



Old, New Testaments need name changes, says Mobile visitor

By SYLVIA HART
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Dr. Harry James Cargas is suggesting that Christians change the names of their Old and New Testaments.

CARGAS, PROFESSOR of literature, language and religion at Webster University in St. Louis, spoke at Spring Hill College under the sponsorship of the Mobile Area Jewish-Christian Dialogue.

In an interview, Cargas said the names "Old Testament" and "New Testament" are "at least condescending terms, maybe even insulting terms, to Jews."

The professor acknowledged that the changing of the names would be a complicated matter, but he maintained that Christian and Jewish theologians "could settle the whole thing" if they seriously tried.

THE CHRISTIAN Old Testament is the same as the Jewish Scriptures, and the use of the word "old" for the Jews' Bible causes problems in Jewish-Christian relationships, said Cargas.

Cargas said the supersessive theory has been condemned by scholars such as Michael McGarry of the University of Texas.

Cargas explained the supersessive theory allows Christians to say to Jews, "We have now fulfilled your book (Bible). We have now taken over from you."

SAID CARGAS, "There's certainly arrogance in that kind of position."

Cargas quoted Robert Willis, a Protestant theologian at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minn., as saying that Christians' missionary work among Jews causes problems in Jewish-Christian relations.

Asking the question, "Why do we feel we need to do missionary work toward the Jews?" Cargas commented, "Willis says if we still feel we have a mission to convert the Jews, then we'll never learn anything from history."

Cargas, who is a Catholic, said the Roman Catholic Church needs to take some actions "to become reconciled with Jews."

SAYING THAT Jews have been persecuted for many centuries by Christians, the professor said, "I'm not so naive as to think ... we're going to become reconciled in a month or something like that. It'll be a century maybe, but we have to start somewhere."

One suggestion the professor made was that the Roman Catholic Church excom-

municate Adolf Hitler, who as the dictator of Germany during the World War II era was responsible for having about 6 million Jews and millions of others murdered.

Cargas said, "Hitler died on the tax rolls of the Roman Catholic Church."

EVEN THOUGH Hitler is dead, Cargas said the Nazi leader should be excommunicated for two reasons: "as a sign from Catholics to Jews that we are serious about acknowledging our errors of the past centuries" and as "a message to the contemporary Ku Klux Klansmen, Neo-Nazis and people like that that the church can't tolerate this and should never have."

Cargas also presented his opinion that Pope John Paul II should issue an encyclical letter to the Catholics of the world condemning anti-Semitism.

Cargas said that in 1938 Pope Pius XI had an encyclical prepared that condemned anti-Semitism and Fascism. "Just before that letter was issued the pope died."

PIUS XII became pope in 1939.

The opinion presented by Cargas was that Pius XII was "a man terrified by communism, so anything that was opposed to communism was somewhat acceptable at least."

Pius XII "issued an encyclical ... with all of the references to anti-Semitism deleted," Cargas said.

EVEN "IF it didn't save any lives," an encyclical against anti-Semitism should have been issued by Pius XII, said Cargas.

The papacy is often called "the moral center of the Catholic world" and sometimes "the moral center of the world," Cargas said, and as such was "obligated to speak out. The papacy did not, and the silence is crushing."

Cargas said Eva Fleischner, a Catholic from Montclair State College in Upper Montclair, N.J., asks the rhetorical question, "Can one be a Christian after Auschwitz?"

AUSCHITZ WAS a German extermination camp in southern Poland where large numbers of Jews and others were put to death.

According to Cargas, Ms. Fleischner answers "yes" to her question, "but she does raise an interesting issue just by asking the question."

Cargas said the Holocaust, or the mass murder of Jews in the World War II era, "is maybe the greatest Christian tragedy of all time, and it's not being addressed. That could be fatal for Christianity. I'm really concerned."