

# **“Nostra Aetate”: A Catholic and Jewish Peace Treaty or a Spiritual Breakthrough?**

Presentation at the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life (Oct. 14, 2015)

## I Introduction

1. Pope Francis on June 30, 2015
2. Pope Francis to Congress on Sept. 24, 2015 (D. Day & T. Merton)
3. My title

## II Steps to “Nostra Aetate”

1. International Conference of Christians & Jews (Seelisberg, Switzerland, July-August 1947)
2. Good Friday, 1959: Pope John XXIII spontaneously eliminates the expression “perfidious Jews” in the liturgical prayer
3. April 24, 1960: Biblical Institute Petition “Avoiding Antisemitism” (April 26, Theology Faculty of Friburg, Switzerland)
4. June 8, 1960: Petition of the Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies (Seton Hall U.)
5. June 13, 1960: Meeting of John XXIII and Jules Isaac, author of *The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism* (Diasporal as punishment; Judaism as degenerate at time of Jesus; Deicide)
6. Autumn, 1960: Meeting of Cardinal Bea with Nahum Goldmann (President, World Jewish Congress)
7. Nov. 26, 1960: Meeting between Cardinal Bea and Abraham Joshua Heschel (May 22 Memorandum from Heschel to Bea)
8. Oct. 11, 1962: Vatican Council II opens in Rome; Nov. 18, 1963 Document on Ecumenism introduced; Sept. 28, 1964 debate on the Jews and Non-Christian Religions (introduced by Bea three days earlier); Oct. 14-15, 1965 “Nostra Aetate” approved with vote of 2,221 for, 88 against, and 3 voided (Oct. 28 official promulgation)

## III Assorted Issues

1. The place of the Holocaust
2. The Ministry of Saint Pope John-Paul II
3. Role of Converts from Judaism ( eg, G. Baum, John Oesterreicher, Paul Démann) & the Righteous(?); (the ex-Protestant Karl Thieme” was the first major Catholic thinker to grasp in St. Paul I’s letter to the Romans that Jews remained beloved by God as Jews. *They did not need conversion but the Catholic Church did.*”<sup>i</sup>)
4. Jewish Response (see sheet “A Jewish Statement on Christianity...”)

## IV Challenges

1. Who Are the Jews?
2. Religious Fundamentalisms
3. Reform of Seminary Education & Catholic Liturgy

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<sup>i</sup> John Connelly, *From Enemy to Brother: The Revolution in Catholic Teaching on the Jews 1933-1965* (Cambridge: Harvard U., 2012) 187.