

Tablet



Notebook

VATICAN II AT 50

Assessing the impact of 'Nostra Aetate' on Jewish-Christian relations

By **David Berger**
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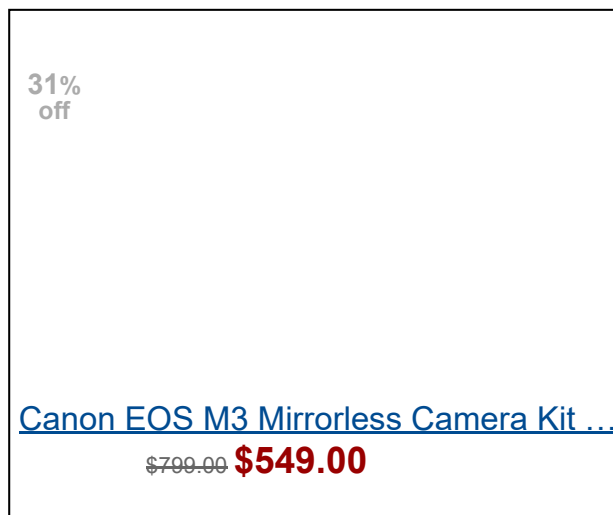
I

On Oct. 28, 1965, Pope Paul VI officially issued a brief “Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions” titled “**Nostra Aetate**,” whose fourth section deals with Judaism. Terms like “historic,” “turning point,” and the like are often overused, but this is one of the rare instances where they are appropriate. The current commemorations celebrating the 50th anniversary of the document mark a genuinely significant moment.

“Nostra Aetate” was adopted by a large majority at the Second Vatican Council after a lengthy, complex, and contentious process that cannot detain us here. What is of great relevance is the historical setting in which it was produced, the specifically Jewish dimension of which was the Holocaust. The moral introspection generated by that catastrophe was further stimulated by the campaign of some Jewish intellectuals, notably Jules Isaac, who urged the Church to undo the “teaching of contempt” that had characterized its approach to Jews through the ages. However, exclusive attention to this dimension obscures the larger forces transforming the moral and intellectual landscape of the 1960s. The egalitarian impulse that produced the civil rights movement in the United States and de-colonization worldwide did not sit well with traditions of

religious exclusivism and triumphalism, let alone the condemnation of the other to

religious exclusivism and triumphalism, let alone the condemnation of the other to discrimination and damnation.



What, then, does “Nostra Aetate” #4 say? The most focused, concrete, and revolutionary assertion was that only those 1st-century Jews directly involved bore responsibility for the Crucifixion. Contemporary Jews are entirely without guilt. Beyond this, the document, invoking a classic but historically underemphasized passage in Romans chapters 9-11, asserts that Jews and Judaism are the root of Christianity and that the gifts of God, in this case the divine election of Israel, are not revoked. At the same time, it affirms that the Church awaits the day when “all people will address the Lord in a single voice and ‘serve him shoulder to shoulder.’” It “decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone” and calls for “fraternal dialogues.”

This month, in connection with the jubilee of “Nostra Aetate,” 25 Orthodox rabbis issued a statement on Christianity.

Jewish reactions were for the most part highly favorable, though various objections were raised that strike me as expressions of hypersensitivity. Thus, the document should have “condemned” anti-Semitism rather than merely “decrying” it; the final version should have retained the term “deicide” in characterizing the offense for which the Jews bear no guilt. Orthodox concerns, as we shall see, were more substantive; at the same time, a substantial number of Orthodox Jews tended to evince a generally dismissive reaction that was also present to a lesser degree in the

larger community. The declaration was seen as too little, too late, and the notion that Jews were

being exonerated for crucifying Jesus was seen as at least marginally insulting. Thus, some Jews whose long-standing bill of particulars against the Church featured the guilt that it assigned to the Jewish people for the Crucifixion nonetheless dismissed the historic revocation of this theology as an event that should have no consequences for their own resentful stance.

To implement the new relationship, the Church established a Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, which issued its first official document (“Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate* (No.4)”) in 1974. In 1985, it issued “Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church.” And in 1998, it issued a document on the Holocaust titled “We Remember.” Despite occasional formulations that some Jews, rightly or wrongly, found inadequate or objectionable, these documents fleshed out “*Nostra Aetate*” in a direction that reflected advances achieved by ongoing dialogues and even dealt with some of the specific concerns that Jews had expressed regarding the original declaration.

II

Before proceeding to matters of greater substance and complexity, we need to ask how much of an impact these changes have exerted on ordinary Catholics and the Christian populace as a whole. With respect to what I characterized as the most focused and concrete issue addressed by “*Nostra Aetate*,” we have a fairly extensive survey carried out by the Anti-Defamation League in 2012. Its objective was to measure attitudes toward Jews in 10 European countries (not including the former Soviet Union), and it asked respondents whether they thought a series of affirmations were probably true. The fifth and final of these was: “The Jews are responsible for the death of Jesus.” (Note the present tense verb.) The average of those responding “probably true” was 22 percent, ranging from 14 percent in France and Germany to 46 percent in Poland. The percentage in Spain was only 21 percent. Since we can be certain that these numbers would have been far higher two generations ago, it almost certainly follows that even allowing for the impact of European secularization, at least a significant part of the decline can be attributed to the effect of “*Nostra Aetate*” and the teachings that it inspired. Nonetheless, the Polish result speaks volumes for the educational work that remains to be done.

I am unaware of any relevant survey results in the United States. One proclamation by a Catholic lay leader during the controversy over Mel Gibson’s film on the Passion points in a strikingly positive direction, though another, more official Catholic response reveals the limitations of formal Church guidelines. In an article about the film in *Commentary*, I noted that William Donohue, a traditional Catholic who heads the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, described *The Passion of the Christ* in an open letter to the Jewish community as “magnificent beyond words” and, in an effort to allay Jewish concerns, added that “anyone who subscribes to the notion of collective guilt or who believes that today’s Jews are responsible for the behavior of some Jews 2,000 years ago, is demented.” Whatever reservations one may have about Donohue’s characterization of the film, and whatever his motives for dismissing its

potential for engendering anti-Semitism, his effective if unintended assertion that his own immediate ancestors as well as untold generations of Christians were demented is evidence that

a deep and welcome change has been effected in the psyche of mainstream American Catholics.

If Donohue were challenged on this point, he might very well assert, as many traditional Catholics do, that the exoneration of the Jews in “Nostra Aetate” is nothing new, that Church doctrine properly understood had always ascribed guilt for the Crucifixion to sinful humanity as a whole. There is no reason for Jews to challenge this in the context of friendly dialogue, although the element of truth that it contains cannot obscure the fact that the primary blame—with all its terrible consequences—was nonetheless widely assigned to the Jews.

The Office of Film and Broadcasting of the United States Council of Catholic Bishops, without even a passing reference to an earlier document issued by the USCCB titled “Criteria for the Evaluation of Dramatizations of the Passion,” issued a largely positive review of Gibson’s film even though it violates virtually every element in that document. Those criteria represented a concerted effort to apply a key affirmation of “Nostra Aetate”; the review demonstrates how ineffective well-meaning guidelines can be when they are thrown into the maelstrom of intense communal passion and controversy.

III

In “Nostra Aetate” itself, and much more so in subsequent Church documents and papal utterances, the abiding value of Judaism has been affirmed and even emphasized. In theological language, the covenant between God and the original Israel remains in effect. What precisely that covenant is—the Abrahamic and/or the Mosaic—is not quite settled, and some Jews have virtually demanded that Christians declare that the Mosaic covenant remains in full force. I have argued that this demand is unwise. It raises intractable questions about the parameters of the Jewish need to observe that covenant and constitutes a telling example of the inappropriate dictation to others of what their own religion must teach.

This is far from the only instance in which Jews must evaluate the proper parameters of such intervention. Jews active in interfaith affairs have not infrequently denounced the Christian belief that the entire world will recognize Jesus as the divine messiah at the end of days. This, in my view, is none of our business, especially in light of the corresponding Jewish belief strikingly expressed in the High Holiday liturgy and the *Aleinu* prayer. Many Jews welcome the views of Christian scholars and theologians who maintain that certain anti-Jewish narratives in the Gospels are unhistorical, but we have no right to urge more fundamentalist Christians to reject the accuracy of their scriptures.

Sometimes, however, even a non-interventionist can be given pause. Passion plays clearly endorsing the cries of the mob that “his blood be on us and on our children” are not simply reporting the account in Matthew; they are rendering a theological judgment about the validity of that declaration that is not required even by a fundamentalist reading. Given the dangers that inhere in such scenes, we have the right and duty to object.

The most interesting phenomenon that challenges the convictions of a non-interventionist is Christian missionizing, which brings us back to the covenant. Catholic theologians friendly to

the Jews have struggled with the implications of the unbroken Abrahamic/Mosaic covenant. This unbroken covenant sits uneasily with the doctrine of the contemporary Church that although those who consciously reject belief in Jesus can under certain circumstances be saved, the vehicle of salvation—even for Jews—is Jesus acting through the Church. In some sense, we are told, there is an implicit belief at work. Moreover, despite the enduring Jewish covenant, Christians are obligated to “witness” to the Jews even though they should not directly proselytize.

It should not be our concern to help resolve these conundrums in Catholic theology, and I am all the more grateful that leading theologians firmly oppose mission to the Jews even though their rationale for this position leaves them with unresolved “mysteries.” However, in relating to Christian groups who do proselytize, it is, I think, legitimate for Jews to make every effort to persuade them to desist despite the fact that this constitutes interference in their internal theology. In this case, the imperative of self-defense is so direct that it overrides countervailing principles.

It is all the more evident that missionizing intent cannot be tolerated in the context of interfaith dialogue. As recently as 2009, the U.S. National Council of Catholic Bishops issued a statement containing an affirmation that shocked their Jewish dialogue partners: “Though Christian participation in inter-religious dialogue would not normally include an explicit invitation to baptism and entrance into the Church, the Christian dialogue partner is always giving witness to the following of Christ to which all are implicitly invited.” From its inception in 1998, I have participated in a dialogue between the NCCB and a joint delegation of the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (O.U.). In response to this statement, I wrote to the NCCB delegation on behalf of our group. The **letter** affirmed *inter alia* that “this assertion that the Christian partner enters the dialogue with Jews with the intention of extending an implicit invitation to join the Church strikes at the very heart of the dialogical enterprise and undermines the most basic understanding that makes that enterprise possible.” (In a private letter to a Jew, I proposed a riddle: “Provide a case where an explicit proclamation that X is X renders it something other than X. Answer: When an implicit invitation is explicitly identified as an implicit invitation, it becomes an explicit invitation.”) I also participated in formulating a **letter** from several secular and religious Jewish organizations protesting the statement.

This episode illustrates both the limits of non-interventionism and the residual conversionary impulse even in friendly Catholic dialogue partners. But it also illustrates something else. To our pleasant surprise—even astonishment—the NCCB promptly removed the offending sentences from a document that they had just issued. About a year later, a Catholic interfaith activist exceedingly supportive of Jews gave a presentation at a scholarly conference that I attended where she mentioned a similar sentence about the purpose of Jewish-Christian dialogue that appeared in the official high-school catechism. I privately complained to two members of the NCCB delegation, and once again the sentence was removed. All this would have been unimaginable in the pre-“*Nostra Aetate*” era.

Concern with instructing Christians regarding internal beliefs and actions generally applies to matters of faith, but it ought to play a lesser yet substantial role in other contexts as well. Moves to canonize Pope Pius XII offend many Jews because of his virtual silence as the Holocaust was unfolding, and the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC), along with other Jewish organizations, has made a vigorous argument that the process should not proceed until the Vatican archives from the relevant period are fully available for public perusal. The pace of the process indeed appears to have been moderated, but, as an RCA delegate to IJCIC, I urged—unsuccessfully—that this issue not be pressed. It is highly improbable that a smoking gun will emerge from the archives, any evidence will be subject to different interpretations, and the benefit to the Jewish community from impeding the canonization is very difficult to discern. I felt even more strongly about vocal Jewish opposition to the canonization of Edith Stein, a Jewish convert who became a nun and was murdered by the Nazi killing machine. Here the Jewish objection was that she died because of her Jewishness, not as a Christian martyr, hardly, in my view, an appropriate *casus belli* with the Catholic Church. On the other hand, should the Church make any serious moves toward implementing a suggestion that Queen Isabella, who presided over the expulsion of the Jews of Spain, join the ranks of the saints, vehement objections would, I believe, be very much in order.

IV

I indicated earlier that Orthodox Jews had substantive reservations about elements of “Nostra Aetate.” Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, the dominant authority in the Modern Orthodox community, delivered a lecture titled “**Confrontation**” as the council was deliberating. He set forth the position that interfaith dialogue is appropriate when addressing social and moral issues, but theological interchange must be avoided. He understood very well that the boundary between these categories can be permeable but nonetheless insisted on the overall necessity of maintaining it. The RCA and O.U. have generally adhered to this guideline, and because of their participation in umbrella organizations like IJCIC and the late Synagogue Council of America, their position has served as an imperfect restraint on theological dialogue in those settings.

One of Rabbi Soloveitchik’s concerns was that theological discussion could lead to expectations of reciprocity. Whether explicitly or implicitly, Christians would say, “We have made fundamental changes in our evaluation of Judaism and the Jewish people. It is time for you to do the same with respect to Christianity.” For Rabbi Soloveitchik, religious evaluations of other religions should not be subject to such pressures; we must not “trade favors pertaining to fundamental matters of faith.”

Precisely because of the remarkable shift in Christian attitudes, the sense that Jews are obligated to re-assess Christianity has indeed emerged. Let me say immediately that those religious figures who have affirmed such an obligation have made every effort to do so with full fealty to what they see as Jewish law and theology. Nonetheless, the strain is evident, and some of the results are problematic. In September 2000, a document titled *Dabru Emet* was formulated by four eminent Jewish theologians and ultimately signed by well over 200 rabbis and scholars. It was organized into eight rubrics most of which are in my view unexceptionable, but I regard the strong implication that neither community should insist “that it has interpreted

but I regard the strong implication that neither community should insist that it has interpreted Scripture more accurately than the other” as uncomfortably relativistic and the assertion that Jews and Christians worship the same God as an incomplete truth.

This month, in connection with the jubilee of “Nostra Aetate,” 25 Orthodox rabbis issued a **statement** on Christianity (*To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven: Toward a Partnership Between Jews and Christians*). Here again, much of it is unexceptionable, even admirable. I welcome its affirmations, often citing significant authorities that, like Jews, Christians worship the God of Heaven and Earth, that we share crucial moral values, and that Christians (in the words of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch) “have a claim to the benefit of all the duties not only of justice but also of active human brotherly love.”

Nonetheless, elements of this declaration are decidedly problematic. Appealing to Maimonides and Yehudah Halevi, it asserts that Christianity “is neither an accident nor an error, but the willed divine outcome and gift to the nations.” It goes on to say that “Jews and Christians have a common covenantal mission to perfect the world under the sovereignty of the Almighty, so that all humanity will call on His name,” though it also asserts that the authors do not minimize the differences between the religions.

The authors know very well that Halevi and even more vigorously Maimonides saw the divine plan in the establishment of Christianity (and Islam) as preparation for universal recognition of the truth of Judaism and the rejection of those religions. There is something disingenuous about citing only half the position. Moreover, whatever we think of Maimonides’ affirmation, Modern Orthodox Jews usually shrink from making confident assertions about God’s plans and intentions (except for the monumental and in their view obvious instance of the re-establishment of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel). All of a sudden, they express confident knowledge of the mind of God.

Moreover, the affirmation that Jews and Christians have a “common *covenantal* [my emphasis] mission” raises questions for a careful reader. I can account for it only as an endorsement of an innovative theological doctrine proposed by Rabbi Irving Greenberg, who was one of the three signatories on this document when it was circulated to obtain additional signatures. To Greenberg, as an extension of the covenants with Noah, Abraham, and even Israel, God established a covenant with Christians qua Christians, who in Greenberg’s most ambitious formulation have become a part of Israel. I am strongly inclined to think that most of the rabbis who signed the declaration saw the phrase in question as a mere rhetorical flourish; I myself would probably have missed its significance had I not **reviewed** Greenberg’s book. Nonetheless, they have, however unintentionally, affirmed the existence of a specific divine covenant with Christians of which Jewish tradition knows nothing and that every authority through the ages to whom Orthodox Jews turn would have rejected out of hand.

Finally, the assertion that “differences between ... the religions” remain is a rather anemic way of recognizing that Jewish law requires martyrdom rather than conversion to Christianity. Given the critical importance of those differences to the core of the Jewish religion, this paean of praise to Christianity, much of which is deserved, needs to be leavened by a clearer

affirmation of the transcendent significance of the theological chasm that remains. The declaration, despite its many merits, demonstrates the prescience exhibited in Rabbi Soloveitchik's concerns.

V

The value of Jewish-Christian interaction in the social and moral sphere is clear and uncontroversial, at least among those who are open to any sort of dialogue. Here, differences about issues like abortion, gay marriage, and church-state issues cut across religious lines, dividing Jews from Jews and Christians from Christians at least as much as they divide adherents of the respective religions from one another. At the same time, there are many manifest areas of commonality and cooperation that do not need to be specified.

Finally, we turn to the critical and contentious issue of Israel. “Nostra Aetate” decisively did away with the key theological impediment to Catholic recognition of the State. No longer could a loyal Catholic assert that Jewish dispossession from the land resulted from the sin of the crucifixion and that unrepentant Jewry must remain in its exile. Nonetheless, the Vatican did not establish diplomatic relations with Israel until 1993. The reasons provided for the delay, which were embarrassingly unpersuasive, need not detain us here. The key point is that normal relations have been established, and they were made theologically possible by “Nostra Aetate”

On the spectrum of Christian attitudes toward Israel, the Vatican stands between the almost fiercely Zionist evangelicals and the hostile Protestant groups that dominate the World Council of Churches. With all the tensions—and they are legion—it is fair to say that the Vatican, at least by the global standards that currently prevail, can be counted among the friends of the Jewish State and serves as a resource to which advocates for Israel can appeal with reasonable hope of support.

I have tried to convey some measure of the intriguing complexities that characterize the contemporary Jewish-Christian and Jewish-Catholic relationship. Nonetheless, the challenging realities that we face should not obscure the overarching and indisputable fact that a brief document issued a half-century ago has revolutionized that relationship to the point where an observer transported from 1964 would be astonished, even disoriented. After recovering, the Jewish observer—though he or she should not actually succumb to the temptation—might well feel the spontaneous urge to recite the blessing at having lived to see this day.

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David Berger is the Ruth and I. Lewis Gordon Professor of Jewish History and Dean of the Bernard Revel Graduate School of Jewish Studies at Yeshiva University.

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| (Sony Classics)

An immersion in Auschwitz during the mass murder frenzy of October 1944, when the gassing of Hungarian Jews had been nearly completed, *Son of Saul*—a first feature by the French-Hungarian director László Nemes—is not a movie to recommend lightly.

It is also, as a fictional film that depicts, in what might almost be a single endless take, a prisoner's single-minded quest to give a boy who could be his son a Jewish burial, a movie that strains credulity. But then so does Auschwitz. "The world into which one precipitated was terrible," Primo Levi wrote, "but also indecipherable: It did not conform to any model." It was, in the deepest, most dreadful sense of the word, absurd.

Son of Saul can be taken as a fable (a feeble word for so visceral an experience) that ponders the nature of redemption under the most extreme circumstances. Nevertheless, it is far from Oscar-winning crowd-pleasers like *Schindler's List* or *Life Is Beautiful*. In a way, it is their antithesis. *Son of Saul* may also win an Oscar (it has already been nominated for a Golden Globe), but, taking as its subject the moral nightmare of Jewish collaboration, the salvation it offers is more like the idea of redemption where none is possible.

The protagonist, Saul Ausländer (played with expressionless determination by the poet Géza Röhrig, a Hungarian native of the Bronx), is a member of the Auschwitz "special command unit" or Sonderkommando—one of the hundreds of mainly young, mostly Jewish men whose lives were spared for several months so that they could perform the filthiest of the Nazi dirty work. It was their task to clean out the gas chamber, relieve the dead of their gold fillings, shovel the bodies into the crematoria, and dispose of their ashes.

Why did these doomed men not kill themselves first? As Albert Camus began *The Myth of Sisyphus*, his book-length essay on the absurd: "There is but one truly serious philosophical

problem, and that is suicide.” Some did, but the will to live is not necessarily a choice. Levi, who considered the creation of the Sonderkommando to be the Nazis’ “most demonic crime,” ponders their isolation (“deprived of even the solace of innocence”) and also their opacity. Notwithstanding the testimony that has been found or given, he wrote, “We have found it difficult, almost impossible, to form an image for ourselves of how these men lived day by day, saw themselves, accepted their condition.”

Most appallingly, these slaves who stoked the annihilation machine were used to herd dazed and terrified fellow Jews from the transport trains into the showers. *Son of Saul* more or less begins with this process, perhaps the second most awful thing imaginable, but ends, with the sound of pounding on the gas chamber door, without dramatizing the worst.

Son of Saul’s brief explanatory title refers to the men of the Sonderkommando as the “bearers of secrets.” Levi uses a similar term in his final book *The Drowned and the Saved*. Claude Lanzmann interviewed one of the very few surviving Sonderkommando, Filip Müller, in *Shoah*. When I interviewed Lanzmann in 1985, he told me that he considered Müller as a “saint.” Saul Ausländer is not that, but he might be described as a holy fool, and, like some saints, he is possessed by a sense of mission.

Nemes and his co-writer Clara Royer credit *Voices From Beneath the Ashes* (an anthology of Sonderkommando testimony, not translated into English) as their source, but its inspiration might well have been the second chapter of *The Drowned and the Saved*. Here, Levi not only discusses the Sonderkommando, among other Jewish collaborators, but recounts the “exceptional, unique” story of the teenaged girl who somehow survived the gas chamber and describes the doomed Sonderkommando revolt of Oct. 7, 1944—the two legendary historical events that structure *Son of Saul*.

After a young boy (briefly) lives on, Saul manages to delay the child’s autopsy, then seeks to find a rabbi who can officiate over the child’s burial. (He also tries to find out, in vain, if the transport was from Hungary—the first indication that the miracle child is not his actual son.) Saul’s crazed search maps the perimeters of the Sonderkommando world—separate from the rest of the camp, the genocide’s “backstage” in the British film critic Jonathan Romney’s apt formulation. The self-anointed father’s stubborn irrational passion also serves to identify the Sonderkommando hierarchy, something the viewer has to puzzle out on the fly and something, like a secret, that can never truly be known.

Tumult is constant, and so is babel. Hungarian, German, and Yiddish are mixed with concentration-camp slang. Throughout, Saul demonstrates super- (or is it sub?) human powers of concentration. Totally focused on survival, he seems hyper-alert yet robotic. Is his an animal intelligence, or is it one in which a human spirit has been rekindled? Even in the fiery pit of hell, Saul searches for a rabbi, grabbing a likely looking man, just off a transport, utterly bewildered and headed for the showers: “You’ll help me bury my son!”

Fascinating from beginning to end, *Son of Saul* is a movie that, among other things, tries to evoke the sensation of being terrorized every moment of every day. (See *Maus II*, chapter 2 with Art kvetching to his therapist that he can't begin to imagine what Auschwitz "felt like.") Here we must ponder the movie's artifice.

Son of Saul is highly stylized. The format is boxy and the depth of field often shallow. There is little, if any, use of conventional cross-cutting. Saul, who seems to be in virtually every shot, is tightly framed and often in close-up—particularly when he is motion—a strategy developed by the Dardenne brothers in their neo-neorealist movies to heighten the protagonist's situation. The idea would seem to be the replication of Saul's tunnel vision. It also allows the movie to suggest more horror than it shows. At the same time, the sound mix is disorienting and clamorous.

Nemes served as an assistant to the reigning maestro of Hungarian cinema, Béla Tarr, but he is also a born filmmaker. (Not just figuratively but literally. His father, András Jeles, was among the most interesting Hungarian directors of his generation and also among the first to directly address the deportation of Hungarian Jews in his 1990 film *Why Wasn't He There?*) And his filmmaking has broken a taboo.

As disturbing and resistant to representation as Nemes' subject is, it is understandable that some critics have been put off by his apparent aestheticism. On the other hand, some found the movie overly naturalistic. At the New York Film Festival press conference I attended, a man objected to his use of color—as if *Schindler's List* had determined that the Holocaust could only be filtered through the abstraction of black and white.

It is not surprising that *Son of Saul* stirred strong feelings at Cannes—where it was in competition and won the Grand Prix (runner up to the Palme d'Or). Citing Elie Wiesel's koan that "a novel about Auschwitz is either not a novel or not about Auschwitz," the Austrian journalist Stefan Grisseemann **denounced** *Son of Saul* as a "willfully obscene thriller." I would suggest that it is rather a deliberate—and possibly absurd—attempt to incorporate moral philosophy into an action film.

Reporting in the *New York Times*, Manohla Dargis **acknowledged** Nemes' "technical virtuosity" even as she characterized his movie as "radically dehistoricized" and "intellectually repellent" in its focus on a single figure in the midst of unspeakable horror. Whether or not this isolation was the natural state of an Auschwitz prisoner ("a thousand sealed-off monads, and between them a desperate covert and continuous struggle," per Levi), Saul Ausländer's separation from the rest of humanity might be termed the Sonderkommando Condition. Levi quotes one: "Doing this work one goes crazy on the first day or gets accustomed to it."

It is not for nothing that the filmmakers give their anti-hero a name translatable as "stranger." ("A world that can be explained even with bad reasons is a familiar world," Camus writes in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. "But on the other hand, in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger.") The significance of Saul's crazy, compelling need to give

his “son”—one dead Jew out of the exterminated millions—the recognition of a proper funeral is his attempt to transcend or at least give meaning to his solitude. Hence the haunting pseudo resurrection that causes the fool to at last break out in a grin of mindless joy.

Coinciding with the foredoomed revolt that is only launched when the men of the Sonderkommando understand they are to be liquidated, Saul’s mission is an absurd quest in an incomprehensible charnel house. “You failed the living for the dead,” one of the organizers tells him. But “we are already dead,” Saul maintains. He may be a meshuganeh but he raises the question whether blowing up the cremo is any less inspirational (or more irrational) than adopting a dead child and endeavoring to escape with the child’s corpse in his arms.

Both the revolt and Saul’s delusional attempt at tikkun unfold against a backdrop of divine indifference. The film ends as it began in the surrounding woods outside Auschwitz, incongruously peaceful and improbably green for October. Yet *Son of Saul* is not utterly devoid of hope. Close attention to the orchestrated chaos shows that, as heedless as he is, Saul is repeatedly spared by the selfless actions (intentional and otherwise) of some, even as his fanaticism directly or indirectly causes the death of others.

Increasingly allegorical but never less than visceral (visceral *and* thoughtful), *Son of Saul* is a film about the aftermath of a miracle and then a series of miracles that, in its brutal tact, compassion, and intelligence, is something of a miracle itself.

To read more of J. Hoberman’s film criticism for Tablet magazine, [click here](#).

J. Hoberman, the former longtime Village Voice film critic, is a monthly film columnist for Tablet Magazine. He is the author, co-author or editor of 12 books, including Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film Between Two Worlds and, with Jeffrey Shandler, Entertaining America: Jews, Movies, and Broadcasting.



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Rabbinical Council of America

ועדה רבנית ואמריקאית

Response to Statement of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on Covenant, Mission, and Dialogue

Jul 9, 2009 -- Beginning in 1998, representatives of the Rabbinical Council of America and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America have held semi-annual meetings with a group representing the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on matters of mutual concern. At the most recent meeting (June 25, 2009), one topic of discussion was a document issued on June 18, 2009 by the USCCB ("Note on Ambiguities Contained in Reflections on Covenant and Mission") reacting to a 2002 Catholic statement on covenant and mission in the context of Jewish-Christian relations. At the end of the meeting, the Jewish group was asked to send a letter setting forth the concerns expressed during the discussion. The letter, written by Prof. David Berger in consultation with Rabbi Fabian Schonfeld, who chairs the Jewish delegation, was sent on June 29th. On July 1, a USCCB press release, prepared without awareness of the letter, was issued containing a brief summary of the Jewish concerns expressed at the meeting along with a Catholic response. Because of the wide dissemination of this press release, we feel the need to place the letter on the record so that our concerns can be understood as clearly as possible.

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2015 Resolution: Combating the BDS Movement

Here, then, is the text of the letter:

It was, as always, a pleasure to speak with you at our meeting this past Thursday. In compliance with your request, we write to summarize our concerns regarding two sentences in the newly issued USCCB document entitled "Note on Ambiguities Contained in Reflections on Covenant and Mission."

Reflections contained the following passage as part of an argument for a broad definition of "evangelization": "Catholics participating in interreligious dialogue, a mutually enriching sharing of gifts devoid of any intention whatsoever to invite the dialogue partner to baptism, are nonetheless witnessing to their own faith in the kingdom of God embodied in Christ. This is a form of evangelization, a way of encouraging the Church's mission." The phrase asserting an absence of intention to issue an invitation to baptism in the context of interfaith dialogue (clearly referring primarily to dialogue with Jews, who are the sole focus of the document) is not the primary thrust of the passage. That phrase expresses what the authors clearly saw as a patently uncontroversial observation, a bedrock assumption, a self-evident truth, a given, an elementary understanding of what interreligious dialogue is about.

The new document expresses dissatisfaction with this phrase. The two sentences at issue read as follows: "Reflections on Covenant and Mission proposes interreligious dialogue as a form of evangelization that is 'devoid of any intention whatsoever to invite the dialogue partner to baptism.' Though Christian participation in interreligious dialogue would not normally include an explicit invitation to baptism and entrance into the Church, the Christian dialogue partner is always giving witness to the following of Christ to which all are implicitly invited."

This assertion that the Christian partner enters the dialogue with Jews with the intention of extending an implicit invitation to join the Church strikes at the very heart of the dialogical enterprise and undermines the most basic understanding that makes that enterprise possible. Moreover, the assertion that an explicit invitation to abandon Judaism would not "normally" be extended implies unmistakably that the authors of this document can envision a circumstance in the context of Jewish-Christian dialogue when such an explicit invitation would in fact be extended. This possibility is so far beyond anything that Jews who engage in dialogue ever imagined that it comes as a bolt from the blue.

Some of the interpretations proposed by a few Catholic participants in our meeting inadvertently demonstrated the desperate measures to which one must resort in an effort to make these sentences mean anything other than what they manifestly mean. A passage in a document focusing specifically on Jews cannot refer to dialogue with adherents of Asian and African religions. A sentence responding to a passage describing dialogue as an exchange entirely devoid of the intention to convert the other party cannot refer to "a dialogue of conversion or catechesis." A passage taking issue with an assertion that specifically affirmed the role of witness in dialogue cannot be urging witness without conversionary intent (not to speak of the fact that such intent is explicit in the sentence in question).

When the insupportability of all these explanations became clear, we were finally told that everything a Christian does must implicitly invite his or her interlocutor to accept baptism. It may indeed be the case that the authors of the new statement believe that a Christian politely thanking someone for a favor is obligated to do so with the intention of inviting the other party to the baptismal font, but it would be a surreal exercise to conjure up an imaginary USCCB document criticizing the assumption that one may say "thank you" without such a conscious intention. It is precisely the religious context of dialogue that brings this obligation—if indeed there is such an obligation—to the fore, and once such dialogue is explicitly characterized as an invitation to baptism, Jewish participation becomes more than problematic.

Let us make it clear that we do not regard such a Catholic position as morally objectionable. Catholics are absolutely entitled to believe that they cannot in good conscience hold interfaith discussions without the intention of extending an implicit invitation to baptism. We can—and in your case certainly do—regard such Catholics as good friends and wonderful human beings whose values we more often than not share and with whom we can cooperate in all sorts of ventures in support of shared legal and social initiatives. But the moment such cooperation takes a form that would intuitively be seen as a religious dialogue, it must be ruled out once such dialogue has formally been characterized as an invitation, whether explicit or implicit, to apostasy. Small meetings of experts in political and social issues like aid to religious schools, yes—but no religious dialogue. Lobbying against laws recognizing gay marriage, yes—but no statement about marriage of the sort we issued, which was replete with Scriptural references and religious language. Efforts to limit pervasive immorality in popular culture, yes—but no further discussion of the ten commandments. Since in our case—unlike that of other Jewish denominations—the lion's share of discussion has dealt with those narrower, non-theological issues, much of our interaction can continue. Nevertheless, some of the examples just noted point to a profound effect even on our exchanges. Those Jews who engage in quintessentially theological dialogue would, if they react to this document as they should, be required to transform their activities in this regard even more fundamentally. Precise lines would need to be thought through, but the overall approach is, at least to us, clear and, to our deep regret, unavoidable. We take apostasy seriously.

Precisely because Orthodox Jews generally appreciate the need for preserving the integrity of traditional religion, we have refrained from criticizing positions of the Church that other Jews have sometimes denounced. One of us has made this point vigorously in many settings and been subject to criticism for doing so by both Jews and liberal Christians. Consequently, we can live with the rest of the USCCB document even though many Jews see it as profoundly objectionable. Here we apply the principle that it is not our business to tell Christians what to believe about their own religion. But these two sentences are a dagger thrust into the heart of the entire enterprise of Jewish-Catholic dialogue on matters of religion. They undermine everything we were led to believe about that enterprise. If they can be removed on the grounds that Jews have misunderstood them (whether or not we would accept that assessment), we could continue our relationship without change. As long as they remain, we cannot continue business as usual and maintain our self-respect as Jews.

Respectfully,

Prof. David Berger
Rabbi Fabian Schonfeld

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David Berger is Broeklundian Professor of History at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York

Review Essay COVENANTS, MESSIAHS AND RELIGIOUS BOUNDARIES

For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter between Judaism and Christianity

BY IRVING GREENBERG

(Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2004)

Irving Greenberg has written an ambitious, stimulating, and profoundly problematic book providing a moving personal account of his struggle with the implications of the Holocaust along with a re-evaluation of Christianity that attempts nothing less than a penetration of the mind of God and His current plan for the evolution of humanity.

For Greenberg, the Holocaust is an event requiring a fundamental religious re-orientation comparable at least to the one triggered by the destruction of the Second Temple, when, in his understanding, God limited His presence so that the Jewish people facing the travails of exile would take a more active role in the long-range process of redemption. In the wake of the Holocaust, the next stage has arrived, and it is startling in its radicalism. God, says Greenberg, has lost the moral right to command the Jewish people to live in accordance with the high standard required by the covenant. After His failure to protect the covenantal people from the Nazi onslaught, any such demand would be “inherently abusive . . . illegitimate, and therefore null and void, because it [would] only expose the Jews to greater danger” (p. 26). Nonetheless, some Jews so love God that they have voluntarily chosen to maintain the covenantal relationship, which now constitutes the highest level of commitment precisely because it is the product of a free choice. At this mature stage of the covenant, the partnership between God and man is that of equals (p. 188).

One wonders if Greenberg, who is committed to a halakhic way of life, means all of this quite literally. He never descends from the heights of rhetoric to the level of discourse that would actually address the consequences of this position. What is the meaning of the commandment (or voluntary commitment) to fear God once He is our equal? What is the current status of the punishments listed by the Torah for certain transgressions? Is anyone, to take a specific example, *hannyav karet*? Has Greenberg, as a committed feminist, considered how the voluntary covenant might clear the way for women to lead religious services? After all, *everyone* now is *eino metsurveh ve-oseh*, and so we no longer face a situation in which one who is not obligated would be discharging an obligation on behalf of one who is. Perhaps this suggestion does not work because the voluntary commitment to persist in the covenant entails acting as if it is still binding in its original form despite awareness on the theological level that it is not. Whether or not Greenberg is entirely serious, even a rhetorical rejection of the binding authority of the Torah would be understood by any fair-minded observer as a *prima facie* abandonment of Orthodox Judaism, so that complaints of marginalization by the Orthodox establishment (which Greenberg describes on one occasion, though in a different context, as a form of quasi-martyrdom [p. 22]) ring hollow.¹

The thrust of this book, however, is not the voluntary nature of the covenant between God and Israel, but the existence of multiple (or at least two) covenants between God and humanity. At the very time when God called upon the Jewish people to undertake enhanced responsibility for the destiny of the world, He broadened the constituency of His covenantal love by sending a signal, or a group of signals, that launched Christianity. Greenberg's argument for this position is multifaceted: God's love is not limited to a single group; all human beings are created in His image; Maimonides pointed to a divinely guided eschatological purpose in the establishment of Christianity as a religion grounded in the Jewish scriptures; the inevitable moral, intellectual, and religious distortions that result from restricting election to a single group can be corrected by other groups with different emphases.

The first three of these points are fully valid, and there is considerable truth in the fourth as well. Since Maimonides regarded the establishment of any new religion as illegitimate and saw Christianity in particular as *avoda zara*, his assertion that it is part of a divine plan for spreading knowledge of Torah raises evident difficulties. But he did say this, so that there exists a precedent for maintaining that God wanted Christianity to

develop (though probably not in the precise form that it has taken), and I see no principled objection to speculation that would broaden the range of divine motives beyond the one that Maimonides proposed.

To apply the language of covenant, however, is not consonant with biblical teaching or Jewish tradition. There is, of course, a Noahide covenant, but the Torah speaks of Israel as a special people in a manner that does not sit well with the notion that this is merely the first of a series of elections. (Even Amos, who compared Israelites to Cushites, Philistines, and Arameans, also said, albeit in a stern context, that God knows Israel above all other nations.) For Greenberg, Christians should be seen as a branch of the Jewish people (p. 95), as honorary members of the house of Israel (p. 96), even as members *tout court* (p. 233). Jews and Christians are “part of one people, the people of Israel” (p. 99). “When Jacob and his brother become Israel, a moment of redemption is at hand. This is our time and our mission” (p. 102). The Torah is one of “a variety of experiments to find right ways of covenantal living” (p. 58). Without the Christian complement, the Jewish community would be “hypocritical or confused” (p. 176). We should beseech God that we—and He!—be persuaded by Greenberg’s pluralistic model of the covenant:

If indeed we believe that our exclusivity is what God wants, we should be praying that that cup pass from our lips. Perhaps all humans should be praying for the courage and strength to argue with God, and to convince God that humanity will arrive at perfection faster if God follows through on the pluralist implications of the covenantal model (pp. 180-181).

The last sentence once again raises questions about the genre of this book and whether it is meant to be read as rhetoric or as an argument to be engaged seriously. Since Greenberg repeatedly expresses his belief that God intentionally launched Christianity as an additional, alternative covenant, such a prayer at this juncture of history appears inexplicable. At least in this passage, we are confronted by a rhetorical exercise with little concern for ordinary canons of coherence.

Greenberg pronounces a *herem* (“a covenantal anathema”) on anyone who will assert that he is collapsing the distinctions between Judaism and Christianity (p. 98). At the same time, he is capable of moments that—despite his vehement protestations—can only be characterized as relativism. Here is the conclusion of the essay entitled, “The New Encounter of Judaism and Christianity” (pp. 122-123):

This open faith is dependent on a trust in God so complete that I do not demand an advance pledge that I am right and the other is wrong. The new situation requires a willingness to live under the judgment of God without the easy assurances of guaranteed righteousness and salvation. In a world where people are learning first hand the universal problems of humanity and consequently feel an urgent need to heal them, perhaps the new encounter can give us the possibility of Jew and Christian—and all people—working side by side in this encounter until the end of days.

Let me add: There are indeed people who are willing to live side by side until the end of days who do so because they are fully confident that the Messiah, when he comes, will confirm their rightness all along. Of course, it is a step forward to live together until that time. But even here, we may underrate the love and wonder of the Lord. I have often thought of this as a nice truism. Let us wait until the Messiah comes. Then we can ask him if this is his first coming or his second. Each of us could look forward to a final confirmation. Perhaps I was a bit too narrow in my trust in God with this initial conception. After entering the dialogue, I wrote a short story in which the Messiah comes at the end of days. Jews and Christians march out to greet him and establish his reign. Finally they ask if this is his first coming or his second coming—to which the Messiah smiles and replies, “No comment.” . . . Perhaps we will then truly realize that it was worth it all along for the kind of life we lived along the way.

Aside from the cavalier attitude toward a fundamental point of contention in the historic Jewish-Christian debate, this story ends too early. What if the Jews and Christians in this narrative would go on to ask the Messiah, “Are you the second person of the triune God?” “Is the New Testament sacred scripture on a par with the Torah?” One hopes—but unfortunately one cannot be sure—that Greenberg’s Messiah would not say, “No comment.”

Most of the chapters in this book are reprints of earlier essays, but the new material includes a powerful autobiographical piece describing Greenberg’s spiritual odyssey. One of the elements of this story recounts the controversy spawned by his coinage “failed messiah” rather than “false messiah” to characterize Jesus. A false messiah, he wrote, teaches the wrong values; a failed messiah has the right ones, but does not achieve the final goal. Many Orthodox readers were, as Greenberg indicates, appalled by this, especially in light of his illustrat-

ing “failure” by reference to the “failure” of Abraham, Moses, and Jeremiah (p. 153). Standing alone, the term “failed messiah” did not offend me; it need not mean anything more than a messianic aspirant who failed. As to the question of values, R. Jacob Emden, whom no one has read out of Orthodoxy, also asserted that the ones promulgated by Jesus were proper.

Greenberg, however, goes further than this. He now tells us that he intended “failed messiah” as an honorific term describing a person of such achievements that some people could seriously consider him a universal redeemer (p. 32). Even this might not go beyond R. Jacob Emden’s position, but I do not think that he would have endorsed Greenberg’s next step, which is the assertion that if Christians repent and direct their religious energies properly, Jesus could even be described as an “unfinished messiah” (p. 231). Irrespective of religious evaluation, Greenberg’s discussions of this issue descend into analytical murkiness on several fronts. We recall that the criterion distinguishing a failed from a false messiah was that the former had the right values. But Greenberg occasionally asserts that evil behavior by Christians generations later can turn Jesus (despite his preaching of proper values) into a false messiah, while proper behavior can turn him into a failed one or even an unfinished one (pp. 177, 231). If later misuse of someone’s teachings can have such consequences, I am afraid that all the prophets of Israel may be vulnerable to posthumous reevaluation. Moreover, the analogy with the failures of Abraham, Moses, and Jeremiah, aside from its emotional offensiveness to Jewish sensibilities, ignores a point central to the entire discussion. Everyone experiences failure. But *Mashi’ah ben David* is *defined* by his success in presiding over the redemption. The respective failures are entirely incommensurate.

Greenberg implicitly addresses this objection by pointing to Messiah son of Joseph as a failed but true messiah, who paves the way for Messiah son of David. Nonetheless, in light of the fact that Jesus’ disciples and all subsequent Christians saw him as the ultimate redeemer—and it may well be that this was his self-perception as well—the expansive use of the term messiah, especially unfinished messiah, to describe him and the equation of his failure with that of others who made no such claims, is both problematic and dangerous.

Greenberg is well aware that the question missing from his eschatological tale, namely, the divinity of Jesus, presents an especially intractable obstacle to the sort of rapprochement that he advocates, and it is not surprising that his discussions of the incarnation reflect considerable

unease. He makes matters easier for himself by providing definitions of idolatry that do not evoke technical halakhic parameters. Thus, idolatry is the affirmation of “all human absolutes” (p.63); it is any human system—even if divinely revealed—whose believers extend it without limit so as to leave no room for the other, ultimately becoming sources of death (p. 210). If the election of Israel were understood as an end in itself, that would be idolatry (p. 190). Given the profound seriousness with which Judaism treats *avoda zara*, I have always been uneasy with the ubiquitous, almost promiscuous applications of the term idolatry (as in idolatry of the land, or idolatry of money and possessions) that cheapen its meaning and sometimes prevent people from recognizing genuine *avoda zara*. Though Greenberg’s theological definitions are more serious than most and decidedly deserve attention in their own terms, they help distract the reader from the need to apply traditional categories in evaluating Christian doctrine.

Still, Greenberg does address the issue frontally, if elusively and inconsistently, on a number of occasions. The slippery nature of his discussions makes it very difficult to summarize them, but I will do my best, essentially relying on direct quotations.

The resurrection and incarnation were not “putative facts to be argued over,” but signals for Christians (p. 45). This sentence does not tell us to what degree, if at all, these “signals” reflected any reality. Much later, we are informed that the early Christians “received [an] activating signal: an empty tomb” (p. 222). Though an alternative understanding is possible, the most straightforward reading of this sentence is that the tomb was really empty. We are not told what might have emptied it, but the signal itself is part of a divine plan.

As to the incarnation:

The claim that God became incarnated in a particular human being at a unique moment in history has been denied by faithful Jews as contradictory to God’s essence and unjustified in light of the human capacity to turn to God directly. . . . But one can uphold the presence of ultimates and, at the same time, honor limits. Why is it necessary for Jews (or other religions) to insist that the Truth of their historical experience with God extends into Christian communities and negates Christianity’s claims? It is sufficient for Jews to affirm that they have no interest in restricting God’s choice of tactics and methods of revelation. . . . They need only insist that as open as they were, God did not give them the Christian signal (pp. 67-68).

TRADITION

Again:

One can argue that the incarnation is improbable and violative of other given biblical principles. . . . But one can hardly rule out the option totally, particularly if it was intended for gentiles and not intended for Jews (p. 156, and repeated on pp. 232-233).

Again, but pulling back:

It is not that Jews and Christians will accept each other's view on this issue, but they can come to realize that both positions grow out of strategies for achieving the goals of the covenant held in common (p. 166).

Again, but moving a bit forward:

One can conceive of a divine pathos that sent not only words across the gap, but life and body itself. I say this not as a Jew who accepts this claim, but as one who has come to see that it is not for me to prescribe to God how God communicates to others (p. 180).

Again, moving forward a bit more:

Did God then become incarnate to cross the covenantal divide in order to rescue humankind? Far be it from me as a Jew to prescribe to Christians or to God what happened in that religious experience. I can only suggest that the resurrection signal had to be so marginal, so subject to alternate interpretations, and the incarnation sign so subtle, as to be able to be heard in dramatically opposing fashions—one way by the band elected to start the new faith and another way by the majority of Jews called to continue the classical covenantal mission (p. 194).

It is very difficult to avoid the conclusion that Greenberg believes that it is at least possible that the incarnation as understood by Christians actually took place, except that Jews were not intended to see it. Near the end of the book, he even characterizes the Jewish position excluding one who adopts the belief in the incarnation from the community as part of a religious conception that belongs to the past (p. 206). Despite his assertion that Christians are part of a greater Israel, this characterization stands in such tension with his dominant affirmation of separate covenantal communities, that I am willing to assume that it results from careless formulation rather than considered judgment.

Though Greenberg must be serious about the belief that God has established a covenant with Christians, here again he fails to address the concrete implications of this position even in rudimentary fashion. What is the content of this covenant? Do his discussions of incarnation mean, as they appear to, that God wants Christians to believe that Jesus is God incarnate? Are Unitarians, then, straying from an important component of the covenant? Was the incarnation intended only as a catalytic signal but not as a permanent doctrine? If the content of the covenant devolves into nothing more than ethical behavior, how does it differ from an expansive understanding of the Noahide laws? Has the Holocaust rendered the Christian covenant and not just the Jewish one voluntary? On the one hand, if God, as Greenberg suggests, has lost the right to command Jews because of the special suffering that the covenant has imposed upon them, perhaps He retains the right to command Christians. On the other hand, Jews were killed by the Nazis irrespective of their commitment to their covenant, while Christians were victimized selectively in direct proportion to their degree of commitment to theirs; in light of this consideration, perhaps the Christian covenant too has imposed such suffering on its most devoted adherents that it is no longer binding.

This work, then, is marked by powerful rhetoric not always matched by scholarly or analytical rigor. This weakness is exemplified in small ways—some intrinsically significant, others more marginal—throughout the book.

- “For both religions, the central metaphor of the divinely desired total triumph of life would be the promise of a universal resurrection” (p. 72). To restrict myself to Judaism, Maimonides and many other Jews believed that resurrection would be limited, and many of those who considered it universal saw the resurrection of the wicked as a vehicle for their eternal torment (Daniel 12:2).

- The description of Jesus as an intermediary between man and God (p. 81), while almost a commonplace in Jewish discourse regarding Christianity, is an oversimplification. Jesus is one of three equal persons in the triune God.

- “It has been estimated that more than six million Jews died during the course of various [Christian] persecutions in the Middle Ages” (p. 108). This number is, in my judgment, a great exaggeration, and we should at least have been provided with its source.

TRADITION

- Judaism, we are told, provides a way to test its truth claims in this world. “If [redemption] does not happen, then the religion is revealed to be an illusion” (p. 147). But in the absence of a firm date for the redemption, Judaism has not really provided a criterion by which it could be falsified.²

- Both Judaism and Christianity, says Greenberg, affirm that “life is growing and becoming more and more like the God who is its ground” (p. 162). I am not sure that this has any clear meaning, but it certainly does not sit well with one strand of Jewish thought that speaks of the decline of the generations.

- Greenberg attributes to “the people of Israel” (and on another occasion to the Talmud, presumably based on the famous Mishna in *Sanhedrin* 4:5) the position that all human beings are equal (pp. 187, 199). While I identify with the impulse that produced this formulation, it is an oversimplification to attribute this position either to “the people of Israel” (who allegedly affirm it as a “self-evident” truth) or to the Talmud without qualification and serious discussion.

- “Jewry’s counter-self-definition to Christianity pushed Judaism toward its own breakdown forms: tribalism, legalism, asceticism, and denial of this world” (p. 195). How the last two items emerged out of a “counter-self-definition to Christianity” is, to put the matter moderately, unclear, and such an assertion surely requires explanation.

One of the unfortunate consequences of Greenberg’s radicalism is its potential for eliciting resistance among his readers to a Jewishly defensible version of the respectful approach toward Christianity that he wishes to encourage. On one occasion, he argues that classifying Christianity “as idolatry . . . means [that it is] a faith with no redeeming spiritual value” (p. 80). Much later, however, he notes that by following Maimonides, one could acknowledge religious value in Christianity while maintaining an uncompromising doctrinal position (pp. 231-232). Greenberg himself has little interest in developing this option further, but it is, I believe, precisely the direction in which we should move.

There is decidedly Jewish precedent for regarding Christianity as very different from paganism even though it remains *avoda zara*. (“Idolatry” in this context is a misleading and inappropriate term.) One can see it as a theology forbidden even to non-Jews while simultaneously valuing its recognition of the Creator of heaven and earth, its capacity for engendering piety, and its adherence to moral norms.³ We can even

learn Jewish lessons from Christian thinkers writing out of Christian convictions. R. Joseph B. Soloveitchik's publications bear explicit testimony to this, as does R. Aharon Lichtenstein's recommendation that students read certain works of C. S. Lewis. R. Walter Wurzbarger reported that R. Soloveitchik once persuaded a wavering Catholic doctor who was treating him not to leave the Church, even as R. Hershel Schachter testifies that the Rav rejected the view that Christian-style *shittuf* is permissible to Noahides.⁴ Apparently, this sort of forbidden *shittuf*, with its adherence to moral codes and recognition of the Creator of heaven and earth, is preferable to atheism and moral bankruptcy. Moreover, I can affirm from experience that when this nuanced position is presented sensitively to Christians of good will, it does not undermine cordial inter-faith relations; indeed, it sometimes even enhances them.

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For two very different reasons, the writing of this review has caused me considerable internal anguish.

First, I admire Irving Greenberg for many reasons. My introduction to the study of history came in a survey course of his when I was a freshman in Yeshiva College. Not only do I remain grateful for his decision to ignore my creative spelling while defining monophysitism in an exam ("the belief that Jesus' two natures are really won"); I retain vivid recollections of a gifted, inspiring teacher whose subsequent prominence came as no surprise. He was an animating force and role model during the early years of Yavneh. His goal of establishing cooperation across denominational and religious lines commands respect in principle if not always in practice. Despite thoroughly unjustified criticism from some circles, his advocacy for Israel has been exemplary. At a meeting arranged by a major Jewish organization involving several Jews and representatives of an important liberal Protestant church, the Christians expressed their moral revulsion at the humiliations and inconveniences generated by multiple Israeli checkpoints during the second intifada. When I saw that the Jewish representatives were not responding directly, I made a few remarks that engaged the real issues of Israeli security needs, but these comments paled into insignificance when Greenberg launched into a passionate and uninhibited denunciation of self-righteous criticism leveled against necessary measures of self-defense. Far from simply telling Christians what they want to hear, Greenberg engages in dialogue out of a personal sense of Jewish commitment that

I do not question. For all its flaws, this work too contains much material worthy of its author: To take one example, Greenberg's definition of hope—as distinct from an illusion or an escape—as “a dream that is committed to the discipline of becoming a fact” strikingly illustrates his sharp and engaging mind. It is genuinely painful to feel impelled, as I do, to assert that such an individual has written a book advocating positions fundamentally incompatible with authentic Judaism.

The second reason for anguish cuts even deeper. Not long ago, a friend remarked to me that I reminded him of Cato the Elder. I understood what he meant with no further explanation: just as Cato ended every speech with a call to destroy Carthage, so do I find occasion to denounce Lubavitch messianism at virtually every opportunity. While I cannot plead entirely innocent, my professional expertise in Jewish-Christian relations and messianic beliefs and movements leads me to write—and to be asked to write—about the very subjects that triggered my concern with Lubavitch in the first place, so that I am likely to address material of genuine relevance. This essay is very much a case in point.

As I wrote, I became more and more acutely aware that I was defending religious boundaries that have already been erased. Setting aside the issue of the voluntary covenant, which was not the reason for the major Orthodox attacks on Greenberg, I sensed that many readers of *Tradition* would work themselves into high dudgeon over his approach to Christianity, while they themselves embrace far worse offenders. At worst, Greenberg has described Jesus as an unfinished messiah; he has never declared him the Messiah or a messiah—even for non-Jews—with certainty. At worst—and this is quite terrible—he has implied that there may actually have been some sort of incarnation (though the relevant “signal” was intended only for non-Jews), but he has made it clear that he is not certain of this. For their part, a majority of Lubavitch hasidim believe with absolute assurance in the messiahship of a man who proclaimed repeatedly and unequivocally that his was the generation of the redemption and then died in an unredeemed world. Many of them affirm with absolute assurance and literalism that he so annulled his essence to that of God that he is pure divinity, that he is consequently omniscient, omnipotent, and unbounded, and that one can petition him (and in some formulations bow to him) with this conception of his nature in mind.⁵ With few exceptions, mainstream Orthodox Jews recognize the rabbinic legitimacy of Lubavitch hasidim with no questions asked, and this recognition is rarely withdrawn even in the face of overt declarations of messianist belief.

Of course there are profound differences between Jesus of Nazareth and the Lubavitcher Rebbe, but Jews rejected the messiahship and divinity of Jesus for reasons of deep principle that transcended his personal characteristics. It is this deep principle that the Orthodox rabbinate has betrayed in the last decade. Now that I have learned about something called a covenantal anathema, I am tempted to invoke one against the large number of Orthodox rabbis who accept Lubavitch messianists as religious authorities and functionaries and then rail against Greenberg. In fact, however, there is no need for anathemas or for the comical conceit that I am qualified to pronounce them. It requires nothing more than common decency to recognize that anyone who accords Orthodox legitimacy to adherents of posthumous false messianism and even of *avoda zara* is morally obligated to allow Irving Greenberg to say anything he wishes about failed messiahs, unfinished messiahs, and even messiahs who are God in the flesh.

NOTES

1. It is perfectly evident that Greenberg does not understand his voluntary covenant to be a simple repetition of the voluntary acceptance of the Torah by the Jewish people that the rabbis ascribe to the period of Mordecai and Esther. Even if we take that aggadic passage to mean that previous generations were really free to violate the covenant—and I seriously doubt that this was meant literally—the acceptance noted in the *megilla* bound all Jews from that point on. In the post-Holocaust era, only a small percentage of the Jewish people agreed to follow the covenant in all its particulars, and they clearly could not obligate all those who did not. Greenberg never suggests that they could, and the tenor of his presentation gives the unmistakable impression that even the committed few have the moral right to opt out of this voluntary commitment if they so choose.
2. I am more than a bit disturbed when respected Orthodox organizations disseminate material stating as undeniable fact that the redemption must come before the year 6,000 in the Jewish calendar. Other messianic dates in the Talmud have passed, and Maimonides—in an explicit effort to discourage messianic calculation and obsession—made a point of emphasizing that even Hazal did not have a tradition regarding these matters (*Hilkhot Melakhim* 12:2). Many years ago, a friend told me how a classmate of his in a traditionalist yeshiva had told him that if he would be alive in the year 6,000 and the Messiah would not have come, he would throw his *tefillin* on the ground and stomp on them. It is worth reemphasizing the prophet's

- declaration: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are My ways your ways, declares the Lord. But as the heavens are high above the earth, so are My ways high above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9).
3. For a detailed presentation of my own views on this difficult subject, see “Jews, Gentiles, and the Modern Egalitarian Ethos: Some Tentative Thoughts,” in Marc Stern, ed., *Formulating Responses in an Egalitarian Age* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).
 4. Greenberg’s account (pp. 13-16) of his conversations with the Rav about dialogue asserts that “Confrontation” (*Tradition* 6:2 [1964], 5-29) does not represent the latter’s true views and that a different stand by the RCA would probably have led him to reverse course and “back them.” Given the Rav’s record on this issue over the years, this position is implausible in the extreme. See my essay, “Revisiting ‘Confrontation’ After Forty Years: A Response to Rabbi Eugene Korn,” on the website of the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning: www.bc.edu/cjlearning (accessed December 2005).
 5. I have discussed the evidence for this account of beliefs within the movement in *The Rebbe, the Messiah, and the Scandal of Orthodox Indifference* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2001) and in the revised and updated Hebrew version, “*Ha-Rebbe Melekh ha-Mashi’ah*,” *Sha’aruriyyat ha-Adishut, ve-haIyyum al Emunat Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Urim, 2005).

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Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Rosh Yeshiva at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University, is the acknowledged intellectual leader of and spokesman for halakhic Judaism. That more of his original scholarly insights and creative philosophical ideas be made available in print has been the long-cherished hope of the many who seek his guidance on the baffling problems of our age. The Editors of this journal are deeply grateful to the revered mentor of the Rabbinical Council for having chosen TRADITION for the publication of his first major essay in English. Widely acclaimed as "*The Rav*," Dr. Soloveitchik, in his capacity as Chairman of the Halakhah Commission, is also formally recognized by the Rabbinical Council as its authority in all halakhic matters. Because of Rabbi Soloveitchik's pre-eminent position, his approach to one of the most delicate and sensitive issues that faces world Jewry is bound to have far-reaching repercussions on future developments. Portions of this paper, which was specifically prepared for TRADITION, were read by Rabbi Soloveitchik at the 1964 Mid-Winter Conference of the Rabbinical Council. Its presentation led to the formulation of a Rabbinical Council policy statement dealing with the major issues Rabbi Soloveitchik had discussed. The text of this statement is therefore appended to this essay.

I

1.

The Biblical account of the creation of man portrays him at three progressive levels.

At the first level, he appears as a simple natural being. He is neither cognizant of his unique station in the cosmos nor burdened by the awareness of his paradoxical capability of being concur-

rently free and obedient, creative to the point of self-transcendence and submissive in a manner bordering on self-effacement. At this stage, natural man is irresponsive to the pressure of both the imperative from without and the "ought" from within — the inner call of his humanity surging *de profundis* — ממעמקים. For the norm either from within or from without addresses itself only to man who is sensitive to his own incongruity and tragic dilemma. The illusory happy-mindedness of natural man stands between him and the norm. Natural man, unaware of the element of tension prevailing between the human being and the environment of which he is an integral part, has no need to live a normative life and to find redemption in surrender to a higher moral will. His existence is unbounded, merging harmoniously with the general order of things and events. He is united with nature, moving straightforwardly, with the beast and the fowl of the field, along an unbroken line of mechanical life-activities, never turning around, never glancing backwards, leading an existence which is neither fraught with contradiction nor perplexed by paradoxes, nor marred by fright.

וכל שיח השדה טרם יהיה בארץ וכל עשב השדה טרם יצמח . . . ואדם אין לעבד את האדמה. ואד יעלה מן הארץ והשקה את כל פני האדמה. וייצר ה' א' את האדם עפר מן האדמה ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים ויהי האדם לנפש חיה.

"And every plant of the field was not yet in the earth and every herb of the field had not yet grown, . . . and there was no man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. And the Lord God formed the man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:5-7)¹

Man who was created out of the dust of the ground, enveloped in a mist rising from the jungle, determined by biological immediacy and mechanical necessity, knows of no responsibility, no opposition, no fear, and no dichotomy, and hence he is free from carrying the load of humanity.

1. While the Biblical phrase נפש חיה refers to natural man, Onkelos' רוח ממלא is related to a typologically more advanced stage.

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In a word, this man is a non-confronted being. He is neither conscious of his assignment vis-a-vis something which is outside of himself nor is he aware of his existential otherness as a being summoned by his Maker to rise to tragic greatness.

2.

When I refer to man at the level of naturalness, I have in mind not the *Urmensch* of bygone times but modern man. I am speaking not in anthropological but typological categories. For non-confronted man is to be found not only in the cave or the jungle but also in the seats of learning and the halls of philosophers and artists. Non-confrontation is not necessarily restricted to a primitive existence but applies to human existence at all times, no matter how cultured and sophisticated. The *hêdoné*-oriented, egocentric person, the beauty-worshipper, committed to the goods of sense and craving exclusively for boundless aesthetic experience, the voluptuary, inventing needs in order to give himself the opportunity of continual gratification, the sybarite, constantly discovering new areas where pleasure is pursued and happiness found and lost, leads a non-confronted existence. At this stage, the intellectual gesture is not the ultimate goal but a means to another end — the attainment of unlimited aesthetic experience. Hence, non-confronted man is prevented from finding himself and bounding his existence as distinct and singular. He fails to realize his great capacity for winning freedom from an unalterable natural order and offering this very freedom as the great sacrifice to God, who wills man to be free in order that he may commit himself unreservedly and forfeit his freedom.

Beauty, uncouth and unrefined but irresistible, seducing man and contributing to his downfall, emerges in the Biblical arena for the first time — according to the Midrash quoted by Nachmanides (Genesis 4:22) — in the person of Naamah (the name signifies pleasantness), the sister of Tubal-Cain.

ומדרש אחר לרבותינו שהיא האשה היפה היא מאד שממנה טעו בני האלהים והיא הנרמזת בפסוק ויראו בני האלהים את בנות האדם.

“Our sages offered another Midrashic interpretation, that Naamah was the fairest of all women, who seduced the sons of the

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mighty, and it is she who is referred to in the verse: 'and the sons of the mighty saw the daughters of man that they were fair.' " Her seductive charms captivated the sons of the mighty and led to their appalling disregard for the central divine norm enjoining man from reaching out for the fascinating and beautiful that does not belong to him. The sons of the mighty yielded to the hedonic urge and were unable to discipline their actions. They were a non-confronted, non-normative group. They worshipped beauty and succumbed to its overwhelming impact.

Naamah, the incarnation of unhallowed and unsublimated beauty, is, for the Midrash, not so much an individual as an idea, not only a real person but a symbol of unredeemed beauty. As such, she appears in the Biblical drama in many disguises. At times her name is Delilah, seducing Samson; at other times she is called Tamar, corrupting a prince. She is cast in the role of a princess or queen, inflicting untold harm upon a holy nation and kingdom of priests whose king, the wisest of all men, abandoned his wisdom when he encountered overpowering beauty. The Book of Wisdom (Proverbs) portrays her as the anonymous woman with an "impudent face" who "lieth in wait at every corner" and the Aggadah — also cited here by Nachmanides — as the beautiful queen of the demons tempting man and making him restless.

No less than their seductress, the sons of the mighty also represent a universal type. Non-confronted man — whether he be a primitive caveman, the king depicted in *Ecclesiastes*, or a modern counterpart — is dominated by two characteristics: he can deny himself nothing, and he is aware of neither the indomitable opposition he is bound to meet in the form of a restrictive outside, nor of the absurdity implied in man's faith that the beautiful is a source of pleasure rather than one of frustration and disillusionment. The aesthete of today, like the aesthete of old, is prisoner of — no matter what her name — beauty unethicized and unreclaimed from aboriginal immediacy. He enjoys a sense of oneness with the natural scheme of events and occurrences and his transient successful performance encourages him to strive for the absurd — an unopposed and uncontradicted hedonic *modus existentiae*.

וישע ה' א' גן בעדן מקדם וישם שם את האדם אשר יצר. ויצמח ה' א'

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מן האדמה כל עץ נחמד למראה וטוב למאכל ועץ החיים בתוך הגן ועץ הדעת טוב ורע.

"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is desirable to the sight and good for food; the tree of life in the midst of the garden and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." (Genesis 2:8-9)²

Man depicted in these verses is hedonically-minded and pleasure-seeking, having at his disposal a multitude of possibilities of sense-gratification. Before him stretches a vast garden with an almost endless variety of trees desirable and good, tempting, fascinating, and exciting the boundless fantasy with their glamorous colors.

3.

At the second level, natural man, moving straightforwards, comes suddenly to a stop, turns around, and casts, as an outsider, a contemplative gaze upon his environment. Even the most abandoned voluptuary becomes disillusioned like the king of Ecclesiastes and finds himself encountering something wholly other than his own self, an outside that defies and challenges him. At this very moment, the separation of man from cosmic immediacy, from the uniformity and simplicity which he had shared with nature, takes place. He discovers an awesome and mysterious domain of things and events which is independent of and disobedient to him, an objective order limiting the exercise of his power and offering opposition to him. In the wake of this discovery, he discovers himself. Once self-discovery is accomplished, and a new I-awareness of an existence which is limited and opposed by a non-I outside emerges, something new is born — namely, the divine norm. "ויצו ה' א' על האדם" — "And the Lord God commanded the man." With the birth of the norm, man becomes aware of his singularly human existence which expresses itself

2. Maimonides translated טוב ורע into aesthetic terms as "pleasing and displeasing". Paradisical man, violating the divine commandment by eating from the tree of knowledge, suspended the ethical and replaced it with the aesthetic experience (*Guide of the Perplexed*, I, 2).

in the dichotomous experience of being unfree, restricted, imperfect and unredeemed, and, at the same time, being potentially powerful, great, and exalted, uniquely endowed, capable of rising far above his environment in response to the divine moral challenge. Man attains his unique identity when, after having been enlightened by God that he is not only a committed but also a free person, endowed with power to implement his commitment, he grasps the incommensurability of what he is and what he is destined to be, of the *יהי* and *יהיה*.

God, in answer to Moses' inquiry, gave his name as *אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה* — I am what I am. God is free from the contradiction between potentiality and actuality, ideal and reality. He is pure actuality, existence par excellence.³ Man, however, is unable to state of himself *אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה* since his real existence always falls short of the ideal which his Maker set up for him as the great objective. This tragic schism reflects, in a paradoxical fashion, human distinctiveness and grandeur.

Simultaneously with man's realization of his inner incongruity and complete alienation from his environment, the human tragic destiny begins to unfold. Man, in his encounter with an objective world and in his assumption of the role of a subject who asks questions about something hitherto simple, forfeits his sense of serenity and peace. He is no longer happy, he begins to examine his station in this world and he finds himself suddenly assailed by perplexity and fear, and especially loneliness. *וַיֹּאמֶר ה' א' לֹא טוֹב הָיִיתָ הָאָדָם לְבָדּוֹ* "And the Lord God said: 'It is not good that the man should be alone'." The I-experience is a passionate one and real man is born amid the pains of confrontation with an "angry" environment of which he had previously been an integral part.

Confronted man is called upon to choose either of two alternatives:

1) To play an active role as a subject-knower, utilizing his great endowment, the intellect, and trying to gain supremacy over the objective order. However, this performance is fraught with difficulty because knowledge is gained only through conflict and the

3. See *Guide of the Perplexed*. I, 63.

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intellectual performance is an act of conquest.⁴ The order of things and events, in spite of its intrinsic knowability and rationality, does not always respond to human inquiry and quite often rejects all pleas for a cooperative relationship. The subject-knower must contest a knowable object, subdue it and make it yield its cognitive contents.⁵

2) Man may despair, succumb to the overpowering pressure of the objective outside and end in mute resignation, failing to discharge his duty as an intellectual being, and thus dissolving an intelligent existence into an absurd nightmare.

Of course, the Torah commanded man to choose the first alternative, to exercise his authority as an intelligent being whose task consists in engaging the objective order in a cognitive contest. We have always rejected the nirvana of inaction because the flight from confrontation is an admission of the bankruptcy of man. When man became alienated from nature and found himself alone, confronted by everything outside of him, God brought the "animal of the field and every fowl of the heaven unto the man to see what he would call it . . . and the man gave name to all the beasts and the fowl of the heaven and to every animal of the field."

4. The Latin *objectus* derived from *obicere*, to oppose, the German *Gegenstand*, denoting something standing opposite, the Hebrew חפץ having the connotation of something intensely desired but not always attainable, are quite indicative of the element of tension which is interwoven into the logical subject-knower knowable-object relationship.

5. The element of tension in the subject-object relationship is a result not of sin but of the incongruity of "attitudes" on the part of the confronters. The attitude of man is one of dominion while the "attitude" on the part of the objective order is one of irresponsiveness. The knowable object refuses to surrender to the subject-knower. The result of man's sin was not the emergence of tension and resistance — since this state of affairs prevailed even before man's expulsion from Paradise — but the change from tension to frustration, from a creative, successful performance to defeat. In imposing this metaphysical curse upon man, God decreed that the latter, in spite of all his glorious achievements, be finally defeated by death and ignorance. Judaism does not believe that man will ever succeed in his bold attempt to unravel the *mysterium magnum* of being and to control nature as a whole. The human cognitive and technological gestures, Judaism maintains, have a chance to succeed only in small sectors of reality. וקוץ ודרדר תצמיח לך — "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."

ויצר ה' א' מן האדמה כל חית השדה ואת כל עוף השמים ויבא אל האדם לראות מה יקרא לו . . . ויקרא האדם שמות לכל הבהמה ולעוף השמים ולכל חית השדה.

Man no longer marched straightforwards with the brutes of the field and the forest. He made an about-face and confronted them as an intelligent being remote from and eager to examine and classify them. God encouraged him to engage in the most miraculous of all human gestures — the cognitive. Confronted Adam responded gladly because he already realized that he was no longer a part of nature but an outsider, a singular being, endowed with intelligence. In his new role, he became aware of his loneliness and isolation from the entire creation. ולאדם לא מצא עזר כנגדו. “And for the man [God] had not found a helpmeet opposite him.” As a lonely being, Adam discovered his great capacity for facing and dominating the non-human order.⁶

4.

The Book of Genesis, after describing the four rivers which flow from the Garden of Eden, offers us a new account of the placing of Adam in this garden.

ויקח ה' א' את האדם וינחהו בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה. “And the Lord God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to keep it.” This sentence in Genesis 2:15 is almost a verbatim repetition of Genesis 2:8, yet the accounts differ in two respects.

First, in the second account, the Bible uses a verb denoting action preceding the placing of man in the Garden of Eden — “And God *took* (ויקח) the man and placed him” — whereas in the previous account, the verb “he placed”, וישם, is not accompanied by any preliminary action on the part of the Almighty. The expression ויקח does not occur in the first account. Second, there is no mention in the previous account of any assignment given to man while this account does specify that man was charged with the task of cultivating and keeping the garden.

The reason for these variations lies in the fact that the two accounts are related to two different men. The first story, as we have

6. See Nachmanides, (Genesis 2:9).

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previously indicated, is of non-confronted man carried by the mighty tide of a uniform, simple, non-reflective life, who was placed in the Garden of Eden for one purpose only — to pursue pleasure, to enjoy the fruit of the trees without toil, to live in ignorance of his human destiny, to encounter no problem and to be concerned with no obligation. As we stated previously, non-confronted man is a non-normative being. The second story is of confronted man who began to appraise critically his position vis-a-vis his environment and found his existential experience too complex to be equated with the simplicity and non-directedness of the natural life-stream. This man, as a subject-knower facing an almost impenetrable objective order, was dislocated by God from his position of naturalness and harmonious being and placed in a new existential realm, that of confronted existence. Confronted man is a displaced person. Having been taken out of a state of complacency and optimistic naivete, he finds the intimate relationship between him and the order of facticity ending in tension and conflict. The verb **ויקה** signifies that God removed man from one dimension and thrust him into another — that of confronted existence. At this phase, man, estranged from nature, fully aware of his grand and tragic destiny, became the recipient of the first norm — **"ויצו ה' א' עיל האדם"**. "And the Lord God commanded the man." The divine imperative burst forth out of infinity and overpowered finite man.

Alas, not always does creative man respond readily to the divine normative summons which forms the very core of his new existential status as a confronted being. All too often, the motivating force in creative man is not the divine mandate entrusted to him and which must be implemented in full at both levels, the cognitive and the normative, but a demonic urge for power. By fulfilling an incomplete task, modern creative man falls back to a non-confronted, natural existence to which normative pressure is alien. The reason for the failure of confronted man to play his role fully lies in the fact that, while the cognitive gesture gives man mastery and a sense of success, the normative gesture requires of man surrender. At this juncture, man of today commits the error which his ancestor, Adam of old, committed by lending an attentive ear to the demonic whisper "Ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil."

5.

There is, however, a third level which man, if he is longing for self-fulfillment, must ascend. At this level, man finds himself confronted again. Only this time it is not the confrontation of a subject who gazes, with a sense of superiority, at the object beneath him, but of two equal subjects, both lonely in their otherness and uniqueness, both opposed and rejected by an objective order, both craving for companionship. This confrontation is reciprocal, not unilateral. This time the two confronters stand alongside each other, each admitting the existence of the other. An aloof existence is transformed into a together-existence.

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' א' לֹא טוֹב הָיִיתָ הָאָדָם לְבֶדּוֹ אֶעֱשֶׂה לוֹ עֶזְרָא כְּנֶגְדּוֹ . . . וַיִּבֶן ה' א' אֶת הַצֶּלַע אֲשֶׁר לִקַּח מִן הָאָדָם לְאִשָּׁה וַיְבָאָהּ אֵל הָאָדָם.

"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make a helpmeet opposite him . . . And the Lord God made the rib which he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her unto man." (Genesis 2:18, 22) God created Eve, another human being. Two individuals, lonely and helpless in their solitude, meet, and the first community is formed.

The community can only be born, however, through an act of communication. After gazing at each other in silence and defiance, the two individuals involved in a unique encounter begin to communicate with each other. Out of the mist of muteness the miraculous word rises and shines forth. Adam suddenly begins to talk — וַיֹּאמֶר הָאָדָם — "And the man said." He addresses himself to Eve, and with his opening remark, two fenced-in and isolated human existences open up, and they both ecstatically break through to each other.

The word is a paradoxical instrument of communication and contains an inner contradiction. On the one hand, the word is the medium of expressing agreement and concurrence, of reaching mutual understanding, organizing cooperative effort, and uniting action. On the other hand, the word is also the means of manifesting distinctness, emphasizing incongruity, and underlining separateness. The word brings out not only what is common in two existences but the singularity and uniqueness of each existence as well. It emphasizes not only common problems, aspirations and

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concerns, but also uniquely individual questions, cares and anxieties which assail each person. Our sages, in explaining the graphic difference between the open and closed *mem*, spoke of מאמר פתוח and מאמר סתום — the enigmatic and the clear or distinct phrase. They felt that the word at times enlightens, at times, confounds; at times, elucidates, and at other times, emphasizes the unintelligible and unknowable.

When Adam addressed himself to Eve, employing the word as the means of communication, he certainly told her not only what united them but also what separated them. Eve was both enlightened and perplexed, assured and troubled by his word. For, in all personal unions such as marriage, friendship, or comradeship, however strong the bonds uniting two individuals, the *modi existantiae* remain totally unique and hence, incongruous, at both levels, the ontological and the experiential. The hope of finding a personal existential equation of two human beings is rooted in the dangerous and false notion that human existences are abstract magnitudes subject to the simple mathematical processes. This error lies at the root of the philosophies of the corporate state and of mechanistic behaviorism. In fact, the closer two individuals get to know each other, the more aware they become of the metaphysical distance separating them. Each one exists in a singular manner, completely absorbed in his individual awareness which is egocentric and exclusive. The sun of existence rises with the birth of one's self-awareness and sets with its termination. It is beyond the experiential power of an individual to visualize an existence preceding or following his.

It is paradoxical yet nonetheless true that each human being lives both in an existential community, surrounded by friends, and in a state of existential loneliness and tension, confronted by strangers. In each to whom I relate as a human being, I find a friend, for we have many things in common, as well as a stranger, for each of us is unique and wholly other. This otherness stands in the way of complete mutual understanding. The gap of uniqueness is too wide to be bridged. Indeed, it is not a gap, it is an abyss. Of course, there prevails, quite often, a harmony of interests, — economic, political, social — upon which two individuals focus their attention. However, two people glancing at the same object

may continue to lead isolated, closed-in existences. Coordination of interests does not spell an existential union. We frequently engage in common enterprise and we prudently pursue common goals, travelling temporarily along parallel roads, yet our destinations are not the same. We are, in the words of the Torah, an עֵזֶר — a helpmeet to each other, yet at the same time, we experience the state of כְּנֻגָּד — we remain different and opposed to each other.⁷ We think, feel and respond to events not in unison but singly, each one in his individual fashion. Man is a social being, yearning for a together-existence in which services are exchanged and experiences shared, and a lonely creature, shy and reticent, fearful of the intruding cynical glance of his next-door neighbor. In spite of our sociability and outer-directed nature, we remain strangers to each other. Our feelings of sympathy and love for our confronter are rooted in the surface personality and they do not reach into the inner recesses of our depth personality which never leaves its ontological seclusion and never becomes involved in a communal existence.

In a word, the greatness of man manifests itself in his dialectical approach to his confronter, in ambivalent acting toward his fellow-man, in giving friendship and hurling defiance, in relating himself to, and at the same time, retreating from him. In the dichotomy of עֵזֶר and כְּנֻגָּד we find our triumph as well as our defeat.

Modern man, who did not meet to the fullest the challenge of confrontation on the second level, does not perform well at the level of personal confrontation either. He has forgotten how to master the difficult dialectical art of עֵזֶר כְּנֻגָּד — of being one with and, at the same time, different from, his human confronter, of living in community and simultaneously in solitude. He has developed the habit of confronting his fellow man in a fashion similar to that which prevails at the level of subject-object relationship, seeking to dominate and subordinate him instead of communicating and communing with him. The wondrous personal confrontation of Adam and Eve is thus turned into an ugly attempt at depersonalization. Adam of today wants to appear as master-hero

7. The interpretation of כְּנֻגָּד as "opposing" was accepted by our Talmudic sages. See *Yebamot*, 63a.

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and to subject Eve to his rule and dominion, be it ideological, religious, economic, or political. As a matter of fact, the divine curse addressed to Eve after she sinned, *וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶל הָאִשָּׁה וְהָיָה כִּי תֵאָכְלִי מִן הַעֵץ וְהָיָה לָךְ בְּרִי וְהָיָה עִבְדְּךָ לָהּ* — “and he shall rule over thee,” has found its fulfillment in our modern society. The warm personal relationship between two individuals has been supplanted by a formal subject-object relationship which manifests itself in a quest for power and supremacy.

II

1.

We Jews have been burdened with a twofold task; we have to cope with the problem of a double confrontation. We think of ourselves as human beings, sharing the destiny of Adam in his general encounter with nature, and as members of a covenantal community which has preserved its identity under most unfavorable conditions, confronted by another faith community. We believe we are the bearers of a double charismatic load, that of the dignity of man, and that of the sanctity of the covenantal community. In this difficult role, we are summoned by God, who revealed himself at both the level of universal creation and that of the private covenant, to undertake a double mission — the universal human and the exclusive covenantal confrontation.

Like his forefather, Jacob — whose bitter nocturnal struggle with a mysterious antagonist is so dramatically portrayed in the Bible — the Jew of old was a doubly confronted being. The emancipated modern Jew, however, has been trying, for a long time, to do away with this twofold responsibility which weighs heavily upon him. The Westernized Jew maintains that it is impossible to engage in both confrontations, the universal and the covenantal, which, in his opinion, are mutually exclusive. It is, he argues, absurd to stand shoulder to shoulder with mankind preoccupied with the cognitive-technological gesture for the welfare of all, implementing the mandate granted to us by the Creator, and to make an about-face the next instant in order to confront our comrades as a distinct and separate community. Hence, the Western Jew concludes, we have to choose between these two encounters. We

are either confronted human beings or confronted Jews. A double confrontation contains an inner contradiction.

What is characteristic of these single-confrontation philosophers is their optimistic and carefree disposition. Like natural Adam of old, who saw himself as part of his environment and was never assailed by a feeling of being existentially different, they see themselves as secure and fully integrated within general society. They do not raise any questions about the reasonableness and justification of such an optimistic attitude, nor do they try to discover in the deep recesses of their personality commitments which transcend mundane obligations to society.

The proponents of the single-confrontation philosophy (with the exception of some fringe groups) do not preach complete de-Judaization and unqualified assimilation. They also speak of Jewish identity (at least in a religious sense), of Jewish selfhood and the natural will for preservation of the Jewish community as a separate identity. As a matter of fact, quite often they speak with great zeal and warmth about the past and future role of Judaism in the advancement of mankind and its institutions. However, they completely fail to grasp the real nature and the full implications of a meaningful Jewish identity.

2.

This failure rests upon two misconceptions of the nature of the faith community. First, the single-confrontation philosophy continues to speak of Jewish identity without realizing that this term can only be understood under the aspect of singularity and otherness. There is no identity without uniqueness. As there cannot be an equation between two individuals unless they are converted into abstractions, it is likewise absurd to speak of the commensurability of two faith communities which are individual entities.

The individuality of a faith community expresses itself in a threefold way. First, the divine imperatives and commandments to which a faith community is unreservedly committed must not be equated with the ritual and ethos of another community. Each faith community is engaged in a singular normative gesture re-

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flecting the numinous nature of the act of faith itself, and it is futile to try to find common denominators. Particularly when we speak of the Jewish faith community, whose very essence is expressed in the halakhic performance which is a most individuating factor, any attempt to equate our identity with another is sheer absurdity. Second, the axiological awareness of each faith community is an exclusive one, for it believes — and this belief is indispensable to the survival of the community — that its system of dogmas, doctrines and values is best fitted for the attainment of the ultimate good. Third, each faith community is unyielding in its eschatological expectations. It perceives the events at the end of time with exultant certainty, and expects man, by surrender of selfish pettiness and by consecration to the great destiny of life, to embrace the faith that this community has been preaching throughout the millenia. Standardization of practices, equalization of dogmatic certitudes, and the waiving of eschatological claims spell the end of the vibrant and great faith experience of any religious community. It is as unique and enigmatic as the individual himself.

The second misconception of the single-confrontation philosophy consists in not realizing the compatibility of the two roles. If the relationship of the non-Jewish to the Jewish world had conformed to the divine arrangement for one human being to meet the other on the basis of equality, friendship and sympathy, the Jew would have been able to become fully involved together with the rest of humanity in the cosmic confrontation. His covenantal uniqueness and his additional mandate to face another faith community as a member of a different community of the committed would not have interfered in the least with his readiness to and capability of joining the cultural enterprise of the rest of humanity. There is no contradiction between coordinating our cultural activity with all men and at the same time confronting them as members of another faith community. As a matter of fact even within the non-Jewish society, each individual sees himself under a double aspect: first, as a member of a cultural-creative community in which all are committed to a common goal and, at the same time, as an individual living in seclusion and loneliness.

Unfortunately, however, non-Jewish society has confronted us throughout the ages in a mood of defiance, as if we were part of the

subhuman objective order separated by an abyss from the human, as if we had no capacity for thinking logically, loving passionately, yearning deeply, aspiring and hoping. Of course, as long as we were exposed to such a soulless, impersonal confrontation on the part of non-Jewish society, it was impossible for us to participate to the fullest extent in the great universal creative confrontation between man and the cosmic order. The limited role we played until modern times in the great cosmic confrontation was not of our choosing. Heaven knows that we never encouraged the cruel relationship which the world displayed toward us. We have always considered ourselves an inseparable part of humanity and we were ever ready to accept the divine challenge, מלאו את הארץ וכבשה "Fill the earth and subdue it," and the responsibility implicit in human existence. We have never proclaimed the philosophy of *contemptus* or *odium seculi*. We have steadily maintained that involvement in the creative scheme of things is mandatory.

Involvement with the rest of mankind in the cosmic confrontation does not, we must repeat, rule out the second personal confrontation of two faith communities, each aware of both what it shares with the other and what is singularly its own. In the same manner as Adam and Eve confronted and attempted to subdue a malicious scoffing nature and yet nevertheless encountered each other as two separate individuals cognizant of their incommensurability and uniqueness, so also two faith communities which coordinate their efforts when confronted by the cosmic order may face each other in the full knowledge of their distinctness and individuality.

We reject the theory of a single confrontation and instead insist upon the indispensability of the double confrontation. First, as we have mentioned previously, we, created in the image of God, are charged with responsibility for the great confrontation of man and the cosmos. We stand with civilized society shoulder to shoulder over against an order which defies us all. Second, as a charismatic faith community, we have to meet the challenge of confronting the general non-Jewish faith community. We are called upon to tell this community not only the story it already knows — that we are human beings, committed to the general welfare and progress of mankind, that we are interested in combatting disease, in alle-

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viating human suffering, in protecting man's rights, in helping the needy, *et cetera* — but also what is still unknown to it, namely, our otherness as a metaphysical covenantal community.

3.

It is self-evident that a confrontation of two faith communities is possible only if it is accompanied by a clear assurance that both parties will enjoy equal rights and full religious freedom. We shall resent any attempt on the part of the community of the many to engage us in a peculiar encounter in which our confronter will command us to take a position beneath him while placing himself not alongside of but above us. A democratic confrontation certainly does not demand that we submit to an attitude of self-righteousness taken by the community of the many which, while debating whether or not to "absolve" the community of the few of some mythical guilt, completely ignores its own historical responsibility for the suffering and martyrdom so frequently recorded in the annals of the history of the few, the weak, and the persecuted.

We are not ready for a meeting with another faith community in which we shall become an object of observation, judgment and evaluation, even though the community of the many may then condescendingly display a sense of compassion with the community of the few and advise the many not to harm or persecute the few. Such an encounter would convert the personal Adam-Eve meeting into a hostile confrontation between a subject-knower and a knowable object. We do not intend to play the part of the object encountered by dominating man. Soliciting commiseration is incongruous with the character of a democratic confrontation. There should rather be insistence upon one's inalienable rights as a human being, created by God.

In light of this analysis, it would be reasonable to state that in any confrontation we must insist upon four basic conditions in order to safeguard our individuality and freedom of action.

First, we must state, in unequivocal terms, the following. We are a totally independent faith community. We do not revolve as a satellite in any orbit. Nor are we related to any other faith community as "brethren" even though "separated." People confuse two

concepts when they speak of a common tradition uniting two faith communities such as the Christian and the Judaic. This term may have relevance if one looks upon a faith community under an historico-cultural aspect and interprets its relationship to another faith community in sociological, human, categories describing the unfolding of the creative consciousness of man. Let us not forget that religious awareness manifests itself not only in a singular apocalyptic faith experience but in a mundane cultural experience as well. Religion is both a divine imperative which was foisted upon man from without and a new dimension of personal being which man discovers within himself. In a word, there is a cultural aspect to the faith experience which is, from a psychological viewpoint, the most integrating, inspiring and uplifting spiritual force. Religious values, doctrines and concepts may be and have been translated into cultural categories enjoyed and cherished even by secular man. All the references throughout the ages to universal religion, philosophical religion, *et cetera*, are related to the cultural aspect of the faith experience of which not only the community of believers but a pragmatic, utilitarian society avails itself as well. The cultural religious experience gives meaning and directedness to human existence and relates it to great ultimates, thus enhancing human dignity and worth even at a mundane level.

Viewing the relationship between Judaism and Christianity under this aspect, it is quite legitimate to speak of a cultural Judeo-Christian tradition for two reasons: First, Judaism as a culture has influenced, indeed, molded the ethico-philosophical Christian world-formula. The basic categories and premises of the latter were evolved in the cultural Judaic orbit. Second, our Western civilization has absorbed both Judaic and Christian elements. As a matter of fact, our Western heritage was shaped by a combination of three factors, the classical, Judaic, and Christian, and we could readily speak of a Judeo-Hellenistic-Christian tradition within the framework of our Western civilization. However, when we shift the focus from the dimension of culture to that of faith — where total unconditional commitment and involvement are necessary — the whole idea of a tradition of faiths and the continuum of revealed doctrines which are by their very nature incommensurate and related to different frames of reference is utterly absurd, unless

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one is ready to acquiesce in the Christian theological claim that Christianity has superseded Judaism.

As a faith individuality, the community of the few is endowed with intrinsic worth which must be viewed against its own meta-historical backdrop without relating to the framework of another faith community. For the mere appraisal of the worth of one community in terms of the service it has rendered to another community, no matter how great and important this service was, constitutes an infringement of the sovereignty and dignity of even the smallest of faith communities. When God created man and endowed him with individual dignity, He decreed that the ontological legitimacy and relevance of the individual human being is to be discovered not without but within the individual. He was created because God approved of him as an autonomous human being and not as an auxiliary being in the service of someone else. The ontological purposiveness of his existence is immanent in him. The same is true of a religious community, whose worth is not to be measured by external standards.

Therefore, any intimation, overt or covert, on the part of the community of the many that it is expected of the community of the few that it shed its uniqueness and cease existing because it has fulfilled its mission by paving the way for the community of the many, must be rejected as undemocratic and contravening the very idea of religious freedom. The small community has as much right to profess its faith in the ultimate certitude concerning the doctrinal worth of its world formula and to behold its own eschatological vision as does the community of the many. I do not deny the right of the community of the many to address itself to the community of the few in its own eschatological terms. However, building a practical program upon this right is hardly consonant with religious democracy and liberalism.

Second, the *logos*, the word, in which the multifarious religious experience is expressed does not lend itself to standardization or universalization. The word of faith reflects the intimate, the private, the paradoxically inexpressible cravings of the individual for and his linking up with his Maker. It reflects the numinous character and the strangeness of the act of faith of a particular community which is totally incomprehensible to the man of a different

faith community. Hence, it is important that the religious or theological *logos* should not be employed as the medium of communication between two faith communities whose modes of expression are as unique as their apocalyptic experiences. The confrontation should occur not at a theological, but at a mundane human level. There, all of us speak the universal language of modern man. As a matter of fact, our common interests lie not in the realm of faith, but in that of the secular orders.⁸ There, we all face a powerful antagonist, we all have to contend with a considerable number of matters of great concern. The relationship between two communities must be outer-directed and related to the secular orders with which men of faith come face to face. In the secular sphere, we may discuss positions to be taken, ideas to be evolved, and plans to be formulated. In these matters, religious communities may together recommend action to be developed and may seize the initiative to be implemented later by general society. However, our joint engagement in this kind of enterprise must not dull our sense of identity as a faith community. We must always remember that our singular commitment to God and our hope and indomitable will for survival are non-negotiable and non-rationalizable and are not subject to debate and argumentation. The great encounter between God and man is a wholly personal private affair incomprehensible to the outsider — even to a brother of the same faith community. The divine message is incommunicable since it defies all standardized media of information and all objective categories. If the powerful community of the many feels like remedying an embarrassing human situation or redressing an historic wrong, it should do so at the human ethical level. However, if the debate should revolve around matters of faith, then one of the confronters will be impelled to avail himself of the language of his opponent. This in itself would mean surrender of individuality and distinctiveness.

Third, we members of the community of the few should always act with tact and understanding and refrain from suggesting to the community of the many, which is both proud and prudent,

8. The term "secular orders" is used here in accordance with its popular semantics. For the man of faith, this term is a misnomer. God claims the whole, not a part of man, and whatever He established as an order within the scheme of creation is sacred.

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changes in its ritual or emendations of its texts. If the genuinely liberal dignitaries of the faith community of the many deem some changes advisable, they will act in accordance with their convictions without any prompting on our part. It is not within our purview to advise or solicit. For it would be both impertinent and unwise for an outsider to intrude upon the most private sector of the human existential experience, namely, the way in which a faith community expresses its relationship to God. Non-interference with and non-involvement in something which is totally alien to us is a *conditio sine qua non* for the furtherance of good-will and mutual respect.

Fourth, we certainly have not been authorized by our history, sanctified by the martyrdom of millions, to even hint to another faith community that we are mentally ready to revise historical attitudes, to trade favors pertaining to fundamental matters of faith, and to reconcile "some" differences. Such a suggestion would be nothing but a betrayal of our great tradition and heritage and would, furthermore, produce no practical benefits. Let us not forget that the community of the many will not be satisfied with half measures and compromises which are only indicative of a feeling of insecurity and inner emptiness. We cannot command the respect of our confronters by displaying a servile attitude. Only a candid, frank and unequivocal policy reflecting unconditional commitment to our God, a sense of dignity, pride and inner joy in being what we are, believing with great passion in the ultimate truthfulness of our views, praying fervently for and expecting confidently the fulfillment of our eschatological vision when our faith will rise from particularity to universality, will impress the peers of the other faith community among whom we have both adversaries and friends. I hope and pray that our friends in the community of the many will sustain their liberal convictions and humanitarian ideals by articulating their position on the right of the community of the few to live, create, and worship God in its own way, in freedom and with dignity.

4

Our representatives who meet with the spokesmen of the community of the many should be given instructions similar to those

enunciated by our patriarch Jacob when he sent his agents to meet his brother Esau.

ויצו את הראשון לאמר כי יפגשך עשו אחי ושאלך לאמר למי אתה ואנה תלך ולמי אלה לפניך ואמרת לעבדך ליעקב מנחה היא שלוחה לאדני לעשו והנה גם הוא אחרינו ויצו גם את השני גם את השלישי גם את כל ההלכים אחרי העדרים לאמר כדבר הזה תדברון אל עשו "And he commanded the foremost, saying, when Esau my brother, meeteth thee and asketh thee, saying: whose art thou and whither goest thou? And whose are these before thee? Then thou shalt say they are thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau, and behold he also is behind us. And he commanded also the second, and the third and all that followed the droves, saying in this manner shall ye speak unto Esau when ye find him." (Genesis 32:18-20).

What was the nature of these instructions? Our approach to and relationship with the outside world has always been of an ambivalent character, intrinsically antithetic, bordering at times on the paradoxical. We relate ourselves to and at the same time withdraw from, we come close to and simultaneously retreat from the world of Esau. When the process of coming nearer and nearer is almost consummated, we immediately begin to retreat quickly into seclusion. We cooperate with the members of other faith communities in all fields of constructive human endeavor, but, simultaneously with our integration into the general social framework, we engage in a movement of recoil and retrace our steps. In a word, we belong to the human society and, at the same time, we feel as strangers and outsiders. We are rooted in the here and now reality as inhabitants of our globe, and yet we experience a sense of homelessness and loneliness as if we belonged somewhere else. We are both realists and dreamers, prudent and practical on the one hand, and visionaries and idealists on the other. We are indeed involved in the cultural endeavor and yet we are committed to another dimension of experience. Our first patriarch, Abraham, already introduced himself in the following words: "I am a stranger and sojourner with you" — "גר ותושב אנכי עמכם" — Is it possible to be both — גר ותושב — at the same time? Is not this definition absurd since it contravenes the central principle of classical logic that no cognitive judgment may contain two

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mutually exclusive terms? And yet, the Jew of old defied this time-honored principle and did think of himself in contradictory terms. He knew well in what areas he could extend his full cooperation to his neighbors and act as a *תושב*, a resident, a sojourner, and at what point this gesture of cooperation and goodwill should terminate, and he must disengage as if he were a *גר*, a stranger. He knew in what enterprise to participate to the best of his ability and what offers and suggestions, however attractive and tempting, to reject resolutely. He was aware of the issues on which he could compromise, of the nature of the goods he could surrender, and vice versa, of the principles which were not negotiable and the spiritual goods which had to be defended at no matter what cost. The boundary line between a finite idea and a principle nurtured by infinity, transient possessions and eternal treasures, was clear and precise. Jacob, in his instructions to his agents, laid down the rule:

כי יפגשך עשו אחי ושאלך לאמר למי אתה ואנה תלך ולמי אלה לפניך?
“When Esau my brother meeteth thee and asketh thee, saying: whose art thou, and whither goest thou and whose are these before thee?” My brother Esau, Jacob told his agents, will address to you three questions. “Whose art thou?” To whom do you as a metaphysical being, as a soul, as a spiritual personality belong? “And whither goest thou?” To whom is your historical destiny committed? To whom have you consecrated your future? What is your ultimate goal, your final objective? Who is your God and what is your way of life? These two inquiries are related to your identity as members of a covenantal community. However, Jacob continued, my brother Esau will also ask a third question: “And whose are these before thee?” Are you ready to contribute your talents, capabilities and efforts toward the material and cultural welfare of general society? Are you ready to present me with gifts, oxen, goats, camels and bulls? Are you willing to pay taxes, to develop and industrialize the country? This third inquiry is focused on temporal aspects of life. As regards the third question, Jacob told his agents to answer in the positive. “It is a present unto my lord, even unto Esau.” Yes, we are determined to participate in every civic, scientific, and political enterprise. We feel obligated to enrich society with our creative talents and to be constructive and useful citi-

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zens. Yet, pertaining to the first two questions — whose art thou and whither goest thou — Jacob commanded his representatives to reply in the negative, clearly and precisely, boldly and courageously. He commanded them to tell Esau that their soul, their personality, their metaphysical destiny, their spiritual future and sacred commitments, belong exclusively to God and His servant Jacob. "They are thy servant Jacob's," and no human power can succeed in severing the eternal bond between them and God.

This testament handed down to us by Jacob has become very relevant now in the year 1964. We find ourselves confronted again like Jacob of old, and our confronters are ready to address to us the identical three questions: "Whose art thou? Whither goest thou? Whose are these before thee?" A milenia-old history demands from us that we meet the challenge courageously and give the same answers with which Jacob entrusted his messengers several thousand years ago.

STATEMENT ADOPTED BY THE RABBINICAL COUNCIL OF AMERICA AT THE MID-WINTER CONFERENCE, FEBRUARY 3-5, 1964

We are pleased to note that in recent years there has evolved in our country as well as throughout the world a desire to seek better understanding and a mutual respect among the world's major faiths. The current threat of secularism and materialism and the modern atheistic negation of religion and religious values makes even more imperative a harmonious relationship among the faiths. This relationship, however, can only be of value if it will not be in conflict with the uniqueness of each religious community, since each religious community is an individual entity which cannot be merged or equated with a community which is committed to a different faith. Each religious community is endowed with intrinsic dignity and metaphysical worth. Its historical experience, its present dynamics, its hopes and aspirations for the future can only be interpreted in terms of full spiritual independence of and freedom from any relatedness to another faith community. Any suggestion that the historical and meta-historical worth of a faith community be viewed against the backdrop of

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another faith, and the mere hint that a revision of basic historic attitudes is anticipated, are incongruous with the fundamentals of religious liberty and freedom of conscience and can only breed discord and suspicion. Such an approach is unacceptable to any self-respecting faith community that is proud of its past, vibrant and active in the present and determined to live on in the future and to continue serving God in its own individual way. Only full appreciation on the part of all of the singular role, inherent worth and basic prerogatives of each religious community will help promote the spirit of cooperation among faiths.

It is the prayerful hope of the Rabbinical Council of America that all inter-religious discussion and activity will be confined to these dimensions and will be guided by the prophet, Micah (4:5) "Let all the people walk, each one in the name of his god, and we shall walk in the name of our Lord, our God, forever and ever."

A handwritten mark, possibly a signature or initials, consisting of a large 'X' shape with a vertical line extending downwards from the center.



Orthodox Rabbinic Statement on Christianity

December 3, 2015

To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven: Toward a Partnership between Jews and Christians

After nearly two millennia of mutual hostility and alienation, we Orthodox Rabbis who lead communities, institutions and seminaries in Israel, the United States and Europe recognize the historic opportunity now before us. We seek to do the will of our Father in Heaven by accepting the hand offered to us by our Christian brothers and sisters. Jews and Christians must work together as partners to address the moral challenges of our era.

1. The Shoah ended 70 years ago. It was the warped climax to centuries of disrespect, oppression and rejection of Jews and the consequent enmity that developed between Jews and Christians. In retrospect it is clear that the failure to break through this contempt and engage in constructive dialogue for the good of humankind weakened resistance to evil forces of anti-Semitism that engulfed the world in murder and genocide.
2. We recognize that since the Second Vatican Council the official teachings of the Catholic Church about Judaism have changed fundamentally and irrevocably. The promulgation of *Nostra Aetate* fifty years ago started the process of reconciliation between our two communities. *Nostra Aetate* and the later official Church documents it inspired unequivocally reject any form of anti-Semitism, affirm the eternal Covenant between G-d and the Jewish people, reject deicide and stress the unique relationship between Christians and Jews, who were called "our elder brothers" by Pope John Paul II and "our fathers in faith" by Pope Benedict XVI. On this basis, Catholics and other Christian officials started an honest dialogue with Jews that has grown during the last five decades. We appreciate the Church's affirmation of Israel's unique place in sacred history and the ultimate world redemption. Today Jews have experienced sincere love and respect from many Christians that have been expressed in many dialogue initiatives, meetings and conferences around the world.
3. As did Maimonides and Yehudah Halevi,[1] we acknowledge that Christianity is neither an accident nor an error, but the willed divine outcome and gift to the nations. In separating Judaism and Christianity, G-d willed a separation between partners with significant theological differences, not a separation between enemies. Rabbi Jacob Emden wrote that "Jesus brought a double goodness to the world. On the one hand he strengthened the Torah of Moses majestically... and not one of our Sages spoke out more emphatically concerning the immutability of the Torah. On the other hand he removed idols from the nations and obligated them in the seven commandments of Noah so that they would not behave like animals of the field, and instilled them firmly with moral traits.....Christians are congregations that work for the sake of heaven who are

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Bible Study Corner

Rationales for the Omission of

destined to endure, whose intent is for the sake of heaven and whose reward will not be denied.”[2] Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch taught us that Christians “have accepted the Jewish Bible of the Old Testament as a book of Divine revelation. They profess their belief in the G-d of Heaven and Earth as proclaimed in the Bible and they acknowledge the sovereignty of Divine Providence.”[3] Now that the Catholic Church has acknowledged the eternal Covenant between G-d and Israel, we Jews can acknowledge the ongoing constructive validity of Christianity as our partner in world redemption, without any fear that this will be exploited for missionary purposes. As stated by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel's Bilateral Commission with the Holy See under the leadership of Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen, “We are no longer enemies, but unequivocal partners in articulating the essential moral values for the survival and welfare of humanity”.[4] Neither of us can achieve G-d's mission in this world alone.

4. Both Jews and Christians have a common covenantal mission to perfect the world under the sovereignty of the Almighty, so that all humanity will call on His name and abominations will be removed from the earth. We understand the hesitation of both sides to affirm this truth and we call on our communities to overcome these fears in order to establish a relationship of trust and respect. Rabbi Hirsch also taught that the Talmud puts Christians “with regard to the duties between man and man on exactly the same level as Jews. They have a claim to the benefit of all the duties not only of justice but also of active human brotherly love.” In the past relations between Christians and Jews were often seen through the adversarial relationship of Esau and Jacob, yet Rabbi Naftali Zvi Berliner (Netziv) already understood at the end of the 19th century that Jews and Christians are destined by G-d to be loving partners: “In the future when the children of Esau are moved by pure spirit to recognize the people of Israel and their virtues, then we will also be moved to recognize that Esau is our brother.”[5]
5. We Jews and Christians have more in common than what divides us: the ethical monotheism of Abraham; the relationship with the One Creator of Heaven and Earth, Who loves and cares for all of us; Jewish Sacred Scriptures; a belief in a binding tradition; and the values of life, family, compassionate righteousness, justice, inalienable freedom, universal love and ultimate world peace. Rabbi Moses Rivkis (Be'er Hagoleh) confirms this and wrote that “the Sages made reference only to the idolator of their day who did not believe in the creation of the world, the Exodus, G-d's miraculous deeds and the divinely given law. In contrast, the people among whom we are scattered believe in all these essentials of religion.”[6]
6. Our partnership in no way minimizes the ongoing differences between the two communities and two religions. We believe that G-d employs many messengers to reveal His truth, while we affirm the fundamental ethical obligations that all people have before G-d that Judaism has always taught through the universal Noahide covenant.
7. In imitating G-d, Jews and Christians must offer models of service, unconditional love and holiness. We are all created in G-d's Holy Image, and Jews and Christians will remain dedicated to the Covenant by playing an active role together in redeeming the world.

Initial signatories (in alphabetical order):

Rabbi Jehoshua Ahrens (Germany)
 Rabbi Marc Angel (United States)
 Rabbi Isak Asiel (Chief Rabbi of Serbia)
 Rabbi David Bigman (Israel)
 Rabbi David Bollag (Switzerland)
 Rabbi David Brodman (Israel)
 Rabbi Natan Lopez Cardozo (Israel)
 Rav Yehudah Gilad (Israel)
 Rabbi Alon Goshen-Gottstein (Israel)
 Rabbi Irving Greenberg (United States)
 Rabbi Marc Raphael Guedj (Switzerland)
 Rabbi Eugene Korn (Israel)
 Rabbi Daniel Landes (Israel)
 Rabbi Steven Langnas (Germany)
 Rabbi Benjamin Lau (Israel)
 Rabbi Simon Livson (Chief Rabbi of Finland)
 Rabbi Asher Lopatin (United States)
 Rabbi Shlomo Riskin (Israel)

Eschatology in the Bible

BY NOAH H. ROSENBLUM

HAVING GAINED A SHORT RESPITE FROM PERSECUTION after the expulsion from Spain, Don Isaac Abravanel, after many arduous and turbulent years in the service of the Portuguese and Spanish sovereigns, settled in Monopoli, a small Italian town on the Adriatic Sea. He wished to devote himself, in his declining years, to [Continue Reading](#)

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If you're an orthodox rabbi wishing to add your name to the signatory list, please fill out your information in the fields below:

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City (required)

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Currently serving a congregation:

☐ Yes ☐ No

Name of synagogue:

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STATEMENT SOURCES

[1] Mishneh Torah, Laws of Kings 11:4 (uncensored edition); Kuzari, section 4:22

[2] Seder Olam Rabbah 35-37; Sefer ha-Shimush 15-17.

[3] *Principles of Education*, "Talmudic Judaism and Society," 225-227.

[4] Fourth meeting of the Bilateral Commission of the Chief Rabbinate of Israel and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with Jewry, Grottaferrata, Italy (19 October 2004).

[5] Commentary on Genesis 33:4.

[6] Gloss on Shulhan Arukh, Hoshen Mishpat, Section 425:5.

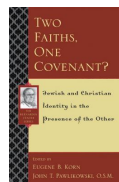
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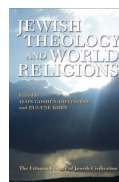
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Christian Conversion of Jews?

National Jewish Interfaith Leadership Letter on USCCB "Note

🕒 Created: August 18, 2009

Cardinal Francis George,
President, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Archbishop Wilton Gregory
Chairman, Bishops Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

Bishop William Lori,
Chairman, Bishops Committee on Doctrine and Pastoral Practice

Father James Massa,
Executive Director, Secretariat of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs

Father Thomas Weinandy,
Executive Director, Secretariat of Doctrine

Cardinal William Keeler,
Moderator, Catholic-Jewish dialogue

Dear Esteemed Colleagues;

The recent USCCB statement “*A Note on Ambiguities Contained in Covenant and Mission*” has called the Jewish community.

A major source of concern is the document's assertion that the remark in the earlier Reflections on interreligious dialogue is "devoid of any intention whatsoever to invite the dialogue partner to baptism. According to the new document, "though Christian participation in interreligious dialogue would be an explicit invitation to baptism and entrance into the Church, the Christian dialogue partner is always following of Christ to which all are implicitly invited." Since Reflections focused specifically on the Catholic Church, it informs us that Catholics engaging in dialogue with Jews must have the intention of extending an invitation to Christianity and that one can even imagine a situation in such a dialogue where this invitation would

A declaration of this sort is antithetical to the very essence of Jewish-Christian dialogue as we have known it since the Vatican II era. We pose no objection to the position that Christians must bear witness to the truth about God on it forthrightly, candidly and passionately. However, once Jewish-Christian dialogue has been focused on an explicit invitation, whether explicit or implicit, to apostatize, then Jewish participation becomes untenable.

The second source of concern has to do with the continuing validity of the Mosaic covenant. Section 2 of the "Note" states that "the fulfillment of the covenants, indeed, of all of God's promises to Israel, is found in Jesus Christ." This appears to posit that the Mosaic covenant is obsolete and Judaism no longer has a reason to exist.

There is a range of views within the Jewish community about the appropriate Jewish reaction to a Church statement of this covenant. But we all recognize that affirming its validity is more likely to result in more positive Jewish-Christian relations and we were consequently encouraged by a series of what appeared to be authoritative statements over the years that endorsed this affirmation. One example of such a statement is the following affirmation by Cardinal Walter Kasper at the most important venue for Catholic-Jewish dialogue where he spoke in his capacity as the official for relations with the Jews (published in America, Sept. 17, 2001): "One of these questions is the relationship with the Jewish people, which according to St. Paul is unbroken and not revoked but still in vigor, with the New Covenant. As you know, the old theory of substitution is gone since the Second Vatican Council. Today the covenant with the Jewish people is a living heritage, a living reality."

The new statement has therefore engendered both uncertainty and considerable disappointment within the Jewish community maintained by the Church and its spokespersons regarding this matter.

The "Note" has not only raised questions about the Church's perception of the Mosaic Covenant but also the objective of Jewish-Christian dialogue that threatens the mutuality and efficaciousness of the entire process concerned.

Sincerely,

Rabbi Gary Greenebaum,
American Jewish Committee

Rabbi Eric J. Greenberg,
Anti-Defamation League

Rabbi Gilbert S. Rosenthal,
National Council of Synagogues

Professor Lawrence Schiffman,
Orthodox Union

Rabbi Dr. David Berger,
Rabbinical Council of America

cc: Cardinal Walter Kasper, President, Vatican Commission on Religious Relations with the Jews;
Bishop William Murphy, Moderator, Catholic/Orthodox Jewish Dialogue

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NATIONAL JEWISH SCHOLARS PROJECT | 15.07.2002

National Jewish Scholars Project

DABRU EMET

A Jewish Statement on Christians And Christianity

In recent years, there has been a dramatic and unprecedented shift in Jewish and Christian relations. Throughout the nearly two millennia of Jewish exile, Christians have tended to characterize Judaism as a failed religion or, at best, a religion that prepared the way for, and is completed in, Christianity. In the decades since the Holocaust, however, Christianity has changed dramatically. An increasing number of official Church bodies, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, have made public statements of their remorse about Christian mistreatment of Jews and Judaism. These statements have declared, furthermore, that Christian teaching and preaching can and must be reformed so that they acknowledge God's enduring covenant with the Jewish people and celebrate the contribution of Judaism to world civilization and to Christian faith itself.

We believe these changes merit a thoughtful Jewish response. Speaking only for ourselves -- an interdenominational group of Jewish scholars -- we believe it is time for Jews to learn about the efforts of Christians to honor Judaism. We believe it is time for Jews to reflect on what Judaism may now say about Christianity. As a first step, we offer eight brief statements about how Jews and Christians may relate to one another.

Jews and Christians worship the same God. Before the rise of Christianity, Jews were the only worshippers of the God of Israel. But Christians also worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; creator of heaven and earth. While Christian worship is not a viable religious choice for Jews, as Jewish theologians we rejoice that, through Christianity, hundreds of millions of people have entered into relationship with the God of Israel.

Jews and Christians seek authority from the same book -- the Bible (what Jews call "Tanakh" and Christians call the "Old Testament"). Turning to it for religious orientation, spiritual enrichment, and communal education, we each take away similar lessons: God created and sustains the universe; God established a covenant with the people Israel, God's revealed word guides Israel to a life of righteousness; and God will ultimately redeem Israel and the whole world. Yet, Jews and Christians interpret the Bible differently on many points. Such differences must always be respected.

Christians can respect the claim of the Jewish people upon the land of Israel. The most important event for Jews since the

Holocaust has been the reestablishment of a Jewish state in the Promised Land. As members of a biblically based religion, Christians appreciate that Israel was promised -- and given -- to Jews as the physical center of the covenant between them and God. Many Christians support the State of Israel for reasons far more profound than mere politics. As Jews, we applaud this support. We also recognize that Jewish tradition mandates justice for all non-Jews who reside in a Jewish state.

Jews and Christians accept the moral principles of Torah. Central to the moral principles of Torah is the inalienable sanctity and dignity of every human being. All of us were created in the image of God. This shared moral emphasis can be the basis of an improved relationship between our two communities. It can also be the basis of a powerful witness to all humanity for improving the lives of our fellow human beings and for standing against the immoralities and idolatries that harm and degrade us. Such witness is especially needed after the unprecedented horrors of the past century.

Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon. 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. Too many Christians participated in, or were sympathetic to, Nazi atrocities against Jews. Other Christians did not protest sufficiently against these atrocities. But Nazism itself was not an inevitable outcome of Christianity. If the Nazi extermination of the Jews had been fully successful, it would have turned its murderous rage more directly to Christians. We recognize with gratitude those Christians who risked or sacrificed their lives to save Jews during the Nazi regime. With that in mind, we encourage the continuation of recent efforts in Christian theology to repudiate unequivocally contempt of Judaism and the Jewish people. We applaud those Christians who reject this teaching of contempt, and we do not blame them for the sins committed by their ancestors.

The humanly irreconcilable difference between Jews and Christians will not be settled until God redeems the entire world as promised in Scripture. Christians know and serve God through Jesus Christ and the Christian tradition. Jews know and serve God through Torah and the Jewish tradition. That difference will not be settled by one community insisting that it has interpreted Scripture more accurately than the other; nor by exercising political power over the other. Jews can respect Christians' faithfulness to their revelation just as we expect Christians to respect our faithfulness to our revelation. Neither Jew nor Christian should be pressed into affirming the teaching of the other community.

A new relationship between Jews and Christians will not weaken Jewish practice. An improved relationship will not accelerate the cultural and religious assimilation that Jews rightly fear. It will not change traditional Jewish forms of worship, nor increase intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews, nor persuade more Jews to convert to Christianity, nor create a false blending of Judaism and Christianity. We respect Christianity as a faith that originated within Judaism and that still has significant contacts with it. We do not see it as an extension of Judaism. Only if we cherish our own traditions can we pursue this relationship with integrity.

Jews and Christians must work together for justice and peace. Jews and Christians, each in their own way, recognize the unredeemed state of the world as reflected in the persistence of persecution, poverty, and human degradation and misery. Although justice and peace are finally God's, our joint efforts, together with those of other faith communities, will help bring the kingdom of God for which we hope and long. Separately and together, we must work to bring justice and peace to our world. In this enterprise, we are guided by the vision of the prophets of Israel:

It shall come to pass in the end of days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established at the top of the mountains and be exalted above the hills, and the nations shall flow unto it . . . and many peoples shall go and say, "Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob and He will teach us of His ways and we will walk in his paths." (Isaiah 2:2-3)

Tikva Frymer-Kensky, University of Chicago

David Novak, University of Toronto

Peter Ochs, University of Virginia

Michael Signer, University of Notre Dame

[National Jewish Scholars Project <URL: http://www.icjs.org/programs/ongoing/njsp/dabruemet.php>](http://www.icjs.org/programs/ongoing/njsp/dabruemet.php)

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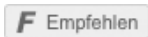
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DECLARATION ON
THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS
NOSTRA AETATE
PROCLAIMED BY HIS HOLINESS
POPE PAUL VI
ON OCTOBER 28, 1965

1. In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.

One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth.(1) One also is their final goal, God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men,(2) until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City, the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light.(3)

Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men: What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what is sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to true happiness? What are death, judgment and retribution after death? What, finally, is that ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?

2. From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrates their lives with a profound religious sense.

Religions, however, that are bound up with an advanced culture have struggled to answer the same questions by means of more refined concepts and a more developed language. Thus in Hinduism, men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustible abundance of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry. They seek freedom from the anguish of our human condition either through ascetical practices or profound meditation or a flight to God with love and trust. Again, Buddhism, in its various forms, realizes the radical insufficiency of this changeable world; it teaches a way by which men, in a devout and confident spirit, may be able either to acquire the state of perfect liberation, or attain, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination. Likewise, other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing "ways," comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself.(4)

The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men.

3. The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth,(5) who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.

4. As the sacred synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.

Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ-Abraham's sons according to faith (6)-are included in the same Patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is mysteriously foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage. The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament

through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles.(7) Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one in Himself.(8)

The Church keeps ever in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen: "theirs is the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the law and the worship and the promises; theirs are the fathers and from them is the Christ according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:4-5), the Son of the Virgin Mary. She also recalls that the Apostles, the Church's main-stay and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ's Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people.

As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation,(9) nor did the Jews in large number, accept the Gospel; indeed not a few opposed its spreading.(10) Nevertheless, God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues-such is the witness of the Apostle.(11) In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and "serve him shoulder to shoulder" (Soph. 3:9).(12)

Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues.

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ;(13) still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.

Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.

Besides, as the Church has always held and holds now, Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation. It is, therefore, the burden of the Church's preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.

5. We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: "He who does not love does not know God" (1 John 4:8).

No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and man or people and people, so far as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned.

The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion. On the contrary, following in the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this sacred synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to "maintain good fellowship among the nations" (1 Peter 2:12), and, if possible, to live for their part in peace with all men,(14) so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven.(15)

NOTES

1. Cf. Acts 17:26
2. Cf. Wis. 8:1; Acts 14:17; Rom. 2:6-7; 1 Tim. 2:4
3. Cf. Apoc. 21:23f.
4. Cf 2 Cor. 5:18-19
5. Cf St. Gregory VII, letter XXI to Anzir (Nacir), King of Mauritania (Pl. 148, col. 450f.)
6. Cf. Gal. 3:7
7. Cf. Rom. 11:17-24
8. Cf. Eph. 2:14-16
9. Cf. Lk. 19:44
10. Cf. Rom. 11:28
11. Cf. Rom. 11:28-29; cf. dogmatic Constitution, [Lumen Gentium](#) (Light of nations) AAS, 57 (1965) pag. 20
12. Cf. Is. 66:23; Ps. 65:4; Rom. 11:11-32
13. Cf. John. 19:6

14. Cf. Rom. 12:18

15. Cf. Matt. 5:45
