

# A TIME FOR RECOMMITMENT

JEWISH CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE 70 YEARS AFTER  
WAR AND SHOAH

## EDITORIAL REFERENCES

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## PREFACE

*"To bring about a reconciliation with Israel, with Israel and with all Jews everywhere in the world – that was my prime concern, which I pursued because deep inside me there was a profound feeling of obligation, because I felt that humanity owes Judaism a great debt of gratitude in all spheres of the human intellect as well as in the field of religion."* This goal played a crucial role in Konrad Adenauer's policy. As early as 1949, he emphasised that *"in the spirit of tolerance, we regard our Jewish compatriots as fully entitled fellow citizens. Endowed with equal rights and duties, we wish them to participate in the intellectual, political, and social reconstruction of our country. We cannot and will not do without their assistance."*

Proud to bear the name of Konrad Adenauer, our foundation remains permanently committed to the aim of promoting reconciliation and understanding by exchanging views on the intellectual and spiritual heritage we share. Conducting a national and international dialogue with the Jewish world is one of the core missions of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung. Ever since we began our work, we have been supporting the Jewish-Christian dialogue and helping to resolve misunderstandings and irritations.

The need for dialogue is as urgent as ever. Relevant examples include the theological debate about the Jewish mission, the reformulation of the traditional prayer on Good Friday in the extraordinary rite of the Catholic Church, and the cancellation of the excommunication of four bishops belonging to the Pius Brotherhood. In this situation, while an occasionally heated debate is raging, it is good to see positive signals and motivations for a discussion that is factual and based on scientific insights. After several years of debate, the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) has presented twelve propositions regarding the reassessment of the Christian-Jewish dialogue. The intention is to provide a new foundation for the exchange between Christians and Jews.

This call for renewed commitment will be published in Berlin, the city in which preparations for the Holocaust of the European Jewry were made in the era of National Socialism.

After some initial encounters in the twenties, the foundation stone for theological dialogue was laid in Seelisberg, Switzerland. There, members of Christian and Jewish organisations met in 1947 at an "emergency conference against anti-Semitism" to promulgate ten propositions on the reorientation of Christian teaching and preaching. The theological demands that were made at the time, i.e. that Jesus' Jewish identity should be recognised and any anti-Jewish interpretation of the reports of his passion should be rejected, have by now become almost commonplace. At the time, they formed the programmatic starting point of the Christian-Jewish dialogue.

Sixty years later, the new publication shows that Christian-Jewish relations, though often turbulent, have come a long way since then. In retrospect, we see what obstacles barred the way, and how important it is to listen to one another and be attentive to each other's injuries. In the dialogue, new questions have been asked which open up new perspectives for theological research as well as new fields of investigation where we can discover commonalities and conflicts and analyse how much these are tied to their times. Next to the fundamental question of religious pluralism, further essential aspects include the theology of the covenant and understanding the deeply-rooted ties which attach the Jews to the land of Israel, the rationale for the right of the state of Israel to exist. We regard all encounters and talks as part of an ongoing process of learning.

In addition to updating the theological dispute, the Berlin declaration follows a novel approach in terms of its addressees. Unlike the ten propositions of Seelisberg which, formulated immediately after the war when the impression of the Shoah was still fresh, addressed exclusively Christians and Christian communities, the new undertaking also targets Jews and Jewish communities as well as Muslims and all people of good will.

In view of the challenges confronting all humankind, the twelve Berlin propositions go beyond the confines of theology, calling upon all people who live in their faith to work together. They presume that people are motivated by their religious convictions to work for others and for the good of the whole. This rationale for social commitment deserves to be highlighted because socio-ethical maxims will have to be accorded

greater importance in the future so that they may reach large segments of society. For this reason, we welcome the wider scope which the new declaration implies.

Based on the precept that every human being is created in God's own image, the appeal aims at strengthening the dialogue with political and economic institutions. Key issues include social justice in a globalised society, ecological accountability, and questions relating to comprehensive education through interreligious and intercultural schooling. The authors face difficult problems, especially the Israeli-Palestinian conflict where interreligious dialogue might help, in their opinion, to do away with distorted perceptions and promote mutual understanding. Once again, the point is to remain wakeful, particularly because of the experience of the Holocaust, and to see to it that no group is marginalised in the common search for solutions.

What is unusual about the twelve propositions is that they are not confined to the perception and propagation of values. They expressly include the question of God as a basis for conscious decision-making and place their trust in spiritual strength. In a society that is obviously growing more receptive towards religious issues, all those must be supported who again and again feel called upon by the strength of God to set out for new shores and join in building a better society on the basis of the writings they consider sacred. Given these foundations, the new propositions may throw open gateways to Jewish culture, help keep a productive memory of the Shoah alive, and create opportunities to view the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a constructive and factual way.

To provide a background for the twelve propositions of Berlin, this publication includes the presentations given at the last preparatory meeting held at Fribourg in the autumn of 2008 as well as the Seelisberg propositions of 1947. Martin Klöckener's article on the beginnings of the ICCJ shows how astonishingly up to date some of the points were that the first members focused on, and how deep the reservations were they had to struggle with.

Rabbi Marc Saperstein warns against an overdose of metaphorical rhetoric instead of rational analysis. This, he says, is particularly hazardous whenever metaphors fail to describe reality, appeal to emotions, and resort to exaggeration in order to avoid a rational discourse. Despite these reservations, however, he proposes to describe interreligious dialogue

as an orchestra incorporating various large groups of instruments. In translation, this means trying to understand the intrinsic logic of the self-interpretation of another religion in order to identify what is common and what is different. He demands honesty in dealing with one's own tradition in the Alenu prayer which asks that every human being should recognise the one true God, a universal appeal which resembles that of the Good Friday prayer. Instead of blaming others, people had better turn to the urgent problems of mankind.

From the Catholic point of view, Bishop Sklba names three characteristics of a fruitful dialogue: distinguishing between positions without excluding any of the disputing partners, undertaking to implement the results of the dialogue, and recognising consciously that any statements are temporary in nature. In his opinion, any dialogue essentially depends on cultivating a collective memory, being able to see oneself through the eyes of the other, and striving for truth. He goes on to say that the theology of the covenant and its impact on Jews and Christians is of key importance in this context.

Regarding the prerequisites of the interreligious dialogue, the president of the ICCJ, Deborah Weissman, believes that people should be open with regard to results so that views can be exchanged without surrendering one's position. The classical texts of Jewish tradition described a culture of debate in which alternative truths were admissible. Though pluralism had its limits, we should strive not to "reproduce uniformity" but to "organise diversity", a peaceful, vibrant coexistence of different elements. Yet there were crucial items that were not negotiable; for Jews, these included the recognition of the right of the state of Israel to exist.

Many of the ideas contained in the new appeal can be summarised in one sentence: *"We do not intend to forget anything, but we do intend to build a better future together."* This clearly amalgamates remembering and turning towards the future. We will not forget that it was the Jewish-Christian culture of the occident which left its mark on our continent and which, through its strength, will shape the future of our polity.

Berlin, July 2009

*Prof. Dr. Bernhard Vogel*  
*Minister President (retd.)*  
*Chairman, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V.*



## PREFACE

It is my honor and pleasure to introduce this document, published in conjunction with the July 2009 annual conference of the International Council of Christians and Jews. We are meeting in Berlin, as it is the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War. I believe that since the War many of the German people have provided us with a model of what Christians call *metanoia*, of transformation, that can surely serve as a beacon to other nations, as well. They have assumed responsibility for the past and are among the most outspoken opponents, for example, of Holocaust denial. Many German leaders in the recent past and present have been true friends of the Jewish people and the State of Israel, and I would like to acknowledge our gratitude for that.

It is for those reasons that there can be perhaps no more fitting venue than Berlin for the proclamation and publication of our statement, "A Time for Recommitment." This I believe is a groundbreaking statement in that to the best of my knowledge, never before has a large group of Christians and Jews worked together on such a declaration that calls for parallel action on the part of Christians and the Churches and Jews and the Jewish communities, as well as joint action of Christians and Jews together. Most of the previous statements in the history of the dialogue were either unilateral or were primarily theological documents. I do not wish to minimize their importance. Each one of them moved us along in the right direction, on our long and bumpy road towards reconciliation and cooperation. But I believe that our document is different, in that it also translates theology into practical liturgical, educational, social and other realms.

I anticipate that there will be criticism of the document. I hope that it is constructive criticism from which we can all learn. If the document engenders fruitful discussions between Christians and Jews and within each of those communities, I would say, echoing the Jewish Passover liturgy, *Dayeinu!* It will suffice!

I wish to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to a number of individuals, organizations, and institutions, without whose assistance this document could not have been produced and published. Our partners in this venture have been the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and especially Dr. Karlies Abmeier. I want to thank Dr. Eva Schulz-Jander, who serves as our liaison with the DKR. Special thanks to ICCJ First Vice-President Professor Phil Cunningham, the general editor of our document. About 35 Jewish and Christian scholars and leaders from throughout the world had input into the document, as well as members of the ICCJ Executive Board and staff. Thanks to all of the many people who contributed to the writing, editing, and translating of our document.

And last, but certainly not least, I express my thanks to God, who has sustained us, kept us alive, and enabled us to reach this time.

*Dr. Deborah Weissman  
President, International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ)  
Jerusalem/Israel*

## PREFACE

Do miracles still happen in our day and age? To my mind at least, the publication and presentation of our declaration about the future of Christian-Jewish Dialogue, "*Time for Recommitment*" is one. Does it not seem like a miracle that seventy years after the beginning of World War II this declaration is to be presented in Berlin, the city where the annihilation of European Jewry was conceived and planned – and where the desks were located from which the implementation orders were sent out? Seventy years – a biblical time. It is the time that is generally connected with the Babylonian exile, but also, according to Psalm 90, the duration of a human life. This time was needed to travel the long and arduous road from the darkest period of Christian-Jewish relations to this document of mutual trust and co-operation. The joint input of both Christians and Jews from such different countries as Germany, Israel, the United Kingdom, the USA, and Poland went into the making of this document.

Seventy years after the greatest abyss ever separating the two religious and secular cultures, men and women of both traditions could meet in mutual respect as equal partners, in spite of the pain suffered and the wounds inflicted in the past, to address not only the similarities but also the differences of their religious traditions.

The road towards reconciliation was long and arid, but those who travelled it learned to listen to the religious Other and to be aware of what hurts him. Only a trustful encounter allowed the authors to address new and radical questions in the document.

Other documents prepared the way. First of all, the Ten Points of Seelisberg in 1947, the first document after the shock of the Shoah. It calls on the Christian Communities to renounce their long term theology of supercessionism. One year later, in 1948, the first Societies of Christian-Jewish Co-operation were founded in Germany to overcome the

paralysing silence between Christians and Jews. Soon thereafter they formed an umbrella organisation, the *Deutscher Koordinierungsrat*. It was precisely this umbrella organisation that arranged a conference, "*Common Mistakes about the People of the First Covenant*," for clergymen and teachers in Schwalbach. The Eight Schwalbacher Points, published after the conference, extend and deepen the Seelisberger Points calling for a theological language and interpretation of biblical texts free of anti-Jewish contempt. Moreover, they also address the failings of many Christians to help Jews during the time of persecution by the Nazis. Out of this experience, according to the document, arises the responsibility for every Christian to fight any form of anti-Semitism. In other words, the Schwalbacher Points of the *Deutscher Koordinierungsrat* focus, already in 1950, on the social and political consequences of a new relationship to the Jews. Other declarations followed. The Churches had started to redefine their relationship to the Jews.

All documents preceding the Twelve Berlin Points were directed towards the Christian communities and their members, whereas the Berlin Points address Christians and the Churches as well as Jews and Jewish Communities in their call for joint action, thus bringing theology out into the public space.

As liaison of the *Deutscher Koordinierungsrat* to the ICCJ, I am very grateful that we could participate in the making of this groundbreaking document. We are pleased to sign the *Berlin Declaration* for it reflects our motto 2009, „*So viel Aufbruch war nie*“ in an exemplary way calling on Jews, Christians and Muslims alike to join forces and work together for a better future for all mankind.

*Dr. Eva Schulz-Jander*  
*Deutscher Koordinierungsrat der Gesellschaften*  
*für Christlich-Jüdische Zusammenarbeit*

# A TIME FOR RECOMMITMENT

## BUILDING THE NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JEWS AND CHRISTIANS

In the summer of 1947, 65 Jews and Christians from 19 countries gathered in Seelisberg, Switzerland. They came together to express their profound grief over the Holocaust, their determination to combat antisemitism, and their desire to foster stronger relationships between Jews and Christians. They denounced antisemitism both as a sin against God and humanity and as a danger to modern civilization. And to address these vital concerns, they issued a call in the form of 10 points to Christian churches to reform and renew their understandings of Judaism and the relationships between Judaism and Christianity.

Now, more than 60 years later, the International Council of Christians and Jews issues a new call — this one to both Christian and Jewish communities around the world. It commemorates the anniversary of the Seelisberg gathering, which was also the genesis of the International Council of Christians and Jews. Today's call reflects the need to refine the Ten Points of Seelisberg, consistent with the advances in interreligious dialogue since that groundbreaking document of 1947.

This new call contains 12 points – presented as goals, and addressed to Christians and Jews, and to Christian and Jewish communities together. After listing the 12 points and several specific tasks for each one, the document reviews

the history of the relationship between Christians and Jews, which has provided the contextual framework and impetus for our initiative.

We members of the International Council of Christians and Jews speak together in this new call as active members of our traditions with a centuries-long history of alienation, hostility and conflict, punctuated by instances of persecution and violence against Jews in Christian-dominated Europe, as well by as moments of graciousness and mutual recognition from which we can take inspiration.

Spurred by the Seelisberg initiative, we have worked to overcome the legacy of prejudice, hatred and mutual distrust. Through a serious commitment to dialogue, self-critical examination of our texts and traditions, and joint study and action for justice, we better understand each other, accept each other in the fullness of our differences, and affirm our common humanity. We understand that Jewish-Christian relations are not a "problem" that is going to be "solved," but rather a continuing process of learning and refinement. Perhaps most important, we have found friendship and trust. We have sought and found light together.

The journey has been neither simple nor easy. We have encountered many obstacles and setbacks, including conflicts – some quite serious – over theological or historical developments. But our determination to pursue the dialogue in spite of difficulties, to communicate honestly, and to assume our partners' good will has helped us stay the course. For these reasons, we believe that the history, the challenges, and the accomplishments of our dialogue are relevant for all those who are dealing with intergroup and interreligious conflicts. In that spirit, we issue this call to Christian and Jewish communities around the world.

**A TIME FOR RECOMMITMENT –  
THE TWELVE POINTS OF BERLIN: A CALL TO CHRISTIAN  
AND JEWISH COMMUNITIES WORLDWIDE**

We, the International Council of Christians and Jews and our member organizations, resolve to renew our engagement with the Ten Points of Seelisberg that inspired our beginnings. Therefore, we issue these calls to Christians, Jews, and all people of good will:

## **A Call To Christians and Christian Communities**

We commit ourselves to the following goals and invite all Christians and Christian communities to join us in the continuing effort to remove all vestiges of contempt towards Jews and enhance bonds with the Jewish communities worldwide.

### ***1. To combat religious, racial and all other forms of antisemitism***

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#### *Biblically*

- By recognizing Jesus' profound identity as a Jew of his day, and interpreting his teachings within the contextual framework of first-century Judaism.
- By recognizing Paul's profound identity as a Jew of his day, and interpreting his writings within the contextual framework of first-century Judaism.
- By emphasizing that recent scholarship on both the commonality and gradual separation of Christianity and Judaism is critical for our basic understanding of the Jewish-Christian relationship.
- By presenting the two Testaments in the Christian Bible as complementary and mutually affirming rather than antagonistic or inferior/superior. Denominations that use lectionaries are encouraged to choose and link biblical texts that offer such an affirming theology.
- By speaking out against Christian misreadings of biblical texts regarding Jews and Judaism that can provoke caricatures or animosity.

#### *Liturgically*

- By highlighting the connection between Jewish and Christian liturgy.
- By drawing upon the spiritual richness of Jewish interpretations of the scriptures.
- By cleansing Christian liturgies of anti-Jewish perspectives, particularly in preaching, prayers and hymns.

#### *Catechetically*

- By presenting the Christian-Jewish relationship in positive tones in the education of Christians of all ages, underlining the Jewish foundations

of Christian belief and accurately describing the ways Jews themselves understand their own traditions and practices. This includes the curricula of Christian schools, seminaries and adult education programs.

- By promoting awareness of the long-lived traditions of Christian anti-Judaism and providing models for renewing the unique Jewish-Christian relationship.
- By underscoring the immense religious wealth found in the Jewish tradition, especially by studying its authoritative texts.

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### ***2. To promote interreligious dialogue with Jews***

- By understanding dialogue as requiring trust and equality among all participants and rejecting any notion of convincing others to accept one's own beliefs.
- By appreciating that dialogue encourages participants to examine critically their own perceptions of both their own tradition and that of their dialogue partners in the light of a genuine engagement with the other.

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### ***3. To develop theological understandings of Judaism that affirm its distinctive integrity***

- By eliminating any teachings that Christians have replaced Jews as a people in covenant with God.
- By emphasizing the common mission of Jews and Christians in preparing the world for the kingdom of God or the Age to Come.
- By establishing equal, reciprocal working relationships with Jewish religious and civic organizations.
- By ensuring that emerging theological movements from Asia, Africa and Latin America, and feminist, liberationist or other approaches integrate an accurate understanding of Judaism and Christian-Jewish relations into their theological formulations.
- By opposing organized efforts at the conversion of Jews.

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### ***4. To pray for the peace of Jerusalem***

- By promoting the belief in an inherent connectedness between Christians and Jews.
- By understanding more fully Judaism's deep attachment to the Land of Israel as a fundamental religious perspective and many Jewish people's connection with the State of Israel as a matter of physical and cultural survival.



- By reflecting on ways that the Bible's spiritual understanding of the land can be better incorporated into Christian faith perspectives.
- By critiquing the policies of Israeli and Palestinian governmental and social institutions when such criticism is morally warranted, at the same time acknowledging both communities' deep attachment to the land.
- By critiquing attacks on Zionism when they become expressions of antisemitism.
- By joining with Jewish, Christian and Muslim peace workers, with Israelis and Palestinians, to build trust and peace in a Middle East where all can live secure in independent, viable states rooted in international law and guaranteed human rights.
- By enhancing the security and prosperity of Christian communities both in Israel and Palestine.
- By working for improved relations among Jews, Christians and Muslims in the Middle East and the rest of the world.

#### **A Call To Jews and Jewish Communities**

We commit ourselves to the following goals and invite all Jews and Jewish communities to join us in the continuing effort to remove all vestiges of animosity and caricature toward Christians and to enhance bonds with Christian churches of the world.

#### ***5. To acknowledge the efforts of many Christian communities in the late 20th century to reform their attitudes toward Jews***

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- By learning about these reforms through more intensive dialogue with Christians.
- By discussing the implications of changes in Christian churches regarding Jews and their understandings of Judaism.
- By teaching Jews of all ages about these changes, both in the context of the history of Jewish-Christian relations and according to the appropriate stage of education for each group.
- By including basic and accurate background information about Christianity in the curricula of Jewish schools, rabbinic seminaries and adult education programs.
- By studying the New Testament both as Christianity's sacred text and as literature written to a large degree by Jews in an historical-cultural context similar to early Rabbinic literature, thereby offering insight into the development of Judaism in the early centuries of the Common Era.

***6. To re-examine Jewish texts and liturgy in the light of these Christian reforms***

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- By grappling with Jewish texts that appear xenophobic or racist, realizing that many religious traditions have uplifting, inspirational texts as well as problematic ones. The emphasis for all religious traditions should be on texts that promote tolerance and openness.
- By placing problematic texts within their historical context, in particular writings from the times when Jews were a powerless, persecuted and humiliated minority.
- By addressing the possible re-interpretation, change or omission of parts of Jewish liturgy that treat others in problematic ways.

***7. To differentiate between fair-minded criticism of Israel and antisemitism***

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- By understanding and promoting biblical examples of just criticism as expressions of loyalty and love.
- By helping Christians appreciate that communal identity and interconnectedness are intrinsic to Jewish self-understanding, in addition to religious faith and practice, therefore making the commitment to the survival and security of the State of Israel of great importance to most Jews.

***8. To offer encouragement to the State of Israel as it works to fulfil the ideals stated in its founding documents, a task Israel shares with many nations of the world***

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- By ensuring equal rights for religious and ethnic minorities, including Christians, living within the Jewish state.
- By achieving a just and peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**A Call To Both Christian and Jewish Communities and Others**

We commit ourselves to the following goals and invite Jews, Christians and Muslims, together with all people of faith and goodwill, always to respect the other and to accept each other's differences and dignity.

### ***9. To enhance interreligious and intercultural education***

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- By combating negative images of others, teaching the foundational truth that each human being is created in the image of God.
- By making the removal of prejudices against the other a high priority in the educational process.
- By encouraging mutual study of religious texts, so that Jews, Christians, Muslims and members of other religious groups can learn both from and with each other.
- By supporting common social action in the pursuit of common values.

### ***10. To promote interreligious friendship and cooperation as well as social justice in the global society***

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- By rejoicing in the uniqueness of each person, and promoting everyone's political, economic and social well-being.
- By recognizing as equal citizens members of faith traditions who have migrated to new homelands where they may have become part of a religious minority.
- By striving for equal rights for all people, regardless of their religion, gender or sexual orientation.
- By recognizing and grappling with the fact that feelings of religious superiority – and an accompanying sense that other religions are inferior – are present in each tradition, including one's own.

### ***11. To enhance dialogue with political and economic bodies***

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- By collaborating with political and economic bodies whenever possible to promote interreligious understanding.
- By benefiting from political and economic groups' growing interest in interreligious relations.
- By initiating discussion with political and economic bodies around the urgent need for justice in the global community.

### ***12. To network with all those whose work responds to the demands of environmental stewardship***

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- By fostering commitment to the belief that every human being is entrusted with the care of the Earth.

- By recognizing the shared Jewish and Christian biblical duty toward creation, and the responsibility to bring it to bear in public discourse and action.

To all these challenges and responsibilities, we – the International Council of Christians and Jews and its member organizations – commit ourselves.

*Berlin, Germany, July 2009*

*At the International Conference and the Annual General Meeting of the International Council of Christians and Jews.*

# THE STORY OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF A RELATIONSHIP

## **INTRODUCTION**

Just over 40 years ago, all humankind had a first glimpse of Earth from the moon and gained new perspective on the beauty and fragility of our planet. Whatever our differences, those photos from the vastness of space showed us our common home. Questions about how we care for one another and for our world took on new urgency.

For many Jews and Christians, this view of our planet evoked the Psalmist's cry, "What are human beings that you are mindful of them?" (Psalm 8:4) Both the ancient poetry of the Psalms and the technology that took us to the moon cause us to pause once again to ponder our human calling.

Reflection compels us to acknowledge the scars our planet bears, including consequences of wars, disparities in wealth and access to the necessities of life, and depletion of earth's resources. We are mindful that violence tears apart the fabric of humanity and intensifies fear.

Religion, we confess, has been implicated in that violence. Over the ages, men and women have used religion to motivate and justify vilification and persecution of those whose beliefs differ from their own. Violence in the name of religion has caused bloodshed and perverted religion itself. Whenever religion becomes complicit in violence, it must be questioned.

When religions promote service to others and respect for those who are different, they are powerful forces for good. They inspire care for the other and loving-kindness. They challenge us to aspire to a time when people "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4)

The relationship between Christians and Jews is one such sword being refashioned into a plowshare. The history of these two peoples has been marked largely by rivalry and conflict. Centuries of Christian disparagement of Judaism and abuse of power have contributed to antisemitism and provided fertile ground for Nazism's genocidal assault on Jews. Confronted by the horror of this darkness, Jews and Christians have turned to one another in dialogue, seeking the light of mutual understanding and friendship.

This ongoing dialogue continues the work begun in Seelisberg, Switzerland in 1947. There, a multinational group of 65 Jews and Christians called on Christian churches to reflect on and renew their understandings of Judaism and their relationships with Jews. Their call came to be known as the Ten Points of Seelisberg.

We members of the International Council of Christians and Jews have come together more than six decades after the Seelisberg conference, steeped in the spirit of its work. We are mindful that genocide continues to afflict humankind, that hatred of the other continues to fuel violence. Yet the healing between Christians and Jews in the years since Seelisberg shows that enmity and hostility can be transformed. This statement has been written collaboratively by Jews and Christians and addressed to the Jewish and Christian communities and all people of goodwill. It has been born of our conviction that when religious people commit themselves to the work of reconciliation, our planet becomes more peaceful. The statement rises from this realization and this hope.

## **A. THE INTERTWINED LIVES OF JEWS AND CHRISTIANS OVER THE CENTURIES**

### **1. An Ambivalent Relationship**

Christianity and Judaism have a unique relationship among the world's religions. Both Jews and Christians hold the texts of biblical Israel to be sacred scripture, though they organize and interpret those texts in different ways. Christians and Jews share many religious and ethical principles, although some common terms are understood in different ways. Jews and Christians both anticipate a similar destiny for the world in a messianic age, although the arrival of that age is envisioned in different ways. Christians and Jews have been dealing with one another, for good and for ill, for many centuries, sometimes influencing each other's religious ideas and practices along the way. All of these forces have produced an ambivalent relationship that has shaped their interactions.

The two traditions are also linked because Jesus was born, lived and died a Jew. The first Christians were Jews and it was centuries rather than decades after the death of Jesus that Christianity and Judaism separated in a process that unfolded differently in various places. The Roman destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in the year 70 and persecutions of Christians were among the factors that motivated the Gospel writers and their early interpreters to downplay the Roman governor's role in the execution of Jesus. They also sought to explain why many Jews disagreed with Christian claims about Jesus. Invective was often the result. Christians came to view Jews as an obsolete covenant people, replaced by the newly covenanted people of the Christian church. Christian authors increasingly regarded the Christian church as the new and true Israel (*verus Israel*). This theology of replacement is often termed "supersessionism." Yet for several centuries many Gentile Christians continued to be attracted to synagogues and welcomed at services, including at Passover.

Christian leaders such as John Chrysostom (c. 350–407) complained about the appeal of the synagogue and delivered vitriolic sermons against Jews and Judaism, contributing to a literary genre called *adversus Iudaeos*. They insisted that Jews did not understand the Old Testament and that the Judaism of the rabbis was founded on error. Augustine of Hippo (354–430) portrayed Jews as children of Cain whose dispersion and

debasement were God's punishment. Jews, he argued, served as witnesses to Christian truth and were not to be harmed. This basic theological approach remained influential for the next thousand years.

Once Christianity was established as the official religion of the Roman Empire in the late fourth century, the situation for Jews became more difficult. Roman law codes, such as the Code of Justinian, began to erode Jewish legal rights. The erosion took place gradually over the next four centuries at the same time Christianized Rome was also expending great effort on defeating pagans and those deemed to be Christian heretics.

By the sixth century, Judaism and Christianity had fully separated and Jewish forms of Christianity ceased to exist. Through the centuries, however, Christians and Jews have been entwined in their veneration of the same Scriptures. For the most part, what Christians call Old Testament and Jews *Tanakh* is one and the same, though their content, structure and the methods to interpret them differ. Hence the saying, "Jews and Christians are divided by a common Bible." Jews and Christians are also divided by several theological convictions, notably Christian claims about the divinity of Jesus.

Because they were a minority group in both the Islamic world and Christendom, Jews pondered possible reasons for the flourishing of these two traditions. One view held that Christianity was a form of idolatry. Another categorized Christianity according to the Noachide Laws, which defined Gentile moral standards without a demand for conversion to Judaism. A third view, propagated by Judah ha-Levi (1075–1141) and Maimonides (1135–1204), affirmed that Christianity introduced the nations to the worship of the God of Israel and thus prepared the way for redemption. Menahem ha-Meiri's (1249–1316) positive argument was that Christianity should be understood as a form of monotheism. He coined the phrase "nations bound by the ways of religion" to interpret certain rabbinic laws and enable a more fruitful interaction between Jews and Christians.

Widespread expulsions and anti-Jewish activity in Western Europe characterized the later medieval period, roughly after 1000, and led to the social decline or devastation of Jewish communities there. As Western Christendom became more homogeneous, Jews were seen as one of the last "different" groups. Especially during the First Crusade (1096), mob violence inspired by Christian preaching wiped out dozens of Jewish



communities. As time passed, and despite the efforts of various popes, Jews were accused of the ritual murder of Christian children, of desecrating the consecrated Christian sacramental bread and of causing the Black Death. They were demonized as "children of the devil." These accusations usually led to group expulsions or executions. At the order of Pope Gregory IX and with the cooperation of the Inquisition, thousands of Jewish books were burned (Paris, 1242). Christian leaders preached conversionist sermons which Jews were forced to attend and held enforced public disputations (such as Paris, 1240; Barcelona, 1263). The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) required Jews to wear an identifying badge. By the 16th century, Jews had been expelled from most of Western Europe, with the notable exception of Rome. Beginning in 1555, Jews in some cities, among them Rome, Venice and Prague, were confined in ghettos. Travel was severely restricted and Jews were often locked at night in their ghettos.

There were some exceptions to this hostility. The *Convivencia* describes the relatively easy "coexistence" of Jews, Christians and Muslims in medieval Spain and Portugal until the 13th century. In northern Europe, Jews and Christians generally lived together peacefully and productively. A totally negative picture of Jewish life in Christian Europe in this period overlooks the persistence and spread of Jewish settlement there.

The 16th-century Reformation led to more positive attitudes toward Jews among Christians. The humanist tradition emphasized the enduring qualities of Jewish religious teaching. Although religious wars between Catholics and Protestants also triggered anti-Jewish violence, partly inspired by Luther's tractate *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543), there were also smaller philosemitic Christian reform movements. The Anabaptists and Calvinist churches, for example, looked favorably on Judaism's adherence to Old Testament teachings, although they said that Jews did not fully understand them.

This interest in the Christian Old Testament helped to promote tolerance for Jews in the Netherlands and later in some of the American colonies. By the time of the American Revolution, the proliferation of religious groups, the growing desire to separate church and state, and an Enlightenment emphasis on the rights of the individual helped create a more hospitable climate for Jews. While the theology of supersessionism was brought to the New World by Christian settlers and missionaries, its social impact was blunted in regions that stressed basic human rights.

Also notable in the 16th century was a small English Protestant millenarian movement that emphasized Jewish restoration to the Land of Israel as an essential element in the Second Coming. This idea spread to continental Europe and in the 18th century to North America.

## **2. The Century before Seelisberg**

In the 19th century, some discourse between Jews and Christians became more positive. Central and Western European Jews were allowed out of ghettos and began to integrate into the dominant European society. The desire to assimilate, however, also caused some Jews to conceal or abandon their heritage. Some Christians, impelled by a missionary intent, began to take more interest in the Jewish people and their beliefs and practices. A quest to recover the historical Jesus led some scholars to take a greater interest in first-century Judaism, often emphasizing, however, differences between Jesus and his allegedly corrupt Jewish contemporaries. In this period, Christians and Jews were motivated to communicate for different reasons. Jews wanted to improve their lot in society and were concerned for civil rights. Christian leaders wanted converts or to facilitate the assimilation of Judaism into Christianity.

Antisemitism, increasingly understood according to racist categories, was more and more accepted as a fact of life in European society. The hasty espionage conviction of a loyal French Jewish army officer, Albert Dreyfus, on the basis of highly suspicious evidence, generated a public sensation. State-sponsored persecutions, or pogroms, in Russia and Eastern Europe led to mass emigration to Western Europe and the United States. Such events began to cast a dark shadow over European Jewry. Some politicians also began to exploit pseudo-scientific claims of Aryan racial superiority and Jewish inferiority for their own advantage.

However, in the late 19th and early 20th century, a few Jewish and Christian scholars began to take a serious interest in each others' religion. Their writings marked the emergence of yet another moment of positive attitudes between members of the two faith traditions.

Abraham Geiger (1810–1874), a leading German Reform rabbi, was one of the first Jewish scholars to place Jesus in the context of first-century Judaism. Herman Cohen (1842–1918), a German philosopher and a professor at Marburg, began to write extensive critiques of Christianity.

Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929) proposed a doctrine of two covenants. Martin Buber (1875–1965) accepted Christianity as a path to God, hoping Christians would do the same with regard to Judaism. Claude Montefiore (1858–1938), a liberal Anglo-Jewish leader and scholar, wrote a sympathetic study of the Gospels. Joseph Klausner (1874–1958) discussed Jesus and Paul in the context of Jewish Messianism.

Léon Bloy (1846–1917), Joseph Bonsirven (1880–1958), Herbert Danby (1889–1953), Robert Travers Herford (1860–1950), Charles Journet (1891–1975), and Jacques Maritain (1882–1973) were among the first Christians scholars to write extensively about the Talmud, Midrash and Mishnah or to advocate for affirmative theological approaches to Judaism and the Jewish people. Their scholarship challenged Christians to appreciate Rabbinic Judaism and dispel caricatures of the Pharisees. George Foot Moore (1851–1931) published a three-volume work, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*. James Parkes, an Anglican clergyman who worked in Central Europe in the 1930s, was one of the first Christians to warn of the dangers of Nazism. In *The Conflict of Church and Synagogue: A Study of the Origins of Antisemitism*, he blamed the centuries of Christian anti-Jewish teaching for contemporary antisemitism.

The early 20th century also saw the beginnings of scholarly dialogue. A Parliament of the World's Religions convened in Chicago in 1893. From its inception in 1904, the London Society for the Study of Religions had some Jewish members, including Claude Montefiore. And in 1927, the London Society of Jews and Christians was formed. The World Congress of Faiths, with members from all religions, was established in 1936.

Practical matters also were bringing some Jews and Christians together. In the U.S. presidential race of 1924, Alfred E. Smith, a Roman Catholic who unsuccessfully sought the Democratic nomination, was subjected to abuse by the Ku Klux Klan whose members were also antisemitic. Their slogan "America for the Americans" was a threat to all minorities. To counter their influence, the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America and B'nai B'rith set up a Committee on Good Will between Jews and Christians. Four years later, when Smith became the Democratic presidential nominee, the Roman Catholic Church joined with Protestants and Jews to establish the National Conference of Christians and Jews, which from the 1940s through the 1980s was well-known for sponsoring an annual Brotherhood Week.

By the mid-1930s, refugees from Nazi Germany were arriving in Britain where Jewish organizations found it increasingly difficult to care for the large numbers. In 1936, a newly formed Inter-Aid Committee comprised representatives of numerous Jewish and Christian social welfare agencies. Despite numerous failures to help refugees, in 1938, after the general attack on synagogues and Jewish property on the so-called *Kristallnacht*, “the Night of Shattered Glass,” a Refugee Children’s Movement was formed to find suitable homes for Jewish children who had been sent to England and Scotland by their parents.

With the outbreak of World War II, many people failed to see the threat that the Nazis represented and some Christian leaders supported them. Other Christian leaders began denouncing Nazi antisemitism, at the same time recognizing the overarching need to promote better relations between Christians and Jews. William Temple, the Archbishop of Canterbury, convened a meeting in March 1942, resulting in the formation of the Council of Christians and Jews. While one of the organization’s goals was to combat all forms of racial and religious intolerance, special emphasis was placed on affirming the moral values shared by Jews and Christians, and on educational work, especially among the young. William W. Simpson, a Methodist minister who had been involved in the refugee effort, was appointed secretary. He held that position until 1974.

### **3. The Seelisberg Conference and Beginnings of the ICCJ**

After the end of World War II, the magnitude of the *Shoah* – the murder of two-thirds of the Jews of Europe and one-third of the Jewish community globally – became known to the entire world. Jews and Christians started to scrutinize how traditional Christian teaching might have contributed to – and even enhanced – the Third Reich’s industrial genocide. Jules Isaac furthered this examination when, in *Jésus et Israël* (1948), he highlighted the interplay between the anti-Judaism in Christian theology and racial-biological antisemitism. The title of his second study, *L’Enseignement du mépris* (1962), actually named what needed to be identified and excised from Christian theology: *the teaching of contempt*.

When the Second World War ended, William Simpson and others recognized that a new relationship between Jews and Christians had to be built internationally. A conference was held in Oxford in 1946. Dean Grüber from Berlin and Herman Mass from Heidelberg, both Christian pastors,

received special permission to attend. Rabbi Leo Baeck, leader of the German Jewish community during the Third Reich, survivor of Theresienstadt, and a post-war émigré to London, was one of the speakers. Conference participants decided that an emergency meeting on the problem of antisemitism in Europe should be held as soon as possible. It took place in the Swiss village of Seelisberg in 1947.

In the history of Jewish-Christian dialogue, the Seelisberg conference is referred to primarily because of its Ten Points, which were specifically addressed "to the churches." The first four points emphasized the deep and fundamental roots of Christianity in Judaism. The next six made it clear that Judaism must no longer be presented negatively in Christian teaching. This challenge established one of the foundations for subsequent research on the complex relations between the two religious traditions.

Although numerous Christians at that time understood the Ten Points as a bold statement, it is now increasingly obvious to Jews and Christians alike that the document demands updating and new perspectives. For instance, the Seelisberg document never discusses the importance of covenantal theology. It does not address religious pluralism or the State of Israel, critically relevant topics that contemporary interreligious dialogue explores. The Ten Points were addressed only to Christians. Today, after six decades of expanded dialogue, a new text would properly address both Christians and Jews. The introduction to the Ten Points also reflects the influence of Third Reich-era terminology, use of the phrase "a Jewish problem," for example, as if antisemitism were not first and foremost a "Gentile problem."

While the Ten Points of Seelisberg have contributed to the improvement of Jewish-Christian relations in a number of ways over decades, the time is now ripe to refine the statement in the interests of refuting contemporary anti-Jewish theology and antisemitism, and for Jews and Christians together to address wider human needs.

The 1947 Emergency Conference on Antisemitism at Seelisberg also called for the establishment of an International Council of Christians and Jews "without delay." The following year in Fribourg, Switzerland, a constitution for the nascent organization was adopted, an office in Geneva was opened and an address in London was established.

This initial phase of ICCJ's existence lasted only a short time. The member organization from the United States – the National Conference of Christians and Jews – concluded after the Fribourg meeting that an International Council of Christians and Jews would have an agenda both too narrow and too religious to combat antisemitism and other forms of intergroup prejudices effectively. It set up a World Brotherhood project, while the European Christian-Jewish dialogue groups continued to focus particularly on improving the relations between Jews and Christians. The ICCJ office in Geneva was closed, although the London address continued.

A number of important statements and documents were published in the first years after World War II. At its First Assembly in Amsterdam in 1948, the World Council of Churches declared that antisemitism, "no matter its origin [was] ... absolutely irreconcilable with the profession and practice of the Christian faith. ... [It] is a sin against God and man." Although the statement was powerful and accurate, what still demanded exploration were the ways in which Christian anti-Jewish teachings and actions had informed and nurtured antisemitism, a topic of particular interest to the embryonic ICCJ.

Another challenge arose when in 1950 a Vatican directive charging the ICCJ to be "indifferentist," meaning that it allegedly held all religions to be of equal status, precluded Catholics from cooperating with the ICCJ. This limitation changed completely when the Catholic Church adopted a more positive outlook toward other religions during the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965).

Nonetheless, a growing number of European Jewish-Christian dialogue groups cooperated in the formation of an "Informal Liaison Committee" in the mid-1950s, and in 1962 of an "International Consultative Committee" supervised by William Simpson. After the NCCJ joined this consultative organization, its representative proposed in a 1974 meeting in Basel, Switzerland, that the Committee's name become the "International Council of Christians and Jews." Thus, 26 years after its first establishment at the 1948 Fribourg conference, the ICCJ finally came into full existence.

## **B. SIX DECADES OF GROWTH**

### **1. Developments in Biblical Scholarship**

Scholars devoted to the historical-critical study of the Christian Old Testament made great progress during the 19th century: biblical texts were examined against the background of contemporary writings, philological research flourished, and there was great interest in reconstructing the history of ancient Israel.

However, some influential scholars, such as Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918), expressed Christian teaching of contempt against Jews in asserting that Old Testament passages could be dated by the extent to which they reflected “genuine spirituality.” Wellhausen and others argued that texts they judged to be narrow-minded and rigid demonstrated a decline from the high spirituality of the Hebrew prophets to a sterile legalism that supposedly prevailed in Judaism after the Babylonian Exile. The unspoken message – made explicit by some later Christian scholars – was that the Jesus movement was a religious reformation that returned to its authentic Hebrew sources and interpreted them in their original sense, before their distortion by legalistic Judaism. The latter characterization was given the technical term *Spätjudentum* (“late Judaism”), a supposed but far from neutral way to describe Jewish faith and life at the time of Jesus.

If, according to this construct, post-exilic or Second Temple Judaism can be described as a religious failure marked by a soulless spirituality, and if Judaism at the time of Jesus can be described as “late,” then a spiritually legitimate Judaism would have ceased and Judaism today would have no reason to exist. Post-World War II biblical studies have challenged such self-serving arguments.

The discoveries of texts – e.g., the Dead Sea Scrolls in Qumram and the Library of Nag Hammadi – have reminded biblical scholars that there was considerable variety in Judaism and Christianity during the first centuries of the Common Era. Scholars studying the historical Jesus and Paul have also realized that their own agendas and methods have sometimes rested on tenuous presuppositions. Although previous generations of scholars portrayed Jesus and Paul as constantly in conflict with their contemporaries, a growing number now address the historical fact that Jesus’ and Paul’s debates with their Jewish contemporaries reflect their firm ground-

ing in Judaism and continuing identification with it. New Testament scholar Lloyd Gaston has argued that in critical scholarship anything that makes Jesus sound like a first-century Jew is to be preferred to anything that makes him sound like a twentieth-century Christian.

The most obvious example of scholarly reassessment concerns the role of the Law in the New Testament. Scholars used to describe the Law as having been “abrogated,” “annulled” or “replaced.” Contemporary scholarship generally avoids these anachronistic and antinomian presentations of earliest Christianity. Jesus is often presented not as a teacher who contested the Law, but as one who based his teaching on the *Torah* (the Pentateuch), *Neviim* (the Prophets) and *Ketuvim* (the Writings). Texts such as Matt. 5:17: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil,” receive greater weight in contemporary studies.

Recent scholarship increasingly portrays the historical Paul first and foremost as “an apostle to the Gentiles” (cf., Rom. 11:13; Gal. 2:8). His mission was not to condemn Jewish *Torah*-piety but to invite Gentiles into a covenantal relationship with the God of Israel. The motivating force in his theology is *inclusion* rather than *exclusion*. Arguably, his apostolic vision is nowhere presented more clearly than in Rom. 15:8f.: “Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.”

One of the perennial issues confronting biblical scholarship is the “decide charge,” the accusation against Jews that they, collectively or individually, are guilty of murdering God (as suggested, for instance, by 1 Th 2:14–16; Mt 27:25; Jn 19:13–16; Acts 3:14–15). Given this accusation’s history of inciting Christian antipathy toward Jews, the relevant New Testament texts that narrate a “trial” leading to the execution of Jesus are of great importance. Many researchers hesitate to use the word “trial” to describe these passages because there are so many questions about their historical accuracy.

A substantial consensus of scholarly opinion agrees with Krister Stendahl: that “... as the story grew and developed, the burden of guilt for Jesus’ crucifixion shifted from Pilate to the high priests, from the high priests to the Pharisees, and on to ‘the Jews.’” Historical research around the death



of Jesus emphasizes often-forgotten facts such as Pontius Pilate's reputation. The writer Philo cites "the briberies, the insults, the robberies, the outrages and wanton injuries, the executions without trial constantly repeated, the ceaseless and supremely grievous cruelty." In addition, the Temple leadership was co-opted by the Roman authorities and Caiaphas could function as the high priest only with Pilate's consent; crucifixion was used by the Romans for crimes against the state and Jesus was crucified as a pretender "king of the Jews"; only a tiny fraction of the Jewish people would even have heard of Jesus at the time of his death; and most important, Jesus seems to have been popular with the common people (cf., Luke 20:19). Both Caiaphas and Pilate were interested in maintaining the peace during the volatile Passover season, and Jesus, who regularly proclaimed the coming of a "Kingdom of God," was perceived as a threat to order and stability.

Any Christian inclination to accuse the Jewish people of the death of Jesus lacks historical plausibility. The view is also theologically meaningless. From a Christian point of view, everyone is blameworthy in the death of Jesus. S. Mark Heim has said, "The moment we point a finger at some 'they' as Jesus' killers, we have enacted the sin that the very particularity of the cross meant to overcome."

Tragically, the practice of interpreting New Testament texts to prove that Jews were cursed by God and should be demeaned in Christian society became habitual in European Christendom. Today it is self-evident that Christians have a particular responsibility to interpret with great care those New Testament passages that have provoked disregard and antagonism toward Judaism.

## **2. The Impact of the Shoah**

Any consideration of the Holocaust must include Elie Wiesel's dictum that "to forget the victims is in fact to kill them a second time." Preserving the memory of those who perished under Nazism must remain a prime obligation both of Jews and Christians.

The *Shoah* opens the door for powerful reflection on a number of central issues challenging global society. For people of faith, understanding how God relates to the well-being of humanity emerges as a central question. If God is portrayed as all-powerful and deeply involved with humanity,

the *Shoah* can leave us with the image of an uncaring God who did not use divine power to save those with whom God was in a covenantal relationship. In another sense, to marginalize God's influence on human society leaves a void easily filled by a disastrous ideology. So the challenge is to refine the relationship between God and the human community in a way that sees them as covenantal partners with co-responsibility for the future of all creation.

Reflection on the *Shoah* propels the effort to place human rights and human dignity at the core of religious faith. That the Nazi campaign of mass murder was necessary to initiate international covenants supporting human rights and opposing genocide is nothing short of tragic. It is incumbent on faith communities to acknowledge that their existence can never be pursued in ways that neglect or undercut human dignity and rights of others.

The *Shoah* presses upon people of all faiths a responsibility to combat religious bigotry and violence. Classical Christian antisemitism, while not the sole cause of the Holocaust, contributed to its implementation and weakened Christian opposition. No religious tradition can assume moral leadership until it first rids itself of all violent tendencies, including demeaning and hateful language and imagery towards those outside its community of belief. This represents a special challenge for religious education and preaching.

The *Shoah* reflects the importance of building solidarity across racial, ethnic and religious lines in times of relative social peace. If such bonds are not in place when social crises arise, it will prove difficult or impossible to build them on short notice under duress.

Study of the rescuers during the *Shoah* demonstrates that moral education must be implanted in people at an early age, particularly within the family. Concern for the other must become a deeply ingrained, natural response.

### **3. Changes in Institutions and Their Teachings**

In the six decades since Seelisberg, numerous Christian churches have issued statements, with varying degrees of authority, on the subjects of Jews and Judaism and of Christian-Jewish relations. These are the result

of self-examinations generated by the *Shoah* and of an unprecedented number of serious dialogues between Jews and Christians. Some statements address historical matters, particularly the *Shoah*, while others treat biblical or theological issues. Those churches with centralized authority structures have tended to produce a greater number of documents whose goal is to alter education and practice, while more congregationally organized churches have tended to compose texts for study and discussion. In all cases, it is challenging to internalize new perspectives and attitudes throughout each faith community.

Among Catholic and traditional Reformation churches in the West, the following ideas have been expressed frequently. In general, Eastern Christianity is only beginning to grapple with the fuller implications of positive relations with Jews.

- Jews remain in a covenantal relationship with God. The Christian churches' "new covenant" did not terminate Israel's covenantal life with God lived through the Torah.
- The denigration of Judaism and all forms of antisemitism are sins against God.
- Over the centuries, Christian preaching and teaching have contributed to antisemitism. Certain New Testament texts have regularly been misinterpreted or taken out of context and used to promote hostility. No divine curse on Jews can be asserted on the basis of the New Testament.
- There exists a divinely willed ongoing relationship between Judaism and Christianity, a relationship that is unique among the world religions. Judaism has its own distinctive purpose in the divine plan that goes beyond the preparation for Christianity.
- Jesus was and always remained a Jew, a son of Israel. He was not opposed to the Torah or the Judaism of his day.
- Christians must learn to understand and affirm Jewish self-understanding of their own religious experience. This includes respect for Jewish attachment to *Eretz Yisrael* – the Land of Israel.
- Christians can learn more about the One God and their relationship with God, as well as about Christianity, from the traditions of Judaism over the centuries and from the living faith of contemporary Jews.
- The Hebrew Scriptures (*Tanakh*) have spiritual value as revelatory texts irrespective of later Christian re-readings of them through the lens of faith in Christ.

- Christian understandings of the relationship between the “Old Testament” and the “New Testament” in terms of promise and fulfillment must be seen as still awaiting the complete fulfillment of God’s designs in the coming Kingdom.
- Jews and Christians both have the covenantal duty to prepare for the Age to Come or Reign of God by pursuing justice, peace and the integrity of all creation.

These convictions represent authentic changes, in some cases total reversals, of attitudes that prevailed among Christians for almost two millennia. They pose profound theological challenges to Christian self-understanding.

Jews are also challenged by such unfamiliar Christian teachings. To the degree that Jewish self-understanding has been influenced by Christianity, significant reforms in Christian attitudes inevitably affect Jewish thought as well. This includes the development of a positive Jewish religious view of Christianity as a legitimate, non-idolatrous faith.

It is not surprising that some members of both communities prefer to avoid or marginalize dialogue. The core identity questions arising from substantive Christian-Jewish dialogue are seen as threatening or diminishing previous understandings. The ICCJ, however, believes that dialogue between Jews and Christians must intensify along with the mutual trust and respect that strengthens participants in their respective religious identities and practices.

#### **4. Lessons Learned from Decades of Dialogue**

Since the Seelisberg conference, the deepening encounter between Jews and Christians has demonstrated that a sustained relationship can produce real change. We have progressed from the initial, tentative conversations in which we first had to set aside our preconceptions and learn about the “other” through that person’s own self-understanding. We are now at a point where empathy and honest self-criticism have made possible open discussions of fundamental differences and frank treatment of the disagreement and conflicts that inevitably arise. The critical study of religion and history has provided a much clearer, shared understanding of the complexity of the historical, scriptural and theological issues that both unite and divide Christians and Jews. We understand that Jewish-Christian

relations are not a “problem” that is going to be “solved,” but rather a continuing process of learning and refinement. This process not only makes it possible for us to live together in peace but also enriches our understanding of our own tradition and of ourselves as children of God and religious people.

Even within the community of dialogue, we continue to learn the deep-seated patterns of thinking and fear that are obstacles to true mutuality. We are keenly aware that there are parts of the Jewish and the Christian worlds that remain untouched by dialogue and are resistant or even opposed to it, with much work remaining. In some cases, advances based on the dialogue have been ignored or reversed. This points to the need for the development of theologies across both traditions that affirm the permanent religious authenticity and integrity of the Jewish or Christian other.

We are learning to better appreciate the different memories and agendas that Christians and Jews bring to their exchanges. We are convinced that authentic dialogue never seeks to persuade the other of one’s own truth claims, but rather to change one’s own heart by understanding others on their own terms, to whatever degree possible. In fact, interreligious dialogue in the fullest sense of the term is impossible if any of the parties harbor desires to convert the other. It is also the general experience of both Christians and Jews that interreligious dialogue provides deeper insights into one’s own religious tradition.

Most dialogue has occurred where Jews and Christians live in geographical proximity. It is important to eradicate stereotypes and promote accurate understandings of each other’s traditions among those who may live at great distance from the other community or have no contact with it. We are also committed to the belief that the example of Jewish-Christian dialogue can be an inspiration and a model for other religious groups in conflict.

In recent years, both Jews and Christians have come to understand the critical need to build a dialogue with Muslims. This realization makes it tempting to assume that the work of Jewish-Christian relations is done and our attention can now be turned to our Muslim brothers and sisters. While the need for dialogue with Islam is pressing, it would be a mistake to abandon the Jewish-Christian effort, both because it serves as a

successful model and because the work is unfinished. To ignore Islam would also be a mistake, both because of the size and geo-political significance of the Muslim community and because of the convergent and divergent religious claims among the three traditions. Engaging Islam in interreligious dialogue is not as simple as merely placing another chair at the table; while we have learned important lessons from the Jewish-Christian conversation, the one with Islam will develop its own methodologies reflecting the different dynamics that emerge in both bilateral and trilateral encounters.

As Jews and Christians we have come to understand more and more deeply that the lasting meaning of our dialogue will come from something more than promoting tolerance and understanding, as laudable as these goals are. It must also enable us as religious people to work together to address the challenges in today's world – perhaps most notably, responsible stewardship of the environment and protection of human life and freedoms.

### **5. Christian-Jewish Dialogue and the State of Israel**

The foundation of the State of Israel has had a profound impact on contemporary Jewish self-understanding, and by extension, on dialogue between Christians and Jews. For several reasons conversations about the State of Israel and the Middle East are often difficult and contentious, even where there is mutual trust between Jews and Christians.

First, religious and political factors combine with the complex geopolitics, disputes and history of the region in ways that are not easily understood. Second, there is a range of viewpoints about the State of Israel within the Jewish and Christian communities. Third, Jews and Christians generally have a fundamental difference in perspective about the significance of the Land – as distinct from the State – of Israel. This difference is rooted in the ways in which the two groups developed as they separated from one another, especially in how they responded to the Roman destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in the year 70 and to the definitive loss of Jewish self-rule after 135.

The early rabbis substituted the Jewish home for the vanished Temple as the central locus of celebration, and communal prayer and study took the place of the Temple's sacrificial rituals. The rabbis' creative work allowed Judaism and the Jewish people to survive without a homeland.

Yet attachment to the Land of Israel remained enshrined in Jewish historical memory, finding expression throughout rabbinic culture, tradition and liturgy throughout the centuries when no State of Israel existed.

New interpretations and understandings of the Temple and the Land also began to take shape among the Jews and Gentiles in the earliest churches. For nascent Christianity, the resurrected Jesus became the focus of worship. His victory over death itself was seen as important for all humanity and not restricted to a specific geographic location. This universalist view was later coupled with a polemic that interpreted the Jews' loss of national sovereignty as evidence of divine punishment for their refusal to accept Jesus Christ.

Over time, Christians have had conflicted attitudes about the Land of Israel. While some focused on the heavenly Jerusalem in the afterlife, others promoted pilgrimages to the places where Jesus walked. In recent centuries, some strands of Christian evangelicalism anticipated a Jewish ingathering to their ancestral homeland as a pre-condition for the return of Jesus Christ. Although some Christians did not see any religious significance in the 1948 foundation of the State of Israel, many welcomed its creation as a haven for oppressed Jews everywhere. Others saw the demise of the notion that God intended Jews to be homeless wanderers, while still others saw the possible dawning of the end of days. These various perspectives interacting within and among Christians are one important factor when Christians dialogue with Jews about the State of Israel.

Among Jews, the idea of re-establishing a national homeland arose in the 19th century in a movement called Zionism, one of many nationalistic movements of the time. Zionism was a pluralistic endeavor comprising many different points of view: religious and secular, liberal and conservative, socialist and capitalist. Not all Zionists were Jews, and not all Jews were Zionists. However, the Shoah convinced almost all Jews, including those who had previously been indifferent or opposed, of the need for a Jewish homeland where Jews could control their own destiny. The foundation of the State of Israel was the most important collective project of the Jewish people in modern times. Its safety and security now constitute a priority for the vast majority of Jews everywhere, who link their survival as a people with the survival of their national homeland. This is a conviction that many Jews bring to interreligious dialogue.

Recognizing and honoring this central Jewish connection to Israel does not mean that any specific religious perspective – Jewish, Christian or Muslim – can or should resolve current political conflicts. The birth of the State of Israel as a political reality has led many thoughtful Christians to reevaluate their theological presuppositions about the exile and return of the Jewish people, the People of Israel. But a renewed theology does not provide answers to specific political problems. Similarly, Muslim territorial claims to the land of Palestine – or any land – based on Islamic theology, cannot provide the sole grounds for political solutions, neither can territorial assertions made by Jewish groups based on religious claims. In short, territorial claims and political stability cannot rest on debated interpretations of different scriptures or theologies. Issues of legitimacy, borders, rights, citizenship, recompense and security can only be resolved through the agreement of all the relevant parties on the basis of international law and backed by credible measures of implementation.

Among the most pressing political and social problems is the catastrophic plight of the Palestinian people. Arguments over the many contributing causes of this situation must not distract the international community, including Israel and neighboring Arab states, from the urgent need to address the suffering and rehabilitation of Palestinian refugees. A concomitant Palestinian recognition of Israel's self-understanding is also urgently required for the establishment of peace and stability.

The State of Israel has many achievements and accomplishments, but also faces many problems and challenges in living up to its stated ideals, including guaranteeing equal status for all its citizens. It is not unique among the nations of the earth in this respect.

When Jews, Christians and Muslims engage in interreligious dialogue about these matters there is always the potential for antisemitism and Islamophobia and for hypersensitive perceptions and allegations of these twin curses. Those engaged in dialogue ought to be able to criticize freely the government of Israel and its policies without being automatically accused of antisemitism or anti-Zionism. Likewise, they should be free to critique the failings of Muslim leaders – secular or religious – and the policies of Muslim nations without being charged with harboring irrational fears of Islam. Local Christian leaders can also be critiqued without invoking charges of anti-Christian motives.



On the other hand, when criticism singles out the State of Israel according to standards not demanded of other nations, when Israel is denounced for military reprisals without condemnation of the attacks that provoked them, when Islam is branded as the religion of terrorists on the basis of statements and actions of radical extremists, when Palestinians are refused recognition as a distinct nationality – in short, whenever stereotypes and canards are invoked, the presence of ethnic or religious bigotry must be acknowledged and confronted.

Jews can expect their dialogue partners to support the rights of the State of Israel as a nation without expecting they will defend all of its actions and policies. Muslims can expect their dialogue partners to defend the rights and needs of Palestinians without expecting them to support all their claims and actions or to overlook failures. Christians can expect their dialogue partners to recognize the plight of Christians in the region, who are often buffeted minorities caught between contesting religious majorities, without expecting them to abandon their own priorities. And those Christians too should expect criticism if their declarations serve antisemitic purposes.

We believe that interreligious dialogues cannot avoid difficult questions if meaningful and lasting relationships are to develop. Bilateral and trilateral interreligious dialogues can contribute to peace by eliminating caricatures and promoting authentic mutual understanding. Interreligious dialogue can also encourage political leaders to seek the welfare of everyone, and not simply of one's own religious or ethnic group.

## **C. THE ROAD AHEAD**

### **1. The Changing World of the 21st Century**

Today's world is a place of turmoil and rapid change. In the nearly 70 years since the outbreak of World War II, about 28 million persons have been killed in wars and other conflicts. About 75 million people have been made refugees. These refugees fleeing war and persecution, and immigrants fleeing poverty and hopelessness have changed the demographics of Western Europe and the Americas. Many have encountered prejudice and discrimination in their new settings. Some have brought with them hatred and prejudice nurtured in other conflicts and cultures. Populations once

dominant in a particular place can find themselves slipping towards minority status. Both growing minorities and dwindling majorities are tempted to respond to shifting demographics by adopting a "siege mentality" that reinforces religious dogmatism and fundamentalist perspectives. Many people living amid reshuffling populations have struggled with the problem of multiple identities, as they have tried to balance national, ethnic, religious, gender and age-related issues at any given time. In these environments, interreligious dialogue is more necessary and more difficult. Yet dialogue empowers people to explore their experiences of grappling with competing identities.

We are more acutely aware of conflicts engendered around the globe by a process of globalization that both shrinks and enlarges our world. It is larger because a century ago, despite huge waves of immigration to the new world, most people were likely to be born, grow up, live and die within a small geographical area. Their experience of the world was limited by the ranges of train and ship, with air travel increasing by mid-century. Today, no place on the planet is beyond reach. Media reports supplement physical travel, showing countries and cultures beyond the experience of most. We have been exposed to the unfathomable diversity of human life, and our horizons have widened. The world seems larger.

The same technologies that bring every corner of the globe onto our television and computer screens are also shrinking our world. An exploding volcano, a tsunami, a bomb blast is known globally within minutes and has global repercussions. The promise of instant communication – that it would bring the world together, facilitate understanding, and overcome barriers – has often soured with the realization that it can spread calumny and advance hatred. While technology is a priceless tool for communication, information and research, its outlets are sometimes infected with misinformation and defamation. Internet hate sites abound, slander proliferates at electronic speed, and rampant pornography dehumanizes and objectifies people. While we oppose all prejudice based on race, ethnicity and ideology, whatever is rooted in religious bias and bigotry must especially concern us as committed religious individuals and organizations.

The rapid shifts in population, technologies and societies that characterize civilization today challenge Christians and Jews, as they do all people, and raise new insecurities. Thus the need is unprecedented for interreligious dialogue, understanding and cooperation that keeps pace with our changing world, helping us face its challenges together.

## **2. ICCJ and the Future**

We, the International Council of Christians and Jews, coming together to mark the promulgation of the Ten Points of Seelisberg, have reflected on the intervening six decades as well as the unique challenges of the 21st century. At this point in the history of our world and of our respective religious traditions, we stand more committed than ever to the work of building understanding and solidarity among Jews and Christians. It has become clear to us that the emerging realities of the 21st century require a reassessment of our interreligious relationships and new priorities for the future. This realization gives rise to the present document.

We invite Jews and Christians everywhere to join us in pursuing the goals we have set for ourselves, goals which spring from our common conviction that God wants us – precisely as Jews and Christians – to prepare the world for the Reign of God, the Age to Come of God’s justice and peace. We urge all women and men with similar ideals to collaborate in promoting human solidarity, understanding and prosperity. We invite everyone to walk with us as together we continue to build a new relationship between Jews and Christians and among all peoples.

## TEN POINTS OF SEELISBERG

- 1.** Remember that One God speaks to us all through the Old and the New Testaments.
- 2.** Remember that Jesus was born of a Jewish mother of the seed of David and the people of Israel, and that His everlasting love and forgiveness embraces His own people and the whole world.
- 3.** Remember that the first disciples, the apostles and the first martyrs were Jews.
- 4.** Remember that the fundamental commandment of Christianity, to love God and one's neighbour, proclaimed already in the Old Testament and confirmed by Jesus, is binding upon both Christians and Jews in all human relationships, without any exception .
- 5.** Avoid distorting or misrepresenting biblical or post-biblical Judaism with the object of extolling Christianity.

- 6.** Avoid using the word Jews in the exclusive sense of the enemies of Jesus, and the words 'the enemies of Jesus' to designate the whole Jewish people.
- 7.** Avoid presenting the Passion in such a way as to bring the odium of the killing of Jesus upon all Jews or upon Jews alone. It was only a section of the Jews in Jerusalem who demanded the death of Jesus, and the Christian message has always been that it was the sins of mankind which were exemplified by those Jews and the sins in which all men share that brought Christ to the Cross.
- 8.** Avoid referring to the scriptural curses, or the cry of a raging mob: "His blood be upon us and our children, "without remembering that this cry should not count against the infinitely more weighty words of our Lord: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."
- 9.** Avoid promoting the superstitious notion that the Jewish people are reprobate, accursed, reserved for a destiny of suffering.
- 10.** Avoid speaking of the Jews as if the first members of the Church had not been Jews.



# THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS AND THE UNIVERSITY OF FRIBOURG

*Martin Klöckener*

## **THE ICCJ AT FRIBOURG 1948<sup>1</sup>**

From 21 to 28 July 1948 the ICCJ met for the first time at the University of Fribourg.<sup>2</sup> The Chronicle speaks of around 130 participants from 17 countries. The location was chosen not only because of the international reputation of its university, but also because of its favourable position on the railway axis between Lausanne and Bern and its bridge function between the cultures. The participants were lodged mainly in the international seminary Salesianum, in rooms without running water. These were in every respect different times: postwar times, times of need, but also times of upheaval and of creativity in Jewish-Christian encounter. The conference received words of greeting from Swiss federal president Celio, minister Petitpierre, from the Bishop of Fribourg, François Charrière, and from John Foster Dulles, then chief of the US delegation at the United Nations gathering in Paris. At the opening, the Rector of the university, Oskar Vasella, spoke, as did Jules Bovet in the name of the canton, and Everett R. Clinchy, president of the ICCJ. The president of the conference was Henri N. MacCracken,

president of Vassar College in the State of New York, who unwillingly provided a bit of humour at the opening session. After his speech, in which he spoke of a "historic hour", he sat down and the chair broke under his weight.<sup>3</sup> The conference languages were English and French.

### **THE WAYS OF DIALOGUE BEFORE FRIBOURG 1948**

The Fribourg conference of 1948 constitutes with the Oxford conference of 1946 and the Seelisberg conference of 1947 a founding event of the ICCJ. Here we cannot set forth the complicated history of the ICCJ origins in detail. Suffice to say that the London conference of Jews and Christians of 1928 was a motivator to found a "society of Jews and Christians", which would pursue the following two goals:

1. To overcome religious misunderstandings and to promote good will and collaboration between Jews and Christians, while maintaining mutual respect for differences in faith and life.
2. To oppose religious intolerance.<sup>4</sup>

In the same year 1928, the "National Conference of Christians and Jews" was founded in the USA. Similar councils of Christians and Jews also arose in a few other countries. The next development is marked by the experience of the Second World War. Under Hitler's bombs Christians and Jews drew closer together in the "British Council of Christians and Jews"; and they were pushed by the American association to institutionalize the collaboration by the holding of international conferences. Thus in 1946 the first international conference in Oxford took place. It concentrated primarily on the themes "Freedom, Justice and Responsibility" and came out with two resolutions, which would be important for the future: "to create an international umbrella organization of Christian-Jewish councils of the whole world, as well as to convoke an emergency conference for dealing with anti-Semitism in Europe."<sup>5</sup>

### **THE SEELISBERG CONFERENCE 1947**

That both goals could be realized in Switzerland, certainly speaks for the hospitality and for the businesslike culture of this country, but had to do not least with the fact that after the Oxford conference the intended international umbrella organization was already present with a secretariat office in Geneva.



The emergency conference for dealing with anti-Semitism took place in Seelisberg (Canton Uri) 30 July to 5 August 1947. From Fribourg came two participants: the Dominican Jean de Menasce, a Jew from Egypt who converted to Christianity, who was also Professor for missiology and comparative religions in our theological faculty; the Reverend Charles Journet, later Cardinal, but at the time rector of the Diocesan Seminary and Professor of Systematic Theology there. Both were close associates of the philosopher Jacques Maritain. Père de Menasce sympathized with Zionism; he opened Maritain's eyes in the 1920s for the salvation historical significance of Israel. Journet shared with Maritain the wish for a renewal of the Catholic Church. Maritain, at the time French ambassador to the Holy See, could not come to Seelisberg, but sent a message to the secretary of the conference, the pastor Pierre Visseur, entitled "Against Anti-Semitism".<sup>6</sup> He mentioned the six million murdered Jews and emphasized that this brutal hatred was also directed against Jesus Christ himself, because he was a Jew. Maritain viewed the founding of a Hebrew state in Palestine as "necessary and legitimate", but in his short communication he was not able to go into the social and political implications; he was further convinced that Christians had a great deal of work to do, of inner purification and reflection, if they wanted to overcome religious anti-Semitism. Christians should consider that Jesus was born of a Jewish virgin, that he himself was a Jew "par excellence de nature," that the apostles and first martyrs were Jews, that many absurd expressions such as "race of God-killers" and "perfidia iudaica" should disappear from Catholic word usage... Not least because of the strong impression his message left in Seelisberg, Maritain was elected as "honorary president of the International Council". In the history of Jewish-Christian dialogue the Seelisberg conference is referred to primarily because of the Ten Theses, which are primarily directed to Christians. In research it is emphasized that with these theses a lasting foundation stone for theological dialogue between Jews and Christians has been laid, "even if since then the relation between Church and Synagogue would be seen in some respects in a more complex and differentiated way."<sup>7</sup>

### **THE WORK OF THE FRIBOURG CONFERENCE 1948**

During the conference in Fribourg 1948, the second desideratum of the Oxford conference was translated into action: the International Council of Christians and Jews was formally set up. This occurred in a session "of the representatives of the American National Conference of Christians and

Jews, which existed since 1928 and had more than 16,000 members, the British Council of Christians and Jews, to which a considerable number of prominent personalities of the intellectual, social and political life of Great Britain belonged, and the Christian-Jewish Working Group of Switzerland.”<sup>8</sup>

The work of the Fribourg Conference took place in three commissions: In the “Educational Commission” the program of an “intercultural education” was planned; in it understanding and good will for people of other races, other religions and other nationalities should be awakened and the significance of foreign contributions to one’s own culture should be communicated. In the “Civil Commission” it was discussed how the national councils and the International Council of Christians and Jews could promote different measures for enlightenment as well as for increased international exchanges, as for example, the children who belonged to ethnic or religious minorities could meet together in summer camps with other children. In the “Religious Commission”, the meaning of the spirit of Seelisberg for Church and Synagogue as well as religious freedom were dealt with. A few speeches in the plenary meeting, dealing with the spiritual and ethical bases of our culture, aroused particular interest.

Thus Everett R. Clinchy, in his opening address, emphasized the shaping influence which the culture of the “Jewish-Christian” tradition had on the rest of the world in the last centuries, going out from the West: on the Russian, the Islamic, the Hindu and Far Eastern cultures, and they for their part should be challenged by this double tradition. One could say that all these cultures failed in their duty to practice a universal, intercultural brotherhood . This will not happen “either automatically or as a natural event;” but it can be result of a new intercultural education, an education for justice, for friendship, for understanding and for collaboration among the religious cultures of the world.<sup>9</sup>

Charles Journet and Jules Isaac spoke from the Catholic and the Jewish viewpoints respectively about the bases of our culture in view of the dangers threatening it. Journet saw in the opening to God and to his Kingdom, as occurred in the Old Testament in Isaiah, and as Jesus preached it, the motor of world history. We have to thank the message of the Kingdom of God not only for the idea of progress in history, but also the regarding of justice as a transcendental and not simply a profane virtue, as well as the dignity of man. Journet thought that this culture was threatened by atheism, hatred, cruelty and violence well up in human

hearts.<sup>10</sup> Jules Isaac asked himself two questions: "What in our culture is worth saving? What can we do to save our culture?" He responds by making reference to the spiritual foundations of our culture: justice, freedom, human dignity, the quest for truth, i.e. everything that makes up the grandeur, dignity and nobility of the human spirit. Isaac finds it above all in the Greek, Judeo-Christian and Roman tradition that essentially shaped the West. Yet as a path to our culture's salvation, he also seeks contact with the spiritual elites of Islam, India and the Far East, especially elites that seek to work towards spiritual peace: "We have to open wide our doors and windows ... that is the way to salvation."<sup>11</sup>

Looking back, we can marvel at the present-day relevance of certain proposals and discussions at the 1948 Fribourg Conference, those which emphasized inter-cultural, fraternal and ethical-spiritual cooperation among the world's cultures.

The conference concluded with several statements, recommendations and greetings which allow us to determine that an atmosphere friendly to both Zionism and Ecumenism ruled the day. In his lecture, Jules Isaac had already described the Israelis who had constructed the Jewish state as *David redivivus*, who once again confronted Goliath and the Philistines on the battlefield. In an explanation of their prayer for peace in Palestine, the Christian members of the religious commission spoke about a peace "that is built upon justice ... and which allows all Jews, Christians and Muslims to live in harmony and mutual understanding." At the same time, they greeted – not lastly from the standpoint of the struggle against anti-Semitism and in the hope that, through its new establishment in the land of the Bible, Israel would find a new spiritual strength to fulfil its vocation – the "restoration" of the Jewish state in Palestine. In a special statement, the Jewish members of the religious commission emphasized that they sought the same. Also worth mentioning is the greeting that the commission's Christian members sent to the 1948 Conference of Churches in Amsterdam, which was the foundation of the World Council of Churches. The greeting asks for a discussion of anti-Semitism.

#### **CHAIM WEIZMANN, DOCTOR AND DOCTOR HONORIS CAUSA OF FRIBOURG UNIVERSITY**

That the Fribourg Conference marked the university with a Zion-friendly atmosphere was also (and not lastly) the result of the fact that Chaim

Weizmann was elected the first president of the State of Israel on September 12, 1949. Weizmann had graduated from Fribourg with a doctorate *summa cum laude* in 1899. On the golden anniversary of the doctorate's attainment, he was solemnly received at the University for a renewal of the degree. A commemorative plaque in the entrance hall of the main building of the university still marks the occasion. In the Rector's report for the academic year 1948–1949, Oskar Vasella wrote that this anniversary celebration represents "a singular event in the annals of our university's history, exceptional for the participation of many high ecclesiastical and civil authorities, the representative of the State of Israel in Switzerland, and also through an active participation of the Jewish community in Fribourg. It was a very harmonious and, for the university, a very honourable occasion. The high human qualities of the honoured personality, who spoke movingly about his own time of study in Fribourg, contributed greatly to the occasion. Let us hope" – so still the words of Rector Vasella – "that the expectations of the President, who offered a politically significant explanation of the holy places in Palestine, will be fulfilled, and let us rejoice that our university had the opportunity, to prove before the eyes of a wider public our spirit of human understanding and loyal solidarity with former students of other faiths."<sup>12</sup>

### **CRITICS AND OPPOSITION TO THE FRIBOURG CONFERENCE**

But not everyone agreed with the convergence of the Fribourg Conference with the goals of Zionism and Ecumenism. On July 25, 1948, Journet wrote to Maritain: "Here in Fribourg, there is a second session of the International Council of Christians and Jews which met last year at Seelisberg. I don't really understand the purpose of this conference, which sends 'Messages to the Churches.' Yesterday, a discussion on a greeting rejoicing in the establishment of the state of Israel took place. A Protestant took the floor to say that this was a purely political matter. A Rabbi protested, saying that it was a mystical matter, that Israel was held mystically to the Holy Land, as was already noted at the first Zionist conferences, and that he believed himself to be speaking on behalf of all Jews."<sup>13</sup> On August 13, 1948, a worried Maritain responded: "It's necessary to speak with Visseur [Dr. Pierre Visseur, the Council's Secretary]. The members of the Conference of Christians and Jews have good intentions, but they are diplomatically inept."<sup>14</sup> Journet and Maritain feared, that the conference's

religious-political statements might discredit it in certain religious circles, which is precisely what happened. Henceforth, the Roman Catholic Church was very careful to avoid all religious-political statements in relation to the State of Israel which might especially offend Muslims in general and Palestinian Christians in particular. Even the history of the emergence of the Conciliar decree *Nostra aetate* is shaped by this state of affairs.<sup>15</sup> On December 20, 1949, in an "Instruction on the Ecumenical Movement", Pius XII allowed the Holy Office to conjure up the danger of indifferentism. In 1950, Rome also described the ICCJ as an "indifferentist Organization" that ignored or minimized the differences in faith and morals, not least because of its programs for "inter-cultural fraternity."<sup>16</sup>

### **A SECOND ICCJ-CONFERENCE AT FRIBOURG UNIVERSITY 1987**

In 1987, forty years after the Seelisberg theses, another conference of the ICCJ took place at the University of Fribourg, this time with about 200 participants.<sup>17</sup> The theme was the overcoming of condemnations as an educational challenge. Yet the conference will be especially remembered for its lively discussions of the construction of a Carmelite monastery at Auschwitz, the beatification of Edith Stein and John Paul II's reception of the Austrian President Kurt Waldheim.

### **ENCOURAGING THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE**

As we can see, during the six decades after the 1947 Seelisberg and 1948 Fribourg Conferences, Jewish-Christian relations have remained a very sensitive matter. Since then, undeniable advances have been achieved on the theological and inter-religious plane that allows us to work today on a renewed basis. Yet many prejudices and hostile perceptions – not only between Christians and Jews, but also generally in our world – remain in the popular imagination and in various fundamentalisms on all sides. The ICCJ will therefore still have much work to do, and not only the ICCJ. I hope that the reflections of these three days and the work on the Berlin theses 2009 here at our university will be a decisive contribution to make progress in this very important field. I wish you all that our exchanges will really be fruitful, following the tradition of the former Fribourg conferences.

- 1| *Materials for the historical chapter of this opening conference were prepared by Mariano Delgado. See also: Mariano Delgado, Konferenz des Internationalen Rates der Christen und Juden an der Universität Fribourg 60 Jahre nach dessen Gründung, in: Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft 93 (2009) no 1.*
- 2| *See the chronicle of the conference and other informations: Qu'est-ce que le Conseil international de chrétiens et de juifs?, in: L'Amitié judéo-chrétienne, no 1 (September 1948) 13; Le Congrès de l'association internationale des chrétiens et de juifs à Fribourg (21–28 Juillet 1948), in: L'Amitié judéo-chrétienne, no 2 (January 1949) 12–13; Die christlich-jüdische Konferenz von Freiburg, in: Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ), 11 August 1948, 7; Christlich-jüdische Konferenz, in: Freiburger Nachrichten, no 171, 27 July 1948, 3; Fin du Congrès judéo-chrétien, in: Le Fribourgeois, no 114 (1948) 3; Le Conseil international de chrétiens et juifs, in : La Liberté [Fribourg], 30 July 1948, 4.*
- 3| *See: William W. Simpson – Ruth Weyl, The International Council of Christians and Jews. A Brief History. Heppenheim 1988, 28.*
- 4| *See ibidem 15.*
- 5| *See: Archiv für Zeitgeschichte (AfZ), NL Jean Nordmann, CJA, Ornstein an Nordmann, [24.] Juni 1948 (ohne Signatur: Dossier 294); see also Simpson – Weyl 24.*
- 6| *Jacques Maritain: Contre l'Antisémitisme, in: Nova et Vetera 22 (1946–47) 312–317 (Maritain wrote this text on 28 July 1947 at Rome), also published in: Jacques Maritain, Le mystère d'Israël et autres essais. Nouv. éd. augmentée. Ed. par le Cercle d'Études Jacques et Raïssa Maritain. Paris 1990, 221–231.*
- 7| *See: Christian M. Rutishauser, Jüdisch-christliche Arbeit von 1947–2007: was feiern – warum wir feiern!, in: 60 Jahre Seelisberger Thesen. Der Grundstein jüdisch-christlicher Begegnung ist gelegt! Bern – Fribourg – Zürich 2007, 14–19, here 17.*
- 8| *Die christlich-jüdische Konferenz von Freiburg, in: NZZ, 11 August 1948, 7.*
- 9| *See the opening speech in: AfZ [see above note 5].*
- 10| *The text is published in: Charles Journet: Chrétiens et juifs, in: Nova et Vetera 24 (1949) 238–244; La Liberté, 31 July 1948, 2.*
- 11| *See AfZ [see above note 5].*
- 12| *See: Universitas Friburgensis Helvetiorum, Bericht über das Studienjahr 1948–49. Erstattet vom derzeitigen Rektor Oskar Vasella. Freiburg/Schweiz 1949, 16–17.*
- 13| *See: Jacques Maritain, Correspondance, vol. 3, 1940–1949, ed. Fondation du Cardinal Journet. Fribourg 1998, 663–671, here 664.*
- 14| *Ibidem 669.*
- 15| *See: Benedict T. Viviano, L'histoire de „Nostra aetate“, la Déclaration sur les relations de l'Eglise avec les religions non chrétiennes, in: Mariano Delgado – Benedict T. Viviano (edd.), Le dialogue interreligieux. Avec la collab. de Patrizia Conforti. Fribourg 2007, 11–20.*
- 16| *See: Simpson – Weyl 29.*
- 17| *See ibidem 63–64.*

# BUMPS, FORKS AND DETOURS ON THE ROAD TO GOD'S KINGDOM

*Marc Saperstein*

During my rabbinical studies at the New York School of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion I once had a teacher who told us, "If you are ever asked months in advance to provide a title for a sermon, and you don't have the vaguest notion of what you will want to be speaking on so long before the actual date, you can always give the title, "For Such a Time as This". When asked for a title a month and a half ago, I was tempted to go along with his advice. Instead I came up with a somewhat more colourful one, without really knowing what I was going to say. You will need to judge its appropriateness for what follows.

My actual remit was to present what I consider to be the most pressing issues and theological challenges for Jewish-Christian dialogue today. My response to this will be a bit quirky, as I will not be speaking about such issues as Israel, intermarriage, or the beatification of Popes Pius IX or Pius XII. Rather, I would like to share my perspective as a non-professional in dialogue, as a historian and not a theologian, on three general issues concerning our approach to inter-religious communication.

## MIND THOSE METAPHORS

A few months ago I heard a statement on the radio while I was concentrating on something else, so I confess I am unable to provide the source. But the point struck me as enormously perceptive and valid. The speaker, noting the common rhetorical image of marching into the future, pointed out that the metaphor of marching into the future is totally misguided. When you march forward, the assumption is that you can see clearly for a certain distance ahead. The appropriate metaphor – at least for those of us who are not Prophets – would be *walking backward* into the future. We see nothing ahead of us; all that we see is the landscape behind us, the path that brought us to where we are at present. Our progress into the future is blind; the only guidance is from our vision and memory of the past and the problems we encountered where we have been.

Now in addition to the insight about the problematic nature of this specific image of “marching into the future”, this comment raises a larger issue that is the first point I would like to address. It is the seductiveness of allowing vivid metaphors to substitute for proper analytical thinking; the rhetorical strategy of using vivid metaphors to persuade and convince in the absence of adequate evidence; and the need to recognize a metaphor that comes in place of a true rational argument.<sup>1</sup> During the Second World War, Churchill spoke of “the soft under-belly of Europe” as a strategic target. Those who actually participated in the invasion of Sicily and Italy discovered that the metaphor did not at all reflect the reality.

Some chilling examples of the power of metaphor in pernicious discourse: First, from a work written by a German liberal intellectual, published in 1819 in the context of debates over the emancipation of Jews: The Jews are like “a rapidly growing parasitic plant that winds round the still healthy tree to suck up the life juice, until the trunk, emaciated and eaten up from within, falls moldering into decay.”<sup>2</sup>

The second, from Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*, describes the author’s experience in Vienna during the years preceding the Great War: “Was there any form of filth or profligacy, particularly in cultural life, without at least one Jew involved in it? If you cut even cautiously into such an abscess, you found, like a maggot in a rotting body, often dazzled by the sudden light – a kike!”<sup>3</sup> The third is attributed to Fritz Klein, an SS physician assigned as camp doctor in Birkenau throughout most of 1944, by Ella Lingens-Reiner, a



Jewish physician, chosen to assist at the Auschwitz infirmary. One day they were standing together, watching black smoke coming out of the chimneys of the crematoria, and Lingens-Reiner asked Klein, "How can you reconcile this with your Hippocratic Oath?" The reply: "When there is a gangrenous appendix, we remove the appendix to save the patient. The Jew is the gangrenous appendix of mankind."<sup>4</sup>

In all of these cases, metaphorical language is used to create a vivid image in an appeal to emotion intended to short-circuit the process of rational analysis and critical thinking – with potentially catastrophic results. (Note that none of these metaphors of modern anti-semitism draws from traditional Christian discourse, but rather from entirely new realms.)

The problem is not only with such obviously malicious uses of metaphor. Image substitutes for analysis in less offensive contexts as well. Virtually every significant word of my title, "Bumps, Forks, and Detours on the Road to God's Kingdom", is a metaphor, and a problematic one at that. "Kingdom", implying the metaphor of God as King, central to our Biblical and liturgical traditions, but certainly not without problems in our contemporary context where kings are either relatively impotent figureheads or autocratic tyrants. And "road". Is this indeed the proper metaphor for our experience in history? It may work for the past (*The Twisted Road to Auschwitz*), but does it work for the future – as in "The Road Forward", a major heading in our draft document?<sup>5</sup> Is there indeed one destination of history, where the road ends? Is there a single road to that destination, or parallel roads? Detours away from the most direct root? Might an equally plausible metaphor for the complexities of history be a *labyrinth*? Or perhaps even – as many have thought – a large oval track, or a Möbius strip, circling back upon itself? Is there an infallible Sat-Nav that will always direct us, no matter where we are, to destination, so long as we follow instructions?

One of the most common road metaphors we use in Jewish-Christian dialogue is "the parting of the ways". This implies a picture of people walking on a path together, until they come to a fork, and then they split up. But are the two paths leading eventually to the same destination, or is one path – that taken by the Jewish people – meandering around in loops and circles, never arriving to the destination of the alternative? Or perhaps is there no destination at all, just a path, or two paths, and the

purpose is not to reach a destination but the journey itself? There is of course no demonstrable answer to these questions, which are essentially about images and pictures, not reality.

Perhaps the very metaphor of parting of the ways is misleading.<sup>6</sup> Daniel Boyarin has suggested a very different analogy, based on the languages of South-eastern France and North-western Italy. Today there are borders, with French spoken on one side and Italian on the other. But “on the ground”, as one travels from one region to the next noting the local dialects of each village, one would find more and more elements identified with the other language gradual blending with the first, until the elements of the second language eventually began to predominate.<sup>7</sup> That is an engaging alternative metaphor to replace the parting of the ways – no sudden rupture, many individuals without a clearly demarcated identity of one religion or the other, only gradual differentiation.<sup>8</sup>

Let me mention in somewhat greater detail one other example of metaphorical thinking. In the summer of 2000, I prepared a paper for the Oxford Holocaust Conference called “Remembering for the Future” exploring the state of the scholarly question of continuity or discontinuity between Christian anti-Jewish doctrine and policies and the Nazi death camps.<sup>9</sup> Many scholars can be situated clearly on one side or the other of this divide, emphasizing elements of continuity with the Christian past, or emphasizing the novelty of Nazi policy. A popular compromise position, held by many whom I respect both in the Jewish and Christian communities, is represented by the image of “the fertile field” – the Christian teaching of contempt over many centuries provided a fertile field in which the Nazis’ “venomous plant of hatred for the Jews was able to flourish” and produce the implementation of a policy of mass murder<sup>10</sup>.

Let us remember that this is simply a metaphor that does not substitute for arguments that would demonstrate the validity of the claim asserting continuity between Christian doctrines and the death camps. In order to justify the metaphor, one would expect evidence documenting a correlation between the level of traditional religious piety and devotion of Christians within the general German population and the degree of their support for the Nazi anti-Jewish programme. To my knowledge, no evidence for such a correlation exists: the German Catholic Centre Party may have made an accommodation with Nazism, but it was by no means a base of support.

There is no need to appeal to traditional Christian doctrine about the Jews in order to explain why most Polish Catholics under Nazi occupation were unwilling to defy the German authorities by sheltering Jews, when all knew that the penalty for such defiance was summary execution. And the implication that had they not been imbued with traditional Christian anti-Jewish discourse, the masses in occupied Poland would have risen up to prevent the operation of Death Camps on their territory is an obvious absurdity.

Although I was of course a signatory to the "Dabru Emet" statement, I did not concur with the assertion that "Without the long history of Christian anti-Judaism and Christian violence against Jews, Nazi ideology could not have taken hold nor could it have been carried out", a counter-factual that is impossible to prove. The historical record and subsequent examples of genocide (for example in Cambodia) suggest to me the more pessimistic conclusion that an authoritarian government can demonize a minority group with lethal results in a frighteningly short period of time without a centuries-long tradition of negative attitudes. The Nazis did not need any "fertile field" to implement their programme, and it is not at all clear that the legacy of Christian anti-Judaism made their work easier. Their purpose was not to grow a plant, but to destroy a people. Let us indeed "mind those metaphors".

### **NO PRECONDITIONS OR ULTIMATUMS**

One of the ground-rules of dialogue as I understand it is that we enter without pre-conditions. The purpose is to articulate our own understandings of our faith tradition in a manner that is intelligible to the Other, and to listen sympathetically to the articulations of the other tradition in their own integrity, so as to deepen our understanding both of commonalities and differences. It is certainly not to convince the Other that they are wrong, or pressure the Other to change. If change arises from within one tradition as a result of an internal dynamic stimulated by the communication of dialogue, that of course is welcome, but that is very different from the attitude "You must change x, y, z, or there is nothing to talk about."

An internal Jewish joke: A Jew and a Christian are sitting down to engage in dialogue for the first time. The Jew says to the Christian, "If we are going to have anything to talk about, you will need give up the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Virgin Birth, and Vicarious Atonement."

"That's a pretty serious request," says the Christian. "To be honest, it doesn't leave very much left of Christian theology. Tell me, what would you be willing to go up in return?" The Jew thinks for a moment and says, "I'll go back to my people; I think I can get them to agree to give up the second "Yekum Purkan" (by context, you can appreciate that this is one of the most minor paragraphs of traditional Jewish liturgy).

In general, dialogue is held between the representatives of the various religions who share an outlook of openness to new insight, to alternative assumptions, to a broadening of world-view, to the possibility of learning from those different from themselves. Fundamentalist, evangelical Christians and ultra-Orthodox Jews might indeed have something to learn from each other about facing common problems and challenges in a secular world, but they rarely feel any inclination to talk to each other. What about liberal Jews and evangelical Christians? Here it gets rather complicated.

I once participated in such a dialogue, and heard a leading American evangelical theologian articulate his position in totally uncompromising terms: "We evangelicals maintain that by the whole Christ-event Judaism *qua* religion has been superseded, its propaedeutic purpose accomplished. Since the Messiah has come and offered his culminating sacrifice, there is, as we see it, no temple, no priesthood, no altar, no atonement, no forgiveness, no salvation, and no eternal hope in Judaism as a religion. Harsh and grating expressions as to [Judaism's] salvific discontinuity are called for – abrogation, displacement, and negation. And these expressions are set down here, I assure you, with some realization of how harsh and grating they must indeed sound to Jewish ears."<sup>11</sup>

These words were said not with arrogant condescension, but with a measure of anguish. How do I as a believing Jew respond to them? Do I get up and walk out of the room? Do I dismiss the spokesman as a theological Neanderthal unworthy of serious attention? Do I say that if he wants to have talk to us, he is going to have to change his belief: abandon (if not Trinity and Incarnation) then at least supersessionism, accept God's continuing covenant with the Jewish people, concede that Jews can be saved without the Christ? I speak for no one but myself in saying that this would not be my approach. I would certainly confirm his intuition that the words sound harsh and grating to Jewish ears, but intellectually I can recognize the basis for these beliefs in classical Christian doctrine,

and emotionally I can appreciate the integrity of someone who affirms them today despite all the pressures to substitute a more pluralistic, tolerant, "open-minded" view. Ultimately, his view of Judaism tells me something not about Judaism but about the theologian and his own religion; my own sense of the value of Judaism is not dependent upon his recognition of my faith as a valid way of fulfilling what God expects and demands from a tiny minority of the human race.

In this context, allow me to revisit for a few moments the issue that aroused such strong feelings last spring: the permission extended by Pope Benedict XVI for Catholics who so chose to use the "extraordinary rite" version of the Good Friday prayer "For the Jews". As we all know, the text authorized by Pope Benedict prays (in the English translation) that "our Lord and God may enlighten their hearts, that they may acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Saviour of all men," and that God will "graciously grant that all Israel may be saved when the fullness of the nations enter into Your Church." This was perceived, in my judgment rightly, as a throwback from the version in Pope Paul VI's Roman Missal of 1970, which speaks of the fullness of redemption for the Jewish people, without reference to the acknowledgment of Jesus as the Saviour of all mankind.

Something of a firestorm of protest ensued from members of the Jewish community, especially in Europe. The official Jewish communities of Germany, Austria and Italy proclaimed that they would discontinue all programmes of dialogue with the Church as an expression of their dismay, after a "demand" with a deadline from the Central Council of German Jews that the prayer be changed was not met. Some 1600 rabbis throughout the world (myself not included) were said to have issued a formal protest. The Rector of our sister seminary, Abraham Geiger College, wrote that "the dismay of Jewish ... officials is rooted in the more general observation that high-ranking Catholic Church representatives seem to be emphasising again that missionising the Jews is a natural mandate for the Church" – an assertion for which no evidence was provided, and I wonder whether such evidence exists. My understanding is that the position of the Catholic Church on this issue is still, and will remain, substantially different from that of the World Evangelical Alliance, which recently issued a document calling for its members to renew their "commitment to the task of Jewish evangelism".<sup>12</sup>

My own take on this was quite different:

- a. Knowing the influence of traditionalist groups in the Jewish community who are opposed to all change, especially in the direction of liberalism, I recognize this decision of the Pope as driven essentially by internal considerations, a concession to the traditionalists that was deemed to be critical enough to risk ruffling some feathers in the Jewish community. I believe that in such circumstances, we Jews need to remind ourselves that the Church is an enormous and complex institution, and that maintaining the best possible relations with the Jewish community, though important, is not (and should not be expected to be) at the very top of the priority list.
- b. I would suggest that we Jews have the same kind of problem in our own liturgy – a point that is acknowledged in general terms toward the end of the ICCJ draft document. One of the most important passages of Jewish liturgy is the *Aleynu* prayer, which comes near the end of every morning, afternoon and evening service. The beginning of it emphasizes a particularistic statement of Jewish identity and mission: We praise God, according to one translation, “for He has not made us like the nations of the lands, and has not emplaced us like the families of the earth... .” The original text of prayer then draws a clear contrast: “For they bow to vanity and emptiness and pray to a god who does not save, while we go on our knees and prostrate ourselves in acknowledging the King of kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.”

In the late middle ages, some genius who converted from Judaism to Christianity reported to Church authorities that the word “emptiness” in the phrase “they bow down to vanity and emptiness” (actually taken from Isa. 45:20, in a polemic against idolatry), was a code word for “Jesus”, as the numerical equivalent of letters in the Hebrew word *va-rek* was identical to that for “Yeshu”. The Jews were therefore guilty of blaspheming, which violated the ground-rules of toleration: Jews were permitted to say their own prayers but not to insult the sancta of Christianity.<sup>17</sup> As a result, various governments intervened to prohibit this passage, and the Ashkenazi communities removed it from their printed prayer books. The Sephardi and Eastern communities, retain it. Today, there is a tendency even among Ashkenazi Orthodox communities to restore the original wording.

This is in my judgment an internal Jewish problem. Even ignoring any association with Jesus, the controversial phrases assert that the Gentile nations at present have no access to the true God, who is worshipped by

Jews alone. All Liberal and Reform prayer books eliminate the phrases, and most substitute a positive formulation for the preceding ones.

I wonder, however, how Jews would react if a group of Christians were to say to the Chief Rabbis of Israel, or of the United Synagogue in the UK, "You must prevent all Jews from saying those words that we find to be offensive in their prayers. Otherwise, we will discontinue our dialogue with you." Jews would resist acting on the basis of such outside pressure.

Actually, the continuation of the *Aleynu* prayer is more analogous to the problem raised by the Good Friday liturgy. While the first part is particularistic, asserting the uniqueness of Jewish identity, the second part is universalistic, expressing the hope that God will remove all idols from the earth and false gods will be utterly destroyed, that "all human beings will call upon Your name ..., that all who dwell on earth will recognize that to You every knee must bend and every tongue swear loyalty ..." Growing up, I was taught that this universalism was a model of open-mindedness, praying to include everyone, without exception, in the worship of the one true God. It was not until much later that I began to wonder why this was so different from the universalism of the Church, praying that all (including the Jews) will recognize Jesus as the universal saviour.<sup>14</sup> And – appreciating of course the obvious historical differences – I wondered why Hindus should not be protesting the "universalism" of our prayer as offensive, if Jews protest the "universalism" of the "extraordinary rite" in the Good Friday liturgy.<sup>15</sup> Despite aspects of other traditions that perplex or even offend us, let us not set pre-conditions for dialogue, or issue ultimatums.

### **NO FALSE WITNESS**

My mentor in Jewish-Christian dialogue, Krister Stendahl, of blessed memory, used to say that the first commandment of dialogue is "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour".

My teacher Eugene Borowitz once wrote a book called *Contemporary Christologies: A Jewish Response*. It was based on a careful reading of the work of leading Christian theologians, recommended to him by several Christian intellectuals whom he respected. I recall hearing Borowitz speak in public about the reception of this unusual book in the Jewish community. A distinguished traditionalist intellectual said to Borowitz, "My

problem with the book is that you don't take seriously the category of idolatry" – which is indeed an important category in Jewish law. Borowitz replied, "I read these writers very carefully, and I did not find in their discussion of Jesus or the Trinity anything that would fit my understanding of idolatry." To which the response was, "Well then, they're not really representative of Christianity."

This response recalls the old line, "Don't confuse me with the facts, my mind's already made up." That mindset, so antithetical to true dialogue, is familiar to us on both sides: highlighting the most problematic components of the other religion, oversimplifying, removing them from context, identifying them as the essence of the other faith, and contrasting them with the reasonable and politically correct components of one's own. I would like to exemplify this tendency with regard not so much to theology but to the issue of fanaticism and intolerance within our religious traditions.

A month or so ago I saw advertised a new book called *The Legacy of Islamic Antisemitism: From Sacred Texts to Solemn History*, edited by Andrew G. Bostom (Prometheus Books, 2008). Its 766 pages contain passages (in translation) from the Qur'an with an abundance of material from classical Muslim commentators, *The Life of the Prophet*, collections of *Hadith* or statements attributed to the Prophet and handed down in an authoritative tradition, and passages by legal experts. In addition, there are many essays by scholars on Islam, highly respected authorities. All of this material has a single focus: Islamic discourse about, policy toward, and behaviour regarding the *dhimmi* (tolerated religious minorities) in general, and Jews and Judaism in particular.

As far as I can tell, none of the material is fabricated. It is all there in the Islamic tradition and in the scholarship about the Islamic tradition. But all of the material in the book is negative. The purpose of the book is not to document a comprehensive picture of Muslim discourse, policy and behaviour regarding the Jewish minorities in Islamic lands, but rather to select the negatives and present them in English at exhaustive length. Reading this book, it would be impossible to imagine how Jewish communities living under Islamic rule – at one point (in the 10th century) comprising 90% of the Jews in the world – were tolerated, survived, and even flourished under Islamic rule, its culture immeasurably enriched by the stimulus of texts made available to Jews in the Arabic language, in turn producing a rich Jewish literature written in the Arabic language.



I cannot fathom the purpose of this book other than to convey the message that there is no possibility for peaceful co-existence between Jews and Muslims today. In its massive scholarship mobilized for what I consider to be a pernicious purpose, it reminds one of Eisenmenger's 2100-page *Entdecktes Judenthum*, published in 1699, which ransacked classical Jewish texts to present evidence of unmitigated hostility toward all Gentiles, especially Christians.<sup>16</sup>

And as we all know, there is a substantial literature of Jewish writing presenting a similarly one-sided view of Christianity and Christian policy and behaviour toward the Jews. Joshua Trachtenberg's *The Devil and the Jew* is of this nature, chronicling and documenting the negative images of the Jew from Christian sources.<sup>17</sup> Or Dagobert D. Runes' *The War Against the Jew*, the very last book by this prolific writer, organized not thematically but by brief entries in alphabetical order.<sup>18</sup> Or Simon Wiesenthal's, *Every Day Remembrance Day: A Chronicle of Jewish Martyrdom*: starting from January 1 and ending with December 31, each day of the year lists events in which Jews were persecuted, or murdered, as Wiesenthal puts it, in a manner always "directed by Christians: first of all by the Roman Catholic Church, then by the Orthodox Church."<sup>19</sup> And by a prolific scholar, Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *The Crucified Jews: Twenty Centuries of Christian Anti-Semitism*.<sup>20</sup>

As a result of such books, many reasonably knowledgeable Jews come to dialogue with a litany of persecutions in their repertoire: Crusades, ritual murder, host desecration, Inquisition, expulsions, pogroms. Ironically, the libel "Your ancestors killed our Saviour" has been replaced in the other direction with "Your ancestors killed our ancestors." I have spent a good part of my academic career trying to combat these overly simplistic presentations of the past, in teaching American undergraduates, in speaking to synagogue audiences (and now Limmud), and in published essays and reviews, because of a commitment to a far more balanced and nuanced historical picture, but also because I believe that this attitude is likely to foster smug self-righteousness among Jews and guilt among Christians, with neither emotion conducive to healthy dialogue.

Let us stop judging pre-modern doctrines and behaviours by the standards of contemporary multi-culturalism, pluralism, and political correctness. Let us recognize that both of our traditions – and the Islamic tradition as well – are multivalent, containing material that can be used to justify a

narrow-minded, prejudiced view of the other, the outsider, as well as the basis for toleration, understanding, and mutual respect. Enough of these works by (metaphorical) prosecuting attorneys and hostile witnesses. Let us cease bearing false witness against our neighbours, or the ancestors of our neighbours.

There are pressing challenges that require cooperation today between Jews and Christians and Muslims who take a Scriptural-based faith with utmost seriousness yet are open to the inspiration of the best of modern culture and appreciate the freedom of secular democracy. The threat of environmental degradation despoiling the home that all of us share and are entrusted to hand over to future generations, and the economic turbulence that seems to be shaking the ground of our assumptions like an earthquake have a common cause: the prioritizing of short-term material self-indulgence over long-term commitments. Faced with these challenges, the wording of a Good Friday prayer or a statement about Israeli government policy seems almost trivial. The ICCJ has shown that it can continue to strengthen an alliance based on knowledge and respect, an alliance that will bring us beyond the bumps, forks and detours as we continue our difficult backward walk into the future.

- 1| *I was first stimulated to think about this issue by an address delivered in the 1980s, during the Reagan Administration, by Barney Frank, for many years a member of the US House of Representatives. At one point in his talk, Frank cited a phrase frequently used at the time to justify the policy of Reagan's economic policy: "A rising tide raises all boats", or in other words, when the general economy improves, everyone benefits. Frank said, "that may be true for the people in boats, but what about that rising tide if you are standing at the bottom of the water, just trying to keep your head above the surface?" The general point that Frank was making – which has remained with me ever since – was not merely a critique of specific economic policy, but a general point about allowing metaphors to substitute for analysis.*
- 2| *Christoph Henrich Pfaff, "Über das Verhältnis christlicher Regierungen und Staaten gegen die Juden in dem gegenwärtigen Zeitpunkte", quoted in Jacob Katz, From Prejudice to Destruction, p. 150.*
- 3| *Mein Kampf, a selection readily accessible in The Jew in the Modern World, ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 638.*
- 4| *Quoted by Robert Jay Lifton, The Nazi Doctors: Medical Killing and the Psychology of Genocide, p. 232.*
- 5| *Note also a chapter entitled "Antechamber to the Holocaust" reviewing policy of the Vatican in the 1920s and 1930s, the metaphor implying that being*

- in the antechamber, people should have been aware of what would happen in the main hall: David I. Kertzer, The Popes Against the Jews (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), pp. 264–91.*
- 6| *Note Philip Alexander's alternative suggestion of two circles, overlapping to various degrees in antiquity, eventually separated: The 'Parting of the Ways' from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism", in Jews and Christians: the Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1991), p. 2.*
  - 7| *Daniel Boyarin, Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 9. Boyarin also discusses the problem of family metaphors for religions: is Christian a "daughter religion" or a "sister religion" of Judaism? (pp. 1–2).*
  - 8| *Are languages indeed an appropriate analogy for religion. In his book The Dignity of Difference, British Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks suggested that different religions might indeed be conceived like different languages, each having certain strengths and beauties compatible with the peoples who learn them from early childhood, as well as certain weaknesses. That strikes me as a rather daring analogy for an Orthodox Jew, indeed for an Orthodox believer of any faith, and unfortunately Rabbi Sacks felt pressured or compelled by the ultra-orthodox Jewish religious court in the UK to remove formulations that suggested the possibility that Judaism does not have a monopoly on truth and that other religions may transmit truths as well.*  
*My own suggestion for a metaphor of inter-religious relations is an orchestra. Large groupings or families of instruments: strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion. Within the families, separate instruments, reflecting the diversity within religious traditions. Most instruments are played by several musicians. Each individual has a part to play, a contribution to make; sometimes all are in unison, sometimes one family or one group of instruments has the melody while others are silent, or provide harmony, or a counter-melody, or the same melody in counterpoint. The performance is not complete unless each instrumentalist plays her role while listening to the others and watching the divine conductor, who is dependent on the musicians to create harmony rather than dissonance. But again, this is only a metaphor, not a substitute for analysis.*
  - 9| *Marc Saperstein, "Christian Doctrine and the 'Final Solution': The State of the Question," in Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide, edited by John K. Roth, 3 volumes (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Publishers, 2001), pp. 814–41.*
  - 10| *French Bishops 1997 Declaration of Repentance", cited by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, A Moral Reckoning (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), p. 226. Cf. John Pawlikowski, "There is no question that Christian anti-Semitism provided an indispensable seedbed for Nazis"—"The Holocaust and Contemporary Christology", in Fiorenza and Tracy, editors, The Holocaust as Interruption, p. 44.*
  - 11| *Vernon C. Grounds, in Evangelicals and Jews in an Age of Pluralism, ed. Marc Tanenbaum (Grand Rapids, 1984), p. 207.*
  - 12| *Jewish Chronicle ,3 October 2008, p. 6.*
  - 13| *Although the word "va-rek", and "emptiness" was of course not originally intended as a code word for Jesus, it is not inconceivable that some medieval and early modern Jews thought of Jesus when they said the word in their prayer, and some contemporary Jews may as well.*
  - 14| *I also wondered (ironically) whether the Taliban were fulfilling the sentiments of this prayer when they literally destroyed the statues of the Buddha in Bamyán back in 2001.*

- 15] *I would contrast the universalism of the Aleynu (praying that all human beings will recognize the truth that now we alone recognize) with an example of a more positive universalism in our liturgy, emphasizing those aspects of the human condition shared by all human beings. It is taken from a central prayer for the Days of Awe Unetaneh tokef, which has been shown by scholars to be originally based on a Byzantine Christian liturgical poem, and has strong affinities with the Dies irae of the Latin Requiem mass: see Eric Werner, The Sacred Bridge: Interdependence of Liturgy and Music in Synagogue and Church During the First Millennium (1959), pp. 252–55. "This day all who enter the world pass before You like a flock of sheep ... You set a limit to the life of every creature and determine its destiny ... Man comes from the dust and ends in the dust. He spends his life earning his living, but he is fragile like a cup so easily broken, like grass that withers, like flowers that fade, like passing shadows and dissolving clouds, a fleeting breeze and dust that scatters, like a dream that fades away, But You are the king, the living God, the everlasting."*
- 16] *A useful and accessible review of Eisenmenger can be found in the first chapter of Jacob Katz, From Prejudice to Destruction (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 13–22; Katz concedes the author's "tremendous erudition" and notes that "he does not falsify his sources", but presents a selection of Jewish texts that does not reflect the reality of Jewish attitudes and behaviour toward contemporary Christians.*
- 17] *Joshua Trachtenberg, The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Antisemitism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943; republished Philadelphia: JPS and Cleveland: World Publishing Company). See my new Foreword to the 1983 JPS republication.*
- 18] *Dagobert D. Runes, The War Against the Jew (New York: Philosophical Library, 1968. We are informed in the Preface, "From pulpit to pulpit, every Sunday and holy day, in every Church of Christ, cold hate was released against the hapless Jewish families. And this teaching of hate has not ceased to this very day [in 2968. Soon the cold hate turned into fiery action, and from one end of Europe to the other the almighty Catholic Church put the Jews to the pyre and sword. No child, no woman, no invalid was spared" (p. xvi). The book is truly an embarrassment for anyone with historical knowledge and a minimal sense of accuracy and fairness.*
- 19] *Wiesenthal, p. 9. One instance would be August 25, for which the first date is '1255 – A Jew in Lincoln, England, is victim of a blood libel.' The second date is '1941 – During a night raid, several thousand Jews are taken from the ghetto of Minsk, Belorussian S.S.R, and murdered,' as well as other atrocities committed in the wake of the Germany invasion of the USSR, followed by other Holocaust-related events of 1942, 1943, and 1944 (p. 191).' No connection between the blood libel and the murder of Minsk Jews is explicitly claimed, but the very juxtaposition on the page implies the continuity.*
- 20] *Dan Cohn-Sherbok, The Crucified Jew: Twenty Centuries of Christian Anti-Semitism (London: HarperCollins, 1992 Grand Rapid, Mich., Eerdmans, 1997); see the review by Eugene Fisher in Missiology.*

# REDISCOVERING: "AN IMMENSE PATRIMONY"

A CATHOLIC REFLECTION ON THE TWELVE BERLIN POINTS

*Abstract of 2008 Statement held by  
Bishop Richard Sklba*

Sklba's reflections begin with three parallels between Jewish and Christian communities in the first century of the common era and our own communities today in order to help set the stage for understanding the kinds of dialogue that are needed now. First: in their passionate search for truth the dialogic debates in the first century (CE) were usually characterized by differentiation without exclusion; second: Dialogue between Jewish Christians and Jews carried moral weight and the obligation to put into practice what the dialogue had discovered; third: Dialogues in the first century were fully aware of our "unknowing" state in interreligious dialogue.

One of the most pressing issues in Christian-Jewish dialogue today is the cultivation of memory within the minds and hearts of Christians. A memory which is more than a psychological recalling or the mere story as told in history text books, it is a spiritual act to be developed by following generations, until it has become an intricate part of Christian culture.

A second pressing issue in the dialogue today is the need for both communities to continue working at a particular partnering skill essential to better communication. Pope John Paul II, while implementing the document *Nostra Aetate*, developed communication skills that reassured the religious other and averted misunderstandings. Essential was the Pope's ability to understand issues not simply from a Christian point of view but also from a Jewish one. Central to his insight in communicating with Jews was an appreciation for the many fears that are historically the foundation of Jewish concerns.

Pope Benedict XVI extended the issues of dialogue to a common commitment to search for truth as known by faith and reason. Thus the goal of interreligious dialogue is a full exchange of religious beliefs and long held tenets of faith and religious practice. In other words Pope John Paul II gave us the insight into how we communicate, Pope Benedict XVI on what we communicate.

Each community today is confronted by the current theological challenges of the interpretation of the "covenant", that is to say by the theological examination of the discontinuity of Jewish and Christian communities. Understanding the "covenant" is essential to the identity of Israel and the Church. A proper understanding of this notion unlocks a good many issues of mutual concern, including Israel's claim to the land; and the way in which Christian theories of salvation relate the Jewish community to God, and most sensitively the issue and practices of missiology and evangelization, an issue which is currently the subject of vehement debates. There are two truths facing each other. For Christians the redemption won by the death and resurrection of Christ has universal significance, whereas God's call to Israel is permanent and cannot be taken back. Precisely how these two truths are related to each other remains a subject for much further study, for the right formulae to give expression to the fullness of those truths have not been found yet. "We Christians would hold that the Messiah continues and deepens the covenant with Israel, which must still speak in its own voice."

Skiba finds laudable words for the twelve Berlin points, especially because of their appeal to the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities to work towards an economic and political balance within their respective societies. The appeal for social justice, Skiba points out, carries a moral imperative and is meant to change its partners by making each more just in relationship to the other.

Moreover Sklba praises the Berlin document for renouncing the traditional teachings of contempt of the Jews such as supersessionism and religious anti-Judaism, as well as the encouragement to Jewish communities to consider acknowledging the work and transformation undergone by their Christian partners. Thus he pleads for joint “learning teams” where differentiation without exclusion be practiced.

Bishop Sklba concludes his reflections by describing a meeting of Pope Benedict XVI and Rabbi Jacob Neusner. This encounter of two scholars, a Jew and a Christian, greeting each other warmly, full of high esteem for the other, learning from each other’s learning, and searching for God, mirrored the fulfillment of God’s promise in which He brings about the redemption of all who believe in him.





# “THE LONG AND BUMPY ROAD”

*Deborah Weissman*

Today, my title derives from the Beatles’ song, “The long and winding road.” The road of Jewish-Christian dialogue is not only long and winding, but full of bumps, within the churches, in Israel, etc.

In Jerusalem, I am privileged to be a member of a long-standing Jewish-Christian group called “The Rainbow.” Each year we conduct monthly dialogues around a certain theme. The first year I joined the group the theme for the year was: “Embarrassing Texts in My Tradition.” We must all learn to be critical of our own traditions, a loving and loyal criticism from within. As was suggested by my former teacher, Professor Moshe Greenberg, a Bible scholar at the Hebrew University: “Even the choicest vine needs seasonal pruning to ensure more fruitful growth.”<sup>1</sup>

I would suggest that the challenge of religious and cultural pluralism is one of the three major issues facing the world – the environment and socio-economic justice being the other two. This seems to be a major obstacle for Christians, who can’t seem to get over the idea that the only way to the Father is through the Son. I have a running debate on this issue with Rabbi Yehiel Poupko from Chicago. He told me that he has a debate with Professor David Sandmel. According to Poupko, Sandmel sees as a prerequisite for dialogue a

Christian renunciation of the idea that the only way to the Father is through the Son. Poupko says he doesn't really care if that's what the Christians believe; he is prepared to dialogue on any grounds. My own position on this question is what I would call the "middle position" – in other words, I would like to challenge our Christian dialogue partners to confront the issue, being prepared, in the end, to continue the dialogue no matter the outcome of their confrontation.

### **CAN THERE BE PLURAL "TRUTHS?"**

It could be argued that religions which make claims to represent ultimate truths (a more apt phrase, I believe, than "absolute truths") leave no room for other faiths and *their* truths. However, this might be an overly glib or superficial presentation of the nature of religions in reality. Another approach may be grounded in classical Jewish sources:

A *Midrash*<sup>2</sup> relates that when God prepared to create Adam, the "angel" of truth argued against this move, saying that human life would be full of lies. God responded by throwing "truth" down to the ground. Some commentators have extended the metaphor by suggesting that on earth, truth has been shattered into millions of little pieces. Different people possess pieces of the truth.

Dr. Shlomo Fischer, who has been associated with the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem, and Professor Suzanne Last Stone, of Yeshiva University in New York, have suggested that there are several "characteristics of Judaism that support pluralism and acceptance of diversity."<sup>3</sup>

One is "the internal structure of Judaism – its limitation to one nation – which has led to a positive valuation of the role of other collectivities in the divine plan."<sup>4</sup>

I would simply amend that to read not necessarily that it *has* led to a positive valuation, but that it *could*. The need for balance between the particular and the universal is seen already in Gen. 12:1–3. Abram – later to become Abraham – is chosen so that he will bring blessing to all the families of the earth. Another Biblical source in this context is Micah 4:1–5. There, the various nations stream to Jerusalem, each walking in the name of its god. In verse 5, it says, "And we will walk in the name of our God." Some translations render the "and" as a "but;" that, in my view, is an unnecessary opposition.

Another classical and beautifully succinct statement of the need for balance is Hillel's famous dictum in his famous statement in *Mishnah Avot* 1:14, "If I am not for myself, then, who will be for me? But, if I am for myself alone, then what am I? And if not now, when?" One could pluralize this in a national context to read, "If we are not for ourselves, then who will be for us? But, if we are for ourselves alone, what are we?"

But many Jews, unfortunately, *have* gone to one extreme or the other. A dramatic example of this problem can be found in the work of an important 20th century Jewish philosopher, Leon Roth. Roth, in an article entitled "Moralization and Demoralization in Jewish Ethics,"<sup>5</sup> makes reference to the famous *Mishnah* in *Sanhedrin* 4:5, "... if any man saves a single soul from Israel, Scripture imputes it to him as though he had saved a whole world." Roth points out that in earlier manuscripts, the words "from Israel" are omitted. Indeed, in terms of the context – namely, the Creation of Adam – they do seem to distort the simple meaning of the text. Roth refers to the process by which a more universal text became "particularized" as the "demoralization" of the text. He writes: "The addition of the word *me-Yisrael* (from Israel) produces a sudden, and ludicrous, deflation."

Sara Schenirer (early 20th century, founder of Beis Ya'akov, the pioneering movement for girls' Torah education), in her work, *Em B'Yisroel* 2:75-78, (translation from *The Jewish Political Tradition*, Vol.1), says the following: "When we state that it is a mitzvah to love people, this means that it makes no difference who the person is, whether Jew or alien ... Thus Abraham our father, through love and devotion, extended his hospitality to guests, dressing them and feeding them. He endangered his life for the sake of the King of Sodom and begged G-d's<sup>6</sup> mercy for Sodom and Gomorrah. Moses our master, too, was quick to come to the aid of alien shepherds and defended them from attackers."

Another commentary, this time from northern Italy in the 19th century: *And love your neighbor as yourself* – Not that one should love every person as he actually loves himself, for that is impossible, and Rabbi Akiva already taught that "Your life takes precedent over your friend's life." Rather *as yourself* in the sense of [*your neighbor*] *who is like you* – as in [the verse] *for you are like unto Pharaoh*. So here too as well *Love your neighbor who is as yourself*; he is equal to you and similar to

you in that he was also created in the *image of God*, he is a *human being just as you are*, and that includes *all human beings*, for they were all created in the divine image. The Torah concluded [in the passage] everything with this commandment, just as it began with *each man shall fear his mother and father*, because one who honors the human image and considers it excellent treats himself and all other people well (R. Yitzhak Shemuel Reggio on Leviticus 18:19).<sup>8</sup>

Going back to Fischer and Last Stone, another characteristic of traditional Judaism that supports pluralism and diversity is, in their words, “the tradition of intellectual pluralism within the normative *halakhic* community fostered by its skeptical approach to truth-claims.”<sup>9</sup> The Jewish tradition of Oral Torah can be important here in a certain way: It helps to create a culture of discourse and debate, with room for alternate truths. The Oral Torah is based on endless discussions that compel the participants to look at the objects of their inquiry from many possible perspectives. Questions are raised about most assumptions. Students are rewarded for asking difficult questions. In the event that a student asks an especially interesting question that was heretofore asked, for example, in a relatively obscure Rabbinic or medieval source, he<sup>10</sup> will offer a blessing to God.

It is well-known that the “houses” – in modern parlance, schools – of Hillel and Shammai were constantly arguing over points of Jewish law. The Talmud in *Eruvin* 13b records that finally, a Divine Voice came down from heaven and declared: “These, and also these, are the words of the Living God, and the Law is according to the house of Hillel.”

That passage is interesting in three ways: first, it seems to support the notion of plural truths. Another Rabbinic passage makes this point perhaps even more sharply: “These are the sages who sit in assemblies and study the Torah, some pronouncing unclean and others pronouncing clean, some prohibiting and others permitting, some declaring unfit and others declaring fit. But a person might say: How, then, shall I learn Torah? Therefore the text says, all of them ‘are given from one shepherd.’ One God gave them, one leader proclaimed them from the mouth of the Lord of all creation, Blessed be He.”<sup>11</sup> So, perhaps we can summarize this and say that there is one divine source – the source of Truth with a capital T – but there are many truths on the human level.

Secondly, even when plural truths are recognized on a theoretical plane, a decision must be taken regarding lawful behavior in the real world. Otherwise, there would be no sense of community and society would degenerate into chaos.

Third, the passage seems to fly in the face of another equally well-known passage from another tractate, *Baba Metzia* 59b: Again R. Eliezer then said to the Sages, "If the *Halakhah* agrees with me, let it be proved from heaven." Sure enough, a divine voice cried out, "Why do you dispute with R. Eliezer, with whom the *Halakhah* always agrees?" R. Joshua stood up and protested: "The Torah is not in heaven!" (Deut. 30:12). We pay no attention to a divine voice because long ago at Mount Sinai You wrote in your Torah at Mount Sinai, 'After the majority must one incline'. (Ex. 23:2)" R. Nathan met [the prophet] Elijah and asked him, "What did the Holy One do at that moment?" Elijah: "He laughed [with joy], saying, 'My children have defeated Me, My children have defeated Me.'"

So, do we listen to Divine Voices or do we not? Perhaps we can say that in general, we do not. Rational discussions are held on the basis of texts and the majority rules. But at one point in Talmudic "sacred history," it became necessary for a Divine Voice to lend its sanction to the idea of plural truths.

Now, someone might claim that the plural truths being referred to in all of these Talmudic passages are representative of a fairly narrow form of pluralism; they all come from "dead male" rabbis within the normative Jewish tradition. Could this still be a basis for a Jewish appreciation of the Other, who is truly other?

Medieval rabbis have made it reasonably clear that Islam is a "true", non-idolatrous and monotheistic faith. Christianity is more controversial, because of the belief in the Trinity, the use of icons, etc. But many authorities would see it, too, as a religion of truth. For example, the 12th century Tosafists, in their commentary on *Avodah Zarah* 2a, state, "... we are certain that the Christians do not worship idols." Even more unequivocal was Menachem ben Solomon HaMeiri of Provence (1249–1316.) He averred that both Christians and Muslims were "peoples disciplined by religion" and that the theological problem of *shittuf* (believing in one God, together with other divine manifestations) was not applicable to non-Jews, thus allowing for Trinitarian Christianity.<sup>12</sup> More controversial

than that would be the status of the Eastern religions, although some authorities have concluded that these, too, can be seen as true faiths. In any case, it might perhaps be argued that once you have a philosophical basis for the notion of plural truths, the parameters of those truths is a secondary question.

A 20th century Jewish philosopher and mystic Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook wrote, "Some err and think that world peace can be built only through total consensus ... But the truth is that real peace, on the contrary, can come to the world only through precisely the multiplicity of peace, and this is when all sides and opinions come to light, and are proven to each have their own place."<sup>13</sup>

We should bear in mind that Rabbi Kook died in 1935, before the Holocaust. Had he lived longer, he might have amended his position to exclude certain sides and opinions; I don't know. I believe that there are limits to pluralism, and I'm certainly not arguing for a nihilistic relativism. But I *am* arguing, using social scientific terminology, that what we need in society is not "the replication of uniformity", but "the organization of diversity."<sup>14</sup>

Now there are many obstacles to inter-religious dialogue that go beyond the issues of pluralism and universalism. Unfortunately, the Jewish attachment to the Land and State of Israel has begun to function in this regard, as obstacles, rather than opportunities. Judaism involves a relationship with the Land of Israel; Zionism, with the State of Israel. As a Zionist, I believe that today one can not have a deep relationship with the Jewish people without involvement with the State of Israel. However, that does not mean identifying with a particular policy or position. As the government of Israel is a democratically elected government, it can be supported or opposed by democratic means – without calling into question one's loyalty to the State.

But I maintain that this applies to non-citizens of Israel, too. Sometimes commitment and love are best expressed through criticism. We have a wonderful Biblical role model in Abraham. The prophet Isaiah<sup>15</sup> has God referring to Abraham as "my lover" or "my friend." Yet it was Abraham in Genesis 18:25 who, pointing an accusing finger at the Lord, asked, "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do justly?" Thus we see that criticism need not be a sign of alienation.

The question of the appropriate channels for expression of criticism may be debatable. But Jews and non-Jews ought to be able to freely criticize the government of Israel and its policies, without being accused of anti-Semitism or anti-Zionism. On the other hand, when the criticism holds Israel up to standards never demanded of any other nation, or when anti-Semitic stereotypes and canards are used (e.g., as in the headline, “the Israelis are crucifying the Palestinians in Lebanon,”), Jewish ears become sensitive to the criticism in the wrong way.

Several years ago, a popular bumper sticker in the US tried to express this point of view, “Wherever I stand, I stand with Israel.” Jews could expect their Christian friends to support Israel’s right to exist without necessarily defending all of its actions and policies. The range of opinions within Israel is often much greater than within Jewish communities in the Diaspora. The more people abroad are knowledgeable about what is actually going on in Israel and the more they are connected with various groups in Israel, the more complex and sophisticated will be their awareness of the issues.

As is customary within the particular context of our cultural tradition, I would like to approach a conclusion by offering a *d’var Torah*: Twice in the Torah – once in Leviticus 11 and once in Deuteronomy 14 – we find a list of nonkosher birds. Among those listed is the *chassida*, the stork. It would appear that the name of this bird is derived from the word *chessed*, “lovingkindness.” Our great medieval biblical commentator Rashi, following the *Midrash*, asks, “Why is the bird called *chassida*? Because it performs acts of *chessed* by sharing its food with other storks.” It took hundreds of years for the next logical question to be addressed; namely, then why isn’t it Kosher? This question was asked in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Gerer Rebbe known as *Chiddushei HaRim*. The answer he gave: “Because it performs acts of *chessed* by sharing its food with other storks. Only with other storks.”

In this short parable we have the strength and the weakness of communities; we have the dilemma of particularism and universalism. Strong particularistic communities do *chessed* towards members of their own group, but how do they relate to outsiders, who may be members of other communities? This is the educational challenge we have today: to develop proud young Jews, grounded in their own culture, who will not be like the storks, but like human beings who can shown compassion and concern for members of other communities as well.

- 1| *As quoted in Fox, Scheffler, Marom, Visions of Jewish Education, University Press: Cambridge, 2003, p. 145.*
- 2| *B'reishit Rabba 8:5.*
- 3| *Guidelines for Teachers: Tolerance and Principles of Religion: published by IFB, (International forum Bosnia) 2004, p. 85.*
- 4| *Ibid.*
- 5| *Modern Jewish Thought: Selected Issues, 1889-1966, New York: Arno Press, 1973.*
- 6| *Writing the name of the Deity this way is an Orthodox convention, intended to prevent a transgression of the commandment not to take the Lord's name in vain.*
- 7| *I am indebted to the modern Orthodox organization Edah for this passage. See: [www.edah.org](http://www.edah.org).*
- 8| *As this appeared in Shabbat Shalom, no. 445, May 2006.*
- 9| *Guidelines, op.cit.*
- 10| *Here I am using the male pronoun purposely to indicate that regrettably, for most of history, women were not involved in this kind of Jewish discourse. The situation, fortunately, began to change in the last quarter of the 20th century.*
- 11| *Hagigah 3a-b, as quoted by Barry Holtz, Finding our Way: Jewish Texts and the Lives we Live Today, Schocken Books: New York, 1990, p. 23.*
- 12| *See Beit HaBechirah, his commentary on the Talmud; particularly, Baba Kamma 113b and Avodah Zarah 20a.*
- 13| *Olat HaRa'ayah, p. 330.*
- 14| *The terms are taken from Anthony F. C. Wallace, Culture and Personality, Random House: New York, 1961, pp. 26-7, 84-92.*
- 15| *41:8.*
- 16| *As in [stopcrucifyingpalestine.blogspot.com](http://stopcrucifyingpalestine.blogspot.com), accessed September 9, 2008.*



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