

PRO PERFIDIS JUDAEIS

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ON GOOD Friday, the Church solemnly intercedes for all within and without her fold. Among her petitions is one for the Jewish people.

Oremus et pro perfidis Judaeis: ut Deus et Dominus noster auferat velamen de cordibus eorum; ut et ipsi agnoscant Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum.

Non respondetur Amen, nec dicitur Oremus, aut

Flectamus genua, aut Levate, sed statim dicitur:

Omnipotens sempiternae Deus, qui etiam Judaicam perfidiam a tua misericordia non repellis: exaudi preces nostras, quas pro illius populi obcaecatione deferimus; ut, agnita veritatis tuae luce, quae Christus est, a suis tenebris eruantur. Per eundem Dominum. Amen.

This is the text given in the Roman Missal. Two problems arise in regard to this prayer: the meaning of *perfidia* and *perfidus*, and the significance of the rubric directing certain omissions.

THE MEANING OF "PERFIDIA"

The St. Andrew Missal in its 1927 edition reads: "Let us pray for the perfidious Jews"; in the edition of 1943, this is changed to: "Let us pray for the faithless Jews." Father Lasance's Missal of 1935 speaks of the "unfaithful Jews" and of "Jewish faithlessness." The Missal of Fathers Callan and McHugh gives in all editions the rendering "perfidious Jews." Father Stedman's Lenten Missal (1941) translates: "Let us pray for the unbelieving Jews."

It is our contention that *perfidus* denotes neither "perfidious" nor "faithless" nor "unfaithful" in their present connotations, but "unbelieving" or "disbelieving." The liturgy does not pass moral judgments, nor would it label the Jews "treacherous" or "wicked." In saying *perfidia judaica*, the Church mourns Israel's disbelief in Christ, holding that from Abraham's children, least of all, would one expect such refusal of faith.

Considerable authority is lent this thesis by the opinion of Ildefonso Cardinal Schuster; in his *Liber Sacramentorum*, he translates the

Church's intercession: "Preghiamo pure per gl'infedeli Giudei."¹ The English translation unfortunately misses this point; it uses the term "perfidious."² Another scholar, A. Lukyn Williams, in *Adversus Judaeos*, sees *perfidia* as a kind of active unbelief.³ Pierre de Labriolle, in a note on the following passage from St. Cyprian's *De catholicae ecclesiae unitate*:

It is the adversary who flatters and dupes . . . [the false Christians], who, according to the words of the Apostle, transfigures himself, as it were, into an angel of light, who adorns his ministers as ministers of justice, who presents night as day, death as salvation, despair under the cover of hope, unbelief under the colors of faith (*perfidiam sub praetextu fidei*), and the antichrist under the name of Christ,⁴

writes: "*Perfidia, c'est exactement le contraire de fides.*"⁵

Félix Vernet says that in ancient texts *perfidus* apparently signifies "incrédule, incrédule qui s'obstine," "qui s'aveugle volontairement," or "infidèle." *Perfidi Judaei* would thus be similar to the words of our Lord, γενεὰ ἄπιστος καὶ διεστραμμένη, "unbelieving and perverse generation."⁶ Having cited examples from St. Ambrose, St. Gregory the Great, the *Decretum Gratiani*, and others, Vernet arrives at the following conclusion: "Toutefois, sauf exception, dans le langage

¹ Ildefonso Cardinal Schuster, *Liber Sacramentorum* (Turin, 1920), III, 221.

² *Op. cit.*, trans. A. Levelis-Marke (New York: Benziger Bros., 1924-1930), II, 213 f.

³ A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Judaeos* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936), p. 400.

⁴ S. Cyprian, *De catholicae ecclesiae unitate* (PL, IV, 498).

⁵ P. de Labriolle, *Saint Cyprien: De l'unité de l'église catholique* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1942), p. 51.

⁶ Matt. 17:16; Mark 9:18; Luke 9:41. "Unbelieving and perverse [= contrary, misguided] generation," a reminiscence of Deut. 32:5, is addressed apparently to the father of the afflicted boy, to all present, including the disciples, to the Pharisees, and to the Jewish people as a whole. St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Comment. in Luc.*, remarks that the rebuke is directed to the father and to all men of like mind (PG, LXXII, 657). Origen comments that it was as burdened with the perversity of all mankind that Christ said: "How long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?" (*Comment. in Matth.* XIII, 7 [PG, XIII, 1109]). St. Jerome says: "The words of Christ are like those of a physician who, upon seeing his patient acting contrary to his orders, says: 'How long am I going to come to your house? How long shall I waste my labors and my art, I bidding one thing and you doing another?' But He was not so much angered at the man as at his fault—and in his person reproved the Jews for their unbelief—adding at once: 'Bring him to Me.'" (*Comment. in Matth.* III [PL, XXVI, 125]). Thus Christ's words of indignation were followed by a work of mercy.

officiel de l'Église, la 'perfidie' juive paraît bien être l'erreur ou l'incrédulité juive."⁷

Vernet's whole argument is borne out by the following passage from St. Augustine, who, commenting on Psalm 54:10, wrote:

Extendebat ille manus suas ad populum non credentem, et contradicentem. Si enim justus est, qui ex fide vivit (Rom. 1:17); iniquus est, qui non habet fidem. Quod ergo hic ait, iniquitatem: perfidiam intelligo. Videbat ergo Dominus in civitate iniquitatem et contradictionem, et extendebat manus suas ad populum non credentem, et contradicentem; et tamen et ipsos exspectans dicebat: Pater, ignosce illis, quia nesciunt quid faciunt (Luc. 23:24).⁸

These words, sung in *Tenebrae* on Spy Wednesday, not only exemplify Vernet's thesis, but also breathe the same spirit as does the Good Friday prayer. *Fides* and *perfidia* are set in opposition: the faith that justifies, and the unbelief that leaves man to his "injustice," his fallen nature. But the Lord does not leave His people to their "iniquity"; despite their disbelief and contradiction, He stretches out His hands towards them and prays that they be forgiven.

Erik Peterson, in an outstanding paper, "Perfidia Judaica," has likewise demonstrated that *perfidia* means "unbelief."⁹ For it is, he shows, generally applied by the Fathers, not to Jews only, but also to heretics, schismatics, and *lapsi*. In the case of those who in times of persecution failed to stand fast in the faith, sacrificing to idols, the term *perfidia* connotes a breach of allegiance, a revolt against the unity of the Church. Since by their unbelief the Jews in no wise destroy the juridical relationship characteristic of the Christian faith, never having been within the Church, their *perfidia* can be taken only in the sense of an active incredulity.

Peterson adduces several patristic texts as evidence for his argument, among others: "Electae sunt gentium nationes, ut destruat^r perfidia Judaeorum";¹⁰ "Ad . . . refellendam perfidiam [Judaeorum] quaedam ex Veteri Testamento aggregavimus testimonia";¹¹ "Quorum itaque perfidiam detestamur, eorundem fidem, si convertantur, amplecti-

⁷ F. Vernet, "Juifs et Chrétiens," *DAFC* (1915), II, 1733 f.

⁸ In *Psalm. 54* (PL, XXXVI, 637).

⁹ E. Peterson, "Perfidia Judaica," *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, L (1936), 296.

¹⁰ St. Ambrose, *Ad Psalmum 43* (PL, XIV, 1104).

¹¹ St. Isidor of Seville, *De fide catholica contra Judaeos* (PL, LXXXIII, 450).

mur.”¹² In all these instances, *perfidia* can have but one meaning, “unbelief.” In the mind of St. Ambrose, the nations were chosen that the unbelief of the Jews might be torn down, might come to naught, for the faith of the Gentiles in the Divine Saviour showed the Jewish unbelief to be built on sand. To what end did Isidor of Seville collect texts from the Old Testament if not to prove the Jews in error, to battle and refute their unbelief? Leo the Great, in saying that we detest the unbelief of the Jews (their unbelief, it is worth noting, and not the Jews as unbelievers), but that after their conversion, we shall cherish their faith, contrasts *perfidia* with *fides*.

The language of the liturgy is best interpreted by the liturgy itself. The Leonian Sacramentary, representing the most ancient Roman tradition known to us, says of the Protomartyr: “Sanctus Stefanus primitivus tuae fidei candidatus ob hoc infidelium persecutione lapidatus est.” In another of its prayers in honor of the same Saint, it reads: “. . . Verbi tui potentia Judaicam destruens constanti voce perfidiam”¹³ If these two sentences are considered together, it is evident that the *perfidia* St. Stephen unmasked with firm voice, by the power of the Word, was “unbelief,” for those who persecuted and stoned him are called *infideles*, “unbelievers.”

The seventh and eighth stanzas of *Jam Christus astra ascenderit*, the Ambrosian hymn of the fourth century sung at Matins throughout the Octave of Pentecost, read:

Judaea tunc incredula,
Vesana torvo spiritu,
Madere musto sobrios
Christi fideles increpat.

Sed editis miraculis
Occurrit, et docet Petrus,
Falsum profari perfidos,
Joele teste comprobans.

Here, as in other instances, *incredulus* is linked with *perfidus*. It is incredulous Judea, herself unsound because of her savage mind (seemingly, a mind lacking the power to discern spirits), that accuses

¹² St. Leo the Great, *Sermo LXX* (PL, LIV, 381).

¹³ *Leonian Sacramentary* (ed. C. L. Feltoe, Cambridge, 1896), pp. 88, vi and v.

Christ's sober faithful of being drunk on new wine. But Peter counters with miracles; he shows the unbelievers to speak falsely, confirming his words by the testimony of Joel.¹⁴ In these two stanzas, it is not perfidy and fidelity, but error and truth that confront one another. This instance of the use of *perfidia* is particularly interesting; here a crowd of Jews lightly charges the disciples with vice. The Apostle, however, attempts by gentle teaching and mighty deeds to convince them of their blunder.

The Second Nocturn, in recounting the lives of saints, employs frequently the term *perfidia*. The narrative of St. Hermenegild's life, from the *Dialogues* of St. Gregory, written in the late sixth century, tells of Leovigild, the Visigoth king, his father, who sent to his prison, on Easter Eve, 585, an Arian bishop, to offer him sacrilegious communion and thus reconvert him to heresy. His father, as an adherent of Arianism, is called *perfidus*. Hermenegild rebuked the heretical bishop: "... ejusque a se perfidiam dignis increpationibus repulit." Of St. Vincent Ferrer, who was canonized in 1455, the Second Nocturn says: "Mox obtenta a superioribus licentia, verbum Dei praedicare, Judaeorum perfidiam arguere, Saracenorum errores confutare tanta virtute et efficacia coepit, ut ingentem ipsorum infidelium multitudinem ad Christi fidem perduxerit." This is a perfect instance for our thesis, for its parallel use of "perfidia Judaeorum" and "error Saracenorum" shows them to be analogous. The employment of "arguere" and "confutare" shows their object to be in the intellectual sphere. And the final phrase, "unbelievers led to faith in Christ," proves their *perfidia* to have been the absence of such faith. These several texts, representing the usage of many centuries, demonstrate the persistent use of *perfidia* in this sense.

A further proof for the correct interpretation of *perfidia* and *perfidus* in the Good Friday liturgy can be deduced from yet another liturgical source, the Rite of Baptism for Adults, as given in the *Rituale Romanum*. If the candidate for baptism is a heathen or idolator, he is enjoined by the priest: "Horresce idola, respue simulacra"; "Abhor

¹⁴ Many translations unfortunately display the usual mistaken approach. J. H. Palmer and J. W. Doran, in their translation (quoted by Dom Matthew Britt, O.S.B., *The Hymns of the Breviary and Missal* [New York: Benziger Bros., 1936], p. 166), speak of "Juda's sons e'en faithless yet," and of Peter as "confounding their malignant lie." Britt himself renders *Judaea incredula* by "faithless Judea" and *perfidus* by "perfidious Jews" (p. 167 f.).

idols, reject images." If a Moslem desires the sacrament, he is told: "Horresce Mahumeticam perfidiam, respue pravam sectam infidelitatis," which may, I suggest, be read as: "Abhor the unbelief of the Moslems, reject the sect whose faith [in Christ] is distorted even to unbelief." If the convert derives from Judaism, the priest thus addresses him: "Horresce Judaicam perfidiam, respue Hebraicam superstitionem," which is, in my opinion, to be understood: "Abhor the Jewish unbelief, reject the Hebrew error [the vain conviction that the Messiah has yet to come]," or alternately: "Abhor the Jewish unbelief, reject the Hebrew rites [now] deprived of meaning [having been fulfilled in Christ]."¹⁵ Each of these entreaties is followed by the solemn bidding: "Worship God the Father Almighty, and Jesus Christ, His Only Son our Lord, who will come to judge the living and the dead, and the world by fire." This sequel (which concerns worship and not morals), the reiterated references to false creeds and cults in the cases adduced, and the use of *perfidia* for both Moslems and Jews, point to the same conclusion: the Jew approaching the baptismal font is not told to amend the "treacherous and deceitful" ways of his people, but is bidden to abandon the unbelief of Israel, who denies herself to Christ. Similarly, the Church in the Good Friday Intercession does not call the Jews an evil race, a base and faithless people. However, with sorrow she remembers their unwillingness to receive Him whom the patriarchs expected, the prophets foretold, the apostles preached—who revealed Himself among them.

Abbé Charles Journet, in his lucid and profound *Destinées d'Israël*¹⁶ cites the definition of "Jewish unbelief" given by St. Thomas: "Renititur fidei christianae susceptae in figura, et sic est infidelitatis Judaeorum,"¹⁷ and its exposition by the Carmelite theologians of Salamanca: "Renititur fidei non utcumque, sed fidei quam determinate profitetur in figura, et determinate negat in figurato praesenti, et post manifestationem Evangelii."¹⁸ Thus, according to St. Thomas, Jewish unbelief is resistance against the faith already received and

¹⁵ Cyril Bailey gives this definition of *superstitio*: "A rite going beyond what is needed, a *religio* where no *religio* need be" (*Religion in Vergil* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935], p. 72).

¹⁶ C. Journet, *Destinées d'Israël* (Paris: Egloff, 1945), p. 142.

¹⁷ *Sum. Theol.*, II-II, q. 10, a. 5.

¹⁸ *Cursus theol.* (ed. Palmé), XI, 416.

accepted in figure; it is, to the great theologians of Salamanca, not a denial, pure and simple, of the truth of Christ, which Judaism does accept as prefigured, but which it rejects present and manifest. In the words of Abbé Journet, Judaism goes astray in preferring the promises to the things promised, the preparation to the fulfillment, the figure to the reality. For the love of the stem, it refuses the flower.

The ultimate argument for the true meaning of *perfidia* may be gathered from the Intercession itself. We pray for the Jews that they may be freed from their blindness, delivered from their darkness, that they may recognize our Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledge the light of God's truth. What we implore for them is enlightenment, the gift of faith; lacking it, their state is unbelief. The words of the Church echo the bewilderment of the Apostle that the people of the revelation, who had watched through the night and witnessed the dawn, should, as a whole, have failed to see the day. And she employs his gentle image for their ignorance—the veil with which Moses covered the radiance of his face is now upon their hearts; when they read the Old Testament, they do not understand, nor do they see the glory of Christ. "But," writes the Apostle, "when they shall be converted to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away" (II Cor. 3:13–16). Until the veil is "withdrawn from their hearts," "their senses are dulled"; they are unbelieving, *perfidii*.¹⁹

Indeed, Israel's sin is more than lack of faith; it is her failure to answer divine love with love. In speaking of the Jews as *perfidii*, "unbelieving," the Church spares them the graver charge. Léon Bloy and many with him imagine that it is an "abysmal wickedness which the precision of liturgical language calls by the singular name, 'Jewish perfidy.'"²⁰ But just the opposite is true; the use of *perfidia* by the Church reveals restraint rather than harshness. And so careful

¹⁹ Not only the liturgy, but many papal documents use the term *perfidia* to characterize the Jewish rejection of Christ. See S. Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century* (Philadelphia: Dropsie College, 1933). *Perfidia* is contrasted with *fides nostra* (p. 92), spoken of as *caecitas perfidiae* (p. 104), or *perfidia Judaeorum, de quorum cordibus . . . Redemptor nostra velamen non abstulit* (p. 250). As equivalents of *perfidia Judaeorum*, some letters of the Holy See employ *infidelitatis error* (p. 182), *error Judaicae caecitatis* (pp. 180, 286), and *tenebrae erroris Judaici* (pp. 96, 136). The Fourth Lateran Council uses *Judaeorum perfidia* in opposition to *Christiana religio* (p. 306).

²⁰ Léon Bloy, *Le salut par les Juifs* (Paris: Mercure de France, 1933), p. 128.

is her choice of language that she does not say, as in substance do some translations: "Almighty and everlasting God, who drivest not away from Thy mercy even the perfidious Jews..." She says rather: "... who repellst not from Thy mercy even the Jewish disbelief..." thus marking the distinction between Israel's sin of rejection, so grievously at variance with her vocation and her graces, and Israel herself, the object of divine Love. The words of the liturgy reflect perfectly Pauline theology, which calls the Jews, despite their enmity to the Gospel, "most dear for the sake of the fathers" (Rom. 11:28).

THE RUBRIC

There is unanimity among scholars as to the meaning of *perfidia*; the second problem, however, the significance of the rubric, gives rise to divergent opinions. The ritual of the prayer for the Jews differs from that of all the other Good Friday Intercessions in that it prescribes the omission of the triple injunction, *Flectamus genua. Levate. Oremus*. The admonition *Non dicitur Amen* poses no problem, being merely a caution that the words *Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum* are not, through habit, to be followed by *Amen*, since they do not form the conclusion of an *oratio*; they are but the last phrase of the invitation (*adhortatio*), and none of the invitations prefacing any of the Solemn Intercessions on Good Friday concludes with *Amen*. Durand of Mende (†1296) therefore writes: "... pro nullo statu post praefationem respondetur Amen, sicut nunquam fit post aliquam praefationem, licet etiam ibi ponatur per Christum Dominum nostrum: sicut patet in cotidiana Missae praefatione."²¹

The usual reason given, however, for the absence of the injunctions to kneel and pray, is that the order to kneel is omitted in order not to renew the remembrance of the shame with which the Jews on this day scorned the Saviour by their genuflections. But no explanation is offered for the suppression of the *Oremus*. Among the medieval writers with whom this interpretation originated is Amalarius of Metz, who writes: "Per omnes orationes genuflexionem facimus, ut per hunc habitum corporis, mentis humilitatem ostendamus excepto quando oramus pro perfidis Judaeis. Illi enim genu flectebant, opus

²¹ Durand of Mende, *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* (ed. Lyons, 1672), p. 346, col. 2.

bonum male operabantur, quia illudendo hoc faciebant. Nos ad demonstrandum quod fugere debeamus opera quae simulando fiunt, vitamus genuflexionem in oratione pro Judaeis.”²² Sicardus of Cremona says: “Pro Judaeis vero non flectimus genua, ut vitemus illorum illusionem, quoniam irrisorie sua Deo flectebant.”²³ Joannes of Avranches²⁴ and Joannes Beleth²⁵ express themselves similarly. Some modern authors who share this opinion are Dom P. Guéranger,²⁶ Pius Parsch,²⁷ and H. Villetard.²⁸

This explanation suffers from two weaknesses. For, in the way it is generally presented, it is hard to understand why the mocking genuflections of the Jews should prevent Christian worshippers from kneeling. One could with equal justice demand that we bend the knees in reparation.²⁹ Thus a sermon attributed to St. Augustine urges the faithful to follow the example of St. Stephen, who prayed for himself standing, but for his Jewish brethren on his knees. To the mind of the preacher, this mortification is needed because of the gravity of Jewish disbelief, which is not easily forgiven.³⁰

Moreover, the usual interpretation suffers not only from what may be called a logical defect, but also from a historical misconception. Those who made Jesus a mock king and bowed the knee before Him were not Jews, but Roman soldiers.³¹ Furthermore, not only were they not Jews, but in ridiculing Christ, they were intending to show their contempt for those very Jews. “What caprice of cruelty were these soldiers obeying?” writes F. Didon, O.P. “Why this detestable and vulgar mockery? The Roman soldiers entertained an intense hatred of the Jews and the condemned man who was delivered to them

²² Amalarius of Metz, *De Eccl. Officiis*, IV, i, 13 (PL, CV, 1027).

²³ Sicardus of Crémone, *Mitrales*, VI (PL, CCXIII, 517).

²⁴ Joannes of Avranches, *Liber de Officiis Eccl.* (PL, CXLVII, 51).

²⁵ Joannes Beleth, *Rationale Divinorum Officium*, 98 (PL, CCII, 102).

²⁶ P. Guéranger, *L'Année liturgique* (1875), p. 553.

²⁷ P. Parsch, *Das Jahr des Heiles* (1934), II, 32.

²⁸ H. Villetard, “I Giudei nella liturgia,” *Rassegna Gregoriana* (1910), p. 431.

²⁹ In the mind of St. Basilus, standing is the likeness of the resurrection while kneeling is the symbol of man’s fall. This is given as a reason why the worshipers in the first centuries of the Church did not kneel on the day of the Lord, nor at Eastertide, nor at Pentecost. (*De Spiritu Sancto*, 27 [PG, XXXII, 192]). Cf. Tertullian, *De oratione*, 23 (PL, I, 1191 f.).

³⁰ *Sermo CXXI*, 3 (PL, XXXIX, 2141).

³¹ Matt. 27:29; Mark 15:18; John 19:3.

was made the victim of this hatred."³² In the ruthlessness of their hearts, the soldiers were unable to grasp the gentle meekness of Christ, who showed but love for His torturers. To them He seemed utterly helpless, a picture of Jewish impotence. In greeting Him: "Hail, King of the Jews!" they scorned not only the Man Jesus, but also the messianic hope of Israel.

Joannes Beleth must have felt the ineptitude of the hypothesis relating the rubric to mockery on the part of Jews. For he says, speaking of the derision of the Lord crowned with thorns, that though not the work of Jews, it must be attributed to them, as having been responsible for His passion; "Quod quamvis a Judaeis factum non fuerit, ascribitur tamen illis, quod causam praestiterint."³³ It might be argued that this view is exactly that of the Church, and that the usual explanation of the rubric is therefore correct. For in the Reproaches, she herself makes our Lord say: "Thou hast beaten Me with blows and scourges. . . Thou hast given Me gall and vinegar . . . Thou with a spear hast opened My side." But the tenor of the *Improperia* is, in my opinion, altogether different from the usual remarks on the Intercession. The Reproaches are the complaint of divine Love. When the Lord says: "My people, answer Me," He speaks to the Jews, and, by implication, to the nations. Israel and mankind are here seen as one, for as the favors bestowed upon the Jews were given for the sake of all, similarly the Jews are held responsible for the deeds of the Roman soldiers, and likewise all men are in a certain sense accountable for those of the Jews, who acted, as it were, in their name. Hence the *Improperia* can hardly be adduced in support of the view attributing the omission of the customary genuflection to scorn on the part of Jews.

Sicardus of Cremona, aware of the deficiencies of this, the usual explanation, which he himself had proffered,³⁴ and Rupertus the Abbot, likewise dissatisfied,³⁵ both present a rather odd interpretation.

³² F. Didon, O.P., *Jesus Christ* (English trans.; New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1891), II, 343.

³³ Joannes Beleth, *loc. cit.*

³⁴ Sicardus of Cremona, *loc. cit.*

³⁵ Rupertus the Abbot, *De Divinis Officiis*, VI, 18 (PL, CLXX, 163 f.).

Since the blindness that befell the Jews cannot, they claim, be dispelled by dint of prayer so long as the plenitude of the gentiles has not entered the kingdom of God, one should not pray for them too vehemently. But pray one should nevertheless, they say, for it is bound to occur that He, who was lifted up on the Cross to draw all things to Himself, will draw them too. The attitude expressed by these two medieval authors is often encountered, but it hardly conforms with the mind of the Church. With no theological or historical basis, it cannot serve as an interpretation of the rubric. It seems necessary to approach the problem from the historical point of view, although the scarcity of data as yet precludes the possibility of reaching a conclusion definite and incontestable.

Louis Canet seems to have been the first to have attempted such an approach. In his article "La prière 'Pro Judaeis' de la liturgie catholique romaine," he gathered data on the history of this rubric.³⁶ The *Sacramentarium Gelasianum* (Cod. Vatican. Reg. 316), written, most probably in the seventh or in the early years of the eighth century, possibly for the Abbey of St. Denis, knows no such rubric. The first of the *orationes solennes* has this directive: "Adnuntiat diaconus: Flectamus genua. Iterum dicit: Levate." This same rubric is repeated in each case, for the Jews as for the others: "Adnuntiat diaconus ut supra."³⁷ Early *Ordines Romani* show no special rubric relating to the prayer for the Jews. The manuscript of Saint-Amand (Paris, lat. 974), probably of the late eighth century, and that of Einsiedeln (326), give no indication that the Good Friday Intercessions were recited with any modification from one to the other.³⁸ One must therefore conclude that the ancient discipline of the Church observed no distinctive rite in praying for the Jews.

³⁶ L. Canet, "La prière 'Pro Judaeis' de la liturgie catholique romaine," *Revue des Études Juives*, LXI, 122 (April, 1911), 213.

³⁷ Cf. H. A. Wilson, *The Gelasian Sacramentary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), p. 77. The Gelasian Sacramentary of Angoulême, of the eighth century (B. N. lat. 816), likewise makes not the slightest distinction between the intercession for the Jews, and the others. Cf. *La sacramentaire gelasien d'Angoulême* (Angoulême: La Société historique et archéologique de la Charente, 1918), pp. 43-44'.

³⁸ Cf. L. Duchesne, *Origines du culte chrétien* (5th ed.; Paris: Thorin et fils, 1925), pp. 488, 503.

The first indication of a different usage appears in the *Ordo Romanus I*, of a later date than the manuscript of Einsiedeln, which reads: "Tunc venit pontifex ante altare, et dicit: Oremus, dilectissimi nobis in primis pro Ecclesia Dei, et cetera per ordinem sicut in quarta feria diximus.³⁹ Cum autem ventum fuerit ad Iudaeos, non flectunt genua."⁴⁰ That this *Ordo* records the omission of the usual genuflection is no proof that it was at that time the Roman practice. For the *Ordo Romanus I* does indeed present for Paschal time the Roman Use, but as observed outside of Rome, and combined with customs unknown to the papal court.⁴¹ The fact that the Easter section of this *Ordo* records Frankish customs seems rather to indicate that the change originated outside of Rome, that is, in the Frankish realm.

Beginning with the ninth century, almost all sacramentaries and all liturgical works attest to the same usage: the suppression of the deacon's injunction to bend the knee. The Missal of Westminster reads simply: "Hic non dicitur Flectamus." The Missal of Milan (1474) omits the rubric, but makes no comment. The Missals of Paris (1530 and 1540) say explicitly: "Et non respondetur Amen, nec dicitur Flectamus genua, sed dicitur Oremus." The Roman Missal (1570) reads: "Non respondetur Amen, sed statim dicitur"; the Missal of Troyes (1736): "Hic non dicitur Amen nec Oremus nec Flectamus genua, sed continuo, Omnipotens"; the Missals of Caylus of Auxerre (1738) and of Vintimille of Paris (1676): "... Dominum nostrum. Oremus. Hic non dicitur Flectamus genua"; the Missal of Robert de Jumièges,⁴² the *Sacramentarium Gregorianum*, and the *Missale Gallicanum vetus*⁴³ have the word *Oremus* introducing the solemn intercession for the Jews; the rest of the rubric is lacking, but no special allusion is made to it.

Viewing the historical development, Canet observes three stages in the evolution of today's usage: (1) *Oremus* and *Flectamus* until the

³⁹ According to certain manuscripts of the *Sacramentarium Gregorianum*, the *orationes solennes* were recited on Wednesday of Holy Week as well as on Good Friday. (Cf. *PL*, LXXVIII, 79, 312, note 239.)

⁴⁰ Cf. Muratori, *Liturgia Romana Vetus* (Venice, 1748), II, 995.

⁴¹ Cf. Duchesne, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-56.

⁴² H. Bradshaw Society, Vol. XI.

⁴³ Ed. Muratori, II, 59, 726.

ninth century; (2) *Oremus* without *Flectamus* from the ninth century to the end of the sixteenth century; (3) neither *Oremus* nor *Flectamus* after the sixteenth century. Dom Henri Leclercq, O.S.B., in his article "Judaïsme," substantially supports this observation.⁴⁴

Robert Fawtier draws attention to a manuscript (lat. 190) of the Use of York, which he identifies as written in Whitby Abbey in the last years of the twelfth century.⁴⁵ It is, he believes, the oldest copy known of the Use of York, and contains an interesting deviation in the course of the Good Friday Intercessions. While other contemporary manuscripts, and a later manuscript of the Use of York, demand the omission of the deacon's injunction,⁴⁶ here is found: "Hic flectamus genua." However, in a different hand of somewhat later date, the word *non* is added, giving "Hic non flectamus genua." Dismissing the possibility of an error in the original wording of the rubric,⁴⁷ Fawtier claims that from the ninth to the twelfth centuries, despite the absence of the deacon's injunction, the people nonetheless continued to kneel when praying for the Jews. Should he be correct, the people of York in this preserved for a time the ancient discipline of the Church.

One thing can be said with certainty: the ancient usage was altered in the ninth century. The problem yet demanding solution is the occasion of the change. Canet claims to have found the answer in the people's antagonism towards the Jews, basing his opinion on a marginal

⁴⁴ H. Leclercq, O.S.B., "Judaïsme," *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de la liturgie* (1928), VIII, Part I, 2.

⁴⁵ R. Fawtier, "The Jews in the 'Use of York,'" *John Ryland's Library, Manchester, England, Bulletin*, 5 (August, 1918—July, 1920), p. 381.

⁴⁶ Cf. *Missale ad Usum Percelebris Ecclesiae Herfordensis* (ed. W. G. Henderson, 1874), p. 93, *The Sarum Missal*, p. 112; *Missale ad Usum Insignis Ecclesiae Eboracensis* (ed. E. W. Henderson), I, 104.

⁴⁷ He bases this contention on the rubric at the beginning of the *orationes solemnes*, which gives no indication of a special usage for the prayer for the Jews, saying simply: "Post passionem dicat Episcopus vel sacerdos has orationes" (lat. 190, fol. 28). On the other hand, the later manuscript of the Use of York indicates a variation: "Post passionem praelatus, osculato lectu, dicat has orationes, stans in dextra parte altaris, sine Dominus vobiscum, et ad unamquamque illarum dicatur 'Flectamus genua,' nisi ad eam quae pro Judaeis oratur" (E. W. Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 103). The manuscript of the Use of Hereford reads: "Lecta passione in primis fiat oratio pro Ecclesia Sancta Dei et caetera sequentes per ordinem pronuntiante Diacono 'Flectamus genua'. Pro Judaeis tamen non genua flectant" (W. G. Henderson, *op. cit.*, p. 91), and that of the Use of Sarum: "Sequantur orationes solemnes et ad unamquamque illarum dicatur 'Flectamus genua,' nisi ad illam quae pro Judaeis oratur" (*Sarum Missal*, p. 110).

note in the Sacramentary of St. Vast (tenth century).⁴⁸ This marginal note reads: "Hic nostrum nullus debet modo flectere corpus ob populi noxam ac pariter rabiem." The significance of this note depends on the identity given to the "people" on account of whose "fault and madness" "none of us [priests] is allowed to bend his body."⁴⁹ Canet thinks that "the people" refers to Christians who, under the delusion that they were driven by a holy wrath, often stoned doors and windows of Jewish houses during Holy Week.⁵⁰ Influenced by this same erroneous attitude, they might have, he thinks, opposed the Church in her fervent intercession for the children of Israel. If he is right, then the Church was induced, apparently by the protest of the people, to alter the ritual of the prayer, simply codifying a popular usage.

Among Catholic scholars who uphold Canet's opinion are Félix Vernet and Dom Leclercq. Vernet says: "La haine du peuple contre les Juifs eut, pendant tout le moyen âge, des explosions qui n'étaient ni préparées ni dirigées par les princes ou par la hiérarchie ecclésiastique. Un des faits les plus caractéristiques nous a été révélé par une note marginale du sacramentaire de Saint-Vast."⁵¹ Leclercq writes in reference to the same marginal comment: "Ce fut donc la malveillance [du peuple] qui imposa l'omission de la genuflexion . . ."⁵²

A strong degree of corroboration is given Canet's thesis by the support of these two scholars. However, two other Catholic scholars think otherwise. Dom G. Morin, O.S.B., while according Canet the praise of "acribie et finesse de jugement," does not concur in his interpretation of the note in the Sacramentary of St. Vast, seeing it, curious though it be, as no hindrance to his accepting the usual explanation, namely, a deliberate avoidance of the gesture of derision narrated in the passion of our Lord. For the Roman liturgy, he says, is

⁴⁸ Canet, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

⁴⁹ Cf. H. Netzer, *L'Introduction de la messe romaine en France sous les Carolingiens* (Paris, 1910), p. 257.

⁵⁰ On the widespread custom of stoning the Jews at Eastertide, see Cecil Roth, "The Eastertide Stoning of the Jews and its Liturgical Echoes," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, XXXV, 4 (April, 1945), 361. This custom was forbidden by the *Constitutio pro Judaeis*, promulgated by Calixtus II and reissued nine times by eight other popes. (See Grayzel, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-78, 92-95.) Raphael Patai has shown in a note on Roth's article, appearing in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*, XXXVI, 4 (April, 1946), 415, that this stoning at Eastertide was not a persecution invented by Christians against the Jews, but a survival of pagan nature rites, which, unfortunately, found an object in the Jews.

⁵¹ Vernet, *op. cit.*, col. 1715.

⁵² Leclercq, *op. cit.*, col. 181.

accustomed to make these subtle omissions, "prétermisions pleines de délicatesse"; as an instance, he cites the omission of the Kiss of Peace on Maundy Thursday, and of the *Gloria* and *Alleluia* on the feast of the Holy Innocents.⁵³ Furthermore, Peterson raises the question as to whether the marginal note might not refer to the Jewish people rather than to Christians in the Kingdom of the Franks, where, as has been said, the modern usage in all likelihood had its origin.⁵⁴ Should this interpretation be correct, then *rabies populi* would refer to the "fury" of the Jews, who were pictured as having bent their knees in mockery before Christ; in this case, the marginal note would itself already have presented this erroneous conception. Peterson further surmises that the avoidance of the genuflection was not the consequence of anti-Jewish polemics in Gaul, but a liturgical innovation due to oriental influence. He thinks that with the introduction of the Reproaches from Syria, an attempt was made to dramatize the Good Friday prayer. For he sees both the Reproaches and the new order of the prayer for the Jews as charged with emotion, and contrasting, to a certain extent, with the sobriety of the Roman liturgy.

The two scholars who do not regard Canet's hypothesis as convincing, hold, it should be noted, widely divergent views on the congruity of the omission with the tenor of the Roman liturgy. And it should be remarked that Dom Leclercq accepted Canet's hypothesis, in spite of Dom Morin's disagreement. It thus appears difficult to determine with final certitude what caused the change in the ancient discipline. Not before further historical material comes to light will it be possible to state, in an entirely satisfactory manner, the reason for the suppression of the genuflection.

The omission of *Oremus*, however, is briefly explained. For sometime after the *Flectamus genua*, *Levate* had been eliminated, the injunction *Oremus* was preserved, only to fall gradually into desuetude, so that the Missal published by Pius V in 1570 did not contain it. In conformity with his hypothesis that it was popular prejudice which led to the first change, Canet conjectures that, after the ninth century, the

⁵³ G. Morin, O.S.B., "De quelques publications liturgiques récentes," *Revue Bénédictine*, XXX (Maredsous, 1913), 122 f.

⁵⁴ Peterson, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

priests took great pains to urge the people to silent prayer for the Jews, but when the silent prayer, traditional between *monitio* and *oratio* (for the *oratio* of the priest was, after all, but the “collect” of the people’s silent petition) was abandoned, the *Oremus* lost some of its meaning, serving mainly as an introduction to *Flectamus genua, Levate*. And since in our case, the eighth Intercession, these latter had vanished, the first injunction likewise disappeared.

CONCLUSION

To conclude with a proposal made from time to time: that the Church should modify the expression *perfidia Judaica* and restore the ancient order for the Good Friday prayer, I should like to venture an opinion. The Church will hardly alter the words *perfidia Judaica*, which, as we have shown, are not intended to dishonor the Jews, and this because she may not and will not forget Christ’s claim for recognition from His own people. She, the custodian of truth, must call things by their proper names; thus, Israel’s resistance to Christ, unbelief. Indeed, she would be an enemy of the Jews did she conceal from them the source of their unrest. However, as far as I can see, there is no reason why the Church could not restore the former discipline and reintroduce the genuflection, although this does not appear to me of paramount importance.

Whatever may have been the origin of the present usage—whether it was imposed, as it were, on the Church by popular resistance against her bidding to kneel, or whether it was introduced to express the same sacred shyness that keeps the Church from singing *Alleluia* on the day that Rachel mourned, or from giving the Kiss of Peace on the day Christ was betrayed—it most certainly cannot be said that we refrain from kneeling because by this act the Jews mocked Jesus during His sacred passion. Whatever may have been the origin of the change, it is certainly in no wise antagonism which leads the Church to maintain the present usage. It does indeed single out the Jews, but to her mind, their singularity is not only one of human failure, but also of divine love.

The important question, in my opinion, is that of vernacular editions of the Missal. It would be a great help towards the true under-

standing of the Good Friday Intercession, and of the authentic mind of the Church on the Jews, were *perfidia* generally rendered "disbelief." And in the event that a symbolic interpretation of the rubric is given, the comment could be that we refrain from bending the knee out of discretion, with the courtesy of love; we do not genuflect because the Lord in His passion was mocked by kneeling ruffians, pagan soldiers, instruments of the Jews and of us all.