

Gesture to the Jews from Benedict ...as Pope or Professor?
March 23, 2011

http://sspx.org/miscellaneous/gesture_to_jews_from_benedict_pope_or_professor.htm

Pope Benedict XVI has made a sweeping exoneration of the Jewish people for the death of Jesus Christ in his new book, the second volume of *Jesus of Nazareth*. This should not be surprising since it follows *Nostra Aetate*, which initiated a revolution of the Church's relations with Jews. In this new book, Benedict attempts to explain, biblically and theologically, why there is no basis in Scripture for claiming that the Jews are responsible for the death of Christ. So the argument goes, interpretations to the contrary have been used for centuries to justify the persecution of Jews.

For Benedict, the responsibility of Christ's death is allocated instead to the "Temple aristocracy" and a few supporters of Barabbas who were responsible. Benedict asks: "How could the whole [Jewish] people have been present at this moment to clamor for Jesus' death?" He deconstructs the famous phrase of the crowd: "His blood be on us and on our children", a phrase frequently cited as evidence of the collective guilt that the Jews bore and the curse they carried as a result. Benedict, however, argues that Jesus' blood "does not cry out for vengeance and punishment, it is not poured out against anyone, it is poured out for many, for all."

He has visited the Nazi concentration camp of Auschwitz in Poland and Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial, in spite of the fact that Jewish groups oppose the beatification process of Pius XII, whom they claim should have done more to prevent the Holocaust.

Finally, Benedict approvingly quotes the Cistercian abbess Hildegard: "The Church must not concern herself with the conversion of the Jews, since she must wait for the time fixed for this by God." Until God's plan comes to fruition, Benedict says, the "particular task" of the disciples of Christ is to carry the Faith to the Gentiles, not to the Jews.

Concerning Pope Benedict's interpretation, the following reflections are offered:

- The responsibility of the Jewish people as such for the death of Christ has been the constant teaching of the Magisterium, based on Scripture and the Church Fathers. St. John speaks three times in his Prologue of the rejection of Christ by His own (meaning His own people or nation). Romans XII speaks of the rejection of Israel for the profit of the Gentiles. See also St. Augustine's Treatise 49 On John, near the end: "The chief priests and the Pharisees took counsel together... 'If we let Him alone as He is, all will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.' Fearing the destruction of temporal things, they took no thought of eternal life, and so they lost both. After the Lord's Passion and glorification the Romans did indeed take away both their place and their nation, by assault on the city and dispersal of the people." The Fathers connected the punishment of the loss of the nation to the crime of deicide, perpetrated by the highest ranking political and moral authority: the Sanhedrin.
- It is important to distinguish today between the Jewish race (which has little to do with Christ's crucifixion), present day Israel (including the Zionists who were forced to emigrate mostly from Russia), and the Jewish religion (led by rabbis, the doctrinal successors of the Sanhedrin which rejected Christ).
- As the Messiah was the whole purpose of Israel, His acceptance by many Gentiles turned them

into the true Israel (according to St. Paul) and, similarly, His rejection by many Jews could not but be their undoing, since “God is not mocked.”

- Such theological interpretations, based on Romans XII, or the Jewish responsibility for Christ’s death have certainly not been the justification for any alleged Jewish persecution by the Church in the Middle Ages. Witness the sermons of St. Bernard, forbidding the killing of Jews; if there was any pressure from the side of the Church, it was not against them but on their behalf.
- Regarding the idea of dialogue vs. conversion, the late Cardinal Dulles provided a blunt assessment about ten years ago: the Church cannot curtail the scope of the Gospel without betraying Herself.
- John Vennari (editor of Catholic Family News) recounts hearing a Jewish rabbi (note 1) say that the Gospel account of the Passion is not accurate: that the Pharisees were not hostile to Our Lord, but that they were trying to warn Christ against Pilate’s treachery. Mr. Vennari also reports that this rabbi from the Anti-Defamation League works in union with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops which allows him to teach these falsehoods to Catholics everywhere through the United States.

Footnote

1) John Vennari said the Rabbi’s name was Rabbi Leon Klenicki, who died in 2009. In 2007, Pope Benedict named Rabbi Klenicki a Papal Knight of the Order of St. Gregory the Great.