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# The Jewish-Christian dialogue

A proposal to the Lasallian  
institutions



## Introduction

There are several reasons for Jewish-Christian dialogue even if it is not always possible to promote it in schools. However, before giving the reasons why we should enter into this dialogue with our Jewish brothers - our “elder brothers”, as Pope John Paul II calls them - we need first of all to recall briefly the meaning of the word “dialogue” in this religious context, and remind ourselves of the events which caused the split between our two communities.

### A. Regarding the word “dialogue”

In the geopolitical context of today, it is the duty of all religions, including Christianity, to talk and listen to one another, maturing and growing together, inspired by a common desire for the well-being and salvation of humanity. This dialogue, however, has rules and consequences, because what is involved here is not academic argument about a theory, but rather the discussion of a subject which stirs deep feelings in those taking part.

A true, deeply committed theological dialogue begins when the two theologies confront each other in the same person; when they give rise to authentic religious meditation, contemplation, even a religious crisis in the depths of the human heart. Dialogue shakes the foundations of our faith, of our hope and of our charity.

There are those who cast doubts on Jewish-Christian dialogue, given the insuperable lack of symmetry between the two religions, caused by the absolute, unique and universal role of Christ's redemption in Christian thinking, and its absolute rejection by Jews. There are others who believe that, from the Christian point of view, this dialogue is necessary because of the theological heritage that unites us. For some Jews, it is one of the necessary conditions if we are to live in a society free of prejudice. Whatever we think of these different points of view, it is clear that the roots of antisemitism are to be sought in Christian theology; while the reluctance of Jews to enter into dialogue is not necessarily theological, but is due to resentment caused by the savage treatment they have endured in the course of Christian-dominated history.

We need to create a healthy psychological approach for dialogue to begin, thrive and produce results, rather than attempt to change ways of thinking through a never-ending exchange of accusations, and recriminations regarding painful wrongs committed in ages past.

A basic definition of dialogue states that it is a conversation on a common subject between two or several persons who have different points of view, whose essential purpose is to enable participants to learn from one another to change and to grow. This definition contains the first rule of dialogue. In the past, we would meet other Christians or Jews we openly disagreed with, to discuss with them and try to win them over to our way of thinking, convinced that we possessed the absolute truth. We can no longer continue to act in this way.

## B. The rejection of Jewish-Christian dialogue. A brief historical résumé

The first split between Jews and Christians occurred at the Council of Jerusalem and is reported in chapter 15 of the Acts of the Apostles. About the year 90, the Jews who had survived the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 added a blessing to their official prayers. This was the *Birkat haminin* against heretics, that is, Christians. The gap widened subsequently because of sociological pressure, increased differences in the understanding of the Bible, an acute identity crisis within communities and, of course, the demographic impact of new Christians coming from the pagan world. The official endorsement of Christianity as the State religion by Constantine put Jews under greater pressure as the result of the new powers granted to the disciples of Jesus.

The last Jewish-Christian dialogue featuring in the writings of the early Church is that of St Justin with the rabbi Tarphon. With the passing of time, many Fathers of the Church showed interest in Judaism, but in a way we would describe nowadays as anti-semitic. A basic reason for hatred of the Jews lies in an interpretation of the Gospels which lays on them the responsibility for the death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. This is the sin of deicide. There are many *Tractatus versus Iudaeos* - treatises against the Jews - written by the Fathers of the Church. In the Middle Ages, ghettos

appeared, Jews were made to wear a yellow badge, defamatory myths were created about the mixing of the blood of Christian children with the unleavened bread eaten at the Jewish Passover. Then there was the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, the Inquisition which burned them at the stake or forced them to abjure their religion, the pogroms or the massacres by Cossack troops or Russian Tsars towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their calvary ended with the so-called "final solution" of Hitler's crematoria - the *Shoah* - the Holocaust of the last World War.



# 1. Motives for a Jewish-Christian dialogue

What is written here is intended clearly, first of all, for Christian readers belonging to the Lasallian Educational network whose aim is to constitute “a living community where young people, coming from different social and family backgrounds, educate one another by mutual understanding and respect, openness of mind in dialogue, acceptance of the uniqueness and limitations of each, growth in the spirit of service, and the practice of justice and fraternal charity”<sup>1</sup>.

The brief résumé we have given of the history of the Jewish people would be sufficient to explain the absence of Jewish-Christian dialogue and to motivate it. There are, however, reasons to promote this dialogue, reasons that are more contemporary and more forward-looking. The most important of these are the following:

- A. The invitation contained in the documents of Vatican II, in particular in the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, regarding non-Christian religions and including N° 4 on Judaism, and the Declaration *Dignitatis humanae* on religious freedom.
- B. The new prospects of the theology of religions.
- C. Geopolitics, the new context of religions.
- D. Theological reparation owed to Judaism.
- E. Institute texts.

## A. The Declaration *Nostra Aetate*

There were two events which foreshadowed the spirit that would inspire the Council Fathers regarding Judaism. Shortly after the world hecatomb of the Second World War, Jews and Christians met at Seelisberg, Switzerland, in 1947 to draw up some preliminary points for a new beginning in relations between the two reli-

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<sup>1</sup>. Declaration: The Brother of the Christian schools in the world today. 39<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, 1966-67, Rome, N° 46,2.

gions (see text in part V). This was 13 years before the Ecumenical Vatican II Council. The second event was the request of good Pope John XXIII - now Blessed – for the prayer for the “*perfidious Jews*” to be removed from the great liturgical prayer of Good Friday. His decision was implemented for the first time on Good Friday 1959.

This marked a new era in the Church and in Judaism. The Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate* on non-Christian religions was adopted by 2,221 Council Fathers out of 2,310 on October 28<sup>th</sup> 1965. The Declaration *Dignitatis Humanae* on religious freedom was approved on December 7<sup>th</sup> of the same year by 2,308 Council Fathers out of 2,384. These two Declarations opened new avenues for Christian theology in general, and for inter-religious dialogue in particular. Here is article N<sup>o</sup> 4 of the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* on Judaism which became the basis for relations between Catholics and Jews after the Council:

#### **4 - On Judaism**

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,<sup>(14)</sup> so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven.<sup>(15)</sup>

**Notes:**

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. Constitution Lumen Gentium (Light of nations) AAS, 57 (1965) p. 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

Spurred on by the impetus given by this Conciliar Declaration, Catholics began to set up Committees. The first - the International Jewish-Catholic Liaison Committee - was formed of Jews from their own Jewish International Committee for Inter-religious Relations, and of Catholics from the Bureau for Jewish-Christian Relations. It met in Rome for the first time from December 20<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup> 1970. The next year, this joint committee began a series of meetings - totalling 25 at present - on Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Despite all these very valuable meetings, dialogue has been marked by high and low points. The attitude of Pius XII during the Second World War regarding the feasibility of saving Jews continues to be condemned severely in certain circles and every now and then upsets dialogue. In the same way, the political conflict between the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority with its atrocious consequences continues to influence a dialogue intended to be strictly religious.

## B. The new theology of religions

The Christian theology of religions studies human religious experience in the light of the Christian faith, and considers it to be an unexpressed aspiration to the mystery of Christ<sup>2</sup>. The religions of the world are different aspects or expressions of human religious experience.

In our case, it is not a question of comparing Judaism with other religions in order to deduce that it occupies a privileged position vis-a-vis Christianity and other religions, or that it is superior or inferior. The theology of religions stresses the relations existing between Jesus Christ and human religious traditions, of which Judaism is one, without denying the special historical and theological links the latter has with Christianity.

The challenges of present-day world call upon the theology of religions to work for peace and justice in the world, and contribute to a world ethic which will help people to make this peace and justice real, establishing dialogue as a norm among them. This constitutes a sufficient motive for pursuing Jewish-Christian dialogue in parishes in general, and in Lasallian schools in particular.

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<sup>2</sup>. DUPUIS, Jacques. Toward a Christian theology of religious pluralism. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998, p. 4-25.

## C. Geopolitics, the new context of religions

Views of inter-religious dialogue depend on the present-day geopolitical map which reflects a “clash of civilisations”<sup>3</sup>. The opposing forces are no longer totalitarian ideologies such as Fascism, Nazism or Communism, but civilisations. In these, religions are a dominant factor. Until now, wars in Europe could be classed as “civil wars” of western civilisation. From now on, the conflict is more likely to be between civilisations whose differences, in particular religious ones, are mutually demonised. In certain situations, this conflict can be expressed in a life-threatening way, as when you are stopped at a police check-point in a country beset by religious-ethnic conflict, and your identity card indicates you are a Jew, Arab, Muslim or Christian, as the case may be. Under the Nazi regime in Europe, such encounters were always life-threatening for Jews.

The geopolitical situation includes religions and vice versa. This is true even at present in the case of Jews and Christians. And so, it should be studied at school. Arrogant ignorance of other people’s culture is a way of waging war, because it opens the door to its demonisation and, therefore, to its persecution. So long as there is no peace between religions, there will be no peace in the world. The present-day confrontation between a certain type of Islam and the West has political and religious roots. The three great Book religions - Judaism, Christianity, Islam - are called to find common ground in Abraham in which the values of each would promote the presence of God in the world.

As far as our two religions are concerned, politics and religion were often intermingled after the recognition of Christianity as the majority religion by the Emperor Constantine. The secular authorities of the State let the Church inveigh against the Jews with its ecclesiastical anathemas. This resulted in the creation of antisemitic reflexes and behaviour which lasted for centuries, as we saw earlier in our historical résumé.

Also, the present-day definition of the State of Israel as a Jewish state makes Christians think about the theological meaning that could be enshrined in such biblical notions as the *Promised Land*,

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<sup>3</sup>. HUNTINGTON, Samuel *The clash of Civilizations?* Dans: la revue *Foreign Affairs*, Université de Harvard 72(3), 1993, p. 22-49.

on *violence in the Bible*, on the *Chosen race*, the *supremacy of the Mosaic Law*. Catholics ought to think also about the meaning of the recognition of the State of Israel by the Holy See and its implications, both for the Jews in the world, and the minority Christians living in that state. The answers to these questions are part of the knowledge we need before engaging in Jewish-Christian dialogue.

## D. Theological reparation owed to Judaism

What do we mean by “theological reparation”? The expression was coined by the theologian Franz Mussner<sup>4</sup>. The Church recognises that its theological interpretation of the mystery of Israel was the reason for the preaching of contempt for the Jews. The Church decided therefore to “recall, regret and ask for forgiveness”<sup>5</sup>. The various “dialogue committees” set up by the Vatican after the Council had as their aim also to re-examine the Scriptures with our Jewish brothers, to study the mystery of Israel and that of Jesus for, it should not be forgotten, Jews read the Old Testament according to the Talmud tradition, whereas Christians read it in the light of the New Testament.

Dialogue implies, therefore, setting off on a journey with our Jewish or Christian neighbour, and the first steps consist in learning the fundamental texts of the other and how they understand them. And so, a Jew who wishes to enter into dialogue with his Christian brothers has to read the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles in order to grasp the key concepts of Christianity. In the same way, a Christian who seeks to understand Judaism needs to know the Hebrew Bible explained by Jews and the fundamental notions of the oral Torah which includes the Mishna and the Talmud. The Christian cannot be satisfied with what he learns about the Jews and Judaism in the New Testament, because its description is often coloured by the split and growing antagonism between the two communities. To understand the pharisees really well, one cannot be satisfied with the information given about them by the Gospels.

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<sup>4</sup>. Cf MUSSNER, Franz. *Tractate on the Jews*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984, chap. 5.

<sup>5</sup>. International Theological Commission. *Memory and Reconciliation: the Church and the Faults of the Past*, 7. 3. 2000.

But knowing the key concepts of Judaism is not sufficient as theological reparation. "Theological reparation" means also "giving back Jesus to his own people". Jesus was thrown out by his own people from the tribe of Israel, while at the same time he was "captured" by the Church. A kind of "balance" is now being established: the Jews are beginning to recognise Jesus as one of their own, whereas his name used to be taboo; and Christians, for their part, are beginning to discover his Jewish, cultural and religious identity, without depending for their information necessarily on the Gospels.

This revision implies also a new approach to the theology of "the covenant of Sinai which has never been abrogated"<sup>6</sup>. The traditional expressions *Old Testament* and *Old Covenant* had tragic consequences because they created the religious inferiority of Judaism which in some way allowed Christianity to disinherit it.

The term old covenant does not exist in the Hebrew Bible, while in the New Testament the term appears only once in 2 Co 3, 14. As for the *new covenant*, the expression is to be found in the Jewish Scriptures - the best known instance is Jer 31, 31-34 - and of course in the New Testament (cf. Rm 9,4; Ac 7,8; Ep 2,11-12; Lk 1,72-75; Ac 3,25-26; Ga 3,15-18; Rv 11,19).

In the light of Pope John Paul's allocution at Mainz on November 17<sup>th</sup> 1980, an exegesis has been born of a *single covenant that has never been abrogated*. The covenant of Sinai is unique and eternal, renewed according to God's merciful intention, each time his people sinned or prostituted themselves before false gods. The covenant is offered to Christians, sealed by the body and blood of Jesus Christ. "But as the chosen people they are still loved by God... God never takes back his gifts or revokes his choice" (Rm 11, 28-29). To use a modern image, the motorway of the covenant of the chosen race (formed of Jews and Christians, according to the Holy Scriptures) is a 2 lane motorway to God our Father, culminating in the final miracle announced by the Apostle Paul (Rm 11, 36).

The reparation we are speaking about is not therefore solely theological. Jews expect Christians to respect their difference. A bet-

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<sup>6</sup>. JEAN-PAUL II. The Alliance never cancelled, in AAS 73 (1981) 80. Speech in Mainz, 17.11.1980.

ter understanding of their identity as they define it, should figure in the study programmes of seminaries and religious houses of formation, and a catechesis in line with the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* should address their concerns.

## E. Official texts of the Institute

There are, therefore, serious reasons for Jewish-Christian dialogue in Lasallian establishments. It is interesting to read for example the following guidelines in the Documents of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter of the Brothers of the Christian Schools<sup>7</sup>:

“GUIDELINES: The presence of the Institute in multi-religious societies calls for inter-faith dialogue on four levels:

**A. Life:** Brothers, Partners and young people build friendly relations with others and nurture a fraternity which transcends religious differences.

**B. School:** A place where the child is the focus of concern, whatever his religious beliefs. It is a place where human and religious education is given, and the educational service of the poor is a priority.

**C. Service:** Despite their religious differences, Brothers, Partners and young people show solidarity in the service of the poor.

**D. Institution:** There is inter-faith dialogue at national and international gatherings.

Recommendation [13]... To ensure the representation of the Institute at international inter-faith meetings and events”.

In the same way, in the document: *The Lasallian Mission of Human and Christian Education: a Shared Mission*, dated April 30<sup>th</sup> 1997, the whole of section 2.6 is devoted to inter-faith dialogue in general<sup>8</sup>. There is also Br John Johnston’s pastoral letter dated January 1<sup>st</sup> 1995. As the subject of inter-faith dialogue has been treated already in another MEL Bulletin, we restrict ourselves here to simply quoting these sources.

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<sup>7</sup>. Documents of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter - Circular 447, p. 31-32. October 2002.

<sup>8</sup>. De La Salle Publications: 140 Banbury Road, Oxford - United Kingdom, 15/5/1997, p. 71-74.





## 2. The rules of dialogue

There are a number of these worth mentioning. They are often listed in the form of a “decalogue”. What follows is valid for all kinds of inter-faith dialogue, including, of course, Jewish-Christian<sup>9</sup>.

1. The first aim of dialogue is to learn, that is, to change and to grow by perceiving and understanding reality in order to act accordingly in the future.
2. Inter-faith dialogue must be a dual process: within each religious community and reciprocally between religious communities.
3. Each participant must approach dialogue in all honesty and sincerity, and assume the same on the part of the other.
4. In inter-faith dialogue we are not called upon to compare our ideals with the practice of the other party, but rather our ideals with its ideals, and our practice with its practice.
5. Each participant must define and identify himself. Only a Jew, for example, can define what it means to be a Jew. Others can do little more than say how a Jew looks from the outside. Also, the person who is “interpreted” must be able to recognise himself in the interpretation.
6. Each participant must come to the dialogue without the slightest prejudice regarding the existence of points of disagreement.
7. Dialogue is possible only between equals. For example, dialogue between Jews and Christians at the beginning of the 70s was only a prelude to inter-faith dialogue. It was understandable and normal that Jews came to these meetings to teach Judaism to Christians, and that the latter came to learn. But, if there is to be genuine inter-faith dialogue between Jews and

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<sup>9</sup>. Cf. SWIDLER, Leonard. *The dialogue decalogue*. Journal for Ecumenical Studies-Winter 1983.

Christians, the former have to come also in order to learn. In this way they will be on an equal footing.

8. There is no basic dialogue without mutual trust.
9. Those who engage in inter-faith dialogue must have a minimum of self-criticism regarding themselves and their own religious traditions.
10. Each participant must try, if possible, to “get a feel for” and “experience” personally the religion of the other party, given that religion is not cerebral but rather something to do with the heart and mind which affects the whole being of the individual and of society. If the aims of dialogue are attained, then the fundamental hope and finality of Judaism and Christianity will come closer to their fulfilment, in particular to the Kingdom of God which will then be understood and promoted.

### 3. The approach to dialogue

It is a question of looking, “feeling” and acting on the basis of what one finds in one’s environment, in this case, in the religious Jewish environment of the school, neighbourhood and town. This approach calls on both pupils and teachers to ask themselves a number of questions. Every pupil can ask himself the following questions and try to answer them as a way of starting to enter into a Jewish-Christian dialogue. The questions which follow may seem too elementary, indiscreet or too impertinent. They are intended for an average school population which has had no contacts with Jewish culture. The answers to these questions give the Christian pupil - and possibly some teachers - a minimal knowledge of Jewish identity. These questions can also be used in group or class work, the aim always being the same: to know our Jewish brothers and their religious background.

#### A. Through questions

What is involved is looking for concrete information about your social and religious environment: the percentage of Jews in your class, your school, your neighbourhood and town; the way they manifest their presence; where they meet and on what feast days or dates; the way they dress, why some wear skull caps, a hat or a black overcoat; why often they live apart in certain neighbourhoods. When Christians meet to pray they generally have Mass. When Jews gather to pray, what do they do in the synagogue? Why are they circumcised at birth? Why do they refuse to do any kind of work on Saturdays, and cannot light a fire, or touch a light switch? Why is their food subject to religious and church restrictions? What are their most important books after the Bible? Do Jews have a “Credo” something like our “I believe in God...”?

#### B. Through feelings

Feelings also come into it: are you embarrassed to have a Jewish friend? What feelings do you have about Jews when you read the

accounts of the Passion of Jesus in the New Testament? What did you feel when you read or heard people say that they were in favour of the extermination of Jews in crematoria? What do you feel about the occupation of Palestinian territory by Israel and its tragic consequences? Can you explain the difference between antisemitism and antizionism? It is not enough to know about other people; it is also important to be aware of one's feelings about them. The feelings we have about someone or a group of people can have more consequences than we realise.

### C. Through concrete actions

To get a Jewish-Christian dialogue going in your school, you could:

1. Invite a rabbi to come and answer pupils' questions or speak on a particular topic.
2. Visit a synagogue and Jewish community premises.
3. Attend a Jewish liturgy on a Saturday or a big feast.
4. Attend a Jewish wedding.
5. Draw up a glossary of 100 words from Jewish culture, by giving, for example, 10 words to each pupil and asking him to find its meaning in an encyclopaedia, from the Internet, from a Jewish neighbour, and make a booklet with the results.
6. Study the texts in the appendices at the end of this Bulletin (p. 27 - 40).

## 4. The fruits of dialogue: Joint tasks

There is no doubt that Jews and Christians belong to the club of the better-off of this world, and consequently they need to be aware of the part they should play in the establishment of justice. One of the first challenges regarding this is to get a clear idea of what “sufficient” means in this context. Without the ability to make a distinction between desires and needs, and to accept that there are limits to economic development, it is not possible to devise a way to promote social justice. This is a challenge for Jewish and Christian schools. To go a little further with reference to the Bible, it is enough to read the prophets of Israel to see that God is ready to give up his religious rights for the sake of the poor: “Bring me your worthless offerings no more... You may multiply your prayers, I shall not listen. Your hands are covered with blood, wash, make yourselves clean... Cease to do evil. Learn to do good, search for justice, help the oppressed, be just to the orphan, plead for the widow” (Is 1, 13-17).

It is clear that the Jewish-Christian dialogue cannot restrict itself to academic exchanges of views or shared prayers. It is by leading to joint action that this dialogue will be also redeeming, and will “correct” the world, by preparing for the coming of the Messiah which is the shared expectation of our two religions.

### A. The fight for justice

In the *Declaration* we read: “The school is one of the principal experiences of life whereby children and adolescents learn how to participate in human society” (44, 2). We have quoted also from the *Documents of the 43<sup>rd</sup> General Chapter* of the Brothers which invites pupils to help the poor whatever their religion. This is the context in which we should read the prophets Micah and Isaiah: “With what gift shall I come into Yahweh’s presence and bow down before God on high? Shall I come with holocausts, with calves one year old?... What is good has been explained to you, man; this is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly,

to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God" (Mi 6, 6-9). "Listen to me, you who pursue integrity, who seek Yahweh. Consider the rock you were hewn from, the quarry from which you were cut. Consider Abraham your father" (Is 51, 1).

## B. The fight against all religious extremism

There is fundamentalism in all religions and it is often mingled with politics without it being always clear for whose benefit. The wars of religion between Catholics and Protestants are part of European history. We find this extremism in Northern Ireland, in India between Muslims and Hindus, and in the war-torn lands of former Yugoslavia. Today, Islam seems to have taken up arms against the Christian West through the intermediary of Taliban extremists and the Al Qaida group.

In the face of this religious counter witness, Pope John Paul II has made several appeals for peace and harmony between religions. These include an address he made at the XV International Meeting for Prayers for Peace:

"We can no longer tolerate the scandal of division: it is a repeated "no" to God's love. Let us encourage the power of the love which he has shown to us so that we might have the daring to walk together. Together with you, the representatives of the great religions of the world, we must also "go out to the open sea", to the ocean of this world to help the world to raise its eyes and look at the one and only God and Father of all the peoples of the world. We will then recognise that differences do not lead to confrontation, but rather to respect, to total collaboration and to the building up of love. We must all rely on dialogue and love as being the only means which make it possible to respect the rights of all people and to meet the challenges of the new millennium".

## C. The adoption of dialogue as a norm

If the State of Israel honours today the courage of Christians who risked their lives to save Jews during the Second World War, by declaring them the Just of the Nations, and by inscribing the names in the Yad Vashem shrine, there should also be a special shrine to honour all those who have fought to ensure dialogue

was the norm. Outstanding names that would figure would be Raymond Llull (1233-1315), Cardinal Nicolas de Couse (1400-1464), Martin Luther King, Martin Buber, Mahatma Ghandi, Franz Rosenzweig, and Blessed John XXIII , among others.

Dialogue “attracts” so to speak the Presence of God - the Shekhina: “If two or three sit down to speak together about the Word of God, the Divine Presence will be in their midst”<sup>10</sup>. Elsewhere, the Talmud tells us also that “the world subsists only thanks to the person who controls himself during discussion”<sup>11</sup>.

#### D. The “correction” of the world by the coming of the Messiah

Although the idea of “redemption” is understood differently by Christians and Jews, there are some points in common which can constitute a whole programme. Although for Christians the redemption was accomplished by the life, passion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Kingdom of God which it inaugurated has still to be brought about day by day. It is present here but also potentially. For Jews, the world has not yet been redeemed, and the task facing us is that of “*letaqen 'olam bemalkhut Shaddai*” - “Repair the world, make it perfect for the Kingdom of God”. And so, Jews and Christians alike, we unite in the Qaddish and the Our Father to say by our dialogue, our actions and our prayers: “Your Kingdome come!”

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<sup>10</sup>. Pirqéi Avot - *Sentences of the Fathers of the Synagogue* 3,2.

<sup>11</sup>. The Babylonian Talmud, Hullin 89 a.





## 5. Texts for reading, meditation and sharing

### A - The ten points of Seelisberg. Switzerland - 1947

Issued by the International Council of Christians and Jews.

1. Remember that One God speaks to us all through the Old and the New Testaments.
2. Remember that Jesus was born of a Jewish mother of the seed of David and the people of Israel, and that His everlasting love and forgiveness embraces His own people and the whole world.
3. Remember that the first disciples, the apostles and the first martyrs were Jews.
4. Remember that the fundamental commandment of Christianity, to love God and one's neighbour, proclaimed already in the Old Testament and confirmed by Jesus, is binding upon both Christians and Jews in all human relationship, without any exception.
5. Avoid distorting or misrepresenting biblical or post-biblical Judaism with the object of extolling Christianity.
6. Avoid using the word Jews in the exclusive sense of the enemies of Jesus and the words The Enemies of Jesus to designate the whole Jewish people.
7. Avoid presenting the Passion in such a way as to bring the odium of the killing of Jesus upon all Jews or upon Jews alone. It was only a section of the Jews in Jerusalem who demanded the death of Jesus, and the Christian message has always been that it was the sins of mankind which were exemplified by those Jews and the sins in which all men share that brought Christ to the Cross.
8. Avoid referring to the scriptural curses, or the cry of a raging mob: His Blood be Upon Us and Our Children, without remembering that this cry should not count against the infinitely more

weighty words of our Lord: Father Forgive Them, for They Know not What They Do.

9. Avoid promoting the superstitious notion that the Jewish people are reprobate, accursed, reserved for a destiny of suffering.

10. Avoid speaking of the Jews as if the first members of the Church had not been Jews.

## B - Declaration on religious freedom

### *Dignitatis Humanae* - Extracts -

1. A sense of the dignity of the human person has been impressing itself more and more deeply on the consciousness of contemporary man,<sup>1</sup> and the demand is increasingly made that men should act on their own judgment, enjoying and making use of a responsible freedom, not driven by coercion but motivated by a sense of duty. The demand is likewise made that constitutional limits should be set to the powers of government, in order that there may be no encroachment on the rightful freedom of the person and of associations[...].

First, the council professes its belief that God Himself has made known to mankind the way in which men are to serve Him, and thus be saved in Christ and come to blessedness [...]. On their part, all men are bound to seek the truth, especially in what concerns God and His Church, and to embrace the truth they come to know, and to hold fast to it.

This Vatican Council likewise professes its belief that it is upon the human conscience that these obligations fall and exert their binding force. The truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it makes its entrance into the mind at once quietly and with power.

Religious freedom, in turn, which men demand as necessary to fulfill their duty to worship God, has to do with immunity from coercion in civil society. Therefore it leaves untouched traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of men and societies toward the true religion and toward the one Church of Christ [...]

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<sup>1</sup>. Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Pacem in Terris", April 11, 1963: AAS 55 (1963) p. 279; *ibid.*, p. 265; Pius XII, radio message, Dec. 24, 1944: AAS 37 (1945), p. 14.

2. This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits.

The council further declares that the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself.<sup>2</sup> This right of the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed and thus it is to become a civil right.

It is in accordance with their dignity as persons - that is, beings endowed with reason and free will and therefore privileged to bear personal responsibility - that all men should be at once impelled by nature and also bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth, once it is known, and to order their whole lives in accord with the demands of truth. However, men cannot discharge these obligations in a manner in keeping with their own nature unless they enjoy immunity from external coercion as well as psychological freedom [...].

3. [...] Wherefore every man has the duty, and therefore the right, to seek the truth in matters religious in order that he may with prudence form for himself right and true judgments of conscience, under use of all suitable means.

Truth, however, is to be sought after in a manner proper to the dignity of the human person and his social nature. The inquiry is to be free, carried on with the aid of teaching or instruction, communication and dialogue, in the course of which men explain to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order thus to assist one another in the quest for truth.

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<sup>2</sup>. Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Pacem in Terris," April 11, 1963: AAS 55 (1963), pp. 260-261; Pius XII, radio message, Dec. 24, 1942: AAS 35 (1943), p. 19; Pius XI, encycl. "Mit Brennender Sorge," March 14, 1937: AAS 29 (1937), p. 160; Leo XIII, encycl. "Libertas Praestantissimum," June 20, 1888: Acts of Leo XIII 8 (1888), p. 237-238.

Moreover, as the truth is discovered, it is by a personal assent that men are to adhere to it.

[...]. It follows that he is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience. Nor, on the other hand, is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience, especially in matters religious. The reason is that the exercise of religion, of its very nature, consists before all else in those internal, voluntary and free acts whereby man sets the course of his life directly toward God. No merely human power can either command or prohibit acts of this kind.<sup>3</sup> The social nature of man, however, itself requires that he should give external expression to his internal acts of religion: that he should share with others in matters religious; that he should profess his religion in community. [...].

Government therefore ought indeed to take account of the religious life of the citizenry and show it favor, since the function of government is to make provision for the common welfare. However, it would clearly transgress the limits set to its power, were it to presume to command or inhibit acts that are religious.

4. The freedom or immunity from coercion in matters religious which is the endowment of persons as individuals is also to be recognized as their right when they act in community. Religious communities are a requirement of the social nature both of man and of religion itself.

Provided the just demands of public order are observed, religious communities rightfully claim freedom in order that they may govern themselves according to their own norms, honor the Supreme Being in public worship, assist their members in the practice of the religious life, strengthen them by instruction, and promote institutions in which they may join together for the purpose of ordering their own lives in accordance with their religious principles.

Religious communities also have the right not to be hindered, either by legal measures or by administrative action on the part of government, in the selection, training, appointment, and transferral of their own ministers, in communicating with religious authorities and communities abroad, in erecting buildings for religious purposes, and in the acquisition and use of suitable funds or properties.

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<sup>3</sup>. Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Pacem in Terris," April 11, 1963: AAS 55 (1963), p. 270; Paul VI, radio message, Dec. 22, 1964: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 181-182.

Religious communities also have the right not to be hindered in their public teaching and witness to their faith, whether by the spoken or by the written word. However, in spreading religious faith and in introducing religious practices everyone ought at all times to refrain from any manner of action which might seem to carry a hint of coercion or of a kind of persuasion that would be dishonorable or unworthy, especially when dealing with poor or uneducated people. Such a manner of action would have to be considered an abuse of one's right and a violation of the right of others.

In addition, it comes within the meaning of religious freedom that religious communities should not be prohibited from freely undertaking to show the special value of their doctrine in what concerns the organization of society and the inspiration of the whole of human activity. [...]. Finally, the social nature of man and the very nature of religion afford the foundation of the right of men freely to hold meetings and to establish educational, cultural, charitable and social organizations, under the impulse of their own religious sense.

5. The family, since it is a society in its own original right, has the right freely to live its own domestic religious life under the guidance of parents. Parents, moreover, have the right to determine, in accordance with their own religious beliefs, the kind of religious education that their children are to receive. Government, in consequence, must acknowledge the right of parents to make a genuinely free choice of schools and of other means of education, and the use of this freedom of choice is not to be made a reason for imposing unjust burdens on parents, whether directly or indirectly [...].

6. Since the common welfare of society consists in the entirety of those conditions of social life under which men enjoy the possibility of achieving their own perfection in a certain fullness of measure and also with some relative ease, it chiefly consists in the protection of the rights, and in the performance of the duties, of the human person<sup>4</sup>. [...].

If, in view of peculiar circumstances obtaining among peoples, special civil recognition is given to one religious community in the constitutional order of society, it is at the same time imperative that the right of all citizens and religious communities to religious freedom should be recognized and made effective in practice.

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<sup>4</sup>. Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Mater et Magistra," May 15, 1961: AAS 53 (1961), p. 417; idem, encycl. "Pacem in Terris," April 11, 1963: AAS 55 (1963), p. 273.

Finally, government is to see to it that equality of citizens before the law, which is itself an element of the common good, is never violated, whether openly or covertly, for religious reasons. Nor is there to be discrimination among citizens.[...].

7. The right to religious freedom is exercised in human society: hence its exercise is subject to certain regulatory norms. In the use of all freedoms the moral principle of personal and social responsibility is to be observed. In the exercise of their rights, individual men and social groups are bound by the moral law to have respect both for the rights of others and for their own duties toward others and for the common welfare of all. Men are to deal with their fellows in justice and civility.

Furthermore, society has the right to defend itself against possible abuses committed on the pretext of freedom of religion. It is the special duty of government to provide this protection. However, government is not to act in an arbitrary fashion or in an unfair spirit of partisanship. Its action is to be controlled by juridical norms which are in conformity with the objective moral order. These norms arise out of the need for the effective safeguard of the rights of all citizens and for the peaceful settlement of conflicts of rights, also out of the need for an adequate care of genuine public peace, which comes about when men live together in good order and in true justice, and finally out of the need for a proper guardianship of public morality. [...].

8. Many pressures are brought to bear upon the men of our day, to the point where the danger arises that they lose the possibility of acting on their own judgment. On the other hand, not a few can be found who seem inclined to use the name of freedom as the pretext for refusing to submit to authority and for making light of the duty of obedience. Wherefore this Vatican Council urges everyone, especially those who are charged with the task of educating others, to do their utmost to form men who, on the one hand, will respect the moral order and be obedient to lawful authority, and on the other hand, will be lovers of true freedommen, in other words, who will come to decisions on their own judgment and in the light of truth, govern their activities with a sense of responsibility, and strive after what is true and right, willing always to join with others in cooperative effort [...].

9. The declaration of this Vatican Council on the right of man to religious freedom has its foundation in the dignity of the person, whose exigencies have come to be fully known to human reason through centuries of experience. What is more, this doctrine of freedom has roots in divine revelation, and for this reason Christians are bound to respect it all the more conscientiously [...].

10. It is one of the major tenets of Catholic doctrine that man's response to God in faith must be free: no one therefore is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith against his own will.<sup>5</sup> This doctrine is contained in the word of God and it was constantly proclaimed by the Fathers of the Church.<sup>6</sup> The act of faith is of its very nature a free act. Man, redeemed by Christ the Savior and through Christ Jesus called to be God's adopted son,<sup>7</sup> cannot give his adherence to God revealing Himself unless, under the drawing of the Father,<sup>8</sup> he offers to God the reasonable and free submission of faith. It is therefore completely in accord with the nature of faith that in matters religious every manner of coercion on the part of men should be excluded [...].

11. [...] God has regard for the dignity of the human person whom He Himself created and man is to be guided by his own judgment and he is to enjoy freedom. This truth appears at its height in Christ Jesus, in whom God manifested Himself and His

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<sup>5</sup>. Cf. CIC, c. 1351; Pius XII, allocution to prelate auditors and other officials and administrators of the tribune of the Holy Roman Rota, Oct. 6, 1946: AAS 38 (1946), p. 394; idem. "Encycl Mystici Corporis," June 29, 1943: AAS (1943) p. 243.

<sup>6</sup>. Cf. Lactantius "Divinarum Institutionum," Book V, 19: CSEL 19, pp. 463-464, 465: PL 6, 614 and 616 (ch. 20); St. Ambrose, "Epistola ad Valentianum Imp.," Letter 21: PL 16, 1005; St. Augustine, "Contra Litteras Petiliani," Book II, ch. 83: CSEL 52 p. 112: PL 43, 315; cf. C. 23, q. 5, c. 33, (ed. Friedberg, col. 939); idem, Letter 23: PL 33, 98, idem, Letter 34: PL 33, 132; idem, Letter 35: PL 33, 135; St. Gregory the Great, "Epistola ad Virgilium et Theodorum Episcopos Massiliae Galliarum", Register of Letters I, 45: MGH Ep. 1, p. 72: PL 77, 510-511 (Book I, ep. 47); idem, "Epistola ad Johannem Episcopum Constantinopolitanum," Register of Letters, III, 52: MGH Letter 1, p. 210: PL 77, 649 (Book III, Letter 53); cf. D. 45, c. 1 (ed. Friedberg, col 160); Council of Toledo IV, c. 57: Mansi 10, 633; cf. D. 45, c. 5 (ed. Friedberg, col. 161-162); Clement III: X., V, 6, 9: ed. Friedberg, col. 774; Innocent III, "Epistola ad Arelatensem Archiepiscopum," X, III, 42, 3 Friedberg, col. 646.

<sup>7</sup>. Cf. Eph. 1, 5.

<sup>8</sup>. Cf. John 6, 44.

ways with men. Christ is at once our Master and our Lord<sup>9</sup> and also meek and humble of heart.<sup>10</sup> In attracting and inviting His disciples He used patience.<sup>11</sup> He wrought miracles to illuminate His teaching and to establish its truth, but His intention was to rouse faith in His hearers and to confirm them in faith, not to exert coercion upon them.<sup>12</sup> He did indeed denounce the unbelief of some who listened to Him, but He left vengeance to God in expectation of the day of judgment.<sup>13</sup> When He sent His Apostles into the world, He said to them: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved. He who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16, 16).

But He Himself, noting that the cockle had been sown amid the wheat, gave orders that both should be allowed to grow until the harvest time, which will come at the end of the world.<sup>14</sup> He refused to be a political messiah, ruling by force:<sup>15</sup> He preferred to call Himself the Son of Man, who came "to serve and to give his life as a ransom for the many" (Mark 10,45). He showed Himself the perfect servant of God,<sup>16</sup> who "does not break the bruised reed nor extinguish the smoking flax" (Matt. 12,20). [...]. For He bore witness to the truth,<sup>17</sup> but He refused to impose the truth by force on those who spoke against it. Not by force of blows does His rule assert its claims.<sup>18</sup> It is established by witnessing to the truth and by hearing the truth, and it extends its dominion by the love whereby Christ, lifted up on the cross, draws all men to Himself<sup>19</sup>. Taught by the word and example of Christ, the Apostles followed the same way [...].

12. In faithfulness therefore to the truth of the Gospel, the Church is following the way of Christ and the apostles when she recogni-

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<sup>9</sup>. Cf. John 13, 13.

<sup>10</sup>. Cf. Matt. 11, 29.

<sup>11</sup>. Cf. Matt. 11, 28-30; John 6, 67-68.

<sup>12</sup>. Cf. Matt. 9, 28-29; Mark 9, 23-24; 6, 5-6; Paul VI, encycl. "Ecclesiam Suam," Aug. 6, 1964: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 642-643.

<sup>13</sup>. Cf. Matt. 11, 20-24; Rom. 12, 19-20; 2 Thess. 1, 8.

<sup>14</sup>. Cf. Matt. 13, 30 and 40-42.

<sup>15</sup>. Cf. Matt. 4, 8-10; John 6,15.

<sup>16</sup>. Cf. Is. 42, 1-4.

<sup>17</sup>. Cf. John 18, 37.

<sup>18</sup>. Cf. Matt. 26, 51-53; John 18, 36.

<sup>19</sup>. Cf. John 12, 32.



zes and gives support to the principle of religious freedom as befitting the dignity of man and as being in accord with divine revelation. Throughout the ages the Church has kept safe and handed on the doctrine received from the Master and from the apostles. In the life of the People of God, as it has made its pilgrim way through the vicissitudes of human history, there has at times appeared a way of acting that was hardly in accord with the spirit of the Gospel or even opposed to it. Nevertheless, the doctrine of the Church that no one is to be coerced into faith has always stood firm [...].

13. [...] In human society and in the face of government the Church claims freedom for herself in her character as a spiritual authority, established by Christ the Lord, upon which there rests, by divine mandate, the duty of going out into the whole world and preaching the Gospel to every creature.<sup>20</sup> The Church also claims freedom for herself in her character as a society of men who have the right to live in society in accordance with the precepts of the Christian faith.<sup>21</sup>

In turn, where the principle of religious freedom is not only proclaimed in words or simply incorporated in law but also given sincere and practical application, there the Church succeeds in achieving a stable situation of right as well as of fact and the independence which is necessary for the fulfillment of her divine mission. Therefore, a harmony exists between the freedom of the Church and the religious freedom which is to be recognized as the right of all men and communities and sanctioned by constitutional law.

14. [...]. The disciple is bound by a grave obligation toward Christ, his Master, ever more fully to understand the truth received from Him, faithfully to proclaim it, and vigorously to defend it, never - be it understood - having recourse to means that are incompatible with the spirit of the Gospel. At the same time, the charity of Christ urges him to love and have prudence and patience in his dealings with those who are in error or in ignorance with regard to the faith<sup>22</sup> [...].

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<sup>20</sup>. Cf. Mark 16, 15; Matt. 28, 18-20, Pius XII, encycl. "Summi Pontificatus," Oct. 20, 1939: AAS 31 (1939). pp. 445-446.

<sup>21</sup>. Cf. Pius XI, letter "Firmissiman Constantiam," March 28, 1937: AAS 29 (1937), p. 196.

<sup>22</sup>. Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Pacem in Terris," April 11, 1963: AAS 55 (1963), pp. 299-300.

15. [...]. This council greets with joy the first of these two facts as among the signs of the times. With sorrow, however, it denounces the other fact, as only to be deplored. The council exhorts Catholics, and it directs a plea to all men, most carefully to consider how greatly necessary religious freedom is, especially in the present condition of the human family.

## C - Declaration *NOSTRA AETATE*

Please, go to p. 10

## D - Dabru Emet

*A Sacred Obligation: rethinking Christian Faith in relation to Judaism and the Jewish People.*

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 of 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).

## **E - Prayer of His Holiness Pope John Paul II At the Wailing Wall - Jerusalem 26. 03. 2000**

God of our fathers, you choose Abraham and his descendants to bring your Name to the Nations: we are deeply saddened by the behaviour of those who in the course of History have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking your forgiveness we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant.

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Tikva Frymer-Kensky, University of Chicago

David Novak, University of Toronto

Peter Ochs, University of Virginia

Michael Signer, University of Notre Dame

Follwed by the names of more than 170 Jewish scholars.



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