Interfaith dialogue and the golden age of Christian-Jewish relations

INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND THE GOLDEN AGE OF CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1960s, remarkable changes have taken place in the relationship between the Christian and Jewish communities in the West. A movement of interfaith dialogue stood at the center of the developments, serving as a catalyst that helped to bring about reconciliation and improvement in the attitudes of Christians towards Jews. Beginning in the English-speaking world at the turn of the twentieth century, the dialogue between Jews and non-Jews gained more ground in the decades between the two world wars. The movement of interfaith reconciliation advanced considerably in the years after World War II and reached a "golden age" in the late 1960s and 1970s, when an unprecedented momentum for reconciliation and dialogue between the faiths flourished in Europe, America, Israel, and other countries. Despite occasional set-backs and while involving mostly members of liberal or mainstream groups, this movement helped to improve the relationship between Christians and Jews in an unprecedented manner and on a worldwide scale.

FULL TEXT:

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Council’s approach to Christian-Jewish relations was particularly revolutionary, signaling a major shift in Catholic teaching by acknowledging "the spiritual bond linking Christians and Jews," promoting "mutual understanding and respect" based on "brotherly dialogues" between them, and repudiating the age-old charge of collective Jewish guilt for the crucifixion of Jesus (Vatican Council II 1966, 663; 665-666). Pope John Paul II made the Vatican Council's teaching on interfaith dialogue a top priority of his pontificate, stating, "No one can fail to see the importance and the need that int The term interreligious dialogue (or interfaith dialogue) refers to positive interaction between people of different faith communities, mostly following the 1893 World’s Parliament of Religions. Although it is difficult to draw out the aims of the modern interreligious movement, which contains many disparate groups and individuals, certain common goals do seem to emerge. The International Council of Christians and Jews and many local interfaith groups have done such things for some years. Two serious criticisms can be leveled against them. First of all, although the Golden Rule makes sense as an aspiration, it is much more problematic when it is used as a foundation for practical living or philosophical reflection.