

POPE  
BENEDICT  
XVI

MANY  
RELIGIONS  
— ONE  
COVENANT

Israel, the Church, and the World

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IGNATIUS



## The mission of reconciliation

After Auschwitz the mission of reconciliation and acceptance permits no deferral. Even if we know that Auschwitz is the gruesome expression of an ideology that not only wanted to destroy Judaism but also hated and sought to eradicate from Christianity its Jewish heritage, the question remains: What could be the reason for so much historical hostility between those who actually must belong together because of their faith in the one God and commitment to his will?

Does this hostility result from something in the very faith of Christians? Is it something in the "essence of Christianity", so that one would have to prescind from Christianity's core, deny Christianity its heart, in order to come to real reconciliation?

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with the address I had prepared. In order to relate my remarks to the overall theme of the Congress, I tried to conclude by briefly indicating the consequences of these perspectives for our shared responsibility in the secularized world. Since my address was written on the basis of the Bible and the Catechism, it did not seem necessary subsequently to add bibliographical references; they are not hard to find. [This talk was given in English.]

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This is an assumption that some Christian thinkers have in fact made in the last few decades in reaction to the horrors of history. Do confession of Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of the living God and faith in the Cross as the redemption of mankind contain an implicit condemnation of the Jews as stubborn and blind, as guilty of the death of the Son of God? Could it be that the very core of the faith of Christians compels intolerance, even hostility toward the Jews? And, conversely, could the self-esteem of Jews and the defense of their historic dignity and deepest convictions oblige them to demand that Christians abandon the heart of their faith and so require Jews similarly to forsake tolerance? Is the conflict programmed in the heart of religion and only to be overcome through its repudiation?

Reconciliation without  
abandoning the Christian faith?

In this heightened framing of the question, the problem confronting us today reaches far beyond an academic interreligious dialogue into the fundamental decisions of this historic hour. One sees more frequent attempts to mollify the issue by representing Jesus as a Jewish teacher who in principle did not go beyond what was possible in Jewish tradition. His execution is understood to result from the political tensions between Jews and Romans. In point of fact, he was executed by the Roman authority in the way political rebels were