

# CENTRO PRO UNIONE

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*A Center conducted by the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement*

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# Director's Desk

This issue of the *Bulletin* is particularly rich both because of the articles and because of the diversity of themes that they deal with. The lead article is from the lecture of Dr. Dina Porat who has done immense work on the questions related to anti-Semitism and the Shoah. She presents in this study important information concerning the diplomatic mission of Angelo Roncalli in Turkey. Much of the research comes from archival material and certainly puts the pontificate of Pius XII in a different light since Roncalli was an agent of the Pope who kept him informed of his every action in the rescue of many Jews in Turkey. We are most grateful for the collaboration of His Excellency Mordechai Lewy, Ambassador of Israel to the Holy See for his aid and support in making Dr. Porat's lecture possible at the **Centro Pro Unione**.

Last year's lecture given in the series to honor the Co-Founders of the Franciscan Friars and Sisters of the Atonement, Paul Wattson and Lurana White was offered by a friend of the Centro, Dr. Turid Karlsen Seim. She spoke from first hand knowledge of the dialogue between Lutherans and Catholics since she was a member of the dialogue commission. Dr. Seim wished to look beyond the Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification to the fifth phase of the dialogue which will look at the implications of our commonly recognized theology of baptism for further growth in communion. With the commemoration of the Reformation nearing in 2017 there is hope that a further clarification of our canonical relationship to each other will be made.

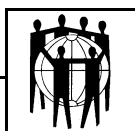
Our good friend Rabbi Jack Bemporad, offered a very stimulating lecture on a fresh reading of the Book of Job. Rabbi Bemporad concludes that the final teaching of Job is that we must take on the burden of making the world better. This may cause suffering but it is a way that human beings bear and carry on the work of creation.

The final conference was given by the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Olav Fyske Tveit during this year's annual celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. He takes a look at the role of the WCC in the search for Christian Unity. After reviewing the role that the WCC plays he speaks about the importance of a "mutual accountability." While the member churches need to be accountable to each other, the WCC needs to provide strategic leadership to the ecumenical movement on the global level. In this context he notes three areas where the accountability and the leadership needs to be exhibited: in the area of the diversity of and in churches; in the area of globalization, peace and development; and finally in a religiously pluralistic society.

Check our web site for up to date information on the Centro's activities and realtime information on the theological dialogues. We are honored to have Kurt Cardinal Koch give this year's lecture to honor the Co-Founders of the Society of the Atonement entitled: *La fondazione del Pontificio Consiglio per la Promozione dell'Unità dei Cristiani*. Please consult the enclosed flyer.

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James F. Puglisi, sa  
Director





# CC

Centro Conferences

## Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli His Support of the Rescue Work according to Hebrew Sources Istanbul 1943-1944

Prof. Dina Porat

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(Conference given at the **Centro Pro Unione**, Wednesday, 20 October 2010)

### Introduction

A lot has been written since World War II ended on Pope Pius the XII and his conduct during the Holocaust, and the debate is still being launched, both in historiography and in media representing public opinion in many countries. Among the many questions raised are a few central ones that concern the details the Pope had on the plight of European Jews, and especially the information that reached, and the dates on which it reached, him from his own Nuncios and Apostolic delegates in the various countries. The sources that nourish the debate are most often the 11 volumes of the «*Actes et documents du Saint-Siège relatifs à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale*» edited and issued by a decision of Paul VI (between 1965 to 1981), featuring thousands of dispatches and correspondence between the Vatican's State Secretary, its officials and its diplomatic representatives, bishops and prelates, while many other relevant documents, memoirs and testimonies serve to complement the picture.

What follows is an attempt to elaborate on these central issues by using a source less known than those above mentioned: i.e. the many documents kept in the private archive, and the short memoirs, of Chaim Barlas, head of the Hebrew Yishuv rescue delegation in Istanbul during WWII, that concern Monsignor Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli (later Pope John the XXIII), who then served as the Apostolic Delegate in Turkey and Greece, and his intensive cooperation with Barlas in the years 1942-1944, regarding the rescue of Jews from the Holocaust in general, and the role played in this regard by the Vatican

and its representatives in particular. This source is less known because of its location – in private hands, and its language – much of it is written in Hebrew. Having read these documents<sup>1</sup> and memoirs,<sup>2</sup> and Barlas' book *Rescue during Holocaust Days*, which is more known, it is my assumption that a special contact was forged between these two personalities, and that this personal contact made Roncalli confide in Barlas, even in matters relating to his relationship with the Holy See; and made Barlas

<sup>1</sup> Barlas' archive is in private hands in Israel. He organized it in files and carton boxes according to issues and dates, but not in every case and did not number them. He told me on our conversation on January 1979 in his home that he had sent to Ertz-Israel copies of all the material gathered in his office in Istanbul before he returned home towards the end of the war.

<sup>2</sup> Barlas, an exceptionally modest person, did not write an autobiography. It seems that he began writing a book on his Istanbul memoirs, to be called *An Unfinished Mission*. The part on Roncalli, kept in his archive, was written in 1958, when he became John the XXIII, and its contents is more emotional regarding praises for Roncalli's attitude and rescue work (hereafter: *Unfinished Mission*). Other parts of memoirs are in *Meetings in Constantinople*, in *Masua* 4 (April 1976) 125-133 (hereafter: *Meetings*); in interviews: see A. CHAIM ELHANANI, *People in Jerusalem*, II Jerusalem 1977, 181-191, and the same in *Bama'aracha* (In The Struggle) 188 (September 1976) 10-11, and 189 (October 1976) 12-13, 27 (hereafter: *Elhanani*); see also in the daily press: *Davar*, November 21, 1958, when Roncalli became Pope John the XXIII; *Haboker*, June 14, 1963 and *Ma'ariv*, June 15, 1963, when Roncalli passed away. His book *Rescue during Holocaust Days* (Tel Aviv, 1975) 371, is a well-documented analysis of rescue attempts in the Holocaust, mainly from Istanbul, and not a personal account. All sources in this note are Hebrew written.

come rushing to Roncalli for help, once and again, showing him various documents, from forged certificates to urgent cables, and from transcripts of telephone calls to the Auschwitz Protocols. Barlas most often asked Roncalli to forward the documents and the cries for help they included to the Pope, and Roncalli promised to inform him when he would – and many times he did not – receive a response from Pius the XII or his secretaries. Barlas' archive and memoirs show clearly that Roncalli did not confine himself to act merely as a channel to Rome and back: he also acted actively, if not independently, mostly with Barlas but with others as well, generously devoting time and effort in order to rescue as many as he could.

The Yishuv is the Hebrew term for the Jewish community that lived under the British Mandate in pre-state Israel, or as the British authorities referred to it, Palestina/EI, that is Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel). Most of the members of this community, then numbering 475,000, emigrated as an avant-garde mainly from Europe, having left their relatives and communities behind. No wonder then, that the information about the persecution and murder of European Jewry shocked them personally, and undermined their collective efforts to establish a Jewish political entity. The evidence that the murder was carried out systematically accumulated since it began (in the middle of 1941), though the unprecedented reality it described was only quite slowly understood and absorbed. Decisive proof, reaching the Yishuv towards the end of 1942 made its leadership issue a declaration to the effect that the murder was carefully planned.<sup>3</sup> Following the declaration rescue attempts started, the scope and adequacy of which is still debated.

The various Yishuv bodies sent about 15 delegates to Istanbul that could serve as a bridge between the Middle East and Nazi-occupied Europe.<sup>4</sup> The senior delegate, formally acting as head of the delegation on behalf of the Jewish Agency, was Chaim Barlas. Born in 1898 he was the elder among the delegates, and by that time had already fulfilled major positions in the Jewish Agency's Immigration Department, including being its director general.<sup>5</sup> Except for one other delegate, Menachem Bader of the leftist Kibbutz Hazore'a, most of the others

were young, in their twenties or early thirties, and, burning with a sense of urgency, tended to take risks.<sup>6</sup> It should be emphasized that Barlas was the only one among the delegates to have a formal Jewish Agency appointment acknowledged by the British as well as the Turkish authorities, and that he could jeopardize this valuable appointment had he not acted according to their war time rules. Therefore it was mainly between Roncalli and Barlas – elder, senior, with a legal status, a cautious and austere, restrained and meticulous person – that the contact was intensively maintained for almost two years, until Roncalli left for Paris towards the end of 1944.

Roncalli, born in 1881, took part in WWI and later headed centralization of Propagation of the Faith and its Italian branch. In 1925 he became bishop, and an Apostolic Visitor in Bulgaria, where he handled the negotiations for the marriage of Princess Giovanna of Savoy with the Orthodox King Boris the III and its complicated development, a fact that made him an influential figure in the court. Some 10 years later he became an Apostolic Delegate in Turkey and Greece, where he stayed until the end of 1944, and witnessed from there the involvement of the Holocaust during most of the Third Reich years.<sup>7</sup> As a Nuncio in Paris he replaced a collaborator who was sent back to Rome by President De Gaulle, and had a successful eight years long stay.<sup>8</sup> As a Pope (1958-1963), he summoned and initiated the Second Ecumenical Council, which practically revolutionized the Church in general and its relations with the Jewish people in particular.<sup>9</sup> It was his uniquely warm and communicative personality, combined with an uncompromising adherence to human values that made

<sup>3</sup> On the impact of the information on the Yishuv see D. PORAT, *The Blue and the Yellow Stars of David. The Zionist Leadership in Palestine and the Holocaust, 1939-1945* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990) especially part one.

<sup>4</sup> See their list in the Hebrew version, *An Entangled Leadership. The Yishuv and the Holocaust, 1942-1945*, ed. by Y. Vashem and A. Oved (Tel Aviv, 2004) 220-221.

<sup>5</sup> See formal details in *Who's Who in Israel* (Tel Aviv, 1971-1972) 60.

<sup>6</sup> See their memoirs, all Hebrew written: M. BADER, *Sad Missions* (Merchavia, 1954); E. AVRIEL, *Open the Gates* (Tel Aviv, 1976); T. KOLLEK, *One Jerusalem* (Tel Aviv, 1979); Z. VENIA HADARI, *Against all Odds, Istanbul, 1942-1945* (Tel Aviv, 1992).

<sup>7</sup> A. MELLONI, *Fra Istanbul, Atene e la guerra: la missione di A. G. Roncalli (1935-1944)* (Genoa: Marietti, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> E. DUFFY, *A History of the Popes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) 268 *passim*. The Nuncio left also on this a personal witness: A.G. RONCALLI, *Anni di Francia. Agende del Nunzio, I: 1945-1948*, ed. by É. Fouilloux, (Bologna: Istituto per le scienze religiose, 2004); a second volume on 1949-1953 is forthcoming.

<sup>9</sup> P. HEBBLETHWAITE, *John XXIII. Pope of the Council* (London: Chapman, 1984); *History of Vatican II*, 5 vols., directed by G. ALBERIGO, (Maryknoll/Leuven: Orbis/Peeters, 1998-2006), and G. ALBERIGO, *A Brief History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2006).

him an exceptionally trusted and active representative of his faith, even beyond its confessional border.<sup>10</sup>

## I

Having introduced the framework of our discussion in terms of time, place and protagonists, let us address the main points with which we opened: Roncalli's attitude to Pius the XII and his entourage during WWII, the rescue efforts he carried out in cooperation with Barlas, and the materials he was asked to transfer to Rome, especially the Auschwitz Protocols, all as reflected in Barlas' documents and writings. His attitude to the Pope, to his faith and to the rescue of Jews: in his memoirs on the meetings he held in Istanbul with him, Barlas described Roncalli's office, located in an annex of an ancient Catholic church standing in an alley in old Byzantine Constantinople.<sup>11</sup> In the 1968 Yad Vashem conference he told the audience that he used to come there at night, so as not to attract unnecessary attention to his many visits in the Delegate's office.<sup>12</sup> But «I could always come to him», said Barlas on another occasion, «I had a free entrance to the Nunciature, and even if I came late on an urgent matter he would be always glad to receive me and to help as much as he could», using his connections to get accurate information and to be active beyond his formal position.<sup>13</sup> On his first visit, wrote Barlas in his memoirs, he realized that Roncalli was different than other clerics in his position, in his involvement in world and war current events, and especially in his attitude towards the Jewish problem. His warm heart made him genuinely feel the suffering of the Jewish individual and people, «beyond the dogma of religion and church».<sup>14</sup> When approached for help, wrote Barlas when Roncalli became John the XXIII, he would listen, ask questions

<sup>10</sup> Barlas after the first meeting with him: «a vivacious old man [...] open hearted», *Masua* 4 (April 1976) 128. «Genuinely felt the sorrow, and was exceptionally ready to help and save»: BARLAS, *Unfinished Mission*, 1. Bader in the first meeting: «A neutral personality, its importance recognized by everyone», quoted by HADARI, *Against All Odds...*, 54.

<sup>11</sup> *Masua* 4 (April 1976) 128; a description of places is made by Roncalli in his own diaries, now edited as A.G. RONCALLI, *La mia vita in Oriente. Agende del delegato apostolico, I: 1935-1939*, ed. by V. Martano, (Bologna: Istituto per le scienze religiose, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> The conference was dedicated to rescue efforts during the Holocaust. Barlas took the floor to angrily protest against the general feeling that the Yishuv did not do enough, and brought his contact with Roncalli as a proof of the serious work that had been done in Istanbul.

<sup>13</sup> *Haboker*, June 14, 1963. HEBBLETHWAITE, *John XXIII...*, 187.

<sup>14</sup> *Haboker*, June 14, 1963. *Masua* 4 (April 1976) 128. *Unfinished Mission*, 1.

and write down answers and notes and would not refer the matter to a secretary or messenger.<sup>15</sup>

On one of his first visits, held on March 1943, Barlas came rushing in on a rainy night. Roncalli listened carefully, and promised Barlas to transfer to Slovakia, to Jozef Tiso, the anti-Semitic Catholic president of Slovakia, a plea to have mercy and prevent the continuation of deportations from his country to the death camps, mainly to near by Auschwitz (deportations that stopped on October 1943). Before promising he prayed softly, in Barlas' presence, asking God to have mercy on him and show him the right way, and then added : «so be it, with God's mercy».<sup>16</sup> Later, when Barlas reported on this meeting and others to the Jewish Agency members in Jerusalem, he spoke about Roncalli,

“who many times went right into the heart of the matter and acted when we asked him, and sent cables to the Vatican. I remember that when I came to him with the Slovak Jews matter, he himself wrote the cable to the Pope and sent that very day, and after five days told me he received an answer that an action such as we wanted was carried out.”<sup>17</sup>

This was one of the few cases a concrete answer came in quickly, following a practical action, sponsored by Barlas and Roncalli.

«We spoke a lot then on the attitude of the Holy See to the Jews», wrote Barlas, and his Hebrew expression «a lot» («*rabot*») could also be translated as «many times». «We spoke, and how we spoke» on this issue, he said.<sup>18</sup> Barlas described the way Roncalli addressed this issue, either on this occasion or on the many others as very restrained, yet clearly expressing despair that originated in his knowledge of the circumstances and of the chances the Holy See would act, or at least respond. When Barlas brought him the Auschwitz Protocols (to which we'll refer later in more details), Roncalli was shocked and read it with tears – and with delicate unambiguous resentment reported towards his superiors, «whose power and influence are great, but who refrain from action and

<sup>15</sup> *Unfinished Mission*, 1; see also G. ALBERIGO, *Papa Giovanni* (Roma/Bari: Laterza, 1987).

<sup>16</sup> *Unfinished Mission*.

<sup>17</sup> Rescue Committee Presidency meeting in Jerusalem, 3.10.1944, 18, Barlas archive and S26/1238a, Central Zionist Archives (hereafter: CZA). More on the Slovak affair see later, notes 31-35.

<sup>18</sup> *Masua* 4 (April 1976) 128. *Haboker*, June 14, 1963.

resourcefulness in extending concrete help». <sup>19</sup> This is indeed a rare case, in which Roncalli, an Apostolic Delegate, allows his compassion and sorrow when facing human suffering to overcome the discretion he owes his superior, and criticizes him – very gently, by casual and restrained remarks, as Barlas put it – but still criticizes him for not acting forcefully in favor of the persecuted Jews. Moreover, his remarks were made in the presence of a Jewish delegate, moreover a Zionist from the Land of Israel, not a colleague of the same or similar position nor even a fellow Christian. He must have trusted Barlas as a person and as a representative of people in dire stress, who depended upon his help. Indeed, when Barlas tried to ask him for the reasons behind the Pope's silence, Roncalli refrained from answering and spoke about God's reasons that are hidden from human beings, as if this question presented a red line he would not cross. Still, he did not reproach Barlas or object his criticism when speaking about the impact that direct a public appeal of the Pope might have, calling upon the local population in the Nazi occupied countries to render their Jewish citizens a helping hand.

It seems that Roncalli restricted his critical remarks to his meetings with Barlas: his first meeting with another Yishuv delegate took place on January 1943, when Barlas was away from Istanbul, dealing with urgent matters in Ankara, the capital. Roncalli agreed to listen to Bader's pleas for help in urgently granting Jewish children passage through Turkey. <sup>20</sup> According to Bader, Roncalli became nervous when being told that most of the murder or the deportations happened in Catholic countries, Poland first and foremost, and that their citizens should be clearly told by the Pope to extend Christian help. Roncalli answered at length, «sighing piously», as Bader put it rather ironically, opposing the Yishuv delegate's accusation against the head of the church. He emphasized that «the Voice of the Vatican» (probably the Vatican Radio, perfectly heard in Turkey) often announced that the Pope prayed for all those suffering on account of their religion or race, and that in places in which help was extended – it could not have been done without the church. Nevertheless Bader went on to add a request for a larger future plan, according to which Roncalli, acknowledged by all as «an important neutral personality», would undertake negotiations with some eight countries, so that Jewish children be let out

<sup>19</sup> *Masua* 4 (April 1976) 128; the best synthesis on the whole issue of Pacelli's attitude is now: G. MICCOLI, *I dilemmi e i silenzi di Pio XII. Vaticano, Seconda guerra mondiale e Shoah* (Milano: Rizzoli, 2000).

<sup>20</sup> See D. PORAT, *The Zionist Leadership...*, 149-163, *The Affair of the 29,000 Children*.

and reach Turkey. Roncalli promised – again, after standing and praying facing an icon of Jesus, as if asking for his advice and inspiration – to help in countries where the Catholic clergy was under his «jurisdiction» (*sic!*), and to send the written request to grant the children a free passage to the Pope, so that he intervenes with the rigid Turkish authorities. <sup>21</sup> He did so immediately via Arthur Hughes, the Apostolic Delegate to Egypt and Eretz Israel, who happened to be in Istanbul on his way to Rome. The Vatican's documents show he did: a memo written by the delegates and signed by Barlas who returned at night, was handed to Hughes late that same night – yet weeks went by, and no answer came back from the Vatican. <sup>22</sup>

It is possible that since this meeting with Bader was the first one he had with a Yishuv delegate, Roncalli was not yet fully aware of the situation of European Jews, and he still thought that the Vatican would act. It is also clear that the chemistry that later characterized Barlas' relations with Roncalli was not created with Bader, and this fact lends more credibility to the criticism Roncalli limited himself to air in the presence of one person only, whom he did not rebuke. It also lends credibility to later expressions, regarding the Vatican's stance towards Zionism: in one of their meetings, Barlas brought Roncalli part of a report on the horrors of mass killings of Jews in Nazi occupied Poland, and Roncalli, pale and trembling, suggested that Barlas rereads in Ezekiel 37 the prophesy that the dry scattered bones of the House of Israel will be brought to its resurrecting land. <sup>23</sup> In doing so, Roncalli was trying to console Barlas, but in fact he did not condemn (at least) Zionist aspirations. When Chief Rabbi of Eretz Israel, Yitzhak Eizik Halevi Herzog was brought by Barlas to visit Roncalli on February 1944, he inquired his visitor about the Jewish revival in the Holy Land and about Arab-Jewish relations, and ended their conversation with the hope that the People of Israel would be redeemed. Roncalli, deeply impressed with his visitor's personal stature, later wrote to the Vatican about their meeting; Barlas, who was present, heard them with awe and respect discussing at length theological questions. <sup>24</sup>

Roncalli's attitude, though expressed in Biblical and not in political terms in his conversations with Barlas and Herzog, contradicts the Vatican's attitude that was

<sup>21</sup> BADER, *Sad Missions...*, 51-53. Hadari's source in *Against all Odds...*, 54, is Bader's letter to Yosef Lipsky of Kibbutz Ein-Harod, on the same day, 22.1.1943, Moreshet Archive, D1.698.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid...* More on the children affair see later, note 30.

<sup>23</sup> *Masua* 4 (April 1976) 129. *Elhanani*, 187.

<sup>24</sup> *Haboker*, June 14, 1963, where Barlas mentioned the Roncalli-Herzog meeting as the highlight of his contacts with Roncalli. See more on this meeting later, in notes 40-41. See A. MELLONI, *Fra Istanbul, ..., op. cit.*

opposed to Zionism.<sup>25</sup> Pope Pius the X had already told Theodor Ze'ev Herzl, founder of political Zionism, in their meeting in 1904, that the main bone of contention was the fear that Jewish presence would jeopardize the holiness of the Holy places and Christian access to them.<sup>26</sup> Roncalli himself was familiar with the official doubts regarding the proper status of the Jewish people,<sup>27</sup> but it should be clearly stated that during the Holocaust he cast them aside, differentiated between Zionism in the future and the horrors Jews were undergoing in the present, and acted according to Christian values, not interests.

Barlas' words in his book sum up our first point, regarding Roncalli's attitudes. He stated that the Vatican had detailed reports on the situation of the Jews in the Nazi occupied countries, especially from the net of his Nunciatures; and that the response from Rome sometimes did come but was most often very general and vague, and Barlas draws a list of responses such as: the Pope is sad, he prays, he does everything he can; and then he concludes: «Monsignor Angelo Roncalli told me explicitly in our conversations in Istanbul that he passed on the material for the Holy See to know, but did not receive an answer»,<sup>28</sup> meaning that concrete answers regarding practical measures were very seldom received. When Barlas reported to the Jewish Agency Rescue Committee in Jerusalem in the autumn of 1944 he was asked about the chances of a delegation to the Pope and answered, based on his experience, that he did not think «the Pope would want that».<sup>29</sup> Later Barlas quoted Moshe Shertok (later Sharett), head of the Jewish Agency's Political Department, reporting in Jerusalem on his disappointing audience in the Pope's court one month before the war ended: even then Pius the XII mentioned briefly «terrible persecutions» (Shertok: actual killings), «in Poland and Hungary» (Shertok: all over Europe), and wondered: «five millions, indeed?».<sup>30</sup> It seems that

Shertok's experience echoed Barlas', because it meant that the information regarding the «Final Solution», which he sent via Roncalli, was not internalized by the Pope, who consistently did not mention *verbatim* Jews, Nazis and killings.

## II

And to our second point, regarding actual rescue work: the list of the rescue possibilities discussed and initiated between Barlas and Roncalli is a long one, and when put together it is even a surprising one. Naturally, Barlas developed many more contacts and worked through other channels at the same time, as one can gather from the dozens of files in his archive; Roncalli was approached by others as well, had meetings and was involved in rescue efforts with the Jewish community in Turkey; with Chief Rabbi Herzog; and with Ira Hirschman, who represented in Turkey the WRB (War Refugee Board) appointed in January 1944 by President Roosevelt; and he wrote extensively to his colleagues, Nuncios and Apostolic delegates, and to heads of State, in the European countries he had contacts with, especially the four «satellites», namely Slovakia, Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary.<sup>31</sup>

Still, let us take a brief chronological look at the Barlas-Roncalli cooperation only.

The January 1943 Bader-Roncalli meeting regarding negotiations and passage permits for children, was followed by the memo to Hughes, in which the delegates had more requests: an intervention of the Vatican asking the neutral countries to offer shelter to Jews, and the German authorities to let certificate holders and relatives of EretzIsraeli citizens to leave for Palestine. The third and last request in the memo referred very gently to the famous declaration issued by Pius the XII on December 24, 1942, regarding innocent people being doomed to death on account of their religion or race, yet not mentioning they were Jews. The memo, written less than a month after this deeply disappointing declaration, politely acknowledges the «highly humanitarian attitude [that] was a source of moral comfort for our brethren», but it actually suggests a correction: another radio broadcast declaring, this time clearly, that «rendering help to persecuted Jews is considered by the Church as a good deed». The memo was sent by Roncalli and brought by Hughes to Rome in a matter of days, as the Vatican *Actes*

<sup>25</sup> M. PHAYER, *The Catholic Church and the Holocaust, 1930-1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000); U. BIALER, *Cross on The Star of David: The Christian World in Israel's Foreign Policy, 1948-1967* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

<sup>26</sup> T. HERZL, *A Diary, 1895-1904*, VI (Jerusalem, 1929) 237-241; A. ELON, *Herzl* (Tel Aviv<sup>4</sup>, 1977) 432-434. Both in Hebrew.

<sup>27</sup> B. HEBBLETHWAITE, *John XXIII...*, 183-186. See in *Actes et Documents du Saint-Siège relatifs à la seconde Guerre Mondiale*, IX: *Roncalli's letters*, 11 Vols., (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965-1981) 310-311, 371-372, 469, where he referred to his theological stance on the Jewish people (Hereafter: ADSS).

<sup>28</sup> See in BARLAS, *Rescue during Days of Holocaust*, 162-163.

<sup>29</sup> See note 16.

<sup>30</sup> Jewish Agency meeting, 22.4.1945, CZA. Quoted by Barlas in *Rescue in Days of Holocaust*, 169-170, and in *Elhanani*, 185-186.

<sup>31</sup> His activity is recorded in the Barlas archive; in the ADSS Volumes; see also our student Yuval Frenkel, «Monsignor Angelo Roncalli's Rescue Activities during the Holocaust», *Yalkut Moreshet* 59 (1995) 109-136. Unfortunately, he did not see the Barlas archive. Printed materials are known. See MELLONI, *Fra Istanbul, ..., op. cit.*, which is the source for Miccoli, *I dilemmi e i silenzi, ..., op. cit.*

*et documents* show, but as above mentioned, no answer to any of its points was received by Roncalli. One may assume that if Roncalli allowed himself to send the Vatican such criticism, he must have felt that the criticism was correct, and that the Pope should have indeed mend his conduct. A month later Hughes got an answer regarding the second point, to the effect that the Vatican cannot assist immigration of Jews to Palestine because access of Christians to their holy places might be limited.<sup>32</sup>

On March 11, 1943 Barlas and Eliezer Kaplan, member of the Jewish Agency Executive and its treasurer, who came to Istanbul to explore rescue possibilities, signed another memo to be sent by Roncalli to Rome, urgently asking the Pope to help prevent the next deportations from Slovakia, and begging to let Jewish children leave for Palestine.<sup>33</sup> Two months later Roncalli got one vague sentence from Maglione, the Vatican secretary of state, regarding the children.<sup>34</sup> In mid-May one more memo signed by Barlas was handed to the New York Archbishop Francis Spellman visiting Istanbul. Again, as in the Hughes case, a contact was gracefully made by Roncalli, who introduced Barlas to Spellman in the midst of a solemn ceremony followed by a press conference held in the Bishop's residence in honor of the high ranking guest.<sup>35</sup> News came in May that the deportations were halted thanks to the Vatican intervention, though contemporary research attributes the halt to many other factors as well.<sup>36</sup> Tireless Roncalli is still writing about the children in June, 1943, and on

<sup>32</sup> See the full memo signed by Barlas, on January 1, 1943, in his archive and in ADSS, IX, 88-90, accompanied by Roncalli's letter and his summary of the memo, *ibid.*..., 87-88, to Cardinal Maglione, the secretary of state; and Maglione's answer to Hughes, *ibid.*..., 90-91.

<sup>33</sup> See the 11.3.1943 full memo in Barlas archive; in L15/208, CZA; in BARLAS, *Rescue in Days of Holocaust*, 349-350. See in ADSS, IX, 184-186, William Godfrey, the Apostolic Delegate in London to Maglione, confirming British agreement to the children passage, Roncalli to Maglione, letter and most of the French written memo, using words such as «*implora, supplicano*».

<sup>34</sup> Maglione's answer to Roncalli on 4.5.1943 see in ADSS, IX, 272; and see HEBBLETHWAITE's comments in his chapter God's Consul, 188.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*..., 189. BARLAS, *Unfinished Mission*, 3-4, on how graciously Roncalli treated him. The May 16, 1943, memo to Spellman see in BARLAS, *Rescue in Days of Holocaust*, 350-352. Roncalli's diary on May 22, 1943, on Barlas' visit in his office. This could be another visit of Barlas, or perhaps Roncalli wrote a few days after Barlas' visit in mid-May.

<sup>36</sup> The good news: Roncalli to Maglione, ADSS, IX, 307. BARLAS, *Unfinished Mission*, 2, note 16 here, and *Davar*, November 11, 1958. On other factors see D. PORAT, *Zionist Leadership...*, 175-188.

behalf of the remnants of Slovak Jewry in September and October of 1944, and gets vague and belated answers.<sup>37</sup>

Parallel to the Slovak affair, almost on the same dates, Bader and Venia Pomerantz (later Hadari), came urgently to Roncalli – Barlas was again in Ankara – to ask for his urgent help regarding a plan to deport the Jews from Thrace and Macedonia. The morrow after Roncalli was able to tell them that the king of Bulgaria promised him not to let the plan materialize.<sup>38</sup> On May the Jews in Sofia faced the same danger, and Barlas hurried to Roncalli, on a Sunday, after the morning mass. Roncalli himself immediately wrote a cable to the king Boris, and ordered his secretary to send it right away. On July 8, 1943 Barlas got a hand written message, in French, from Roncalli, assuring him that the matter had been successfully settled.<sup>39</sup> Barlas later wrote that Roncalli did not receive an answer from the Vatican regarding the Bulgarian Jews,<sup>40</sup> but it is doubtful that Roncalli ever sent a parallel message to the Pope: he acted independently, using his excellent relations with the King and Queen of a country he had spent ten years in.

On May and June 1943 Roncalli wrote to Rome and to the Apostolic Nuncio and the bishop of Zagreb regarding Jews in Yugoslavia;<sup>41</sup> on September and December 1943 he wrote many times to Rome following Herzog's request to Barlas, regarding Italian Jews;<sup>42</sup> on June and July 1943 he wrote about the Jews deported from Rumania to Transnistria, and in February 1944, on the day of his meeting with Herzog in Barlas' presence, he wrote to the Vatican asking to let the deportees return; he wrote again on the same matter in March, and notified Barlas on that month, in a very moving letter, that his letter to the Vatican from February which included a very respectful message from Herzog was immediately [after a month, actually] answered, and the request would be taken care of;<sup>43</sup> and he was involved in, or at least followed the

<sup>37</sup> See ADSS, IX, 321-322, 327, 361-362, and X, 418, 454-455.

<sup>38</sup> See note 20 here.

<sup>39</sup> BARLAS in *Masua* 4 (April 1976) 129, in *Unfinished Mission*, 3-4, in *Ma'ariv*, June 15, 1963, and Roncalli's letter to Barlas, in his archive (a transcript) and in *Rescue in Days of Holocaust*, 354 (a Xerox). The letter in *Ma'ariv* has one more part, recommending Barlas to be in touch with Mr. Albert Chaimovitch, as a «good acquaintance of the Apostolic Delegate», which means that Roncalli had good contacts with Jews in Bulgaria as well. See also Roncalli to King Boris the III, ADSS, IX, 371-372.

<sup>40</sup> BARLAS, *Rescue in Days of the Holocaust*, 163.

<sup>41</sup> See ADSS, IX, 321-322, 327-328, 337.

<sup>42</sup> See ADSS, IX, 438, 469, 592.

<sup>43</sup> On Herzog's visit see BARLAS in *Haboker*, June 14, 1963; Herzog's letter to Roncalli, ADSS, X, 161, and Roncalli to Barlas, *ibid.*, 188, on Herzog's letter. See also Roncalli's diary, February 23, 1944.



refugee ships affairs, from the Struma to the Tari, rejoiced when their voyage ended safely, and deeply mourned the losses: «*Poveri figli di Israele*» (poor children of Israel), he writes regarding the sinking of the Struma. «*Io sento quotidianamente il loro gemito intorno a me*» (I feel everyday their sigh around me).<sup>44</sup> A look at this incomplete list to which a lot could be added, shows that Roncalli served as an active channel to Rome, but also acted on his own initiative; it shows that he acted with a sense of urgency; that receiving the delegates, Barlas first and foremost, had a preference over Sunday and ceremony (which meant a delicate respect for Shabat); and that he took care of many matters at the same time, writing to a number of countries and persons and Rome on close dates and trying to follow the results of his pleas.

### III

This leads to the third point, that concerns a tragic and dramatic turn in the Barlas-Roncalli connection: the fate of Hungarian Jewry and the Auschwitz Protocols. There were a number of angles to this turn. First, it seems Roncalli was the first one to warn the Vatican that Hungarian Jews faced an immediate danger following the German invasion. In this warning the Auschwitz Protocols were *not* mentioned yet. Second, it seems that the information about the Protocols reached the Vatican for the first time from Roncalli, who got it from Barlas. Third, it seems that when the information about the Auschwitz Protocols reached the Vatican through the Barlas-Roncalli channel, this information became part of the pressure that was being built up on the Pope at the time, yet it is possible that it came in two days after the Pope's decision to intervene in order to stop the murder of Hungarian Jews in Auschwitz.

Following the March 19<sup>th</sup> German invasion into Hungary Rabbi Herzog called upon Hughes to act, and the latter sent the plea to Roncalli.<sup>45</sup> On March 25 Roncalli invited Barlas to his office – again: it was Roncalli who invited Barlas – to discuss matters that have already been raised in their former meetings (the situation in Transnistria, a ship for the refugees in Rumania), and heard from him as well about «the desperate situation and fatal danger» awaiting Hungarian Jewry.<sup>46</sup> Roncalli, having heard Barlas' words and Herzog's cry, sent a warning in Herzog's words to Rome

via Switzerland.<sup>47</sup> A few days later Angelo Rotta, the Nuncio in Hungary, sent a message of worry.<sup>48</sup> It so happened that Roncalli was, then, the first to warn the Secretary of State and the Holy Father with specific arguments.

Later Roncalli got from Barlas a copy of a short German written version of «The Protocols»: as it is well known, the term «the Auschwitz Protocols» stands for a 30 pages long report written as a summary of the testimony given in Zilina, Slovakia by two young Slovak Jews, Rudolf Vrba (originally Walter Rosenberg) and Alfred Wetzler, who managed to escape Auschwitz on April 10, 1944. The summary was written down on April 25, 1944 by members of the Jewish local leadership.<sup>49</sup> It should be emphasized that the report does not include any warning on the expected deportations of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz, nor on preparations made in the camp prior to their coming.<sup>50</sup> It is only in Vrba's book and oral testimonies that he claims he and Wetzler saw the preparations in the camp, and escaped in order to save Hungarian Jewry.<sup>51</sup> This point is important for the understanding of the date in which the information reached Pius the XII, and I suggest making a distinction between (i) the report itself and (ii) the information it contained about Auschwitz in general, and the fate of Hungarian Jewry.

Two more young Slovak Jews, Cheslav Mordowicz and Arnost Rozin escaped Auschwitz and reached Slovakia on June 6, and they were the ones who brought with them the terrible news, that Hungarian Jews were being deported to and killed in the camp since May 15 in an unparalleled pace, of 12,000 human beings a day. The first couple described how the killing system functioned, produced drawings of the gigantic camp and the

<sup>47</sup> See ADSS, X, 188-189.

<sup>48</sup> See MICCOLI, *I dilemmi e i silenzi ...*, *op. cit.*

<sup>49</sup> See R. VRBA, *I Escaped from Auschwitz* (London: Robinson Books, 1968<sup>2</sup>1997) (English), and (Tel Aviv, 1998) (Hebrew). On the memoirs and testimonies of the escapees see Y. BAUER, «The Auschwitz Protocols», *Yalkut Moreshet* 80 (2005) 160 (especially on Mordowicz's book in Slovak), and M. KARNY, «The Vrba-Wetzler report», in Y. GUTMAN and M. BERENBAUM (eds.), *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998) 589-606 in Hebrew version 2003.

<sup>50</sup> A short German version of the Protocols, Barlas' archive; the full, English (WRB) and Hebrew version, are an appendix to Vrba's memoirs: *cf.* Vrba, *I Escaped from Auschwitz...*, 290-314. See also parts in German and English in M. DOV-BER WEISSMANDEL, *In Distress* (Jerusalem, 1960), as unnumbered appendices, and an abstract in M. GILBERT, *Auschwitz and the Allies* (Chicago: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1981), the Hebrew version, Tel Aviv 1988, 239-240 (note 51).

<sup>51</sup> This debate is outside the scope of our presentation.

<sup>44</sup> See his moving letter in ADSS, IX, 310.

<sup>45</sup> See ADSS, X, 196 and *ibid.*..., 355.

<sup>46</sup> Barlas' summary of the conversation, March 25, 1944, Barlas' archive and L22/157 in CZA.

extermination installations and gave an estimation of the number of Jews that had already been killed in Auschwitz since the killing operation started. The second added more details and facts, especially that the killing of Hungarian Jews was already in full swing.<sup>52</sup> From the 27<sup>th</sup> and the 28<sup>th</sup> of April on, Slovak Jewish leadership tried its best to send the Auschwitz Protocols in full and/or a short summary of their contents, with accompanying letters, or just letters without the Protocols, abroad, to as many leaders and institutes as possible. These leaders and representatives sent them on, translated from the Slovak into a number of languages, such as Hungarian, German, Yiddish and English, and accompanied with their own letters. From May 16, a day after the deportations from Hungary started and the trains passed through Zilina, Slovakia, and more so from the 6<sup>th</sup> of June on, they tried to send information on the deportations and death of Hungarian Jewry, with or without the Protocols, either in full or in short, or even as a summary or abstract of their contents.<sup>53</sup>

Taking all the above into consideration, the tracking down of all the many routes the Protocols and the accompanying information went through, is an almost impossible mission. Moreover, the difficulties of transmitting confidential material during an all encompassing war by messengers, agents and double agents, material the Germans certainly would not have allowed to come to light, make the tracking even harder. The debate on who sent what and when, and who got what and when, what was the impact of the information on Auschwitz and on the deportations from Hungary on Jewish leaders in general and on Jewish Hungarian leaders in particular, and on non-Jewish personalities, has not subsided as yet.<sup>54</sup> The debate notwithstanding, the significance of the Protocols was clear cut: they carried, for the first time, inside reliable information to the effect that Auschwitz was a death camp, in fact the

most central and industrialized one, and not a huge slave compound, as it was believed until then. To this day it is hard to swallow that the Nazi system succeeded in hiding an extermination center of such magnitude in the heart of Europe, and in deluding so many.<sup>55</sup> It is also clear that after June 6<sup>th</sup> information on Auschwitz and on the deportations from Hungary mingled into one tragic report.

Let us follow the routes that concern Pius the XII,<sup>56</sup> Roncalli and Barlas only, routes which went from Slovakia to Switzerland, then to Hungary, from there both back to Switzerland, and to Istanbul, and from there to Rome. The first address the Jewish Slovak leadership tried to send the Protocols to was that of the Yishuv delegates in Istanbul, but the messenger they sent failed to do so.<sup>57</sup> On May 16 they sent to Switzerland, using the contacts of Rabbi Michael DovBer Weissmandel, a central orthodox leader in this leadership, a summary of the situation in Auschwitz, to which they added a request that the Allies bomb Auschwitz and especially the railways leading to it, that Hungary be warned not to allow any more deportations, and that world leaders would all be notified of the true nature of Auschwitz. Weissmandel and Gisi Flischmann, also a central Jewish Slovak leader, signed the letter. But much as the first one to Istanbul, it was lost and left no traces.<sup>58</sup> Still, Switzerland, a neutral and geographically central country, later became an important focal point in which the many agencies and representatives got acquainted with the Protocols and with the fate of the Hungarian Jews, and from which they went on.

On May 22<sup>nd</sup> the Slovak leadership also handed the first version of the Protocols to the local Nuncio, Monsignor Giuseppe Burzio, who tried to send them to the Vatican. Though he sent them a week after the deportations from Hungary started on May 15, the document reached the Vatican and was registered there only late in October, after more than five months: Burzio tried to transmit the full version with an emissary, who had to go through Switzerland and Spain because Rome was still not liberated by the Allies, so that this attempt failed as well.<sup>59</sup> Close to June 20<sup>th</sup>, Vrba and Mordowicz were brought to the Svati Jur monastery, and met with Mario Martiloti from the Switzerland Apostolic office, who was

<sup>52</sup> See BAUER, *The Auschwitz Protocols...* and KARNY, *The Vrba-Wetzler report...* in note 47, and R. ROSETTE, *The Relations Between Rescue and Revolt – Jewish Resistance and Revolt in Slovakia and Hungary, in the Holocaust*, an M.A. thesis, June 1987, The Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

<sup>53</sup> On how the Protocols were spread see BAUER, *The Auschwitz Protocols...* and KARNY, *The Vrba-Wetzler report...* in note 48; GILBERT, *Auschwitz and the Allies...*; J. CONOWAY, *The Distribution of the Protocols*, as an appendix to Vrba, *I Escaped from Auschwitz...*, 343-346 (Hebrew); D. KRANZLER, *The Man who stopped the Trains to Auschwitz*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000). WEISSMANDEL, *In Distress...*, 103-111, actually summarizes the Protocols in his own Rabbinic language.

<sup>54</sup> One of the main bones of contention concerns the date Dr. Rudolf – Israel Kaszner got the Protocols, and the way he acted henceforth.

<sup>55</sup> See MELLONI, *Fra Istanbul, ..., op. cit.*

<sup>56</sup> On the information which reached or did not reach the Pope, see R. GRAHAM.

<sup>57</sup> GILBERT, *Auschwitz and the Allies...*, 187.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid...*; and see their letter, dated May 16, 1944, Z1063/h4, CZA, and in WEISSMANDEL, *In Distress...*, 103-111; Bauer, *The Auschwitz Protocols...* and KARNY, *The Vrba-Wetzler report...*, as in note 47.

<sup>59</sup> See GRAHAM.

temporarily stationed in Bratislava, but there is no evidence in the Vatican documents that a report of this meeting – a long and moving one, according to Vrba – ever reached the Vatican.<sup>60</sup> In the meantime, the Nuncio in Hungary, Angelo Rotta, facing the beginning of the deportations from Hungary sent on their first day, May 15, a point blank protest to the Hungarian government, requesting that it would not continue its war against the Jews, warning against «any action against which the Holy See and the conscience of the entire Christian world feel obliged to protest».<sup>61</sup> The deportations went on, and no such protest was heard.

Weissmandel tried again: he wrote both to Switzerland and to Hungary, and thus two parallel lines were created: the Protocols with his letter reached Fulop von Freudiger, one of the leaders of the Hungarian Orthodoxy and a member of the Jewish council. According to his testimony in the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961 he got the short version of the Protocols from Weissmandel, who sent it via the Hungarian embassy in Bratislava, towards the end of May or the beginning of June. Von Freudiger sent it to «all Hungarian politicians, the clerics,<sup>62</sup> the Nuncio [Angelo Rotta], and it also reached the hands of [the regent, admiral] Horti». From Hungary he and his colleagues sent it to Jewish officials in Switzerland.<sup>63</sup> In any case, Rotta went on protesting and warning, but there is no clear evidence as to if and when, he sent (or he tried to send) the Protocols to Rome.

Von Freudiger handed the Protocols to Moshe (Miklos) Krausz, director of the Eretz-Israeli office in Budapest, who sent them on June 19 to Dr. Chaim Pozner, his colleague in Geneva, again. And thus they also reached Richard Lichtheim, of the Jewish Agency.<sup>64</sup> Pozner sent them, in their same short version, in German, with a long letter from Krausz, to Barlas. According to Barlas, he got them and the letter on June 23, 1944, and on the next day he urgently notified four of the main Zionist leaders in Jerusalem, New York and London; the US and British Ambassadors in Ankara; and Roncalli. All promised quick transmission of the news.<sup>65</sup> On the

same June 19 an emissary of the Czech underground brought a copy from Weissmandel and Fleischmann to Dr. Jaromir Kopecky, the representative of the Czech government in Geneva, who started an intensive campaign to have the world know: he sent it immediately to the World Jewish Congress office there (they must have gotten it on the same day from Krausz as well), to the International Red Cross, to the War Refugee Board, to the BBC broadcasting in Czech and Slovak and to the Allied Governments.<sup>66</sup> Krausz sent to Switzerland an English translation as well, via another channel, to George Mantello (originally George Mandl), the Jewish Consul General of El Salvador in Geneva. From him the Krausz material reached Walter Garrett, a chief news reporter of the Swiss Exchange Press, who published the content of the Protocols first in Switzerland, where practically hundreds of articles and news items were published in a matter of weeks.<sup>67</sup> Garrett sent it to London and to Western countries as well, ending his June 24 cable with a confirmation that the Protocols are reliable beyond doubt, and that Catholic diplomatic activists, well known to the Vatican demand that it be published as widely as possible. He did not mention their names.<sup>68</sup> On the same June 24 the WJC also sent word to a number of governments, with Weissmandel's suggestions to act, and the World Council of Churches called upon its members world wide to protest, and many more leaders and institutes, not listed here, became acquainted with the information. It should be noted that the WRB was the last one to publish – as late as November 1944.<sup>69</sup>

When Barlas brought Roncalli the Protocols the Apostolic Delegate, who was already aware of the extension and the extermination purposes of Nazi and Fascist deportation, was really shocked. «With tears he read the documents I asked him to transfer to his Patron in Rome», Barlas says and Roncalli promised to do it immediately though he did not hide from Barlas that he was skeptic regarding the results.<sup>70</sup> Roncalli did not know German, and Barlas must have read out for him the four German written pages, and translate their contents into French; and Roncalli must have sent a cable with the gist of it to Rome into a document still missing. The material itself was sent to Rome, and it was Laurence Steinhardt, the USA ambassador in Istanbul, who was instrumental in

<sup>60</sup> GILBERT, *Auschwitz and the Allies...*, 187; KARNY, *The Vrba-Wetzler report...*, 592-593. E. KULKA, "Five Escapes from Auschwitz," *Yalkut Moreshet* (1964) 23-38, especially 32, 34.

<sup>61</sup> His plea is quoted in most sources on the issue: for instance, GILBERT, *Auschwitz and the Allies...*, 205.

<sup>62</sup> On the ambiguous position of the Bishop's Conference, see MICCOLI, *I dilemmi e i silenzi...*, *op. cit.*

<sup>63</sup> *The Eichmann Trial. Testimonies*, II (Jerusalem, 1974) 734-774, especially 756-757.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*..., and 759, 770.

<sup>65</sup> BARLAS' archive and in *Rescue in days of Holocaust*, 35.

<sup>66</sup> See BAUER, *The Auschwitz Protocols...* and KARNY, *The Vrba-Wetzler report...*, as in note 47. It should be noted that both speak Czech, and were able to read the Kopecky correspondence fully.

<sup>67</sup> See KRANZLER, *The Man Who Stopped...*, especially Chs. 7-8.

<sup>68</sup> GILBERT, *Auschwitz and the Allies...*, 226-227.

<sup>69</sup> See the WRB report, as published in November 1944, as the appendix to VRBA, *I Escaped from Auschwitz...*

<sup>70</sup> BARLAS, in *Masua* 4 (April 1976) 128.

transferring materials to Rome, and used to update Barlas when materials were in fact sent.<sup>71</sup> On the next day, the 25<sup>th</sup>, the Pope did write to Horti: even on such an occasion he did not publish his letter world wide, and did not mention the Jews or their murder *en masse*, but rather wrote about the need to prevent «more suffering» from many «miserable human beings». Horti answered on July 1<sup>st</sup> using the same vague language. In the meantime Gustaf the V king of Sweden, the international Red Cross and President Roosevelt added their weight, and more so did an American bombing of the Budapest train station, and the deportations were halted on July 7.

According to Barlas he got the Protocols on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and brought them to Roncalli on the 24<sup>th</sup>. We know for a fact that Pius the XII wrote to Horti on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Is it indeed possible that it was a hypothetical and promised Roncalli's cable, that according to Barlas was sent immediately, that moved the Pope to write to Horti? Historian John Cornwell mentions Roncalli as the only source that safely sent the Protocols to the Pope, and among those pushing the Pope to act.<sup>72</sup> Robert Graham denies that the Protocols came into the Vatican before October 1944, with a weak *argumentum ex silentio*, which conflicts with Pius XII's letter to Horti...<sup>73</sup> But Roncalli himself in the diary he always kept daily (and his secretary Capovilla reported it in the «Cronologia» he devoted to his Superior) wrote that it was on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June that Barlas came urgently «per un S.O.S», two days after Pius the XII's letter.<sup>74</sup> If Barlas, a very meticulous person, was right, and Roncalli, who kept a daily note on his meetings, wrote on the 27<sup>th</sup> about a visit of Barlas that occurred two days before, we have just two options: we may presume that one or both of them was wrong; another option is that they were both right: Barlas remember an emotional meeting, which did not leave a trace in Roncalli's diary, as sometimes we know it

happens;<sup>75</sup> Roncalli makes a note of another meeting which could have been a debriefing of an attempt or an unanswered appeal or an intermediate step taken by the Pope: this means that Roncalli and/or Barlas thought they were the one who pushed the Pope into writing, but there is no more material to prove either version. Therefore let us return to the above description of the many routes the information took: The Pope could have known about the deportations from Hungary if not from Burzio then from the constant protests of Rotta, that started on May 15. Also, the information was spreading from June 6 on, in many channels, and all the more so since June 19, when it started reaching radio and press. The Garrett's cable, that ended with the Catholic activist diplomats, known to the Vatican and their demand to publicize the information, suggests that it was the pressure that accumulated during the week from June 19 to June 24, that made the Pope write. Perhaps the Catholic diplomatic activists Garrett was referring to Rotta and Spellman and Hughes and Roncalli, who wrote and warned tirelessly. When the Protocols and the fate of Hungarian Jewry in Auschwitz became common knowledge and a centre of general activity, the Pope, pressured from within by his own officials as well, could not afford to linger behind. Roncalli, a personality of such a moral stature, warned him already on March 25, as above mentioned, and his constant cables and pleas were part of the pressure, if not the immediate trigger, of a diplomat who deserved

<sup>75</sup> In Roncalli personal diaries, as usual, the most delicate operations, mostly connected with the Jews and the Shoa, did not have a detailed report. A well known episode which proves Roncalli's prudence in writing is related to the Holy Office orders, approved by Pius XII, to prevent the French monasteries, convents and institutions from delivering the Jewish kids saved from the Shoa to the Jewish organizations and families in October 1946: in this case the diary is very vague and it does not underline the discrepancy between the open attitude that Roncalli had in front of the Jewish authorities and the cruel orders of the Holy Office (about the quarrel on this issue and the effort to transform a tragic fact into an argument in favour of Pius XII in the controversial trial of beatification, see A. Melloni, *General and personal remarks on a journalistic case concerning Pius XII*, paper delivered at the Tel Aviv bugren, *The Churches and the Holocaust*, Roth Institute for the History of anti-Semitism, April 25-26, 2006. The same seems to happen in the Istanbul diaries, as I may learn from the editors, who think that the diary was kept for (and only for) events and meetings which Roncalli could show to a potential reader; they are now edited in several volumes: RONCALLI, *Anni di Francia. Agende del Nunzio, I: 1945-1948...*; RONCALLI, *La mia vita in Oriente, I: 1935-1939...*, A.G. RONCALLI, *Giornale dell'anima. Soliloqui, note e diari spirituali*, ed. by A. Melloni, (Bologna: Istituto per le scienze religiose, 2003).

<sup>71</sup> See BARLAS, *Rescue in Days of Holocaust*, 162.

<sup>72</sup> J. CORNWELL, *Hitler's Pope. The Secret History of Pius XII* (London: Viking, 1999) 325.

<sup>73</sup> GRAHAM.

<sup>74</sup> See Roncalli's diary and the chronology of his secretary Capovilla, both on a visit of Barlas regarding the Jews of Hungary on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

Pacelli's confidence on the issue as early as 1941.<sup>76</sup> When the Pope wrote it was far too late, for about 430,000 were already dead, from Hungary only.

Of course, there is no concrete evidence in the Vatican's volumes of selected documents as to when the Protocols sent by Roncalli reached the Pope. Still, let us ask, how come there is no evidence in these volumes, since all the former correspondence with Roncalli is there; and since cables, as these documents show, came in within hours, or at the next day. The Protocols, or their abstract as transmitted by Barlas to Roncalli, and the very fact that Barlas met with him urgently on such a crucial matter, either on the 24 or the 27 of June 1944, are missing from the selection published since the sixties, and this fact is quite disturbing, and deserves an answer, which will come with the opening of Pius XII's archives, an act that has to be on the top of the agenda of a German Pope.

Protocols or not, letters or not, in the summer of 1944 Auschwitz was still functioning, and the Jews of Budapest were still in danger – and many remained inactive.<sup>77</sup> Somebody, on the contrary, became even more committed to a cause which appeared to be more than a specific tragedy into a tragic war. Roncalli went on with his cooperation with Barlas and without it, as if the Hungarian affair made him even more daring: Barlas discussed with him the possibility of bombing Auschwitz, and in his reports in Jerusalem spoke about falsified immigration certificates, that helped Budapest Jews. He did not mention Roncalli, who was very instrumental in the Autumn of 1944 in transmitting thousands of certificates (not conversion documents, as some American legends claim), South American documents and money to Hungary. Although Barlas did not mention Roncalli's name in this regard, perhaps because his activity verged on the illegal, Roncalli himself writes to Rotta, who continued to be courageously active as well, that since the immigration certificates he had sent Rotta for distribution saved Jews, he sends him three more packages he got from the Jewish Agency (he does not mention Barlas' name either), and asks Rotta to hand them over to Krausz.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Pius XII asked Roncalli «What the world thinks about my silence on Germans' behaviour?», see MELLONI, *Fra Istanbul*, ..., *op. cit.*

<sup>77</sup> See S. PICCIAREDDA, *Diplomazia umanitaria. La Croce Rossa nella seconda guerra mondiale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003).

<sup>78</sup> BARLAS, *Rescue in Days of Holocaust*, 129, and in the Rescue Committee meeting in Jerusalem on 11.8.1944, S26/1238a. See Roncalli's letters to Hischman and Rotta, ADSS, X, 390-393 and 391.

Roncalli kept the contact with Barlas until he had to leave for Paris. On September 9<sup>th</sup>, when Barlas left to report in Jerusalem, he wrote Roncalli a letter, in French, the language they corresponded in, to express deep gratitude for his good willed cooperation, guided by «a great humanitarian spirit and a generous attitude».<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Barlas' archive.



# CC

Centro Conferences

## Beyond The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification Recent Developments in the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue

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Lutheran-Catholic dialogue texts worked out by world-level commissions extend from the relatively brief *The Gospel and the Church*, also called *The Malta Report* of 1972,<sup>1</sup> to the study-document *The Apostolicity of the Church* with its two hundred pages, which was published in 2006.<sup>2</sup> The Malta Report was my first encounter with an ecumenical text and I sometimes revisit it to rekindle my commitment. The optimism it reflects in the wake of Vatican II does not leave one untouched. Indeed, the last paragraph of the document opens like this “At the conclusion of their work the members of the commission look back in joyful gratitude on the experience of this truly brotherly (sic) encounter. Even the discussion of opposing convictions and opinions led us to sense even more deeply our profound community and joint responsibility for our common Christian heritage” (par 75).<sup>3</sup> The identity of the dialogue group was, however, clearly one of a scholarly study commission. They also repeatedly state that although the commission had an official assignment, its report has no binding character and they foresee a broader process evolving also at regional levels. This was in tune with a clarification by the Vatican in 1971, when Cardinal Willebrands and Pope Paul VI had to make a decision about two of the early dialogue documents then being finalized, namely, ARCIC I’s Windsor Statement on Eucharistic Doctrine and the Lutheran-

Catholic Commission’s *The Gospel and the Church*. The decision was to permit publication, while clearly stating that the publication of the studies should not be taken to imply that the churches thereby officially approved and received the contents. Thus neither report was accorded a binding character for the churches.

The significance of *The Malta Report* was immediate in that it bore witness to a general sense of thaw and of being on good speaking terms, and thus made evident that the Vatican II had significant ecumenical implications. Yet its impact was primarily a long-term one: It led to further dialogue. In one perspective the long and persistent process of dialogue which followed may be read as a reception of *The Malta Report* which despite its brevity covers surprisingly much ground. It is a text to which later dialogue texts constantly refer thereby establishing a pattern or tradition of intertextual markers. However, the later and constantly longer documents which have followed also bear witness to the fact that the dialogue had and still has a long way to go and a stony path to clear.

On this road, *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ)*<sup>4</sup> is singular in its significance. It was officially received by the churches at high level and formally signed at the same high level in Augsburg on Reformation Sunday in 1999. It thereby became a text of the churches themselves, and in the Roman-Catholic Church it has been included in the body of texts of reference in theological educa-

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<sup>1</sup> Available together with several other reports in H. MEYER and L. VISHNER (eds.), *Growth in Agreement. Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1972-1982*, Faith & Order Paper, 108 (NY/Geneva: Paulist/World Council of Churches, 2007<sup>2</sup>) 168-181. Most documents mentioned in this article are also electronically available.

<sup>2</sup> LUTHERAN-ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMISSION ON UNITY, *The Apostolicity of the Church: Study Document of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity [of] the Lutheran World Federation [and] Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*. (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> All documents in the dialogue are organized by paragraph numbered in sequence, so that in the following references are simply given by paragraph number.

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<sup>4</sup> THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION & THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2000). Originally published as *Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre* (Frankfurt: Verlag Otto Lembeck, 1999). However, both versions are of equal authority. The declaration has since been affirmed also by the World Methodist Council. Hereafter cited as JDDJ.

tion.<sup>5</sup> *The Joint Declaration* unites ecclesially still divided Christians on an issue which had been at the core of the controversies that caused division centuries ago. In this statement Roman-Catholics and Lutherans hold together (in Par 15-17) that justification is the work of the triune God, based on the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ as they together confess “By grace alone, in faith in Christ’s saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works”. They share “the conviction that the message of justification directs us in a special way towards the heart of the New Testament witness to God’s saving action in Christ” and also move beyond this substantive doctrinal agreement by working carefully examining a series of related doctrines, which might seem to make the churches quite different in their teaching, in order to show that the differences do not in fact have the divisive impact generally ascribed to them.

Methodologically this was possible through the application of an approach called “differentiated consensus”. A differentiated consensus is a carefully balanced interchange between the opening up of positions and terms as they have been defined within each tradition, and the move to reinterpret them dialogically.<sup>6</sup> The confessional differences explicitly stated by each party in the redefinition are to be heard within the consensus as initially stated. Thus, they are no longer to be regarded as church divisive. The method requires precision but also great amount of flexibility and it is not without its opponents raising semantic questions such as: How “the same” is to be recognized in diverse expressions or how unity may become manifest without uniformity as difference persists? Nevertheless, the divisive dispute at the time of the Reformations about the doctrine of God’s justifying act has been resolved. A further highly significant feature of the JDDJ process is that the condemnations from the time of Reformations are not lifted, since that would imply an impossible remaking of history. More effectively they are declared no longer to apply - even if they may remain “salutary warnings” (JDDJ par 41-42). One may apologize for the hurt caused in and by the past, but the past cannot not in itself be changed. What can be changed, is the weight and authority past events are made to carry, the impact the commemoration of them has in the present.

As already mentioned above, the authoritative status assigned to the Joint Declaration of Justification is unique. Important as some of the many other Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue

<sup>5</sup> The so-called Denzinger, or H. DENZINGER, *Enchiridion Symbolorum et Definitionum*. A recent English version is Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Publishers, 2002). It is being constantly up-dated.

<sup>6</sup> This method is clearly different from the much vaguer but yet to some degree workable idea of theological convergence or “large measure of agreement” which Faith and Order introduced in the Preface to the much acclaimed Lima Document FAITH AND ORDER COMMISSION, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper, 111 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982).

reports may have been in attesting to a change of climate and in their theological explorations and, indeed, achievements, their authoritative status in the churches has on the whole been weak. It was the practice on the Lutheran side at least until the 1990’s that the member churches were invited to respond and thus tentatively involved in a process of reception. Some responded but many did not. The status and authority of these responses represent a dilemma both in the churches who responded, in The Lutherans World Federation that collated them. Also their “Wirkungsgeschichte” in the further dialogue process is at best vague and unclear as the responses, differently from the dialogue reports themselves, rarely seem to have been taken into account. One exception to this oblivion might be the report *Facing Unity* (in German *Einheit vor Uns*) from 1984 to which the Lutheran responses were negative to a degree which made its alleged achievements become counter-productive to the dialogue. It had simply moved too far too fast.

However, also the process towards the signing of *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* may amply illustrate the authoritative framework of the dialogue. The declaration was on the whole well received by the churches. It was a fulfillment of hard and faithful work over many years in dialogue; there were rejoicing and hope rekindled. Nevertheless, the process towards the formal approval which established its extraordinary status, was not an easy ride on any side - as is evident from the so-called *Annex* where some further theological and procedural circumstances are addressed. Hesitancy on the Roman-Catholic side had to be overcome, and there was also a strong opposition against signing the declaration on the Lutheran side, especially from some German theologians if not churches.<sup>7</sup> This included traditional anti-Catholic sentiments that I would not support. But, more importantly, it raised the objection that the agreement on the doctrine of justification was of little, if any ecclesiological consequence.

In a Lutheran context this is a serious complaint, since the doctrine of justification traditionally has the status of being *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* (the article by which the church stands and falls). It plays a role or has a location within the theological paradigm or configuration which is fundamentally different from its role or location in Roman-Catholic teaching. Such imbalance or incongruity is not uncommon in ecumenical dialogue and means that even if one agrees on a specific doctrinal topic (*locus*), its value or location (in German “Stellenwert”) within the total doctrinal configuration may differ. It is therefore not, as often assumed, a matter of contextual diversity or lack of contextual awareness. Rather it constitutes an intrinsic imbalance or incompatibility, which entails that the effect of an agreement with regard to other issues or practices may vary widely, and that, accordingly, the partner’s expectations of what ought to follow will or can not possibly be met. In

<sup>7</sup> Despite the organized protest by a great number of prominent theological professors, the formal and decisive decision by the evangelical churches in Germany was that the JDDJ be signed.

the case of *The Joint Declaration* this became utterly clear and the imbalance showed itself primarily in the exchange about the criteriological function of the doctrine of justification. Is it as the Lutherans would claim the one criterion by which the church stands and falls, or is it as the Catholic Church sees it an element, however significant, within a configuration of several doctrinal *loci*?

Indeed, already in the *Malta Report* it was stated that in Catholic theology “all truths, whatever the level to which they are assigned, are given a common reference point in the foundation of the Christian faith. This brings the idea of the hierarchy of truths very close to that of the center of the gospel” (par 25). Nevertheless, “Although a far-reaching agreement in the understanding of the doctrine of justification appears possible, other questions arise here. What is the theological importance of this doctrine? Do both sides similarly evaluate its implications for the life and teaching of the church? According to Lutheran understanding, and on the basis of the confession of justification, *all traditions and institutions of the church are subject to the criterion* which asks whether they are enablers of the proper proclamation of the gospel and so do not obscure the unconditional character of the gift of salvation.” (MR par 28-29) However, there was then and also, not surprisingly, again in the JDDJ – process the 1990’s on the Catholic side some wariness about using one doctrine as a principle whose impact might erode the catholic heritage.

Hence, in the Joint Declaration on Justification the repeatedly negotiated and carefully formulated par 18 explains how a consensus yet is possible. It follows a line of reasoning similar to the one in the Malta Report, but here the language is slightly changed: “Therefore the doctrine of justification . . . is more than just one part of Christian doctrine. It stands in an essential relation to all truths of faith, which are to be seen as internally related to each other. It is an *indispensable* criterion that constantly serves to orient all the teaching and practice of our churches to Christ.”<sup>8</sup> The method of differentiated consensus comes in useful as it continues: “When Lutherans emphasize the unique significance of this criterion, they do not deny the interrelation and significance of all truths of faith. When Catholics see themselves as bound by several criteria, they do not deny the special function of the message of justification.” The method of differentiated consensus is thus developed to establish that when the position of the other is not denied, this indicates that the positions are not mutually exclusive. However, a difference remains between “the unique significance” that justification has as *the* supreme criterion and critical norm for Lutherans, and a “special function” among “several criteria” which Catholics envisage when they use the potent term “criterion”.

Nevertheless many Lutherans, also many among those who

<sup>8</sup> For the negative Lutheran reception mentioned above, the term “indispensable” not only was too weak but undermined the truth claim, cf. E. JÜNGEL, “Um Gottes Willen – Klarheit! Bemerkungen zur Verharmlosung der criteriologischen Funktion der Rechtfertigungsartikels,” *ZTK* 94 (1997) 394-406.

approved the signing of the Joint Declaration, had high expectations about an extended communion. They were accordingly deeply disturbed and disappointed by the fact that the consensus on the doctrine of justification had no ecclesial and canonical consequences. In Roman-Catholic view, the agreement on the doctrine of justification meant that highly significant yet particular doctrine was no longer church divisive, but this represented only a partial reconciliation since it, among other pending issues, it did not remove the *defectus sacramenti ordinis* of the Lutheran ecclesial ministry. The churches therefore appear still to remain apart in much the same way as before. One may with Cardinal Walter Kasper speak of an “ongoing tension”<sup>9</sup> so that even if it is not a church-dividing difference, it is a remaining perhaps even an unresolved issue, a stone in the shoe as we walk on.

This ambiguity explains, if not fully, that at almost the same time as the achievement of the Joint Declaration was celebrated, in August 2000, the document *Dominus Iesus* was issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.<sup>10</sup> It reinforces the practice that the churches of the Reformation are not to be called or recognized as churches but should remain “ecclesial communities”. In accordance with this and at about the same time, a letter was sent by that same Congregation to the presidents of the Roman Catholic Bishops Conferences including a *Note on the Expression “Sister Churches”* reminding the bishops that the word “church” should not be used when addressing Protestants.<sup>11</sup> The designation “ecclesial community”, when it first was coined at Vatican II, represented a significant ecumenical advancement but in the year 2000, after thirty-five years of ecumenical dialogue, it was received - and still is every time this question comes up - with disappointment and also frustration not only by the churches of the Reformation but also by many within the Roman-Catholic Church itself. Intermezzos or overruling interventions such as these were not helpful to the further dialogue. They created an ambience of uncertainty concerning its mandate and work, and promoted caution rather than courage. I think it is fair to say that they for a while had a numbing impact on the work in the commission. Indeed, they were difficult reminders of the wider framework of authoritative structures within which the dialogue takes place and upon which it in the end depends.

Predictably the immediate Lutheran reaction to *Dominus Iesus* was one of disappointment, and in its response The Lutheran World Federation explicitly reflected on the document’s negative impact on the dialogue

“The document, “*Dominus Iesus*,” contains the observation that “ecclesial communities which have not preserved

<sup>9</sup> W. KASPER, *Harvesting the Fruits: Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (London/NY: Continuum 2009).

<sup>10</sup> It is most easily available on: [www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents)

<sup>11</sup> The same site as above.



the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery, are not Churches in the proper sense". Lutheran churches, together with other churches of the Reformation, are not ready to accept the categories now emphasized by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith nor the definitions and criteria underlying them. We are disappointed that thirty-five years of ecumenical dialogue seem not to have been considered (...).The impact of these statements is the more painful because they reflect a different spirit than that which we encounter in many other Lutheran-Roman Catholic relationships."<sup>12</sup>

The response is particularly interesting in that it, in addition to its clear refusal of the ecclesial categories employed by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, exploits a discourse of sentiment. The dialogue is described not as much in terms of its documentary results as in terms of relationships established through joint work, indeed of the valuable friendships that time together in dialogue has helped develop. Given the disappointment, this is understandable and even, to some degree, defensible. It is indeed a crucial element in the dialogue meetings that the commission experiences a process of community building as we pray and worship together or in each other's presence. However, it also goes, almost without saying, that a process of formal reception must be carried out according to the established structures of authority in each church, and that these procedures may be different.

More challenging is the fact that in order for the dialogue to be successful, the formal process of reception requires some degree of recognition of the ecclesial structures of authority by which the other church(es) carries out the process. The approval and reception process therefore implicitly involves a not insignificant degree of mutual ecclesial recognition. In fact, the letters issued by the Congregation of the Faith referred to above, were echoes of the first *Response of the Catholic Church to the Joint Declaration of the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation on the Doctrine of Justification* of June 1998, which critically addressed the imbalance between the two partners in terms of ecclesial authority:

"6. We need finally to note, from the point of view of their representative quality, the different character of the two signatories of this Joint Declaration. The Catholic Church recognizes the great effort made by the Lutheran World Federation in order to arrive, through consultation of the Synods, at a "*magnus consensus*", and so give a true ecclesial value to its signature; there remains, however, the question of the real authority of such a synodal consensus, today and also tomorrow, in the life and doctrine of the

Lutheran community."<sup>13</sup>

This was not only disappointing to the Lutherans; it questioned the presuppositions of the dialogue in that it threatened the sense of equal partnership. The reactions were sharp on the Lutheran side but also among Catholic ecumenists, and intervention eventually from the Holy Father himself, resulted in the so-called *Annex* to the Declaration,<sup>14</sup> which made the high level approval and signing possible in 1999. Beyond some doctrinal clarifications the *Annex* re-addresses the issue of ecclesial authority. Without explicitly withdrawing the former statement, this is interpreted in what I like to call a "palimpsest"-manner, that is overshadowing or overwriting one text with another:

"4. The response of the Catholic church does not intend to put into question the authority of Lutheran synods or of the Lutheran World Federation. The Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation began the dialogue and have taken it forward as partners with equal rights (*par cum pari*). Notwithstanding different conceptions of authority in the church, each partner respects the other partner's ordered process of reaching doctrinal decisions."

This clarification is of major importance also to the ongoing dialogue process today. It means that difference in patterns of defining and exercising authority no longer are seen as an insurmountable obstacle, and the dialogue is affirmed as taking place on equal terms. It is, however, interesting to note that significantly but not unexpectedly, the term "respect" is used rather than the term "recognize".

Even if these incidents may be known to many readers, the purpose of including them here is to reflect on the ambivalence of the dialogue process: advancement, even grand achievements - perhaps particularly the grand achievements - are more often than not accompanied by reminders that mark the pending arrear, the distance yet to be walked. This leads to the question as to whether more recent work during the last decade has made any further progress? Faced with questions such as this, it is important to bear in mind that a process like this is not easy to measure in terms of progress as if it were a constantly ongoing movement forward towards a clearly defined goal perhaps with some occasional backlashes. After years in various forms of dialogue I have learned that when achievements generate new obstacles, one may feel discouraged but should stay determined to remain in dialogue believing that it represents a divine calling, a service of reconciliation and healing.

The Fourth Phase of dialogue was opened in 1995, and the commission had then been renamed - or perhaps upgraded - to become The Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity. It began its work at the same time as the negotiations about the

<sup>12</sup> I have not been successful in my attempts to make the new website of LWF yield documentary material, and have had to trust my old paper version.

<sup>13</sup> *Information Service* 98 (1998/III) 95.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Note 5 above. The Annex is by necessity included in the publication.

Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification were taking place by a smaller ad hoc group - in utter secrecy. Already before the bilateral approval of the Joint Declaration on Justification, the Unity Commission's study of the Apostolicity of the Church was underway. The commission was not directly or formally involved in the JDDJ process, but the difficulties which arose during the reception and approval process did, as already mentioned above, influence its working atmosphere. There were demanding moments of disappointment and discouragement, which the final approval and the moving occasion of the signing in Augsburg could not entirely erase. Even if it ended well, the process had revealed still pending and unresolved questions caused by a fundamental incompatibility pertaining to theological method and paradigm. However, withdrawal from dialogue is no answer - rather one should rise to the challenge of continuing together. It may, however, help explain why the new study on "The Apostolicity of the Church" took the form of a lengthy study-document of almost 200 pages.<sup>15</sup>

The study begins with laying out the New Testament Foundations of the apostolicity of the Church, but in a manner which is hermeneutically different from the proof-texting use of Scripture in former and most other dialogue texts. There is an ecumenical potential in joint work with the biblical witness, but it also delineates the areas of interpretation most sensitive to a confessional positioning. One such area is the degree to which the New Testament witness continues into the witness of the Early Church and the further ecclesial development. In the dialogue a Lutheran hermeneutics of change and reclaiming of Scripture is challenged by a Catholic hermeneutics of (irreversible) continuity and vice versa.

To a great extent "The Apostolicity of the Church" is a systematic-theological reflection on the history of the two traditions, both before and after the time of the Reformation or Division. It explores through historical presentations how Catholic and Lutheran doctrine and life have come to their present-day configuration and emphases. The methodology employed, involves that we recognize our inter-relatedness and the interdependence of our memories. Thus the final paragraph first says "The church's witness to the truth exists in history and thus has aspects of both finality and provisionality" and then later "faith is professed and lived out in history, amid cultural changes, which requires an ongoing search for appropriate doctrinal expressions adequate to God's truth in this time before the ultimate eschatological manifestation of Christ as Lord and Savior of all" (460).

The study document thus represents a jointly but not uncritical re-appropriation of the shared story in which one church was not without the other - yes, perhaps one might even speak of a reconciliation of memories. During the work, we learned a lot - about the other but also about ourselves. In the longish and in many ways learned text, history is constantly revisited, renegotiated and lapses that were made mute and conveniently forgotten,

are recovered. History is never only naked facts themselves; it is the stories and concepts through which history is remembered and made meaningful in ways that form and shape what is here today. At times of change and rupture, like the time of the Reformation, memories may be problematized and historical legitimization for contemporary practices may be questioned. Most often this happens by a re-claiming or an alternative representation of the past. Authorization is sought in the memory of a different past or rather by claiming a different memory of the same shared past. It is therefore important in ecumenical dialogue to reappraise together the history and thereby face and renegotiate even the most controversial and identity shaping events. One knows, of course, all too well that the events in the past can never be re-enacted. A later generation cannot undo condemnations from generations back, but it can stop repeating them. We can say, as it happened when "The Joint Declaration on Justification" was approved: the condemnations no longer apply.

Thus, even if history cannot be re-enacted, we can re-evaluate our story about the past and the way in which it is being used polemically. Such reappraisal, built on critical self-scrutiny on both side, is to a great extent what takes place in the study document on "The Apostolicity of the Church," as it surveys developments in the church of the patristic and medieval periods, which for both Catholics and Lutherans represent a common history of an as yet undivided western church, - a fact that is often overlooked by Lutherans whose focus on the witness of Scripture and hermeneutics of change, makes them not see how much they in fact depend the early development of doctrine and ecclesial structure and practices. As is being said based on a quote from Luther in a text where he rejected rebaptism: "... in the papacy there are the true Holy Scriptures, true baptism, the true sacrament, the true keys for the forgiveness of sins, the true office of proclamation, and the true catechism." (par 99). Indeed, the reformation was not starting the church anew but depended on the several elements which had been received. Even if they under the papacy had been seriously defected as an embodiment of Christ's gospel," the Lutheran recognize that the Roman church is still carrying within it the principal practices by which the gospel is meant to shape the life of the church in continuity with its apostolic foundation (par 159).

Catholics and Lutherans agree that apostolicity must be taken as a complex reality embracing *multiple elements* and we agree on which these elements should be - as also stated in the citation from Luther. However, since the elements are multiple, they may be differently configured. Are all the elements equally important or do their what the Germans call "*Stellenwert*" vary? The Apostolicity study here succeeds in renegotiating the criteriology discord that made the JDDJ-process almost go wrong, towards a constructive solution. It claims that since the Reformers are said to have aimed "to re-gather the elements of apostolicity around their proper center" (par 127), the concern of the one criterion, the articulus with which the church stands and falls, is not a reduction through the exclusion of other elements, but the

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<sup>15</sup> See note 2 above.

concentration of everything on the central communication of God's life-giving forgiveness. The centre is the holy gospel that promises forgiveness and salvation given freely by God's grace, for Christ's sake, received by faith alone. The gospel is linked inseparably with baptism and the Lord's Supper in articulating this grace given to believers. This represents the central cluster of authentic continuity and opens up for a mutual acknowledgment of each other's ecclesial apostolicity.

One of my much respected colleagues and a faithful and indispensable drafter in the dialogue, Father Jared Wicks, wrote to me when he learned that I was given the lecture on which this essay is based, and one of his comments was this: "Hearing about justification as a *constructive* criterion also goes a long way towards calming Catholic fears that the central Reformation conviction may well erode the catholic heritage. It also opens for Catholics a promising avenue for approaching the coming Reformation commemorations of 2017 with new appreciation. Justification as "criterion" is therefore not only critical and potentially erosive of the heritage, but also constructive in giving a shape and pattern to ecclesial life".<sup>16</sup>

It should, however, be added that when the Catholics consider how separated ecclesial communities, such as the Lutheran churches, preserve and foster the "elements" of sanctification and truth, and also appreciate that bodies outside the Catholic communion by their apostolic faith and practices, "have by no means been deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation" (*Unitatis Redintegratio*, 3, as cited in par 120), this acknowledgment is again qualified by contrast to the full complement of sacramental and ministerial "elements" of the Catholic Church (par 122).

Substantial progress has nevertheless been made in The Apostolicity of The Church with regard to much contested and still divisive issues such as apostolic succession, episcopacy and primacy as it appreciates apostolicity "as a complex reality embracing multiple elements" (par 127-130; cf. also already BEM III.34). In light of this the Lutherans define the reformation as a re-gathering of these elements around the proper center, so as to recover an authentically apostolic pattern of the marks of the church. The center is the holy gospel that promises forgiveness and salvation given by God's grace, for Christ's sake, received by faith alone. Around the central expression of the gospel in word and sacrament, the life of the community takes shape in offices and institutions, in doctrines, liturgies and church orders, and an ethos and spirituality animated by the message of God's grace. There is an echo in this of the Malta report as cited above, but the emphasis or rather the movement of the argumentation is if not reverted so more complex.

Chapter 2 on The Apostolic Gospel and the Apostolicity of the Church shows that there is solid basis for a mutual recognition of apostolic continuity. This is further pursued in the

following part 3 on Apostolic Succession and Ordained Ministry. In some of the concluding paragraphs the remaining differences are seen in an ecumenical perspective perusing the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* and the process that led to its official approval as representing an authoritative reference. The significance but also intricacy of these paragraphs is such that I should quote them in full.

First concerning the ordained ministry in par 288: "For apostolic succession, succession in faith is the essential aspect. Without this, succession in office would lack all value. The ministry is service to the apostolic gospel. But now, the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* has ascertained the existence of a "consensus in basic truths of the doctrine of justification" between the Catholic Church and the Lutheran churches. This shows a high degree of agreement in faith, that is, in that which represents the heart of apostolic succession. According to the *Joint Declaration*, the doctrine of justification is "the measure and touchstone for Christian faith" of which is said, "No teaching may contradict this criterion." The Catholic view of the ministry of the Lutheran churches, along with the Lutheran view of ministry in the Roman Catholic Church cannot remain untouched by the *Joint Declaration*. For, even if preserving correct doctrine is not the task of the ordained ministry alone, it is still its specific task to reach and proclaim the gospel publicly. The signing of the *Joint Declaration* therefore implies the acknowledgment that the ordained ministry in both churches has by the power of the Holy Spirit fulfilled its service of maintaining fidelity to the apostolic gospel regarding the central questions of faith set forth in the Declaration"

Then about apostolic succession in par 288: "It is Catholic doctrine that an individual bishop is *not* in apostolic succession by his being part of a historically verifiable and uninterrupted chain of imposition of hands through his predecessors to one of the apostles. It is instead essential that he be in communion with the whole order of bishops which as a whole succeeds the apostolic college and its mission. Thus the consensus of the bishops among themselves is the decisive sign of the apostolicity of their teaching. Catholicity is the means and expression of apostolicity. If catholicity is a sign of apostolicity, then apostolicity is a condition for catholicity. Thus fidelity to the apostolic gospel has priority in the interplay of *traditio*, *successio* and *communio*. The internal order of those three aspects of apostolic succession is of great significance. From this point it becomes once more clear how important is the expressed and confessed agreement in the fundamental truths of the doctrine of justification. The Roman Catholic Church recognizes a priestly ministry and true sacraments, by apostolic succession, in certain churches even though the bishops of those churches are not in communion with "the bishops with Peter's successor at their head. But there are now many individuals at many locations in Christendom who exercise the office of supervision which in the Roman Catholic Church is performed by bishops. These others bear a special responsibility for the apostolicity of doctrine in their churches, and they can do justice to this responsibility, as the Catholic

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<sup>16</sup> He also attached for my benefit a revised lecture text on "The Lutheran-Catholic World-Level Dialogue: Selected Remarks" which helped me greatly in preparing for this lecture.

Church recognizes in the *Joint Declaration*. They preside over churches and ecclesial communities, about which the Second Vatican Council asserts “that the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation” (UR 3). But if the consensus of bishops is the definitive sign of apostolicity of their doctrine, then Catholics cannot exclude these other *episkopoi* from the circle of those whose consensus is according to the Catholic view the sign of apostolicity of doctrine.”

By biblical expositions, by historical re-examinations, by delineating remaining differences and yet ecumenically developing even the differences, *The Apostolicity of the Church* clarifies longstanding impediments in fresh ways—explicitly encouraged by the fact that, despite the difficulties of ecclesial incongruity, *The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* was jointly approved. This affirms the central reality of the Lutheran–Roman Catholic relationship as one of real but incomplete ecclesial communion, as a true communion, notwithstanding certain limitations in the recognition of apostolicity in the other body.

The limitations are particularly stringent in Part 4 Church Teaching that remains in the Truth, which presents the means and instances of authoritative teaching by which, in each body, believers and their communities are kept in the truth of the apostolic Gospel of salvation. The topic is raised already in par 163: “differences over how the teaching office is constituted and how Scripture functions as the source and apostolic criterion of all that our churches believe and teach”, and later in Part 4 treated at length, ending with a series of yet unresolved tensions, easily recognized as such as rescue is taken to descriptive language. However, steps forward are also here being cautiously made and both agree that were a teaching office not present in specific ways and at both local and more comprehensive levels the church would be defective (par 433).

For Lutherans it remains important that the teaching ministry includes many participating agents and instances, with no one of these able to rightfully claim exclusive competence for itself (par 356)—as it also happened in the process by which the Lutherans churches attained agreement on *The Joint Declaration on Justification*.

Limitations, tensions and remaining differences should not lead to resignation, but instead to further work. For the moment such further work takes place in a Fifth Phase of dialogue in the Lutheran/Roman-Catholic Commission on Unity. Between Lutherans and Catholic baptism as incorporation into the one body of Christ, is mutually recognized. How do we further develop our shared but implicit theology of baptism and its potential for contributing to further growth in communion?

In addition, but not insignificantly, we challenge sectarianism and prepare a joint text on the anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.



# CC

Centro Conferences

## A New Look at the Book of Job

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### Introduction

The Book of Job is universally recognized as one of the great literary and religious pieces of all literature—it is a poetic drama. Beginning with a prose prologue (chapters 1 and 2), it continues through three cycles of speeches between Job and his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar (Chapters 3–31); Elihu’s speech (Chapters 32–37), God’s interrogation and Job’s response (Chapters 38–42:6) and closes with an epilogue (Chapter 42:7 to the end).

There is considerable controversy as to how genuine the various parts of the book are. Some scholars believe that the only genuine features of the book are the cycles of speeches, God’s interrogation and Job’s response. These scholars maintain that the Prologue and Epilogue, Chapter 28, Elihu’s speech, and much of the divine speech were added later. These scholars take an extreme view. Most scholars grant that the prologue and the epilogue (with the exception of Chapter 42:12-16) are original parts of the book, and most scholars reject Chapter 28, Elihu’s speech and the references to Behemoth (Chapters 40:15-24) and Leviathan (Chapter 41:1-end) as later interpolations,<sup>1</sup> although recently there have been some significant scholarship which accepts Elihu’s speech.

### The Prologue

The Prologue (Chapters 1 and 2) sets the stage for the problem of the book. Job is “blameless and upright,” a man who “fears God and turns away from evil.” He is exceedingly prosperous and blessed in full measure in every way.

When the “sons of God” present themselves before the Lord and Satan, who has gone to and fro on the earth, God asks Satan

the accuser,<sup>2</sup> “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil?” Satan responds to God, by asking Him why shouldn’t Job be righteous, since God has blessed him in everything? But if God were to face him with adversity, He would see that Job would turn against Him and curse him.

The issue at stake between God and Satan is this: Is there such a thing as virtue for its own sake? Will Job remain virtuous when the rewards of virtue are not praise and prosperity, but irreparable loss and intense suffering? The Prologue only introduces the issue and informs the reader that Job is innocent and that his sufferings are in no sense deserved.

God places Job in Satan’s power and in one fell swoop, everything, except his wife—who Satan uses as his ally (Chapter 2:9)—is taken from him. His children, his property and his servants are destroyed. Instead of cursing God, Job proclaims “Naked I came from mother’s womb and naked shall I return; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” (Chapter 1:21).

Satan appears before God again, and again God speaks of His servant who is unique in his righteousness. Satan claims, “All that a man has he will give for his life, but put forth this hand now and touch his bone and flesh and he will curse thee to thy face.” God puts Job into Satan’s power once again—but he is not permitted to let him die.

Job is afflicted with sores all over his body and is in intense pain. His wife pleads with him to curse God and die as a relief. But Job maintains his faith and asks, “Shall we receive good at the hand of God and not evil?”

“In all this Job did not sin with his lips.”

Job’s three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar hear of Job’s affliction and come to visit him. When they see him from afar, he is so disfigured, they cannot recognize him. They weep over his fate, tear their clothing and “throw dust in the air.” They sit with

<sup>1</sup> In spite of Habel’s attempt to give weight to Elihu’s speeches see N.C. HABEL, *The Book of Job: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985) 46 and 443- 516; the judgement of Driver that the speeches “formed no part of the original work” S.R. DRIVER and G.B. GRAY, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Job*, The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1977) XL and the arguments Driver gives to support this judgment seem to me to be correct. For a recent rejection of the Elihu material see S. VIRGULIN, *Giobbe*, Novissima versione della Bibbia dai testi originali, 17 (Rome: Edizioni Paoline, 1980) 240-241.

<sup>2</sup> Habel correctly in my view explains the word satan here as “not the personal name Satan but a role specification meaning ‘the accuser / adversary/ doubter’,” N.C. HABEL, *The Book of Job...*, *op. cit.*, 89.

him for seven days and seven nights without saying a word.

Let me immediately indicate It is fairly clear that the friends are assuming that Job has blasphemed, or they would not have “thrown dust in the air,” an act that has been associated with being in the presence of a blasphemer. Moses Bottenwieser explains this passage in an original and penetrating manner in his commentary to Chapter 2, verse 12 from his *The Book of Job*,

“The stricken Job is bewildered at God’s visitation, but not so the friends. They are not for a moment at a loss how to account for his affliction. For them, there is only one conclusion possible in accordance with the doctrine of retributive justice. Of a certainty, he has offended God! Adversity in Job’s day was the sure proof of guilt—their must be remembered. The more crushing a man’s calamity, the plainer it was that he was suffering the Divine wrath incurred by his sins.”

This is the light in which the friends view Job’s misfortunes, not only in the Dialogues, but also in the Prologue. In the Prologue, indeed, they express their verdict more effectively than they do by their tirades later—their silence is far more eloquent than words. They come with the avowed intention of offering consolation to Job, but when they behold his “most terrible affliction,” when they find him smitten with leprosy, they see the unmistakable proof of God’s displeasure and instead of showing sympathy, “they rend their garments,” before they venture into his presence, “and sprinkle dust over their heads by casting it heavenward.” By this strange performance they mean to express, not grief on Job’s account, but rather solicitude on their own; they seek to ward off the danger of becoming affected themselves by the curse that has been visited upon Job.

That this is the significance of the rites performed by the friends may be deduced from various sources which supplement one another, notably Acts 22:22f. These verses tell how, when Paul by his own confession had been proved guilty of apostasy, the people, demanding that he be put to death, “cried, and rent their garments, and threw dust into the air.”

The Talmudic law in Mishna Sanhedrin 7.5 pertaining to the related case of blasphemy. The law specifies that in a trial when the witnesses testify that the offense was committed, the court and the bystander must rend their garments. The Gemara 60a significantly adds that the reason that the witnesses are not required to do likewise is that they naturally performed these rites at the time the offense happened”.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, Job breaks the silence and initiates the conversation by cursing the day of his birth and longing for death.

<sup>3</sup> M. BUTTENWIESER, *The Book of Job* (Ithica: Cornell University Library, 2009) originally printed in 1922.

“Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire? Why did the knees receive me? Or why the breasts, that I should suck? For then I should have lain down and been quiet; I should have slept; then I should have been at rest,” (Chapter 3:11-13) and “Why was I not as a hidden untimely birth, as infants that never see the light? There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners are at ease together: they hear not the voice of the taskmaster. The small and the great are there, and the slave is free from his master” (Chapter 3:16-19).

Death is the great leveler. All achieve equality in death. Job longs for death. “Why is light given to him that is in misery and life to the bitter in soul, who longs for death?” (Chapter 3:20-21)

Eliphaz responds to Job’s lament. His discourse is well-organized, coherent and well-tempered. His hostility is immediate. He asks “if one ventures a word with you will you be offended? He first says that Job “instructed many” and “strengthened the weak hands” when others were in trouble. “Your words have upheld him who was stumbling and you have made firm the feeble knees. But now it has come to you and you are impatient; it touches you, and you are dismayed. Is not your fear of God your confidence and the integrity of your ways your hope?”

Eliphaz exhorts Job not to make an exception of himself. He tells him to heed the very advice he gave others in trouble—to trust in God, who will save him. Secondly, Eliphaz states, “Think now, who that was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off?”

Does Job really believe that evil can afflict the innocent? It would mean that God is not just. On the contrary, Job himself knows very well that “those who plan iniquity and sow trouble reap the same” (Chapter 4:8).

Thirdly, Eliphaz claims that in a vision at night, the truth was revealed to him. “Can mortal man be righteous before God? Can a man be pure before his Maker? Even in his servants he puts no trust, and his angels he charges with error; how much more those who dwell in houses of clay.” (Chapter 4:17ff.) That is, man is too puny to question God. If even the angels are imperfect, how much more so is man?

Finally, Eliphaz maintains that God guides all things, including natural phenomena, according to justice and this is the foundation for man’s hope.

“As for me, I would seek God, and to God would I commit my cause; who does great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number: He gives rain upon the earth and sends waters upon the fields; He sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety. He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success. He takes the wise in their own craftiness; and the schemes of the wily are brought to a quick end. They meet with darkness in the daytime, grope at noonday as in the night. But He saves the fatherless from their mouth, the needy from the hand

of the mighty. So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts her mouth.

Behold, happy is the man whom God reproves; therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty. For He wounds but He binds up; He smites, but His hands heal. He will deliver you from six troubles; in seven there shall no evil touch you. In famine He will redeem you from death, and in war from the power of the sword. You shall be hid from the scourge of the tongue, and shall not fear destruction when it comes. At destruction and famine you shall laugh, and shall not fear the beasts of the earth. For you shall be in league with the beasts of the field, and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you. You shall know that your tent is safe, and you shall inspect your fold and miss nothing. You shall know also that your descendants shall be many, and your offspring as the grass of the earth. You shall come to your grave in ripe old age, as a shock of grain comes up to the threshing floor in its season. Lo, this we have searched out; it is true. Hear, and know it for your good.” (Chapter 5:8-27)

Eliphaz’s speech is an overpowering theological display. What is more, he speaks to Job as a prophet stating a divine teaching. Everything that happens is due to God’s justice; the wicked will be punished and the righteous will be rewarded. If only Job will trust in God, he will be saved from his suffering.

Job’s response is that Eliphaz’s speech is beside the point. First of all he does not need reproof, he needs sympathy. They are indeed not his friends. “He who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty. My brethren are treacherous as a torrent bed, as freshets that pass away, which are dark with ice, and where the snow hides itself” (Chapter 6:14-17).

But the essence of Job’s response is simple. Wherein has he done wrong? What is his sin? He states, “Teach me and I will be silent; make me understand how I have erred. How forceful are honest words! But what does reproof from you reprove?” (Chapter 6:24-25).

Finally, it is easy for others to talk of hope and trust. Job asks, “What is my strength that I should wait... Is my strength the strength of stones or is my flesh bronze...?” (Chapter 6:11-13) Bildad the Shuhite now responds to Job bluntly: “Does God pervert justice? Or does the Almighty pervert the right?” (Chapter 8:3) He also refers to the death of Job’s children, “If your children have sinned against him, he has delivered them into the power of their transgression,” (Chapter 8:4) and Bildad argues, “God will not reject a blameless man but will reward you in the end” (Chapter 8:20a).”

Job now raises a different issue which foreshadows the confrontation later on in the book. How can man contend with God? There is no match between man and God. How can man maintain his innocence against God? God can easily overpower him. Job states, “For He crushes me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds without cause; He will not let me get my breath, but fills me with bitterness. If it is a contest of strength, behold him! If it is a matter of justice, who can summon him?”

Though I am innocent, my own mouth would condemn me; though I am blameless, he would prove me perverse” (Chapter 9:17-20).

God can overpower Job and persuade him against himself and in spite of himself. Despite this, Job maintains his blamelessness. But since God has all the power on his side, Job understands that in spite of his innocence he will be condemned. He states,

“If I say, I will forget my complaint, I will put off my sad countenance, and be of good cheer, I become afraid of all my suffering, for I know thou wilt not hold me innocent. I shall be condemned; why then do I labor in vain? I wash myself with snow, and cleanse my hands with lye, yet thou wilt plunge me into a pit, and my own clothes will abhor me. For He is not a man, as I am, that I might answer him, that we should come to trial together. There is no umpire between us, who might lay his hand upon us both. Let him take his rod away from me, and let not dread of him terrify me. Then I would speak without fear of him, for I am not so in myself” (Chapter 9:27-35).

If Job could find an umpire who could be objective with respect to his claim of innocence, he could plead his case. If Job could plead his own case before God, if only God would not terrify him and would grant him some respite from his suffering, Job would say to God:

“Do not condemn me; let me know why thou dost contend against me. Does it seem good to thee to oppress, to despise the work of thy hands and favor the designs of the wicked? Hast thou eyes of flesh? Dost thou see as man sees? Are thy days as the days of man, or thy years as man’s years, that thou dost seek out my iniquity and search for my sin, although thou knowest that I am not guilty, and there is none to deliver out of thy hand? Thy hands fashioned and made me; and now thou dost turn about and destroy me. Remember that thou has made me of clay; and wilt thou turn me to dust again?” (Chapter 10:2-9).

Job draws a logical conclusion from his innocence and suffering. It must be that God destroys both the blameless and the wicked. When disaster brings sudden death, He mocks the innocent as they fail. The earth is given into the hands of the wicked; He covers the faces of its judges—and if it is not He, then who else could it be? (Chapter 9:22-24) Here is where Job raises the question that the experience of his excruciating suffering and the recognition of his own innocence force to the fore: There is no justice in the world; both the blameless and the wicked are destroyed. Zophar the Na’amathite joins the dialogue and states explicitly what the others have so far only implied. “For you say, ‘My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in God’s eyes,’ But oh, that God would speak...” (Chapter 11:4-5a).

...What you would learn is that “God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves.” (Chapter 11:6b) Zophar also argues that Job should “set your heart aright” (Chapter 11:13) and thereby be secure. Job’s responses become increasingly bitter. First he condemns his friends. They are at ease and all they can do is condemn those whom misfortune overtakes. (Chapter 12:5a) He tells them, “As for you, you whitewash with lies; worthless physicians are you all” (Chapter 13:4).

The irony is that when God does finally speak, He condemns the friends for not speaking rightly as His servant Job has.

What Job is seeking is a confrontation with God. Job calls God to judgment as in a lawsuit. Lawsuits can be conducted in two ways—by asking a series of questions or by being asked a series of questions. Job is prepared for both. “Call, and I will answer; or let me speak, and do Thou reply to me.” (Chapter 13:22)

“I would speak to the Almighty and I desire to argue my case with God... (Chapter 13:3a) Let me have silence, and I will speak, and let come on me what may. I will take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hand. Behold, He will slay me; I have no hope; yet I will defend my ways to his face. This will be my salvation—that a godless man shall not come before him. Listen carefully to my words, and let my declaration be in your ears. Behold, I have prepared my case; I know that I shall be vindicated. Who is there that will contend with me? For then I would be silent and die. Only grant two things to me, then I will not hide myself from thy face: withdraw thy hand far from me, and let not dread of thee terrify me. Then call, and I will answer; or let me speak and do thou reply to me. . . .” (Chapter 13:13-22a)

Eliphaz is alarmed at Job’s utterances. He accuses Job of forsaking his religion and indicates that his own words have condemned him. “But you are doing away with the fear of God. . . (Chapter 15:4a) For your iniquity teaches your mouth, and you choose the tongue of the crafty. Your own mouth condemns you, and not I; your own lips testify against you. (Chapter 15:5-6) Why does your heart carry you away, and why do your eyes flash, that you turn your spirit against God, and let such words go out of your mouth?” (Chapter 15:12-13)

In opposition to the accusations of the friends, Job stands firm. They are “miserable comforters” (Chapter 16:2a). But God is his witness. He will vindicate him. (Chapter 16:19) Job knows that he will be redeemed (Chapter 19:25a) “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last He will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, (then from my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side. . .)” (Chapter 10:25-27a)

Both Bildad and Zophar are disturbed at Job’s rejection of justice in the world. Bildad wants to know why Job considers his friends brutes, why he regards them as stupid. He asks, “If light of the wicked is put out” (Chapter 18:5) and in Chapter 20, Zophar asks Job, “Do you not know this from the days of old,

since man was placed upon earth, that the exulting of the wicked is short, and the joy of the godless but for a moment?” (Chapter 20:4-5).

Job now directly confronts this oft repeated doctrine of the friends that the righteous prosper and the wicked perish. In the most explicit terms, he rejects it completely. He states, “When I think of it I am dismayed, and shuddering seizes my flesh. Why do the wicked live, reach old age, and grow mighty in power? Their children are established in their presence, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, and no rod of God is upon them. Their bull breed without fail; their cow calves, and does not cast her calf.

“They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They sing to the tambourine and the lyre, and rejoice to the sound of the pipe. They spend their days in prosperity, and in peace they go down to Sheol. They say to God, ‘Depart from us! We do not desire the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him? And what profit do we get if we pray to him?’

“Behold, is not their prosperity in their hand? The counsel of the wicked is far from me. How often is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out? That their calamity comes upon them? That God distributes pains in his anger? That they are like straw before the wind, and like chaff that the storm carries away?

“You say God stores up their iniquity for their sons. Let Him recompense it to themselves, that they may know it. Let their own eyes see their destruction, let them drink of the wrath of the Almighty. For what do they care for their houses after them, when the number of their months is cut off? Will any teach God knowledge, seeing that He judges those that are on high? One dies in full prosperity, being wholly at ease and secure, his body full of fat and the marrow of his bones moist. Another dies in bitterness of soul, never having tasted of good. They lie down alike in the dust, and the worms cover them.

“Behold, I know your thought, and your schemes to wrong me. For you say. Where is the house of the prince? Where is the tent in which the wicked dwelt? Have you not asked those who travel the roads, and do you not accept their testimony that the wicked man is spared in the day of calamity, that he is rescued in the day of wrath? Who declares his way to his face, and who requites him for what he has done? When he is borne to the grave, watch is kept over his tomb. The clods of the valley are sweet to him; all men follow after him, and those who go before him are innumerable. How then will you comfort me with empty nothings? There is nothing left of your answers but falsehood.” (Chapter 21:6-34)

Let me pause for a minute and point out that in these verses Job raises a question similar to that raised by Jeremiah (12) and the Psalmist (Psalm 73). All three texts question the prosperity of



the wicked and why God allows this to happen. Jeremiah states it and answers it without significant elaboration. The wicked prosper but their loss is that they are remote from God whereas Jeremiah experiences a profound closeness to the divine.

“Righteous art thou o Lord, when I complain to thee, yet I would plead my case before thee.

“Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?... Thou plantest them, and they take root; they grow and bring forth fruit; Thou art near in their mouth yet far from their heart. . .”

In raising this question, the Psalmist is more elaborate and has produced one of the great gems of religious literature. His answer is similar to Jeremiah’s.

In Psalm 73 the Psalmist confesses that the prosperity of the wicked, of which he was so jealous, almost caused him to abandon his religion.

They have no fear of punishment or any kind of judgment. People honor them for their raw power and praise them. They fear nothing.

However the psalmist realizes that they lack what he has, the nearness to God. He states having thee in heaven I desire none else upon earth. It is the closeness to God that opened his eyes to the fact that they can never be close to God and thus in spite of their arrogance miss the whole purpose of life.

Job raises the more troublesome question which is “Why should God cause his servants to be the very ones to suffer?” Therefore it is both the prosperity of the wicked *and* the suffering of the righteous that raises the question of justice in the world.)

Job defends his integrity and innocence (Chapter 27:5-6) against the explicit attack of Eliphaz (Chapter 22:4ff) and his friends.

Now Job speaks of his past, when he was honored and God’s care watched over him. These verses are some of the most beautiful and touching in the whole Bible.

“Oh that things were as of old, when the Almighty was yet with me, when my children were about me; when my steps were washed with milk, and the rock poured out for me streams of oil! When I went out to the gate of the city, when I prepared my seat in the square, the young men saw me and withdrew, and the aged rose and stood; the princes refrained from talking, and laid their hand on their mouth; the voice of the nobles was hushed, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth. When the ear heard, it called me blessed, and when the eye saw, it approved; because I delivered the poor who cried, and the fatherless who had none to help him. The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban. I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know. I broke the fangs of the unrighteous, and made him drop his prey from his teeth” (Chapter 29:5-17).

“Men listened to me, and waited, and kept silence for my counsel, After I spoke they did not speak again, and my word dropped upon them. They waited for me as for the rain; and they opened their mouths as for the spring rain. I smiled on them when they had no confidence; and the light of my countenance they did not cast down. I chose their way, and sat as chief, and I dwelt like a king among his troops, like one who comforts mourners” (Chapter 29:21-25).

But what a reversal! What a contrast between then and now. Job continues: “But now they make sport of me, men who are younger than I, whose fathers I would have disdained to set with the dogs of my flock. (Chapter 30:1) They abhor me, they keep aloof from me; they do not hesitate to spit at the sight of me. Because God has loosed my cord and humbled me, they have cast off restraint in my presence. On my right hand the rabble rise, they drive me forth, they cast up against me their ways of destruction. They break up my path, they promote my calamity; no one restrains them. As through a wide breach they come; amid the crash they roll on.

“Terrors are turned upon me; my honor is pursued as by the wind, and my prosperity has passed away like a cloud. And now my soul is poured out within me; days of affliction have taken hold of me. The night racks my bones, and the pain that gnaws me takes no rest. With violence it seizes my garment; it binds me about like the collar of my tunic.

“God has cast me into the mire, and I have become like dust and ashes. I cry to Thee and Thou dost not answer me; I stand, and Thou dost not heed me. Thou has turned cruel to me; with the might of Thy hand thou dost persecute me. Thou liftest me up on the wind, Thou makest me ride on it, and Thou tосsest me about in the roar of the storm.

“Yea, I know that Thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living. Yet does not one in a heap of ruins stretch out his hand, and in his disaster cry for help? Did not I weep for him whose day was hard? Was not my soul grieved for the poor?”

“But when I looked for good, evil came; and when I waited for light, darkness came. My heart is in turmoil, and is never still; days of affliction come to meet me. I go about blackened, but not by the sun; I stand up in the assembly, and cry for help. I am a brother of jackals, and a companion of ostriches. My skin turns black and falls from me, and by bones burn with heat. My lyre is turned to mourning, and my pipe to the voice of those who weep” (Chapter 30:10-31).

The friends are arguing, first, that God is just and thus no innocent person ever perished and no wicked person ever triumphed. Second, Job must have sinned or God would not be

punishing him. The only alternative is that God is unjust and this would be blasphemy! Although at first it may seem otherwise, if one persists, he will discover that God's justice does indeed operate in this world as it does in all His doings in the natural and human realm. Third, the friends affirm that man is finite and of necessity imperfect and therefore is in no condition to challenge God or to question God's ways.

The issue between Job and his friends is that they are judging him without in any way taking into consideration the agony of his suffering. They refuse to put themselves in his place. They immediately judge his suffering as the consequence of sin, indeed of blasphemy. They are convinced that there is no suffering without sin and that all who suffer must be sinful.

Job is arguing, first, that he is innocent and even if God were to slay him, he would still defiantly proclaim his integrity. He states, "I will defend my ways to His face." Second, he challenges their basic proposition and maintains that often the wicked do prosper and the righteous do suffer and that God does not seem to hearken to the prayers of the oppressed. Third, he states that the Friends are whitewashers and liars and speak falsely for God but that God will vindicate him.

Two completely alien positions are expressed here. Implicit in the friends' arguments and the refrain that runs through their speeches is that justice is a fact and to deny it is to blaspheme God. They affirm that God's goodness completely depends on the duality of reward and punishment in this world.

Job accuses them of lying (Chapter 13:4) and speaking deceitfully for God. He defends his integrity in the face of all. Job can no longer converse with his friends, bewail his former glory or lament his degradation. Finally, he turns to God to vindicate him and resolve his perplexity. Why do the good suffer? We are aware that in Job's case it is the best man, the most righteous man who suffering the worst fate, (1:8, 11-12: 2:3-6) so how do we reconcile the reality of ideal justice with the fact of injustice? What is the role of God and man in all this? Job confronts God, as if in a lawsuit, but God is silent (19:7) and so Job asks in a crescendo of questions (31:5ff) "If I have walked with falsehood, if my step had turned aside from the way and my heart had gone after my eyes, my heart had been enticed by a woman?"

After vindicating his personal morality, Job turns to his relationship with his fellow man. "If I have rejected the cause of my man servant; if I have withheld anything that the poor desired or have eaten my morsel alone. . . . If I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing?" and then turns to his own values and ideals: "If I made gold my trust. . . if I have rejoiced because my wealth was great. . . If I had rejoiced in the ruin of him that hated me?"

This crescendo of questions addressed to God by Job plainly demonstrates his integrity and innocence. If he had done any of these things, then his punishment would be just. But he is innocent and God must declare to him wherein he had done wrong.

Now it is God's turn. As in a lawsuit, God must either answer for Himself or pose questions for Job to answer.

Finally God's voice issues forth from the whirlwind, asking

questions concerning the laws operating in nature. "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . . Who determined its measurements?... Have you walked in the recesses of the deep?... Have the gates of death been revealed to you? . . . Who has cleft a channel for the torrents of rain . . . to bring rain in a land where no man is, on the desert where there is no man to satisfy the waste and desolate land."

He then turns to the order of the animal world. "Can you hunt the prey for the lion and satisfy the appetite of the young lion? . . . Who provides for the fallen prey? . . . Who has let the wild ass go free?"

Nature and animal life is so diversified and vast that the mere listing of these questions undercut man's belief that the whole universe and everything in it functions for the sake of man and is created expressly for his needs. On the contrary, nature and animal life have their own laws which are separate and unrelated to man's needs.

But even more, nature is indifferent to the morality so central to man. "The wings of the ostrich wave proudly but are they the pinions and plumage of love? She leaves her eggs on the ground forgetting that a foot may crush them. . . . She deals cruelly with her young. . . . And the eagle, he spies out his prey and the young ones suck up blood."

The brunt of these questions is to show overwhelmingly both the variety and diversity of existence and also its amoral character. Nature and animal life do not function morally. The culmination comes when God confronts Job directly: "Will you condemn me that you may be justified? Deck yourself with majesty and dignity, clothe yourself with glory and splendor, look on everyone that is proud and abase him, look on everyone that is proud and bring him low and tread down the wicked where they stand. Hide them all in the dust together, bind their faces in the world below then will I also acknowledge to you that your own right hand can give you victory."

It seems that one can make the argument that Job is acting towards God in a similar manner as the friends are acting toward Job. Job complains that the friends judge him without having any idea of his condition, not being aware of his predicament, not really understanding his profound suffering. But is not Job doing a similar thing with respect to God. He is challenging God without in any knowing what is involved in creating this vast universe. What God is in effect asking: "When was the last time that you created a world? You seem to know how I should have done it" furthermore recognize your purpose in the world which is only a part of the purpose of creation.

Job responds. He says he now understands and that he repents. What does Job now understand? First, he understands that man is not the center of the world. Second, the world is essentially amoral. Third, God has placed upon man the task of "treading the wicked." Man must do the work on earth. He must realize that it is his "own hand that will give him victory." It is not up to God to do man's work. Fourth, the world is unfinished and that man must strive to make it whole. It is only in an unfinished universe, one that is in the making, one that is not yet

won for God and man, that man has a task and a function.

Yet, the good suffer and the best suffer most because it is the just and true and righteous that take upon themselves the task of bringing justice and truth in the world. When man has achieved his task, only then will a new heaven and a new earth appear together with a new heart and a new covenant, then the whole earth will be full of the knowledge of God and the lion will eat straw like the ox, then none shall be afraid, then God shall be one and His name shall be one.

In the Epilogue God announces that the friends have not spoken correctly of God, whereas Job has (Chapter 42:7-9). They must therefore offer up a burnt offering for their sin. What constitutes their sin? It is three-fold: First, they affirmed that man is at the center of the universe and thus assumed that the natural and moral are one.

In fact, as we have seen. Job's protest and God's answer demonstrate that they are not in fact one, but must be made one. Second, they deny the very nature of man's task. For them man has no self-transcending, nature transforming historical task. They thus deny what is at the heart of the prophetic concept of man—that he is the instrument for the realization of the Messianic goal. Third, they make trivial the suffering and agony, the tragic pathos endured by the just man who is the agent for the realization of the good. The friends want God to do man's work.

Thus they have not spoken correctly, while Job recognizes injustice yet sticks to his task and to his ideal despite the utmost agony and the most intense suffering. Job is the servant of God par excellence, and he symbolizes to us the historic transformations that nature and man must accomplish if God's world is to emerge, to be brought into being.

Job is called the servant of the Lord and is symbolic of the suffering Israel who has a mission which can only involve suffering. The concept of the servant of God comes to completion in the heroic and terrifying servant passages in Second Isaiah. There God states: "Hearken to me you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is My law. Fear not the reproach of men." Israel the servant of God is to be a light unto the nations that God's salvation may reach to the ends of the earth. (Is. 49:6) In these servant passages the promise that was made to Abraham is transmuted into the broadest and most universal context. Now a law will go forth from God and His justice for a light unto the people. The servant of God is to carry God's law, he is to declare God's kingdom. His mouth is like a sharp sword. (Chapter 49:2) He has the tongue of them that are taught (50:4). God's servant, Israel, must affirm God in the world, must bear witness undismayed to the ideal goal of brotherhood and peace.

Slominsky said it best in his essay on the Midrash.

"The core of Jewish belief is that Israel must bear the Torah from God to the world, but the world is unwilling and resists all three; God, Torah, and Israel. And the protagonist who does the actual bearing must also bear the brunt of the suffering...the Torah stands for goodness, for

the vision, and ideals, and values, or light of God in which we see light.

God, besides being this light and vision which we behold, is also such power, such real actual power in the universe as is committed and has already been marshaled for the victory of the good. This power must be increased, the ideal must be translated into the real, and the active agent in this crucial event is man, who is thus destined for tragic heroism by the very nature of his situation. Israel, of course, stands for the ideal Israel, and is paradigmatic of the good and brave man everywhere.

That the best must suffer the most, must assume the burdens and sorrows of the world, constitutes the most awesome phenomenon and paradox of the whole spiritual life. God in the full meaning of the term is seen to stand at the end, not at the beginning; on that day He shall be one and His name shall be one. He must be made one, man is the agent in whose hands it is left to make or mar that supreme integration. The assertion of God in a Godless world is the supreme act of religion."<sup>4</sup>

I would like to conclude that just as the book of Jonah is a book written about a seer from a prophetic perspective, so the book of Job is written about a wise righteous man from a Prophetic perspective.

The suffering of the righteous is the central question of the book of Job. This question appears in a poignant form in prophetic literature.

There seems to be an inner contradiction in the teaching of the prophets: that if the people will act righteously then they will prosper and if they act wickedly they will suffer.

*Amos 5: 14*

Seek good, and not evil,  
that you may live;  
and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you,  
as you have said.

*Jeremiah 7: 1-15*

[1] The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD:

[2] "Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD.

[3] Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will let you dwell in this place.

[4] Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.'

[5] "For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly execute justice one with another,

[6] if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other

<sup>4</sup> H. SLONIMSKY, *Essays*, Quadrangle Books (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1967) 14.

gods to your own hurt,

[7] then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers for ever.

[8] "Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail.

[9] Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Ba'al, and go after other gods that you have not known,

[10] and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered!' – only to go on doing all these abominations?

[11] Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, says the LORD.

[12] Go now to my place that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.

[13] And now, because you have done all these things, says the LORD, and when I spoke to you persistently you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer,

[14] therefore I will do to the house which is called by my name, and in which you trust, and to the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I did to Shiloh.

[15] And I will cast you out of my sight, as I cast out all your kinsmen, all the offspring of Ephraim.

#### *Isaiah 1:16-20*

[16] Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes;

cease to do evil,

[17] learn to do good;

seek justice,

correct oppression;

defend the fatherless,

plead for the widow.

[18] "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD:

though your sins are like scarlet,

they shall be as white as snow;

though they are red like crimson,

they shall become like wool.

[19] If you are willing and obedient,

you shall eat the good of the land;

[20] But if you refuse and rebel,

you shall be devoured by the sword;

for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

The problem arises in that the prophets and many servants of God act righteously, they proclaim the word of God, but as a result, they suffer.

It therefore dawns upon us that suffering also takes place not simply from doing evil but from doing good. The very people that take on the burden of ascent, of rectifying the wrongs in the world suffer. It is for this reason that Jeremiah, in responding to

God's demand says "I am a lad (inexperienced)" (Jeremiah 1:6); Moses says send someone else, (Exodus 4:13) and Amos, (3:8; 7:15) describes it as an overpowering experience over which he has no control. Jeremiah clearly shows the agony of the prophet:

#### *Jeremiah 20:7-9*

[7] O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived;

thou art stronger than I,

and thou hast prevailed.

I have become a laughingstock all the day;

every one mocks me.

[8] For whenever I speak, I cry out,

I shout, "Violence and destruction!"

For the word of the LORD has become for me

a reproach and derision all day long.

[9] If I say, "I will not mention him,

or speak any more in his name,"

there is in my heart as it were a burning fire

shut up in my bones,

and I am weary with holding it in,

and I cannot.

The midrash in confronting the suffering of the righteous specifically affirm that the righteous MUST suffer. Because it is only by the righteous taking upon themselves the burden of ascent, that the Messianic age can be ushered in. It is the great merit of Slonimsky in his brilliant essay, "The Philosophy Implicit in the Midrash" that these doctrines are carefully explored: the Midrash states:

R. Jonathan said: "A potter does not test defective vessels, because he cannot give them a single blow without breaking them. Similarly God does not test the wicked but only the righteous, thus the Lord trieth the righteous." R. Jose b. R. Hanina said: "When a flax-worker knows that his flax is of good quality, the more he pounds it the more it improves and the more it glistens; but if it is of inferior quality he cannot beat it at all without its splitting. Similarly the Lord does not test the wicked but only the righteous, as it says The Lord trieth the righteous." R. Eleazer said: "When a man possesses two cows, one strong and the other feeble, upon which does he put the yoke? Surely upon the strong one. Similarly the Lord tests none but the righteous; hence The Lord trieth the righteous."

The answer to the question why the good must suffer for the inadequacies of the world would be the fact that the world is growing, developing, and therefore inevitably defective, and there must be someone noble enough to assume the burden, as exemplification of a new insight, namely that nobility obligates, *noblesse oblige*."

"The sentiment gradually established itself that it is a mark of

the grandeur of man to be asked to bear more than his share of the burden; and by the same token that the supreme degradation of the low and the base is to be thought not worthy of being ennobled through bearing the sins and sorrows of others.’<sup>5</sup>

Thus, Slonimsky notes that these sufferings bring us closer to God when we do His work, by taking on that which goes beyond our own personal world. “. . . The great tragedy of those who will not take that upon themselves this burden is that “in a growing world like ours, only when the old self is crushed and broken can a higher self emerge, and only if we transcend and forget the petty arithmetic of our private life and go on to include and assume the burdens of others do we rise to a higher life.”<sup>6</sup>

The great merit of the Book of Job is to conclusively demonstrate that there is no mechanical connection between suffering and sin; on the contrary, there may be great suffering as the result of doing good. The Prophets testify to this, for Justice is not a fact It is a task, an accomplishment that human beings must take upon themselves. That is why God, when speaking directly to Job, *goes from the Interrogative to the Imperative* and says that he must take upon himself the burden of making the world better—a historical burden human beings must bear and carry on the work of creation.

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<sup>5</sup> H. SLONIMSKY, “The Philosophy Implicit in the Midrash,” in *Essays*, 8.

<sup>6</sup> H. SLONIMSKY, *Essays*, 38.



# CC

Centro Conferences

## Renewed Mission of the WCC in the Search for Christian Unity

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(Lecture given at the **Centro Pro Unione**, Thursday, 20 January 2011)

### Introduction

It is a great honour and privilege to speak at the *Centro Pro Unione*, such an important place in the history of the ecumenical movement. I am coming after significant others, who have been here in significant moments of the Ecumenical Movement. It is a source of pride that the WCC, particularly through Dr Visser 't Hooft, played such a pivotal role in conversations with the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, particularly with Cardinal Bea, to ensure the presence of ecumenical observers at the Second Vatican Council. People like Lukas Vischer and Dr Nikos Nissiotis were present in this room with other ecumenical observers, to meet with Cardinal Bea and Bishop Willebrands. I myself have had the privilege to work together with Dr Puglisi, the present director of the Centre. I am impressed by the high quality of the work done here to strengthen the ecumenical dialogues by providing studies of high quality, material for studies, and spaces for ecumenical encounters, like today. To use an analogy drawn from church architecture, one could say that this *Centro* is like the “apse”—*una bella abside*—of the emerging theological methodology of ecumenical dialogue which has shaped the churches ever since.

I am also aware of the significance of being here at this time, in this week. There is a historic relationship between the *Centro Pro Unione* and the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The *Centro* is a ministry of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement who trace their beginnings to the Anglican monastic community of Father Paul Wattson, who left us with the gift of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 1908. I am also aware of the significance of being here at this time, in this week.

Addressing Christian unity in a context which bespeaks both ecumenical theology and spiritual ecumenism signals a healthy tension, but one that is held in a fine balance by the Friars of the Atonement who support the theological work of the *Centro*, and also the spiritual ecumenism associated with the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Ecumenical theology has provided us with a vision and models of the unity of the churches, tools with which much can be done to overcome those things that continue to divide. Such a vision was articulated exactly fifty years ago at the New Delhi Assembly of the WCC in 1961:

We believe that the unity which is both God's will and his gift to his church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people.

This remains one of the classic definitions of the church united, in all places, also in Rome. It was borne out of profound theological reflection and dialogue. This is a vision of how we are in Christ. Even more, it can lead to an attitude of commitment to this fellowship, an attitude of mutual accountability for one another for what we all have received through Christ. This is at the same time an attitude of accountability to the world that desperately needs to be sharing in these gifts.

Work for Christian unity is rooted in prayer. Abbé Paul Courtier clarified what was being prayed for in 1935, namely that unity for which Christ prayed, “as Christ wishes and by the means which he desires.” Such a prayerful, spiritual ecumenism puts into perspective all our ecumenical work. Unity is fundamentally a gift of God, in response to the prayer given by the grace of the Holy Spirit. The unity for which we pray may not be the model that the WCC at New Delhi proposed, nor as even documents of the Second Vatican Council propose, nor anyone else's vision or model, for that matter; unity will be as Christ wills it and prays for it and by the means which he desires. Placing the work for Christian unity within the context of prayer for unity saves us from the dangers of ecumenical-Pelagianism and ecumenical triumphalism.

You have asked me to speak about the search for Christian unity and the mission of the WCC within that search. But in offering these reflections to you within the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at the *Centro Pro Unione*, I keep in mind that

they need to be kept in balance within the broader framework of that spiritual ecumenism which is also a gift of the Atonement Friars through their founder, Father Paul Wattson.

### **The mission of the World Council of Churches**

I am not sure that I am entirely comfortable with the title of this presentation: “The renewed mission of the WCC in the search for Christian unity”, unless the word “renewed” is understood as *paradosis* or tradition. I am less hesitant about the word “renew” if it is not understood as new; but as development, for without question the WCC has continued to develop as it has responded to vastly different contexts since 1948. I would assert, however, that the fundamental mission of the World Council of Churches in 2011 remains the same as it was in the beginning. As described in the Constitution:

The World Council of Churches is constituted by the churches to serve the one ecumenical movement. It incorporates the work of the world movements for Faith and Order and Life and Work, the International Missionary Council, and the World Council of Christian Education.

The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.

This introduction to the Constitution and Rules of the World Council of Churches, which has its roots in Edinburgh 1910, remains the guiding mission statement of the WCC. Any space also the ecumenical space between us in the WCC must be defined. It cannot be an empty space.

However, the ecumenical landscape since 1910 has changed enormously and indeed since the foundation of the WCC in 1948, and the New Delhi statement of 1961, and the Second Vatican Council. There are new ecumenical partners: Will the increasing engagement with the WCC and the ecumenical movement by the Pentecostals and Evangelicals have a comparable impact on the movement as did the engagement of the Catholic Church following the Second Vatican Council? We shall see. The shift of the Christian center of gravity from the Global North to the Global South has had tremendous ecumenical impacts which are only just beginning to be realized. The phenomenon of migration in significant ways recasts the language of global north and south, and poses ecumenical, pastoral and ecclesiological challenges. The financial crisis continues to have an impact on the ecumenical movement. And, there is the so-called “winter of ecumenism”. As a Norwegian I have though, always seen winter as a season we have to be living in – which also belongs to our lives, and which has its specialties. A time to do something else – to plan for the summer – even rest with nature, waiting for the spring we know will

always come. But, nonetheless, the ecumenical movement does not have the same resources and maybe not the same energy today as it did a generation ago.

In certain Christian contexts, the call to Christian unity is met with skepticism, if not hostility. In the face of so many pressing concerns and complexities around justice and peace, including care for the environment, is work and prayer for Christian unity a luxury we can still afford? As financial commitments are reduced to ecumenical organizations such as the WCC, or to ecumenical institutes or even ecumenical offices within the churches, it is quite literally something the churches do not seem to be able to afford in the same way as before. Let me, however, turn the question around: In a time of so many pressing concerns, do we not need the willingness to be one even more? Do we not see examples of the churches’ readiness to be one in many occasions – addressing injustice, climate change, violence, immigration?

The call to Christian unity remains. It is a not simply an interest of some scholars, students, clergy and faithful, those who care about such things. Rather, the call to be one remains a gospel imperative, rooted in the prayer of Jesus Christ that his disciples may be one so that the world may believe.

Clearly, within the new context, the instruments and organizations that have responsibilities for the quest toward Christian unity are experiencing change. We know this in the WCC with financial cuts which affect programmed and staffing levels. The WCC is no longer the funding organization that it once was.

The WCC today needs to be defined, an accent on the fellowship of the churches. This corresponds to a long process. At the 1975 WCC Assembly in Nairobi an amendment was made to the constitution which said:

The World Council of Churches is constituted for the following functions and purposes: 1) to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship...

Following a lengthy consultative process which produced the *Common Understanding and Vision* (CUV) of the WCC in 1997, the 1998 Harare Assembly made a subtle but significant change to the purpose of the WCC as articulated in the constitution. Rather than the WCC calling the churches to the goal of visible unity, the revised constitution says: “The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to *call one another* to visible unity in one faith and in one eucharistic fellowship.” It is not the WCC that calls the churches to the goal of visible; it is the fellowship of the churches which calls one another. The churches are the principal agents in calling each other to this gospel imperative.

On the one hand, the present constitution describes the responsibilities of the churches; the churches *through* the WCC will:

- Promote the prayerful search for forgiveness and reconciliation in a spirit of mutual accountability, the development of

deeper relationships through theological dialogue, and the sharing of human, spiritual and material resources with one another;

- Facilitate common witness in each place and in all places, and support each other in their work for mission and evangelism;
- Express their commitment to diakonia in serving human need, breaking down barriers between people, promoting one human family in justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation, so that all may experience the fullness of life;
- Nurture the growth of an ecumenical consciousness through processes of education and a vision of life in community rooted in each particular cultural context;
- Assist each other in their relationships to and with people of other faith communities;
- Foster renewal and growth in unity, worship, mission and service.

On the other hand, in order to strengthen the one ecumenical movement, the WCC has its particular areas of responsibility. The Council will as a response to the call be one:

- Nurture relations with and among churches, especially within but also beyond its membership;
- Establish and maintain relations with national councils, regional conferences of churches, organizations of Christian world communions and other ecumenical bodies;
- Support ecumenical initiatives at regional, national and local levels;
- Facilitate the creation of networks among ecumenical organizations;
- Work towards maintaining the coherence of the one ecumenical movement in its diverse manifestations.

This is ambitious, and should be so. Since the financial crisis of 2008—ten years after Harare—the vision of the CUV borne out of the context of the 1980s and 1990s achieved a new level of pertinence, and a renewed accent on the churches as the primary agents is imperative, with the WCC in a facilitating, supporting, nurturing, convening and coordinating role.

### **Mutual accountability**

The constitution of the WCC speaks of a spirit of mutual accountability in terms of “the prayerful search for forgiveness and reconciliation.” Mutual accountability is a theme which holds together many of the varied dimensions of the search for Christian unity. Mutual accountability is also a vision about how we work together in the ecumenical movement as a demonstration that we are one. It is an ecumenical attitude required wherever we are and on our way towards unity. This is a theme which I believe belongs at the heart of the mission of the WCC in the search for Christian unity. It has been a substantial part of my own theological reflection on ecumenism, particularly as it

has been addressed by Commission on Faith and Order, of which I was a member before my election as general secretary.

The key recommendation that I take away from my study of the work of the Commission on Faith and Order between 1948 and 1998 is the need to strengthen mutual accountability as an expression of the relations between churches. This implies that to be a church means being mutually accountable to other Christian churches. We cannot be church alone in the world—because we have received the same gifts from Christ and the same calling from Christ. The most profound meaning of being mutually accountable in an ecumenical relationship, therefore, is to be accountable to God, and to share in the gifts of God, and to share the gifts of God with all who need them. Mutual accountability may thus be seen as a criterion for all ecumenical efforts, a quality of the relationship called *koinonia* in faith, life and witness.

The accent on mutual accountability is one of the significant features of the 2006 Porto Alegre statement, “Called to be the one Church” where it connects the theological theme of catholicity with the practical imperatives of mutual accountability:

7. The relationship among churches is dynamically interactive. Each church is called to mutual giving and receiving gifts and to *mutual accountability*. Each church must become aware of all that is provisional in its life and have the courage to acknowledge this to other churches. Even today, when eucharistic sharing is not always possible, divided churches express mutual accountability and aspects of catholicity when they pray for one another, share resources, assist one another in times of need, make decisions together, work together for justice, reconciliation, and peace, hold one another accountable to the discipleship inherent in baptism, and maintain dialogue in the face of differences, refusing to say “I have no need of you” (1 Cor.12:21). Apart from one another we are impoverished.<sup>1</sup>

The call for mutual accountability corresponds to a *calling to the churches* to manifest the unity given to the church by the triune God. There is, therefore a *moral* perspective to the communion of churches. The marks of mutual accountability are reliability, faithfulness, trustfulness, solidarity, openness and ability to give and take constructive critique. In developing the servant leadership of the churches such mutual accountability presupposes a willingness to be examined, even criticized, for all aspects of the life of the church, from its liturgy to its standards of being corruption-free. It is openness to hearing truth from the other spoken to our power.

Mutual accountability is thus about how we work together in the ecumenical movement. Being accountable to one another as

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/assembly/porto-alegre-2006/1-statements-documents-adopted/christian-unity-and-message-to-the-churches/called-to-be-the-one-church-as-adopted.html>



churches and Christians also means taking seriously conflict as we seek to give account to each other about our concerns, our positions, and our intentions. To be a church means being mutually accountable to other Christian churches. It means reliability, a commitment to listen and a willingness to criticize and to hear criticism constructively.

At least twice in the 20th century, in the struggles against Nazism and against apartheid, the fellowship of churches learned in a special way what it means to be truly mutually accountable: the importance of affirming a clear “yes” to one another, as well as a clear “no” when accountability to the marginalized and excluded is threatened. Such affirmations were not arrived at without conflict within the fellowship of churches about how to stand up for one another, and for humanity created in God’s image.

After the Second World War, in response to a visit in October 1945 by the World Council of Churches (still in process of formation), the council of the Evangelical Church in Germany issued the Stuttgart Declaration of guilt. In this, they described themselves as being not only in a community of suffering, but also in a solidarity of guilt with the German people: “With great anguish we state: Through us, inestimable suffering was inflicted on many peoples and lands ... We charge ourselves for not having confessed more courageously, prayed more conscientiously, believed more joyously and loved more ardently”.<sup>2</sup> This deep expression of mutual accountability between churches inside Germany and those outside was a first step towards rebuilding their relationship, through acknowledging the suffering that had gone before, not seeking to play it down.

In the apartheid era, the WCC and individual communions did not choose the easy way when the unity of the church was threatened. They did not play down apartheid for the sake of a superficial unity. They not only declared apartheid a sin and a heresy, but actively stood on the side of the oppressed black and colored population. They accepted division for the sake of a deeper unity with God and with their oppressed sisters and brothers and the wider human fellowship. The fact that the black Reformed church today insists on nothing less than organic unity with the white Reformed church is a visible expression of this deeper, more costly unity.

Being accountable to one another as churches or as Christians can thus imply deep concerns as we seek to give account to each other, about our concerns, our positions, our intentions. As Emilio Castro, one of my predecessors as general secretary of the World Council of Churches, put it, “We cannot turn ecumenism into an exercise of mutual congratulation; it must be a true discipline of mutual questioning.”<sup>3</sup>

In the fellowship of churches in the WCC of global, ecumenical fellowship of churches, we become more mutually vulnerable

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<sup>2</sup> V. BARNETT, *For the soul of the people: Protestant Protest against Hitler* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 209.

<sup>3</sup> E. CASTRO, “Conflict and Reconciliation,” *The Ecumenical Review*, 25, 3 (1973) 289.

and much more sensitive to the other, but that also gives us a greater opportunity to achieve and to live the fullness of the gospel.

The calling to churches to be one means that we stand up for one another and for all human beings whom God has created. This insight needs to be grasped by the ecumenical movement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, seeing mutual accountability as an expression of the reality of communion in Christ, against the background of a globalization that leads to a fragmentation of societies and to the exclusion of more and more of the human family.

Every action in our life together as churches must have the aim to make us one - that the world may believe – and that God’s love for our divided humanity and for the wounded creation may be more clearly seen.

When we speak of “the ecumenical movement of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” we mean such walking together, particularly in the fast-moving, instant-communication global village of today and tomorrow. The World Council of Churches is called to give strategic leadership to this movement at the global level; such leadership belongs to the mission of the WCC in the search for Christian unity. Together, the fellowship of churches is called to create an open ecumenical space; to convene the mutually accountable encounters where we share what we have: resources and challenges, joys and burdens. We are called to encourage that openness to learn what we can from one another, to formulate and give our common witness to Jesus Christ together and together to give direction to our common movement and action.

The challenge of mutual accountability presents itself in several dimensions. Let me outline just three:

### **Mutual accountability and the diversity of and in churches**

The churches still have a way to go before we have a full mutual recognition of one another as churches. Christian disunity separates and hurts Christians on all continents, and weakens our witness for justice and peace. We are closer in respect of mutual recognition of one another’s baptism, the spring of living water. Thanks to the hard work in ecumenical dialogues, much more can be shared today than could be in Amsterdam at the founding of the World Council of Churches in 1948. Next month, the Commission on Faith and Order study text on *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition* will be published, and this will be an historic sign post. But we can and we must go further, for the benefit of local churches divided, not to mention for families divided as they worship. At the same time churches and church communions face new threats to unity on ethical and moral issues.

### **Mutual accountability in one world: globalization, peace and development**

This world is torn apart by injustices and violations of human rights. The financial crisis makes some of the injustice worse. The poor get even poorer. We must powerfully address the greed and its consequences in this globalized world as they appear in the North – and in the South, in the East and in the West.

Together we need to respond to what people from Kiribati or from Greenland, and others, tell us about the effects of climate changes they see going on, hurting the indigenous peoples and the most vulnerable first and foremost. We need to counteract the destructive powers of stigmatization of people with HIV/Aids and other burdens carried by so many today. We need to listen carefully to God's call as it comes to us in the Bible and through the face and the need of our neighbour, as the global ecumenical community prepares to gather in Jamaica 2011 to work for a just peace, against the misuse of military, political, financial or even religious power. To address the violence people experience in their daily life – not to forget what particularly women experience in the closest relations of all – in the family. The convocation in Jamaica should be a new manifestation of how the different movements in the one ecumenical movement belong together. We work for peace together because we are called to be one.

### **Mutual accountability and a religiously plural society**

Almost 100 years after the meeting in Edinburgh where the churches agreed to be united in mission, we still have the same call to share the gospel. Today, however, we must also consider together, and with peoples of other faiths, how we can avoid our mission creating conflicts between human beings who have lived together and who must live together. The World Council of Churches plays an important role in the relations between world religions. One of its added values is a multilateral approach to other faiths because we are coming from so many contexts. Another is its common Christian ethos to be good neighbours to all peoples, no matter their faith: locally, nationally and globally. And together we can ask peoples of other faiths to be good neighbours to our Christian sisters and brothers, where they are so needed. It is also time for more solidarity between Christians. We hear how urgent is such solidarity today in Iraq, Pakistan, Egypt and other places. This means accompanying and advocating with one another, being warm in our love for all, both the Jewish and the Palestinian people, and clear in our speech about sin, particularly when our Christian faith is abused to defend injustice.

Let us recall again, the "primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity." We are unable to escape from this calling to demonstrate that we are one: one in faith, in life and in witness. To work together on the issues that divide us demands that we are mutually accountable to each other - identifying, demonstrating and nourishing the attitudes that the unity of the church requires. Such work on the basis of mutual accountability is an important dimension of ecumenical ecclesiology, and is itself a way of establishing a quality of relationships within the church.

At the same time, the calling of the ecumenical movement does not have significance only when we succeed. Whether we are heard or not, our call is to carry the cross with one another. Are we willing to walk in the shoes of the marginalized and oppressed? Are we ready to carry the burden of distress when we

are not in agreement, are we prepared for the disappointments when we are unable to solve all the problems we are addressing? Whatever happens, it remains our call to carry the cross in our search for unity, in our witness, in our service. And we do it together, never alone.

In short, by practising mutual accountability, we discover what it is to be one, the blessings as well as the difficulties of being closer to one another, and we develop more fully the capacity to encourage the world to be one. The mission of the World Council of Churches in the quest for Christian unity includes providing an ecumenical space where we can give account of our concerns, our positions and our intentions; a space that helps us to act together, "that the world might believe."

### **The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2011: Jerusalem**

In an ecumenical movement based on the prayer of Christ that we may be one, we need to find ways to pray together, and to pray for one another. We need an ecumenical space before God in prayer where we can give account to one another of our concerns, our positions and our intentions, all of which belongs to the practice of mutual accountability.

The prayer of Christ that we may be one transforms us, in our personal relationship with the triune God and with one another. In an ecumenical movement based on this prayer, we pray together and pray for one another. This year, the call to prayer for unity to churches all over the world comes from the churches in Jerusalem. The choice of Jerusalem this year was intentional, as the witness of this particular Christian community has a role to play in this year of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation that will be convened by the WCC at Kingston, Jamaica in May.

I believe that Jerusalem is a source, matrix and paradigm of the search for Christian unity. As the 2011 text of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity states:

The churches in Jerusalem today offer us a vision of what it means to strive for unity, even amid great problems. They show us that the call to unity can be more than mere words, and indeed that it can point us toward a future where we anticipate and help build the heavenly Jerusalem.

In Jerusalem and throughout the Middle East, and elsewhere in the world, there are situations where it is very clear that many are suffering from what others have done elsewhere in the world. We are also seeing very clearly that the church is a part of this story in many ways, and it continues to be as we know from Pakistan, Iraq and most recently, Egypt.

There are different ways of being church, but I am more and more convinced that Jerusalem can teach us once more what it means to be a church, reminding us that we find in the same church in Jerusalem in the Holy Sepulchre, both the place of the crucifixion of Christ and the empty tomb. Jerusalem holds before us the very sources of our faith. It reminds us that there is

no meaning in the cross without the empty tomb; and that the empty tomb has a deep meaning only because it is in same church as the cross. This is the living witness the churches in Jerusalem give in their very buildings, but especially in the life of their people. Everything that they represent is a witness to all of us about the origins of our faith, why we are church, but also about what it means to be church, to carry the cross and to live the life of the resurrection today.

While the call to pray for Christian unity comes from Jerusalem, our source, matrix and paradigm of Christian unity, it is also a city of pain and division. It is a city of contradictions: Jerusalem is not the city of peace, it is not the city of justice, and it is not the city of joy. Praying with the churches of Jerusalem is also a call to work for the peace of Jerusalem, and to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. We as Christians must promote a vision of Jerusalem as a holy city shared by three religions, Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Such prayer belongs to mutual accountability. As the WCC Assembly at Porto Alegre reminded us:

Divided churches express mutual accountability and aspects of catholicity when they pray for one another, share resources, assist one another in times of need, make decisions together, work together for justice, reconciliation and peace, hold one another accountable to the discipleship inherent in baptism. . .

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, rooted in Jesus' prayer for such unity on the night before his suffering and death, is about mutual accountability. The call to pray for unity from the churches of Jerusalem, within the year of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Jamaica, is about mutual accountability and peace-building. We are called to be one, so that the world may believe. . . that peace is possible.