Declaration for the Upcoming Jubilee of Brotherhood

30.11.2015 | Jean-François Bensahel, Philippe Haddad, Rivon Krygier, Raphy Marciano, and Franklin Rausky

On November 23, 2015 at the Collège des Bernardins in Paris, the "Declaration for the Upcoming Jubilee of Brotherhood," signed by various persons of the French Jewish world (Jean-François Bensahel, Rabbi Philippe Haddad, Rabbi Rivon Krygier, Raphy Marciano, Franklin Rausky), was presented by the Chief Rabbi of France, Haim Korsia to Cardinal André Vingt-Trois, the Archbishop of Paris. An unofficial English translation of the statement follows.

So I will make pure the speech of the peoples, that they all may call upon the name of the LORD,

and serve Him with one heart." (Zephaniah 3.9).

We, Jews of France, signatories of this declaration, express the joy of celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration Nostra Aetate composed at the Second Vatican Council, which opened an era of reconciliation between Jews and Christians. For us, this anniversary marks not only the culmination of a Jubilee of reconciliation. It should also be the beginning of another. We understand this as a sacred calling, as a pivotal moment, as a challenge and a commitment.

What have we Jews learned from you Christians during these last 50 years?

That the Catholic Church, but also Protestant churches and prominent members of the Orthodox and Anglican Churches, decided to go back to the Jewish sources and values enshrined in the heart of the identity of Jesus and the apostles.

In a move whose sincerity has been proven, the Church has made a decisive turning point of theological significance. Now, for her, the Jewish people are not held responsible for the death of Jesus; Christian faith does not cancel or supersede the covenant established between God and the people of Israel; anti-Judaism, which has often been the seedbed of antisemitism, and was once able to feed into doctrinal teaching, is a sin; the Jewish people are no longer considered an outcast people; and the State of Israel is now recognized by the Vatican.

This reversal is not only for us Jews a happy realization. It also shows an unusual ability for self-criticism in the name of the most fundamental religious and ethical values. It sanctifies God's name, forever commands respect, and constitutes a precedent of exemplary character for all religions and spiritual beliefs on the planet.

What can we, the Jews, hope to build with you Christians in the next 50 years?

What is our duty, now that the highest representatives of Christian institutions have expressed the

wish to be replanted, to be regrafted onto the trunk of Israel? To welcome Christianity as the religion of our brothers and sisters in synergy with Judaism.

We, the undersigned, recognize, with the support of historical research, that rabbinic Judaism and Christianity of the [patristic] councils were built in the past upon opposition, in contempt and hatred. The Jews have often paid a high price through persecution. These twenty centuries of denial have made us forget the essential reality: our ways, although irreducibly distinctive, are complementary and convergent. Do we not, in fact, both hold the supreme hope that the history of mankind has the same horizon, that of the universal brotherhood of humanity gathered around the One and Only God? We must work together, more than ever, hand in hand.

We Jews are working on this through the study of the Torah, the practice of mitzvot, that is to say, the divine commandments, by teaching the wisdom that follows from it, and aims at the transformation of hearts and minds. You, Christians are working on this through the reception of the Word that gives you that higher existence, the elevation of the heart and mind. Theological differences should not make us forget that many Christian teachings are in perfect agreement with those of rabbinic tradition.

The Jubilee that begins bids us to work together to build this universal brotherhood and to achieve a common ethic, valid for the whole world. We must learn to get rid of the prejudices that over time became embedded in our respective consciences about what the other believes, thinks, and does in order to better listen to what each religion says of itself and its plan for the respect and prosperity of all humanity. We must now strive to better understand each other, to appreciate, esteem, and love the other for what he or she is and accomplishes.

The brotherhood between Jews and Christians is a first step and an invitation to make dialogue among all religions and spiritualities the cornerstone of a reconciled and pacified humanity. May this live in the heart of our prayers.

For the French original please see here on JCR.

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