

JEWS IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH A Presentation of the Association of Hebrew Catholics

Some Jews in the Roman Catholic Church started the *Association of Hebrew Catholics* (AHC).

Goal: To preserve the identity and heritage of Israelites within the Catholic Church, through the establishment of a Hebrew Catholic Community juridically approved by the Holy See. The recognition of the special status of Israelite converts in the framework of an approved Community. This would then enable Israelite converts to preserve and develop their historical identity.

With this other major aim can begin to develop, that is, restoring the heritage of Israel to the life of the Church (see also 0273uk on www.stucom.nl).

To recognise the Jewish identity of Jews in the Roman Catholic Church is important, but there are tensions. One of them wrote: 'We are a problem for the dialogue. The Jews see us as apostates from the faith and traitors to the people. The Catholics in the dialogue are embarrassed to have us around - we appear to be a back door to evangelization. Although we do not actively evangelize, our very existence is an evangelical witness that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel.'

Below a presentation.

Kees Slijkerman, March 2009



Association of Hebrew Catholics

From: www.hebrewcatholic.org

Presenting the Association of Hebrew Catholics Elias Friedman, O.C.D.

Aim

The Association of Hebrew Catholics (AHC) is a voluntary association of Catholics which aims at ending the alienation of Catholics of Jewish origin from their heritage as Israelites. The AHC intends to petition the Holy See to approve the establishment of an Israelite Community in the Church, based on the special registration of converts at baptism and of their descendants. Once constituted, the Community will serve as a sign of the times.

The Signs of the Times

The need for the establishment of an Israelite Community in the Church is based on the reading of the signs of the times, expounded in Jewish Identity. Jewish Identity sustains the thesis that the plan of salvation has entered the phase of the Apostasy of the Gentiles, prophesied by Our Lord (Luke 18:8) and St. Paul (2 Thess. 2:1-11).

The Return of the Jews to their ancient homeland, after 2,000 years of dispersion, culminating in the capture of Jerusalem (1967), is the corollary. [\[Top\]](#)

State of the Question

Until now, the admission of Jews into the Church has been governed by a regime of assimilation. Under this regime, ignoring their special theological status defined by Vatican Council II, as “secundum electionem” (Lumen Gentium, §16*), converts enter a Gentile Catholic Community, where they are progressively alienated from participation in the destiny of their people. Their children, should there be any, grow up to be Gentiles, as daily experience goes to prove.

The effects of the regime of assimilation on the families of converts and their brother-Jews are no less destructive. The converts are commonly regarded as traitors to their people, preparing its destruction. In particular, Jews observe with dismay the loss of the children of converts, for if all Jews were to convert only to be assimilated, then the people would, ipso facto, cease to exist. The lessons of history bear out their fears. In turn, Jews, both religious and non-religious, are prompted to make common cause in their opposition to the Christian Mission.

The projected Israelite Community in the Church would correct the deficiencies of the regime of assimilation.

Historical Note

On May 28th, 1979, Father Elias Friedman, O.C.D., wrote to Msgr. William Aquin Carew, then Apostolical Delegate of Jerusalem, objecting to an opinion he had encountered in a Catholic review (*Civiltà Cattolica*, 1937, p. 500); it read as follows:

“The conversion of Israel would be the definitive solution (to the Jewish problem) on condition that, once they have become Christians, Jews lose their nationality.”

Much to the satisfaction and relief of Fr. Elias, Msgr. Carew replied in a letter, dated June 25th, in the following terms:

“I, personally, believe that we should enable them (the Jews) to accept Christ and his Church without assimilation.”

While recognizing that the Delegate had offered a personal view which might not be that of the Holy See, Fr. Elias felt himself authorized to launch a call to those Israelites who had entered the Church of their own free will. The call was to assemble in an Association so that, after consultation with all those concerned, a collective petition would be presented to the Holy See. The petition would solicit recognition of the special status of Israelite converts in the framework of an approved Community. This would then enable Israelite converts to preserve and develop their historical identity and transmit their millennia-old heritage to their offspring.

The Support of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Southern Africa

As far back as 1965, Fr. Elias had broached the project of the Community to the Bishops of South Africa. His idea was welcomed. Special mention should be made of the support given him by the late Cardinal Owen McCann, then Primate of South

Africa, and the late Archbishop John C. Garner of Pretoria. The latter wrote to Fr. Elias of his personal conviction in the soundness of Fr. Elias' reading of the signs of the times. In consequence, the Liturgical Commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Southern Africa recommended to the Holy See the erection of an Israelite Community in the Church.

In 1981, Fr. Cyril Axelrod, Redemptorist and himself a Jewish convert, in unison with Thérèse-Marie Meyer, Fr. Elias Friedman's sister, again drew attention of the South African Bishops to the matter, following which the Conference of the Catholic Bishops of Southern Africa, unanimously, in Plenary Session, renewed its recommendation to the Holy See (February 1982). Regrettably, Fr. Cyril, failed to consult Fr. Elias, prior to his initiative, and recommended a rite. This is an ambiguous term which could signify a Community or/and a liturgy. It could be understood to mean the composition of a new text for the administration of the seven sacraments, an idea totally unacceptable to the Holy See and one which had not been intended nor conveyed by Fr. Elias. The upshot of this misunderstanding was to cloud the true issue, namely, the formation of a Community, not a rite.

First Steps

Fr. Elias managed to obtain the help of Andrew Sholl, an advocate resident in Australia, who, as a child, had suffered internment in a Nazi prison camp. Andrew prepared a newsletter to keep affiliates in contact with one another. His task was subsequently taken over by David Moss, who now produces and edits the bi-monthly publication of the AHC entitled *The Hebrew Catholic*.

The affiliation of Msgr. Eugene Kevane, now deceased, formerly President of the Notre Dame Pontifical Catechetical Institute, Virginia, U.S., and Professor of Catechetics at the Angelicum, marked a decisive step in the progress of the AHC. He was instrumental in co-opting several valuable members, to name only Dr. Ronda Chervin, Ph.D., a convert well-known in the Catholic Church of the United States and, formerly, Professor of Philosophy at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio. Msgr. Kevane was also responsible for co-opting David Moss, who renders invaluable service to the AHC, of which he is the President.

In October 1985, Msgr. Nolan, then president of the Pontifical Mission for the Near East, expressed the opinion that the time had come for the AHC to apply for recognition by the Sacred Congregation of the Oriental Churches. The application has not yet been made, since the need was felt to give priority to extending work in the field.

Msgr. Nolan was kind enough to show his encouragement by a financial contribution to the AHC.

Since then, the AHC has made slow but sure progress, the pace being governed by its limited financial resources and personnel, reliance being placed on voluntary efforts and contributions.

At the time of writing, the AHC has affiliates in Australia, Canada, England, France, Ireland, Israel, Italy, New Zealand, Spain, South Africa and the United States. Its unity is assured by a common acceptance of the reading of the signs of the times as expounded in *Jewish Identity*.

Organization

- The AHC will eventually seek the approbation of the Holy See; in the meantime, local branches should try to obtain the approbation of their Bishop.
- The overall direction of the AHC is in the hands of a President aided by a Central Committee. At this stage of its development, the President is appointed by the Founder. However, it is desirable that in the future all offices be held by election.
- Note: In March 1996, the AHC in the U.S. became a non-profit corporation registered in the state of New York. In July 1998, it obtained tax-exempt status in accordance with §501(C)3 of the IRS codes. Contributions are tax-deductible.
- The AHC is under the patronage of Our Lady of the Miracle and Blessed Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein) to be canonized as a saint on 11 October 1998.

Individual Affiliation with the AHC

- All Catholics, of both Jewish and non-Jewish origin, who agree with the aims of the AHC are invited to affiliate as members.
- Affiliation of individuals is made to local groups or directly to the Central Committee.

Group Affiliation with the AHC

- The basic group is a branch with a minimum structure: President, Secretary and Treasurer.
- Affiliation of groups, under a name of their own choosing, is made to the Central Committee.
- Wider groupings are envisaged.

Friends of the AHC

- All those who are not able to affiliate but who support our work are invited to become a Friend of the AHC.

Subscriptions to The Hebrew Catholic

- Affiliates automatically receive *The Hebrew Catholic*. All others are invited to subscribe.

Activities

- The apostolate of the AHC is directed exclusively to Catholics. The AHC does not actively evangelize.
- The AHC has its publishing house. The Miriam Press was founded by David Moss for the development of a Hebrew Catholic literature and the promotion of Hebrew

Catholic authors and their works.

- The quarterly publication of the AHC, *The Hebrew Catholic*, aims at reflecting the presence of Hebrew Catholics in the Church today.

Programs

- These should tend to develop a Hebrew Catholic identity, mindful of the words of Our Lord not to pour new wine into old wine skins (Mt. 9:17).
- Programs are of three kinds: 1) Doctrinal, 2) Spiritual and 3) Practical.

Doctrinal

- The first stage in the apostolate of the AHC is kerygmatic, announcing the signs of the times.
- The AHC is based on a Catholic interpretation of history, in the light of the divine plan of salvation, and applied to contemporary events by a reading of the signs of the times. These disciplines are susceptible of development.

Spiritual

- The spirituality of the AHC is messianic; it springs spontaneously from the reading of the signs of the times, which reveals the action of Almighty God in contemporary events. The apostolate of the AHC relies on the action of God, who governs the history of Israelites and Gentiles alike, according to His plan of salvation.
- The perception of God's action in events creates a serene optimism about the future of the apostolate and of the Church.
- For Gentile Christians, there is a warning that their Church is under the cloud of apostasy, with the dire consequences such an apostasy engenders.
- Hebrew Catholics should see themselves as pioneers in the Divine process of the ingrafting of their people into their own cultivated olive-tree.
- Hebrew Catholics should identify themselves with the biblical history of Israel and the post-Christic tragedy of their people, culminating in the Holocaust. The tragic exile of post-Christic Jewry was due to their incredulity, their refusal to acknowledge the divinity of Jesus; and this thought should prompt Hebrew Catholics to redress the situation by their exemplary orthodoxy.
- Hebrew Catholics should assume the past of their people and help prepare its future.

Practical

- The first step in the apostolate is to announce the kerygma and to help others to read the signs of the times.

- To cultivate the Hebrew language.
- To reach out to the Church to which its message should be communicated.
- To obtain information about the presence of Hebrew Catholics in the Church: their numbers, distribution, rate of entry into the Church, marriage state, the perceived identity of the children, and their activities in the Church. In this way, their contribution to the life of the Church can be accurately assessed.
- To formulate a collective picture of Hebrew Catholics. Hebrew Catholics have provided the Church with a Blessed, the Carmelite nun and martyr, Edith Stein, a venerable figure in the person of Fr. Francis Libermann, Founder of the missionary Congregation of the Holy Spirit, and Hermann Cohen, Discalced Carmelite, whom the Order considers worthy of canonization.

The AHC is proud to count a Hebrew Catholic in the College of Cardinals, Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, Cardinal Archbishop of Paris. In addition, it knows of Hebrew Catholic bishops, priests, religious—both male and female—in many Orders of the Church, such as Rev. Arthur Klyber, C.S.S.R., Raphael Simon, O.C.S.O.; scholars such as the late Msgr. John Oesterreicher, and a laity—some members of which have distinguished themselves in the service of the Church. Such would be, for example, Dr. Ronda Chervin, Ph.D., in a previous generation, Rosalie Marie Levy, Karl Stern, David Goldstein, and many others. Their writings constitute an impressive library on which members of the AHC could draw for spiritual nourishment.

Liturgy

The AHC adopts the arrangement for Hebrew Catholics in Israel. These are of the Latin Rite, practiced in Hebrew, with an original paraliturgy, such as hymns and prayers for various occasions.

Publications

Ed. The following publications may all be ordered through our book store.

Jewish Identity, Elias Friedman, O.C.D.

Fr. Elias' offers a reading of the signs of the times, an understanding of Israel's role in salvation history, and the theological and historical background for the AHC apostolate.

The Hebrew Catholic

The quarterly publication of the AHC. Write for a sample issue. A small donation for printing and mailing costs is appreciated.

En Route to Eternity, Ronda Chervin, Ph.D.

The autobiography of Ronda Chervin, a founding member of the AHC in the U.S.

Novena to Saint Edith Stein, E. Friedman, OCD

Novena from August 19, meditating on Saint Teresa Benedicta's way of the Cross.

Born of the Ever Virgin Mary, Br. Anthony Opisso

Reviews the doctrine about the perpetual virginity of Mary, according to Sacred Tradition and as seen in the light of Jewish tradition.

"The glorious Messiah's coming is suspended at every moment of history until His recognition by 'all Israel'..." Catechism of the Catholic Church, par. 674.

*May our efforts hasten the day when 'all Israel' shall proclaim
"Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord"
(Baruch haba b'Shem Adonai)*



Association of Hebrew Catholics

Original Manifesto of the Association of Hebrew Catholics

Ed. This manifesto was written by Elias Friedman, OCD prior to the launch of the Association in 1979. Prior to his passing over in 1999, Fr. Friedman was working on a revision of this statement. - which will be eventually posted.

The Association of Hebrew Catholics aims at combating the alienation of Jewish converts and their descendants from their historical heritage by the formation of a Hebrew Catholic Community, juridically approved by the Holy See.

At present, the admission of the Jewish convert to the Church is governed by a regime of assimilation, which systematically ignores the specific elements of his identity, recognised nevertheless by Vatican Council II (*Lumen Gentium* para. 16). The ultimate effect of the regime is to alienate the convert from his people of origin and prepare the way for the total absorption of his descendants into the Gentile community. Between themselves, converts may have a past in common, but they have no present and no future in common. Whatever be the sentiments, virtues or attainments of the individual convert, he has no way of transmitting his historical identity, as an Israelite, to his descendants. These, in consequence, cease eventually to be Israelites, as daily experience shows to be the case.

The effects of the regime of assimilation on the convert's fellow Israelites are no less destructive. Quite apart from the justifiable criticism that the convert has betrayed his people, they perceive the regime of assimilation as an expression of

Gentile contempt for Jewish identity and a real menace to their historical survival - for if all Jews were to be converted, only to be assimilated, the Jewish People would cease to exist: hence, their total opposition to the Christian Mission. The regime of assimilation has thus become the major obstacle to the admission of Jews to the Faith.

A community framework would correct the grave deficiencies attendant on the admission of Jews to the Faith, as it occurs today. Within a community framework the convert would be free to develop his new identity in harmonious continuity with his past, to assure the Hebrew education of his children and, God willing, to establish a mutually beneficial relation with the Jewish People.

With these hopes in mind, the Association aims eventually at petitioning the Holy See to approve the erection of a Hebrew Catholic Community, into which Jewish converts would be integrated at baptism and to which their descendants would belong.

From: www.hebrewcatholic.org

*Lumen Gentium 16 in Dutch:

Zij, tenslotte, die het evangelie nog niet hebben ontvangen, staan niettemin om velerlei redenen naar het volk van God gericht.³² Vooreerst het volk waaraan de verbonden en de beloften gegeven werden en waaruit Christus naar het vlees is voortgekomen vgl. ([Rom. 9,4-5](#)): met betrekking tot de uitverkiezing is dit volk bemind omwille van de aartsvaders, want nooit kent God berouw over zijn genadegaven en roeping vgl. ([Rom. 11,28-29](#)). Doch het heilsbesluit omvat ook...

Bron: <http://www.katholieknederland.nl/naslagwerken/vaticanumii/index.html>

*Lumen Gentium 16 in English and other languages: www.vatican.va.

More on this subject on www.hebrewcatholic.org, www.tjcii.org and www.tjcii.nl; and on www.stucom.nl:

- 0273uk

Are Jewish Converts still Jewish? Interview with David Moss

- 0271uk

Jewish identity of Jewish disciples of Yeshua. Four different fundamental perspectives - in Zot Habrit, Sept. 2007

- 0253uk

The Marranos: A History in Need of Healing - Peter Hocken. History and sufferings of the Jews of Spain, Portugal and Latin America, baptized under pressure.

In Dutch: rubriek Joden - christenen op www.stucom.nl

This is document 0272uk on www.stucom.nl