



## Removing Anti-Jewish Polemic from our Christian Lectionaries: A Proposal

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**A New Testament scholar examines the problem of anti-Jewish polemic in the weekly scripture portions read in Catholic and Protestant churches and proposes a new lectionary that avoids such material.**

### Removing Anti-Jewish Polemic from our Christian Lectionaries: A Proposal

by Norman A. Beck

#### I. Defamatory Anti-Jewish Polemic in Christian Lectionaries

During the past few decades, increasing numbers of mature Christians who read and study the specifically Christian New Testament texts critically have become painfully aware of the supersessionistic and vicious, defamatory anti-Jewish polemic that is included in some of these texts. Although many Jews have been aware of these texts throughout the history of Christianity, most Christians have been insensitive to the nature of these texts and to the damage that these texts and the use of these texts have done to Jews throughout the history of Christianity and especially since the fourth century of the common era when mainline Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire.<sup>1</sup>

Our concern in this section of the present study is focused on the inclusion of these religiously racist defamatory anti-Jewish texts in our Christian lectionaries. We shall examine specific lectionaries here to document the extent of inclusion of defamatory anti-Jewish texts, focusing primarily on the so-called "historic pericopes" in the form in which they were used by the majority of Christians prior to 1969, in the *Lectionary for Mass* as it was used by Roman Catholic Christians during the mid-1980s, on the Lutheran adaptations of the *Lectionary for Mass* that are included in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978), and on the *Revised Common Lectionary* published by the Consultation on Common Texts in 1992.

The data base that will be used in this examination of these lectionaries will be the specific texts identified as most problematic in my two *Mature Christianity* books (see footnote) and particularly the texts relegated to small-print form with explanations in the prefaces and footnotes in my *The New Testament: A New Translation and Redaction*, Fairway Press (the academic subsidiary of CSS Publishing), Lima, Ohio, 2001. For the convenience of the reader of the present study, I am listing these most problematic texts here. They are present in six of the twenty-seven documents that comprise our New Testament. In addition, I have identified the instances in which all or portions of these texts are included in major lectionary series, according to the following code:

H The "Historic Pericopes"

M The Roman Catholic *Lectionary for Mass* as used during the 1980s

L Lutheran adaptations of the *Lectionary for Mass*, printed in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*

R The *Revised Common Lectionary*, 1992

In the seven letters written by the Apostle Paul and available to us as redacted by other early Christians after Paul had been killed by zealous advocates of Roman Civil Religion and in the six Pseudo-Pauline and Deutero-Pauline epistles, there are only four verses (1 Thessalonians 2:13-16) of virulent anti-Jewish polemic. These verses are a vicious condemnation of the Jews for killing the Lord Jesus and the prophets and a celebration of the suffering of the Jews now that the "wrath of God" has come upon them, almost certainly an interpolation into Paul's letter thirty years or more after the death of Paul, perhaps by the writer of the Acts of the Apostles or by some other early Christian influenced heavily by the Acts of the Apostles.

In the **Gospel According to Mark**, there are approximately 40 verses of defamatory anti-Jewish polemic. They follows:

MR	3:6	The Pharisees are said to have begun to plan to destroy Jesus
MLR	7:6-13	Condemnation of the Pharisees for rejecting the commandments
	8:15	Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees
MLR	10:2-5	The Pharisees are said to be hard-hearted
	14:55-65	The chief priests and council condemn Jesus as deserving death
MLR	15:1-15	The crowd demands that Jesus, not Barabbas, be crucified.

In the **Gospel According to Matthew**, there are approximately 80 verses of defamatory anti-Jewish polemic:

MLR	3:7c	The Pharisees and Sadducees are called poisonous snakes
	12:34a	The Pharisees are called evil poisonous snakes
	15:3-9	Condemnation of the Pharisees for rejecting the commandments
	15:12-14	The Pharisees are called blind guides leading the blind
	16:6	Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees
	19:3-9	The Pharisees are said to be hard-hearted
	19:28	The disciples of Jesus will judge the twelve tribes of Israel
HMLR	22:18c	The Pharisees are called hypocrites
	23:13-36	The scribes and Pharisees are repeatedly vilified as hypocrites
	23:38	The house of Jerusalem is to be forsaken and desolate
MLR	26:59-68	The chief priests and council condemn Jesus as deserving death
MLR	27:1-26	The people demand that Jesus, not Barabbas, be crucified
MLR	27:62-66	The chief priests and Pharisees request a guard at Jesus' tomb
LR	28:4	The guards tremble and become like dead when the angel appears
	28:11-15	The chief priest bribe the guards to lie about their actions.

In the **Gospel According to Luke**, there are approximately 60 verses of defamatory anti-Jewish polemic:

LR	3:7c	The multitudes are called poisonous snakes
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MLR	4:28-30	The members of the synagogue in Nazareth try to kill Jesus
	7:30	The Pharisees are said to have rejected the purposes of God
	11:39-54	The Pharisees and Torah scholars are repeatedly condemned
	12:1b	Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy
	13:14-17	The ruler of the synagogue is condemned as a hypocrite
LR	13:35a	The house of Jerusalem is to be forsaken
LR	22:63-71	The chief priests and council condemn Jesus as deserving death
LR	23:1-25	The people demand that Jesus, not Barabbas, be crucified.

In the **Gospel According to John**, there are approximately 130 verses of defamatory anti-Jewish polemic:

	5:16-18	The Jews are said to have persecuted Jesus and wanted to kill him
	5:37b-47	It is said that God's word and God's love is not in the Jews
	7:19-24	It is said that none of the Jews do (what is written in) the Torah
	7:28d	It is said that the Jews do not know the One who has sent Jesus
	8:13-28	It is said that the Pharisees know neither Jesus nor the Father
H	8:37-59	The Jews are said to be descendants of their father, the Devil
MLR	9:13-41	The Pharisees and other Jews are condemned as guilty
MLR	10:8	The Jews are said to be thieves and robbers
	10:10a	The Jews are depicted as those who steal and kill and destroy
	10:31-39	The Jews are said to have picked up stones to throw at Jesus
L	11:53	It is said that the Jews realized that they would have to kill Jesus
	11:57	It is said that the chief priests and Pharisees wanted to seize Jesus
	12:10	It is said that the chief priests planned to kill Lazarus and Jesus
	12:36b-43	It is said that most Jews loved the praise of men more than of God
H	16:2-4	(The Jews who) kill Jesus' disciples will think they are serving God
HMLR	18:28-32	The Jews are said to have demanded that Pilate sentence Jesus to death
HMLR	18:38b-40	The Jews are said to be demanding that Jesus, not Barabbas, be crucified
HMLR	19:4-16	The Jews are depicted as insisting to Pilate that Jesus be crucified.

In the **Acts of the Apostles** there are approximately 140 verses of defamatory anti-Jewish polemic, included in 28 chapters of that document:

MLR	2:23b	Peter tells the men of Israel that they crucified Jesus
MLR	2:36b	Again Peter tells the men of Israel that they crucified Jesus
MLR	3:13b-15a	Peter tells the men of Israel that they killed the originator of life
MLR	4:10a	Again Peter tells the men of Israel that they killed Jesus
MLR	5:30b	Peter tells the members of the Jewish council that they killed Jesus
	6:11-14	Some Jews are said to have brought false accusations against Stephen
MLR	7:51-60	Stephen shown as condemning the Jews for betraying and killing Jesus
LR	9:1-2	Paul is depicted as planning the arrest of disciples of Jesus
	9:23-25	Jews are said to have plotted to kill Paul
	9:29b	Jewish Hellenists are also said to have tried to kill Paul
	12:1-3a	It is said that the Jews were pleased when Herod killed James
	12:3b-4	Herod is said to have seized Peter also to please the Jews
	12:11	Peter is said to have realized that the Jews wanted to kill him
	13:10-11	Paul is said to have condemned the Jew Elymas as a son of the Devil
L	13:28-29a	It is said that the Jews had asked Pilate to crucify Jesus
	13:39d	It is said that Jews cannot be forgiven by means of the Torah
ML	13:45-46	Jews are said to have spoken against Paul
ML	13:50-51	Jews are said to have encouraged persecution of Paul and Barnabas
	14:1-6	Many Jews opposing Paul and Barnabas and attempting to stone them
	14:19-20	Jews are said to have stoned Paul, thinking that they had killed him

L	17:5-9	Jews are said to have incited a riot, looking for Paul and Silas
L	17:13	Jews are said to have stirred up turmoil against Paul
	18:6	Paul said to have told the Jews, "Your blood will be on your own heads!"
	18:12-17	Jews are said to have brought accusations against Paul
	19:13-19	Jewish exorcists are shown to be condemned
	21:27-36	Jews are depicted as seizing Paul and as trying to kill him
	22:4-5	Paul says that when he was a Jew he had persecuted Christians
	23:2-5	Paul is said to have condemned the chief priest for striking Paul
	23:12-22	Jews are said to have plotted to eat nothing until they kill Paul
	23:27-30	Paul is said to have been nearly killed by the Jews
	24:9	The Jews are said to have accused Paul of many crimes
	25:2-5	Jews are said to have plotted to kill Paul
	25:7-11	Jews are said to have continued to bring accusations against Paul
	25:15-21	Jews are said to have spoken repeatedly against Paul
	25:24	All Jews are said to have shouted that Paul must be killed
	26:21	The Jews are said to have seized Paul and tried to kill him
	28:25-28	Paul is said to have condemned the Jews for never understanding God.

A few observations may be helpful here in our analysis of the data provided above. By my calculations, the "historic pericopes" utilized approximately 4% of the Bible each year. Six "historic pericopes" texts include defamatory anti-Jewish polemic. Three of these six are in the passion account in the Gospel According to John read each year during the Good Friday services. The other three are in the question about paying taxes to Caesar text in Matthew 22:15-22, the John 8:46-59 discourse of disputation with the Jews, and the John 15:26--16:4 farewell discourse of the Johannine Jesus with his disciples. Fortunately, the John 8:46-59 discourse did not include the most severe condemnation in John 8:44, "You are descended from your father, the Devil!" The most problematic of the "historic pericope" texts are the use of the passion account in John and the John 8:46-59 discourse. It is noteworthy that the most problematic texts in the "historic pericopes" are from the Gospel According to John, a favorite within the "historic pericopes," as the selection of the Johannine form of the passion account indicates. Nevertheless, we can say that the "historic pericope" tradition did not deliberately select blatantly anti-Jewish texts. The tradition was not sensitive regarding this issue, but there was no attempt to select large numbers of defamatory anti-Jewish texts. Neither was there any special effort to avoid their use.

The *Lectionary for Mass* utilizes approximately 16% of the Bible over its three-year cycle of readings, including, of course, selections from the Earlier Testament. (If the selections chosen for saints' days and other festival observances are included, the percentage is somewhat larger than 16%. The *Lectionary for Mass* selections for saints' days and other festival observances are not included in the data above, however, because of the considerable diversity in the inclusion and use of these special observances within the various lectionary series.) Since there are approximately four times the text content in the *Lectionary for Mass* compared to the "historic pericopes," we might expect that there would be a larger number of blatantly anti-Jewish selections in the *Lectionary for Mass* than in the "historic pericopes," though not more than three times as many, since the *Lectionary for Mass* includes in each instance selections from the Earlier Testament. Also, we might expect that since the Second Vatican Council had approved *Nostra Aetate*, the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, the Roman Catholic liturgical specialists who developed the *Lectionary for Mass* might have been sensitive to the issue of inclusion of defamatory anti-Jewish texts and avoided such texts in their selections.

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We see, however, that compared to the six selections that are blatantly anti-Jewish in the "historic

pericopes," there are twenty-three in the *Lectionary for Mass*. The only defamatory anti-Jewish texts that are in the "historic pericopes" that are not in the *Lectionary for Mass* are the John 8:46-59 and John 15:26--16:4 selections. There are 19 selections that are blatantly anti-Jewish in the *Lectionary for Mass* that were not in the "historic pericopes." The liturgical specialists who developed the *Lectionary for Mass* obviously did not apply the principles and the spirit of *Nostra Aetate* to their process of lectionary formation. They were particularly insensitive in their selections of virulently anti-Jewish texts from the Acts of the Apostles document, which they used instead of texts from the Earlier Testament all three years during the critically important Easter Season.

The Lutheran liturgists and the liturgists within the other Christian denominations who became interested in the *Lectionary for Mass* and in adopting it with modifications for their own use apparently had no concerns about the expanded use of defamatory anti-Jewish texts (twenty-three in the *Lectionary for Mass* compared to six in the "historic pericopes") either. In fact, the liturgists from my own Lutheran tradition added ten more viciously and blatantly anti-Jewish selections in the Lutheran three-year lectionary, as can be seen above. In only one instance, Mark 3:6, the Lutheran liturgists avoided an anti-Jewish text by using Mark 2:23-28 instead of the Mark 2:23-3:6 text of the *Lectionary for Mass*. In ten instances, our Lutheran liturgists made our Lutheran lectionary more anti-Jewish than the Roman Catholic *Lectionary for Mass*, as I noted in each instance in my three books of comments on the Common, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic lectionaries published by CSS Publishing, Lima, Ohio, more than fifteen years ago (*Scripture Notes B* (1984), *Scripture Notes C* (1985), and *Scripture Notes A* (1986)). For example, in commenting on the extension of the John 11:1-45 *Lectionary for Mass* to John 11:1-53 in the Lent 5, Series A selection, I noted that "Unlike the Common and Roman Catholic selections, which end on the positive note of many of the Jews who were friends of Mary believing in Jesus (11:45), the Lutheran pericope continues through 11:53 with its suggestion that leaders from among Jesus' own people plotted his death . . . . This tendency of the Lutheran selections to be more anti-Jewish than the Common and Roman Catholic texts must be noted and opposed each time that it is encountered" (*Scripture Notes A*, p. 77). Were our Lutheran liturgists more anti-Jewish than were their Roman Catholic counterparts, or were they merely even less sensitive to this issue? Regardless of how that question may be answered, the Lutheran lectionary that we used for more than 20 of the past 30 years is the most anti-Jewish of the three-year lectionaries that I have examined in this study.

Soon after the publication of the *Lectionary for Mass*, leaders among the Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Disciples of Christ, and the United Church of Christ in the U.S.A. became interested in the Roman Catholic Lectionary. Like the Lutherans, leaders in these groups replaced all of the texts in the *Lectionary for Mass* that were selected from what these groups consider to be Earlier Testament Apocrypha. Many of the leaders in these groups, with less emphasis on Services focusing on the Sacraments of the Church than was primary for Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and Lutherans, and correspondingly more emphasis on Services of the Word, were also interested in using more continuous and semi-continuous readings within the selections from the Epistles and from the Earlier Testament, in order to encourage the study of individual books of the Bible. In doing this, they selected some continuous and semi-continuous readings of texts used during the Sundays after the Epiphany and after Pentecost.

Since there were significant variations in the lectionaries produced and used within these groups during the 1970s and early 1980s, the Consultation on Common Texts established the North American Committee on Calendar and Lectionary to study the lectionaries being used and to recommend a lectionary to be used "in common" by as many denominations as possible. Although

Lutheran and Roman Catholic liturgists participated in this process, the *Common Lectionary* (New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1983) published by this Committee was not utilized by the Lutherans or by the Roman Catholic Church.

## II. Lectionary Revision as a Means of Repudiation of Defamatory Anti-Jewish Polemic in our New Testament Texts

After the *Common Lectionary* had been used for two three-year cycles, the Consultation on Common Texts appointed a task force in which fourteen representatives from many denominations participated and which developed and published the *Revised Common Lectionary* in 1992. In regard to the issue of defamatory anti-Jewish polemic in our lectionaries, it is claimed in "The Story of the Common Lectionary" section of the *Revised Common Lectionary* (pp. 78-79) that "the Revised Common Lectionary has paid attention to the tragic history of the abuse of biblical materials to support Christian anti-Semitism," and that "The need to avoid such abuse is one of the basic principles of this lectionary."

There are various ways in which such abuse can be avoided. One is to decrease or eliminate the "typological" use of Earlier Testament texts that is a significant feature of the *Lectionary for Mass*. In the "typological" use, the Earlier Testament text is selected with little regard for its meanings in its own context and is "paired" with a text from the Four Gospels, frequently as a "prophecy" that is "fulfilled" in a sense in the New Testament, rather than reading and proclaiming the messages from the Earlier Testament texts within their own contexts. The *Common Lectionary* began and the *Revised Common Lectionary* continued a process of decreasing the "typological" use by providing continuous and semi-continuous readings of Earlier Testament texts as basic texts or as alternate readings. This is significant for the integrity of Christianity and is a positive factor in Jewish-Christian relations. The "typological" use of Earlier Testament texts, however, is not eliminated in the *Revised Common Lectionary*.

The second way in which such abuse can be avoided is by replacing the texts in our lectionaries in which Jews are defamed and vilified as "hypocrites," "children of the Devil," "Christ-killers," etc. with far more appropriate and edifying texts from the New Testament. Even though the task force that produced the *Revised Common Lectionary* was aware of "the tragic history of the abuse of biblical materials to support Christian anti-Semitism," there was not much reduction of the use of the defamatory anti-Jewish texts in the *Revised Common Lectionary*. In the use of texts from the Four Gospels and in every text from the Acts of the Apostles except Acts 13:45-46 and 13:50-51, all of the defamatory anti-Jewish texts utilized in the *Lectionary for Mass* were maintained in the *Revised Common Lectionary*, as my analysis printed above indicates. Even where the Lutheran adaptation had used only Mark 2:23-28 rather than 2:23--3:6, avoiding the defamatory Mark 3:6, the *Revised Common Lectionary* retained the *Lectionary for Mass* reading. Among the defamatory texts that the Lutheran adaptation of *Lectionary for Mass* added, only John 11:53, Acts 13:28-29a, 17:5-9, and 17:13 were not used. Therefore, when the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America chose to use the *Revised Common Lectionary* after its publication in 1992, we added the defamatory anti-Jewish text Mark 3:6 and deleted the defamatory anti-Jewish texts John 11:53, and Acts 13:28-29a, 17:5-9, and 17:13, only a slight net gain. The task force that produced the *Revised Common Lectionary* missed an excellent opportunity to reduce significantly or to replace entirely the defamatory anti-Jewish texts that are in our three-year lectionary.

Another excellent opportunity to reduce or replace the defamatory anti-Jewish texts in our three-year lectionary was missed when the liturgists of the Roman Catholic Church produced and published in 1998 a revised edition of *Lectionary for Mass* for use in the Dioceses of the United States (Second Typical Edition, copyright 1998, 1997, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C.) ([www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org), July 2, 2001). There are no significant changes in the texts in this revised edition of *Lectionary for Mass* and none that reduce or eliminate defamatory anti-Jewish texts.

To date, therefore, there are no indications that revisions of *Lectionary for Mass* or of the adaptations of *Lectionary for Mass* by the churches participating in the production and use of the *Revised Common Lectionary* that will significantly reduce or eliminate the defamatory anti-Jewish texts from our three-year lectionaries are occurring in the U.S.A. Nevertheless, for the integrity of Christianity and of Christian corporate worship only a major revision of our lectionaries that significantly reduces and preferably eliminates the defamatory texts will be adequate.

### **III. The Case for a New Four-Year Christian Lectionary for the Third Millennium**

Since no significant revisions of the *Lectionary for Mass* or of the *Revised Common Lectionary* are occurring, I suggest that alternative steps should be taken. We have used one-year lectionaries for many centuries. We have used three-year lectionaries for many decades. We should now develop and use a four-year lectionary in the new millennium. There would be many advantages in the development and use of a four-year lectionary.

The first advantage would be that larger portions of the Christian Bible would be read in our worship services and more texts would be explicated in our sermons and homilies. As indicated above, by using our three-year lectionaries we read within our once-a-week Services approximately 16% of the Bible in our three-year cycle of lections. A four-year Christian lectionary with approximately the same length readings will include more than 20% of the Bible.

The second advantage would be that those of us who prepare and provide sermons and homilies and aids to worship would be challenged to develop new sermons and homilies and new aids to worship.

The third advantage would be that much greater clarity would result from the use of readings from the Gospel According to Mark one year and of readings from the Gospel According to John a different year. In our Sunday Services during Year B in our three-year lectionaries we currently use texts from Mark 29 times, from John 20 times, and from Luke 3 times. (The usage varies somewhat from year to year because of the changing dates for Easter and the effect of this on our

calendar.) Currently, there are approximately 14 "turnovers" of texts from one Gospel to another during Year B. We read texts from John one Sunday during Advent, during much of the Lenten Season, most of the Easter Season, and for five Sundays in a row from late July until late August. Neither the Gospel According to Mark nor the Gospel According to John is ever given appropriate attention.

The fourth advantage would be that we could use the Four Gospels in the most probable sequence of their development (basically Mark, Matthew, Luke, John) rather than in the jumbled sequence (Matthew, Mark-John, Luke) of our three-year lectionaries. This would help us to see and to present much of the theological development within early Christianity of Christology, of movement of interest from the Jesus of history to the Christ of faith, and of separation of early followers of Jesus from Jewish life and practice. Education and understanding of the development of our religion would be further enhanced if texts selected from the Earlier Testament followed sequential development from Torah texts to texts from the Prophetic Tradition and then from the Writings and if texts from the Epistles followed sequential development also from the seven basic letters written by Paul to the Pseudo-Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Epistles and then to the so-called Catholic Epistles.

The fifth advantage and the one with the greatest significance for the integrity of Christianity and for Jewish-Christian relations would be that a new four-year lectionary could and should present the Earlier Testament as Sacred Scripture for Jews and for Christians, theological reflections over experiences and events and expressions of faith in the one God, and not primarily as "prophecies" to be "fulfilled." Texts that defame and stereotype Jews as "hypocrites," "children of the Devil," "Christ-killers," etc. could and should be entirely avoided. Such texts can be avoided. There are many other texts that are "Christ-centered" and very edifying that are not included in our three-year lectionary.

#### **IV. A Four-year Christian Lectionary Model in which Defamatory Anti-Jewish Texts Are Not Used**

In order to show that it is possible to develop a four-year lectionary that maintains the contexts of the Earlier Testament readings and entirely avoids texts from the Four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles that defame and stereotype Jews as "hypocrites," "children of the Devil," and "Christ-killers," I have prepared such a lectionary to provide a model for others. I have included this new four-year lectionary as an appendix on pages 622-681 of my *The New Testament: a New Translation and Redaction*, Fairway Press (the academic subsidiary of CSS Publishing), Lima, Ohio, 2001. I have designated a unifying theme for each Sunday, as well as an identifying statement for each text. The following is a sample from this work, from page 624.

YEAR 1

##### **Season of Advent**

*First Sunday of Advent* — Theme: "Beginnings"

Genesis 1:1--2:4a	The cosmic creation story in which God instituted the Sabbath
Psalms 1	Blessed are those who do what is right
1 Thessalonians 1	Paul's thanksgiving to God for the Thessalonians
Mark 1:1	The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

*Second Sunday of Advent* — Theme: "Prepare the Way for the Lord"

Genesis 2:4b-25	The Israelite folk creation story in which God instituted monogamous marriage
Psalms 3	Arise, O Lord! Deliver me!
1 Thessalonians 2:1-8	Paul and other Christian leaders, as gentle as a mother nursing her child
Mark 1:2-3	Prepare the way of the Lord

*Third Sunday of Advent* — Theme: "Our Need for Forgiveness"

Genesis 3:1-13	Eating the forbidden fruit
Psalms 4	The LORD hears when I call
1 Thessalonians 2:9-12	Paul and other Christian leaders, as caring as a father encouraging his child
Mark 1:4-5	John's baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins

*Fourth Sunday of Advent* — Theme: "The Coming of the Lord"

Genesis 3:14-19	An etiology for pain and toil
Psalms 5	O LORD, hear my cry
1 Thessalonians 2:17-20	You are our hope and joy at the coming of our Lord Jesus
Mark 1:6-8	After me comes one who is mightier than I.

In this lectionary, as is indicated even in this brief sample, I use texts in semi-continuous sequence from Genesis, Psalms, Paul's earliest letters (1 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians), and the Gospel According to Mark during Year 1. During Year 2, I use texts from Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Psalms, Galatians, Romans 1-11, and the Gospel According to Matthew. For the Sundays during Year 3, there are texts from 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah 1-39, Jeremiah, Psalms, Romans 12-16, Philemon, Philippians, 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, Ephesians, and the Gospel According to Luke. Finally, within Year 4 we have selections from Isaiah 40-66, Ezekiel, Zechariah, Joel, Ruth, Jonah, Habakkuk, Job, Proverbs, Nehemiah, Malachi, Psalms, 1-3 John, Revelation, Acts, Hebrews, James, Jude, 1-2 Peter, and the Gospel According to John. There is no repetition in the use of texts, except for the use of material from the Psalms.

The lack of infancy of Jesus stories and of resurrection appearance stories in the Gospel According to Mark is not an insurmountable barrier in the production of a four-year lectionary. Where there are limited texts from the Gospel According to Mark for use during Advent, I have short selections from Mark 1:1-8 with longer readings from Genesis 1-3, as can be seen above. For Easter evening through Easter 7 in Year 1, I use selections from the longer and shorter endings provided in later manuscripts of Mark rather than making selections from the other canonical Gospels, and for Christmas Eve during Years 1, 2, and 4, I offer the use also if desired of Luke 2:1-20. It was not difficult to select appropriate and edifying texts from Mark and from John for two separate and complete Church Year cycles.

## **V. Implementation of a New Four-year Christian Lectionary in which Defamatory Anti-Jewish Texts Are Not Used**

In the congregation (St. John's Lutheran Church, Stockdale, Texas) in which I serve as the contract pastor (Sunday mornings and as needed) in addition to my full-time teaching at Texas Lutheran University, we are planning to use the new four-year lectionary described above beginning with the First Sunday in Advent, December 2, 2001. I look forward to developing sermons using this lectionary there during the coming four years. Planning for the use of this lectionary is occurring also in the Campus Congregation of Texas Lutheran University. I invite other congregations and their worship leaders to use this lectionary also and to share their experiences with it with me if they wish. Since even in the texts from the Epistles and from the Gospels included in this lectionary there are many instances in which Jews, and especially Pharisees, are mentioned in pejorative ways, I urge users of this new lectionary to read the Epistle and Gospel selections from my sensitive new translation of the New Testament in which this lectionary is attached as an appendix. No other English translation of the Bible has been made with comparable sensitivity to the pejorative statements in the New Testament about Jews and about Pharisees. The Contemporary English Version produced by the American Bible Society during the 1990s is sensitive to these statements in its translation of the Gospel According to John, but is not equally sensitive in its translation of the other documents in the New Testament.

It should be noted here that the Canterbury Press, Norwich, England, during 1990 published *A Four-Year Lectionary* prepared by a Joint Liturgical Group in the United Kingdom. The Joint Liturgical Group recommended that use of its Four Year Lectionary should begin "on the ninth Sunday before Christmas 1992 with Year A" (*A Four-Year Lectionary*, p. 7). During the interval between the publication of its *A Four-Year Lectionary* in 1990 and the ninth Sunday before Christmas 1992, however, church leaders in the United Kingdom prepared and implemented a United Kingdom adaptation of the *Revised Common Lectionary* and it, rather than *A Four-Year Lectionary*, is widely used in the United Kingdom.

While leaders within the Joint Liturgical Group deliberately sought and included "passages about women" (*A Four Year Lectionary*, p. 4), they were not sensitive to the need to avoid anti-Jewish texts. Of the 74 text segments that I list above as anti-Jewish, 53 are used in *A Four Year Lectionary*. On a use per year basis, the "historic pericopes" have 6 anti-Jewish text segments per year, *Lectionary for Mass* has 7 2/3, *Revised Common Lectionary* has 9, our Lutheran adaptation that we used for many years has 10 2/3, and the Joint Liturgical Group *A Four Year Lectionary* has 13 1/4.

Ideally, revision of the *Lectionary for Mass* and of the *Revised Common Lectionary* to reduce the "promise-fulfillment" manipulation of the Earlier Testament and to avoid use of defamatory anti-Jewish texts should be done by leaders from every segment of the Christian Church. Perhaps during the coming decades we shall have truly ecumenical councils that will authorize and urge implementation of such revision and encourage the use of a new four year lectionary in which these factors are addressed with sensitivity. The Roman Catholic Church should be able to participate actively in this within a truly ecumenical council of the entire Church while continuing with its own "Vatican" councils periodically, since its Second Vatican Council documents *Nostra Aetate* and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* are supportive of opening up "the treasures of the Bible" to restore the integrity of Christianity and to respect the integrity of other religions.

## VI. Implications for Jewish-Christian Relations During the Third Millennium

Revision of the *Lectionary for Mass* and of the *Revised Common Lectionary* to reduce the "promise-fulfillment" manipulation of the Earlier Testament and to avoid use of defamatory anti-Jewish texts and the implementation of such revision in a new four-year lectionary used throughout the Church will have very positive implications for Jewish-Christian relations during the third millennium. It will be a very significant indication that the Church is serious about restoring the integrity of Christianity and about respecting the integrity of the Jewish traditions, that it means what it has said in its many positive statements about the Jewish traditions during the past 50 years.

1. Among the most important resources for the study of this polemic are James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, Meridian (1961), Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: The Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism*, Seabury (1974), Norman A. Beck, *Mature Christianity: The Recognition and Repudiation of the Anti-Jewish Polemic of the New Testament*, Susquehanna University (1985), Peter von der Osten-Sacken, *Christian-Jewish Dialogue: Theological Foundations*, Fortress (1986), and Norman A. Beck, *Mature Christianity in the 21st Century*, Crossroad (1994).

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## Appendix: The Historical Development of Christian Lectionaries

The reading and explication of sacred texts is a common practice within corporate worship not only for Jewish and Christian communities, but also among Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Baha'is, and others. Annual cycles of readings and explications, as well as seasonal cycles anchored on festival occasions or punctuated by festival dates, are widely used by the corporate worship leaders within these religions. Jewish groups, for example, read and apply to Jewish life the entire Torah each year, with continuous or semi-continuous readings within private and corporate worship.

As Israelite-Jewish traditions and teachings were put into written form, and as some of them were acclaimed as revelatory and sacred, readings from them and applications of their messages and teachings occurred. A classic example of this is provided in Nehemiah 8-9, a validation of the Torah text, in which it is written that all of the people of Israel gathered as one while Ezra read from the book of the Torah of Moses and other leaders around him helped the people to understand it.

During subsequent centuries, as various groups of Pharisees formed and gathered together on the sabbath and other days in their synagogues, study and explication of Torah texts, supplemented to some extent eventually by readings from the earlier and later prophetic traditions, psalms, and other writings, were their principal activities. The extensive, voluminous "Oral Torah" was a natural development in this process. The Lukan writer, aware of the Jewish practice, used it and modified it in what is for us Luke 4:16-21 to present the Lukan Jesus as reading and applying Isaiah 61:12 and 58:6 to his own situation, in which a fulfillment was claimed. As the Gospel According to Mark was being redacted, expanded, and imitated to produce the Gospels According to Matthew, Luke, and John, the readings, discussions, and applications of these texts must have occurred frequently, often with notations of the Christian belief that Israelite-Jewish expectations had been "fulfilled," especially by the Matthean and Lukan Jesus.

When the letters and fragments of letters that the Apostle Paul had written to various developing Christian house-church communities and individuals were gathered together into what we know today as the seven basic letters of Paul, probably in Ephesus within the Roman province of Asia during the years following the death of Emperor Domitian, it is likely that these letters and

selections from them were read, discussed, and applied within the Christian house churches of that time. Apparently the seven letters of Paul were supplemented by what we today call the Pseudo-Pauline epistles (2 Thessalonians, Colossians, and Ephesians) and still later by the so-called Deutero-Pauline Epistles (2 Timothy, Titus, and 1 Timothy) and sent in packets to be circulated, read, and used within the various house churches, as is indicated in Colossians 4:16. The Acts of the Apostles may often have been circulated with these packets, in order to provide a narrative framework for them.

Gradually, through extensive usage, certain segments of Paul's letters and of the Pauline epistles and the Acts of the Apostles would have become favorites, read, discussed, and applied more than the others, contributing to the development of what later were to be called "lectionaries." Similar selections of favorite texts within the Four Gospels would naturally have been made within this same time period. Within some groups, selections from the Psalms, from narrative portions of the Torah, and from the Prophetic traditions were undoubtedly used as well.

As persecution of Christian groups within the Roman Empire was replaced by toleration and then support, protection, and patronage of "mainline" Christianity early during the fourth century of the common era, not only biblical texts, but also lectionary selections were produced on animal skins, parchment, far more durable than the papyrus that had been used previously. According to the *Revised Common Lectionary* produced by the Consultation on Common Texts and published by Abingdon (1992), p. 9, lectionary tables of readings "were known and used in the fourth century." Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy: a Study of the Common Service of the Lutheran Church in America*, Muhlenberg (1947), p. 430, indicated, however, that "It was not until the fifth century in Gaul that a complete series of selected Lessons for all the Sundays and festivals gained general acceptance."

At first, as selections of readings from the Epistles and Gospels were made, the beginnings and the ends of the sectors to be read were marked in the margins or between the lines of the text, in some instances with red ink, according to Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (Third Edition), Oxford (1992), pp. 30-31. Manuscripts limited to selected readings were also prepared, since these were more easily produced and transported than the complete documents of the developing canonical writings. Their widespread usage is attested by the large numbers of Greek lectionaries that have been catalogued by text critics: 2,135 by the year 1992 (Metzger, p. 33). Such selections were made by various people in diverse geographical locations and in the Western Church were modified in subsequent centuries. In the Eastern Church, however, after ecumenical councils were held with no participation by the Eastern Church, the earlier selections were maintained. The most widely used system of lectionary readings came to be known as the "historic pericopes," a one year repeating cycle of texts "cut around" and later "cut out" from the complete texts, read on the Sundays, saints' days, and other commemorative days of the church year, and used as the principal texts for sermons and homilies.

In addition to the so-called "historic pericopes," other pericope series were developed and used, often only in specific regions. Paul W. Nesper, *Biblical Texts* (Second Edition), Augsburg (1961), catalogued thirteen such series, developed by Lutheran Christians in Germany, Sweden, and the United States between the years 1838 and 1961. Nesper also provides useful suggestions of texts for special occasions such as Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Communion, Marriage, Funerals in

various situations, Ordination, Installation, Farewell, Dedication of a variety of ecclesiastical objects, and special days such as Mother's Day, Baccalaureate, Graduation, and National Holidays. His work also includes an index of the texts selected throughout the Church Year in the "historic pericopes" and the other thirteen lectionary series that he catalogued, as well as an index of the specific texts within the Bible utilized in the fourteen one year lectionaries that he analyzed.

The texts that I heard as a child were the Epistle and Gospel selections of the "historic pericopes," with short selections, usually from the Psalms, included in the "Introit" for each occasion spoken as the pastor stepped forward to the altar, and in the "Gradual," a choral response to the Epistle reading and an introduction to the Gospel (Reed, p. 277). Other than these liturgical selections in the Introits and Graduals, there were no specified readings from the Earlier (Old) Testament in the *American Lutheran Hymnal*, Lutheran Book Concern, Columbus, Ohio (1930) that we used. The sermons were based on the Gospel readings, or occasionally on the Epistle for the day.

Interest in including major readings from the Earlier Testament in addition to the Psalm segments is evidenced by the addition to the "historic pericopes" of such texts made by the Lutheran Commission on a Common Liturgy. These additions, as Nesper put it, "add variety and stimulation for the preacher without changing the essentials (Nesper, p. 208).

These one year cycles of texts incorporate and repeat during the 52 Sundays of each year, by my calculation, somewhat less than 5% of the Bible without use of Earlier Testament major readings and approximately 6% with them.

During my own childhood and youth, the same epistle and gospel selections of the so-called "historic pericopes" were read each year, a total of 104 texts on which 52 sermons were based each year. Unless there was a change in the pastor serving the congregation, we heard each year basically a repetition of the sermons delivered the previous years.

Within the time that I was a graduate student in New Testament Studies at Princeton Theological Seminary, the Second Vatican Council was held in Rome. Among the changes and reforms approved by the Second Vatican Council was the *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, in English, the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy." It is stated in Section 24 of this document that "Sacred Scripture is of paramount importance in the celebration of the liturgy" and that "if the restoration, progress, and adaptation of the sacred liturgy are to be achieved, it is necessary to promote that warm and loving love of Scripture to which the venerable tradition of both Eastern and Western rites gives testimony." Section 51 of the same document mandated that "The treasures of the Bible are to be opened up more lavishly, so that richer fare may be provided for the faithful at the table of God's Word. In this way a more representative portion of the holy Scriptures will be read to the people over a set cycle of years." (*The Documents of Vatican II: All Sixteen Official Texts Promulgated by the Ecumenical Council 1963-1965*, translated from the Latin, Walter M. Abbott, General Editor, Guild Press, America Press, Association Press, 1966, pp. 147, 155.)

In response to this mandate in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, eighteen members of a working group on the lectionary began during 1964 to study existing lectionary series. Biblical scholars were asked to submit lists of texts to be considered. During the years 1967-1968, a draft of an expanded lectionary was circulated and revised. *The Ordo Lectionum Missae*, Vatican Polyglot Press (1969), decreed that the three year cycle of texts produced by this group was to begin November 30, 1969, the First Sunday in Advent, as described by John Reumann in a very useful article, "A History of Lectionaries: From the Synagogue at Nazareth to Post-Vatican II," *Interpretation* 31:2 (April 1977) 116-130.

This Roman Catholic three year cycle of texts, called the *Lectionary for Mass*, includes three readings for each Sunday, with in addition to Gospel and Epistle readings a selection in most instances from the Earlier Testament. It features also a psalm or excerpt from a psalm to be sung in response to the Earlier Testament reading. With a few additions and modifications in 1981 and again recently, the *Lectionary for Mass* has been used by Roman Catholic congregations throughout the world for the past three decades.

Other Christians who were using the "historic pericopes" and other lectionaries, especially in the Anglican, Lutheran, Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, and Disciples of Christ traditions, soon adopted the three year *Lectionary for Mass* lectionary, with a variety of modifications, substituting other texts from their canonical Earlier Testament in those few instances in which the *Lectionary for Mass* has readings from what these other groups consider to be the Old Testament Apocrypha. Lutheran Christians increased the length of some readings, while the denominations of Christians in the Calvinistic tradition in some sections of texts from the Earlier Testament and from the Epistles replaced the Roman Catholic selections with semi-continuous readings from the same biblical document, and substituted other Psalm readings. The gospel readings of the *Lectionary for Mass* were basically unchanged, except for the addition of verses in some instances. This modified three year lectionary was introduced by the Lutheran groups that had produced the *Lutheran Service Book and Hymnal* (1958) during the last few years that the SBH was used and is printed in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978).

Meanwhile, awareness of the proliferation of modifications of the *Lectionary for Mass* readings among the groups using them led to various attempts at standardization. In 1974, the nine denominations in the U.S.A. that were participating in the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) at that time published a pamphlet listing texts that was essentially a compromise of the texts being used at that time within these nine denominations. Four years later, a cooperative group called the Consultation on Common Texts authorized a subcommittee, the North American Committee on Calendar and Lectionary, with representatives from Episcopal, Lutheran, Presbyterian, United Methodist, and Roman Catholic Churches, to seek to develop a lectionary that might be more broadly used. This Committee's work was published in 1983 as the *Common Lectionary*, New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation.

Three years later, a task force comprised of representatives of groups using the *Common Lectionary*, as well as a few others, was formed to respond to critiques of the *Common Lectionary*. As a result, the task force produced the *Revised Common Lectionary*, Abingdon (1992). For more details about this process than can be provided here, see the *Revised Common Lectionary*, pp. 7-20, 75-82.

Although Roman Catholic liturgists participated in the development of the *Common Lectionary* and of the *Revised Common Lectionary*, the Roman Catholic Church continues to use its *Lectionary for Mass* with its own minor revisions. My own Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) encourages use of the texts of the *Revised Common Lectionary*, even though these texts in some instances differ considerably from the lectionary printed in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*. For example, instead of the texts printed in the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, p. 27, Year C, for the Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost (Isaiah 66:18-23, Psalm 117, Hebrews 12:18-24, and Luke 13:22-30), on August 26, 2001, the Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost during the year 2001, the texts we are encouraged to use are Isaiah 58:9b-14, Psalm 103:1-8, Hebrews 12:18-29, and Luke 13:10-17.

There are many advantages in the use of Christian lectionaries, especially when large numbers of worshipping communities use the same series. As John Reumann suggests ("A History of Lectionaries," p. 117), "A lectionary gets beyond the subjectivity of one local preacher wondering what to read for the next week, and its predetermined scope allows what otherwise might be avoided to come up naturally." There are also disadvantages and limitations in the use of them. Leaders in the so-called non-liturgical or "Free Churches" prefer to be "led by the Spirit" to select the topics to be pursued in preaching and to draw from their knowledge of the biblical texts that address their concerns. Some texts are problematic, whether we use pre-selected texts or are individually "led by the Spirit," as we have seen in the body of this paper. For a noteworthy article on the advantages of preaching from lectionary texts and disadvantages, limitations, and cautions of lectionary usage, see Lloyd R. Bailey, "The Lectionary in Critical Perspective," *Interpretation* 31:2 (April 1977) 139-153.

The most problematic texts within our Christian biblical tradition are those that are religiously racist and those that are sexist, those that stereotype and condemn entire groups of people unjustly and call upon God to support one's own prejudices. The body of this paper addresses the issue of inclusion and exclusion in our lectionaries of religiously racist texts in the New Testament that virulently defame and vilify Jews.

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