



New Vatican Document on the Importance of the Jewish Scriptures for the Church

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The Pontifical Biblical Commission has published a 200-page study entitled *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (Vatican Press, 2002). The Commission is presided over by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and is composed of 20 leading biblical scholars, who were appointed by John Paul II at the cardinal's suggestion. It began its work in 1997.

The document states that in 'light of the Scripture, the rupture between the Church of Christ and the Jewish people should not have happened.' The warnings that the Christian Bible addresses to Jews should never be used 'as a pretext for anti-Judaism,' according to the document which notes that 'in the past, errors were committed by unilaterally insisting on the discontinuity' between the Jewish Bible (Old Testament) and the Christian Bible (Old and New Testament).

Cardinal Ratzinger invites Christians in his introduction to the study to recognize 'the Jewish reading of the Bible as a possible reading.' The document 'hopes to foster love toward the Jews in the Church of Christ,' following the 'abominable crimes' against them during World War II.

Chief Rabbi Joseph Levi of Florence stated, 'This is a total novelty.' He added that he is especially pleased with the objective of the document: to manifest officially 'the amazing force of the spiritual ties that unite the Church of Christ with the Jewish people.'

The first chapter states that the New Testament recognizes the authority of the Old Testament as divine revelation, and cannot be understood without being intimately related to it and with the Jewish tradition that transmitted it. The second chapter analyses how the writings of the New Testament accept the rich content of the Old. The third chapter records the extremely varied attitudes toward the Jews reflected in the New Testament, something which also occurs in the Old Testament.