



VICOMTE LEON DE PONCINS is descended from an old and distinguished French family, having a long tradition in the study of spiritual and political subversion. His paternal great grand-father was killed fighting against the 1789 Revolution, and his maternal great grand-father was imprisoned by Napoleon for his support of the monarchy.

The author himself, while refraining from all direct contact with political activity, has written nearly twenty books dealing with specific aspects of the problem of subversion in the modern world, and outside France, his works have been published in England, Germany, Italy, Spain, Brazil, Hungary, Bulgaria and Portugal. Before the last war, he founded and directed the famous review *Contre-Révolution*, which was published from Geneva in Switzerland.

During the Second World War he was enlisted in French Military Intelligence in which he served until the Liberation. Later the Liberation Authorities brought an unsuccessful prosecution against him for alleged treason in respect of some of his writings but it was found that he had merely published texts by eminent Jewish scholars, the authenticity of which were incontestable.

Of all who have attacked the problem of political and spiritual subversion in the modern world, none has won more universal acclaim by his penetrating logic and strict impartiality than Vicomte de Poncins.

DE PONCINS

JUDAISM AND THE VATICAN

CBC

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VICOMTE LEON DE PONCINS

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JUDAISM *and the* VATICAN

AN ATTEMPT AT
SPIRITUAL SUBVERSION

*Translated from the
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VICOMTE LÉON DE PONCINS
by
Timothy Tindal-Robertson

Christian Book Club of America
Post Office Box 900566
Palmdale, California 93590-0566

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"It is a vital principle never to deform the truth. Truth is always fundamental for all responsible men. It should always prevail."

Pope John XXIII

"It is a veritable competition as to who can make the Jews appear most hateful. Richly chequered and pathetic as is the narrator of the fourth Gospel (St. John), the palm goes to Matthew; his unerring hand unleashed the poisoned arrow that can never be withdrawn."

Jules Isaac: *Jésus et Israel*, p. 483

"Professor Isaac, a distinguished French-Jewish historian . . . devoted the last years of his life to a study of the religious roots of anti-Semitism. He had audiences with the late Popes Pius XII and John XXIII, the latter being of considerable importance and leading to subsequent emendation of certain passages offensive to Jews in the Roman liturgy."

Jewish Chronicle 29th October 1965, p. 14

". . . the permanent and latent source of anti-Semitism is none other than Christian religious teaching of every description, and the traditional, tendentious interpretations of the Scriptures."

Jules Isaac: *Jésus et Israel*, p. 572

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DEDICATED

*To the Memory of the Church Fathers who
constructed Christian civilisation.*

PART I

THE "TEACHING OF CONTEMPT"

I

THE JEWISH QUESTION AND THE COUNCIL

"The Ecumenical Council's Declaration on the Church and non-Christians lifting the charge of collective guilt from the Jewish people was impudent, cheap politics, and an insult to God," said Dr. Eliezer Berkovitz, Professor of Jewish Philosophy at the Jewish University of America, in Toronto last week.

"He said that Christianity was spread throughout Europe not by the Gospel but by the sword, and the spirit of ecumenism and interfaith understanding now put forward was little more than a public relations stunt."

Jewish Chronicle, 28th January, 1966, p. 17

"The Gospel version of the Jesus trial, as presented to us by the scribes of the Bishop of Rome as the great judicial event of the first century, is terrifying in its cunning malevolence."

D. G. Runes: *The Jew and the Cross*, 1965, p. 26

"The difficult and slow process of building a happier relationship between Christian and Jew can only proceed if stereotypes and prejudices are cast aside and replaced by rational and intelligent reappraisal. It is essential that we understand more about each other. We must talk, but conversation does not mean conversion."

Jewish Chronicle editorial, 27th January, 1967

ON the 19th November 1964, the bishops and cardinals of the Catholic Church gathered in Council at Rome passed by an overwhelming majority the Schema dealing with the attitude of the Church towards Judaism.

Le Monde of the 27th November referred to the violent reactions provoked by this vote among the Eastern Rite Catholic churches and among the Arab states.

The article concluded with a post-script from the paper's Rome correspondent, H. Fesquet, who was considered the spokesman for Father Congar, the leader of the Catholic progressive wing. Fesquet began by recalling that conciliar votes are secret, and then went on to add:

"Ninety-nine Fathers voted 'No'. One thousand six hundred and fifty-one voted 'Yes' and two hundred and forty-two voted 'Yes' with reservations. Moreover, this was only a provisional vote, and the final ballot will take place at the end of the fourth session of the Council in 1965.

"In the general assembly the Eastern bishops intervened as a body, saying that they were opposed in principle to a declaration on the Jews by the Council. We can therefore conjecture that the ninety-nine Fathers who had voted in the negative were in the main the Eastern ones."

The following is a passage taken from the text of the declaration on the Jews voted by the Council Fathers on the 20th November 1964:

". . . Since such is the inheritance accepted by Christians from the Jews, this holy Council resolves expressly to further and to recommend reciprocal understanding and appreciation, to be obtained by theological study and fraternal discussion and, beyond that, inasmuch as it severely disapproves of any wrong inflicted upon men wheresoever, it equally deplores and condemns hatred and maltreatment (vexationem) of Jews. . . .

"Everyone should be careful, therefore, not to expose the Jewish people as a rejected nation, be it in catechetical tuition, in preaching of God's Word or in worldly conversation, nor should anything be said or done which may alienate the minds of men from the Jews. Equally, all should be on their guard not to impute to the Jews of our time that which was perpetrated in the Passion of Christ."

(*The Tablet*, 26th September 1964, p. 1094—the revised text on the agenda for the third session)

At first sight, this motion seems to conform to the unchanging doctrine of the Church which, while striving to protect the Christian community against Jewish influences, has always condemned persecution, a fact which has indeed been candidly acknowledged by a Jewish writer, Max I. Dimont:

"Popes and princes of the Middle Ages could have wiped out the Jews completely had they wanted to, but they did not want to. . . . When, because of social, economic, or even religious pressures, the presence of the Jews became unwanted, they were banished, not killed. The Church endowed all human beings with a soul, and it took a man's life only to save his soul. It was only when religion lost its deterrent hold on man that Western society could entertain the idea of coolly murdering millions because it felt there was no room for them."

(M. I. Dimont: *Jews, God and History*, p. 286)

In fact, however, the motion voted on in Rome implies that the majority of the Council Fathers are under a serious misapprehension as to what constitutes the very essence of Judaism. It would seem that they have only applied themselves to the humanitarian aspect of the problem skilfully submitted by the spokesmen of World Jewry and by a Press largely favourable to Jewish interests.

The truth, it is suggested, is that a number of Jewish organisations and personalities are behind the reforms which were proposed at the Council with a view to modifying the Church's attitude and time-honoured teaching about Judaism: Jules Isaac, Label Katz, President of the B'nai B'rith, Nahum Goldman, President of the World Jewish Congress, etc.

These reforms are very important because they suggest that for two thousand years the Church had been mistaken and that she must make amends and completely reconsider her attitude to the Jews.

Among the Catholic laity, a similar campaign is being carried on by progressive prelates who, taking their stand on the historical fact

that Christianity is in direct line of descent from Judaism, claim a toleration for Jews, which the latter as we shall see, are far from professing with regard to Christians. In actual fact, for both parties, it is a weapon designed to overthrow traditional Catholicism, which they consider the chief enemy.

Of the Jewish personalities mentioned above, there was one who played a vital role: the writer, Jules Isaac, of Aix-en-Provence, who died recently. He was at one time Inspector-General of Public Education in France and the author of academic books on history.

Isaac turned the Council to advantage, having found there considerable support among progressive bishops. In fact he became the principal theorist and promoter of the campaign being waged against the traditional teaching of the Church.

This is the gist of his thesis:

We must have done with anti-Semitism, the logical outcome of which was the liquidation of European Jews at Auschwitz and other death camps during the Second World War.

According to him, the most dangerous form of anti-Semitism is Christian anti-Semitism, which is fundamentally theological. Indeed, the Christian attitude to Judaism has always been based on the account of the Passion as described by the four Evangelists and as commented on by the Fathers of the Church such as St. John Chrysostom, St. Ambrose, St. Augustine, Pope Gregory the Great, St. Agobard, Primate of the Gauls, and many others.

Thus it is this theological foundation that Jules Isaac sought to undermine in disputing the historical value of the Gospel accounts and in discrediting the arguments advanced by the Fathers of the Church to protect Christians from being influenced by the Jews who were charged with everlasting plotting against the Christian order.

Now let us consider in detail what steps Jules Isaac took, both in the Vatican and in the heart of the Council, to get his views accepted.

After the disappearance of his wife and daughter, who died during deportation, he dedicated the last twenty years of his life to a critical study of relations between Judaism and Christianity, and to this end he wrote two important books, *Jésus et Israël*, first published in 1946 and republished in 1959, and *Genèse de l'Antisémitisme*, first published in 1948 and republished in 1956.

In these books Jules Isaac fiercely censures Christian teaching, which he says has been the source of modern anti-Semitism, and preaches, though it would be more correct to say he demands, the "purification" and "amendment" of doctrines two thousand years old. Further on we shall briefly examine these two books; for the

moment let us continue our review of the part played by Jules Isaac in bringing the Jewish question to the attention of the Council.

As early as the end of the war he began organising both national and international gatherings attended by sympathetic Catholics who were favourably disposed towards his arguments.

In 1947,¹ following Judaeo-Catholic dialogues of this kind, which were attended, among the Jews, by Edmond Fleg and Samy Lattés, and among the Catholics, by Henri Marrou, Father Daniélou, and the Abbé Vieillard of the Episcopal Secretariat, he drew up an 18 point memorandum on "The rectification of Christian teaching concerning Israel".

The same year he was invited to the international conference in Seelisberg in Switzerland attended by seventy members from nineteen countries, among whom were Father Callixte Lopinot, Father Demann, Pastor Freudenberg and the Grand Rabbi Kaplan. In general session the conference adopted the "Ten Points of Seelisberg", which suggested to the Christian Churches measures to be adopted to purify religious teaching concerning the Jews.

Then Jules Isaac established the first Judaeo-Christian friendship society with the help of the Grand Rabbi of France and his assistant, Jacob Kaplan, and the Jews Edmond Fleg and Leon Algazi, Catholic friends such as Henri Marrou, Jacques Madaule, Jacques Nantet, and Protestant friends such as Professor Lovsky and Jacques Martin. The society's regulations debarred members from trying to convert one another, and its establishment was soon followed by others in Aix, Marseilles, Nîmes, Montpellier, Lyons and lastly in Lille, where Jules Isaac secured the help of a nun of Dom Bosco's order and the support of Cardinal Liénart. Later on he founded another in North Africa.

In 1949 he made contacts with the clergy in Rome, and through them he was able to obtain a private audience with Pius XII, to whom he pleaded on behalf of Judaism, asking him to have the "Ten Points of Seelisberg" examined.

In 1959 he held a conference at the Sorbonne on the need for revising Christian teaching on the Jews and he closed with an appeal to Pope John's sense of justice and love of truth.

Shortly afterwards he met several prelates of the Roman Curia, in particular Cardinals Tisserand, Jullie, Ottaviani, and Cardinal Bea; and on the 13th June 1960 he was granted an audience by the Pope, whom he asked to condemn the "teaching of contempt", suggesting

¹ All the following information is taken from statements made by Jules Isaac himself.

that a sub-commission should be set up specifically to study the problem.

Some time afterwards Jules Isaac "learned with joy that his suggestions had been considered by the Pope and handed on to Cardinal Bea for examination". The latter set up a special working party to study relations between the Church and Israel, which finally resulted in the Council vote on the 20th November 1964.

2

JULES ISAAC AND
THE EVANGELISTS

LET us now examine the objections to the Gospel writers raised by Jules Isaac, in particular with reference to their account of the Passion, and his objection to the Church Fathers whom he holds responsible for what he calls the "teaching of contempt" with which apparently the whole Christian mentality has been completely impregnated.

Jules Isaac frigidly denies that the account given by the Evangelists has any historical value:

"The historian has the right and the duty, an absolute duty, to regard the Gospel accounts as witnesses for the prosecution (against the Jews), with the aggravating drawback that they are the sole witnesses and that all four of them write from the same angle: we have no Jewish or pagan evidence for comparison or with which to weigh one against the other. Now this bias of the Gospel writers is nowhere more evident or more marked, this absence of non-Christian documentation is nowhere more deplorable, than in the story of the Passion. . . . But it is quite striking how all four writers are preoccupied with reducing Roman responsibility to the minimum in order correspondingly to increase that of the Jews. Moreover, they are not equally biased: in this respect Matthew is far and away the worst, not only worse than Mark or Luke but perhaps even worse than John. Is this so surprising? There are no more bitter opponents than brothers in enmity: now Matthew was a Jew, fundamentally a Jew, the most Jewish of the Evangelists, and according to an apparently well-founded tradition he wrote 'in Palestine and for the Palestinians' to prove from the Old Testament that Jesus was indeed the Messiah prophesied by the Scriptures. . . . But does the cause of historical truth derive any value from this? We are at liberty to doubt it. It is not at all surprising that of the three Synoptic writers Matthew is the most biased, his account of the Passion

being the most tendentious, while the most impartial in the circumstances—or the least biased—is Luke, the only non-Jewish Gospel writer, the only one of Gentile origin.

(Jules Isaac: *Jésus et Israël*, pp. 428-9)

"But let us not forget . . . that they are all in agreement in asserting that there, in Pilate's presence, at a unique moment in time, at an hour which struck once for all mankind and which means more to humanity than any other moment in the whole world, the whole Jewish people expressly and explicitly took on itself the responsibility of the innocent Blood, the total responsibility, the national responsibility. It remains to be shown to what degree the texts and the reality of which they give an indication warrant the appalling gravity of such an assertion.

(Jules Isaac, *ibid.*, p. 478)

"The Christian charge brought against Israel, that of deicide, an accusation of murder which is in itself murderous, is the most serious, the most injurious possible; it is also the most iniquitous.

"Jesus had been condemned to the agony of the Cross, a Roman punishment, by Pontius Pilate, the Roman Procurator.

"But the four evangelists, for once in agreement, state that Jesus was given up to the Romans by the Jews, and that, owing to irresistible pressure by the Jews, Pilate, although he wished to declare Jesus innocent, nevertheless had him put to death. Therefore, it is upon the Jews, not upon the Romans who were mere instruments, that responsibility for the Crime devolves, and it weighs them down with supernatural force and crushes them.

(Jules Isaac, *ibid.*, p. 567)

"At first sight we are impressed by the unanimity—at least on the surface—of the four evangelists on the point at issue, namely Jewish responsibility.

"That the Roman pronounced the death sentence under pressure from the Jews all four Gospel writers to be sure earnestly bear witness with one voice. But as their testimony is an indictment which is prejudiced and impassioned, circumstantial and belated, frankly speaking, we find it impossible to accept it without reservation.

(Jules Isaac, *ibid.*, p. 478)

"Matthew is the only one who recognised (xxvii. 24-25) that the Procurator Pilate ceremoniously washed his hands according to Jewish custom to rid himself of the guilt of innocent blood