*Civiltà Cattolica*, 1924, vol. 4, pp.487ff. (December 20, 1924)

Title: "An Episode of Zionism in Palestine"

The board of directors of the Catholic Union "for the Holy Places," obedient to the voice of the Supreme Pontiff in his promulgation of the Holy Year, enacted a resolution at a meeting last October in which, reaffirming the program for revendicating the rights of Christianity over Palestine and especially over Jerusalem, Catholics of the whole world are exhorted to cooperate for "settlement and final ordering of the Holy Land as required and called for by the sacred rights of Catholicism."

The Rome office of the Zionist Organization considered itself entitled to protest against this resolution, in a circular released to the press which, among many declarations and justifications, of moderation, of the value of Zionism and of its basis in revelation and in the prophets - things that all indeed have value - affirms as obvious and incontrovertible that "Zionism has never done anything to profane the Holy Places"; that indeed “the Zionist movement proceeds respectfully toward the rights of others, staying within the bounds marked by international accords and by the Mandate, under the responsible control of the Mandatory Power and the League of Nations”: and appealing to the humanity and to the love of neighbor that the Jewish Bible teaches to all men, exhorts anti-Zionists to “a more rigorous and decent understanding of the ideals of a resurgent people who are committed to spreading among all civilized peoples ... the message of brotherhood among sons of the same father."(1)

FN (1): The circular also complains that someone has described as a "filthy rabble" those minions traveling today to Palestine from Poland, Russia, and Romania. It seems that the Zionists of Rome have not read what Herzl wrote about the filth in which they squatted and lived as wretches in his time, dens of pestilence for the nations among whom they lived! Theodore Herzl's *Zionistische Schriften*, vol. II, p. 150.

p.488 - To tell the truth, we do not have a mission to defend the board of directors of the Catholic Union against the diatribes of the Zionist Organization. Of Zionism, its qualifications, its juridical validity with respect to the more remote past and with regard to the more recent past of the day before yesterday, namely the circumstances of Palestine in the European War, we have written in timely detail, and perhaps our readers have not forgotten. (Cf. Civ. Catt. 1922, vol. 3, pp.116ff.) Today we only want to report a public fact that touched our brothers in the Holy Land and aroused even the Muslims to anger, and to place that fact up against the “incontrovertible” statements of the Zionist Organization. A fact is worth more than a volume of words.

The episode we take up here touches upon the religious question and the respect for the beliefs of the non-Jewish people that is repeatedly promised by the Mandate for Palestine. It is not as though this is the first or only fact of which Christians might have complained against Jewish hostility. There is not enough time to circulate the rumors about film and theater performances that are insulting to Christianity, and in particular about an uproar during a Jewish feast, called Simon the Just, in which an effigy was crucified, stoned and burned. But the event occurred in a Jewish neighborhood, and although certified by several witnesses, the news was not divulged to the citizenry.

Quite different are the circumstances of the sad episode to which we call the attention of the Christian reader today. It originated from a chance event which should be introduced with a few reliable words.

Dr. Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism, of whom we spoke amply in his time, died at Vienna in 1904, leaving a son Hans who, educated until around the 1890s in Judaism, moved to England for studies and there lost, as he himself writes, the time and the memory of his family traditions. (FN: See *The Universe* of London, November 7, 1924. The convert tells his story succinctly there.) But the religious problem tormented his soul and drove him to seek a doctrine first in the conventions or lessons of theosophy and spiritualism, but to no avail: then in the conferences held in London’s Hyde Park by the Catholic Evidence Guild, often standing several hours at a time to listen to the speakers: he had finally found “food and drink” for his intelligence. But his heart had its difficulties: He remembered the maxim his father inculcated in his last years, that it is an unworthy thing for a Jew to abandon his people.

For the convenience of his office he had to return for several months in 1923 to Vienna as the English correspondent of a bank: and there he heard talk of a Baptist community that was said to live a life inspired by the dictates of the gospel. Curiosity drew him often to their religious functions: his soul was profoundly moved by the words of the pastor who, agreeing with his lively desire, first gave him the book of the gospels to read, and then baptized him on the 20th of July.

Receiving baptism, Hans Herzl wanted, he writes, “to enter into the larger Christian community: but even then he understood that this would not be true if he did not become a Catholic.”

In fact, back in England, he revealed what had happened to one of his relatives who, though not a Catholic, told him frankly that the path on which he had placed himself should logically lead to Catholicism, and sent him surely to a religious Jesuit, Fr. Day, “and everything went full speed ahead.” On last October 19th, in the chapel of Our Lady of Zion, Herzl was received into the Catholic Church in the presence of a good number of the more honorable converted Jews: and on the 24th, the feast of the Archangel Rafael, he made his first communion in the same chapel. “May the archangel who restored sight to Tobias, also illuminate me and guide my journey to salvation.” God verifies the augury.

If such an event gave strong reason of spite to all the synagogue, for the Zionists it was a double blow of thrust and slash. The new convert was the one who had to consider Zionism as the legacy of his family. Was it not the work of his father who, as the new captain, had aroused among the dispersed remnant of Israel the hope of a new Kingdom of Judea? And here he is instead, not only deserting Zionism but disowning the same national tradition. The humiliation was shameful: for revenge they tried to cast ridicule on his conversion and thus contempt on the convert, the typical artifice of all the shamed. And the way it was done is this. (FN: Note that the satire in the Zionist newspaper was published after the first news of the conversion of Hans Herzl from Judaism to the sect of the Anabaptists. That sufficed for the blasphemy.)

In the Zionist newspaper entitled “*Doar Hayom*,” which is published in Jerusalem, a humorous story was inserted of a certain Asmavet, placing in the scene the persons and matters we mentioned, styled even worse, as can be imagined. Old Theodor Herzl, unhappy at his son’s bad end, goes venting his discontent, between the serious and the comic, with the Almighty.

“When the righteous (Theodor) was called to the court of heaven, he came into the presence of the angel of repose and noticed that he remained silent. The righteous thought this was a subaltern who surely did not know all the secrets. Then he approached the higher officials and stood erect before the Meta-throne, the executive vice president of heaven. And he noticed that he also remained silent and made no mention of the sin of his convert son. So he thought that only the director himself held the matter in confidential form, that is in secret. Finally he was introduced into the presence of the Holy One – may he be blessed forever – in all his glory and all his being. He was met with a smiling face and a solemn greeting.

“When the righteous saw that he also remained silent, he began to fear and ponder: and he resolved to begin to speak immediately himself. Then these words popped out: Lord of the world! Surely the story of the disgrace of my son will have come to your knowledge… - The Almighty replied with a familiar gesture of his hand: Even here, an instance like that once occurred. That’s bunk, they’re not at all alike, cried out the righteous: for ‘yours was a bastard,’ but mine, on the other hand, was the legitimate son of a father and mother.”

The phrase alluded openly to Jesus Christ, the son of the Virgin Mary, and the blasphemy publicly struck all followers of the Christian religion in the divine object of their faith. Thus the Zionist newspaper did not hesitate to violate with audacity the laws of the country and to offend with filthy cowardice the most sacred rights of the majority of the Palestinians. The thing was not to be tolerated.

As soon as news of this sacrilegious affront was disseminated in the city and the religious authority made sure of the exact incriminating text, His Beatitude the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem sent the government of the district the following protest:

“Your Excellency, I have the honor of calling the attention of the Government to a recent edition of the newspaper *Doar Hayom*, which contains an odious article blaspheming the sacred person of our Redeemer Jesus Christ, described as a “bastard,” and insulting at the same time Almighty God.

“It is impossible to conceive a more wanton and flagrant crime against religion, or a more provocative and injurious violation of the rights of Christian citizens in this City of Jerusalem. That the Christian religion is so publicly blasphemed with such insolence in the Jewish press, that the most sacred objects of Christian faith and love are traduced with such odious and repugnant cynicism by a Jewish newspaper in Jerusalem, are facts which the Government, I believe, cannot permit, in the interest not only of Christianity but of maintaining public peace. I have the honor to suggest that the most energetic measures be taken immediately to incarcerate the editor and to initiate criminal proceedings against the accused.

By such action the irritation of our people will be quelled and trust will be maintained in the power of the Government to protect the common honor of Christianity and defend the rights of the Christian population against similar sacrilegious publications.”

“I have the honor, etc., Luigi Barlassina, Patriarch.”

To this protest the governor hastened to answer the next day in these words:

“Your Beatitude, I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of yesterday and to inform Your Beatitude that I have not tarried to call the attention of the central government to the sacrilegious article you so justly reproved, and to ask that a case proceed against the editors as soon as possible.

“Thanking Your Beatitude for calling my attention to this event, I have the honor etc., Ronald Storrs, District Governor.”

Thus even the civil authorities, understanding the gravity of the event, proved ready to enforce the laws and punish the impious temerarity of the blasphemers. Meanwhile the Patriarch, awaiting the governmental action, had news of the scandal published in *Raqib Sayum*, the diocesan Arabic newspaper, and in a circular letter of August 28th ordered that in all the churches of the diocese there be held public functions of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and of prayer to the Blessed Virgin in reparation for the execrable impiety written against Him and his divine Son.

The announcement in the diocesan newspaper concluded with these words: “We have full hope that the civil authority will know how to take the necessary measures to prevent a repeat of such sacrilegious provocations that are an atrocious offense against the Christian conscience. And would it really be the case that in Palestine, in this land bathed with the precious blood of the Redeemer, we would have to tolerate vituperation against the Christian name? The Jews know that, if they are descendants of the crucifiers of Christ, we are sons of those heroes who defended the faith at the cost of their blood and their lives.”

But meanwhile the Government remained silent. After waiting eleven days, not seeing any indication of the legal action mentioned in same letter of the governor, the Patriarch addressed him by means of an explanation in this form:

“September 9, 1924

“Your Excellency, In reference to your letter of the 29th of last month, in which it was disclosed to me that you had informed the central Government about the blasphemous article published in the Jewish press, requesting that process be instituted against the editors in the shortest time possible, I allow myself to ask what is the current status of this request and what process has been instituted?

“I am prompted to ask particularly by the news in the *Daily News Bulletin* yesterday, which rather said “no trial will be conducted by the Government against the *Doar Hayom*. A reply in the morning would be appreciated. I have the honor etc.”

And in fact the governor courteously sent the following information to the Patriarch that same morning.

“September 9, 1924.

“Your Beatitude. – In reply to the letter of today I have the honor to inform Your Beatitude that, as a result of the strong remonstration of the Government, the *Doar Hayom* published in its Chronicle section of September 2nd a formal retraction of the blasphemous article printed in an earlier issue. I have the honor etc.”

The reply was a little hasty and a little strange. Things were changed: there was no more talk of a trial, but a retraction had been published. Why was no notice of it given to the Patriarchate? Who rendered authoritative judgment of its worth? Did it provide the just satisfaction that the Christian religion and the people who profess it had a right to demand? Let this be judged by the reader, under whose eyes we place the text of the “formal retraction” which the Jewish newspaper published according to the remonstrations of the Government.

“Declaration. – We have been made aware that the Christians of Jerusalem are enraged on account of the novella about Asmaveth published in *Doar Hayom* on August 15. The community of Jerusalem knows that our newspaper has never entered into religious discussions. We regret to have given, unintentionally, discomfort to some of the Christian community: and we declare publicly that we are very sorry for having given rise to bad interpretations with our literary appendix, if this novella has a significance which affects the religious sentiments of our Christian readers.”

It requires not good faith but simple-mindedness to see a retraction in these phrases of ironic contrition for a discomfort given “unintentionally” and for “bad interpretations” without intent, as if the sacrilegious injury was not expressed by the letter and the explicit text of the novella. Of this, which was the main point at issue, not even a word.

But to offer a just basis for assessing this hypocritical declaration, it is necessary to read what the Zionists wrote in the same days in their newspaper, laughing sarcastically at the horror and indignation of the Catholics, and caricaturing the steps they took with the government to punish the insult against their religion. In an article entitled “A tempest in a teapot,” they are surprised that Catholics “make so much noise over a funny joke without a shadow of offense to Christian sentiments. Even if the joke had mistakenly brushed up against their religious sensibility, a nod to the newspaper would have sufficed to elicit its apology without anything more, as it did of its own will (!) … and instead they have tried to turn the whole world upside down.” And in another article directed to Jewish school students there is a burlesque description of crowds of police and servants of the Patriarchate buying the issue of the newspaper to read the incriminating novella. “Golden business for the newspaper! The passage against religion was translated into seventy languages, and a copy of it was sent to the chief rabbi the Pope in Rome, to the League of Nations in Geneva, and above all to the Government: in a word, out Holy City was in complete consternation. From one of our students who was sent to spy, I knew that one of our Israelite brothers was charged with translating my prose into the language of the Romans, and when he came to the guilty passage … he lost his Latin and gave the newspaper back to the bosses saying he found the Talmudic expressions too difficult to understand and turn into Italian.”

With this impertinence the Zionist mocked the Christian people, the Government, the Patriarchate: and did not hesitate to raise their voice even a bit higher, in quasi-menacing tones: The purpose of these malefactors against Israel is always one and the same: to show the authorities that nothing here is going well and that we have to make changes to things in London as to what concerns our national home… But I tell them that no reaction … and not even all the prayers ordered this week in all the churches will come to nothing, because little by little sound reason will do its part to win over all the Blacks to the extent they are powerful in our national territory.

In this state of things, the ecclesiastical authorities could be in doubt. In the face of the aggressive audacity of the blasphemers, any sign of indecision would have brought harm and shame to the Christian name. The Government had not taken account of the word of the Patriarch: but they miscalculated. Turkish law, which is still the law in force in Palestine, under the heading of chief crimes that disturb internal security, in article 55, provides that “whoever speaks against the chief prophets shall be sentenced to prison for one to three years”: and the Council of Jerusalem, at the time of the promulgation of the law, posed a question to Constantinople: does the name of the prophets contemplates only Mohammed and some other personages of Islam, the Minister of Justice replied: it contemplates all the prophets: and Jesus is one of the greatest prophets honored by the Muslims.

Now who can deny that this law is brutally violated by the rude insult flung in the face of Christ by this pack of Zionists who publish the “*Doar Hayom*”? Justice requires therefore the appropriate remedy: and His Beatitude the Patriarch, the representative and custodian in Jerusalem of that faith which recognizes in Jesus Christ the Son of God himself made Man for the redemption of the world, by the power of his high ministry and for the protection of the faithful people, could not agree that the guilty to escape the merited sentence. To this effect he sent the governor the following communication:

September 11, 1924

Your Excellency, I have received your letter of the 9th of this month. From your letter of the 29th of last month, in which it is affirmed that the article in question was truly reprehensible and blasphemous and thus a request had been sent to the central government for an action against the newspaper, I had been led to suppose that the government would immediately open a legal process. A serious crime has been committed: the authors are known: the law is clear in this matter. If there is no government action, I will be forced to file a formal complaint for a proceeding against the perpetrators of that horrible blasphemy committed with brazen impudence by the press in an official language of this country. I have the honor, etc.

And the complaint was formally presented to the court of the Holy City by a Catholic Englishman, attorney Mockler, who was duly appointed by the Patriarch. It was now up to the Turkish magistrates to do their duty.

The people of Palestine have already done their part: and from all the religious elements that it comprises, arose a unanimous cry of detestation against the sacrilegious crime of the Zionist newspaper. It would be superfluous to collect all the voices of the Catholic population that were the first to protest, following with all their soul the word of their Pastors. Listen instead to the voice of the Moslem Community of Haifa which, through its head Sulaiman Saleh, presented to the High Commissioner of Palestine a brief but proud declaration in qhich, after having recalled the text of the Turkish law we cited, continued:

“For the insult of the Zionist newspaper against our Lord Jesus (to whom be glory) greatly disrespected all Muslims, because our noble Koran confesses the purity of the Messiah and the chastity of the Virgin Mary, our Lady. Wherefore the Muslim Society of Haifa strongly protests against such audacity and demands the government punish severely the brazen author of such infamous writing: and thus to calm Moslem souls and public opinion and also to provide a lesson so that other writers will not dare to imitate.

“Otherwise all responsibility for what can happen will concern the Government which has not given serious consideration and care to the matter.”

The tone of the writing, as can be seen, is quite proud and resolute. In its turn, the Islamic-Christian Session of Jerusalem published a “General proclamation to the noble Arab Nation,” in which is manifested the keen anxiety of souls upon hearing “the extreme injury inflicted against our Lord Jesus Christ (worthy of all glory and respect) by the Zionist society Hassallel in one of its newspapers, saying Christ was the son of adultery (which may God pardon a thousand times over).” And it continued with hardly repressed rancor:

“And we recall that the same society, a while ago, in one of its newspapers greatly insulted the noble Arab nation by publishing that the Arab is a born assassin. Before that, the same society had severely maligned some religious congregations dedicated to teaching and education.

“To remedy, therefore, in some way, this nefarious religious insult which was never experienced in our country before the perverse policy by which today we are governed by force, the executive committee of the sixth Palestinian Arab Congress charged its secretary to initiate cases in the civil courts against the above mentioned Zionist society: this secretary is appointed as a prosecutor and vice-regent of Muslims and Christians of Palestine whose beliefs were injured deeply by such insult. The aforesaid secretary will also initiate cases in his capacity as a Moslem private person.

“The Committee asks everyone to keep calm until the case is finished and justice has run its course.”

The schismatic Greek Orthodox of Jaffa did not want to be outdone by the others and sent the English High Commissioner an open letter, complaining of the offense done to their religious beliefs, all the more since the government of his royal majesty had declared and had not ceased to declare by the mouth of his political representatives that the first duty of the Mandate is to preserve and protect the religious dogmas and traditions of the population that inhabits Palestine.

“Therefore we demand legal inquest against the director of the newspaper and against the author of the article, and ask for the application of the laws of the press against the aforesaid newspaper. We await the outcome of these our legitimate requests. We trust we will see in the representative of the English government in Palestine a man who maintains order and peace in the Holy Places and severely punishes offenders who would have such a great deal of audacity.”

Even outside Palestine, in the neighboring populations reached by reports of the turmoils, there were demonstrations of full agreement with the anti-blasphemy protests, and perhaps among others arose more serious reflections, such as was the following from the Moslem university of Cairo:

“To His Excellency the High Commissioner of His Brittanic Majesty for Palestine.

We the undersigned, professors and employees of Ruak-Assuan in Azka (moschea principale), in our religious character denounced and protest against what the Zionist newspaper Doar Hayom published in disrespect to Christ the Lord – may He be hailed – saying that He was a bastard. (La parola che esce dale loro bocche è assai grave, non ticono che menzogne)(FN: Parole del Corano).

“Noi consideriamo quanto pubblicdfo il detto giornale come una violazione del rispetto dovuto alle religioni celesti e come eccetazione dell’opinione pubblica. Troviamo che il silenzio del Governo palestinese su tale violazione è contrario ai principia del mandato il quale ordina di rispettare I sentimenti e le credenze dei paesi sottoposti alla sua tutela. Domandiamo quindi a V.E. di riparare a si grave male, battendo con mano ferrea, spintovi dal dovere, tanta audacia per calmare gli animi, onde non succedano gravi mali nè si segue l’esempio di pubblicare simili infamie.

E noi approviamo il segretario del Comitato esecutivo di Gerusalemme nella protesta e nel processo intentato a nome del Comitato.

Signed by professors: Roteb Abu Gazzal

Iusef Abdel Aruzak

By employees: Muhammed Rafik Elababidi

Aly Mohammed Schrab Ganem

Professori ed llievi di

P.S. Ci vieni comunicato che il processo dinanzi al tribunal di Gerusalemme si chiuse in questi giorni, con sentenza che condanna alla multa di venticinque lire sterline l’autore dell’articolo, e a quella di cinque sterline il suo editore – trenta lire in tutto, che il popolo paragono aid trenta danari del vangelo. Non vogliamo cercare le ragioni che inclinarono il tribuanle ad essere meno severo della legge turca: auguriamo almeno che la condanna sia monito sufficiente che persuada I sionisti a rispettare I diritti altrui.

p.498 - Meanwhile, the facts that we have documented at length in response to the adversarial statements, suffice to show the rabid animosity [*rabbiosa animosità*] brought by Zionism into the Holy City and the tumultuous danger to the tranquility and mutual respect that the Mandate promised to maintain.