jésus et Israël,” *Cahiers de l’Association des amis de Jules Isaac*, no. 9 – nouvelle série (2008): 20–21.

³² In a book published by Daniélou in 1963 and titled *Dialogue avec Israël* (of which an English translation would follow in 1968), Daniélou would add that Isaac “goes too far when, in his desire to declare the Jewish people innocent, he wants to put the responsibility for it on the Romans and thus to reduce it to an episode in the political history of Judaism. The texts of the Gospel make this argument difficult. Isaac then becomes suspicious of its authenticity. Let us simply say that this is bad method, dependent on outdated exegesis” (p. 70).

the greatest of esteem. If I chose to refer to their works rather than all and sundry, it was to demonstrate by typical excerpts, uncontestable, that even among the best of the commentators, certain unjustifiable traditions are still too easily accepted, by force of habit.”³³ Regarding critique of the gospels themselves, Isaac retorted, “it is by [the gospels], especially by them, that my book has value, from [the gospels] that my book acquires its shining virtue. If there is a light that shines in this book, it is the Word.” Regarding the Jewish unbelief in the divinity of Jesus after the resurrection, wrote Isaac, “[i]t is the P. Daniélou who confuses two problems, that of the alleged rupture between Jesus and Israel, and that of the (subsequent) rupture between the Synagogue and the Church...I will not allow you to drag me onto dogmatic terrain that is not my own, that I am not evading but refuse to address, and that is entirely unnecessary to address in the present debate.” Isaac added, “I admire the ingenious euphemism by which you describe the rejection of the Mosaic Law and strict monotheism. In the last analysis, I posed before the Christian conscience a capital question: do the gospels entitle us to affirm, as does too often Christian teaching, that Jesus rejected the Jewish people, pronounced its decline, or even cursed it, and on the other hand, that the Jewish people did not appreciate Jesus, that the people rejected and crucified him? To this capital question, I have responded in the negative, further to a rigorous examination of the texts.”³⁴

³³ Reproduced as Jules Isaac, “Réponse” *Cahiers de l’Association des amis de Jules Isaac*, no. 9 – nouvelle série (2008): 22–23.

³⁴ Some 18 years later, in 1966, the young rabbinical student who had directed the network of resistance in the Auvergne, who had been charged with procuring false papers for the Isaacs, who had become a disciple of Isaac, would confront Father Daniélou in a dialogue. Jean Daniélou was by that time dean of the Faculty of Theology at the Catholic Institute of Paris. André Chouraqui was by that time a doctor of law and laureate of the Faculty of Law in Paris and former personal adviser to Ben-Gurion. Like a modern-day Joshua, Chouraqui would hear from the lips of Daniélou utterances that his mentor had not been privileged to hear, utterances such as the following:

“I come now to what is more important. Has not Christianity itself – Christian teaching and the presentation of the events in the life of Christ as given by Christians – been one of the sources of anti-Semitism? We are absolutely obliged to say that it has been, particularly because of the way the events of the life of Christ were presented, less by the great theologians and the great saints than by all the popular literature.” (Jean Daniélou and André Chouraqui, *The Jews: Views and Counterviews*, (New York: Newman Press, 1967), p. 60).

BOOK REVIEWS: ESPRIT

Marrou's review was styled as an addendum to the putative review of *Jésus et Israël* by Rabi,³⁵ which was published as, "*Méditations aux sortir des ténèbres.*" Mounier's *Esprit* was in obstructionist mode; Mounier and his Catholic circle evidently wanted this work to be stillborn. In advance of the book's publication, Isaac had offered *Esprit* extracts from *Jésus et Israël*, an offer that was declined. "This [omission] cast a shadow on relations between Isaac and Marrou, whose proximity to the journal *Esprit* was known to all,"³⁶ according to Lovsky, who added that the review by Rabi was no review at all.

If he spoke of *Jésus et Israël*, or referred to it (I counted 241 lines), in 487 lines (double) Rabi alternated between his personal opinions, those of Simone Weil, of Klausner, of Salvador in the prior century, of Sartre, of Trotsky-ite Léon, of Zionist Kadmi-Cohen, of Freud. It was not at all a review, but an essay in which, if Jules Isaac received a few plaudits, his book was buried under the weight of discussion of a more general nature... was but the point of departure for a meditation impugning the work. Apart from the fact that *Esprit* had juxtaposed two Jews, what was intended by Isaac as an interpellation addressed to Christians became a debate, moreover one which impugned, between two Jews... [Marrou] must have been aware that Rabi's piece was not really a review.³⁷

By the time the review was published, Marrou had resigned as first president of *L'Amitié judeo-chrétienne*. A draft of the review was sent to Isaac under cover of correspondence, dated 5 April 1949, in which Marrou wrote,

I know and am deeply saddened that what I have written will wound you profoundly... I hesitated (more than one year)... You are aware of my sentiments, my longstanding desire to strive my best to eradicate antisemitism... but what I *must* say is this: if it be true that Jesus did not declare himself God, did not transmit to his apostles a message containing in essence the transcendence of the old covenant, all our faith is in vain,³⁸ it is not only

³⁵ Wladimir Rabinovitch was writer, journalist and *magistrat au tribunal de Briançon*.

³⁶ Lovsky, "Les Premières années de l'amitié judéo-chrétienne," 267.

³⁷ Ibid., 267–8.

³⁸ Echoes of Galatians 2:21 "for if justification comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing."

antisemitism that must be renounced; it is all that is *our* Christianity...I want as much as you do to purify Christian teaching and vocabulary of all the residue of an unacceptable antisemitism (which I interpret as a regrettable and erroneous implementation of a true principle: that the Church of Christ is henceforth the True Israel and that the Old Covenant has given way to the New, according to the eternal and inscrutable designs of God).³⁹

The fact that Marrou, by his own admission, hesitated for nearly one year before expressing his views implies his views were in gestation during this year and explains that as early as 5 November 1948, Isaac was aware that Marrou wished to resign from his short-lived office as president of *L'Amitié judeo-chrétienne*.⁴⁰ Isaac was not pleased when he read the draft of Marrou's review, as Lovsky recollects.

There was an uncomfortable meeting at Fleg's home. Isaac was in Aix, but he had gone down in writing [probably with the draft of a rebuttal, also destined for publication]. Marrou had the courage to attend. He was visibly shaken. The [June 1949] issue of *Esprit* had been printed, but not yet mailed. Marrou was most dignified. He admitted that he had erred; he would have withdrawn his review were it possible...Marrou had taken umbrage at Isaac's positivist historical method, having failed to discern the spiritual message in *Jésus et Israël*...Neither Rabi nor Marrou were dialogue partners in Christian-Jewish dialogue; ... their reactions were academic. Jules Isaac – and this is the paradox – was also an intellectual; however, misfortune had driven him to penetrate a transformative spiritual reality into which he wanted to drag Christians. That was the message of *Jésus et Israël*; that was the backbone of the AJCF [*Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France*]: antisemitism addresses us on a spiritual plane; *Jésus et Israël*, despite its imprecision, addresses us on a spiritual plane.⁴¹

Marrou followed up with a letter of apology dated 18 June 1949, writing.

I regret again that you did not communicate these remarks in advance of the publication of my review. They would have induced me not to renounce, of

³⁹ Henri Irénée Marrou, "Lettre D'henri Irénée Marrou à Jules Isaac," *Sens, revue de l'Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France*, no. 12 (2005): 626–627.

⁴⁰ Isaac, "Lettres de Jules Isaac à Jacques Madaule," Isaac closes a letter to Madaule dated 5 November 1948 with "I vote for Jacques Madaule as president and shake his hand *très amicalement* (p. 619)."

⁴¹ Lovsky, "Les Premières années de l'amitié judéo-chrétienne," 269.

course, the essence of my critique, but to rectify certain inept expressions, doubly regrettable since they amounted to factual errors and caused you offence. Had I been able to read [your rebuttal] in time, I would not have written that your book murders the Christian reader at practically every page; I would have said, more aligned to my thinking, that at a certain number of pages, it murders me, in that which I consider to be the essentials of my Christian Faith. By the same token, I would say that...in wishing to exculpate to the extent possible the Jewish people as a whole, you impute so much blame to Pilate that you do not do justice to the religious significance of the opposition to Jesus of the Jewish authorities.⁴²

To do justice to this religious significance, did Marrou have in mind Augustine's rhetoric? "The end of the Lord is imminent," Augustine had written. "They arrest him, the Jews; they insult him, the Jews; they bind him, the Jews; they crown him with thorns; they soil him with their spittle; they heap insults upon him; they hang him on a cross; they pierce his body with a lance."⁴³

Marrou opened his review by observing that "M. Isaac, who wishes simply to persuade, murders [the Christian reader], and at almost every page, in regard to that which is held most dear – his Faith...Of course, M. Isaac does not see this, and this derives no doubt from his personal position when he wrote his book...he declares at the end of the preface that, not belonging to any confession, 'His book throughout attests to the fervour that inspires and guides him.' It is with this sentence, intentionally ambiguous, that he abandons his reader."⁴⁴ (In the revised new edition, published by Fasquelle in 1959, Isaac would clarify, "I have been accused of abandoning my reader with this deliberately 'ambiguous' sentence. So I am going to clarify: fervour regarding Israel, fervour regarding Jesus, son of Israel.") Marrou continued by critiquing Isaac in his method, that in apparent obliviousness of *Formgeschichte*,⁴⁵ Isaac had read the gospel exchanges between Jesus and the Jewish authorities as if these exchanges were a judicially stenographed transcription. But the nub of Marrou's cri-

⁴² Reproduced in Marrou: 628.

⁴³ Quoted in Isaac, *Genèse de l'antisémitisme*, 167.

⁴⁴ Reproduced in Marrou, "Trois Apostilles," 629.

⁴⁵ *Formgeschichte* means "history of form." Its English correlate is called "form criticism," the method of analyzing a text and dividing it into its "original" subunits based on literary pattern. In this sense it is related to what is called "source criticism" in the study of the Hebrew Bible.

tique is to be found in the second of his three *apostilles*: “The solution to the problem is not to be found where Isaac has searched,” wrote Marrou. “If there is a Christian, religious taproot to modern antisemitism, it is not to be found in the [Catholic] hierarchy’s confusion regarding the causes of the crucifixion [the *principal* cause of which Marrou acknowledged to be the sins of all men], but (and it is this upon which Rabi has shed light) in the *Perfidia Judaica, in the unfaithfulness of Israel, in its persistent, obstinate refusal to recognize in the Jew, Yeshoua, the Messiah, only Son of God, who was incarnated for us and for our salvation* [emphasis added].”⁴⁶

Isaac’s response appeared in the August 1949 issue of *Esprit*, with the angrier *ad hominem* portions excised. Regarding the murder of Christian readers in their faith at each page, Isaac wrote,

Are not ‘Christian readers’ the men of faith and of goodwill who have lauded me publicly, men such as André Rousseaux, Jacques Madaule, Bernard Voyenne, Fr. [Paul] Démann, Jean-Jacques Bernard, Julien Green, Albert Finet, James W. Parkes, the pastors Duclos, Bruston, and what about all those [Christians] who have paid me visits and sent me letters, among whom I have the honor of counting eminent members of the Catholic clergy, leading off with Fr. de Lubac? Or is it contrary to Christian Faith, or injurious for it, to have accepted as a fundamental principle and grounding of my contentions the repeated return to Scripture, to the gospel texts? Tell me, Marrou, who gave you the right to speak for ‘Christian readers?’ Which tribunal? We are no longer in the XVth century at a time when the Sorbonne regulated Catholicity – and sent Joan of Arc to the stake....My religious position is in no way relevant. I write as a free man, alone – before God. Nobody has the right to call into question the respect that I hold, and which I have unambiguously expressed, for the Christian Faith, as well as for the Jewish Faith, even if I find it impossible to give my support exclusively to one or the other.⁴⁷

In response to the first of Marrou’s *apostille* (“M. Isaac is an apologist, and like all apologists, makes an unreasonable case;...with a view to absolving from the accusation of ‘deicide’ the Jewish people in its entirety, he seeks to shift all responsibility for [Jesus’] death upon Pontius Pilate and the

⁴⁶ Reproduced in Marrou, “Trois Apostilles,” 634.

⁴⁷ Reproduced in Jules Isaac, “Réponse aux “Apostilles” de Marrou,” *Sens, revue de l’Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France*, no. 12 (2005): 638–644 at 639.

Romans. It is not Pontius Pilate who took the initiative of arresting Jesus in the first place!”), Isaac replied,

It is false, absolutely false, that I sought to shift the entire responsibility upon Pontius Pilate and the Romans. The Jewish responsibility is evident, set out, defined at each step. One need only peruse [*Jésus et Israël*] to recognize it, but Marrou, have you read me? I have reason to doubt it...The conclusion of Proposition XVII, p. 414: ‘As a matter of history, within Jerusalem and the Sanhedrin, there was a sacerdotal, lay oligarchy consisting of a handful of powerful families, of which the most powerful was that of Hanan, father-in-law of the high priest Caiaphas. This oligarchy, sadducean by belief, cruel and tyrannical in its ways, was Rome’s puppet and detested by the people. It is this oligarchy, by all accounts, that played the [Jewish] role...What remains, then, Marrou, of your first ‘addendum?’”

Regarding the matter of method (“it is naïve to expect the [synoptic] gospels to relate word for word the exchanges between Jesus and the Sanhedrin”), as if these accounts of Jesus’ trial are word-for-word stenographic transcripts of the hearing in disregard of the fact that what we know only as related by the community out of which the gospels emerged (*Formgeschichte* hermeneutic), Isaac, noting that the probative value of the passion accounts is most difficult to ascertain, wrote the following rebuttal.

If [as Marrou argues], we cannot consider the gospels as first-hand accounts, if, as Bultmann affirms, ‘There is not a single word uttered by Jesus the authenticity of which can be verified,’ if, as Marrou himself writes, ‘It is naïve to expect [the Gospels] to relate word for word the questions and responses exchanged’ before the Sanhedrin, on what basis does Marrou conclude it is ‘certain’ that Caiaphas posed the question [to Jesus], ‘Are you the [true] Son of God?’ and that Jesus replied in the affirmative? Marrou himself demolishes the foundations of his own position; and not just his, that of Catholic exegesis in general.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ In correspondence to the author dated 14 January 2008, Gregory Baum wrote, “Most exegetes think that the divine status of the man Jesus was recognised by the disciples only after the resurrection. The recorded events in the life of Jesus are to a large extent what we call post-Easter projections, that is to say – the disciples, telling the life of Jesus after Easter, did not produce a biography of Jesus in the modern sense, but presented his life as already revealing his divine sonship. Hence they do not hold that the Jewish court condemned him because his claim contradicted their monotheistic belief.”

BOOK REVIEWS: LA REVUE D'HISTOIRE ET DE PHILOSOPHE RELIGIEUSES

In 1951, after Isaac had made known his discontent that his book had yet to be reviewed in *la Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*,⁴⁹ a thoughtful and nuanced review of *Jésus et Israël* appeared in the journal. It was written by Marcel Simon, the very same Catholic historian whose doctoral thesis had been quoted by Isaac in support of the latter's contention that the gospel redactors in the last third of the first century had compelling reason to shift the blame for the crucifixion from Roman shoulders to Jewish ones. Simon opened his review by noting that it was very late to be commenting on a work that was already three-years-old and which had spilled so much ink, not all of it for the better, and that such a book should be treated with the utmost of tact. Although he took no issue with Isaac's situating of Jesus in his Jewish milieu, in his view, Isaac's book minimized the differences between Jesus and his Jewish milieu by emphasizing what they had in common. This emphasis, argued Simon, served to diminish Jesus' originality and made difficult an explanation for why Jesus was the object of attack by all within official Judaism who played a religiously authoritative role.

I am persuaded in particular that the rivalry between Jesus and the pharisaic Judaism that Isaac justifiably seeks to rehabilitate, and which represented at that time the richest element [within Judaism] was deeper than he admits. What the Pharisees opposed was not Jesus's messianic pretensions: even if proclaimed with overwhelming evidence, which is far from established; this does not serve to explain the pharisaic hostility; two irreconcilable views of religious life, and of the significance of the Law and its halachic expansion. In this regard, I can do no better than refer the reader to the incisive pages on point of James Parkes in his *Judaism and Christianity* (London: 1948, pp. 57 et seq),⁵⁰ and to H. J. Schoeps' "Jesus und das jüdische Gesetz" in

⁴⁹ Lovsky, "Les Premières années de l'amitié judéo-chrétienne," 267.

⁵⁰ Parkes' commentary to which Simon alludes on the two seemingly irreconcilable points of view on the significance of the law, as expanded by the rabbis, can be adumbrated as follows. There are two explanations for the mutual hostility between the Pharisees and Jesus. In the first place, neither Jesus' discipleship nor Pharisaism was a closed order. The Pharisees desired to enhance observance within Israel. Jesus' mission was aimed at the same constituency. Secondly, each of Jesus and the Pharisees "paid the other the compliment of considering them the most important alternative teachers to themselves... [Jesus] concerned Himself with the Pharisees because in His view, they were so nearly right. The Pharisees concerned

Aus frühchristlicher Zeit (Tübingen, 1950, pp. 212 et seq). This opposition, embracing in embryo all subsequent Judaism, identified after 70 with pharisaism, explains the final failure of Jesus in Israel.”⁵¹

Even if one concedes that the enthusiasm of the crowds for Jesus was as widespread and deep as the gospels portray (and Isaac contends), argued Simon,

it must be recognized that [this enthusiasm] was shortlived. What remained of these crowds after the crucifixion? Of course, small as it was, the first [Christian] community was Jewish; Jewish were the twelve, Jewish the first missionaries, Jewish was Saint Paul...but the substantial majority of diaspora Jews would have come to hear of [Jesus] *ex post facto* and rejected him nonetheless. It seems to me difficult to distinguish as does M. Isaac (*Résonance*, p. 203) between an alleged ‘Jewish resistance to Jesus’ teaching’ and ‘afterword, principally, the intractable Jewish loyalty to the Mosaic law and to monotheism, as most strictly conceived.’ For what is the latter if not the consequence of the former? And if not, at what point the schism?⁵²

Was there not a bit of sleight of hand in such a contention? As Simon himself would argue in a later publication, a monograph entitled, *Les Premiers Chrétiens*,⁵³ Jewish loyalty to Torah precepts did not follow upon Jewish resistance to Jesus’ teaching *per se*, but upon Jewish resistance to Jesus’ teaching, as subsequently interpreted by Paul, a resistance solidly grounded in Jewish faith claims.

Simon closes his review by addressing Isaac’s contention on the final page of *Jésus et Israël* that “the perennial source of...latent antisemitism is none other than Christian religious teaching in all its forms, the tradi-

themselves with Him because he was so obviously being successful in bringing a new reality of God and a new fellowship between men into the lives of ordinary people (p. 59).” Parkes contends that nowhere do the Pharisees charge Jesus with making new law (and therefore founding a new religion) although he concedes that Jesus’ prohibition of divorce was the unique instance of exactly that. His proscription of divorce aside, however, “It was not more or different Halachah that Jesus desired, but deeper spiritual insight...The conflict was not over two schools of Halachah. It was concerned with two methods of bringing men into contact with the living God (p. 60).”

⁵¹ Marcel Simon, “Jésus et Israël,” *Revue d’histoire et de philosophie religieuse*, no. XXXI (1951): 366.

⁵² Ibid., 366–67.

⁵³ Marcel Simon, *Les Premiers Chrétiens*, 3e ed., Que Sais-je? (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967).

tional and tendentious interpretation of Scripture, an interpretation that I am absolutely convinced is contrary to the truth and love of him who was the Jew Jesus.”⁵⁴ Simon was not persuaded, having not “preserved the memory of such intoxication from the catechism of my childhood,” he wrote “Moreover, I have my doubts that in an era as entirely secular as ours, the key driver of such a state of mind and antisemitic measures is to be found in theology...Christian antisemitism is not ‘eternal’ antisemitism, but [the successor] to Greco-Roman.”⁵⁵ The implication is that Jew hatred is perennial; it is not an invention of the Christian Church. Such a hypothesis was not new. Bernard Lazare had argued the same in 1884 in his *L’Antisémitisme, son histoire et ses causes*.⁵⁶ “Inasmuch as the enemies of the Jews belonged to diverse races, as they dwelled far apart from one another, were ruled by different laws and governed by opposite principles; as they had not the same customs and differed in spirit from one another so that they could not possibly judge alike of any subject,” Lazare reasoned, “it must needs be that the general causes of antisemitism have always resided in Israel itself, and not in those who antagonized it.”⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 572.

⁵⁵ Simon, “Jésus et Israël,” 368–69.

⁵⁶ Lazare’s thesis, “however awkwardly framed and exaggerated,” according to Lovsky, was endorsed by the latter. However, Lovsky argued that antisemitism was a *sui generis* antipathy, related not to the temporal, but to the spiritual. “Antisemitism is not the hatred of just any minority, national or religious, but of Israel,” wrote Lovsky. “There is a connection between Israel’s mission in the world, taken so seriously by so many generations of Jews, and the world’s perception of the people who incarnate this precise vocation...For the virulent anti-semitic discerns in the Jews not psychological traits or the customs of a minority, but Israel’s vocation. How surprising it is, then, that those among [antisemites] who are most acutely aware of Israel’s mission are as vulnerable to the antisemitic impulse as the crowds ignorant of Israel’s destiny – lunacy for the atheists and scandalous for Christians themselves” (Lovsky, *Antisémitisme et mystère d’Israël*, 12–13).

⁵⁷ Bernard Lazare, *Antisemitism, Its History and Causes* (London: Britons Publishing Company, 1967), 8.

A First Papal Audience

Isaac's heated exchanges with his reviewers faded in 1949 when the opportunity arose to plead his case to a higher authority. In October of that year, when on vacation in Rome, he met with certain Catholic clergy, including Père Marie-Benoît, then spiritual director of the *Grand Institut des Capucins* in Rome. Isaac was encouraged to request a *billet de l'audience publique* with Pius XII at Castel Gandolfo. Isaac's first reaction was to resist; as a Jew, he had nothing to do with the Pope. P. Marie-Benoît persisted and Isaac relented, deciding the time was right to inform Pope Pius XII that the decision of the Sacred Congregation of the Rites on 10 June 1948 to authorize in the Good Friday prayer for the Jews the translation of *perfidis* as not perfidy, but unbelief in Christian revelation, had been necessary, but not sufficient.¹ The Good Friday prayer for the Jews had not always been the only prayer for the Jews in the Roman liturgical cycle. "The Church does indeed know its duty; it has never failed to join mercy to reprobation," Isaac wrote. "'We must have pity on them [the Jews], fast and pray for them,' we read in the Didascalia, a liturgical breviary dating to the third century... One must 'pray for them,' Saint Justin said, Saint Augustine repeated. But there is prayer and there is prayer."² The prayers for the Jews would be reduced ultimately to one (already known to Gregory of Tours in the sixth century)—the *oremus* on Good Friday—the day of universal redemption

¹ Promulgated on 16 August 1948 in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (vol. IX, no. 8, p. 342).

² Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 364.

when Catholics are called to pray for the various states and sections of humanity, including heretics and pagans. In this prayer, Catholics prayed *pro perfidis Judaeis* (for the perfidious Jews) and petitioned God to have mercy on the *Judaica perfidia* (Jewish perfidy). Since the ninth century, the silent prayer on bended knee between the solemn exhortation and the official prayer, as well as the Amen in response to the official prayer, had been omitted in the intercession for the Jews (no doubt, offered Maritain in his 1921 lecture at the *Semaine des Écrivains Catholiques*, out of a “sacred horror of sorts that [the Church] reserves for the perfidy of the Synagogue”).³ “Better no prayer than a prayer like this,”⁴ lamented Isaac. Certain Catholic authors felt the accusation overreached. “In fact, in the Latin of late antiquity, (the time of Gregory the Great) when many of the prayers of our liturgy were composed,” wrote then Augustinian priest Gregory Baum in 1957–58, “*perfidia* simply meant unbelief or disbelief, and thus the prayer was not meant to accuse the Jews of the despicable moral quality called perfidy in modern language, but merely to attribute to them a lack of faith in Jesus Christ. They are unbelievers; and their unbelief has a peculiar quality distinct from the unbelief of heretics and heathens.”⁵

Isaac was not the first to petition a pope to clarify the manner in which the Jews were described in the Good Friday mass, nor would he be the first to ask that the silent prayer on bended knee between exhortation and official prayer and the Amen in response to the official prayer be restored. In 1927–28, *Amici Israel* (Friends of Israel), an association consisting of

³ Jacques Maritain, “A propos de la question juive,” *La Vie spirituelle* (No. 22: July 1921, 305–10), 310. There is much in Maritain’s first public utterance on the Jewish Question in 1921, delivered in the form of a lecture at the *Semaine des Écrivains Catholiques*, about which he would be sensitive in later career. Moreover, in 1921, he had yet to formulate the vocabulary that was to be original to him. The lecture was published in both the quasi-official *Documentation Catholique* (30 July–6 August 1921) and the Dominican review, *La Vie spirituelle* (No. 22, July 1921). Unlike Maritain’s later pronouncements on the Jewish Question, this first lecture was never to see the light of day in an English translation, nor was it to be included in his collection of essays published in 1965 and again in 1990 under the title, *Le mystère d’Israël*. Most likely, it was to this first public utterance on the Jewish Question to which Maritain was alluding when he wrote in a footnote in the *Avant-Propos* of *Le mystère d’Israël*, “In particular, I have not included a certain number of duplications (*hélas*, there are numerous instances; how could it be otherwise when it comes to material treating of the same subject and composed at very different epochs, for very different readers and listeners?).”

⁴ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 364–65.

⁵ Baum, *The Jews and the Gospel*, 9.

approximately 19 cardinals, 278 bishops and 3000 priests, had so petitioned Pope Pius XI and the Roman Curia.⁶ In response, the pope not only rejected the petition but condemned, and decreed the dissolution of, *Amici Israel*.⁷ “In an effort to avert public criticism of a Vatican decree abolishing an organization that called for treating the Jews with greater respect,” writes historian Susan Zuccotti, “Pius XI asked that it also condemn anti-semitism.” Thus, it came to be that Pius XI reminded readers in 1928 that

the Catholic Church has always prayed for the Jewish people, depositories, until the coming of Jesus Christ, of the divine promise, regardless of their subsequent blindness, or rather, precisely because of it. Moved by that spirit of charity, the Apostolic See has protected this same people against unjust vexations, and just as it reproves all hatreds, and animosities between people, so it especially condemns hatred against the people elected by God, a hatred that today is vulgarly called “antisemitism.”⁸

Writing in 1964 on the occasion of the publication of the second edition of his *Verus Israël*, Marcel Simon would put it this way: “It seems difficult to see in the Catholic liturgy an essential medium for this ‘teaching of contempt,’ [for Jews and Judaism] for Good Friday scarcely concerns itself with the Jews: it seems to presuppose a sensibility on the part of the mass of Christians to these texts, prayer and ‘*impropères*,’ assembled at one moment in the liturgical year and, what’s more, recited in Latin, an impenetrable language to the vast majority of the faithful.”⁹ But surely Simon’s position is naïve. What about the missal instructions, in the vernacular, to refrain from saying Amen and to refrain from kneeling in connection with, and only in connection with, the prayer for the Jews? These are instructions the mass of Christians would have understood. How could such instructions not but propagate contempt for Jews and Judaism?

⁶See Hubert Wolf, *Pope and Devil: The Vatican’s Archives and the Third Reich*, trans. Kenneth Kronenberg (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010) 81–125 and Hubert Wolf, “The Good Friday Supplication for the Jews and the Roman Curia (1928–1975): A Case Example for Research Prospects for the Twentieth Century,” *The Roman Inquisition, the Index, and the Jews: Contexts, Sources, and Perspectives*, ed. Stephan Wendehorst (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2004), 235–57.

⁷ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 20 (1928), 103.

⁸Quoted in Susan Zuccotti, *Père Marie-Benoît and Jewish Rescue* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013), footnote 24 at 262.

⁹Simon, *Verus Israël*, post-scriptum at 489.

A PAPAL AUDIENCE WITH PIUS XII

A public audience pass was secured for Sunday 16 October 1949. The audience was one of a sequence of audiences and it would last no more than six or seven minutes. In Isaac's own account of it, one gets a sense of him as a man with a mission—as a missionary to Christians.

An embassy car took me there. Once inside the audience room, I saw a motley crowd, cardinals and chamberlains coming and going. Interesting show, but, I thought, well, what could I say in these conditions?

A surprise was awaiting me. A chamberlain called someone. Nobody got up. As I was already deaf, I said to myself: maybe it's me? It was indeed me. I was seated in a small room. After a moment, a chamberlain introduced himself, a curtain parted, the Pope in white appeared. We were standing, facing each other, roughly the same height and age. I introduced myself as what I am, a non-Christian. "Welcome," said the Holy Father, "I'm listening."¹⁰

I opened by relating how I had been led to devote myself to the study of Christian-Jewish relations, on a spiritual plane, which is fundamental, notwithstanding the current significance of the temporal issue of Palestine...I then articulated the goal toward which were directed all my efforts, that is, a rectification of Christian teaching concerning Israel [i.e. the Jewish people] with a view to diminishing a principal obstacle interposed between Christians and Jews. I told him that in this regard, together with several good Catholic companions, we had already made good progress and had secured a favourable result at the Congress of Seelisberg in the form of the redaction (entirely christian) of the ten points [of Seelisberg] the text of which I showed him, as it was published in issue No 1 of the *Amitié Judeo-chrétienne*.

I emphasized the extreme importance of [the ten points], provided it was implemented. I told the Holy Father of my deep, sincere conviction that if he agreed to examine the ten points, to have them examined, to disseminate them in all countries following their scrutiny by the ecclesiastical authorities, a very large step would have been taken on a path assuredly agreeable to God, and that this could prove of capital importance for christian-jewish relations.

...I handed him along with the Congress of Seelisberg brochure the first two issues of *l'Amitié judeo-chrétienne*, showing him in issue No. 2 the text – which he recognized – of the apostolic act respecting the prayer *pro perfidis Judaeis*. On this subject, I took the liberty of pointing out that the suppression of the genuflexion for this *Oremus* alone – a suppression the cause and timing for which is difficult to know with certainty as a matter of

¹⁰ Quoted in Toulat, 140–41.

history – was a greater cause for concern than the translation of ‘*perfidie*’: a decision to reverse could, this also, have a profound resonance within Jewish hearts.¹¹

Pius XII gave me a medal, and left in a rather moving way; before disappearing to give the public audience, he turned around three times, repeating: “I bless you ...” I felt he was quite moved. He was perhaps not accustomed to the at once friendly and direct tone. I do not claim that my request was the cause of the decision taken in 1955 to restore the genuflection [in the prayer for the Jews]. However, the Pope must have retained a memory of it, because shortly after my audience, he made a speech in which he spoke of Israel in uncharacteristic terms.¹²

The papal allocution to which Isaac referred in the account of his audience with Pius XII was one given on Christmas Eve 1949, 10 weeks after Isaac’s audience. The allocution is described thus by John Oesterreicher, writing 20 years later:

On the occasion of the Holy Year, 1950, more precisely at its opening on Christmas Eve 1949, Pius XII invited all men to Rome. In particular he gave a welcome to Christians separated from Rome and together with them, to the Jews. ‘We open the sacred gates to all who worship Christ – which is not to exclude those who await his coming in good faith, though in vain, and honour him as the one who is proclaimed by the Prophets though not yet come – and offer them a fatherly greeting and welcome.’ There is a new spirit at work here, even though the ‘old’ language is still being used. Today we give a more positive value than this to the Jewish expectation; we no longer venture to speak of a vain, and therefore senseless and fruitless waiting. We prefer to see the Jewish hope in its inner relation to that of the Christians. But the Pope’s invitation, despite its defective wording, is a great advance. It is the first ecclesiastical text that places the ‘Jewish question’ in an ecumenical framework. The Jews are mentioned here in the same breath as non-Christians – the sub-title of the printed text speaks of ‘dissident Christians.’¹³

Six years later, in 1955, the Sacred Congregation of Rites, overthrowing a millennium-old tradition, would decree that silent prayer on bended knee should be inserted in the intercession for the Jews in the reformed liturgy of Holy Week.

¹¹ Jules Isaac, “Audience Pontificale du 16 Octobre [1949],” *L’Amitié judeo-chrétienne*, no. 3–4 (1949): 7.

¹² Quoted in Toulat, 140–41.

¹³ Oesterreicher, “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” 10.

THE ENSUING DECADE

Despite the decade-long hiatus between the first edition (Albin Michel, 1948) and the new revised edition (Fasquelle, 1959), *Jésus et Israël* continued to reverberate throughout the 1950s, as did the Ten Points of Seelisberg. In 1952, Paul Démann published through *Editions des Cahiers Sioniens* a 16-page inquiry into 2000 French Catholic school manuals under the title, *La Catéchèse chrétienne et le Peuple de la Bible*. The brochure was divided into three parts entitled: I. Our attitude toward the “separated brothers;” II. Our attitude toward the Jews; and III. A clarification of our catechism in Ten Points. The study was prefaced by Jules-Géraud Cardinal Saliège, Toulouse’s beloved archbishop. The following are some examples of the worst of Catholic teaching regarding the Jews that were unearthed by Démann in his examination of the school manuals.

On the themes of a degenerate Judaism and a sensual people:

The religious life of the Jews was reduced in the time of Jesus to pure exterior formalism.

The Jews had neither the fear nor the love of God.

Imagine the mentality of the people to whom Jesus was speaking; they look for happiness in gold and silver, in filthy lust, in quarrelling and revenge.

On the themes of an accursed people, a deicide people, on the Dispersion as divine punishment:

That his blood be upon us and upon our children! And God, my children, has granted this terrible prayer of the Jews. For more than nineteen centuries, the Jewish people have been dispersed throughout the world, and have kept the stain of their deicide – that is to say, of the abominable crime of which they were guilty in putting to death their God...

Until the end of time, children of Israel in dispersion will carry the curses which their fathers have called down upon them.¹⁴

How hard some traditions die. Ever the optimist, Isaac reacted to *La Catéchèse chrétienne et le Peuple de la Bible* in a letter to Démann dated 13 June 1952, writing, “This brochure, endorsed by Mgr. de Provençères, is a first step, of tremendous importance. We shall await its reception and see what it provokes. We should remain confident and hopeful”¹⁵ (Fig. 9.1).

¹⁴ Reproduced in Isaac, “The Christian Roots of Antisemitism,” 12–13.

¹⁵ Isaac, “Vingt-Quatres lettres de Jules Isaac à Paul Démann,” 352.



Fig. 9.1 J. Isaac in the garden of La Pergola, Aix-en-Provence, with his youngest son, Jean-Claude, Renée Bloch (who perished in 1955 in a plane crash while en route to Israel) and P. Paul Démann (c. 1955)

In early 1954, Isaac was invited to address the North African branch of the World Jewish Congress. He gave the conference sponsors seven or eight choices of subject-matter. The response was uniformly the same. “They asked for *La Dispersion d’Israël*,” he recalled, “and it was my preference since it most aptly typifies the evil a traditional teaching in conflict with the historical truth can wreak. A tradition so enduring that it ultimately suppressed, overshadowed the historical truth and took hold among all as if it were true.”¹⁶ Everywhere Isaac spoke, in Algiers, in Casablanca, in Marrakesh, the crowds were large and deeply moved. On his return to France, he published his lecture as a monograph, *La Dispersion d’Israël. Fait historique et mythe théologique*, to which was appended his 21 Propositions (Paris, 1954). The Foreword adumbrates Isaac’s thinking as the decade was nearing its halfway mark.

1943–54. It has already been more than ten years.

It has already been more than ten years that I have dedicated myself to one task: to expose and eradicate if possible what appears to be, in the view

¹⁶Quoted in Kaspi, *Jules Isaac*, 220.

of History, the deepest root of antisemitism, its Christian roots, a specific traditional Christian teaching.

But so there can be no doubt, no misunderstanding in this respect: in accomplishing my task I am and I remain a man of “Jewish-Christian Friendship”.

Christianity has everything to gain – that is my belief – by freeing itself from a pernicious tradition, which does not touch on faith and dogma.

What is a religious life, whatever it may be, without an incessant effort to purify? What is a religious life that is not out of love, brotherhood, charity?

Substituting a climate of friendship for the former climate of mistrust, hostility and hatred, establishing spiritual peace based on understanding and mutual respect of beliefs, that is my goal.

But friendship does not exclude candour. Spiritual peace is only achieved through a stubborn struggle against prejudice and error, and respecting historical truth.

That is why I felt it necessary to say and write what follows.

That a “pernicious tradition” could touch on “faith and dogma” was inconceivable to Isaac. But if the gospel traditions themselves had been corrupted in the course of their redaction, the credibility of the Christian message seemed at risk.

THE GENESIS OF ANTISEMITISM

In 1956, Isaac’s *Genèse de l’antisémitisme* was published by Calmann-Lévy. This self-styled “*essai historique*” was 330 pages in length. Appended was an annex entitled “*Brève Défense de Jésus et Israël*,” which consisted of Julien Green’s review of *Jésus et Israël*,¹⁷ Isaac’s 21 Propositions and a partial transcription of the *Tribune de Paris* radio debate that had been broadcast on 10 June 1948. *Genèse de l’antisémitisme* is essentially a rebuttal of long-held notions within Christian circles that antisemitism had existed at all times and in all places long before the Christian era. According to these long-held notions, it is Jewish intransigence, Jewish separatism and Jewish non-assimilation that are the perennial causes of antisemitism. “Not only today, but from the beginning of their existence, the Jews have been looked upon as an alien group, a thorn in the flesh of humanity,” contended the Theological Committee of the Swiss Evangelical Society.¹⁸

¹⁷This review was published in the June 1949 issue of *Revue de Paris*.

¹⁸Quoted in Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt*, 27.

“Anti-Semitism is as old as Judaism itself, the very essence of which is to refuse to accommodate itself to the mind and manners of other peoples and to provoke universal antipathy,” wrote Hermann Gunkel, as quoted by W. Vischer, in *Esther*.¹⁹ Isaac was not so naïve to deny that Christian antisemitism had not been preceded by a Greco-Roman antisemitism. “All historians know that [Christian antisemitism] was preceded by a pagan antisemitism – more proximate in time and of less scale than is generally thought,” he conceded, but continued, “That which seems to me historically demonstrable...is that Christian antisemitism by far transcends [pagan antisemitism] in its continuity, its systematic approach, its malignancy, its scope and its depth.”²⁰ Not all scholars were persuaded. Addressing Isaac’s *Genèse de l’antisémitisme*, historian Marcel Simon wrote in a post-scriptum to the 1964 edition of his *Verus Israël*,

Isaac has a tendency to downplay prechristian antisemitism in the Greco-Roman world. The [antisemitic] texts that he cites in this regard seem to him ‘mere trifles, in total, drops in a vast sea of literary production.’ The indispensable corrective to the views [expressed by Isaac] may be found in the very dense chapter devoted to pagan antisemitism by F. Lovsky, *Antisémitisme et mystère d’Israël*, Paris, 1955...As the author judiciously notes, ‘It should be noted that a scholarly text is never negligible; after all, Tacitus and Martial had more readers, and for longer, than the church fathers, the latter confined in a rather narrow circle’ (op. cit, p. 7, n. 1).²¹

If pre-Christian antisemitism should not be downplayed, argued Reverend James Parkes, it should be recognized as qualitatively different in essence from Christian antisemitism. Unlike Greco-Roman antisemitism, Christian antisemitism, contended Parkes, is dislike of the Jews for reasons that relate more to projection than to reality. In the course of a debate between Parkes and Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain through the intermediation of Sir Robert Mayer,²² Parkes was not persuaded by Maritain’s view, expressed in correspondence dated 9 November 1954, that Christianity “is not and cannot be, antisemitic, for any antisemitic utterance is an insult to Christ and His Mother, to the Apostles, and to the Church (‘Spiritually we are Semites,’

¹⁹ Ibid., as quoted at 27.

²⁰ Isaac, *Genèse de l’antisémitisme*, 19.

²¹ Simon, *Verus Israël*, 32 of the post-scriptum.

²² Jacques Maritain Center Archives, 430 Geddes Hall, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana.

Pius XI has said) in which the Gentiles are grafted on the olive tree of Israel.” Maritain is correct that on 6 September 1938, Pius XI had remarked to a group of 120 Belgian pilgrims, “Antisemitism is a hateful movement, with which we Christians must have nothing to do ... [I]t is not licit for Christians to take part in manifestations of antisemitism... Spiritually, we are all semites.”²³ But these remarks were not made in a vacuum; they were not unprovoked, but on the contrary, were made in response to the first of a series of anti-Jewish measures that had been adopted by the Mussolini regime on the day before, 5 September 1938. This first decree banned Jewish children, as well as Jewish teachers, from public and elementary schools. “There, indeed, was the line [“Spiritually we are Semites,”] that might have been repeated over and over again from the very beginning as anti-Jewish persecutions intensified throughout Europe,” writes historian Susan Zuccotti. “But it was not to be. *L’Osservatore Romano*, which faithfully published all papal speeches, mentioned the Belgian pilgrims’ audience with the pope but never printed the pope’s reference to Jews. A Belgian prelate present among the pilgrims took the statement home with him for publication in lesser Catholic journals that were circulated unofficially and to an unclear extent.”²⁴

Parkes also rejected Maritain’s description of medieval antisemitism, “nefarious as it may have been, (especially when allied with the greed of princes for money) [as] essentially impatience against those who prevented by their spiritual obstinacy the advent of Christ’s Kingdom on earth.” Parkes’ rebuttal was forwarded to Maritain on 21 December 1954.

[Maritain] cannot meet my point by citing the medieval Church. Before that there was the early Church! It was in the patristic period that the foundations of antisemitism were laid. Of course there were places where Jews were disliked before that. That I have never denied. But such dislikes were normal human xenophobia, linked, however erroneously, with the actual situation or behaviour of the Jews disliked. What is peculiar to ‘antisemitism,’ and the phenomenon to which that word should be exclusively applied, is dislike of the Jews for reasons which bear no genuine relation to the Jewish situation at that time. And of this phenomenon, the Church is the originator. I have dealt with it at length in *The conflict of Church and the Synagogue* and my facts have never been effectively controverted.

Jews were hated in Alexandria for despising the Egyptians. Jews did celebrate annually, as one of their main festivals, the Passover which presented

²³ Quoted in Zuccotti, *Père Marie-Benoît and Jewish Rescue*, 47.

²⁴ Ibid.

a very unpleasant picture of the Egyptians. The resulting dislike of Jews was normal [emphasis in the original].

Jews were killed in the Middle Ages for being in league with the Devil. They never were in league with the Devil. They were killed for poisoning wells. They never did poison wells. In our own time they have been killed for controlling world finance. They never did control world finance. The resulting dislike of Jews is not normal, i.e. it is “antisemitism.”²⁵

In *Genèse de l'antisémitisme*, Isaac examined the middle third of the first century comprising the first 35 years following the crucifixion, known as the apostolic period. His research led him to conclude that in that period, the good news was proclaimed within a Jewish matrix. “What is most remarkable,” Isaac continued,

is not that there was resistance [to this *kerygma*], but that there were a growing number of Jewish Christians; thus was born the church, born Jewish, of an exemplary Jewish piety, entirely observant of the Law...In the initial period that extended to the [first] Jewish War, from 30 to 66, the Jerusalem church co-existed [with other Jewish sectaries] mostly in peace... The first persecution – Stephen martyr – seems to have been restricted to the ‘Hellenists’ since the apostles were exempted (Acts, VIII, 1); its cause was a charge of blasphemy ‘...against this holy place and the law.’ (Acts, VI, 13). A second more widespread persecution occurred in 44 – James, son of Zebedee, martyr -: ordered by Herod Agrippa I, it ended almost immediately with [Agrippa I’s] sudden death, perhaps even prior thereto. As for the martyrdom in 62 of James the Just, brother of Jesus and leader of the Jerusalem Church, Josephus recounts that it was an isolated incident, a show of power by the high priest, Hanan, who was repudiated by the people at large and deposed shortly thereafter. This, then, is the sum total of the persecution of [Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians] during the thirty-five or so years of Jewish autonomy.²⁶

The conclusions of historian Marcel Simon match those of Isaac. In a study that was limited to the apostolic period (30 CE–70 CE), Simon wrote, “The [Jewish] persecution [of Christians] consequential on the stoning of Stephen was restricted to his followers, the Hellenists [Greek-speaking Jews]. When we are told in Acts that the entire Jerusalem church

²⁵ Jacques Maritain Center Archives, 430 Geddes Hall, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana.

²⁶ Isaac, *Genèse de l'antisémitisme*, 145–146.

was [following the stoning of Stephen] dispersed except for the apostles (Acts, 8, 1) it is impossible to give credence to this testimony.” “By what strange logic,” Simon wonders, “would the Jews leave untouched the leaders of a community they wished to attack? In fact, the continuation of the [Acts] account implies that only the Hellenists were the object of attack: not the church, but a part of the church that had not expressed unconditional solidarity [with Jewish law].”²⁷ Like Isaac, Simon notes that the only instance of persecution of the Jerusalem church as a whole was that conducted by Herod Agrippa (44 CE)²⁸ in which James the apostle and possibly his brother, John, were killed, and Peter temporarily imprisoned. Simon hypothesizes that the cause of this persecution might have been the decision of the first apostolic council that gentile converts to Christianity need not be circumcised. According to scholarly consensus, this council took place *circa* 48 CE.²⁹ “Perhaps it is necessary, to restore the facts to their proper chronological sequence, to invert their order,” Simon writes, “and hypothesize that the persecution followed, rather than preceded, the council, and was driven by the very substantial concessions... made on this occasion by the Jerusalemites, as argued for by Paul, who refused to impose on gentile converts the burden of Jewish observance.”³⁰

What, then, provoked an intra-family mission to come to an end in the last third of the first century? In the absence of documents, Isaac could only speculate. He hypothesized that the intra-family mission was destined to run dry from the moment Christianity, reoriented toward the Gentiles, rejected observance of the Law. The Jewish refusal to see in Jesus the Messiah or the Christ is all of a piece with the Christian refusal of the Law, and with such refusal, Christian rejection of Jewish Christianity. By the time of Justin’s dialogue with Trypho shortly after the end of the second Jew War (c. 135 CE), the marginalization of Jewish Christians within the nascent church was complete. In response to Trypho’s question whether one who believes Jesus to be the Christ and also observes the commandments of Mosaic law shall be saved, Justin replies that “in [his] opinion” such a man will be saved unless

²⁷ Simon, *Les Premiers Chrétiens*, 41–2.

²⁸ Herod Agrippa was a grandson of Herod I who in 37 CE was appointed tetrarch of the dominions of Philip and Lysanias (Upper Galilee, Abilene and parts of Lebanon). In 41 CE, his territories were enlarged to include Jerusalem and Judea and he had been granted the title of king. Jerusalem became his capital and the Sadducean high priesthood, his allies (W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, 90).

²⁹ W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 91–96.

³⁰ Simon, *Les Premiers Chrétiens*, 42.

he exerts every effort to influence...the Gentiles whom Christ circumcised from all error to practice the same rites as himself, informing them that they cannot be saved unless they do so.” However, he acknowledged that “there are some Christians who boldly refuse to have conversation or meals with [Jewish Christians]. I [Justin] don’t agree with such Christians.”³¹

CHANCE AND NECESSITY

On 9 October 1958, Pope Pius XII passed away. The man who succeeded him was then the Patriarch of Venice. On 27 November 1934, this man had been appointed apostolic visitor to the Catholic Church in Turkey and Greece. In such capacity, during World War II, this man had quietly collaborated with the Jewish Agency to provide thousands of Jews in Bulgaria and Hungary with false baptismal certificates and false traveling visas to enable them to flee Europe for Palestine.³² It was this man, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, who was elected Bishop of Rome on 28 October 1958, taking the name of John XXIII. Within the first three months of his papacy, he convoked an ecumenical council, in an almost confidential fashion, with his announcement on 25 January 1959 in the Roman monastery of Saint Paul’s Without the Walls.³³ On the occasion of this announcement, John XXIII would elucidate that one of the chief ends of the ecumenical council would be to work for a reconciliation of separated brethren. This ecumenical council would come to be known as the Second Vatican Council or Vatican II. In his Encyclical of 3 July 1959, *Ad Petri Cathedram*, he declared, “The chief end of the council is to advance the development of the Catholic Faith, the renewal of Christian life among the people, the adaption of ecclesiastical discipline to contemporary conditions. Assuredly, this will afford a wonderful spectacle of truth, of unity, of charity, and we are confident that in seeing it those who are separated from this Apostolic See will see in it a warm invita-

³¹ Edited by Michael Slusser, trans. Thomas B. Falls, *St. Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press), chapter 47.

³² In correspondence to the author dated 25 June 2008, Fr. Thomas Stransky wrote that the pontiff was formally thanked for this war time activity by Rabbi Abraham L. Feinberg (representing the Canadian Jewish Congress), then rabbi of Toronto’s Holy Blossom Temple, during the first recorded meeting on 12 August 1959 of a Jewish leader with Pope John XXIII.

³³ The previous council had been summoned by Pius IX in June 1867 in solemn and grand fashion in the presence of 500 bishops who had assembled in Rome from all over the world to assist in the celebrations in commemoration of the martyrdom of St. Peter.

tion to seek and find unity.”³⁴ On 21 March 1959, this man would with one stroke of his pen delete from the Prayer for the Jews the word *perfidis* [since 10 June 1948 translatable as “unbelief”] and the expression *perfidia Iudaica* [since 10 June 1948 translatable as “unbelieving Jews”]. At first, these suppressions seemed to extend only to the churches of Rome itself. But on 5 July 1959, the Sacred Congregation of Rites formally extended the papal decision (as had been the Pope’s intention) to the liturgy of the whole Church. This man would also do away with two other prejudicial sentences, one in the Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart,³⁵ recited every First Friday, the other in the ritual of baptism of converts.³⁶

The appearance of the new revised edition of *Jésus et Israël*, published by Fasquelle, happened to coincide with the solicitation in mid-June 1959 of the wishes and desires (*consilia et vota*) for the Council agenda. The solicitation was carried out by the Second Vatican Council pre-preparatory commission, under the chairmanship of Cardinal Dominico Tardini (the very same Tardini who had declared earlier that year in conversation with Cardinal Tisserant, “there is no possibility of contact or negotiations with the killers of God”).³⁷ Over 2400 bishops, 156 superiors-general of male religious communities, 69 pontifical faculties of theology and canon law, and the Roman curial departments were canvassed. The responses were printed by the Vatican Press *sub secreto* in 15 volumes totaling 9520 pages. Recalls Fr. Thomas Stransky, recording secretary and first staff member of the unity secretariat, who perused these responses in preparation for the first plenary meeting of the unity secretariat,

To my surprise I discovered no mention of a theological clarification of Catholic-Jewish relations, no pastoral concern of anti-Semitism within the Church – apart from a few exceptions, such as an Italian prelate who complained about “the insidious coalition of Communists, Jews and Freemasons”; and nineteen Jesuits on the faculty of Rome’s Pontifical

³⁴Quoted in Henri Daniel-Rops, *The Second Vatican Council: The Story Behind the Ecumenical Council of Pope John XXIII*, trans. Alastair Guinan (New York: Hawthorn Books Inc., 1962), 119.

³⁵“Turn Thine eyes of mercy towards the children of the race, once Thy chosen people: of old they called down upon themselves the Blood of the Savior; may it now descend upon them a laver of redemption and of life. [‘His blood be upon us and our children’ (Matt 27:25)].”

³⁶Paul VI removed mention of conversion and the assertion that the Jews require deliverance “from their darkness” and introduced a reference to the Jews as “the people of Abraham beloved by God.”

³⁷Quoted in Bialer, 69.

Biblical Institute who submitted a carefully worded contribution on the avoidance of anti-Semitism...Many wanted a discussion on Christian unity and Catholic-Orthodox-Anglican-Protestant relations, and even relations with neighbours who are ‘unbelievers’ or atheists. Nothing on Catholic-Jewish relations. Many bishops pressed for confrontation with a long list of corrosive-isms: secularism and indifferentism, neo-Gnosticism and spiritualism, illuminism and relativism, above all, communism...But anti-Semitism within the Church and in society? Not on anyone’s list.

I asked myself: Was such indifference an unintentional collective oversight? Was the genocide experience of the Jews in *Christian Europe* [emphasis in the original], the ‘final solution’ for the world’s Jewish people, already forgotten or so marginalized? Were the heavily publicized Nuremberg War Trials in 1947 a quickly extinguished blimp? Did no bishop read Anne Frank’s Diary or see the film?³⁸

The brief of the Pontifical Biblical Institute to which Stransky refers, reflective of a purifying tendency within the Catholic Church, was dated 24 April 1960 and signed by then Rector Ernst Vogt, S.J., on behalf of himself and 18 other teachers at the Institute, all Jesuits from various countries. A petition addressed to the Council fathers titled, “On the Avoidance of Anti-Semitism” (*De antisemitismo vitando*), and set out in the last paragraph of the dogmatics section, requested that the Council include the problem of the people of Israel in its considerations of questions concerning ecumenism. It is thought to have been authored by Stanislaus Lyonnet, SJ.³⁹ The petition reverberates with Isaac’s thinking. The urgency of the petition arose from sermons and instructions which, on account of defective exegesis, taught the “accursedness,” “rejection” and also the “collective guilt” of the Jewish people. For the true proclamation of the mystery of the Passion, the Biblical Institute also rightly pointed to the catechism of the Council of Trent with its emphasis that all sinners—all persons—are to be reckoned as Jesus’ crucifiers. A special reason brought forward for the petition was the “error of the ultimate rejection of the ‘chosen people’” which rested on a false interpretation of such passages of the New Testament as Mt. 27:25; 24:2; 1 Thess. 2:16; Rom. 9:22. Finally, the signatories of the petition saw

³⁸ Thomas F. Stransky, “The Genesis of Nostra Aetate: An Insider’s Story,” in *Nostra Aetate: Origins, Promulgation, Impact on Jewish-Catholic Relations: Proceedings of the International Conference Held in Jerusalem 30 October–1 November 2005*, ed. Neville Lamdan and Alberto Melloni (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2007), 34–5.

³⁹ Oesterreicher, “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” 8.

in the Pauline teaching that a time would come when “the full number of the Gentiles come in” and “all Israel will be saved” (Rom. 11:25, 26), a prediction thought to be the best weapon with which to put a stop to any theologically embellished antisemitism, or to make its revival impossible.⁴⁰ Another instance of the purifying tendency is reflected in a letter, dated 26 April 1960, received by the pre-preparatory commission from the University of Fribourg, Switzerland. In this letter, the university declared three propositions to be unacceptable: (i) “the Jews rejected and crucified Jesus,” (ii) “the believers from the Gentiles have been elected instead of the people of Israel” and (iii) “the People of Israel have been rejected by God forever.” The university also recommended that Christians should pray “that the prophecy in Rom. 11:25–26 be fulfilled and the People of Israel be placed in the elect locus reserved for it in the Church of Christ.”⁴¹

A MISSION MOST HIGH

In October 1959, a meeting took place at the *Hôtel Terminus* in Paris. This meeting would set in motion a cascade of events that would culminate in an unprecedented last-minute addition to the agenda of the Second Vatican Council. The initiative for the meeting was Cletta Mayer, wife of Daniel Mayer, *grand “patron” de la Résistance*, socialist and post-war minister of labor, and Jean Pierre Bloch.⁴² With whom did they wish to meet? None other than Jules Isaac. At this meeting, Isaac was importuned to solicit an audience with Pope John XXIII, through the intermediation of Vincent Auriol, former president of the French Republic and one who had come to know the new Pope when he was papal nuncio in Paris.⁴³ “Our friend Vincent Auriol wholeheartedly accepts the idea of serving as intermediary with the Roman Authorities,”⁴⁴ the Mayers assured Isaac. “When favourable circumstances present themselves, they must be seized,” recalled Isaac after the fact. “These circumstances were created by the accession of John XXIII. His first decisions were very favourable to Israel, especially the removal of the radical word *perfidia* in the liturgy.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 9.

⁴¹ Quoted in Tavard (as an English translation from *Acta et documenta concilio aecumenico vaticano II apparando*. Series I, Vol. IV, Pars II) at 22.

⁴² Marx, 434. In 1955, Mayer and Bloch founded the *Centre d’Études des Problèmes Actuels* (CEPA), an organization in close touch with the Anti-Defamation League of Bnai Brith.

⁴³ Ibid., 434.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Kaspi, *Jules Isaac*, 232.

He showed Catholicism he was decisive and a man of the future, yes, future-oriented, which is remarkable for a man of his age – true he is younger than me! I felt this was an opportunity to ask the question in all its magnitude. One does not find a Pope John every day.”⁴⁵ Returning to France, Isaac solicited input from Catholic dialogue partners, including, he recounted, “from P. Marie-Benoît, from François Mauriac (who was rather pessimistic), from Wladimir d’Ormesson, former French ambassador to the Vatican, from André Chouraqui (who was rather optimistic), from Fr Démann, from Sr Geneviève G[endron] (of the Salesiennes de Don Bosco) at Padoue, from Mgr. de Provençères, Archbishop of Aix.”⁴⁶ Two months later, on 15 December 1959, Isaac delivered a lecture at the Sorbonne entitled “Has Anti-Semitism Roots in Christianity?” Hundreds of eminent ecclesiastics, theologians, scholars and writers were informed of the lecture in advance through an advertising campaign conducted by Fasquelle. This lecture compressed Isaac’s thinking into a form suitable for a one-hour delivery and would be translated by James and Dorothy Parkes and published as a monograph in 1960 in the United Kingdom by W.G. Kingham (Printers) Ltd., and in 1961 in America by the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Most importantly, it was to be compressed further into a *mémoire* to be hand-delivered by Isaac to John XXIII at their historic meeting. “The lecture at the Sorbonne of December 1959, culminating in a call to Pope John XXIII and published by Fasquelle with annexed documents, was in my view the prelude to this, my final initiative,”⁴⁷ noted Isaac. By letter of 8 April 1960, first president of the Fourth Republic, Vincent Auriol, wrote France’s ambassador to the Holy See, Baron Guy de la Tournelle:

Professor Jules Isaac is a historian, author of le MALET-ISAAC history manuals. He was a companion of Charles Péguy, is the President of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne*, and author of *Genèse de l’antisémitisme* and *Jésus et Israël*. I am attaching a copy of his address delivered on 15 December 1959 and also a text of what Isaac hopes to accomplish in Rome. He has already been honoured with an audience with His Holiness Pius XII, a meeting that

⁴⁵ Quoted in Toulat, 141.

⁴⁶ Jules Isaac, “Note sur huit jours à Rome (juin 1960),” *Cahiers de l’Association des amis de Jules Isaac*, no. 2 (1974): 18.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

produced beneficial results.⁴⁸ M. Jules Isaac is fulfilling a mission most high which, I am persuaded, will touch and be of interest to His Holiness John XXIII. It is in everyone's interest that [Isaac] be received [emphasis in the original]. I implore you to plead [Isaac's] cause with the Holy Father.⁴⁹

Ambassador de la Tournelle addressed a formal request on Isaac's behalf to Secretary of State Cardinal Tardini and replied to Auriol by letter dated 3 May 1960. "The Pope during this festival period is unable to grant private audiences...nonetheless, the Secretary of State has informed me that [the Pope] is inclined to grant [a special audience] for this eminent historian."⁵⁰

On 5 June 1960, in Rome, John XXIII brought to a close the preparatory phase of the Second Vatican Council with his signature on a document issued under the title of *Superno Dei nutu*. This document catalyzed loci of theological research in the form of twelve organisms, ten commissions and two secretariats each of which was assigned a particular group of matters. Both commissions and secretariats had the same structural formation: a chair, a secretary and some 30 members, and consultors. With one exception, all the chairs were to be cardinals. All the secretaries were selected apart from the curia. One of the two secretariats, the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (SPCU), was created with the vague ecumenical mandate to help other Christians "follow the work of the Council" during its preparations.⁵¹ Augustin Cardinal Bea was appointed president, and Mgr. Johannes Willebrands, as he then was, secretary, of the SPCU, which had been consti-

⁴⁸ Isaac's was not the first attempt to add the Jews to the agenda of a Vatican council. In the closing months of 1869 at the first Vatican Council, the Lémann brothers, Jewish converts to Catholicism, had made "an audacious attempt in appearance, yet nonetheless infinitely touching and noble, to provoke a solemn declaration of sympathy on the part of the Holy Church of Jesus Christ in favour of the rest of Israel, and to call forth prayers everywhere for their return to the integral truth," in the words of Jacques Maritain. "Tenderly encouraged by Pius IX, they drew up a *Postulatum pro Hebraeis* which, presented to the Council Fathers, garnered 510 episcopal signatures. All the Council Fathers, adds Mgr. Elie Blanc, would have signed without exception if the two brothers, in obedience to a delicate deference, had not desired to cede the honour of the great majority of signatures to the *Postulatum pro Infallibilitate* that had garnered 533 signatures. Only the Council's interruption by the war prevented this *postulatum* from being discussed and sanctioned by a papal allocution" (Jacques Maritain, "A Propos de la question juive," *La Vie spirituelle* 4, no. 22 (1924)).

⁴⁹ Le Fonds Jules Isaac, *bibliothèque Méjanes d'Aix-en-Provence*.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Stransky, 30.

tuted a “secretariat” rather than a “commission.”⁵² In Stransky’s account, the reason given by John XXIII was that the low-key title offered “more freedom of movement in a rather new and unique field.”⁵³ Fr. Thomas Stransky heard rumors, as he later recalled, “that some in the Curia, especially in the Holy Office (Cardinal Ottaviani, also president of the Theological Commission), in the secretariat of state (Cardinal Tardini), and on the Central Commission’s staff (Archbishop Felici) preferred the SPCU to be only a public relations and quasi-press office for the needs of the ‘separated brethren’; leave *schemata* to the more competent – the Commissions.”⁵⁴

On 5 June 1960, in Aix-en-Provence, Isaac was putting the finishing touches on a dossier under cover of a *mémoire* adumbrating his Sorbonne lecture, the whole in preparation for his audience with John XXIII. The dossier included his Eighteen Points, the Ten Points of Seelisberg and subsequent variations, Isaac’s published monograph entitled *La Dispersion d’Israël, fait historique et mythe théologique* (Paris, 1954) and relevant extracts from the Catechism of the Council of Trent published by *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne* (Paris, 1950). The *mémoire* and attached dossier were prepared in both French and Italian. The *mémoire* listed the capacities in which Jules Isaac would present himself at the papal audience:

Président d’honneur de l’*Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne* de France
Inspecteur général honoraire de l’Instruction publique
Historien
(famille décimée à Auschwitz et Bergen-Belsen)

⁵² On 8 June 1960, shortly after Bea’s appointment as president of the Secretariat for Christian Unity, Fr. John Oesterreicher, then Director of the Institute of Judeo-Christian Studies, Seton Hall University, New Jersey, on behalf of himself and 13 priestly colleagues scattered throughout the United States, submitted in English to Bea “an appeal...the first advance into an area that had lain neglected for so long, and indeed seemed to be unknown territory for most people.” A Latin version was to follow on 24 June 1960. The signatories of the petition asked that “the Council proclaim that the call of Abraham and the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt were part of the genesis of the Church, so that she can fittingly and rightly be called ‘the Israel of God’ (Gal. 6:16), the Israel renewed and exalted by Christ’s word and blood... the Council give further liturgical expression to the unity of salvation history...[and] finally...that misleading phrases, above all in the lessons of the Office, which distort the true teaching of the Church and her real attitude towards the Jews, should be changed.” (Oesterreicher, *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II, Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, 10–11.)

⁵³ Stransky, 30, n. 2.

⁵⁴ Thomas F. Stransky, “The Foundation of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity,” in *Vatican II by Those Who Were There*, ed. Alberic Stacpoole (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), 70.

In advance of his departure, Isaac received a letter of 3 June from Grand Rabbi Jacob Kaplan in response to Isaac's correspondence of 27 May.

I have received your letter of 27 May and I am delighted to learn that you have secured the promise of a papal audience...I would not be surprised if the current eminent Pope, who has already taken steps to dissociate the Church from the propagation of antisemitism in the liturgy, agrees to undertake measures of a similar kind in the sphere of Catholic teaching. In any event, you are the person most qualified for an initiative that is as sensitive as it is important. May the Almighty bless your indefatigable efforts to give Christianity a better understanding of Israel and grant you the joy of seeing to fruition these efforts in conformity with the exigencies of truth and of justice.⁵⁵

At last, it was time for Isaac to board the train to Nice and thence, to Rome, where he arrived on 9 June 1960. He was in his 83rd year. "I am mindful that I am speaking on behalf of the martyrs of all time," he noted. "My trials, my bereavements, the commendations of the highest order I've received have confirmed to me that it was really a sacred mission. I have survived to accomplish it."⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Le Fonds Jules Isaac, *bibliothèque Méjanes d'Aix-en-Provence*.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Kaspi, *Jules Isaac*, 233.

Mission Accomplished

Upon his arrival in Rome on 9 June 1960, Isaac received a visit from Israeli embassy staffer Hagai Dikan (whose acquaintance Isaac had made when Dikan had been the Israeli consul-general in Marseille), preparatory to a meeting on the following day with Israel's ambassador to the Vatican, Eliyahu Sasson. The Israeli foreign ministry had been caught flatfooted by the Isaac papal audience. When Maurice Fisher, who would be posted to Rome two months later as Israeli ambassador to Italy, learned of the papal audience, his reaction in correspondence to the Israeli consul in New York City was, "There is no purpose, and in the foreseeable future, there will not be any."¹ Isaac then paid a visit to France's ambassador to the Holy See, de la Tournelle, to discuss the personalities with whom he ought to meet preliminary to his audience with the Pope. "Mgr. de Provençères told me,"² Isaac told de la Tournelle, "to meet with his friend, Mgr. Baron, Rector of *Saint-Louis des Français*,³ in whom I would find the most knowledgeable

¹ Quoted in Alberto Melloni, *L'altra Roma: Politica E.S. Sede Durante Il Concilio Vaticano II (1959–1965)* (Bologna: Mulino, 2000), 87–88.

² Mgr. Charles de Provençères (1904–84) was archbishop of Aix-en-Provence from 1946 to 1979. He was a close friend and ardent supporter of Jules Isaac. In the 1950s, de Provençères was President of the *Commission épiscopale du Catéchisme* and collaborated with P. Paul Démann in the publication of the pamphlet titled, *Les Juifs dans la catéchèse chrétienne* (Editions des Cahiers sioniens, 1952). De Provençères was a participant at Vatican II.

³ After graduating from *L'Ecole de Commerce de Narbonne*, Mgr. André Baron (1893–1981) became a wine broker. In 1910, however, he discovered Léon Bloy whom he befriended. In 1917, he came to know Maritain. In 1920, Baron entered the *Séminaire de*

of advisers. [de Provençhères] has alerted him of my arrival in Rome.”⁴ The French ambassador nodded his head, but cautioned, “He has the temperament of a mystic; you must meet him at *Saint-Louis des Français* together with Mgr. Arrighi, who is more grounded practically and has a greater network among the Italian clergy (he himself is Corsican).”⁵ De la Tournelle thought it unlikely Isaac would be able to meet with Cardinal Tardini, whose secretariat responsibilities left little time. Rather, de la Tournelle counseled Isaac to connect with Ottaviani, and among the French cardinals, with Tisserant and Julien. Unbeknownst to both de la Tournelle and Isaac, Tardini, who had declared in 1959 in conversation with Cardinal Tisserant, “there is no possibility of contact or negotiations with the killers of God,”⁶ was doing his utmost to derail what was to be a special, unpublicized encounter between Isaac and John XXIII.

That evening, Isaac met with Mgr. Baron and Mgr. Arrighi. “Mgr. Baron’s first reaction was disappointing: ‘The Holy Father will be wholeheartedly behind you, of the same mind, but...he will be unable to do anything,’” Isaac heard. “The fact was, and this had been told to me many times, that such power was in the hands of two men, Cardinals Tardini and Ottaviani. The man generally recognized as the most eminent of all the Italian prelates, Cardinal Montini, was entirely out of the picture, in Milan, as archbishop.”⁷ Offput but not put off, Isaac argued that there was a pressing need for rectification and purification of Catholic teaching regarding Jews. Mgr. Baron reflected for a time. “You must arrive at your papal audience with positive recommendations that would have to be the object of study,” advised Baron,” recounted Isaac. “The simplest solution seemed to [Baron] to be the creation of an annexed subcommission with the assigned mandate of examining the question of Christian teaching concerning [the Jewish people] and which would be attached to one of the council commissions...I came round immediately at the same

Fontgombault as a mature noviciate, was ordained in 1930 and became a *professeur de lettres* there. On the seminary’s closure, he became a pastor out of *Notre-Dame-de-Lorette* in Italy. From 1949 to 1962, he was rector of the parish of *Saint-Louis des Français* in Rome. He passed away on 11 March 1981 and is buried in the abbey of Fontgombault cemetery.

⁴ Isaac, “Note sur huit jours à Rome (juin 1960),” 19.

⁵ Ibid., 19. Under-secretary Monsignor Jean-François Arrighi, together with Recording Secretary Fr. Thomas Stransky, Secretary Johannes Willebrands and President Augustin Bea, were the first four members of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.

⁶ Quoted in Bialer, 69.

⁷ Isaac, “Note sur huit jours à Rome (juin 1960),” 20.

moment as did Mgr. Arrighi. For the creation [of such a subcommission] was *ipso facto* a neutral act, without presupposing a conclusion.”⁸ But Isaac was impatient. He wanted the official church to take a position. “The three of us discussed at length different ways forward (for example, Mgr. Baron suggested a papal address before delegations of the *Amitié Judéo-Christiennes*),” Isaac recollected. “Out of this meeting was born the concept of a *Note Complémentaire et Conclusive* that I would hand deliver to the Pope, along with the *Mémoire* and the *dossier*, and which proved to be indispensable.”⁹ On Friday 10 June, Isaac paid a visit to the Israeli embassy. Ambassador to the Vatican Sasson counseled Isaac to meet with Cardinal Ottaviani in particular. In the late afternoon, Isaac visited French Cardinal Julien. “From his appearance, a very old man, quite tall, his face somewhat wizened with age, eyes half closed,” Isaac remembered.

He listened, hardly responded, and as I talked on, I had the impression of having landed from another planet. His eminence put to me only one question, a question having no relationship to what I was saying, but which reflected a dominant preoccupation: ‘Do you not think that communism has been an important factor in the resurgence of antisemitism?’ I responded, and then picked up from where I had left off, impressing him with the gravity of these initiatives. He nodded his head and when I asked him for his support, promised me his prayers. I steeled myself all the same – as he seemed more inclined toward the end – and put to him a question, ‘Eminence, in all initiatives of this kind, there must be one or two good doors upon which to knock. Whose doors would you say these are?’ He reflected for a moment then murmured, ‘Cardinal Ottaviani.’ ‘And who else besides Cardinal Ottaviani?’ I pressed. He reflected further and whispered, ‘Cardinal Bea.’¹⁰

On the morning of Saturday 11 June, Isaac met with Jean Bayet, director of *L'Ecole de Rome*, whom Isaac had come to know in post-liberation Paris at the ministry of education, as well as with France’s ambassador to Italy, Palewsky. The latter was of the opinion that if Isaac was unable to make a sidetrip to Milan to meet with Cardinal Montini, he should keep him abreast through the intermediation of a French prelate, perhaps Cardinal Liénart. Saturday afternoon, Isaac and his Rome hosts, M. and

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 21.

Mme. Gaston Kahn, were guests at a lunch hosted by de la Tournelle at which Isaac updated the latter and learned that Cardinal Bea was a German Jesuit, former confessor to Pius XII, influential, important, the highest authority in Rome in all that touched upon sacred scripture. De la Tournelle and Isaac were in agreement that Isaac should target Bea, the recently appointed president of the SPCU. "The lead given by Cardinal Julien had proven to be precious indeed,"¹¹ noted Isaac. On the afternoon of Sunday 12 June, Isaac attempted in vain to contact Mgrs. Baron and Arrighi. At the end of the day, a letter was received from the French embassy to the Vatican, advising that the papal audience had been scheduled for the following day, 13 June 1960 at 13 h. M. de Warren, French embassy secretary, would drive Isaac to the Vatican and be in attendance, given Isaac's hard of hearing condition. "I slept little on the nights of the 12th and the 13th," Isaac later recounted. "I drafted in my own hand a *Note Complémentaire et Conclusive* with a view to making it as concise, yet as efficacious, as possible, emphasizing the principal themes to be emphasized;¹² taking into account the fact, of which I had been forewarned, that the good John XXIII was inclined to chatter, that the conversation could be informal and personal and take unforeseen detours – an obstacle to be surmounted."¹³

On the morning of Monday 13 June 1960, Isaac recounts,

M. de Warren came to pick me up at the hotel with an embassy car. He was in uniform, bearing a row of decorations. I wore a black suit....We were told that His Holiness was tired, that he had been up since midnight, that he had a number of scheduled audiences, which meant that time was going to be of the essence....

Finally, around 13h 15, my turn arrived. The Pope greeted us standing at the entrance to his library/study. M. de Warren genuflected, I bowed my head and John XXIII extended his hand. I announced myself as non-Christian, promoter of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France*, and as an old man, very hard of hearing. We were seated adjacent to his study in three chairs side by side. I was next to the Pope who was truly the essence of simplicity, a simplicity which contrasted starkly with the pomp and circumstance since our arrival.

¹¹ Ibid., 22.

¹² Reproduced as an Appendix.

¹³ Isaac, "Note sur huit jours à Rome (juin 1960)," 22.

He did not seem overly fatigued. He was a heavyset *bonhomme*, with strong and rustic features – a large nose – smiling, easily prone to laughter, with a clear regard, a touch devilish, but from which there was evident goodwill that inspired confidence.

As expected, he started off the conversation, in a lively manner, speaking about his faith in the Old Testament, the Psalms, the Prophets, the Book of Wisdom. He spoke of his name which he had chosen in thinking about France¹⁴; he inquired where I was born, in which region of France. All the while, I was waiting for an opportunity to switch the tenor of the conversation to engage him in the desired subject-matter; I told him of the great hope aroused as a result of the measures he had taken, so spontaneously, in the hearts of the people of the Old Testament; if we could expect more from him, would it not be he himself who could be credited with such great bounty? That caused him to laugh.

I then explained my request regarding [Christian] teaching and its historical grounding. But how, in a few minutes, could I explain this spiritual ghetto in which the Church had ultimately confined old Israel – along with the physical ghetto? I described the bookends which sandwiched the Christian epoch, at one end a pagan antisemitism, incoherent and preposterous in its accusations and at the other end, racial antisemitism, Hitlerian, the most virulent of our day, though no less incoherent and preposterous. But between the two, the only variety [of antisemitism] that was coherent and by which one could be taken in, is that which has engendered a certain Christian theology, by force of circumstances, since the Jewish negation constituted the primary impediment to christian proselytizing in the gentile world. Thus was developed that which I have called ‘the teaching of contempt’ and, since it has subsisted for centuries upon centuries, the Christian psyche has been deeply affected.

Happily, a countercurrent exists today, a purifying countertendency that is growing day by day. Nonetheless, recent studies have shown that a ‘contemptuous teaching’ still exists. Between these two contrary tendencies, Catholic opinion oscillates, divided. That is why it is critical that a voice proclaim from on high, from the ‘summit’ – the voice of the leader of the Church – to tell all what is the right way and solemnly condemn as in essence anti-Christian this ‘teaching of contempt.’

As a practical matter, how to proceed? I then tabled my *Note conclusive* and the recommendation that a subcommission be created to study the question. The Pope reacted immediately, saying: “That is what I have been thinking from the beginning of this meeting.” On several occasions, during my brief presentation, he had shown his understanding and sympathy.

¹⁴The previous Pope John [XXII] had been a Frenchman, son of a *savetier de cahors*.

I did mention at the beginning the circumstances, the trials, surrounding my devotion to this mission since 1943.

No more than twenty minutes had elapsed and it was over. Fortunately there was the *mémoire*, the *dossier*, the *Note conclusive*, that I handed over, and which the Pope promised to read. Expressing my gratitude for the welcome received, I wondered if there was a glimmer of hope I could take away. He exclaimed: 'You are entitled to more than a hope!' and added with a smile, 'I am the leader, but I must also consult, to have the relevant offices study these questions raised, this is not an absolute monarchy.' And we parted on a new and good handshake.

M. de Warren was very pleased with the way the audience had unfolded. It had lasted approximately twenty-five minutes.

In addition to the printed *mémoire*, the handwritten *Note conclusive*, I had the ambassador deliver to the Pope a copy of P. Démann's study, *La catéchèse chrétienne et le peuple de la Bible*, préface by Cardinal Saliege (1952).¹⁵

John XXIII spoke candidly when he told Isaac that the papacy is not an absolute monarchy. The papacy is enmeshed within the Roman curia, a creation of the fourth century that seeks to defend itself. Before day's end, Isaac would spend two hours at the French Embassy debriefing de la Tournelle, having his *Note conclusive* typed up, documenting with M. Warren the papal audience and scheduling meetings with curial members for later that week. Before the end of the day, the Holy Father would make a five-word entry in his diary: "*Interessante l'ebreo prof. Jules Isaac* [An interesting fellow, the Jewish professor Jules Isaac]."¹⁶ According to Stransky, the pope read neither Isaac's *mémoire* nor any of its attachments.¹⁷ The minutes of the meeting documenting Isaac's papal audience would read in part as follows:

The Sovereign Pontiff opened the conversation in most cordial manner with remarks of a general nature concerning the Old Testament. M. Isaac then raised the purpose of his visit, referring to the Holy Father's magnanimous decisions regarding the Good Friday liturgy, raising the hopes of many Jews and Christians by his just and comprehensive attitude...The resolution of

¹⁵ Isaac, "Note sur huit jours à Rome (juin 1960)," 23–4.

¹⁶ Istituto per le Scienze Religiose, ed., *Edizione Nazionale Dei Diari Di Angelo Guiseppe Roncalli – Giovanni XXIII: Agende Del Pontefice 1958–1963* (Roma: 2001).

¹⁷ Related to the author at a meeting with Fr. Thomas Stransky in New York City on (Good) Friday 3 April 2015.

so complex a problem necessitated a comprehensive study and to this end, M. Isaac suggested the formation of a sub-commission attached to the preparatory commissions of the upcoming Ecumenical Council. The Holy Father, who had interrupted Isaac from time to time during the latter's exposé with remarks that reflected his benevolent interest and understanding, declared frankly that this suggestion corresponded to an idea that had come to his mind from the beginning of the audience. He declared himself in agreement in principle without being able to give M. Isaac a formal assurance at the moment since the suggestion would have to be vetted by the Vatican offices. M. Isaac graciously thanked the Holy Father for the audience and inquired whether he could depart with any hope that his wish might be realized. To which the Pope retorted that [M. Isaac] was entitled to espouse better than mere hopes.¹⁸

The following day, Tuesday 14 June, Isaac was to meet with undersecretary of state Mgr. Scapinelli (though he would in fact meet with Mgr. Angelo Felici) as it was vital to keep Cardinal Tardini, Scapinelli's boss, in the loop. On Wednesday 15 June, four meetings were scheduled—one with Cardinal Tisserant, one with Cardinal Ottaviani, one with Cardinal Bea and one with R.P. Paul-Philippe. On the Tuesday evening, Israel's ambassador Sasson was briefed at the Israeli embassy in Rome. On the next day, Isaac was chauffeured from one meeting to the next by a cousin of Samy Lattès, Giorgio Bloch. As Isaac remembered it,

The day would start off badly. My first meeting was at the Vatican Library with Cardinal Tisserant [dean of the College of Cardinals]. In fact, this visit was a courtesy, since he was the most senior of the French cardinals in Rome, although I understood that he was not at all influential. Therefore it was no loss that the welcome I received was devoid of any cordiality.¹⁹ This meeting was the only false note in my visit to Rome. There seems no point to saying anything more in this regard. I abstained from all polemic, adumbrated the background to my initiative, and left a copy of my *mémoire* and my *Note* before leaving.

¹⁸ Le Fonds Jules Isaac, *bibliothèque Méjanes d'Aix-en-Provence*.

¹⁹ Cardinal Tisserant is reported to have reacted to Rolf Hochhuth's play, *The Deputy* in which Pius XII is pilloried for not having done more to assist European Jews, by remarking to William F. Rosenblum, rabbi of Manhattan's Temple Israel, "I do not like it when the truth is not told and you know that it [the play] is not the truth" (reported by Milton Bracker, New York Times Rome bureau chief, 17 October 1963).

From the Vatican Library, I travelled to the Holy Office directed by Cardinal Ottaviani. ...I was surprised by his appearance; this so powerful man was not fine looking. He was rather small, scrawny, wore the red hat badly, and had a wrinkled, almost deformed visage since he had but one eye, the other was damaged....Nonetheless, he was simple, courteous and attentive....He had no objection to the formation of a subcommission mandated to study the problem of teaching concerning Israel...He could think of two possible [preparatory commissions to which the subcommission would be attached], one chaired by Cardinal Aganadjian, the other by Cardinal Bea. I left him copies of the *mémoire* and *Note conclusive*, emphasizing as always, the gravity of this initiative from both the Christian and the Jewish points of view, and before taking leave, offered to give him a copy of my book *Jésus et Israël*, which I inscribed in his presence, thanking him for his welcome. He responded that he was 'very touched.'...

The afternoon, from 17 h, was devoted to Cardinal Bea and to P. Paul-Philippe. These last two meetings were the longest and were to be the most fruitful.²⁰

Born and raised in Germany, but domiciled in Rome since 1929, Augustin Bea had graduated from the University of Freiburg in Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany, in philosophy and theology. He became a Jesuit in 1912 and had pursued postgraduate studies in biblical exegesis in Berlin and the Netherlands. At the time of his appointment as confessor to Pius XII, Bea was rector of the Pontifical Biblical Institute and editor of the journal *Biblica*. In addition to his native German, Bea was fluent in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, Italian and French. He lived almost on the outskirts of Rome, on the Via Aurelia at the Brazilian College, and received Isaac immediately upon the latter's arrival. If Cardinal Bea was taken aback by the fact that the Pope had sent an octogenarian Jewish messenger to transmit the Pope's wishes, such surprise would have dissipated within the first minutes. These are Isaac's impressions of his encounter with Bea.

[Bea] was middle-aged – in his fifties – with a simple, open and intelligent demeanour. He was German but entirely fluent in French. What struck me from the very beginning was that he was entirely *au courant* about the question, already in dialogue with German Catholics who were doing in Germany what we were doing in France in our sections of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne* – Mgr. Oesterreicher, Karl Thieme. He had met recently Mme.

²⁰ Isaac, "Note sur huit jours à Rome (juin 1960)," 26.

Gertrude von Luckner, whose review I receive. He indicated that he was entirely disposed to aim in the same direction.

The idea of the subcommission seemed to him an excellent one, and if it were created, he told me, it would be attached to the commission over which he presided. He would raise it with the Holy Father. With [Bea], I was able to advance further and raise the prospect of a papal declaration concurrent with the announcement of the subcommission's creation, such declaration in the form of a letter or an address and taking a stand in the most general of terms against the 'teaching of contempt.'

The meeting lasted about one hour. I expressed to Cardinal Bea my joy at having found in him so powerful an ally and such an authority – I had been told there was no higher an expert in Holy Scripture. He gave me his card with his address and told me not to hesitate to write him should the need arise. This opened an important line of communication [with the Roman curia].²¹

Gertrude von Luckner, whose name was raised by Bea and whose journal, the *Freiburger Rundbrief*, Isaac received, was born Jane Hartmann of German parents in Liverpool, England. She was a Protestant (Quaker) converted to Catholicism and remained a British citizen to the end of her life. During the war, Luckner had assisted German Jews to escape to Switzerland with funds from Archbishop Conrad Gröber. "Just as she was about to distribute 5,000 marks to the last Jews of Berlin in November 1943," writes historian John Connelly, "she was hauled off a train and arrested by the Gestapo, ending up at Ravensbrück."²² From her liberation until her death in 1995, Luckner worked indefatigably to improve relations between Christians and Jews. "She was the sole German present at the 1947 Seelisberg meeting," according to Connelly,²³ "and she was the first German officially invited to Israel in 1951."²⁴ One year after Seelisberg, Luckner founded the journal *Freiburger Rundbrief*, "a German counterpart to *Cahiers [sioniens]* with a more theological bent and wider readership," writes Connelly. "As adviser, she took on Karl Thieme, like her a convert from Protestantism."²⁵ John Oesterreicher and Karl Thieme, who encountered each other as early as 1934, were

²¹ Ibid., 27.

²² Connelly, 192.

²³ Luckner's name seems nowhere to be found in the official list of Seelisberg participants, a list published by *le Conseil des Juifs et des Chrétiens*, Genève, 1947.

²⁴ Connelly, 192. Luckner is a Yad Vashem Righteous among the Nations.

²⁵ Ibid., 179.

border-crossers to Catholicism—Oesterreicher²⁶ from Judaism, and Thieme²⁷ from Protestantism. Both would play a pivotal role in developing the theological vocabulary upon which the official Church would draw to reorient its attitudes to Jews and Judaism. Bea had first encountered Thieme in the early 1950s when the Vatican issued a *monitum* (warning) against the indifferentism of Catholics who participated in meetings of the International Council of Christians and Jews. Bea, together with fellow Rome-based Jesuit priests and specialists in ecumenism, Robert Leiber and Charles Boyer,²⁸ had been dispatched to investigate the *Freiburger Rundbrief*. Just as Isaac, born a Jew, was the first in modern times to remind Christians that Christ the Jew never stopped loving the Jewish people of the pre-Talmudic era, so Thieme, a Protestant convert to Catholicism, “was probably the first Christian theologian in modern times,” according to Connelly, “to state that Christ the Jew loved the Jewish people of the

²⁶ Johannes Oesterreicher was born in 1904 of Jewish parents, veterinarian Nathan and wife Ida, in Stadt Liebau in northern Moravia. He had been raised with some modicum of Jewish tradition, including instruction in the Hebrew language, in proximity to nine other Jewish families. In 1924, he was baptized by peace activist and priest Max Josef Metzger (arrested repeatedly and finally executed by the Nazis in 1944) in the sacristy of the Graz Cathedral after which he abandoned his medical studies (which he had been pursuing in Vienna) and entered the seminary. Oesterreicher graduated and was ordained a priest in Vienna on 17 July 1927.

²⁷ A descendant of Protestant theologians, Karl Thieme was born in Dresden. After graduating from Leipzig University in history, theology and philosophy, Thieme (by then a member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany) followed his teacher, Jewish legal scholar Hermann Heller, to Berlin's *Deutsche Hochschule für Politik*. Following his postgraduate studies, he joined the faculty of the Pedagogical Academy in *East Prussian Elbing*, where he taught until March 1933, after which Social Democrats were banned from public service. On 30 January 1934 in the *Liebfrauenkirche in Leipzig-Lindau*, Karl Thieme converted to Catholicism. In the same year, he became a co-editor with Johannes Maassen and Waldemar Gurian of the weekly, *Junge Front*, an anti-Nazi Catholic review founded in 1932 and placed into liquidation in January 1936. In August 1935, facing imminent arrest, Thieme took flight across the German-Swiss frontier and moved into his mother's home at Laufelfingen, near Basel, where he would reside for the next decade. In 1953, Thieme joined the faculty of the University of Mainz where he taught European history, philosophy and German studies.

²⁸ The very same Fr. Charles Boyer about whom the Rome correspondent of the Jewish Chronicle would report on 11 November 1960, “Father Boyer described as ‘exaggerated and false’ the theory, propounded by Jules Isaac, that antisemitism derived from the Christian teaching which attributed the death of Jesus to the entire Jewish people. He stated that Christians did not object to Jews because of Jesus's death, but because they refused the New Testament.”

post-biblical era.” This he did in a letter to Pius XII of 31 October 1933, a letter to which the pope did not respond.²⁹

Isaac spent Thursday 16 June 1960 in bed in his hotel room. The following morning, he met again with Mgr. Baron (Mgr. Arrighi was away). “The outcome had exceeded what Mgr. Baron had dared hoped for, but the results were still provisional. One had to make them definitive,” Isaac noted. “He gave me the news that [Lille] Cardinal Liénart had just been named a member of the council’s Central [Preparatory] Commission – a sort of supercommission whose members examine the reports of the other commissions. He is the sole French bishop to be included as a member – not counting the [French] cardinals of the Roman curia. Cardinal Liénart is the French prelate who is most inclined as far as the Jewish Question is concerned (on which he has published a [Lenten] pastoral letter [of 21 February 1960]).”³⁰ In the pastoral letter to which Isaac referred, Liénart asserted, “It is simply untrue that Israel, the chosen people of the Old Covenant, became an accursed people under the New. In reality, the religious destiny of Israel is a mystery of grace, which Christians must ponder with respect and affection.”³¹ At 22 h on Friday 17 June 1960, Isaac boarded a train for his return trip to France. The apparent outcome of the trip had exceeded his wildest expectations. “The train was on track; without my boarding it,” he later recalled. “I was positioned to follow its journey – from a discrete distance...My task was completed, the time had come to pass the torch.”³²

²⁹ Quoted in Connelly, 123.

³⁰ Isaac, “Note sur huit jours à Rome (juin 1960),” 28.

³¹ Quoted in Oesterreicher, “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” 26.

³² Isaac, “Survival,” 232–33.

Quaestiones de Iudaeis

The record is silent from mid-June 1960 until mid-September 1960. Bea took his annual summer retreat to reflect upon Isaac's concerns, the same Augustin Bea who 40 years earlier, before Hitler's rise to power, before the sea change in the Catholic theological vocabulary regarding Jews and Judaism, had unselfconsciously summed up his understanding of the Jews and Judaism in an article published in *Stimmen der Zeit*.

May the Jews of today be how they always want to be; it is and remains true: God has chosen Old Israel in order to make it the bearer of His revelation; and he wanted that from among this nation, His only-begotten Son would take flesh. That this nation has rejected its Messiah became its curse and deprived it of the grace of the special divine guidance. That [Israel] has preserved itself as a nation and religious community until today despite all troubles and persecutions of almost two millennia, it does not owe in the first place to a racially hygienic selection, even though this certainly may have contributed to the preservation or enhancement of some specifically "Jewish" characteristics. In reality, the reason lies deeper; [it lies] in God's salvific providence which, according to the prophecies of the Old Testament prophets and the teachings of the apostle to the Gentiles, also comprises this nation as a people [viz. Israel] despite all its disloyalty. The gate to salvation is open to this nation as well. As St. Paul says in a highly significant passage of his Letter to the Romans: 'Only partially has the hardening come over Israel until, namely, the full number of Gentiles will have come in; thus, then, will the whole of Israel be saved' (Rom 11:25f). This is the Christian

understanding of the Jews and Judaism. It [viz. the Christian understanding] is, as the very same St Paul says, a ‘mystery,’ one of the great secrets of divine world sovereignty and the disposition of salvation, in front of which Paul falls down in worship and confesses: ‘O depth of richness, the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are Your judgments and how unfathomable Your resolutions!’ (Rom. 11:33)¹

One can only surmise whether Bea perused *Jésus et Israël*; there is but one allusion to Isaac’s concerns in a note scribbled by Bea during that summer retreat. On 14 September 1960, Bea requested an audience with Pope John XXIII, writing “I would particularly like to bring up the question of responsibility concerning relations between Jews and Catholics, on which I am frequently consulted.”² Four days later, on 18 September, the Pope received the advice of Cardinal Bea on the question of responsibility concerning relations between Jews and Catholics. “Upon *Bea’s initiative and recommendation* [Stransky’s emphasis],” writes Stransky, “John XXIII mandated that the SPCU facilitate ‘the Jewish Questions’ during the Council preparations.”³ By letter dated 10 October 1960, Isaac briefed Archbishop de Provençères.

Here is the most up to date news from Rome that I am able to impart to your excellence, news transmitted by the ambassador [de la Tournelle] following a visit of Mgr. Baron to S.E. Cardinal Bea. The Holy Father, in the interest of the very cause for which I advocate, thought it would be better to avoid all publicity, ‘the tumult that would arise in response to [news of] the creation of a special commission could be more prejudicial than beneficial.’ Accordingly, he has commissioned S.E. Cardinal Bea to fold into his Secretariat my request and my dossier and to submit them to study. Thus, a first goal is achieved. The question of [Christian] teaching concerning the Jewish people will be examined, under the auspices of the Secretariat chaired by Cardinal Bea, whose favourable inclination appears to be assured. It will be necessary to form a sort of sub-commission to

¹ Augustin Bea, “Antisemitismus, Rassentheorie Und Altes Testament,” *Stimmen der Zeit* 100 (1921): 182–83.

² Quoted in Stransky, “The Genesis of Nostra Aetate: An Insider’s Story,” 32.

³ Ibid.

conduct this study and examination. I can only rejoice at this first very positive result and hope that there will be others, in the knowledge that as just a cause as this will find its vigorous defenders within the very highest reaches of the French Church.⁴

FIRST SPCU PLENARY SESSION

The first meeting of members and advisers of the Secretariat for Christian Unity took place on 14–15 November 1960. At this first meeting, Bea broke the news to the members and consultants that the pope had entrusted the unity secretariat with an additional agenda item—*quaestiones de Iudaeis* (questions concerning the Jews)—to be addressed by a subcommission of the unity secretariat.⁵ A young Augustinian priest in attendance as an adviser recalls the dumbfounded astonishment around the table in reaction to Bea's disclosure.⁶ Fr. Gregory Baum waited until the end of the meeting before discretely approaching Bea to alert him of his interest in ecumenism and of the imminent publication of Baum's defense of the New Testament,⁷ written in partial rebuttal to Isaac's *Jésus et Israël*, and offered his assistance.⁸ "Cardinal Bea accepted this offer," attested Oesterreicher, "and commissioned Fr. Baum to produce a short survey, which was laid before the second meeting."⁹ Thus, it would seem, did Baum become the first member of the subcommission for Jewish Questions.

At the beginning of February 1961, in advance of the 6–9 February second meeting of the unity secretariat, Abbot Leo Rudloff was appointed

⁴ Jules Isaac, "Lettre de Jules Isaac à Mgr Charles de Provençères," *Sens, revue de l'Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France*, no. 7 (2004): 389–90.

⁵ Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 17–18.

⁶ As recounted by Gregory Baum to the author.

⁷ Baum, *The Jews and the Gospel*.

⁸ As recounted by Gregory Baum to the author.

⁹ Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 18.

a member of,¹⁰ and Mgr. John Oesterreicher, an adviser to, the SPCU.¹¹ “Together with Fr. Baum,” recounted Oesterreicher, “[we] formed the core of the ‘Sub-Commission for Jewish Questions’, which was extended to include other members as occasion arose.”¹² Stransky has a slightly different recollection of the genesis of the subcommission for Jewish Questions. The way he remembers it,

George Tavard (then on the faculty of Mount Mercy College, Pittsburgh) and Gregory Baum were the first two consultants tapped for the *De Questione Hebraica* sub-commission. We designated nine ecumenical themes and assigned members of a sub-commission to each, but for the tenth theme, *De Questione Hebraica*, nominated only two consultants who were not yet noted for expertise in Catholic-Jewish relations – George Tavard and Gregory

¹⁰ Cardinal Bea wanted Council Father representation on the subcommission, according to testimony of Fr. Thomas Stransky, as recounted to the author at a meeting in New York City on (Good) Friday 3 April 2015. Rudloff was abbot of the Dormition Abbey in Jerusalem and the Benedictine Priory in Weston, Vermont. Alfred Felix von Rudloff, the youngest of eight children, was born on 31 January 1902 in Duren, a then thriving Prussian industrial city. In the aftermath of World War I, Rudloff entered the Benedictine monastery of Saint-Joseph in Gerleve, not far from Munster, where he had spent his youth. In 1928, Fr. Leo (the name he had taken) completed his theological studies at the Benedictine College of Sant’Anselmo in Rome, earning his doctorate with a thesis on Saint John of the Cross and the Rule of Benedict. Before leaving Sant’Anselmo, he was ordained to the priesthood. His time was divided between Jerusalem, where it was his dream to establish a Benedictine presence, and Weston Priory in Vermont, which he had founded. In between, he would spend time in Rome and visiting relatives in Germany. In correspondence to the author dated 7 October 2015, Gregory Baum recalled his impressions of von Rudloff.

“He was a monk, dedicated to the renewal of monastic life, which he wanted to have a reconciling impact on today’s deeply divided society. He saw this as an international concern, and he lived himself an international life. He was a thoroughly good person. His work at Vatican Council II was a minor event in von Rudloff’s life. He was not a passionate intellectual worried about the meaning of texts and developing theological theories. His contributions to Jewish-Christian relations were his friendships, his respect and sympathy for Jews, and his affectionate support of the State of Israel. It would not surprise me that his search for contact and friendship with Jews was in part the reaction of a German, deeply troubled by what had happened in his country.”

¹¹ In an address marking the 50th anniversary of Oesterreicher’s ordination, Rudloff deferred to Oesterreicher as the principal author of the conciliar statement on the Jews, styling himself as but a “hod carrier or bricklayer” (Br. John Hammond, *Benedictine Legacy of Peace: The Life of Abbot Leo A. Rudloff* (Weston, VT: Weston Priory, 2005), p. 184).

¹² Oesterreicher, “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” 18.

Baum. Afterwards, Bea had to recruit others for the specific inter-religious task. To add to this exceptional situation, Bea told the plenary that unlike the other topics, even the fact of the special papal mandate had to be *sub secreto*, at Pope John's explicit request. Only a few saw the reason: not to stir up further the already turbulent political waters in the Middle East. Even though four weeks earlier Bea and Willebrands had given me, as a staff-member, the 'Jewish Portfolio' (among others) for the collection of materials, I was still quite naïve on this political dimension, until mid-December.¹³

TEN POINTS OF SEELISBERG

When asked to put together a dossier for the first members of the sub-commission, SPCU recording secretary Thomas Stransky thought first of the Ten Points of Seelisberg. "I still find the best and clearest summary of the corrective [to the anti-Jewish tendency] in the Seelisberg list," writes Stransky, "and in hindsight Vatican II's *De Iudaeis* can be traced back to the ten points."¹⁴ On the desks of each subcommission member tasked with questions concerning the Jews, Stransky placed a copy of the Ten Points of Seelisberg,¹⁵ theses that now had to pass theological muster. Since the adoption of the Ten Points, efforts had been under way to subject them to theological due diligence. "This testing [had] occurred in tiny groups of theologians who wrote and debated out of offices in France, Germany, and the Netherlands between the end of the war and the opening of the Second Vatican Council seventeen years later," Connelly relates. "Beyond these small groups, few Catholics wrote about Jews in the years leading up to the Vatican Council. Through the 1950s, the Catholic press – whether the French *Études*, the American *Commonweal* and *America*, the British *The Month*, the Polish *Tygodnik Powszechny*, or the German *Stimmen der Zeit* and *Hochland* – featured next to nothing on the Shoah, let alone suggested that this event should unleash soul-searching within the church about its past."¹⁶ In 1950, the year in which the *Deutscher Koordinierungsrat*, umbrella association for the Societies of Christian-Jewish Co-operation founded in Germany in 1948, had organized a conference under the theme, "Common Mistakes about the People of the First Covenant." Further to this initiative, at Bad Schwalbach, near Wiesbaden, a group of German Catholic theologians, notably Karl Thieme, in consultation with German Protestant

¹³ Stransky, "The Genesis of Nostra Aetate: An Insider's Story," 32–3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

¹⁵ As recounted by Thomas Stransky to the author.

¹⁶ Connelly, 178–180.

theologians, notably Pastor Freudenberg, drew up what they considered to be a theologically sounder version of the Ten Points of Seelisberg—the Eight Schwalbacher Points. In France, P. Paul Démann, director of *Les Cahiers Sioniens* (the review of the missionary priests of *Notre-Dame de Sion*) had used the Ten Points as the template from which they would be restated in slightly different form in a monograph entitled *Les Juifs dans la catéchèse chrétienne*.¹⁷ Gregory Baum, in the first edition of his defense of the gospels written in Fribourg, Switzerland, in academic year 1957–58, had chosen to reproduce as an Appendix the Ten Points of Seelisberg.¹⁸ Following the close of the pre-preparatory phase of the Second Vatican Council, the memorandum drawn up in August 1960 by Paul Démann in the name of the Apeldoorn working group of priests and laypersons addressed to “those who in any way, direct or indirect, have a part in the teaching office of the Church or in the forming of opinion among the faithful, whether their field of work be the training of priests, catechesis, preaching, journalism or other writings”¹⁹ manifested the imprint of the Ten Points of Seelisberg.²⁰

SECOND AND THIRD SPCU PLENARY SESSIONS

The second meeting of the unity secretariat was held from 6 to 9 February 1961 in Ariccia, nestled in the Alban hills. At this meeting, Baum presented his short survey and proposed that the teaching of recent popes had made it clear that the Christian approach to the Jews and Judaism was theological and that anti-Jewish patristic and medieval perceptions

¹⁷Published in 1952 (with the approval of Msgr. de Provençères, Archbishop of Aix and then president of the Episcopal Committee for the Catechism).

¹⁸A.-M. Henry in his edited locus classicus on *Nostra aetate* titled, *Les Relations de l'Eglise avec les Religions non Chrétiennes: Déclaration "Nostra aetate"* published in 1966, would choose to reproduce as an annex (along with successive drafts of the conciliar statement on the Jews) the Ten Points of Seelisberg.

¹⁹Oesterreicher, “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” 12.

²⁰In 1958, Fr. Anton Ramselaar, theological adviser to founder of the Dutch Catholic Church for Israel, Miriam Rookmaaker van Leer (a convert from Protestantism), further to prodding by Ottilie Schwarz, a Viennese convert, convoked an international symposium in Apeldoorn, the Netherlands. Participants included France’s Paul Demann, Germany’s Karl Thieme and Gertrude Luckner, Israel-based Abbot Leo Rudloff and Fr. Jean-Roger Hene, British Irene Marinoff and by then American John Oesterreicher.

were no longer to be defended. He recommended that the Council issue authoritative declarations on the following three points:

1. In the treatment of the origin and nature of Christ's Church, her close connection with the Old Israel should be made unmistakably clear. Thus it should be shown how the New Covenant confirmed, renewed and transcended the Old, and how the New Testament fulfilled and superseded the Old, but nevertheless did not render it invalid.
2. In order to correct the widespread notion that *the* Jews had rejected Jesus as the Christ, it should be made clear that the holy remnant of the Jewish people acclaimed and accepted the Saviour of mankind. It would therefore be unjust to regard the Jews as an accursed race or a people who had been rejected.
3. The Church's unceasing hope of Israel's final reconciliation with herself should be solemnly proclaimed and, no less important, until that day came the Christian's attitude to his Jewish neighbour should be one of love and respect. Anti-Semitism should be condemned.²¹

It was at this meeting that Oesterreicher was requested, as he himself recalls, "to prepare a study of the whole matter, on behalf of the sub-commission, for the forthcoming meeting."²² At the third meeting, also in Ariccia from 6 to 21 April 1961, "Gregory Baum read out the preliminary study worked out by [John Oesterreicher and discussed by the whole sub-commission for Jewish Questions]," according to Oesterreicher. "At this stage, Fr. George Tavard, AA, was also a member of the sub-commission. The study had been drafted in English but was also available to the Secretariat's members in Latin and French translations...if my memory does not deceive me, the spontaneous clapping that greeted the preliminary study on 20 April 1961 was the only example of such a reception for a preparatory document."²³ Unity secretariat members were to reconvene in Bühl, Germany, in August 1961.²⁴

²¹ Quoted in Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 18.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 22.

²⁴ Tavard, At p. 23, Tavard remembers this fourth meeting as having taken place in Rocca di Papa, near Rome.

SUBCOMMISSION FOR JEWISH QUESTIONS CONTACT
WITH JULES ISAAC

Between the third and fourth meetings, Baum's *The Jews and the Gospel* appeared in print. Apparently unaware that a new revised edition of *Jésus et Israël* had been published in 1959 by Fasquelle, Baum took the liberty of forwarding to Jules Isaac, c/o Albin Michel, a copy of this partial rebuttal to *Jésus et Israël*. In correspondence to Claire Huchet-Bishop dated 8 July 1961, Isaac writes in a postscriptum, "I have just received an English book that I draw to your attention: *The Jews and the Gospel* by Greg [ory] Baum OSA, Bloomsbury Publ. Co. 34 Bloomsbury Str. London WC1 (Publisher). To my great surprise, I am front and center stage from the very first page, but in a most sympathetic light; it was the reading of *Jésus et Israël* that is the impetus of this Catholic work."²⁵ Isaac sent a thank you note to Baum who replied by letter of 26 July 1961. Baum's letter is reproduced in full below as it speaks volumes about the views and inclinations of one of those tasked with working up a theological statement of the official Church on the Jews and Judaism.

July 26, 1961

Very dear Sir,

I have just received your letter and I am deeply moved. I am grateful to you for having given my essay so much thought and careful consideration.

In my Introduction, I mention that I wrote "in partial criticism" of your book, *Jésus et Israël*, but the only point I actually criticize is that the gospels are supposed to contain seeds of anti-semitism. I wanted to show that another interpretation of the apparently anti-Jewish passages is, at least, reasonable. Our disagreement, therefore, is not great.

The origin of anti-semitism I mention only in passing, as you have noted, in note 42, page 282. I have been profoundly influenced by your books on this question and a good number of other studies. I believe that the preaching of the Church has created an image of the Jew, which, much later, has been exploited by a diabolical hatred. The pagan, biological inspiration of modern anti-semitism is not derived from Christianity, even if it should be derived from Christians. I admit, however, and have stated implicitly in my

²⁵ Jules Isaac, "Quarante-Cinq Lettres de Jules Isaac à Claire Huchet Bishop," *Sens, revue de l'Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France*, no. 7-8 (2002): 416.

book, that the Church has a grave responsibility in this matter! We should have recognized that painting the picture of the Jew as we did, we were preparing the ground for demons. We should have known, on the basis of man's fallen nature that a constant preaching of contempt will conjure up the most evil forces in man. Even if modern anti-semitism is not derived from Christian sources, the Church is thereby not free of guilt.

You remember that in my Introduction I mention another intention for writing the book: to purify Christian preaching of our day of the legends of the past. In this endeavour I am your pupil and follower. I have made it clear that it was your book which opened my eyes. Since that day I have never ceased to work in this direction. Perhaps I should have stressed this aspect more in my book; though throughout the text I constantly mention the distortions and untrue accounts regarding Israel found in Christian literature.

You do not fully realize the difficulty in gaining influence among Catholics, especially in the English-speaking world. We are so much on the defensive that any criticism of things Catholic is taken as a personal insult and rejected. This is childish, of course. But one must be realistic. For this reason I have combined two purposes in my book. I get the reader on my side because I defend (emphasis in the original) a Catholic position, which allows me to say all kinds of things against (emphasis in the original) Catholic positions. If I only criticize the Christian legends about Jews, I will not be listened to, at least in English-speaking Catholic environments.

I hope that my book will do some good. People may read it as a defense of the gospel, but be impressed by the indictment against the preaching of the past.

John Oesterreicher, editor of the *Bridge*, has done more than anyone else in the English-speaking Catholic world to make people sensitive to this problem. But as far as I know, there exists no detailed study of catechisms and religious instruction in English, such as Father Démann has done for France.

May I also mention that I am a consultant of the Roman Secretariat of Christian Unity. I was appointed because of my interest in Protestant ecumenism and my book translated into French under the title of *L'Unité Chrétienne d'après la doctrine des papes*.

Many thanks again for your kind and thoughtful letter! Sending you my best regards and good wishes, I am

Yours Sincerely,

Gregory Baum
(augustin)²⁶

²⁶ Le Fonds Jules Isaac, *bibliothèque Mejanès d'Aix-en-Provence*.

In undated correspondence to Huchet-Bishop, probably of October or November 1961, Isaac writes, “I bring to your attention...a new Canadian friend, Catholic religious OSA (augustinian), Gregory Baum, Jewish by birth and I think also German. He has published in London, in English, through Bloom[sbury] a book, *The Jews and the Gospel* that he sent to me via my old publisher, Albin Michel; a book with an *Imprimature*, in which I have found that I hold a special place. We have exchanged two letters: he declares himself ‘my disciple and successor’...His letters are most sympathetic, and I think you two would get along quite well. We might soon form across the Atlantic a small group of ‘friends of Jules Isaac.’”²⁷

GREGORY BAUM

Gregory Baum was born Gerhard Baum in Berlin in 1923 “into a wealthy German bourgeois family of Jewish origin and Protestant culture.”²⁸ His father, Franz Siegfried Baum, a university-trained engineer and German army officer in World War I, died following appendix surgery when Gregory was in his first year. Gregory’s childhood was spent in Berlin, a carefree childhood as he remembers it, in the company of a loving mother, Bettie (Meyer) Baum, and an elder sister.²⁹ In 1939, he was *kindertransported* to England.³⁰ By 1942, he had lost both his parents. “When...my sister, and I fled Germany in different directions, my mother, who had never done manual work, felt called to become a nurse in Berlin’s Jewish

²⁷ Isaac, “Quarante-Cinq Lettres de Jules Isaac à Claire Huchet Bishop,” 417–18.

²⁸ Gregory Baum, *The Oil Has Not Run Dry: The Story of My Theological Pathway* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017), 6.

²⁹ Coincidentally, three Second Vatican Council figures had attended the same Kaiser-Friedrich Gymnasium in Berlin: Gregory Baum, Carl Riegner, general secretary of the Geneva-based World Jewish Congress and a WJC representative at the Council and Ernst Ludwig Erlich, a colleague of Jules Isaac and a founder of the German Christian-Jewish Understanding Association, who attended the Council as a representative of the International B’nai Brith for Western Europe.

³⁰ On 15 November 1938, five days after Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, a delegation of British Jewish and Quaker leaders appealed in person to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Neville Chamberlain, requesting, *inter alia*, that the British government permit the temporary admission of unaccompanied Jewish children, without their parents. The British Cabinet debated the issue the next day and subsequently introduced a bill providing that the government would waive certain immigration requirements with a view to admitting into Great Britain unaccompanied children ranging from infants up to the age of 17, under certain conditions.

Hospital,” Baum recalls. “In 1942, she thought of seeking refuge in the house of friends, but she fell ill, caught meningitis, and died peacefully in the hospital.”³¹ In his first year in England, Baum was put to work on a farm, then arrested as a German citizen and sent to an internment camp in Canada. In 1942, Baum secured permission to leave the camp in order to pursue undergraduate studies in physics and mathematics at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, thanks to the efforts and sponsorship of Emma Kaufman, a leader in the YWCA movement and a distinguished missionary. While an undergraduate, Baum found himself drawn to Christian texts, and above all, by the Pauline, Augustinian and Thomistic emphasis on the unsolicited divine initiative. A reading of Augustine’s *Confessions* at the onset of 1946 was apparently the catalyst that provoked his conversion to Catholicism. Following his graduation from McMaster University, Baum was baptized in 1946 at the age of 23 and one academic year later, armed with a master’s in mathematics from Ohio State University, he entered the formation program of the order of St. Augustine. He was ordained a priest in April 1954 and received his doctorate in theology from the Seminary in Fribourg in 1956. His dissertation, which addressed ecumenism and was published in 1958 by Newman Press under the title, *That They May Be One*, was brought to the attention of the future Paul VI, then Bishop of Milan, who made it a point to read it carefully.³² In 1960, Baum joined the faculty of theology at the University of St. Michael’s College in Toronto.

Jésus et Israël had come to Baum’s attention while he was preparing to deliver a short series of talks on the relationship of the Catholic Church and the Jews. “But whatever I read, I understood in the light I had acquired from the traditional Christian attitude and my own theological upbringing,” he writes in his Introduction to *The Jews and the Gospel*. “Thus I repeated, without the slightest hesitation, the ancient stories that the Jews have been rejected and the Gentiles chosen, that the younger brother has been preferred to the older, Isaac to Ishmael, Jacob to Esau, yes, and even Abel to Cain. The Jews, I then thought – and said, in the talks which I gave – are in the likeness of Cain, a people condemned for murder. There exists a whole procession of authors who defend such a statement. Without realising the implications of remarks of this kind, and the impact they make on human relations, I repeated the long litany of theological legends with which the mystery of Israel has been surrounded

³¹ Baum, *The Oil Has Not Run Dry*, 10.

³² As recollected by Fr. Thomas Stransky.

in the literature of the centuries.”³³ Then he came upon Isaac’s book, a book that “shattered” him,³⁴ a book that “raised the frightful question whether the Christian Church could ever separate itself from its anti-Semitic heritage,”³⁵ a book that impelled Baum to write a partial rebuttal of Isaac’s indictment and thereby unwittingly prepare himself for the most important role he was destined to play in the first ever (by Pope or Council) formulation of a “systematic, positive, comprehensive, careful and daring presentation of Jews and Judaism).”³⁶

A study of Paul’s letters as a whole led Baum to conclude that Romans 9–11 constituted “a little treatise on Israel’s role in the history of salvation,”³⁷ and therefore he made these chapters the center of his investigation. Israel’s role in salvation history, as Baum discerned it (standing on the shoulders of Bloy and Maritain) is this:

the privileges which rested on the people of Israel were fulfilled in, and remained with, one section of the people, the Israel of the spirit, which, transformed and extended, became the universal Church of Christ...This schism between the ‘holy remnant’ and ‘unfaithful Israel’ is the bracket in which the Gentiles are inserted into the history of salvation. God wished to let all mankind fall into unbelief that he may include them all in the promises of mercy...Paul who grieved at the incredulity of his people is comforted by the contemplation of the divine plan for the history of mankind: God is faithful.³⁸

Not theology, but kerygma—God is trustworthy. Paul’s theology, as properly understood, does not pre-suppose a new Israel, but a true Israel. One covenant, not two. What has been superseded is not God’s covenant with Israel, but rather the Torah. It is a theology, noted Baum, that while not found in the gospels,³⁹ is not inconsistent with them. “In the Vulgate, it is true, Matthew (and Mark) speak of the ‘new’ covenant,”

³³ Baum, *The Jews and the Gospel*, 1.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Ruether, 2.

³⁶ Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, *Church and Jewish People: New Considerations* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1992), 40.

³⁷ Baum, *The Jews and the Gospel*, 17.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 217–18 and 226.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, note 15 at p. 271.

wrote Baum, “but this is not in conformity with the original.”⁴⁰ Luke does so (Luke 22:20), “yet even there, the ‘new’ covenant does not invalidate the old one but confirms it.”⁴¹ Citing Romans 9:6–14, Baum reminded his readers that this was not the first time God had gratuitously elected only a part of Abraham’s stock. Baum’s defense of the New Testament addresses Isaac’s contention that Christian antisemitism was the taproot to which racial forms of antisemitism attached themselves and by which they were sustained and nourished. “It is unthinkable,” he writes in his Introduction, “for anyone who accepts the gospel as the ultimate revelation of divine love that part of the New Testament was designed to encourage contempt for any people and contribute, in a direct way, to the growth of misunderstanding and hatred in the world.”⁴² For Baum, God’s very Word was at stake; if the New Testament contained passages of anti-Jewish rhetoric, it could not be received as God’s Word. His defense was based on the pre-supposition that the recorded events of the life of Jesus are to a large extent post-Easter retrojections. The disciples, recounting the life of Jesus after his resurrection, did not set out to produce a biography of Jesus in the modern sense, but to present his life as already revealing his divine sonship. “Certain texts, in fact quite a few of them,” Baum concedes, “do sound as if the author wishes to make the Jews appear as a castaway people to be despised, but this is only so because we read them in the light of a later historical development; we tend to project into the texts what is not contained in them.”⁴³ The *par excellence* example of a post-Easter retrojection is the very notion of Jesus’ sonship. “The idea that Jesus was condemned by a Jewish court because he claimed to be God’s son – which was regarded as blasphemous – is no longer widely held by biblical scholars,” according to Baum, “even though Benedict XVI still defends this in his book ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ Most exegetes think that the divine status of the man Jesus was recognized by the disciples only after the resurrection.”⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Ibid., note 14 at p. 271.

⁴¹ Ibid., 63.

⁴² Ibid., 4.

⁴³ Ibid., 5.

⁴⁴ Correspondence to the author dated 14 January 2008. As for the Resurrection, it “is an event beyond history, not a miracle,” Baum writes, drawing upon St. Thomas. “It transcends earthly human existence, entering upon the sphere of the divine.” (Baum, *The Oil Has Not Run Dry*, 63).

FOURTH SPCU PLENARY SESSION

By the fourth plenary meeting in Bühl, Germany, in August 1961, Baum was a correspondence partner with Jules Isaac. At this fourth plenary session, “discussion of the Declaration [on the Jews] was resumed,” relates Oesterreicher. “The first comment concerned the origin of the Church. She was not simply rooted in Israel, for Christ was not only the son of Abraham, but also the only-begotten of the Father. Thus the deepest roots of the Church lay in the triune God.”⁴⁵ At a plenary session of the unity secretariat in Ariccia from 27 November to 2 December 1961,⁴⁶ a first draft of the *Decretum de Iudaeis* (Decree on the Jews) was tabled for discussion.⁴⁷ It reads as follows:

The Church, the Bride of Christ, acknowledges with a heart full of gratitude that, according to God’s mysterious saving decree, the beginnings of her faith and election are already to be found in the Israel of the patriarchs and prophets. Thus she acknowledges that all Christian believers – Sons of Abraham by faith (cf. Gal 3:7) – are included in his call and, likewise, that her salvation is prefigured in the deliverance of the chosen people out of Egypt, as in a sacramental sign (Liturgy of the Easter Vigil). And the Church, new creation in Christ as she is (cf. Eph 2:15), can never forget that she is the spiritual continuation of that people with whom, in his mercy and gracious condescension, God made the Old Covenant.

⁴⁵ Oesterreicher, “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” 33.

⁴⁶ At this session, Mgr. Johannes Willebrands, Secretary of the SPCU, and Mgr. Francis Davis, Birmingham, England, were added to the subcommission for Jewish Questions.

⁴⁷ In correspondence to the author dated 26 February 2011, Gregory Baum has written that the document appended to Jews and Catholics together (ed. Michael Attridge, Ottawa: Novalis, 2007) is “in my opinion,...not a proposal produced by the Secretariat. This must have been a proposal which a learned theologian produced and then sent to the Secretariat as a supporting document. According to my memory, the proposal we produced was shorter. It had a three-point structure – the Jews prior to the coming of Jesus, the Jews at the time of Jesus, and the Jews after the time of Jesus. As I remember, we did not quote the church fathers, nor did we come up with recommendations. I am convinced that this is not a proposal produced by the Secretariat. Michael Attridge found it in the Oesterreicher archives, but it was likely a proposal sent to the Secretariat and kept in Oesterreicher’s files. Tom Stransky had to deal with the documents of the entire Secretariat, so he may not remember the early submission *de Iudaeis*. But the series of recommendations in the proposal is likely to suggest to him that this is not a document produced by the Secretariat.”

The Church in fact believes that Christ, who ‘is our peace,’ embraces Jews and Gentiles with one and the same love and that he made the two one (cf. Eph 2:14). She rejoices that the union of these two ‘in one body’ (Eph 2:16) proclaims the whole world’s reconciliation in Christ. Even though the greater part of the Jewish people remained separated from Christ, it would nevertheless be an injustice to call this people accursed, since they are beloved for the sake of their fathers and the promises made to them (cf. Rom 11:28). The Church loves this people. From them sprang Christ the Lord, who reigns in glory in heaven; from them sprang the Virgin Mary, mother of all Christians; from them came the apostles, the pillars and bulwark of the Church (1 Tim 3:15).

Furthermore, the Church believes in the union of the Jewish people with herself as an integral part of Christian hope. The Church awaits the return of this people with unshaken faith and deep longing. At the time of Christ’s coming only ‘a remnant chosen by grace’ (Rom. 11:5), the first-born of the Church, accepted the (eternal) word. The Church believes, however, with the Apostle that at the time chosen by God, the fullness of the sons of Abraham according to the flesh will finally attain salvation (cf. Rom. 11:12, 26). Their reception will be life from the dead (cf. Rom. 11:15).

As the Church, like a mother, condemns most severely injustices committed against innocent people everywhere, so she raises her voice in loud protest against everything done to the Jews, whether in the past or in our time. Whoever despises or persecutes this people does injury to the Catholic Church.⁴⁸

“With the completion of the schema on the Jews the preliminary work was concluded,” recounts Oesterreicher. “There seemed to be no obstacle to discussion of this draft by the Council fathers during the first session. Accordingly, at the appropriate time, the Secretariat submitted the draft to the Central Preparatory Commission, whose task it was to see all documents destined for the Council fathers.”⁴⁹ As Baum recalls, “Seelisberg, together with the writings of Jules Isaac and other texts, produced a

⁴⁸ Quoted in Oesterreicher, “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” 40.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 41.

critical movement in the Church that mediated a certain critical culture. Belonging to this culture, Oesterreicher, Tavard and I drew up the first draft of the statement on Christian-Jewish relations. We were heirs of the excellent work done by a small group of scholars, writers and activists, but in our formulations, we did not draw upon any one document in particular. The 10 Points of Seelisberg and Jules Isaac's work thus had an indirect influence on us."⁵⁰

THE LOSS OF TWO SONS OF ISRAEL

On 2 February 1962, John XXIII declared closed the preparatory phase and announced that the Council would convene on 11 October 1962. Five weeks earlier, on 31 December 1961, Isaac had written the pope to thank him for a silver medal and a photo of the papal audience that had been delivered to Isaac by R.P. Perrin on Christmas Day 1961.

[The medal and photo were]...a reminder of that day in June 1960 – a date in my life – on which your Holiness received me with so touching a simplicity...How was it that among the host of visitors granted the privilege of a papal audience, I, a son of Israel, was not forgotten? I am well aware that on that occasion, my person, in itself of no consequence, captured your Holiness' attention by that which it represented – millions of martyrs – and by the force of convictions expressed....It is easier for an old historian to predict the past than the future. However, I shall hazard a prediction in any event: it is my strong belief that the Pontificate of H.H. John XXIII will figure as a pivotal moment in History, a moment of profound renewal in the sense of Brotherhood, of Truth, of Hope. That is why I, unworthy but persuaded, pray to God that he watches over he whom His Providence has assigned for this noteworthy role.⁵¹

The Central Preparatory Commission (CPC), whose 110 members included Bea, scheduled its seventh and last meeting for mid-June 1962. "The nervous CPC kept whittling down the original hundred and seventeen submitted schemata to a manageable number, eventually reaching twenty," Stransky recalls. "For Belgian Cardinal Léon-Joseph Suenens,

⁵⁰ Correspondence to the author dated 29 March 2010.

⁵¹ Le Fonds Jules Isaac, *bibliothèque Méjanes d'Aix-en-Provence*.

the original group was ‘too many, too trivial, and too detailed’ – ‘an encyclopaedia of sacred things,’ pronounced the CPC general secretary, Archbishop Pericle Felici. Since *De Judaeis* had only forty two lines, perhaps it was too short and too limited in scope. As such it could too disappear.”⁵² Meanwhile, the creative output of Jules Isaac continued, resulting in the publication in 1962 of his last work, *L’Enseignement du Mépris* (Fasquelle). An English translation (Holt, Rinehart) followed in 1964 under the title, *The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism*. Isaac begins the book with epigraphs by Pope John XXIII and Charles Péguy, thus:

There is something worse than having an evil mind, and that
is having a closed one.
—Charles Péguy

It is a fundamental rule of life never to distort the truth.
—Pope John XXIII

One week before the CPC was to convene, Nahum Goldmann, president of the World Jewish Congress, announced in Rome that Dr. Chaim Wardi, director of Christian affairs for the Israeli ministry of religion, would attend the Ecumenical Council as an unofficial observer representing the Congress. The announcement and endorsement provoked vigorous protests from nine Arab states having diplomatic relations with the Holy See. On 20 June 1962, without presentation or discussion, Secretary of State Cardinal Amleto Cicognani (with Bea’s concurrence) withdrew *De Judaeis* from the agenda. The text of *De Judaeis* is not even included in the *Acta* of the preparatory coordinating commission minutes. On 28 July, Goldmann canceled plans for Wardi to travel to Rome and attend the council as an unofficial observer, citing objections not from Arab states, but from orthodox Jewish groups which were uncomfortable with Jewish representation on any terms.

Isaac, watching from a distance and in ill-health, feared the worst (Fig. 11.1). On 6 October 1962, he wrote again to the Pope.

⁵² Stransky, “The Genesis of Nostra Aetate: An Insider’s Story,” 41.



Fig. 11.1 J. Isaac in the garden of La Pergola, Aix-en-Provence, arm-in-arm with his youngest son, Jean-Claude

Holy Father

Ill, and confined to bed for 6 months, may it be permitted for me, with what remains of my strength, to plead before Your Holiness, the cause of Judaism, of the justice and respect due to it (...)

It is unthinkable that an undertaking of purification so necessary, to which subscribe a Christian elite who are still engaged in a difficult struggle against obscure powers originating from an obsolete past, it is not thinkable that this exercise of purification be adjourned, or even discarded, deprived of the support from on high so indispensable to it to finally prevail. It is unthinkable that the people of the Old Testament, the people of Jesus and his apostles and the first Christians, be absent from this formidable examination of conscience embodied by the upcoming Council. It is unthinkable that such very high hopes will be so very profoundly disappointed.

Referring to my *note conclusive* of June 1960, I can only restate in closing that which I said then and remains as valid today as it was yesterday. If the

issue of the teaching about ancient Israel, considered in all its detail, is very complex, nonetheless there is a general principle which dominates it, and about which there should be unanimous agreement. This principle can be formulated as follows:

That in no case, in no form, may an authentically Christian teaching give rise to feelings of contempt, revulsion and hatred towards the people of the Old Testament. As a result, slanderous imputations of the deicide people or race, the cursed people, the satanic people of the flesh, the people scattered as punishment for the crucifixion, should be definitively proscribed.

Having so spoken and appealed, I repeat that I firmly believe myself to be, in the eyes of God, on the straight path, and I incline, with all the respect due before your Holiness.⁵³

FIRST SESSION OF THE COUNCIL (AUTUMN 1962)

During the first session (11 October–8 December 1962), the Council fathers managed to avoid the topic of the Jews, except on 27 November when Bishop Méndez Arceo (Cuernavaca, Mexico) is recorded as having asked, “where are the Jews on the agenda?”⁵⁴ Following the close of the first session, Bea petitioned John XXIII to keep *De Iudaeis* on the Council agenda, assuring the Pope that the text would remain “purely religious, nothing to do with the question of recognizing the State of Israel.”⁵⁵ On 13 December 1962, Bea received the Pope’s response: the mandate was to remain in effect.⁵⁶

Neither Jules Isaac nor John XXIII would live to see the fruits of their collaboration. On 3 June 1963, John XXIII passed away at the age of 81. Three days and a million mourners later, he was buried in the grottos underneath Saint Peter’s Basilica. On 21 June, Giovanni Battista Cardinal Montini, archbishop of Milan, was elected pope. In August 1963, as Pope Paul VI, he renewed the *De Iudaeis* mandate and scheduled the second session of the Council to begin on the following 29 September. On 5 September 1963, Isaac’s own life would come to an end, 49 years to the day after friend and mentor Charles Péguy was killed, “an unexemplary life,” in Isaac’s own words shortly before his death, “like all human lives,

⁵³ Le Fonds Jules Isaac, *bibliothèque Méjanes d’Aix-en-Provence*.

⁵⁴ Stransky, “The Genesis of Nostra Aetate: An Insider’s Story,” as quoted at 42.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 43.

⁵⁶ For Bea’s memorandum and John XXIII’s response, see *Acta Synod.*, II, pars V, 485.

not without its mistakes, its foibles, its failures.”⁵⁷ Masses were celebrated in churches across the diocese of Aix-en-Provence in gratitude for this “unexemplary life,” in gratitude to this layman who was not Christian, in gratitude to this Jew by birth. In his last Will, Isaac declared, “I have adhered to no religious confession, no Church, but neither to any negation. The struggle against antisemitism brought me closer to Israel’s rigorous monotheism... Meditation and prayer are suited to this hour of final separation. As far as prayer is concerned, you should ask Rabbi Zaoui⁵⁸; my wish is that it be recited in French; otherwise, translated from the Hebrew...I do not wish to be cremated. If there is place for me next to my parents, in the Montparnasse Cemetery, bury me there.”⁵⁹ In death, this self-described non-confessional had opted for a Jewish funeral, presided over by Jewish clergy and for burial in a Jewish cemetery. Born Jewish, Isaac had elected to die Jewish. ⁶⁰ At the *levée du corps* on 7 September, the following lines were read, lines written by Isaac on 28 November 1931 when he was but 54 years of age.

To be read on the day of my death: The most simple of funerals...No procession...no eulogies...no strangers...Only those who loved me a little...Before the carnal separation, my friends, it is I who address you, who was Jules Isaac, and request of you: no futile grief, with accepting hearts, forgiveness, recollection, the memories that survive in you soothing...Adieu, return to life without me, yet with me.⁶¹

Fr. Duployé, author of a thesis on Péguy and who was present at Isaac’s burial, was struck by the extraordinary intensity permeating the crowd of mourners. He reported in the 19.XI.63 issue of *Témoignage chrétien*, “It was at that moment only that we understood. He whom we had just carried to his final resting place had been neither diplomat nor national historian, but an authentic prophet of Israel” (Fig. 11.2).⁶²

⁵⁷ Isaac, “Surviv,” 233.

⁵⁸ André Zaoui was the rabbi of the liberal synagogue, *Union libérale israélite de France* (rue Copernic) from 1946 to 1969.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Ruff: 4.

⁶⁰ By way of contrast, a funeral mass for Isaac’s younger son, eminent portrait painter Jean-Claude Janet, was held on 5 September 2008 in the Church of *Saint-Vincent-de-Paul* in Paris. Jean-Claude married Catholic sculptor Janine Fréjaville, but he himself never converted to Catholicism. He passed away in Paris on 28 August 2008. Isaac’s elder son, Protestant Daniel Isaac, Classicist, administrator general of the Naval Ministry, Croix de Guerre, Legion d’Honneur (Commandeur), passed away on 11 April 2005.

⁶¹ Ruff.

⁶² Quoted in *ibid.*, 5.

Fig. 11.2 J. Isaac in profile sketched by his youngest son, Jean-Claude, for purposes of the commemorative medal sculpted by Jean-Claude



Salvation is from the Jews

The quietly stubborn German Jesuit, Augustin Bea, would see to the completion of Isaac's sacred mission. Bea's most important Jewish interlocutor would be Rabbi Dr. Abraham Joshua Heschel, professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City. Heschel was principal theological adviser to the American Jewish Committee (AJC). Bea and Heschel had first met in Rome on 26 November 1961. Heschel had been accompanied by Polish-born Zachariah Shuster, the Paris-based director since 1948 of the AJC European office, and Professor Max Horkheimer, AJC German consultant and codirector with Theodore Adorno of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt. Bea was accompanied by his personal secretary, German-speaking Croatian Fr. Stjepan Schmidt, SPCU secretary Johannes Willebrands and Fr. Felix Morlion. "Both Heschel and Bea had prepared carefully for this formal encounter," writes Edward Kaplan.¹ "Heschel had studied Bea's introduction to a critical edition in Hebrew of the *Song of Songs*. Bea, who admired Heschel's Berlin dissertation on the prophets, reviewed references to Heschel's writings in Catholic academic sources."² Heschel gave Bea two volumes of *Midrash Rabba*,³ with book markers

¹ Edward Kaplan, a biographer of Abraham Joshua Heschel, was a professor of French Literature (now professor of humanities emeritus) at Brandeis University.

² Edward K. Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical: Abraham Joshua Heschel in America, 1940–1972* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 241.

³ The *Midrash Rabba* is a compilation of aggadot (stories) on the Pentateuch and on the Five Megillot (scrolls)—Song of Songs, Book of Ruth, Book of Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Book of Esther.

indicating commentaries on the *Song of Songs*, expressing admiration “for the cardinal’s scholarly edition of the Song of Songs, ‘even including subtle points of punctuation.’”⁴ Two AJC memoranda with recommendations for changes to Catholic liturgy and catechesis were raised by Heschel. On 22 May 1962, after much internal vetting, Heschel sent Bea a third AJC memorandum titled, “On Improving Catholic-Jewish Relations.” According to this memorandum, the foremost cause of antisemitism was adjudged to be “the slanderous claims that ‘the Jews’ are collectively responsible for the Crucifixion of Jesus, that because of this the Jews were accursed and condemned to suffer dispersion and deprivation throughout the ages. This charge has been used by anti-Semites for centuries, to justify the most cruel and inhuman treatment of Jews; it has even been advanced to justify the fate of six million Jews during the Nazi Holocaust.”⁵ Said the Jews, the murder of six million of their brethren had not been carried out by God, but in defiance of God. On 31 March 1962, at the AJC headquarters on East 56th Street in New York City, Bea met privately with prominent, qualified representatives of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Judaism at a meeting chaired by Heschel. At Heschel’s specific request, no Jewish converts to Catholicism were in attendance,⁶ a demand that ruled out Baum and Oesterreicher.⁷ Speaking unofficially and in English, Bea adumbrated in round terms the problem: the Jews are accused of being guilty of deicide and on them is supposed to lie a curse. Both charges were rebuttable on scriptural grounds, he continued, based on scriptural truth, the same scriptural truth that Isaac had dredged up.

SECOND SESSION OF THE COUNCIL (AUTUMN 1963)

The second session of the Council (29 September to 4 December 1963) was already under way when Milton Bracker, New York Times bureau chief, using his own sources, published an article on 4 October 1963 dis-

⁴ Kaplan, 242.

⁵ Quoted in *ibid.*, 244.

⁶ As recounted to the author by David Novak and confirmed to the author by Susannah Heschel in response to a question posed following her lecture, “Heschel on Heschel,” delivered on 6 October 2010 at the Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue, Montreal, Quebec.

⁷ Toward the end of the Council’s first session in 1962, a 900-page anonymously authored antisemitic tract entitled *Il complotto contro la Chiesa* (The plot against the Church) was disseminated. The tract claimed a worldwide Jewish conspiracy to undermine the Church by Vatican Jews, such as Gregory Baum and John Oesterreicher.

closing as “ready for distribution” a revised declaration on the Jews. On 17 October, Bracker summarized the proposed text in a front-page piece titled, “Vatican Council Paper Decries Blaming of Jews in Jesus’ Death.” Reported Bracker,

A declaration that it is wrong and harmful to blame the Jews for the death of Jesus is ready for distribution as an official document to the Roman Catholic churchmen attending the Ecumenical Council.

The declaration goes on to assert that hatred of and persecution of Jews is abhorrent to the Roman Catholic Church, and that those guilty of either merit the strongest possible repudiation by ecclesiastical authority.

The document, barely a page long ... is the fourth chapter of a schema, or theme, on ecumenism ... Ecumenism is a fairly recent usage describing a movement toward unity among Roman Catholics, Protestants and other Christians. The inclusion of a section on relations between Roman Catholics and Jews in the schema on ecumenism is in itself unusual...

An explanation that has been advanced, without confirmation, for the possibility of open discussion of the document fairly soon is the Vatican’s concern over the play ‘The Deputy,’ or ‘The Representative,’ both English versions of Rolf Hochhuth’s play ‘*Der Stellvertreter*.’ The work assails the late Pope Pius XII for failure to denounce Hitler’s destruction of 6 million European Jews.⁸

When it came to Pius XII’s conduct during the war, opinions were divided. In a letter to Jules Isaac dated 6 February 1961, Emmanuel Levinas, writing on *Ecole Normale Israélite Orientale* stationery, expressed his own privately held view as follows.

And in the very same issue of *Evidences* in which appeared your article [No 87, Jan–Feb 1961], a man of the value of Père Riquet wrote most seriously: ‘...on 18 March 1945 when [the forces that had been amassed against them], Pope Pius XII did not hesitate in saying to the people: [‘To those who have allowed themselves to be seduced by the advocates of violence, and who, after having subconsciously followed them, begin finally to awake from their delusions, horrified in seeing to what point their docile servility has led them, for these persons there is no other way to salvation than to repudiate definitively the idolatry of absolute nationalisms, pride based on

⁸ Milton Bracker, “Vatican Council Paper Decries Blaming of Jews in Jesus’ Death,” *New York Times* 17 October 1963.

race and blood, hegemonic desires in the possession of material goods and to resolutely turn toward a spirit of sincere brotherhood.’]’

As if on 18 March 1945 Pope Pius XII – whose great courage between 1939 and 1945 we all know, *hélas!* – could have had the least doubt about the outcome of the war.⁹

Nothing good could come of the untimely disclosures reported in *The New York Times*. “*The New York Times* article by Milton Bracker went too far and was premature,” wrote Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, a Heschel protégé, in a memo dated 22 October 1963. “But we hope and are confident that nothing pejorative will result from this story. It would take a lot, a mighty lot, to stop the march of events during the next ten days or so.”¹⁰ When it was announced that Cardinal Bea would present chapter IV of the *schema* on ecumenism, the prelates applauded and Heschel flew to Rome. But the ever-cautious Bea judged it unwise to receive a Jewish representative at this most sensitive of moments. At a meeting among Heschel, Shuster and Cardinal Willebrands, Heschel “made a very forceful and effective plea,” writes Kaplan, “for the alteration of ... two passages”¹¹ susceptible of an interpretation that the entire Jewish people were to blame for the death of Jesus. Meanwhile, another anonymous antisemitic tract arguing for retention of the deicide charge and conversion of the Jews was making the rounds among the Council fathers. In the end, Vatican conservatives got what they wanted—the second session ended on 4 December without the *schema* on ecumenism having been put to a vote whether to accept the draft as a basis for discussion, but not before Bea would have occasion to introduce the fourth chapter of the *schema*.

The first CPC-approved draft of the conciliar statement on the Jews, as chapter IV of the *schema* on ecumenism, was distributed to the Council fathers on 19 November 1963, prior to the close of the second session. When Bea rose to address the Council Fathers, “the possibility of such a failure [to put to a procedural vote whether to accept the draft of the *schema* on ecumenism as a basis for discussion and thereby remove it from the competence of the Coordinating Commission] had already to be taken into account,”¹² notes Oesterreicher in his account of the proceedings.

⁹ Le Fonds Jules Isaac, *bibliothèque Méjanes d’Aix-en-Provence*.

¹⁰ Quoted in Kaplan, 252–53.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 253.

¹² Oesterreicher, “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” 54.

“But why,” Bea asked in his address, “is it so necessary today to recall these things?”

The reason is this. Some decades ago, anti-Semitism, as it is called, was prevalent in various regions and in a particularly violent and criminal form, especially in Germany under the rule of National Socialism, which through hatred for the Jews, committed frightful crimes, extirpating several million of Jewish people – we need not at the moment seek the exact number. Moreover, accompanying and assisting this whole activity was a most powerful and effective ‘propaganda’ as it is called, against the Jews.

Now, it would have been almost impossible that some of the claims of that propaganda did not have an unfortunate effect even on faithful Catholics, the more so since the arguments advanced by that propaganda often enough bore an appearance of truth, especially when they were drawn from the New Testament and from the history of the Church. Thus, since the Church in this Council is striving to renew itself by ‘seeking again the features of its most fervent youth’ as John XXIII of venerable memory said (cf. Discourse of 14 November 1960, AAS, 52 (1960), p. 960), it seems imperative to take up this question.

Not that anti-semitism especially that of National Socialism drew its inspiration from Christian doctrine, a quite false allegation. Rather it is a question of rooting out from the minds of Catholics any ideas which perhaps remain fixed there through the influence of that propaganda.¹³

One has to dig deeply to find traces of Isaac’s influence in Bea’s address to the Council members. Isaac had contended that the taproot of anti-semitism is religious in nature and is one that nourishes and sustains other varieties of antisemitism, including those as anti-Christian as Nazi racialism. Bea was not persuaded. After the promulgation of *Nostra aetate*, he would express the view in his *The Church and the Jewish People*, “As I have already had occasion to remark in the Council chamber itself, the painful phenomenon of anti-semitism draws its sustenance neither principally nor exclusively from religious sources. Many other factors, political, national, psychological, social and economic, enter into it.”¹⁴ This view is consistent with that Bea had expressed at a meeting on 31 March 1962 with AJC officials. During that private meeting, Bea had put it this way: “Actually, it is wrong to seek the chief cause of anti-semitism in purely religious sources – in the Gospel accounts, for example. These religious causes, in

¹³ Bea, 157.

¹⁴ Ibid., 8–9.

so far as they are adduced (often they are not), are often merely an excuse and a veil to cover over other more operative reasons for enmity.”¹⁵ What is remarkable is that Jules Isaac had offered a not dissimilar point of view. “Nothing is more dreadful than hatreds driven by ideology, if not hatreds driven by religion, a close relative,” Isaac had written in *Les Oligarques*. “The truth is, ideology is often but a mask behind which hides the grimace of material interests, injured or at risk. The fanaticism of the believer is the equivalent of that of the owner. Both are merciless.”¹⁶ Why ever would the official Church wish to be complicit with those seeking religious cover for enmity arising from other sources? The oriental patriarchs demanded the withdrawal of the fourth chapter as framed, “not because of any doctrinal concerns,” recalled Archbishop Charles de Provençère, “but because of concerns that no matter how [the declaration on the Jews] was presented, Arabs and Jews would give it a political interpretation ... and they feared that its promulgation as drafted might expose to risk Christian communities in Arab countries. The patriarchs were to maintain their position right through the discussion, all the while affirming their agreement with the text’s substance.”¹⁷

On 2 January 1964, following the close of the second council session, a discouraged Heschel met in his Jewish Theological Seminary office with an equally discouraged Jesuit priest and church liberal Gustave Weigel, professor of ecclesiology at Woodstock College and Council consultant. The two decided to lobby American cardinals Spellman, Meyer and Ritter to urge Bea not to falter. Weigel passed away of a heart attack the following day. One month later, the London *Jewish Chronicle* reported that Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik (who had thus far been an inter-faith dialogue participant on the Jewish side) argued forcefully against theological dialogue with Christians at the midwinter conference of the Rabbinical Council of America. His “sharpest words were reserved for Jewish efforts to have Christian texts changed,”¹⁸ according to Kaplan. Further to a recommendation made on 16/17 April 1964 by Cardinal Carlo Confalonieri, member of the Coordinating Commission, the text on Jews and Judaism became a separate document and was downgraded

¹⁵ Quoted in Joseph Roddy, “How the Jews Changed Catholic Teaching,” *Look Magazine* (25 January 1966).

¹⁶ Isaac, *Les Oligarques*, 11–12.

¹⁷ Mgr. Charles de Provençères, “Jules Isaac et le Concile Vatican II,” *Cahiers de l’Association des amis de Jules Isaac*, no. 2 (1974): 37.

¹⁸ Kaplan, 254.

to the status of “declaration.” On 12 June, Milton Bracker’s replacement, Robert C. Doty, reported in *The New York Times* that the draft declaration “has been drastically watered down ... In its original form the draft contained a clear-cut statement that the Jews as a people bore no responsibility in the Crucifixion of Jesus. Now all reference to the issue has been deleted ... A declaration lacking reference to the issue would amount to no more than another official condemnation of anti-Semitism, according to Jewish leaders.”¹⁹ Further to meetings between Heschel and Thomas Merton on 13 July at the Trappist Abbey of Gethsemani, Merton wrote to Bea, “I am personally convinced that the grace to truly see the Church as she is in her humility and in her splendor may perhaps not be granted to the Council Fathers if they fail to take account of her relations to the anguished synagogue.”²⁰

On 4 September 1964, an unauthorized draft of the conciliar statement on the Jews was published in *The New York Herald Tribune*, and one day later, in *The New York Times*. Apart from the suppression of the word, “deicide,” particularly disconcerting for Jews was the following paragraph: “It is also worth remembering that the union of the Jewish people with the Church is a part of the Christian hope. Accordingly, and following the teaching of Apostle Paul (cf. Romans 11, 25), the Church expects in unshakeable faith and with ardent desire the entrance of that people into the fullness of the people of God, established by Christ.” This paragraph, as reported, prompted Heschel to assert in an interview with *Time Magazine*, “As I have repeatedly stated to leading personalities of the Vatican, I am ready to go to Auschwitz any time, if faced with the alternative of conversion or death.”²¹ In this regard, the contrast between Abraham Joshua Heschel and Jules Isaac could not be starker. While perhaps not subscribing to it, Isaac appreciated the Christian hope from a believing Christian perspective. In correspondence to F. Lovsky dated 16 December 1947, Isaac had written, “You would not be Christian if you did not long for ‘the plenitude,’ this membership of Israel that will be akin to ‘a resurrection from the dead.’ But I also think that you would not be Christian if you resisted efforts beforehand at purification and I am pleased that we are in complete agreement on this point.”²² Isaac reiterated this

¹⁹ Robert C. Doty, “Vatican Said to Mute its Text on the Jews,” *New York Times* 12 June 1964.

²⁰ Quoted in Kaplan, 257.

²¹ *Time Magazine*, 11 September 1964.

²² Isaac, “Soixante-Dix-Neuf lettres de Jules Isaac à F. Lovsky,” 298.

sentiment during the *Tribune de Paris*-sponsored radio broadcast debate of 10 June 1948, saying, “I think that clearly a Christian must not disavow this mission [to convert], and that he must have constantly before him the famous verses of saint Paul’s letter to the Romans, must he not, what will Israel’s conversion be but life from the dead. That said, however, I think that for Christians, there is only one way to advance, and this way – allow me to tell you with the greatest of respect that I have for Christianity – is to be first and foremost Christians.”²³

THIRD SESSION OF THE COUNCIL (AUTUMN 1964)

The third session of the Council was to begin on Monday 14 September 1964. As a result of strenuous lobbying efforts on the part of the AJC, Heschel managed to secure a private audience with Pope Paul VI. At noon on that Monday, Abraham Joshua Heschel and AJC European office director Zachariah Shuster entered the pope’s private study. Heschel had with him a proposed revised memorandum and a copy of his book, *The Prophets*. Shuster drafted two accounts of the meeting—one official, the other, eyewitness, confidential and unofficial.²⁴ The following are excerpts from the unofficial, confidential account. “The Pope was at ease, while Dr. Heschel sat on the edge of his chair, fidgeting, extremely tense, betraying great nervousness.” Heschel’s introductory remarks were “too long, obsequious in manner, repetitious in addressing the Pope innumerable times as ‘Your Holiness,’ and lacked point and clarity.” In disregard of the Pope’s caution that the declaration on the Jews was a conciliar text, not a papal one, Heschel tried to persuade the Pope to revert to the previous draft of the text out of an expressed concern that as revised, the text “would create a bad impression on public opinion.” The Pope reminded Heschel that this was a document addressed to believing Catholics. Heschel persisted. Shuster continued, “My eyes sank to the ground because I heard a Jew speaking to the head of the Catholic Church and bring in such irrelevant, unsuitable and alien considerations as *public relations* in a matter of the highest religious import and significance ... [Heschel] returned again and again to obsequious remarks, pointing out that the great public role the

²³ Transcript reproduced in Jules Isaac, “Israel et la Chretiente,” *l’Amitie judeo-chretienne*, no. 1 (September 1949): 4.

²⁴ Whether the unofficial is the more accurate because it is confidential, the author will leave to the reader to decide.

Council had assumed in the world, and that the passage, as it stood, would be misunderstood.” In reaction to the Pope’s further caution to Heschel, “the young interpreter, Monsignor Marcinkus (whose actions I [Shuster] do not condone in any way) could no longer contain himself in view of the ludicrous behavior of Dr. Heschel, and he began to mimic and imitate Dr. Heschel’s gestures and manner of talking.” At the close of the audience, “[Heschel] approached the pope and offered his ‘advice on matters affecting Jews and Judaism ... the Pope was silent for a moment as though not grasping the meaning of Dr. Heschel’s remarks. Then he said, ‘Yes, Rabbi Zolli was a very good friend of mine and I knew him very well.’”²⁵ Dr. Heschel was flabbergasted and visibly taken aback at this reaction of the Pope to his remark, and obviously did not know how to respond to it.” On leaving the Vatican, “I [Shuster] recall definitely ... the words that came spontaneously to my mind and lips were *chillul ha-shem v’yisrael* (the desecration of God’s name and of Israel).”²⁶ Heschel’s own recollection of the papal audience was more flattering. “I succeeded in persuading even the Pope, the head of the Church, you realize; he personally crossed out a paragraph in which there was a reference to conversion or mission to the Jews, The Pope himself.” Heschel related to Carl Stern in an hour-long interview recorded on 10 December 1972 (a fortnight prior to Heschel’s sudden death) and aired by NBC in February 1973 as part of its *Eternal Light* television series. “And the Declaration published by the Ecumenical Council – if you study it carefully, you will notice the impact of my effort.”²⁷

Eleven days later, on 25 September 1964, Cardinal Bea introduced in the Council Chamber a revised *Declaration on the Jews and Non-Christians*. As *The New York Times* had reported, nowhere in the revised declaration, ostensibly out of theological concerns, was there an admonition never to present the Jewish people as, *inter alia*, guilty of deicide. Recalls Tavad,

²⁵ Born in Eastern Europe in 1881, Israel Zolli was a rabbi in Trieste for nearly three decades before taking up the post of chief rabbi of Rome in 1940. He was nowhere to be found on Saturday 18 September 1943 nor at Rosh Hashanah services in that year. Zolli and his family survived the Nazi occupation of Rome in hiding with Catholic families, perhaps even in the Vatican itself. After Rome’s liberation, Jewish community leaders sought to relieve him of his duties as chief rabbi, but Zolli was reinstated by the Allies. In February 1945, Israel Zolli converted to Catholicism and changed his name to Eugenio, after Pius XII.

²⁶ Quoted in Kaplan, 261–66.

²⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 383–84.

This discussion ended on 29 September 1964; the Secretariat for Christian Unity then started to work to expand the proposed draft.

Experts were brought in to help write new paragraphs. Nearly two months later, on 20 November, Cardinal Bea presented the resulting version, which now spoke also of three great religions: Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. This text was accepted in substance on 21 November 1964, with 1,651 votes in favour, 242 in favour with modifications, 99 against and 4 votes that were invalid. During the fourth session of the Council, on 14 October 1965, Cardinal Bea gave his last presentation of the schema in its final form. A vote on 15 October showed 1,763 in favour, 1 in favour with modifications, 250 against and 9 invalid. The final vote on 28 October carried a much higher majority: 2,221 in favour, 2 in favour with modifications, 88 against and 1 invalid ... *Nostra aetate* was promulgated on the same day.²⁸

In the draft reintroduced on 20 November 1964, “the Jews” (*Iudaeis*) gave way to “Abraham’s stock” (*stirpes Abrahæ*), a turn of phrase that “satisfied Cardinal Lercaro’s expectation that the reference to the Jews have an evident religious quality,” according to Connelly. “The German equivalent was precisely the phrase that had been used by Karl Thieme in his Evanston theses (these that were also the source for the words of Zephaniah that put an end to the controversy over mission to the Jews).”²⁹ Connelly surmises that Thieme in turn was drawing upon the work of Karl Barth, his neighbor in Basel, who referred to the Jews as *Stamm Abrahams* in an exegesis of Romans 9–11 from 1942. In French, the words were *lignée d’Abraham*, in Italian, *stirpe*. The word “deicide” was restored in the reintroduced draft. The earlier, “following the teaching of the Apostle Paul (cf. Romans 11:25), the Church waits with unshaken faith and deep longing for the entry of that people into the fullness of the people of God established by Christ” was replaced by “In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and ‘serve Him shoulder to shoulder’ (Zeph. 3:9).”

This change was driven not by Heschel’s theatrics per se, but by the concern that underlay them. As explained by de Provençères, “Certain Jews, unaware of New Testament perspectives concerning the end of times, appear to have understood this text as a call to undertake a mis-

²⁸ Tavard, 32–3.

²⁹ Connelly, 260.

sion to convert the Jews. The fathers considered it prudent to take into account the risk of this kind of misinterpretation and to redraft the text differently.”³⁰ Oesterreicher, in his account of the conciliar declaration on the Jews, was less guarded in his language.

The statement [of the Christian hope] was so greatly misunderstood that Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel – a man of deep insight whose blood, however, boils too easily – felt himself obliged to protest against it in the following terms: faced with the choice of conversion or death in the gas chambers of Auschwitz, he would choose the latter. The imputation that the Church had kept alight the gas chambers of Auschwitz puts the Church’s profession of faith in the union of all who worship the God of Israel in the same category as the most ghastly perversions of the Middle Ages, when Jews were more than once faced with the choice of, for example, baptism or exile. It is too fantastic to be refuted.³¹

The last word in this regard belongs to de Provençères. “This [substitution] reflected not a change in Catholic doctrine, but a change in its formulation, using expressions that would be precisely understood by the man of today, unfamiliar with theology. This was in conformity with instructions given by John XXIII, and repeated by Paul VI. Having regard to the interest aroused by the statement on the Jews, it was essential that its precise meaning be graspable at the same time by the Jews and the Arabs, by the learned and the man on the street.”³²

FOURTH SESSION OF THE COUNCIL (AUTUMN 1965)

The expression “guilty of deicide” was not carried forward to the final version that was put to a final vote on 28 October 1965. “The Secretariat considered that it was preferable to avoid a word that raises controversies,” recalled de Provençères, “while at the same time affirming ‘...precisely and comprehensively the substance of that which it is desired to convey by this word.’”³³ This omission would have been a disappointment to Isaac,

³⁰Mgr. Charles de la Provençère, “Jules Isaac et le Concile Vatican II,” *Cahiers de l’Association des amis de Jules Isaac*, no. 2 (1974): 38.

³¹Oesterreicher, “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” 66.

³²de Provençères: 38.

³³Quoted in *ibid.*, 41.

though even he had appreciated the implications of classical Christology—that in accordance with *communicatio idiomatum*, the properties of the Divine Word can be predicated of the man, Christ, and that the properties of the man, Christ, can be predicated of the Divine Word. In different terms, there is a oneness in the dual natures of Christ, taught the church fathers at Chalcedon: Jesus is entirely man and entirely God. It follows that what can be predicated about his humanity is equally apt of his divinity and vice versa. Bea had alluded to the *communicatio idiomatum* implications of orthodox Christology in an article entitled “Are the Jews a Deicide People and ‘Cursed by God?’” written in 1962 during the first session of the Second Vatican Council, for simultaneous publication in the German *Stimmen der Zeit*, the French *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* and the Italian *La Civiltà Cattolica*. The article reached the second proof stage before it was suppressed out of a concern that its publication would further inflame certain Arab countries, but not without protest from the editors of *Stimmen der Zeit*. As a result of this protest, the substance of Bea’s article was published in *Stimmen der Zeit* under the name of Ludwig von Hertling, SJ, a member of the German journal who had in his time taught church history at the Gregorian.³⁴

According to Catholic doctrine, Jesus Christ is, in one person, true God and true human being. Both natures, the divine and the human, are united hypostatically in Christ, according to the technical term. Between the divine and the human nature in Christ is what theology describes as *communicatio idiomatum*, which means that the same things can be predicated of Christ, Son of God, as of Christ, human being. We call Mary mother not merely of Jesus the man, but we call her Mother of God. We do not merely say that Jesus, the man, died on the Cross, but that God dies on the Cross for us. Conversely, we say that the infant Jesus in the crib, or the blood of Christ, or the Heart of Jesus is to be adored. It is therefore dogmatically correct, even when it might sound somewhat uncustomary, to assert: God has been killed and since it is an unjust and violent death, God has been assassinated.³⁵

Having regard to the *communicatio idiomatum* implications of the man-God nature of Jesus, Bea was able to conclude that *objectively* speaking, the condemnation and crucifixion of Christ constituted the crime

³⁴ Willebrands, *Church and Jewish People: New Considerations*, 57–61.

³⁵ Ludwig von Hertling, S.J., “Die schuld des jüdischen volks am tod christi,” *Stimmen der Zeit* 171 (1962/63): 17.

of deicide. What is astonishing and a testament to intellectual integrity is that Isaac had reached this same conclusion. Romanian Chief Rabbi Emeritus Alexandre Safran, who attended the Seelisberg Conference in 1947, reported that Isaac had been willing to accept the positive formulation in the Ten Points that some Jews (presumably the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead) had “killed God,” but was dissuaded by arguments that collective Jewish responsibility as deicides might be inferable.³⁶

Nonetheless, as Bea would note in *The Church and the Jewish People*, “We cannot speak of the guilt of deicide objectively in the external forum and simultaneously leave the question of possible ignorance to the judgement of God. Here we are asking whether certain *persons* [emphasis added] can be accused of culpability for deicide or not, and the problem of their subjective knowledge or lack of it is as vital as the objective qualification of the crime itself.”³⁷ In other words, the guilt of deicide can only be properly imputed to those who have committed the crime with full knowledge of the dual nature of Christ. In this regard, the biblical scholarly consensus was, and is, that Jesus’ divine status was recognized by his disciples only after his resurrection. In his elaboration of the revised *schema*, Bea echoed Isaac’s arguments and the New Testament passages upon which Isaac had relied³⁸:

Here lies the gravity and the tragedy of their [the Jewish authorities] action – the exercise of their authority in the condemnation and death of Christ. Yet how grievous was their [the Jewish people’s] guilt? Did those ‘rulers’ of the people in Jerusalem fully understand the divinity of Christ and so become formally guilty of deicide? Our Lord on the cross said in his prayer to the Father: ‘Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do’ (Luke 23:34). If this reason for forgiveness is no mere empty formula – God forbid – it surely shows that the Jews were far from full understanding of the crime they were committing. St. Peter also, addressing the Jewish people on the crucifixion of Christ, repeated: ‘And now brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers’ (Acts 3:17). So St. Peter finds an excuse even for the very rulers! So likewise does St. Paul (Acts 13:27).³⁹

³⁶ Alexandre Safran, *Den Flammen Entrissen. Die Jüdischen Gemeinden in Rumänien 1939–1947 Erinnerungen* (Tübingen, Basel: 1989), 221–24.

³⁷ Bea, 69 at n.1.

³⁸ Isaac, *Jesus and Israel*, 361–62.

³⁹ Bea, 161.

“As for Peter, who denied Jesus at the time of his Passion,” Isaac wrote, “it would be more accurate if he had said, ‘This Jesus ... *we* crucified and killed...’ For Jesus’ disciples, being the best-informed of his authority, are more to be blamed for having deserted him.”⁴⁰ Bea would use the fact that neither St. Peter, nor St. Stephen⁴¹ nor St. Paul,⁴² for that matter, had included *themselves* among those responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus in support of the theological argument that the crucifixion of Jesus is not founded on membership of the people of Israel, but on concurrence with the attitude of their leaders in Jerusalem (a point of view reminiscent of that expressed in P. Daniélou’s *Le Nef* review of *Jésus et Israël*).

One fundamental fact must first be noted. In none of the texts cited above does the speaker (St. Peter, St. Paul, or St. Stephen) include *himself* [emphasis added] among those responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus. Their rebukes are always addressed to someone else, whether it be the Sanhedrin, the crowd involved in the trial, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, or Jews in general. Now if these texts referred to a collective responsibility and guilt of the entire Jewish people as such, that is of all members of the people of Israel, then in all honesty the speakers would have been obliged to use the pronoun ‘we’ and to include themselves. It follows that they neither envisaged nor implied a collective responsibility or guilt based solely on membership in the chosen people.⁴³

In his arguments rebutting the accusation of collective guilt, Isaac argued that the Jewish authorities were not representative of the Jewish people. “It is possible to believe, as we shall see,” he wrote, “that this oligarchic caste – four powerful families in all, brutal, cynical, and ill-famed – bore the heaviest part of the responsibility for Jesus’ arrest and delivery to the Romans. And it is this caste which our authoritative theologians and exegetes, for lack of better, baptize as ‘perfectly qualified’ representatives of the Jewish nation. ‘Perfectly disqualified’ would be more accurate. Vichy in Jerusalem. And worse yet, if we recall that Vichy could at least claim some democratic basis and exhibited only a secular (or military) dishonor.”⁴⁴ Bea was not persuaded. In his introduction to the Council fathers, when

⁴⁰ Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt*, 138.

⁴¹ Acts 7:52.

⁴² Acts 13:27–28; 1 Thessalonians 2:15.

⁴³ Bea, 77.

⁴⁴ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 405.

addressing the question whether a declaration that Christ's death can in no way be laid to the charge of the Jewish people *as such*, he stated:

I need scarcely say that there is not and cannot be any question of denying or attenuating anything affirmed in the Gospels. The issue must be carefully defined and it is this: The Leaders of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, although not democratically elected, yet, according to the ordinary understanding of those days, accepted by the scriptures, were regarded and must be regarded as the embodiment of legitimate authority among the people. Here lie the gravity and the tragedy of their action – the exercise of their authority in the condemnation and death of Christ.⁴⁵

In his second address to the Council Father, Bea, drawing upon the data of history, drawing upon the “probability, if not the certainty, that the Jews in Palestine were at that point only a minority,”⁴⁶ stated, “Statistics show that in the apostolic age the Jews dispersed throughout the Roman Empire numbered about 4,500,000: are all of them to be accused of the deeds done by the Sanhedrists on that first sad Good Friday?”⁴⁷ Bea's figure for the Jewish population bore a remarkable similarity to that proposed by Isaac in *Jésus et Israël*. In reliance on Hans Lietzmann and Adolphe Harnack, Isaac writes, “The probability, if not the certainty, is that the Jews in Palestine were at [the time of Jesus] only a minority, the estimates – and they are very rough – ranging from half a million to one or two million.” In apparent reliance on historian Jean Juster, Isaac continues, “The Jews of the Diaspora constituted the majority, numbering four or five million or perhaps more.”⁴⁸ Juster's estimate, in turn, was no doubt based on Bar-Hebraeus' report of a census of Jews (6,944,000) ordered by Claudius, upon which not only Juster, but also Baron and Feldman, among historians, relied. The problem was that Bar-Hebraeus' figure had mistaken the Roman citizen population for the Jewish population of the Roman Empire at the time of Jesus. As McGing writes,

It must be supposed that Baron (and Feldman) simply did not know of the Jerome version of Eusebius' report on Claudius' census of Roman citizens: ‘a *descriptio* of Rome having been made under Claudius, there were found to

⁴⁵ Bea, 161.

⁴⁶ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 162.

⁴⁷ Bea, 161–62.

⁴⁸ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, *New Revised Ed.*, 162.

be of Roman citizens 6,944,000.’ This is, of course, exactly Bar-Hebraeus’ figure for the number of Jews ... Eusebius’ figure may well be problematic, but the notion that Claudius would order a census specifically of Jews is extremely improbable, and there can be no good reason whatever to prefer Bar-Hebraeus to Eusebius on the matter of who was being counted: it is now incontestably clear that somehow or other [Bar-Hebraeus] has picked up and transmitted Eusebius’ figure, mistakenly attributing it to the number of Jews.⁴⁹

There were two other revisions of note. The earlier, “All should then ensure that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the Word of God they do not teach anything that could give rise to hatred or contempt of Jews in the hearts of Christians,” became “All should then ensure 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.” This change would have disappointed Isaac. In the penultimate paragraph of his last letter to Pope John XXIII, dated 6 October 1962, Isaac had written that in no case may an authentically Christian teaching give rise to feelings of contempt, revulsion and hatred toward the people of the Old Testament, and it followed that imputations of the deicide people or race, the cursed people, the satanic people of the flesh, the people scattered as punishment for the crucifixion, should be proscribed. This was consistent with the closing of Isaac’s *Note complémentaire et Conclusive*, drafted in his own script on the night before his papal audience and left with Pope John XXIII: “Is there not a base principle on which it seems inconceivable that there would not be unanimity? It can be formulated thus: in no circumstances, under any guise, may a teaching calling itself Christian, based on the gospels, engender sentiments of contempt, of repulsion or of hate toward the Jewish people – toward Jesus’ people, toward the Apostles’ people and toward the first Christians.”⁵⁰ Also the earlier “Moreover, this Synod ... deplores and condemns hatred and persecution of Jews” became “the Church ... decries hatred, persecution, displays of antisemitism directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.” One theological reason advanced for this change was that the council doc-

⁴⁹ Brian McGing, “Population and Proselytism: How Many Jews Were There in the Ancient World?,” in *Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman Cities*, ed. John R. Bartlett (London: Routledge, 2002), 94.

⁵⁰ Le Fonds Jules Isaac, *bibliothèque Méjanes d’Aix-en-Provence*.

uments reserved the word, “condemn” for formal heresies; another was that this verb had not been used in relation to other forms of racism.

“SALVATION IS FROM THE JEWS” (JOHN 4:22)

As president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Walter Cardinal Kasper had occasion to remark, “[S]ince the substance of *Nostra Aetate* [art. 4] is also present in the formally higher-ranking Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (n. 16) ... on principle, there is no going back.”⁵¹ What is this substance? It is that the Jews are still greatly beloved by God, Whose gifts and call are irrevocable for the sake of the Fathers. This substance, which eclipsed, transcended and superseded the Ten Points of Seelisberg,⁵² is that to which Léon Bloy had presciently pointed in his *Le Salut par les Juifs*, first published in 1892, a monograph that had lain dormant for 12 years from initial publication. The publisher, writes Bloy in his Preface to a new edition published in 1906, “a most excellent and dignified man formed from the alluvium of the soil and admirably suited to the typographic production of this single work,” suddenly and without warning abandoned his publishing activities, with the consequential “arbitrary sequestration of most of the copies of my book.”⁵³ This book, or rather series of essays, is a self-styled “paraphrase” of chapter 11 of Paul’s Letter to the Romans by which Bloy wished to bear urgent Christian witness in favor of “the elder Race” and about which he would wonder in the close of his Preface dated 19 November 1905, “Does the Jewish world appreciate this book, which honours it beyond all expectation and which has cost it nothing?”⁵⁴ Isaac himself had mixed feelings about Bloy’s book. “*Salvation is from the Jews*, in which the sublime skirts the filthy, is a great book,” he writes in *Jésus et Israël*. “But this book, little known in times past, has only too many readers today: dreading the ravages of filth in ill-prepared souls, I would hope that they would be cautioned against such hazardous reading, and that such reading be

⁵¹ *L’Osservatore Romano*, 16 April 2008, pp. 8–9.

⁵² It is noteworthy that in the new revised edition of *The Jews and the Gospel*, published under the title, *Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic?*, Baum chose not to carry forward the Ten Points as an appendix. Although not now recalling his motive, he concedes the possibility that he must have assumed that the Ten Points had served their purpose and been transcended by the conciliar statement on the Jews and Judaism.

⁵³ Léon Bloy, *Le Salut par les juifs*, 2d ed. (Paris: Mercvre de France, 1933), 5.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

reserved for those vigilant souls, exegetes of the quality of Albert Béguin, for example.”⁵⁵

Despite the book’s theological deficiencies,⁵⁶ as well as antisemitic overtones, according to Fr. Charles Journet,⁵⁷

at a time when the conscience of too many Christians on an important issue was not christian, [Bloy] loudly proclaimed into the silence like a prophetic trumpet the sound of the revelations of the apostle that touch upon the destiny of the chosen people. One was in the midst of *downgrading* [Journet’s emphasis] the Jewish problem; he, a lay person, undertook in the face of a literary and political world strangely deaf to every call of faith, to *restore it to its rightful plane* [Journet’s emphasis]. He proclaimed that Israel’s existence was a mystery attesting to divine trustworthiness, that one could not lay a hand upon this elected people, this people set apart, without sacred tremors.⁵⁸

Bloy’s starting point is the five last words of John 4:22: “salvation is from the Jews,” words attributed to Jesus in his dialogue with the Samaritan woman, words which, lamented Bloy although not in these terms, were more honored in the breach than the observance. At the plain meaning level, salvation is from the Jews because, Charles Journet elaborated in 1945, “it is within them that was (i) prepared, (ii) established, (iii) promulgated the messianic Kingdom.”⁵⁹ The plain meaning interpretation of John 4:22 was not lost on Bloy; however, it was the deeper meaning that would pique his interest, a fourth meaning, “that was to be revealed later by the apostle Saint Paul. According to this point of view,” Journet continued, “salvation is from the Jews not by virtue of (i) the birth as a Jew of the Messiah, nor by virtue of (ii) the preparation of the patriarchs, nor by reason of (iii) the fidelity of this ‘remnant’ of Israel which constituted the heart of the Church. By a detour most puzzling, *salvation is to come from*

⁵⁵ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, *New Revised Ed.*, 525.

⁵⁶ For example, Bloy seems not to have acknowledged the advent of the Holy Spirit, which, according to normative church doctrine, occurred at the first post-resurrection Pentecost.

⁵⁷ See John Hellman, “The Jews in the ‘New Middle Ages’: Jacques Maritain’s Anti-Semitism in Its Times,” in *Jacques Maritain and the Jews*, ed. Robert Royal (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

⁵⁸ Charles Journet, *Destinées d’Israël: A Propos du Salut par les Juifs* (Paris: Egloff, 1945), 429.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 404.

the Jews by virtue of their rebellion and from that which ensues [Journet's emphasis]."⁶⁰

The fourth article of *Nostra aetate* restores the Christian attitude to Israel to its rightful plane, what Bloy had loudly proclaimed into the silence like a prophetic trumpet. John Oesterreicher, in his account of the Second Vatican Council's *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, observes in relation to the fourth article of *Nostra aetate*, "It is the first time also that the Church has publicly made her own the Pauline view of the mystery of Israel."⁶¹ In correspondence to the author dated 18 December 2007, one of those who drafted the fourth article of *Nostra aetate*, Gregory Baum, recalls,

At the Secretariat we interpreted the words of St. Paul as the assurance that Israel remains God's chosen people and that the ancient covenant retains its validity after the coming of Jesus. *This was new to me* [emphasis added]. This is not how I interpreted Paul in my book written before the Council. But the positive interpretation emerged ... I don't remember who brought it up first, but I do remember that it was new to me, that I embraced it with gladness, and that I made the corrections in the second edition of my book. I did not ask myself whether this interpretation was shared by all the members of the Secretariat. I simply thought that this was the obvious meaning of the conciliar text. Immediately after the Council, I wrote in various articles that implied in the conciliar teaching is that the Church has no mission to convert Jews to the Christian faith.⁶²

Where is the Pauline view of the mystery of Israel to be found? It is to be found in what Baum called Paul's "little treatise on Israel's rôle in the history of salvation (Romans 9–11),"⁶³ which Baum described as "the heart of Paul's doctrine on this matter, which in the past was often regarded as

⁶⁰ Ibid., 406.

⁶¹ Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 1.

⁶² Correspondence to the author dated 18 December 2007. Baum added in subsequent correspondence dated 21 October 2014, "John Connelly's book argues that Karl Thieme was the first theologian who interpreted Romans 11:29 as the assurance that God's ancient covenant with Israel remains valid even after Christ's coming. I do not know whether Rudloff brought this interpretation to the Secretariat; my impression is – I think Connelly quoted me on this – that we slithered into this position by systematically avoiding interpretations of Scripture that belittled or humiliated Jews, – a post-Holocaust hermeneutic."

⁶³ Baum, *The Jews and the Gospel*, 17.

an obscure speculation of little importance, [and which] has become the object of many scholarly studies and commentaries, and through writers addressing a wider audience – we are thinking above all of Maritain—the positive doctrine of Paul in regard to Israel is, in our day, being brought to the notice of educated Christians.”⁶⁴ A decade later, Oesterreicher, in his commentary, echoed this point of view. “From the time of Christian antiquity up to that of Vatican II, there had been hardly any development of the Church’s teaching on the mystery of Jewish existence,” Oesterreicher noted. “Many other mysteries had been subjects of meditation in prayer and intense intellectual activity, for example, the great mysteries of the triune God, of the person and office of Jesus, and of the Eucharist. There was a constant clarification of concepts and continual refinement of language in order to represent supernatural realities as exactly as possible in human speech. But nothing of this kind had occurred with regard to the relationship of Church and Synagogue. The problem was really the Cinderella of theology.”⁶⁵ A half century later, George Tavad, another of those who drafted the conciliar statement on the Jews, would put it this way: “Most theologians, I believe, have not reflected in depth on [Israel’s role in salvation history]. Thomas Aquinas is a major exception. Yet his thought, briefly formulated in his commentary on Romans, has had few echoes. As a result, the Pauline insights on Judaism have hardly affected the teaching of the Christian faith in the Catholic Church. If they had, the sufferings of the Jewish people at the hands of Christians could not have taken place to the extent they occurred.”⁶⁶ Alas, lamented Baum writing in the late 1950s, “the great apostle is proverbially difficult to understand.”⁶⁷ Even Thomas Aquinas was not certain of Paul’s meaning, adds Tavad.

As [Aquinas] read Paul’s question and answer – ‘For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead!’ (Rom 11:15) – Aquinas understood that ‘The re-assumption of Jews by God will make the Gentiles resurrect into life.’ He wondered who the Gentiles were who were in need of resurrection. He suggested that they might be Christians with lukewarm faith or Christians misled by the Antichrist. He also suggested that the ‘conversion of Jews’ might be an

⁶⁴ Ibid., 172.

⁶⁵ Oesterreicher, “Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions,” 39.

⁶⁶ Tavad, 14.

⁶⁷ Baum, *The Jews and the Gospel*, 171.

eschatological event immediately prior to the general resurrection of the flesh ... These tentative interpretations evidently show that Aquinas was not certain of Paul's meaning. His hesitancy, however, does not tone down his forceful conclusion: 'Ignorance of this mystery would be damning for us.'⁶⁸

As the great apostle is susceptible to more than one interpretation, so too is the conciliar document on the Jews and Judaism. Augustin Bea was fast off the mark in providing his understanding, which was published in English translation in 1966. Bea's was a conservative interpretation. Commenting on the passage of *Nostra aetate* (No. 4) which provides, "Although the Church is the new People of God, the Jews should not be represented as rejected by God or accursed, as if this followed from the holy Scriptures," Bea took pains to clarify more than once that the Jewish people are no longer the people of God "in the sense of an *institution for the salvation of mankind* [emphasis in the original]."⁶⁹ The distinction between Israel as an institution for the salvation of mankind and Israel as a collectivity of individuals is echoed by Oesterreicher. "One had to distinguish between the Jews as a 'corporate person' and the Jews as a sum total of individuals."⁷⁰ Fifty years later, this distinction is to be found in "*The Gifts and the Calling of God are Irrevocable*" – *A Reflection on Theological Questions pertaining to Catholic-Jewish relations on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of Nostra aetate* (no. 4), released 10 December 2015 by the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews (CRRJ). In paragraph 32 of this document, the CRRJ asserts, "The Church is the definitive and unsurpassable locus of the salvific action of God," and in paragraph 33, "This recourse to the Abrahamic covenant is so essentially constitutive of the Christian faith that the Church without Israel would be in danger of losing its locus in the history of salvation." Could it be that Bea and Oesterreicher, perhaps also contemporary Catholic theologians, are drawing their categories from Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain.

The role of French Protestant convert to Catholicism Maritain, like that of German Protestant convert to Catholicism Thieme, in creating a theological vocabulary with which the official Church could speak of the Jews cannot be overstated. The role of Israel in salvation history, wrote

⁶⁸ Tavard, 46–7.

⁶⁹ Bea, 96. See also note 1 at p. 10.

⁷⁰ Oesterreicher, "Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," 34.

Maritain, is one that “ [Léon] Bloy had revealed to him in a ‘supernatural lightningbolt.’”⁷¹ Supernatural is the operative word. When it came to the Jewish people, Maritain’s was a spiritual, not a temporal, vertex. For almost two millennia, chapters 9–11 of Paul’s Letter to the Romans had been an occasion to discuss the Christian doctrine of election, predestination and man’s free will, vague and ambiguous theological speculation that was not central to Paul’s thought. “The very first remark on Rom. 9–11 which we find in the *Bible de Jérusalem*⁷² [overthrew] the tradition of centuries when it [said], ‘In these chapters [Rom. 9–11] it is not a question of divine predestination of individuals to glory or even to faith, but simply the role of Israel in history,’” writes Baum. “When Paul speaks in these chapters of being elected or rejected, he has not in mind the fate of individual men, but rather that of nations and whole communities.”⁷³ In modern biblical scholarship, continues Baum, “the conviction has become almost unanimous that Rom. 9–11 must be taken seriously, that it expresses a central theme in Paul’s thought, and that on the whole, its significance is clear and comprehensible.”⁷⁴ “[P]hilosophy, which even as *ancilla* of theology, is never in a servile condition (it is rather an ‘auxiliary’ – on the side of mere natural reason – than a ‘servant’ of theology),” Maritain wrote, “has not only to furnish to the latter a metaphysics (I mean a metaphysics founded in truth); it has also for function, – at least if in the head of the philosopher it is itself strengthened by faith, – to enter, yes, onto the proper terrain of the *sacra doctrina* in order to make there itself an effort of reason and to propose there eventually to the competent doctors new views.”⁷⁵ It is ironic that the inspiration for Maritain’s insight on the role of Israel in salvation history was, in the words of Pierre Birnbaum, “one of the most extreme and vociferous anti-Semites of turn-of-the-century France.”⁷⁶ Léon Bloy was not to be read by the unsophisticated.

⁷¹ Bernard E. Doering, *Jacques Maritain and the French Catholic Intellectuals* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 1983), 140.

⁷² Further to an encyclical of Pope Pius XII, issued in 1943, and encouraging Roman Catholics to translate the Scriptures from the Hebrew and Greek texts rather than from Jerome’s Latin Vulgate, Dominicans and other scholars at the *École Biblique* in Jerusalem translated the scriptures into French. The fruit of their labor was published as *La Bible de Jérusalem* in 1956.

⁷³ Baum, *The Jews and the Gospel*, 208–9.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁷⁵ Jacques Maritain, *On the Church of Christ: The Person of the Church and Her Personnel*, trans. Joseph W. Evans (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), v.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Hellman, 91, note 8.

The Rest of the Backstory

Do we not hear echoes of Jules Isaac, and perhaps of his spiritual soulmate, Charles Péguy, in the following passages of article 4 of *Nostra aetate*?

The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant [*Isaac's Point 1*].

Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles...

The Church keeps ever in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen: 'theirs is the sonship and the glory and the covenant and the law and the worship and the promises [*Isaac's Point 3*]; theirs are the fathers and from them is the Christ according to the flesh' (Rom 9:4-5), the Son of the Virgin Mary [*Isaac's Point 7*]. She also recalls that the Apostles, the Church's mainstay and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ's Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people [*Isaac's Point 9*]...

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ; still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today [*Isaac's Point 14*].

Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected by God or accursed, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures [*Isaac's Point 13*].

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 by the spiritual love of the Gospel and not by political reasons, decries hatred, persecutions, manifestations of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.

Besides, as the Church has always held and holds now, Christ underwent his passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation [*Seelisberg Point 7*].

No doubt it would have been a source of pleasure for Isaac to have heard the following comments uttered by Cardinal Willebrands, first president of the Commission on Religious Relations with the Jews, comments made with the benefit of 20 years of hindsight from the date of promulgation of *Nostra aetate*:

at least this is true: those [Catholics] who chose to ignore *Nostra aetate* and subsequent actions and documents, including the example of the Pope, are put in the situation of having to explain their attitudes, theological or pastoral. In other words, an attitude which represents ancient stereotypes or prejudices, not to say one that is aggressive against Jews and Judaism, does not anymore have a right to legitimate existence in the Church. It may be there, and it may still be frequent in some places, but it has been put onto the defensive. It is not taken for granted, as it was – I fear – twenty years ago.¹

Isaac's thought is also reflected in the *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration Nostra aetate* (n. 4), published in 1974. For example, the Guidelines call attention to the links between the Christian liturgy and the Jewish liturgy [*Isaac's Point 2*] and recall that:

- It is the same God, “inspirer and author of the books of both Testaments” (*Dei Verbum*, 16), who speaks both in the Old and new Covenants [*Isaac's Points 1 and 3*];
- Judaism in the time of Christ and the Apostles was a complex reality, embracing many different trends, many spiritual, religious, social and cultural values [*Isaac's Point 4*];

¹Willebrands, “Christians and Jews: A New Vision,” 229.

- The Old Testament and the Jewish tradition founded upon it must not be set against the New Testament in such a way that the former seems to constitute a religion of only justice, fear and legalism, with no appeal to the love of God and neighbor (cf. Dt. 6:5; Lv 19:18; Mt 22:34-40);
- Jesus was born of the Jewish people, as were his Apostles and a large number of his first disciples [*Isaac's Points 7 and 9*]...
- The history of Judaism did not end with the destruction of Jerusalem, but rather went on to develop a religious tradition... [a tradition that] is still nonetheless rich in religious values.

The correspondences between the *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Catholic Church*, published in 1985, and Isaac's *Jesus and Israel* are so numerous that they speak for themselves.² How to explain the resonances between *Nostra aetate*, no. 4, the Guidelines and the Notes, on the one hand, and Isaac's *Jesus and Israel*, on the other? Ovey N. Mohammed, Professor Emeritus, Regis College, observes that the Catholic Church "stepped over centuries of contemptuous teaching back to the New Testament itself."³ True enough, but at the provocation of one who had discovered to his horror the gross misalignment between gospel reality and a certain secular tradition regarding the Jewish people. Few are those who know of the catalytic role played by Jules Isaac in the revolution in Catholic teaching and preaching about Jews and Judaism. Thomas Stransky is one of them.

By only these 17 Latin sentences, though a few had been weakened by immediate compromises, Vatican II began to shift with integrity 1,900 years of relationships between Catholics and Jews, and to open locks that had been jammed for centuries. The conciliar act continues in the life of the Catholic Church, an irrevocable *hesbon nefesh*, a reconsideration of soul.

In recalling my personal experience of *Nostra Aetate's* six-year journey, I favour the biblical image which Cardinal Bea once used: the tiny seed of

² Reference is made to the Table of Correspondences set out in Appendix.

³ Ovey N. Mohammed, "Jewish-Catholic Relations: From *Nostra Aetate* to the Present," in *Jews and Catholics Together: Celebrating the Legacy of Nostra Aetate: A Symposium Held in Toronto 10 November 2005*, ed. Michael Attridge (Ottawa: Novalis, St. Paul University, 2007), 54.

Jules Isaac's half-hour conversation with Good Pope John grows into that large mustard tree which warmly hosts in its branches so many men and women of 'non-Christian religions'. The all-embracing positive character of the entire *Nostra Aetate* makes it of commanding import in Catholic history. For *Nostra Aetate* helped open the Catholic Church to living dialogue with each community of faith – respecting its own identity, ritual and conduct. This dialogue begins with 'what human beings have in common and what promotes fellowship' (N.1). Not merely human effort but God's mysterious initiatives, through us, in a shared history.⁴

The mustard seed metaphor had been alluded to by Augustin Cardinal Bea in his address to the Council fathers on 20 November 1964. On that day, he opened his remarks with "This Declaration might well be compared to the biblical grain of mustard seed."

Gregory Baum made the necessary corrections to his book, which was published as a new revised edition in 1965 under the new title, *Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic?* In the closing paragraph of the new revised edition, this self-styled pupil and follower of Jules Isaac chose to express himself in the same paradoxical terms as had the official Church: yes, God is redemptively present in the Synagogue; yes, the Church of Christ is the salvific community for the whole of humanity.

Even though the Jewish people are no longer the sacrament of salvation in the world, God continues to act in their midst. Why? Because the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable (cf. Rom. 11:29)... We may confidently assert that according to the Scriptures God continues to make himself known in the synagogue and to be worshiped there by men who believe in his covenant. God's mysterious action in the Jewish people is for the Church a sign of great consolation, since it reminds her of God's unshakable fidelity and the gratuity of his mercy.⁵

The corrections in the new revised edition of *The Jews and the Gospel* addressed not Part I of Baum's book, in which he had mounted a defense of the purity of the gospels, but Part II, in which Baum presents Paul's thought on the interrelationship of Israel and the Church. In 1965, Baum still understood biblical inspiration in the normative Catholic sense that

⁴ Stransky, "The Genesis of *Nostra Aetate*: An Insider's Story," 52–3.

⁵ Gregory Baum, *Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic? A Re-Examination of the New Testament*, new rev. ed. (Glen Rock, NJ: Paulist Press, 1965), 347–48.

the books of the New Testament are theological unities and that, in his words, “the last redaction bears the imprint of the Holy Spirit, and in their final form the books as a whole represent the message that God wants to communicate to the Church.”⁶ It took this self-styled disciple of Jules Isaac 11 years to catch up to his mentor. In Baum’s Introduction to Rosemary Ruether’s *Faith and Patricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*, published in 1974, Baum disavowed his apology for the New Testament.

My apology for the New Testament led me to a contradiction: for I had to admit in the course of my study that many biblical passages reflected the conflict between Church and Synagogue in the first century. While I was bound to acknowledge that already the New Testament proclaimed the Christian message with a polemical edge against the religion of Israel, I refused to draw the consequences from this. I was still convinced that the anti-Jewish trends in Christianity were peripheral and accidental, not grounded in the New Testament itself but due to later developments, and that it would be consequently fairly easy to purify the preaching of the Church from anti-Jewish bias. Since then, especially under the influence of Rosemary Ruether’s writings, I have had to change my mind. Writing this introduction gives me the opportunity declare that the book I wrote in the late fifties [1957–58] and published in 1961 no longer represents my position on the relationship between Church and Synagogue.⁷

In correspondence to the author that could have been written by Isaac himself, Baum clarified precisely how his position had changed by 1974.

I changed my mind in 1974, recognizing that the NT contains passages of anti-Jewish rhetoric, *and no longer believe (as I did in 1961) that this prevents the NT from being received as God’s Word* [emphasis in the original]. I write in various other contexts a) that the shadow of sin is cast even over the Bible and b) that God’s Word continues to address the Church in the Bible when it is read not literally, but in the Spirit. Reading the Bible in the Spirit makes believers recognize that certain passages are not part of the divine message but simply reflect fallible human experiences.⁸

⁶ Ibid., 34.

⁷ Introduction to Ruether, 3–4.

⁸ Correspondence to the author dated 11 February 2014.

The self-styled pupil had caught up to his teacher. This understanding of divine inspiration had been Isaac's all along.⁹ In response to Daniélou's

⁹While the official Church has accepted the historical-critical method of interpreting the scriptures (in Pius XII's 1943 encyclical, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*), the Church has yet to acknowledge, according to Baum, that damaging cultural prejudices and hostile reactions to outsiders are to be found in the New Testament as in the Old. However, argues Baum, "[*Divino Afflante Spiritu* and Vatican II] opened the door to methods of biblical studies that lead to these insights." Even under the most progressive of assumptions, however, it is difficult to square Baum's point of view with the key Vatican II affirmation in 3:11 of *Dei Verbum* ("Therefore, since everything asserted by the inspired authors or sacred writers must be held to be asserted by the Holy Spirit, it follows that the books of Scripture must be acknowledged as teaching firmly, faithfully and without error that truth which God wanted put in the sacred writings for the sake of our salvation"). It is true that the caveat, "for the sake of our salvation," is understood as teaching that the Bible is not without error in the sense that certain Protestant denominations claim it is. The Pontifical Biblical Commission in its Document on the Interpretation of the Bible in the Church issued 21 September 1993 stipulates:

Fundamentalism is right to insist on the divine inspiration of the Bible, the inerrancy of the Word of God, and other biblical truths included in its fundamental points. But its way of presenting these truths is rooted in an ideology that is not biblical, whatever the proponents of this approach might say. For it demands an unshakeable adherence to rigid doctrinal points of view and imposes, as the only source of teaching for Christian life and salvation, a reading of the Bible that rejects all questioning and any kind of critical research...In what concerns the Gospels, fundamentalism does not take into account the development of the gospel tradition, but naively confuses the final stage of this tradition (what the evangelists have written) with the initial (the words and deeds of the historical Jesus)...Its relying upon a non-critical reading of certain texts of the Bible serves to reinforce political ideas and social attitudes that are marked by prejudices – racism, for example – quite contrary to the Christian gospel... Finally, in its attachment to the principle "Scripture alone," fundamentalism separates the interpretation of the Bible from the Tradition, which, guided by the Spirit, has authentically developed in union with Scripture in the heart of the community of faith...The fundamentalist approach is dangerous, for it is attractive to people who look to the Bible for ready answers to the problems of life...Without saying as much in so many words, fundamentalism actually invites people to a kind of intellectual suicide. It injects into life a false certitude, for it unwittingly confuses the divine substance of the Biblical message with what are in fact its human limitations.

Nonetheless, according to *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, by 3:11 of *Dei Verbum*,

Clearly Vatican II intended to recapitulate traditional teaching on inspiration. The text refers to four NT passages often cited in the history of the church's long discussion on inspiration, esp. 2 Tim 3:16 and 2 Pet 1:19-21. At a relatively late stage of the conciliar discussion on inspiration and in response to an intervention by Dom B.C. Butler, 2 Tim 3:16-17 was incorporated so that there could be no mistaking how the council fathers understood the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures and what they considered its purpose to be. They intended to recapitulate the teaching of the (NT) Scriptures themselves.

review of *Jésus et Israël*, Isaac wrote, “If there is a light that shines in [*Jésus et Israël*], it is the Word.”¹⁰ The aim, he writes in *Jésus et Israël*, is to “to extricate [gospel truth] from all the dross, from all human impurities.”¹¹ Even God’s Word is mediated through human consciousness. In correspondence to Fadiey Lovsky dated 28 December 1947, Isaac wrote, “Do you think that I claim infallibility for Judaism? The Old Testament, like the New Testament, is an inspired text, but nonetheless a human text; each bears the imprint of man, as well as the imprint of God.”¹² In correspondence dated 19 June 1950, Isaac wrote to Lovsky, “God speaks in the Old Testament as in the New: here is the imperative – and something not to be hidden or suppressed by theology. When God speaks, man cannot but be silent.”¹³ Such a supposition is unclassifiable. It is more than mere humanism, but accords neither with normative Judaism (which does not consider the New Testament as God’s Word) nor with normative Catholicism (which would not accept that the “shadow of sin” lies over the New Testament).¹⁴

Was Isaac, like Edmond Fleg, a spiritual descendant of the Jewish Christians? “There were in the time of Christ some Jews who saw in Jesus the greatest of the prophets of Israel, and who thus were separated from their coreligionists,” according to Jean Daniélou, “but who did not recognize him as the Son of God, and who for this reason were separated from the Christians. They are called Judeo-Christians. Hans Joachim Schoeps has devoted a book to them. Fleg is one of their spiritual descendants.”¹⁵ Was Isaac another? In a footnote to *Jésus et Israël* that was not carried forward into the English translation, Isaac mused, “Relations between Jews and Christians were not marked by as much hostility as originally thought. One wonders, therefore, in the absence of theologians of both faiths, in the absence of the bishops and the rabbis, if the Jews and the Christians would have gotten along fine and perhaps, who knows, ended up by merging into a single believing body.”¹⁶ Did he have in mind a Jewish-Christian body? St. Paul himself appears to have had such in mind, argues Fr. Thomas Stransky, a former two-term president of the Paulist Priests

¹⁰ La NEF (no. 48, November 1948: 158–160).

¹¹ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 562.

¹² Isaac, “Soixante-Dix-Neuf lettres de Jules Isaac à F. Lovsky,” 299–300.

¹³ Ibid., 331.

¹⁴ In correspondence to the author dated 11 November 2014, Gregory Baum wrote, “My formulation that the shadow of sin lies even on the Bible is a reference to cultural prejudices and hostile reactions to non-threatening outsiders found in the Scriptures.”

¹⁵ Jean Daniélou, *Dialogue with Israel* (np: Helicon Press, Inc., 1968), 61.

¹⁶ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 358, footnote 1.

and first recording secretary of the Second Vatican Council Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. “According to St. Paul, Gentiles do not have to become circumcised to be Christian. The converse is also true,” argues Stransky. “According to Paul, the circumcised do not have to become Gentile to be Christian.”¹⁷

“There is no common measure between the Messiah and human greatness,” hypothesized Isaac. “Lineage has no bearing.”¹⁸ This was the conviction of apostolic period first generation Jewish Christians, whose belief it was, in the words of St. Paul, that God had exalted their messiah and given him the name that is above every name,¹⁹ but did not identify him with God. “This was not sufficient to create a schism,” according to Catholic historian Marcel Simon. “[The Jewish-Christian] christology had not yet breached rigorous Israelite monotheism; for if [the first Christians] professed a veneration [for Jesus] that raised him above the human condition, they were still far off from identifying him with God. Moreover, as far as the law was concerned, they comported themselves as exemplary Jews.”²⁰ Elsewhere in his book, Isaac had written, “That the one year, Jesus’ single year, was enough to kindle a flame in the world which would never be extinguished thereafter is a miracle; there are none more convincing.”²¹ Statements such as these were not lost on Isaac’s Catholic reviewers, Paul Démann wrote, “Nonetheless, the tone in which M. Isaac speaks of Jesus-Christ, of ‘Master,’ singularly transcends that of a veneration and a respect due to a great man.”²² Jacques Madaule wrote, “This severity, this passion [with which Isaac urged Christians to reexamine their traditions regarding Jews and Judaism] would have been undoubtedly far less impactful if for the author [of *Jésus et Israël*] Jesus’s name was not a name above all other names.”²³ In his partial rebuttal to *Jésus et Israël*, Gregory Baum wrote, “Jules Isaac tells us that he does not believe that Jesus Christ is the saviour of mankind, yet his book is a con-

¹⁷ Related to the author at a meeting with Fr. Thomas Stransky in Totowa, New Jersey, on 17 May 2016.

¹⁸ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, *New Revised Ed.*, 61.

¹⁹ Philippians, 2:9-11.

²⁰ Simon, *Les Premiers Chrétiens*, 38-39. Simon cites Acts, 2:46-47 in support of his contention that the first Jewish Christians were observant Jews.

²¹ Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, *New Revised Ed.*, 170.

²² Démann: 22.

²³ Madaule, “La Tragédie juive et le mystère d’Israël,” 14.

vincing testimony of his own love for the person of Jesus and his wholehearted acceptance of the ethical and spiritual doctrine of the gospels.”²⁴

Emotionally, Isaac’s life can be regarded as marked by both continuity and discontinuity. Throughout his life, there was a ruthless pursuit of the truth, of adherence to spiritual integrity and social justice. Yet it would seem that Isaac emerged from his living contact with the scriptures in very extreme circumstances a different person spiritually, although his spirituality is shrouded in mystery. Jewish by birth, a bar mitzvah, married according to Jewish law and buried according to Jewish ritual, he was not a practising Jew nor was he a member of any Jewish congregation. In correspondence to his son, Daniel dated 22 August 1954, Isaac wrote,

I have not renounced my Jewish religious ties (ties, moreover, that never existed), but I have rekindled, by force of circumstance and of activism, my spiritual ties. The New Testament has revealed to me the greatness of the Old. And Jewish spirituality has been, across the centuries, one of the most noble there is. That said, I am in no way prevented from remaining that which I was exclusively in former times: a humanist.²⁵

Was it a mere humanist, however, who uttered, “We have said it, we know it; there are truths superior to the poor, small temporal truth that we nonetheless apply ourselves to discover, honestly, freely.”²⁶ Was it a mere humanist who, in correspondence to Fadiev Lovsky, dated 16 November 1949, confided, “But I have the feeling that there remains for me much to say, that I am preaching in the desert, that I must return to the task, to put paid to certain Christian errors that bar the way into the future as opened by St. Paul. With each passing day, Christian injustice [toward the Jewish people] aligns me more and more with the Jewish people.”²⁷ Was it a mere humanist who closed his *Note Conclusive*, written on the eve of his fateful audience with Pope John XXIII and hand-delivered to the Pope at this meeting, “And it is my profound conviction that in the eyes of God, I am on the straight path?” In a 1962 interview with *L’Arche*, “Faith does not impose itself. I am an old non-conforming péguyste ... My spirituality is my private affair.”²⁸ Archbishop de Provençères remarked, “I am con-

²⁴ Baum, *The Jews and the Gospel*, 2.

²⁵ Quoted in Kaspi, *Jules Isaac*, 249–50.

²⁶ Isaac, *Expériences de ma vie. Péguy*, 103.

²⁷ Isaac, “Soixante-Dix-Neuf lettres de Jules Isaac à F. Lovsky,” 326.

²⁸ Quoted in Kaspi, *Jules Isaac*, 251.

vinced that [Isaac] believed in God; the visits he paid me were always marked by a deference that reminded me of Maurice Blondel's behaviour in meetings with his own bishop."²⁹

In the aftermath of Isaac's death, sons Daniel and Jean-Claude would state for the record that their father had never belonged to the Jewish community of Aix-en-Provence, or to any other religious community, nor had he bequeathed to anyone in particular his spiritual message.³⁰ In his last years, Isaac would come to consider Judaism as more than a mere religious system. "For better or worse...Judaism is not merely a religion," he said, "not only a people and a state, it is a historically incontestable fact of grand scale."³¹ Perhaps it was his wish to be one with this historically incontestable fact of grand scale that impelled Isaac to opt for a Jewish funeral, in accordance with Jewish custom. In the public sphere, French Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, addressing a Sorbonne symposium on 15 February 1967 to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Ten Points of Seelisberg and the establishment of the *Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France*, leveled this critique, "Many among us do not agree with the language of Jules Isaac in which too much theology is intermixed with too much history."³² In the private sphere six years earlier, however, in correspondence to Isaac, dated 6 February 1961, Levinas purported to lay claim to this man for the Jewish people.

Will your writing persuade Catholics? [Your writing] provokes discomfort and anxiety among them, for it is authoritative. But as for us, Jews, we recognize not only rigorously-grounded argument, but also a humanity most noble – that is to say, a Judaism. We also feel [from you] – dare we mention it – a heart most vigilant and tender, and a memory that forgets nothing. And this [feeling] is more important to us than metaphysical propositions – orthodox or heterodox – that memory transcends. This is the reason why your existence in this century is confirmation of our truth.³³

Writing 25 years after the fact, SPCU Secretary Johannes Willebrands remarked, "To the Pope and the Cardinal we therefore owe the conception

²⁹ de Provençhères: 33.

³⁰ Daniel Isaac, Jean-Claude Isaac, "Note des fils de Jules Isaac," *Cahiers de l'Association des amis de Jules Isaac*, no. 3 (1981): 65.

³¹ Quoted in Kaspi, *Jules Isaac*, 249.

³² Levinas: 372-73.

³³ Quoted in Charmet: 522.

(so to speak) of [*Nostra aetate*, para 4]; as we owe to Pope John's successor in St Peter's office, Pope Paul VI, and always to the same Cardinal, the nurturing and the growing process – a painful growing process indeed – of that small embryo.”³⁴ But as the narrative evidences and the evidence corroborates, the truth is more nuanced. If the fourth paragraph of *Nostra aetate* had a conception, was it not that fateful handshake between a Jew and a Catholic, both octogenarians, at the close of their meeting on 13 June 1960? Notre Dame de Sion Sr Louise-Marie Nietz got it right when she said, “It all started here, in 1960, and we must remember that it was due to the efforts of a Jew, Jules Isaac, and a man of good will and openness, John XXIII. It was already a Jewish-Christian encounter.”³⁵ A Council Father, Charles de Provençères, Archbishop of Aix, who had known and been an ardent supporter of Isaac since becoming archbishop in 1946, got it right when he asserted, “I believe that I can confirm that the genesis of [*Nostra aetate*, 4] was an initiative of M. Isaac...I have reasons to think that the visit of Jules Isaac paid in June 1960 to John XXIII was determinative in the Pope's decision to assign a study of the question to a preparatory commission of the council.”³⁶ Without knowledge of the contents, or even the fact, of Capovilla's documented testimony, Gregory Baum had put his finger on it when in 1974 he hypothesized in his Introduction to Rosemary Ruether's *Faith and Fratricide* that Pope John XXIII was “probably inspired [to add the Jewish question to the agenda of Vatican II] by a visit of Jules Isaac.”³⁷ Thomas Stransky, recording secretary to the unity secretariat, correctly wrote that “the Jewish theme reached the Pope's consciousness at a private audience [with Jules Isaac] on 13 June 1960.”³⁸

On 22 March 1966, not six months after the promulgation on 28 October 1965 of the Vatican II statement on the Jews, Msgr. Loris Capovilla, personal secretary to Pope John XXIII, documented in Italian his testimony regarding the papal audience with Jules Isaac. It appears that Capovilla did so at the suggestion on 14 March 1966 of Fr. Stjepan Schmidt, personal secretary to Augustin Cardinal Bea. The one-page document was delivered by Capovilla to Schmidt, who chose not to show

³⁴ Willebrands, “Christians and Jews: A New Vision,” 222.

³⁵ Louise-Marie Nietz, N.D.S., “Histoire de la Déclaration ‘Nostra Aetate,’” *Sens, revue de l'Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France* 5 (May 1996): 190.

³⁶ de Provençères: 31.

³⁷ Introduction to Ruether, 4.

³⁸ Stransky, “The Foundation of the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity,” 72.

it to any third party, although he alluded to it in conversation with Fr. Thomas Stransky.³⁹ Since 1966, this one-page documented testimony had lain buried in a box in the Vatican secret archives and had not seen the light of day. In the summer of 2014, this documented testimony was retrieved by Dr. John Borelli, special assistant for interreligious initiatives to the president of Georgetown University, from a box whose number Fr. Thomas Stransky was privy to. Borelli copied it in his own hand, and on his return to Washington, DC, this document was transcribed in its original Italian. There cannot be evidence more unequivocal—but for Isaac’s private audience with Pope John XXIII on 13 June 1960 (an audience that occurred after the Pope had closed the pre-preparatory phase [the agenda] of the Second Vatican Council with his *Superno Dei* one week earlier), there would have been no *Quaestiones de Iudaeis* on the Second Vatican Council agenda.

In merito alla nota di p. Stefano Schmidt

Regarding the note of Fr. Stjepan Schmidt

Segretario del Card. Bea – in data 14 marzo 1966.

Secretary of Card. Bea – 14 March 1966

1 – Papa Giovanni ricevette in udienza Jules Isaac il 13 giugno 1960. L’udienza era raccomandata anche dall’ambasciata di Francia presso la santa Sede. Si volle dare all’udienza il carattere di “speciale”, ma papa Giovanni la trasformò, a ragion veduta, in privata [emphasis in the original]. Mi pare che *L’Osservatore Romano* non l’abbia pubblicata.

1 – Pope John receives in audience Jules Isaac on June 13, 1960. The audience was also encouraged by the embassy of France to the Holy See. The audience was featured as “special,” but Pope John changed it, with good reason, into private [emphasis in the original]. I think that *L’Osservatore Romano* did not publish it.

2 – Ricordo benissimo che il Papa rimase oltremodo impressionato da quell’incontro e me ne parlò a lungo. Mi disse che ne avrebbe parlato al card. Tardini e particolarmente a mgr. Dell’Acqua. Anche a me disse di aver indirizzato Isaac al Card. Bea, “di cui si fidava e sul quale confidava.”

2 – I remember very well that the Pope remained extremely impressed by that meeting and he talked about it with me for a long time. He told me that he would speak with Card. Tardini about it and particularly with Mgr. Dell’Acqua. He also told me that he directed Isaac to Card. Bea, “in whom he trusted and had confidence.”

³⁹ Ibid.

3 – Può darsi che le note del card. Tardini conservino traccia sia dell'udienza, sia della conversazione di papa Giovanni.

3 – The notes of Card. Tardini might retain a little about both the audience and the conversation of Pope John.

4 – Ed è vero che sino a quel giorno non era venuto in mente a Giovanni XXIII che il Concilio dovesse occuparsi anche della questione ebraica e dell'antisemitismo. Ma da quel giorno ne fu tutto preso. Bisognava scagionare la Chiesa dall'accusa di essersi tirata in disparte e di avere difeso solo gli ebrei battezzati (come parve insinuare Isaac); [pencil notes from now on] e proclamare una volta per sempre che i cristiani non hanno il diritto di interpretare in chiave di *condonavis super nos*...

4 – It is also true that until that day it had not occurred to John XXIII that the Council had to deal also with the Jewish question and antisemitism. But from that day on he was completely taken by it. It was necessary to clear the name of the Church from the accusation of being aloof and concerned about baptized Jews only (as Isaac seemed to insinuate); [pencil notes from now on] and to proclaim once and for all Christians do not have the right to interpret in the key of 'you have bestowed your pardon upon us' . . .

[typed] E' tutto ciò che ricordo.

[typed] This is all I remember.

Loris Capovilla

c.d.v. [Città del Vaticano] 22 marzo 1966

c.d.v. [Vatican City] 22 March 1966⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Concilium Vaticanum II, Box 1452, Secretariatus ad Christianorum Unitatem Fovendam*. English translation by Francesca Cadeddu, PhD, *Fondazione per le Scienze Religiose Giovanni XXIII*, Bologna, and John Borelli, PhD, Georgetown University, Washington, DC.

EPILOGUE

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the outbreak World War II, in July 2009, the International Council of Christians and Jews, meeting in Berlin, issued a document titled “A Time for Recommitment,” simultaneously with a renewed call to Christian and Jewish communities around the world. The new call—the 12 Points of Berlin—is a self-styled refinement and an expansion of the Ten Points of Seelisberg, the whole consistent with advances in interreligious dialogue since 1947.¹ Six years later, on 10 December 2015, the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews released a document titled, “A Reflection on Theological Questions Pertaining to Catholic-Jewish Relations on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of ‘Nostra Aetate’ (no. 4).” In this reflection, certain gospel truths were reaffirmed.² In paragraph 14, the CRRJ asserts:

Fully and completely human, a Jew of his time, descendant of Abraham, son of David, shaped by the whole tradition of Israel, heir of the prophets, Jesus stands in continuity with his people and its history. On the other hand he is, in light of the Christian faith, himself God – the Son – and he transcends time, history, and every earthly reality... In this sense he is perceived to be in discontinuity with the history that prepared his coming...The conflict

¹<http://www.iccj.org/A-Time-for-Recommitment-The-Twelve-Points-of-Berlin.184.0.html>.

²http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/relations-jews-docs/rc.

between Jesus and the Jewish authorities of his time is ultimately not a matter of individual transgression of the law, but of Jesus' claim to be acting with divine authority. The figure of Jesus thus is and remains for Jews the 'stumbling block', the central and neuralgic point in Jewish-Christian dialogue.

In *Jésus et Israël*, Isaac had put his finger on this most central and neuralgic point in Jewish-Christian relations. In the confrontation of Jewish monotheism with the Christian dogma of the Trinity "lies the abyss that separates the Christian conscience from the Israelite conscience," wrote Isaac, quoting Berdyaev "I think so too ... But an abyss to regard with respect. It will not be filled by pouring cartloads of insult and calumny into it."³ How did the Second Vatican Council finesse the Epistle to the Hebrews, which declares God's covenant with the Jews to be obsolete (Heb. 8:13)? In paragraph 18, the CRRJ elaborates.

This Epistle [to the Hebrews]...is not directed to the Jews but rather to the Christians of Jewish background who have become weary and uncertain. Its purpose is to strengthen their faith and to encourage them to persevere, by pointing to Christ Jesus as the true and ultimate high priest, the mediator of the new covenant....At issue in the Epistle to the Hebrews is not the contrast of the Old and New Covenants as we understand them today, nor a contrast between the church and Judaism. Rather, the contrast is between the eternal heavenly priesthood of Christ and the transitory earthly priesthood. The fundamental issue in the Epistle to the Hebrews in the new situation is a Christological interpretation of the New Covenant. For exactly this reason, "Nostra aetate" (No 4) did not refer to the Epistle to the Hebrews, but rather to Saint Paul's reflections in his letter to the Romans 9–11.⁴

The central thesis of John Connelly's *From Enemy to Brother* is that "without converts to Catholicism, the Catholic Church would never have 'thought its way' out of the challenges of racist anti-Judaism."⁵ But the Church would not have had the opportunity to leverage this new vocabulary had the Council Fathers not been empowered to address questions concerning the Jews in the first place. How did it come to be that a Jew by birth, republican,

³ Quoted in Isaac, *Jésus et Israël*, 77. Berdyaev was an exponent of an important strain in Eastern Orthodox spirituality.

⁴ http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/relation-jews-docs/rc.

⁵ Connelly, 287. Examples are Thieme, Oesterreicher, Gurian, Luckner, Démann, Baum, Rudloff, Bloy, Maritain, van Leer, von Hildebrand, Kraus, Vermes.

laic and socialist in orientation, was destined to play the role of provocateur? As noted earlier, Isaac was not a border crosser; he was more properly a border straddler. Nonetheless, this neutral, non-confessional, status might have made him less threatening to Catholics in general, and the Catholic Church in particular. But there were other factors at play. Had Isaac leveled his indictment against the Church in the interwar period, he might not have been heeded. But he began his campaign after the Holocaust at a time when the Church was recognizing, not without shame, the cultural impact of its anti-Jewish discourse and its implications in legitimating racial antisemitism. His indictment did not take the form of scholarship. It consisted of an eloquent cry of anguish combined with a tireless activism. In his standing to speak for his wife and daughter, Isaac acquired standing to speak for all six million Jews who had perished in the Holocaust.

Isaac was by no means the first scholar to recognize a degree of expansion in the gospel accounts of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, nor to remind Christians of Jesus' Jewishness and the Jewish matrix out of which he came. But his drawing a line in time at the Crucifixion and refusing to be drawn over it into post-resurrectional theological debate were new. So was the manner in which he framed his two research questions. "What was my initial concern?" Isaac wrote, "To know, as current Christian thinking would have it, as a living tradition teaches, if Jesus truly rejected Israel – the Jewish people as a whole – if he declared its fall, condemned and even damned it; conversely, if it were true that Israel misjudged Jesus, refused to see in him the Messiah and Son of God, rejected, ridiculed and crucified him; if Israel deserved nearly two millennia of the heinous stain as the 'deicide people.'"⁶ In asking whether it was *scripturally* true (in a non-fundamentalist sense), as Christianity had taught for nearly two millennia, that the Jewish people were responsible for the death of Jesus and have since remained so, that as a consequence, the Jews had forfeited their very relationship with God, or worse still, were the object of a divine curse, Isaac had ventured into uncharted waters. What he discovered and denounced was, as he would put it in his twilight years, "a custom more than a tradition, a custom made up of deep-seated prejudices and of the most odious habits of mind, heart, and tongue."⁷

So it was that a conclave of all Catholic bishops in union with the Bishop of Rome, recalling that "she draws sustenance from the root of that well-

⁶ Isaac, *Genèse de l'antisémitisme*, 14.

⁷ Isaac, *The Teaching of Contempt*, 35.

cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots,” heeding its own conscience—a Jewish conscience—and attending to the signs of the times, chose to jettison a certain secular tradition contemptuous of Jews and Judaism and to embrace in terms of esteem the role of Israel in salvation history. That is how it came to be that a Bishop of Rome would see fit to pay a visit to the Great Synagogue of Rome on Sunday, 13 April 1986. Much ado has been paid to what transpired upon the entrance of Pope John Paul II; scant attention to what happened at the close of his remarks. We know that Professor Giacomo Saban, president of the Jewish community of Rome, delivered a welcoming address. We know that Rome Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff (the same Elio Toaff who had taken himself to Saint Peter’s Square to join the crowd of Catholics and other Christians who were praying and silently bearing witness to the greatness of soul of John XXIII on the eve of the Pontiff’s death, the same Elio Toaff who would be but one of two living persons to be mentioned in John Paul II’s will, the same Elio Toaff who at his death would be remembered by Pope Francis as a “man of peace and dialogue”) thought it fitting to recall the memory of Jules Isaac in his address. “We thus find ourselves before a true turning-point in Church policy. The Church now looks upon the Jews with sentiments of esteem and appreciation, abandoning that teaching of disdain whose inadmissibility Jules Isaac—may his memory be for a blessing—brought to the attention of Pope John.” We have a text of the address delivered by John Paul II to those in attendance, an address in which the pope referred to the Jewish people as “our beloved elder brothers.” We know that at the close of the Holy Father’s address, a chorus was struck up. The lyrics were drawn from the twelfth of Maimonides’ 13 articles of faith, the *niggun* [melody] from the Modzitzer Hasidim, who according to survivor reports, had chanted this confession of faith as they were herded into the gas chambers. Not theology, but *kerygma*—God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the living God, whose great Name Israel is commanded to sanctify and whom Christians believe to be triune, is trustworthy.

אני מאמין באמונה שלמה בביאת המשיח
ואף על פי שיתמהמה עם כל זה אחכה לו בכל יום שיבא

The Pope’s comprehension found expression in the wave of his hands. Here was a confession to which he too could subscribe.

APPENDICES

EIGHTEEN POINTS

For purposes of greater clarity, may I be allowed to submit for the examination of Christians of good will—who are agreed in principle on the need for rectification—the following Eighteen Points, meant to serve at least as a basis for discussion.

Christian teaching worthy of the name should

1. give all Christians at least an elementary knowledge of the Old Testament; stress the fact that the Old Testament, essentially Semitic—in form and substance—was the Holy Scripture of Jews before becoming the Holy Scripture of Christians;
2. recall that a large part of Christian liturgy is borrowed from it, and that the Old Testament, the work of Jewish genius (enlightened by God), has been to our own day a perennial source of inspiration to Christian thought, literature and art;
3. take care not to pass over the singularly important fact that it was to the Jewish people, chosen by Him, that God first revealed Himself in His omnipotence; that it was the Jewish people who safeguarded the fundamental belief in God, then transmitted it to the Christian world;
4. acknowledge and state openly, taking inspiration from the most reliable historical research, that Christianity was born of a living,

not a degenerate Judaism, as is proved by the richness of Jewish literature, Judaism's indomitable resistance to paganism, the spiritualization of worship in the synagogues, the spread of proselytism, the multiplicity of religious sects and trends, the broadening of beliefs; take care not to draw a simple caricature of historic Phariseism;

5. take into account the fact that history flatly contradicts the theological myth of the Dispersion as providential punishment for the Crucifixion, since the dispersion of the Jewish people was an accomplished fact in Jesus' time and since in that era, according to all the evidence, the majority of the Jewish people were no longer living in Palestine; even after the two great Judean wars (first and second centuries), there was no dispersion of the Jews of Palestine;
6. warn the faithful against certain stylistic tendencies in the Gospels, notably the frequent use in the fourth Gospel of the collective term "the Jews" in a restricted and pejorative sense—to mean Jesus' enemies: chief priests, scribes and Pharisees—a procedure that results not only in distorting historic perspectives but in inspiring horror and contempt of the Jewish people as a whole, whereas in reality these people are in no way involved;
7. state very explicitly, so that no Christian is ignorant of it, that Jesus was Jewish, of an old Jewish family, that he was circumcised (according to Jewish Law) eight days after his birth; that the name *Jesus* is a Jewish name, Yeshua, Hellenized, and *Christ* the Greek equivalent of the Jewish term *Messiah*; that Jesus spoke a Semitic language, Aramaic, like all the Jews of Palestine; and that unless one reads the Gospels in their earliest text, which is in the Greek language, one knows the Word only through a translation of a translation;
8. acknowledge—with Scripture—that Jesus, "born under the [Jewish] law" (Gal. 4:4), lived "under the law": that he did not stop practicing Judaism's basic rites to the last day; that he did not stop preaching his Gospel in the synagogues and the Temple to the last day;
9. not fail to observe that during his human life, Jesus was uniquely "a servant to the circumcised" (Rom. 15:8); it was in Israel alone that he reunited his disciples; all the Apostles were Jews like their master;
10. show clearly from the Gospel texts that to the last day, except on rare occasions, Jesus did not stop obtaining the enthusiastic sympathies of the Jewish masses, in Jerusalem as well as in Galilee;

11. take care not to assert that Jesus was personally rejected by the Jewish people, that they refused to recognize him as Messiah and God, for the two reasons that the majority of the Jewish people did not even know him and that Jesus never presented himself as such explicitly and publicly to the segment of the people who did know him; acknowledge that in all likelihood the messianic character of the entry into Jerusalem on the eve of the Passion could have been perceived by only a small number;
12. to take care not to assert that Jesus was at the very least rejected by the qualified leaders and representatives of the Jewish people; those who had him arrested and sentenced, the chief priests, were representatives of a narrow oligarchic caste, subjugated to Rome and detested by the people; as for the doctors and Pharisees, it emerges from the evangelical texts themselves that they were not unanimously against Jesus; nothing proves that the spiritual elite of Jerusalem was involved in the plot;
13. take care not to strain the texts to find in them a universal reprobation of Israel or a curse which is nowhere explicitly expressed in the Gospels; take into account the fact that Jesus always showed feelings of compassion and love for the masses;
14. take care above all not to make the current and traditional assertion that the Jewish people committed the inexpiable crime of deicide, and that they took total responsibility on themselves as a whole; take care to avoid such an assertion not only because it is poisonous, generating hatred and crime, but also because it is radically false;
15. highlight the fact, emphasized in the four Gospels, that the chief priests and their accomplices acted against Jesus unbeknownst to the people and even in fear of the people;
16. concerning the Jewish trial of Jesus, acknowledge that the Jewish people were in no way involved in it, played no role in it, probably knew nothing about it; that the insults and brutalities attributed to them were the acts of the police or of some members of the oligarchy; that there is no mention of a Jewish trial, of a meeting of the Sanhedrin in the fourth Gospel;
17. concerning the Roman trial, acknowledge that the procurator Pontius Pilate had entire command over Jesus' life and death; that Jesus was condemned for messianic pretensions, which was a crime in the eyes of the Romans, not the Jews; that hanging on the cross

was a specifically Roman punishment; take care not to impute to the Jewish people the crowning with thorns, which in the Gospel accounts was a cruel jest of the Roman soldiery; take care not to identify the mob whipped up by the chief priests with the whole of the Jewish people or even the Jewish people of Palestine, whose anti-Roman sentiments are beyond doubt; note that the fourth Gospel implicates exclusively the chief priests and their men;

18. last, not forget that the monstrous cry, "His blood be upon us and on our children!" (Mt. 27:25), could not prevail over the Word, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34).

SEELISBERG COMMISSION 3 DOCUMENT

Moved by the sufferings of the Jewish people, the Third Commission, in the course of a frank and cordial collaboration between Jewish and Christian members, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, was faced with the tragic fact that certain theologically inexact conceptions and certain misleading presentations of the Gospel of Love, while essentially opposed to the spirit of Christianity, contribute to the rise of antisemitism.

Having recognized this, the Christian members put forward certain proposals with regard to the content and form of Christian teaching, which should serve not only to combat antisemitism, but also to promote good relations between Jews and Christians.

These deal, among other points, with the need to emphasize the close bonds which exist between Judaism and Christianity, the need to present the Passion story in such a way as not to arouse animosity against the Jews, and to eliminate from Christian teaching and preaching the idea that the Jewish people are under a curse.

On their part, the Jewish members of the commission declare that they will seek to avoid in Jewish teaching anything which would prejudice good relations between Christians and Jews. Jews and Christians alike pledge themselves to promote mutual respect for that which is sacred to each religion.⁸

TEN POINTS

Message aux Eglises par les Membres Chrétiens de la Commission III

We have recently witnessed an outburst of antisemitism which has led to the persecution and extermination of millions of Jews living in a Christian

⁸ Rutishauser: reproduced at 41.

environment. In spite of the catastrophe which has overtaken both the persecuted and the persecutors, and which has revealed the extent of the Jewish problem in all its alarming gravity and urgency, antisemitism has lost none of its force, but threatens to extend to other regions, to poison the minds of Christians and to involve humanity more and more in a grave guilt with disastrous consequences.

The Christian Churches have indeed always affirmed the anti-Christian character of antisemitism, but it is shocking to discover that 2000 years of preaching of the Gospel of Love have not sufficed to prevent the manifestation among Christians, in various forms, of hatred and distrust toward the Jews.

This would have been impossible if all Christians had been true to the teaching of Jesus Christ on the mercy of God and love of one's neighbor. But this faithfulness should also involve clear-sighted willingness to avoid any presentation and conception of the Christian message which would support antisemitism under whatever form. We must recognize, unfortunately, that this vigilant willingness has often been lacking.

We therefore address ourselves to the churches to draw their attention to this alarming situation. We have the firm hope that they will be concerned to show to their members how to prevent any animosity toward the Jews which might arise from false, inadequate or mistaken presentations or conceptions of the teaching and preaching of Christian doctrine, and how on the other hand to promote brotherly love toward the sorely tried people of the old covenant. Nothing would seem more calculated to contribute to this happy result than the emphasizing of the following points:

1. Remember that it is the same living God Who speaks to us through the Old and the New Testaments.
2. Remember that Jesus was born of a Jewish mother of the seed of David and the people of Israel, and that His everlasting love and forgiveness embrace His own people and the whole world.
3. Remember that the first disciples, the apostles and the first martyrs were Jews.
4. Remember that the fundamental commandment of Christianity, to love God and one's neighbor, proclaimed already in the Old Testament and confirmed by Jesus, is binding upon both Christians and Jews in all human relationships, without any exception.
5. Avoid disparaging biblical or post-biblical Judaism with the object of extolling Christianity.

6. Avoid using the word *Jews* in the exclusive sense of the enemies of Jesus, and the words *the enemies of Jesus* to designate the whole Jewish people.
7. Avoid presenting the Passion in such a way as to bring odium of the killing of Jesus upon Jews alone. In fact, it was not all the Jews who demanded the death of Jesus. It is not the Jews alone who are responsible, for the Cross which saves us all reveals that it is for the sins of us all that Christ died.

Remind all Christian parents and teachers of the grave responsibility which they assume, particularly when they present the Gospels, and particularly the Passion story in a simplistic manner. By so doing they run the risk of implanting an aversion in the conscious or subconscious minds of their children or hearers, intentionally or unintentionally. Psychologically speaking, in the case of simple minds, moved by a passionate love and compassion for the crucified Savior, the horror which they feel quite naturally toward the persecutors of Jesus will easily be turned into an indiscriminating hatred of the Jews of all times, including those of our own day.

8. Avoid referring to the scriptural curses, or the cry of a raging mob: *His blood be upon us and upon our children*, without remembering that this cry should not prevail against the infinitely more weighty prayer of Jesus: *Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they do*.
9. Avoid promoting the superstitious notion that the Jewish people are reprobate, accursed, reserved for a destiny of suffering.
10. Avoid speaking of the Jews as if the first members of the Church had not been Jews.⁹

En pratique, nous nous permettons de suggérer : d'introduire ou de développer, dans l'enseignement scolaire et extra-scolaire à tous les degrés, une étude plus objective et plus approfondie de l'histoire biblique et post-biblique du peuple juif ainsi que du problème juif;

de promouvoir, en particulier, la diffusion de ces connaissances par des publications adaptées aux différents milieux chrétiens; de veiller à rectifier dans les publications chrétiennes, surtout dans les manuels d'enseignement, tout ce qui s'opposerait aux principes énoncés plus haut.

Nous plaçons notre effort commun...

Our common endeavors are inspired by the spirit of the words of St. Paul in Romans xi, 28–29: *They are beloved for their fathers' sake. For the gifts and the calling of God are without repentance.*

⁹ Isaac, *Jesus and Israel*, reproduced at 404.

TABLE OF CORRESPONDENCES

Jules Isaac's *Jesus and Israel*
(published in 1971)

*Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and
Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church*
Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews
(24 June 1985)

<i>Vatican Notes</i>	<i>Citation</i>	<i>Jesus and Israel</i>	<i>Citation</i>
"... Christians should never forget that the faith is a free gift of God (cf. Rm 9:12) and that we should never judge the consciences of others. St. Paul's exhortation 'do not boast' in your attitude to 'the root' (Rm 11:18) has its full point here."	IV, 21(E)	"If you do boast, remember, it is not you that support the root, but the root that supports you." Rom 11:18	Int, p. 1
<i>Relations between Old and New Testaments</i>			
"The Church, in the spontaneity of the Spirit which animates her, has vigorously condemned the attitude of Marcion and always opposed his dualism."	II, 4	"to deny this [that the Jewish Old Testament is the foundation, the unshakable bedrock on which the New Testament and consequently the Christian faith are grounded] is a type of monstrous heresy which the Church has always fought and victoriously rejected."	Pr 1, p. 5
"Hence, in using typology...we should be careful to avoid any transition from the Old to the New Testament which might seem merely a rupture."	II, 4	"Far from there being a discontinuity in the Scriptures, there is such a bond, wrought by such a hand, that no human hand could dissolve it, no sword could sunder it."	Pr 1, p. 7
"It should also be emphasized that typological interpretation consists in reading the Old Testament as preparation and, in certain aspects, outline and foreshadowing of the New (cf., e.g., Heb 5:5-10, etc.)."	II, 5	"There is more to say than that, from the Christian point of view, the Old Testament is the prelude (albeit grandiose), the prologue, the first and necessary stage in humanity's journey toward God; that it is a preview, a prediction, an annunciation, an advance toward the light."	Pr 1, p. 7
"From the unity of the divine plan derives the problem of the relation between the Old and New Testaments. The Church already from apostolic times (cf. 1 Co 10:11; Heb 10:1) and then constantly in tradition resolved this problem by means of typology, which emphasises the primordial value that the Old Testament must have in the Christian view."	II, 3	"Also to be seen in it, and Christian theology does want to see in it, is a mysterious prefiguring of the New Testament, as a harmony pre-established by the grace of God: a choice theme for doctoral virtuosity, a marvelous exercise with infinite (and sometimes abusive) variations; but equally, and far better, an exalting them with ample harmonics..."	Pr 1, p. 7

<p>"This fact [that the majority of the Jewish people and its authorities did not believe in Jesus] ... led inevitably to a rupture between Judaism and the young Church... there is no question of playing down or glossing over this rupture; that could only prejudice the identity of either side."</p>	IV, 21(D)	<p>"And from this [strict monotheism] would come [Judaism's] unyielding refusal to accept the dogma of the Trinity. 'There,' writes Nikolai Berdyaev 'lies the abyss that separates the Christian conscience from the Israelite conscience.' I think so too. But an abyss to regard with respect. It will not be filled by pouring cartloads of insult and calumny into it."</p>	Pr 7, p. 36
<p>"An exclusively negative picture of the Pharisees is likely to be inaccurate and unjust (cf. <i>Guidelines</i>, Note 1; cf. AAS, p. 76). 'Phariseism' in the pejorative sense can be rife in any religion."</p>	III, 19	<p>"Phariseism does not admit of a definition synonymous with either hypocrisy or formalism, as so many Christian writers still maintain – and as if the true faith required such a masking of historic truth. 'A greater misreading of history,' writes R. Travers Herford, the best historian of Phariseism, 'it is scarcely possible to imagine.'"</p>	Pr 7, pp. 39–40
<p>"Gamaliel (Acts 5:34–39) defends the apostles in a meeting of the Sanhedrin."</p>	III, 19	<p>"...but not the others [did Jesus set against himself and fight], not the respected and respectable masters of the Pharisee school, successors to Hillel, the Gamaliels, of whom perhaps Jesus and certainly Saint Paul were disciples, that Gamaliel who would say in the midst of the Sanhedrin, according to the Acts of the Apostles: 'Men of Israel, take care...for if this plan or this undertaking is of men, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!'" (Acts 5:35, 38–39)"</p>	Pr 17, pp. 271–72
<p>"Jesus shares, with the majority of Palestinian Jews of that time, some pharisaic doctrines: the resurrection of the body; forms of piety, like almsgiving, prayer, fasting (cf. Mt 6:1–18)."</p>	III, 17	<p>"Phariseism had its faults, but it also had its merits (from which Christianity would profit largely): it enriched the Jewish religion, continuing in its evolution, in its spiritual progress, with new beliefs – in the resurrection of the dead, in a judgment beyond the grave; trust in God, hope in His justice, messianic expectation were thereby strengthened; without eliminating the sacrificial Temple rites, prayer and the reading of the Law in the Synagogues moved to the forefront of religious life and in a certain way spiritualized it."</p>	Pr 7, p. 40
<p>"The Church and Christianity, for all their novelty, find their origin in the Jewish milieu of the first century of our era."</p>	III, 20	<p>"When Christianity applies itself to casting aspersions on Pharisee Judaism, it is forgetting everything it owes it; and it is being not only unjust but ungrateful."</p>	Pr 7, p. 40

“...his attitude to rigorous observance of the Sabbath.”	III, 13	“Like all devout Jews, Jesus went to the synagogue regularly on the Sabbath (Lk. 4:16)”	Pr 8, p. 45
“It should be noted also that Jesus often taught in the Synagogues (cf. Mt 4:23; 9:35; Lk 4:15–18; Jn 18:20, etc.)”	III, 14	“And the four Gospels tell us also that having begun to teach in the synagogue, Jesus continued: (Mk. 1:39; 2:2; Mt. 9:35; 13:54; Lk 4:44; 13:10, 22; Jn 18:20)”	Pr 8, p 45–6
“It should be noted also that Jesus often taught ...in the Temple (cf. Jn 18:20, etc.)”	III, 14	“In Jerusalem, Jesus taught in the Temple.” (Mk 11:11; 11:27; 12:35; 12:41; 14:49; Mt. 21:23; 26:55; Lk. 19:47; 20:1; 21:1; 37; 22:53; Jn. 7:14; 7:28; 8:2; 8:20; 10:22–3; 18:20)	Pr 8, p. 47
“Jesus’ relations with biblical law and its more or less traditional interpretations are undoubtedly complex...But there is no doubt that he wished to submit himself to the law...that he was trained in the law’s observance. He extolled in respect for it (Mt 5:17–20) and invited obedience to it (cf. Mt 8:4).”	III, 13	“That Jesus stressed above all the worship of ‘the Father in spirit and truth,’ that he ranked the ritual commandments of the Law well below the commandments of love, of charity, of morality, of justice, that he dismissed with a sovereign gesture the minute requirements of an exaggerated legalism, agreed: who could challenge the evidence? But there is other evidence that respect for the texts – and for Jesus’ teachings – requires us to recognize: in his eyes, <i>one attitude does not exclude the other</i> . As we have seen, Jesus refrained from condemning sacrificial rites themselves. He did not condemn one of the ritual commandments. And not only did he not speak against the rites, but on occasion he recommended their practice and himself set the example for it.”	Pr 9, p. 54
“He [Jesus] showed great liberty towards it [biblical law] (cf. the ‘antitheses’ of the Sermon on the Mount: Mt 5:21–48, bearing in mind the exegetical difficulties.)”	III, 13	“But the Beatitudes are related to Jewish tradition not only in letter but in spirit.”	Pr 10, pp. 76–80
“The Liturgy of the word in its own structure originates in Judaism. The prayer of Hours and other liturgical texts have their parallels in Judaism as do the very formulas of our most venerable prayers, among them the Our Father.”	V, 23	“On the teaching of prayer, the most explicit text is Matthew 6:5–15, contained in the Sermon on the Mount. Again, to show its Jewish roots, reverberations and parallelisms does not in any way indicate that its intrinsic merits and the efficacy of its perfect simplicity are in dispute.”	Pr 10, pp. 80–2

(continued)

<p>“There is no putting the Jews who knew Jesus and did not believe in him, or those who opposed the preaching of the apostles, on the same plane with Jews who came after or those of today. If the responsibility of the former remains a mystery hidden with God (cf. Rm 11:25), the latter are in an entirely different situation. Vatican II in the declaration on <i>Religious Liberty</i> teaches that ‘all men are to be immune from coercion...in such wise that in matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs. Nor...restrained from acting in accordance with his own beliefs (no. 2). This is one of the bases – proclaimed by the Council – on which Judaeo-Christian dialogue rests.”</p> <p>“His relations with the Pharisees were not always or wholly polemical. Of this there are many proofs:</p> <p>it is Pharisees who warn Jesus of the risks he is running (Lk 13:31);</p> <p>Some Pharisees are praised, e.g. ‘the scribe’ of Mk 12:34;</p> <p>Jesus eats with Pharisees (Lk 7:36; 14:1).”</p>	IV, 21(F)	<p>“Since in all historic probability the Jewish people ‘as a whole’ did not know Jesus; since the Jewish people of Palestine, insofar as they knew him, did so only as a prophet; since they listened to him, followed him, and admired him as such, it cannot be legitimately maintained that the Jewish people rejected Jesus, or with all the more reason that they rejected the Messiah, the true Son of God, in Jesus.”</p>	Pr 15, p. 177
<p>III, 16</p>		<p>“...as is apparent from certain texts (for example, Jn. 9:16), a number of the Pharisees who approached Jesus found favor with him; and that, as other Gospel texts allow us to see, relations between the Pharisees and Jesus were not uniformly hostile... Jesus recommends observance of the Pharisees teachings: Mt. 23:1–3</p> <p>Jesus is invited to eat with Pharisees: Lk. 7:36; 11:37; 14:1</p> <p>Pharisees warn Jesus against Herod: Lk. 13:31</p> <p>A Pharisee opposes Jesus’ arrest: Jn. 7:50–51.”</p> <p>“...the Pharisees were not all committed enemies of Jesus. Some maintained a wait-and-see attitude, hesitant and questioning, not intentionally hostile; some, more or less openly but quite genuinely, approved of him, admired him, believed in him.”</p>	Pr 17, p. 270

<p>"The <i>Guidelines</i> already say (note 1) that "the formula 'the Jews' sometimes, according to the context, means 'the leaders of the Jews' or 'the adversaries of Jesus,' terms which express better the thought of the evangelist and avoid appearing to arraign the Jewish people as such."</p>	IV, 21	<p>"Where Jesus had said, 'the chief priests, the scribes and the Pharisees' – which was already a substitution of the whole for the part – people exaggerated, people said: 'the Jews,' 'the Jewish people.' Where Saint Paul had said, 'those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers' – which was once more a substitution of the whole for the part – people said, people said again: 'the Jews,' 'the Jewish people.' Where only Temple flunkies, inflamed followers of the powerful, brutish pagan soldiery figured, people repeated obligingly: 'the Jews,' 'the Jewish people,' 'all the people,' 'all Israel.'</p>	Pr 16, p. 239
<p>"The delicate question of responsibility for the death of Christ must be looked at from the standpoint of the conciliar declaration <i>Nostra Aetate</i>, 4 and of <i>Guidelines</i> and <i>Suggestions</i> (III): 'What happened in (Christ's) passion cannot be blamed upon all the Jews then living without distinction nor upon the Jews of today,' especially since 'authorities of the Jews and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ.'</p>	IV, 22	<p>"Whether Jesus appeared before only the high priests Annas and Caiaphas, as it is said in the fourth Gospel, or before Caiaphas assisted by the Sanhedrin, as it is said in the Synoptics, whether the Sanhedrin session was partial or plenary, and finally whether the Roman authority took the initiative in pursuing Jesus in league with the Jewish authorities – which obviously is not in the Gospels and remains purely conjectural; in every case, we can reiterate and generalize our previous statement: the Jewish people are in no wise involved. They are in no wise involved in a matter conducted without them, apart from them, despite them, and against them. For this reason, we adjudge it useless to dwell on the question any longer, and hasten to pass on to the second phase of the Passion, the Roman trial; for it is here, according to received tradition, that the responsibility of the people was indissolubly linked with that of the leaders."</p>	Pr 18, p. 310

(continued)

Pr 18, pp. 291-94		IV, 21(A)	
	<p>"The Gospels are the outcome of long and complicated editorial work. The dogmatic constitution, <i>Det Verbum</i>, following the Pontifical Biblical Commission's Instruction <i>Sancta Mater Ecclesia</i>, distinguished three stages: 'The sacred authors wrote the four Gospels, selecting some things from the many which had been handed on by word of mouth or in writing, reducing some of them to a synthesis, explicating some things in view of the situation of their Churches, and preserving the form of proclamation, but always in such fashion that they told us the honest truth about Jesus' (no. 19). Hence it cannot be ruled out that some references hostile or less than favorable to the Jews have their historical context in conflicts between the nascent Church and the Jewish community. Certain controversies reflect Christian-Jewish relations long after the time of Jesus. To establish this is of capital importance if we wish to bring out the meaning of certain Gospel texts for the Christians of today."</p>		<p>"It is an indisputable and undisputed fact that the drafters of the Gospels intended to serve religion, not history... That is indeed the purpose: teaching, 'catechesis,' not history. It certainly does not follow that the Gospels are denuded of historic value. But it necessarily follows that religious concerns, concerns of 'demonstration,' prevailed over strictly historic concerns in the minds of the evangelists... It is another and likewise indisputable fact that a certain lapse of time – very difficult to estimate precisely – occurred between the event and the Gospel narration, a lapse long enough for one or another memory to blur, and for true historic tradition to find itself pitted against a legendary tradition which did not take long to spring up and cover the field of Christian piety with dense brushwood... In normal times and in the first case, that of the Synoptics, thirty or forty years is relatively little: such memories, so moving, could persist. But... the times when the religion of Christ, the dogma of the Incarnation evolved in the exaltation of a burning faith were not normal... It is again an indisputable fact... a fact of capital importance for religion and for history that in this same period when the Gospel tradition was put down in writing, a gulf was opening up between the Synagogue and its emancipated daughter, the Church... In the measure that the new religion took form, its doctrine, its credo bore it daily farther away from traditional Judaism, and it hence came up against increasing incredulity and hostility on the part of the Jews. And daily oriented more toward the Gentile world, the Church became aware of how greatly it was to its advantage to detach itself from the Jews... This is why the historian has the right and the duty, the absolute duty, to consider the Gospel accounts as prosecution evidence (against the Jews), with the aggravating circumstance that they are the only evidence available and that all four lie on the same side: we have neither (valid) Jewish testimony nor pagan testimony to present in opposition or in balance."</p>

<p>"It is noteworthy too that the Pharisees are not mentioned in accounts of the Passion."</p>	<p>III, 19</p>	<p>"We can in fact observe that in his explicit prophecies of his Passion and death, Jesus mentions the scribes, never the Pharisees (Mk. 8:31 and 10:32-34, and parallels)."</p>	<p>Pr 17, p. 269</p>
<p>"The delicate question of responsibility for the death of Christ must be looked at from the standpoint of the conciliar declaration <i>Nostra Aetate</i>, 4 and of <i>Guidelines and Suggestions</i> (III): 'What happened in (Christ's) passion cannot be blamed upon all the Jews then living without distinction nor upon the Jews of today,' especially since 'authorities of the Jews and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ.'"</p>	<p>IV, 22</p>	<p>"According to historical evidence, the dominant influence in Jerusalem and in the Sanhedrin lay with a priestly and secular oligarchy composed of a few great families, the most powerful of which was that of Annas, father-in-law of the high priest Caiaphas. This oligarchy, Sadducee in outlook, cruel and tyrannical in conduct, was itself subjugated to Rome and detested by the people. It was this oligarchy, in all likelihood, which played the determining role [in the trial of Christ]... The Jewish nation could not have been identified with this caste in any way. Not only did the people have no part in the intrigue woven against Jesus, but the four evangelists testify that the leaders acted unbeknownst to the people, despite them, and in fear of them."</p> <p>"When Jesus announced to the Twelve that he would be 'rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes,' he was alluding to the Sanhedrin, and it is the Sanhedrin to which the Gospels – the Synoptics, at least – assign the primary role in Jesus' arrest, judgment, and sentencing to death."</p>	<p>Pr 17, p. 277</p>
		<p>"The universal responsibility of the Jewish people, of the Jewish nation, of Israel in Jesus' condemnation to death is thus a fact of legend-based belief, without solid historic foundation. In truth, it is an anachronism, and only that: the transposition, considered opportune, of a quite different and later fact – that after a first burst of conversions, and for reasons we will not examine at present, the mass of the Jewish people became resistant to Christian preaching."</p>	<p>Pr 19, p. 363</p>

(continued)

<p>"The <i>Catechism</i> of the Council of Trent teaches that Christian sinners are more to blame for the death of Christ than those few Jews who brought it about – they indeed 'knew not what they did' (cf. Lk 23:34) and we know it only too well (Pars I, caput V, Quaest. XI)."</p>	IV, 22	<p>"The Catechism of the Council of Trent teaches: 'In this guilt [for Jesus' death] are involved all those who fall frequently into sin; for ...our sin consigned Christ the Lord to the death of the cross...' [Quotation taken from Catechism of the Council of Trent for Parish Priests tr. Fathers John A McHugh, O.P., and Charles J. Callan, O.P., New York, Wagner, 1923, Pt. I, Chap. 5, para. 11.] We can relate this to the Seventh of the Ten Points of Seelisberg, drawn up by the International Emergency Conference of Christians and Jews: '...the Cross which saves us all reveals that it is for the sins of us all that Christ died.'"</p>	Pr 19, p 364
		<p>"Such is the major orientation of the innumerable more or less legendary accounts of the Crucifixion: anti-Jewish, basically, profoundly anti-Jewish. And such is their major omission, their major injustice, their major misreading: everything happens as if there were the Jews, evil, cruel, Satanic, on one side, and on the other some charitable souls, these being unidentified. Everything happens as if Jesus himself were not a Jew who lived among the Jews, never wanted to leave the framework of Jewish Palestine; as if – putting the Roman occupation forces aside – Jesus' friends and foes, adherents and adversaries could not be Jews too, naturally, necessarily. To include all the Jews, 'all the [Jewish] people,' in the camp of Jesus' enemies at the hour of the Crucifixion is a simplistic position that glares simultaneously with prejudice, ignorance, disdain for reality, and the purest pharisaism, in the pejorative sense of the word.</p>	Pr 20, p. 366
		<p>For we must reiterate an observation made earlier, which is the key to all this: the Jewish people are here but representatives; they are representatives of the whole of humanity."</p>	

“In the time of Jesus, in that beginning of the first century of the Christian era, which corresponds with the beginnings of the Roman imperial regime, at the apogee of Roman power and civilization, in that time, understand that the Dispersion of the Jewish people had been an accomplished fact for centuries. Although history cannot reach any numerical certainty on this point, it is overwhelmingly probable that, of the whole of the Jewish nation, the Jews of Palestine were the minority, the Jews of the Dispersion, or Diaspora, the majority.”

Pr 21,
p. 389

NOTE COMPLÉMENTAIRE ET CONCLUSIVE

A l'égard du Judaïsme et des Juifs, l'action purificatrice engagée par S.S. Jean XXIII si spontanément, avec tant de décision et de bonté, a éveillé les plus grands espoirs, car une telle action une fois engagée ne peut pas s'arrêter à mi-chemin.

Les mesures déjà prises concernant la liturgie. Par une suite logique elles en appellent d'autres concernant l'enseignement – au sens le plus large du mot, et à tous les degrés.

Problème complexe, nécessitant une étude attentive, et, pour cette raison précisément, digne d'avoir sa place dans les travaux préparatoires du Grand Concile projeté.

Sous quelle forme? Ce pourrait être par la création d'une Sous-Commission Annexe, chargée spécialement d'étudier cette si grave question de l'enseignement Chrétien concernant le peuple de l'Ancien Testament. Le vieil Israël. – Je crois savoir que beaucoup, en catholicité (où l'opinion à ce sujet paraît si flottante), souhaitant une solution de ce genre.

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Oserai-je dire qu'avec moi-même ils souhaitent encore davantage, tant est grande leur confiance en S.S. Jean XXIII. Nous sommes, j'en ai la certitude, nombreux à former d'un cœur fervent et plein d'espoir le vœu que le Saint-Père non seulement envisage et adopte l'idée de cette création, mais encore, pour lui donner plus de résonance, qu'il veuille bien l'annoncer sous telle ou telle forme qu'il lui plaira – et qu'il en montre à tous les fidèles la haute signification.

Car si ce grave problème d'enseignement, considéré dans toutes ses données, est des plus complexes, les principes qui doivent en dominer l'étude sont des plus simples et dignes d'être rappelés solennellement.

Pour ne prendre qu'un exemple, n'y a-t-il pas un principe général sur lequel il semble inconcevable qu'il n'y ait pas accord unanime?

On peut le formuler ainsi: qu'en aucun cas, sous aucune forme, un enseignement dit Chrétien, basé sur l'Évangile, ne puisse engendrer des sentiments de mépris, de répulsion et de haine à l'égard du peuple Juif – du peuple de Jésus, du peuple des Apôtres et des premiers Chrétiens.

En d'autres temps, certain enseignement traditionnel qui mérite d'être appelé "l'enseignement du mépris" n'a plus droit à l'existence. Puisse-t-il être définitivement condamné par le Souverain Pontife.

Ce serait un grand acte, purificateur, réparateur, et de quelle portée! Selon les perspectives Pauliniennes, n'est-il pas fait pour dégager tout l'horizon de l'avenir Chrétien?

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Présentant de telles requêtes, j'ai pleinement conscience de mon audace. Mais aussi j'ai conscience de parler au nom des martyrs de tous les temps. Mes épreuves, mes deuils, les recommandations suprêmes que j'ai reçues m'ont confirmé que c'était vraiment une mission sacrées. J'ai survécu pour l'accomplir.

Et j'ai la conviction profonde d'être, au regard de Dieu, dans la voie droite.

Deux références à l'Écriture.

1) Le Magnificat (S. Luc, 1, 46–55)

"Mon âme exalte le Seigneur

.....

Il a secouru Israël son serviteur

Se souvenant de sa miséricorde,

Comme il l'avait promis à nos pères,

Envers Abraham et sa semence pour toujours."

2) S. Paul, Romains XI – 29,32

“Les dons et l’appel de Dieu sont sans repentance...
Car Dieu a enfermé tous les hommes dans la désobéissance,
pour faire miséricorde à tous.”

Jules Isaac.

Président d’Honneur (avec Jacques Maritain)
de l’Amitiés judéo-chrétiennes de France.

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