

## The Jews and the Muslims versus the SSPX

by Robert Sungenis

No matter what sector of the world one engages, whether politics, money, sex, society, culture, philosophy, theology, etc., there are liberals and conservatives. By and large, the conservatives want to hold on to the past for fear of what may change in the future; the liberals want to change the future for fear of what happened in the past. You can't escape it. It just is. That's because each side has legitimate complaints about the other, and neither side has all the right answers. Both sides have good and bad. When the bad of one surfaces, the good of the other side is quick to say, "We told you so. We have a better way." It will never change. We can only hope that we are able to take the good and discard the bad from each side.

The same two forces are present in the Catholic Church, as well as those ideological groups who try to influence her. Sometimes the two parties try to reach a compromise, but a compromise, to be sure, in which both seek to preserve their respective foundations and what has already been built instead of starting all over again — although sometimes, as Solomon advises, it's good to start over again (Eccl 3:1-10).

A good example of such an attempted compromise is seen in the efforts of Pope Francis (a liberal) and the Society of Saint Pius X (conservative) to reconcile their decades-old rift. Since both sides realize that it will work much better for the Church if they join as one instead of fighting as two, it only makes sense to reach some sort of *détente*. Not a *détente* wherein either side must give up its distinctive beliefs and practices, but one in which each side can live comfortably with the differences. Don't laugh. Most marriages work that way – at least the ones that survive.

To initiate the *détente*, Pope Francis (led by some of his more conservative curia) recently offered the SSPX a "personal prelatue" (the same as enjoyed now by such organizations as Opus Dei and the Legionaries of Christ). In this arrangement, the SSPX would not be under a bishop and would be answerable only to the Pope. It is assumed that in this arrangement the Pope would give the SSPX the freedom to believe and practice what it has always done, and that the SSPX would give respective allegiance to the reigning pontiff

— including generous donations to Peter’s Pence, to be sure. If accepted, there will, of course, be sticky points that may not be ironed out for quite a while, but at least both parties are moving in the right direction — unification under “one faith, one Lord, and one baptism” (Eph 4:5).

For some die-hard liberals who despise the SSPX and its traditionalism, this Papal/SSPX détente has danger signs written all over it. They believe that after 50 years of moving the Church in the more liberal direction, it would be counterproductive to give even the impression of turning the clock back by accepting the SSPX into the Church. This is to be expected. Liberals and conservatives in the Church will continue to fight each other until Christ returns and they will shift their dominance as sure as the stock market goes up and down.

But what is not expected in the Church’s internal fight between its liberals and conservatives is a fifth column from outside the Church to pour water on the proposed détente. In fact, not only is there a fifth column working against it, there is now a sixth column, if you will. I speak here of the liberals from modern Jewry now being joined for the first time by their previous ideological enemies, the liberals from modern Islam. In this case, the well-known saying, “the enemy of my enemy becomes my friend” seems to be the cement keeping these rivaling factions together. Their common enemy, of course, is the SSPX. Their guiding motif is that if a reconciliation is formalized by a personal prelatore, the SSPX will, in turn, heavily influence the Church with its traditionalism, to the point of destroying all that the Jews and Muslims have done to be accepted by the Church as viable and legitimate religions.

Case in point: A [recent article](#) published on July 28, 2016 by the news platform, *Vatican Insider*, co-written by a prominent member of the American Jewish Committee (AJC) to the Holy See and an Islamic representative, claims the Jews and Muslims, in the age of ecumenism initiated by the Church herself at Vatican II, have a say, if not veto power, to determine whether the SSPX is deserving of a reconciliation. One of the major complaints of the Jewish representative concerned the “history of anti-semitism” in the SSPX, while the Islamic representative appealed to the fact that Islam and Christianity “believe in one God,” which the SSPX rejects.

Although the Church is certainly against “anti-semitism” (*e.g.*, Vatican II’s *Nostra Aetate*: “...the Church, mindful of the patrimony

she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone"), as is usually the case, the problem is not so much "anti-semitism," *per se*, but how one defines the term.

Here we come back to the age-old fight between liberals and conservatives. The conservatives usually define "anti-semitism" as any irrational hatred of the Jews simply because they are Jewish. In other words, it stresses one's internal attitude towards the Jews at large. Conversely, the liberals usually define anti-semitism as being *any* attempt to criticize the Jews, including their political, religious, geographical, and monetary exploits, and, more specifically, criticizing such things as Zionism and anti-supersessionism. As such, their definition is more political.

Where, precisely, the Jewish author lies in this rather wide spectrum is not stated in the article. But if recent history is any indication, she and the AJC she represents, along with other Jewish organizations such as the ADL and the World Jewish Congress, not to mention Catholic liberals who are usually pro-semitic, lean toward the more liberal definition.

The Islamic representative is, of course, working off the fact that the 1994 Catholic Catechism teaches in paragraph 841: "The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims; these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day," and *Nostra Aetate* 4, which says, "The Church also has a high regard for the Muslims. They worship God, who is one..." Interpretations of these rather ambiguous statements depend, of course, on whether one is a liberal or conservative, but we can rest assured that the Islamic author is banking on the more liberal.

The Jewish representative of the AJC who signed the article is Lisa Palmieri-Billig (Billig). Billig was born in Vienna in a Jewish family and emigrated as a small child to New York in 1938. During Vatican II she worked in the Roman branch of the World Jewish Congress (WJC). For 25 years she was the Deputy Chairman of the World Conference of Religions for Peace, based in New York and founded in 1961. Presently she is Chairman of the Italian section of the organization. Since 2005 she has been the AJC representative to the Vatican.

The Islamic representative who signed the article is Yahya Pallavicini. His Italian father converted to Islam in 1951, and Yahya advanced to be the vice-president and imam of the Italian CO.RE.IS. (Italian Islamic Religious Community). He is the global expert for the United Nations' Alliance of Civilizations and advisor for relations with the Vatican and Italy. Pallavicini has many ties with the Jews. He is a founding member of the International Committee of Imams, Rabbis, and Christians for Peace presented at UNESCO of Paris. His first book, *Islam in Europe: Reflections of an Italian Imam*, was published in 2004 by *Il Saggiatore*, with a preface by Amos Luzzato, President of the Union of the Italian Jewish Communities. He has had dialogue with leading Jewish rabbis, and has visited Jerusalem as a Muslim member of the interreligious project organized by the American Jewish Committee. He has met with both Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, and attended the first Catholic-Muslim Forum held at the Vatican.

The Billig-Pallavicini article published by *Vatican Insider* was a response to an [interview](#) given to Curia Archbishop Guido Pozzo, the secretary of the Pontifical Commission of Ecclesia Dei. The interview was published in the German weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* (32/2016). The director of *Vatican Insider* is the papal house vaticanist, Andrea Tornielli, who, as we will see, gave his sanction through Billig and Pallavicini for the AJC and the Islamic Religious Council (IRC) to make a shot across the Vatican's bow, warning that if the Vatican ignores the AJC and the IRC recommendations against the proposed reconciliation with the SSPX, it will "raise serious questions." The temptation couldn't be greater for the Vatican, especially since it has become quite liberal itself in the last few decades. Should it jeopardize 50 years of ecumenical efforts by reconciling with the SSPX, or should it hope for the failure of the reconciliation so that it can remain reconciled the Jews and Muslims? In short, can the Vatican be ecumenical with its own SSPX and, at the same time, be ecumenical with the Jews and Muslims? One might say that the Vatican is between a rock and a hard place. Diplomacy certainly has its price. Trying to please everyone may turn out to please no one.

In the article, Billig sums up Pozzo's position quite well, namely, "the Society (SSPX) is no longer excommunicated, but has not yet been reintegrated canonically, and despite some initial concessions, continues to reject some important documents of Vatican II." The SSPX "rejection" of some of Vatican II's documents turns out to be the hinge upon which Billig's argument turns. She explicitly zeros

in on two documents: *Nostra Aetate* and its teaching on “the relationship of the Catholic Church and the Jewish people,” as well as *Dignitatis Humanae* on religious freedom. Billig complains that Pozzo’s interview is “absent of any reference” to the importance of these two documents, and implies that Pozzo’s lacuna countermands the intent of Popes John XXIII and Paul VI, as well as the whole thrust of Vatican II to combat the “seemingly entrenched theological anti-Semitism” of the SSPX.

## THE NEW WRINKLE IN ANTI-SEMITISM

Accusing the SSPX of anti-semitism is when the milk was spilt and Billig’s real agenda became apparent. But more than that, notice Billig’s reference to “theological anti-semitism.” This is the first time I have seen the adjective “theological” placed before “anti-semitism” in polemical dialogue, which appears to be a bit more involved than any run-of-the-mill anti-semitism. By using “theological,” Billig is upping the ante. She wants to dig real deep, right to the theological core, as it were. For all intents and purposes, Billig is advocating the position that the Jewish people, as a religious-ethnic group, must be recognized as on par with the Catholic Church in having full rights as a religion granted by God, and which thus has a divine license to authorize earthly rewards and heavenly access for its people. As Billig throws down the gauntlet, anything short of that license will be categorized as “anti-semitism.” Interestingly enough, Billig, although in more general terms, may be wondering the same thing when she writes: “On what specific points is the Vatican willing to compromise?” She, of course, wants the Vatican to compromise by divesting itself of “theological anti-semitism.”

To be expected, the SSPX has never acceded, in any respect, to the accusation that it is anti-semitic. It maintains that it is only seeking to be faithful to the Church’s traditional teaching on the Jews. As such, the SSPX has been quite clear that the Jews and Muslims have been categorically denied a divine license, due to the fact that they have rejected the very foundation that can give such a license, namely, Jesus Christ. Hence, the same problem keeps cropping up over and over again in any ecumenical talks that the Jews and the Muslims have with the Catholic Church, that is, what does one do with Christ? As in the 1980s movie, “What about Bob?” the continuing and deafening echo in ecumenical dialogue is “What about Christ?”

Indeed. Is the Vatican willing to compromise on the new charge of

“theological anti-Semitism,” as opposed to the more common charge of ethnic anti-semitism? The latter has always been rejected, but the former, as Billig insists, is the new and improved version of anti-semitism that must be considered and implemented. When all is said and done, the bottom line is: is the Church willing to forego the necessity of its ecumenical partners to accept Jesus Christ as the God/man and the only means of blessing and salvation? If so, will She then be required to make a dogmatic distinction between receiving salvation via Christ as opposed to receiving salvation via “belief in the one God”? Or will She, although remaining friends with the Jews and Muslims for the sake of peace (as St. Paul stated in Romans 12:18: “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men”), make it clear to all that although She “accepts whatever is true in other religions,” by the same token She is obligated to reject whatever is false in them, including the Jews’ and Muslim’s rejection of Christ and Him alone for salvation? Is She willing to maintain, in line with 2000-years of history, that only through the Catholic Church can earthly blessing and heavenly access be attained, whether Church membership is formal or informal? These are the crucial \$64,000 questions for the Church. The right answers will save Her. The wrong answers will bring Her into apostasy. The temptation to do the latter has never been greater in Church history.

The hope of the liberals is that, if they keep dialoguing and persist in putting “ecumenical” pressure on the Church, perhaps the Church will finally stop dancing on the fence and relinquish its presumed sovereign right over divine access and salvation. The SSPX, as it has proven in its stalwart position for the last 50 years, has no such temptation. Its “theological anti-semitism,” if you will, is rooted in the tradition of the Church and thus it has concluded that there can be no compromise on either Jesus Christ or salvation, no matter how friendly on the surface we may be with other religions. To the SSPX, friendly relations with other religions is merely pre-evangelism for final acceptance into the Church. Those who refuse, refuse salvation. But to the liberals in the Catholic Church, and in Judaism and Islam, friendly relations are the first step in removing any pretentious notions of evangelism and its intent on making everyone Catholic.

## THE NEW WRINKLE IN CATHOLIC APOLOGETICS RE: VATICAN II

Be that as it may, Billig was theologically astute enough to pick up

on the “although not dogma” phrase loud and clear from Archbishop Pozzo’s interview. We see Pozzo’s clever approach when, on the one hand, he confirms that anything in Vatican II that reiterates previous Catholic dogma is certainly binding, yet on the other hand, in regards to documents such as *Nostra Aetate*, *Dignitatis Humanae*, and *Unitatis Redintegratio*, Pozzo brings a wrinkle to the discussion of which Billig probably wasn’t at all prepared, and thus had to scramble for a new apologetic, which then led her to adopt the no-holds-barred position of “theological anti-semitism.” In any case, Pozzo made his own shot across the bow of Ship Ecumenical with these stinging words regarding the aforementioned Vatican documents:

“They are not about doctrines or definitive statements, but, rather, about instructions and orienting guides for pastoral practice. One can continue to discuss these pastoral aspects after the canonical approval, in order to lead us to further clarifications.”

“This is certainly not a conclusion on our part, but it was already clear at the time of the Council. The General Secretary of the Council, Cardinal Pericle Felici, declared on 16 November 1964: ‘This holy synod defines only that as being binding for the Church what it declares explicitly to be such with regard to Faith and Morals.’ Only those texts assessed by the Council Fathers as being binding are to be accepted as such. That has not been invented by ‘the Vatican,’ but it is written in the official files themselves.”

“The secretary for the Unity of Christians said on 18 November 1964 in the Council Hall about *Nostra Aetate*: ‘As to the character of the declaration, the secretariat does not want to write a dogmatic declaration on non-Christian religions, but, rather, practical and pastoral norms.’ *Nostrae Aetate* does not have any dogmatic authority, and thus one cannot demand from anyone to recognize this declaration as being dogmatic. This declaration can only be understood in the light of tradition and of the continuous Magisterium.

“For example, there exists today, unfortunately, the view — contrary to the Catholic Faith — that there is a salvific path independent of Christ and His Church. That has also been officially confirmed last of all by the Congregation for the Faith itself in its declaration, *Dominus Jesus*. Therefore, any interpretation of *Nostrae Aetate* which goes into this direction is fully unfounded and has to be rejected.”

Billig, if she has been watching the 50-year history of ecumenical

dialogue closely, realizes that reaching a compromise and dispensing with “theological anti-Semitism” cannot be done overnight, even with a liberal Vatican. The Vatican itself tried a liberal coup this year against its own people when Pope Francis tried to allow the readmission to communion for those living in illegitimate marriages, but was shot down by a conservative onslaught never before seen in modern history.

To be sure, Billig is fearful of losing the ground that her side has already gained. So the best thing to do is to keep kicking the can down the road. One excellent way of doing so is by putting the spotlight on the SSPX’s rejection of *Nostra Aetate* and *Dignitatis Humanae* and making the Vatican feel guilty for even thinking of shunning the ecumenical success these documents have fostered thus far. So, on the one hand, Billig, courtesy of Pozzo’s interpretation, concedes that *Nostra Aetate* and *Dignitatis Humanae* may “not be dogma,” but on the other hand, she says “they have become valuable tools for Interreligious Dialogue.” In this way, Billig is admitting that her kicked can has become a tad bit heavier to get off the ground after Pozzo’s clarification, since her admission that these crucial Vatican II documents are “not dogma” more or less destroys her “theological anti-semitism” foundation.

Pozzo’s voice is certainly an oasis in the desert of 50 years of ecumenical dialogue, which has included such incidents as high-placed liberal Cardinals demanding that Jews not be targeted with Christian salvation, as well as liberal Catholic catechisms becoming more like cataschizms by suggesting that the Mosaic covenant can provide salvation for the Jew. In effect, Pozzo has answered the \$64,000 question — no compromise on Jesus Christ will be tolerated. Let’s hope that the rest of the Catholic prelature follows his faithful lead.

So, Billig is left with “Interreligious Dialogue,” and, oh, how frustrating that can be. Although a little heavier, unending dialogue will allow the can to be kicked as long as both parties are willing to keep kicking it and give the impression of ecumenical success. It will probably go on until Christ returns.

Unfortunately, along the way, the disease to which most ecumenists succumb is talking out of both sides of their mouth. This is inevitable for one who is trying to please all parties at the same time. As such, the Mr. Hyde part of Billig shows she is not about to give up the ship. To contend with Pozzo’s relaxation of *Nostra Aetate*, *Dignitatis Humanae*, and *Unitatis Redintegratio*, she quotes



from Chief Rabbi David Rosen who, believing the Jews have some say in how Vatican II should be interpreted, does not ascribe to the “although not dogma” status of the documents in question. She quotes Rosen as saying:

“I have every confidence in the declaration of Cardinal Kurt Koch, President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, who explained that the adoption of *Nostra Aetate* as a binding document by the SSPX, is a necessary step to ensure that the members of the Society may be formally recognized by the Holy See; and I cannot believe that Pope Francis could accept less than that. In addition, I hope that the Holy See, regarding Judaism and the Jewish people, insists in the addition to recognition of the teaching of the Magisterium, on the denial of anti-Semitism that was part of the culture of the SSPX. It was not just about Bishop Williamson and a couple other people: The website of the organization has been full of anti-Jewish rhetoric in the past. I want to hope that there is a formal recognition of the statement of Pope Francis in line with his predecessors, which states that it is impossible to be a true Christian if you have anti-Semitic opinions.”

So the “bishop against bishop” phenomenon about which the Marian apparitions warned seems to be alive and well in the modern Catholic Church. For the Jewish contingent in dialogue with the Vatican, it is rather easy to find a liberal cardinal these days who takes an opposite view than the conservative Archbishop Pozzo. It is also quite evident, as Rosen points out, that Pope Francis, who considers the German cardinals Koch and Kasper as two of his better cardinals, has sided more with the liberals than with the conservative Italians, like Pozzo. Sadly, with Catholic liberals, the \$64,000 question is always at risk of being answered incorrectly. This is precisely why Billig wrote her article *after* Pozzo did his interview. Her shot across the bow of the Vatican is designed to make the \$64,000 question into an open debate instead of a settled conclusion.

Be that as it may, it is always interesting to watch Jewish ecumenists rely so heavily on *Nostra Aetate* as the vanguard for changes in the Church’s thinking when, in fact, there is little innovation to be had in the document. Although there are no clear and concise statements in *Nostra Aetate* that claim to reject or add anything new to the Church’s previous teaching, nevertheless, certain well-placed and timely phrases have resulted in forcing *Nostra Aetate* to take on a life of its own, which life the liberals

employ with abandon. In reality, the Church has always condemned “anti-semitism.” She simply could not be Christian if she did not condemn hatred of the Jews simply because they are Jewish. In the same vein, the Church has never made any official statements declaring that all Jews of all time are responsible for the death of Christ, but has always cited the Jews in Jesus’ day as the guilty party who incited the Roman leaders to crucify him. Similarly, the Church has never officially taught that all Jews are rejected or accursed, but only those who refuse to accept Christ, the same rule as applies to the Gentiles. At the same time the Church has always affirmed what the Old and New Testament teach about Israel’s foibles and fortunes, namely, that Israel was judged for its many sins and, as a national entity and international representative for God, was thus replaced by the Church, who is now the custodian of the Gospel and has the keys of the kingdom. So, even if Pozzo is wrong that *Nostra Aetate* is not Catholic doctrine (which can only be formally and officially decided by the pope, not the prefect of Ecclesia Dei), there is very little wiggle room for Billig and the Jews.

#### ANTI-SEMITISM AND JULES ISAAC

Regarding “theological anti-Semitism,” we must remember that although this is a new term in the ongoing dialogue in order to up the ante and press for an ultimate decision from the Church, it will never be just about theology. It will always include as its fulcrum the ceaseless cries from the Holocaust. The two work hand-in-hand. This is noted in Billig’s reference to the fact that John XXIII had “become aware through an encounter with Jules Isaac, a survivor of the Holocaust” that “rhetoric circulating in Europe had created a suitable environment for the development of wild anti-Semitic stereotypes, which in turn fueled the hatred that made the Shoah possible.” It is also seen in her judgmental remark about Pope Francis that his “deeply meaningful silence” at Auschwitz was “deafening.”

Billig’s casual citation of Jules Isaac cannot go unchecked. The one man who had the greatest influence on the Catholic prelatry in the 20<sup>th</sup> century concerning the precise nature of “wild anti-semitic stereotypes,” and the very man whose thesis held that the Holocaust was the product of an extreme bias in the New Testament against the Jews, was Jules Isaac. He was especially influential on John XXIII, Cardinal Montini (Paul VI), and Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II). It began with his 1946 book *Jésus et Israël*. In it, Isaac is the

first Jew in history to charge the Gospels as being anti-semitic; and he took this unprecedented leap for the express purpose of changing the Church's attitude toward the Jews. It was an all or nothing gamble for Isaac. If he hit, he had to hit with a single knockout punch; otherwise he knew nothing would change. As such, Isaac insisted that the four Evangelists told deliberate falsehoods about the Jews because, as he claims, "they were preoccupied with reducing Roman responsibility to the minimum in order, correspondingly, to increase that of the Jews."

Let's pay close attention to what is happening here. As the devil accused God of lying to Eve, when, in fact, it was the devil who was lying about God, Isaac's argument to the Catholic pontiffs is that the Gospel writers were lying when, in fact, Isaac was lying about them. Never in history had such a risky apologetic been implemented by a Jew. For all Isaac knew, his new approach would have gotten him thrown out on his ear by pontiffs who we assume would never stoop so low as to accuse the four Evangelists of lying about the Jews, no matter how ecumenical these same pontiffs wanted to be in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

But, Isaac knew a thing or two about modern Catholic hermeneutics. He knew, following the Jewish philosopher Spinoza, who poisoned the biblical well for everyone from Julius Wellhausen to Fr. Raymond Brown, that they were all being schooled in liberal Catholic seminaries which taught, and still do today, that the Bible is full of historical errors and that the Gospel writers and/or their redactors, could, indeed, be guilty of "fixing the text" against the Jews. To see a quick example of this, we need go no further than Pope Benedict's recent book, *Jesus of Nazareth* (Ignatius Press, 2011). In it he claims that the infamous wording of the Jews in Matthew 27:25: "let his blood be on us and our children," never happened, for, as he says, "Matthew is certainly not recounting historical fact here" (see Vol. 2, p. 186). Hence, a pope of the Catholic Church has said what we trusted we would never hear from a reigning pontiff, even if unofficially.

No wonder Mr. Isaac took his gamble. He knew that Catholic tradition, which had previously understood Matthew to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and written with God's own words and thus without error, had passed the baton to a wishy-washy modern Catholic Church that now believes Matthew was not so inspired and thus she now teaches that Matthew deliberately embellished, exaggerated, or fixed the text to coincide with some latent anti-

semitic attitude he harbored. This total about-face from a traditional view to a modern view is made, despite the fact that Matthew was a Jew and there are no Greek textual variants that testify to such a “fixing of the text.” This is how blind the modern Catholic Church has become, and it is a welcome feast to Jews looking to veto its documents and change its direction.

In light of Pope Benedict’s view of Matthew 27:25, it is no surprise that Isaac had a special hostility to St. Matthew. He writes: “It is a veritable competition as to who can make the Jews appear most hateful. Richly chequered and pathetic as is the narrator of the fourth Gospel (St. John), the palm goes to Matthew; his unerring hand unleashed the poisoned arrow that can never be withdrawn” (p. 483). On page after page Isaac laments that “It is hard to believe ... that anything the Gospel writers say, especially about the Passion, is actually true.” Isaac levies a constant barrage of accusations of “anti-semitism” against the Evangelists, even though Isaac admits that the least anti-semitic was St. Luke, the only Gentile among the four.

Hence Isaac claimed that the Catholic Church’s understanding of the Jews for the last two thousand years has been prejudicial and distorted, and, in reality, the Jews did not incur any judgment from God. The Diaspora, as Isaac saw it, was merely the result of “Roman imperialism,” and not a loss of faith among the Jews. This leads him to the conclusion that “...the permanent and latent source of anti-Semitism is none other than Christian religious teaching of every description, and the traditional, tendentious, interpretation of the Scriptures” (p. 572). In Isaac’s mind, the Jews are guilty of nothing and thus deserved no divine punishment, since they had “no loss of faith.” The evil Gentile nations merely took advantage of the weak Jews. This was the same excuse the Jews gave to the prophets of the Old Testament whenever God judged Israel for its sins by sending the Gentile nations against it. It was everyone else’s fault for their many tragedies, except theirs, of course.

The same distorted apologetic is used today by Jewish authors. In David Klinghoffer’s recent book, [\*Why the Jews Rejected Jesus\*](#) (Doubleday, 2005), it is Klinghoffer’s thesis that the Jews throughout history were good religious people who were simply trying to live out the Mosaic covenant, but, being highly outnumbered, were overrun by numerous political and religious competitors, such as the Greeks, Romans, Christ, Paul, and the Catholic Church, to name a few. But, continues Klinghoffer, all

these competitors found that they could not live up to the high moral standards of Judaism “for the practice of the commandments is a discipline unsuited to the requirements of a mass religion” (p. 99), and therefore they all rejected the Mosaic law for an easier path, a more worldly path, which became “the turning point in Western history.” Similar to Jules Isaac, Klinghoffer’s over-infatuated and idealistic portrait of the Jews and Judaism is made in the face of virtually a total absence in his book of how the Jews, both now and in the past, never “lived up to the high moral standards of Judaism,” disobeying the very precepts taught in the Mosaic covenant. Even when receiving the Mosaic covenant, Israel committed one of the worst sins in its history, namely, worshiping a golden calf, from which God was ready to destroy the whole nation, barring Moses’ 40 days of appeasement to God to spare them (*cf.* Exodus 32:1-14; Deut. 9:1-29). Anyone who has read the Old Testament cannot turn but a few pages before he comes to a lengthy narrative describing the gross and immoral sins the Jews committed either against God, their fellow Jews, or their foreign neighbors. But, throughout his 222 pages, Klinghoffer doesn’t mention one of them — not one — yet it is clear from reading Moses’ own description of the Jewish people in the Pentateuch and the subsequent commentary in the historical and prophetic books that the single reason God took the Old Covenant away from the Jews was that they continually transgressed it with their hypocrisy and immorality. In turn, He sent the Romans to destroy them and the Christians to take over the keys of the kingdom. Both Isaac and Klinghoffer are simply blind to this reality. The blindness to their own sins leads them to use the Church for their scapegoat.

But this has been the sad history of the Jew: ignore their own sins, but blame everyone else when God judges them for those sins. In the 1948 book, *Genèse de l’Antisémitisme* (*The Origin of Antisemitism*), Isaac continues the blame game and points his finger at the Fathers of the Church, saying, “One must recognize the sad fact that nearly all the Church Fathers have contributed their stone in this work of moral lapidation: St. Hilary, St. Jerome, St. Ephrem, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Ambrose, and St. Epiphany — who was born a Jew — St. Cyril of Jerusalem, and many others. But two of this illustrious cohort ... deserve special attention, St. John Chrysostom and ... St. Augustine.” Of Pope St. Gregory the Great, Isaac said: “He envisaged the history of this people as an enormous error” and did so because “he could only follow the existing tradition, firmly established by the Fathers of the fourth century” (pp. 161, 289).

It was for this very reason that Isaac desired to influence Pope John XXIII and especially the documents of Vatican II, while Billig and the AJC are vying for interpretive authority over those same documents and are using the SSPX's alleged "anti-semitism" as its "terrorist" fear tactic to keep the ecumenical door wide open. With Billig using Isaac's distorted historiography as the guiding motif, we can see why, although she concedes that the SSPX has "relatively small influence in an enormous Catholic world," she also portents that "nothing happens in this world without effect," and thus acceptance of the SSPX "could easily" turn into "a return of the old prejudices" and thus result in a "transform to the militant conviction of possessing the only true way to God."

Hence, there is little doubt that Billig's accusation of "theological anti-semitism" is the mother lode of all complaints about anti-semitism. Her upping of the ante has reduced all other polemics about anti-semitism to one simple challenge to the Catholic Church: "Are you really the only legitimate people of God and the only means of salvation for the world. Are you really a hate-mongering anti-semitic institution that thinks it is superior to the rest of the world?" Her inquisitiveness would be innocuous, except for the fact that Billig would intend the question to be rhetorical.

Likewise, the Muslim representative, Pallavicini, who has an ongoing relationship with Pope Francis, laments that reconciliation with the SSPX would mean "an insulting and delegitimization of the burning desire of John XXIII according to the *aggiornamento* of the Catholic Church, and to return to the pseudo-religious, anti-Semitic stereotypes that provoked immense suffering of many centuries and ultimately led to the diabolical persecutions and genocides of the 20th century." It is interesting to see that while little "holocausts" occur daily in the Middle East on both sides of the Jewish/Muslim religious and political divide, Pallavicini has seen the political and theological clout that using the Nazi holocaust can bring to the discussion table. As even Jewish author Norman Finklestein admits in his book, the holocaust exploitation has become an "industry" (*The Holocaust Industry*, 2003, Verso).

In the end, the whole ball of wax turns on who possesses the keys of the kingdom. The Jews, and the Muslims by proxy, believe they have, or should have, at least one of those keys and therefore there should be no Catholic militancy. Militancy, according to the Jews and Muslims, even on a "theological" level, is still anti-semitism, and, on a practical level, it is merely another latent form of anti-

semitism that will inevitably lead to another holocaust. As such, the SSPX is guilty by association — a clever Jewish ploy that seems never to lose its usefulness. Consequently, the modern Church's most severe temptation, considering all its efforts of appeasement and conciliation for the past five decades, is the temptation to relinquish to the Jews and Muslims one of those keys to escape the droning complaints of “anti-semitism.”

But sharing the keys is simply not possible and thus “theological anti-semitism” isn't even on the table for discussion, much less will it ever be eliminated. The Jews know this, for it was precisely the error of their ancestors when, against God's clear and direct orders, they fraternized with the false gods from the surrounding nations and God consequently took away their keys. Solomon, for all his glory and wisdom, did this very thing and ended his life in apostasy, putting the Jews on a path from which they never really recovered (1Kings 11:1-13). Of the forty kings that followed him, only eight had a good epitaph. Why the Jews expect the Catholic Church to do the same is quite ironic. Perhaps the old adage that ‘misery loves company’ is at work here. More likely is the fact that the Jews are desperately trying to turn the Church away from Christ, just as St. John prophesied in Apocalypse 1-3 from those who “call themselves Jews.” Let us pray hard that Pope Francis and his successors can see the difference...