



The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible

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With a Preface signed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the lengthy document sets forth an authoritative Roman Catholic position on the matters dealt with. These include the relation between the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament, similarities and differences between Jewish and Christian teaching and exegesis, and how the New Testament passages critical of the Jews and Judaism are to be interpreted.

"Without the Old Testament, the New Testament would be an unintelligible book, a plant deprived of its roots and destined to dry up and wither," the document states (§84). It stresses the New Testament acceptance and reaffirmation of fundamental Old Testament themes: the revelation of God; the greatness and wretchedness of the human person; God as Liberator and Savior; the election of Israel, the covenant, and the law; prayer and cult; divine condemnations and promises.

The text takes the position that the reproaches against the Jews in the New Testament are no more severe than those directed against the Jews in the Old Testament, though it acknowledges that such passages have been misused as the basis for anti-Jewish prejudice. "Real anti-Jewish feeling," it states, "that is, an attitude of contempt, hostility and persecution of the Jews as Jews, is not found in any New Testament text and is incompatible with its teaching" (§87).

Franklin Sherman

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