

TOWARD GREATER UNDERSTANDING



Essays in Honor of
John Cardinal O'Connor

Edited by Anthony J. Cernera

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At a special private audience with Pope John Paul II on Thursday, April 28, 1994, are, from left to right, Cardinal William Keeler of Baltimore; Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz, Administrator of the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding; Dr. Anthony J. Cernera, President of Sacred Heart University; Pope John Paul; Rabbi Jack Bemporad, Director of the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding; Father Remi Hoeckman, O.P., Secretary of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews; and Cardinal John O'Connor of New York.

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Preface



The Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding of Sacred Heart University celebrates His Eminence John Cardinal O'Connor's seventy-fifth birthday with the publication of this *Festschrift*. Included in this volume, the first publication of the Sacred Heart University Press, are essays by Rabbi Jack Bemporad, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, President Chaim Herzog, William H. Cardinal Keeler, Bernard Cardinal Law, Professor David Novak, Rabbi Mordecai Waxman, Professor Elie Wiesel, and Rabbi Walter S. Wurzburger. Such an impressive list of persons is a fitting testimony to a remarkable man.

In so honoring Cardinal O'Connor, an honorary alumnus of the University, Sacred Heart University wishes to acknowledge publicly the significant contributions that he has made to human culture and especially to the furtherance of dialogue between Christians and Jews. Capturing the spirit as well as the letter of the Second Vatican Council, Cardinal O'Connor has sought to inspire and encourage these two great religious

traditions to deepen their understanding and respect for each other. In addition, he has played a leading role in finding concrete ways for Christians and Jews to bring their great wisdom to bear on the contemporary problems facing humanity.

Catholic universities and Jewish institutions have a special responsibility in fostering and nurturing this dialogue and cooperation. Sacred Heart University has sought to play its role in this critical work primarily through its Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding.

The Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding is an educational and research division of Sacred Heart University. It draws together clergy, laity, scholars, theologians, and educators in various modes of interaction to focus on current religious thinking within Christianity and Judaism. While each tradition reevaluates attitudes toward the other, the Center fosters the exploration of the major philosophical and theological issues on the frontier of Christian-Jewish dialogue as these are formulated by scholars at the international and national levels.

Cardinal O'Connor has taken a personal interest in the work of the Center as well as in the general mission of Sacred Heart University. His attention and concern have made a critical difference to us as we chart our course into the future and seek to fulfill our mission to the world. For this help we are deeply grateful. This *Festschrift* is a small way for the University to say "thank you" and "*ad multos annos.*"

A special word of thanks is due to Brother William J. Martyn, S.A. for his role in shaping this project at the beginning and to Dr. Sidney Gottlieb for his efforts in bringing it to completion.

Anthony J. Cernera, Ph.D.

Dialogue

WILLIAM H. CARDINAL KEELER



For Catholics, the Second Vatican Council gave great impulse to dialogue with other churches and other faiths. This dialogue entails personal discussions among committed individuals who are qualified to speak because of their knowledge of issues and their official positions within the faith groups they represent. Such dialogue draws on personal experience as well as our knowledge of scripture, tradition (for Catholics this tradition is expressed in conciliar and papal teaching through the centuries), and theology, and depends also and especially for success on the character and integrity of the participants.

Of this kind of dialogue Cardinal John J. O'Connor is an outstanding practitioner. In regular meetings with Jewish leaders in New York, on trips to the Middle East, in guiding official dialogue between U.S. Catholic groups, in conversation

with Jewish counterparts, in public speaking and writing, and in a generous willingness to serve as a consultant to others, he makes an exceptional contribution to the dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Jewish community.

In honoring Cardinal O'Connor's distinguished role, this essay relates some Catholic perspectives in the development of the dialogue between our Church and Jewish leaders.

The foundations for our approach were laid at the Second Vatican Council, a meeting of the world's Catholic bishops convened by Pope John XXIII in October 1962 and continued by Pope Paul VI in three periods, each of about three months' duration, during the fall months of 1963, 1964, and 1965. In this setting Cardinal Augustin Bea, the German scripture scholar who had been a close advisor of Pope Pius XII and became the key figure in developing the Council's program for Catholic outreach to other religions, oversaw the drafting of a statement on Catholic-Jewish relations. His presentation of this theme to the Council on November 19, 1963, remains vividly in my memory as one of the great moments of those years.

Cardinal Bea recalled how Pope John XXIII personally directed the Council to take up the issue and why it was "so necessary" to treat of it: he cited the Holocaust and how Nazi propaganda used arguments "drawn from the New Testament and from the history of the Church." "It was a question," he continued, "of rooting out from the minds of Catholics any ideas which perhaps remain fixed there through the influence of that propaganda" (see *Council Day Book, Sessions 1 and 2, Vatican 2*, ed. Floyd Anderson, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Washington, 1965).

Thus began the legislative history of what was to become *Nostra Aetate*, the Council's Declaration on the Relationship between the Catholic Church and non-Christian Religions. Solemnly enacted by the Council on October 28, 1965, its third chapter presented the relationship between Church and

Synagogue in terms which responded to Pope John XXIII's original directive.

The Declaration made these principal points:

- 1) The Church, as Saint Paul points out, is founded by Christ who, "according to the flesh," pertains to the Jewish people (cf. Romans 9:4-5). The Virgin Mary, the Apostles, indeed practically the entire infant Church could be correctly described as Jewish.
- 2) Although some Jews opposed the spread of the gospel of Jesus, "nevertheless, according to the Apostle, the Jews still remain most dear to God because of their fathers, for he does not repent of the gifts he makes nor of the calls he issues" (See Romans 11:28-29).
- 3) The Church draws nourishment from the revelation contained in the Hebrew scriptures. The Law, the Prophets, the Psalms and the Wisdom literature — all are part of a heritage given to that people with whom God made a covenant through Abraham. (Addressing this point further, the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with Jews in 1985 underscored the Catholic belief that the covenant between God and the Jewish people continues to exist. Pope John Paul II in Australia referred to "an irrevocable covenant"; in Warsaw, to "that election to which God is faithful.")
- 4) "Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred

Synod (the Second Vatican Council) wishes to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit above all of biblical and theological studies and of brotherly dialogues.”

- 5) With specific reference to texts of the Christian scriptures, the Council points out that what happened to Jesus in “his suffering cannot be blamed upon all the Jews then living, without distinction, nor upon the Jews of today.” What follows is the basis for catechetical instruction to insure that neither Christian scriptures nor Christian teaching could be used in any way that would be an excuse or pretext for anti-Semitism.

Implementation of the document has been measured in different ways. I must emphasize that much of it happened quietly, as the major theological, liturgical, and pastoral shifts directed by the Council were effected rapidly in university and seminary teaching, with repercussions in every level of religious education as well as catechetical materials prepared over a period of time.

Three successive doctoral dissertations (the most recent, in 1991, by Philip Cunningham) have demonstrated a remarkable increase in both accuracy and positive treatment in Catholic educational materials with respect to Jews and Judaism. Often, it should be noted, teachers themselves were unaware of the shift in emphasis insofar as these affected Catholic-Jewish relations; the changes were part of a larger re-ordering of our teaching which included a greater stress on understanding biblical passages in the context of the times in which they were written and the goals of the sacred writers.

In the mid-1980s the Holy See asked the Bishops of the United States to conduct a visitation of our seminaries regarding the implementation of Vatican II teachings. The visitation, undertaken by teams of bishops and educators, offered us an opportunity to remind and to challenge theological faculties to be sure that the principles of *Nostra Aetate* were being taught the future clergy. We learned that the scriptural courses, for example, already reflected the sensitivities to the ancient writings and the Jewish context of the Christian canon of scriptures called for by *Nostra Aetate*. Where direct experience of interfaith dialogue was lacking, the visitation team made recommendations, so that the students could gain a better sense of the practical possibilities and limitations of such dialogues.

In many dioceses, also, in-service workshops for teachers in Catholic schools and religious education programs have enabled them to understand better such issues as Holocaust studies. Of course, not every preacher or teacher has necessarily learned the conciliar approach to this and other concerns, but the progress has been truly phenomenal.

The Holocaust

The harrowing crucible of the Holocaust was also the beginning of dialogue for some people of faith. Even as its memory helped motivate the Second Vatican Council to address the Church's relationship to the Synagogue, so also did the shared experiences of some Catholic survivors help other Catholics appreciate the ongoing vitality of Jewish spirituality. I remember a chance conversation from the 1960s with a Polish priest, a concentration camp survivor. He related how some believing Jews and Christians offered extraordinary mutual support by their witness to faith in God and by their spirit of prayer. He told me, "Those without such faith lost also their sense of dignity in the degrading setting of the death camp."

But in the half-century since the end of Nazi terror, there has been relatively little dialogue among survivors across faith lines. As Dr. Stanislaw Krajewski, a Jewish scholar who lives in Poland, described the problem to a joint Jewish-Catholic group of us from the United States in these words: "In the U.S., most Holocaust survivors are Jewish; in Poland, most are Catholics." Each group has its own set of memories, preserved and perhaps modified a bit through the years, with hardly any exchange with the other set of memories.

This dichotomy came home vividly to Catholics in the summer of 1987, when Pope John Paul II received President Kurt Waldheim of Austria. The strong Jewish reaction to the meeting between the Holy Father and President Waldheim offered an occasion for us to explain to Catholics the feelings of Jewish people regarding the Holocaust. In my presentations, I found that the analogy of sacrament is most helpful. Accordingly, anything which might seem to tarnish the memory of the Holocaust is seen by Jews as a sacrilege. Waldheim had become for many a symbol of trying to sweep under the carpet memories of the Holocaust.

To Jews, it was necessary to explain the feelings of Catholics. The Pope, as the Successor of St. Peter, has an office with great spiritual significance for our people. We Catholics see the role of the Pope, whom we call with meaning our Holy Father, in the context of our faith and devotional life. Many times during the discussions of June and July of 1987, a number of our Jewish partners in dialogue tried to reassure us that they had good relationships with American Catholics but not with the Pope. As I explained the feelings which this kind of remark automatically triggered in a Catholic, one rabbi said, "I think I understand. Many of our people feel that when one attacks the State of Israel, that person is also attacking basic Jewish identity."

In this context, I invited the Jewish listeners to try to see Pope John Paul II as we who are members of the Church see

and know him: He is the one who, from a hospital bed, forgave the man who had shot him. He is one who, like his predecessors, has met and shook hands with heads of state who were actually persecuting Catholics. It is no wonder that Catholics and many of their neighbors thought that, in the Waldheim case, Pope John Paul was being asked to do something not in his job description. In an America where the ACLU and other groups have taught us not to try a person in the mass media, it seemed that some were asking the Pope to act as a civil judge and jury, to pronounce a sentence of guilt on an individual who had not yet had his day in court.

In the course of two visits to Poland, I saw the deep imprint of the Holocaust on that nation and the wisdom of the proposal made in 1992 by the American Jewish Committee to begin a program whereby Catholic seminary students in Poland could hear lectures by Jewish scholars from the United States and Jewish rabbinical students here attend lectures by Polish Catholic scholars. This program was launched in 1993 with the full support of the Polish bishops.

In 1987, the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with Jews announced its intention of preparing a document on the Holocaust as a teaching resource for Catholics. From the outset, the process leading to the document has been one of dialogue, arranged through the International Liaison Committee (in which the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with Jews and the International Jewish Committee on Inter-religious Dialogue collaborate) and involving both Jewish and Catholic scholars in a series of consultations. At Prague in 1990, at Baltimore in 1992, and, less substantively, at Jerusalem in 1994, progress was made, and it is anticipated that the next ILC meeting in 1995 will bring the commission closer to its goal, a document which will promote a worldwide Catholic understanding of the Holocaust and offer tools for combating anti-Semitism.

This formal dialogue about the Shoah has offered a look at painful years, of hearing witnesses describe days of unspeakable horror, devilish betrayal, and undreamed-of heroism. We considered together episodes of human courage and of human weakness, not fearing to listen to descriptions of the failure of Christians and others in one setting or another, nor failing to give credit to those whose courage saved lives, often at the risk, even the cost, of their own.

Besides preparing the way for a teaching document of the Holy See and encouraging a greater sensitivity to the realities of the Holocaust for Catholics, these studies furnish materials helpful for those who, with an interfaith sensitivity, speak publicly for Jewish concerns. For example, while there is no question that some Christian leaders failed, nor is there a question that others acted heroically, it is very clear that the policies of the Holy See during those difficult days made possible the rescue of many Jews.

Through these discussions on the Holocaust, Catholics have been helped to understand how, for Jews, the Holocaust with all its horrors was uniquely genocidal. From the special 1987 International Liaison Committee came a statement, to which both Jews and Catholics subscribed, acknowledging that the demonic Nazi ideology which spawned the Holocaust was indeed opposed to all religions, and that many Christians perished in the death camps.

We know what happened in Holland. The Catholic bishops there protested in 1942 against the roundup of the Jews. In retaliation, the Nazis then sent off to Auschwitz Catholics who had Jewish blood and hastened the deportation of all Jews. It is not clear, even to this day, how much good precise, public denunciation in other settings could have accomplished in the face of a dictatorship with total power in its hands. Even in the Jewish community at that time there existed a dilemma, with some Jews deciding not to speak out publicly, but rather to

work quietly and behind the scenes. Today both the Jewish and the Catholic communities need to grapple with the complexities of that tragic period, not in a judgmental way but constructively for the sake of the future.

Dialogue also was and must remain an essential tool in helping both sides understand both the flashpoint issue of the Auschwitz Carmel and the continuing significance of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camps. In a sense, the Carmelite Monastery question was first defined by dialogue at a February 1987 meeting involving Cardinal Franciszek Macharski, Archbishop of Krakow, three other European cardinals, and some European Jewish leaders.

The cardinals worked with the Jewish leaders toward a solution which would be positive and forward-looking. Together they committed themselves not simply to relocate the site of the convent — to characterize it in this way is to distort the thrust of the understanding reached — but to construct at a distance from the camp a center intended to foster Catholic-Jewish relations through study, dialogue, and prayer. In the mission of prayer, a work, indeed a word not familiar to many contemporary ears, the Carmelite nuns, whose life is dedicated to prayer and contemplation, would have an honored role.

Then came complications. For more than a year the Polish government did not issue necessary building permits. This could be understood in the light of the fact that it was not uncommon to take seven years for the construction of a new public facility in Poland during those years.

The rest is history: the violation of the cloister and clamorous demonstrations on convent grounds by Rabbi Avi Weiss and his associates; the harsh physical reaction of some Polish workers on the scene; the escalation of demonstrations and reactions, involving finally Cardinal Jozef Glemp and other church leaders in Poland and elsewhere.

On September 19 Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, President of the Commission for Religious Relations with Jews, issued a statement on behalf of the Holy See. He commended the stand of the Polish Bishops' Commission for Dialogue with Judaism made public earlier in the month — a stand committing itself to the new center — and he reaffirmed Pope John Paul II's commendation of the proposal, adding this time the pledge of financial help.

Within a few days Cardinal Glemp, following several meetings with Jewish leaders in Poland and England, announced his personal support of the project and the matter moved from the front pages. Work on the new center began at last, a step favored by the return of greater freedom from government control in Poland. Toward the end of the public discussion many voices, Jewish, Catholic, and observers, were raised in favor of restraint and reason in dialogue. These voices helped establish a needed atmosphere.

Even as, through the discussion, Catholics were reminded afresh of deep Jewish sensitivities regarding the Holocaust, so I am hopeful that our Jewish partners in dialogue gained some new insights. They learned, for example, what may strike visitors to *Yad Vashem* in Israel: most numerous of all on the list of "righteous gentiles" who risked their lives to help Jews escape are the Catholic Poles.

They learned that the death camp at Auschwitz was built to handle first the Polish intellectual elite, including clergy, and the army officers who still survived. These selected Poles were being exterminated at Auschwitz a full year and more before the horrifying decision was taken at Wannsee to try to eliminate the Jews.

And perhaps they have learned also that, within the Catholic Church, there is now, as there always has been, a great deal of variety, flexibility, difference, and disagreement. Even as Catholics begin to appreciate that the American

Jewish Congress, the World Jewish Congress, and the American Jewish Committee are three entirely separate organizations, so we invited our Jewish and other neighbors to realize that within the Catholic Church there are many different juridical entities; some of them, like monasteries of nuns, possess surprising autonomy as far as Church law is concerned.

In this context we can better understand how the Carmelites, who had not been part of the negotiations regarding the construction of a new convent and their relocation to it, were reluctant to leave their home next to the Auschwitz camp. When the convent was completed, Pope John Paul II wrote an extraordinary personal letter to the nuns, inviting them either to go to the monastery built at the new center or to return to the community from which Auschwitz Carmel had been established. The sisters finally moved, and the issue was finally resolved.

Our 1992 Catholic-Jewish pilgrimage to Auschwitz and Birkenau was marked by a tender reunion which throws a special light on the significance of the death camps: two Jewish survivors who were part of our group met a Catholic Polish survivor. As they embraced and exchanged their stories, the Jewish woman revealed that her life was saved by a Catholic Pole, who was in fact a friend of their new-found friend, the survivor they met that morning.

This story also helps us understand why, as Archbishop Henryk Muszynski has pointed out repeatedly, the cross near the convent, outside the former death camp, has a special symbolism for Catholic Poles. Within two months of the Nazi invasion in 1939, Polish Catholic leaders, including more than half the priests in some dioceses, were arrested. Some were summarily executed and the others sent to concentration and extermination camps, including Auschwitz, where most subsequently died.

Another critical issue much addressed in the dialogue has been the State of Israel, the theme of another paper in this volume.

From the perspective of the United States, where our national history has been clouded by recurring episodes of anti-Semitism and of anti-Catholicism, I believe that our dialogue in coming years can usefully deal with issues identified as neuralgic by the consultation co-sponsored by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Synagogue Council of America from 1987 through 1994, when the latter group elected to dissolve. These include: the restoration of teaching basic moral values in America's public schools, combating pornography, dealing with new manifestations of discrimination, affirming the right of people of faith to address issues in the public policy arena (where anti-religious prejudice is too frequently injected, often as recently as in the right-to-life debate), and news media unfairness in reporting on religion (Rabbi Mordecai Waxman, then Chairman of IJCIC, and I addressed one 1988 forum in which this was a sub-theme: both of us together addressed a series of inaccuracies in the *New York Times* reporting of the previous year.)

An old issue commanding fresh attention is that of government aid to students in non-public schools, a concern of Catholics, of Orthodox and now of many Conservative Jews who recognize the importance of religious schools. This issue is framed in the context of interreligious dialogue. For instance, aid or relief for students and their parents would have to pass constitutional muster. Several such approaches are now under discussion, with the emphasis on aid to the needy, not to specific institutions, whether religious or secular.

A number of arguments from the common good can be considered in such a rethinking. These range from an acknowledgment of the primacy of parental responsibility for their children's education and the consequent necessity of respecting

and supporting their freedom of choice, to the affirmation of pluralism as opposed to governmental monopoly of education.

There are approximately 9,500 Catholic primary and secondary schools serving about three million students. Surveys have shown that graduates of Catholic high schools in this country are not only more positive toward Jews and Judaism than other Catholics, but far more positive than the general population, which is to say, graduates of public schools.

If one is serious about the full implementation of *Nostra Aetate* and other Church documents on Catholic-Jewish relations in this country, one has to acknowledge the key role that must be played by our schools in the process. Thus, a reconsideration of this issue has the potential for greatly enhancing the common good of the nation, of the children, and all of our efforts at interreligious amity as well.

In addition, many studies — and our experience in Baltimore underscores this — show that Catholic schools offer minority children a way to receive an education, to graduate from high school, go on to college: a way not available to them otherwise, a way now imperiled by rising costs.

It is appropriate here to express appreciation to the State of Israel, which underwrites up to 85% of operating costs of religious schools, including Catholic schools, in that land. The amount of allocation is correlated to the observance of certain quality criteria. The equivalent of more than eleven million American dollars was given in direct aid to Catholic schools by the Government of Israel in 1993. Israel, like most other democratic countries, has concluded that aid to students actually benefits the total good of the country rather than detracting from it.

So many complex issues are already being addressed, so many bridges of understanding are already built, always, it seems, opening the way to new perspectives and challenges. With people of good will, so much more good can be

accomplished in these new moments. Whether it be in understanding the Shoah, building peace for Israel and her neighbors, or promoting dialogue here on issues close to home, we should proceed as people of faith, relying on and praying for the blessing of the Lord of all mercies.

Anti-Semitism: A Catholic Critique

JOSEPH CARDINAL BERNARDIN

Anti-Semitism is a modern term, having first appeared only in the nineteenth century. But it is rooted in the reality of suspicion, contempt, hostility, and hatred toward Jews that goes back to ancient times. As Father Edward Flannery has shown in his classic work on anti-Semitism, *The Anguish of the Jews*,¹ the early Christian community inherited cultural traditions from the Graeco-Roman civilization that included a prejudicial outlook towards Jews. They were disliked in pre-Christian Greece and Rome for their general unwillingness to conform to prevailing social mores.

There were other factors that also likely contributed to the development of anti-Jewish feelings among Christians in the first centuries of the Church's existence. For one, the

overwhelming number of early Christians came from Graeco-Roman communities with little personal acquaintance with Jews and Judaism. We now know from scholars dealing with early Christianity, such as Robert L. Wilken² and Anthony Saldarini,³ that the final break between Judaism and Christianity was a far more gradual process than we once imagined, extending into the third and fourth centuries in some areas of the East. Nevertheless, the *effective* influence of Jewish Christianity upon the Church at large dwindled rapidly after the pivotal decision reached by Paul and the representatives of the Jerusalem Church at what is often called the Council of Jerusalem. As a result, there ceased to exist any countervailing positive identification with Jews and their religious heritage that could overcome the new converts' inbred cultural prejudices. This tendency towards separation from anything Jewish was further enhanced by the desire to avoid any linkage between the Church and the Jewish community after the disastrous Jewish revolt against the Roman imperial authorities (66-70 C.E.) which, besides the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, resulted in continued post-war retribution by Rome against the Jewish community.

Another factor contributing to the emergence of anti-Semitism in early Christianity may be the image of Jews that emerges from the New Testament itself. There are texts that remain open to anti-Semitic interpretation, and there is ample evidence that such interpretations emerged in the first centuries of Christian history. What is not so certain is whether any of the texts themselves can be legitimately termed "anti-Semitic." Scholars differ significantly in their judgments on this point and will likely do so for the foreseeable future. Some feel that much of the conflict can be understood as internal Jewish polemic, which was not uncommon in that period, as we know from certain Jewish documents, the Talmud in particular. Others believe that, for one reason or another, imprecise language was

introduced by New Testament translators, rendering, for example, the pivotal term *hoi Iudaioi* in the Gospel of John as “the Jews” rather than in a more restricted sense of “Jewish leaders.” Retranslation, where scholarly consensus can be achieved, ought to be a goal we pursue in the effort at eradicating anti-Semitism. But such consensus does not appear to be on the immediate horizon.

With little hope for a scholarly resolution of the question of anti-Semitism in the New Testament, we need a pastoral approach to the issue. Father Raymond Brown, S.S., a renowned scholar on the Gospel of John, has suggested the basis of such an approach, at least with respect to the Fourth Gospel, which is generally considered among the most problematic of all New Testament books in its outlook towards Jews and Judaism. In commenting on John’s use of the term “the Jews,” Brown expresses his conviction that, by deliberately using this generic term (where other gospel writers refer to the Jewish authorities or various Second Temple Jewish parties), John meant to extend to the Synagogue of his own day the blame that an earlier tradition had pinned on the Jewish authorities. Although John was not the first to engage in such extension, he is the most insistent New Testament author in this regard. Brown attributes this process in John to the persecution that Christians were experiencing in that time at the hands of the Synagogue authorities. Jews who professed Jesus to be the Messiah had been officially expelled from Judaism, thus making them vulnerable to Roman investigation and punishment. Jews were tolerated by Rome, but who were these Christians whom the Jews disclaimed?

Raymond Brown holds that this teaching of John about the Jews, which resulted from the historical conflict between Church and Synagogue at that time, can no longer be taught as authentic doctrine or catechesis by contemporary Christianity. This is the key pastoral point. Christians today must come to

see that such teachings, while a realistic part of the biblical heritage, can no longer be regarded as authentic teaching in light of our improved historical understanding of developments in the relationship between early Christianity and the Jewish community of the time. As Brown says in his book, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, "It would be incredible for a twentieth-century Christian to share or justify the Johannine contention that 'the Jews' are the children of the Devil, an affirmation which is placed on the lips of Jesus (8:44)."⁴ Negative passages such as these must be evaluated in the light of the Second Vatican Council's strong affirmation in its Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra Aetate*) that Jews remain a covenanted people, revered by God. The teaching of recent Popes has also emphasized this. Pope John Paul II, in particular, has often highlighted the intimate bond that exists between Jews and Christians who are united in one ongoing covenant.

The formal expulsion of Christians from the Synagogue, which seemingly lay behind the Fourth Gospel's negative attitudes towards Jews, was only the beginning of trouble for the Jewish community. Unfortunately, there soon developed within the teachings of the early Fathers of the Church a strong tendency to regard Jews as entirely displaced from the covenantal relationship because of their unwillingness to accept Jesus as the Messiah, despite the clear teaching to the contrary on the part of St. Paul in Romans 9-11 (which served as a basis for the Second Vatican Council's renewed constructive theology of the Christian-Jewish relationship).

This belief, that the Jews had been totally rejected by God and replaced in the covenantal relationship by the "New Israel," led to the emergence of another widespread doctrine in patristic writings; namely, the so-called "perpetual wandering" theology, which argued that the fate of the Jews, as a consequence of their displacement from the covenant, was to

live forever among the peoples of the earth in a miserable state without a homeland of their own as an enduring sign of sinfulness and a perpetual warning to others of what they could expect if they failed to accept Christ. This theology became so deep-seated in popular Western culture that even a familiar houseplant took on its name. This was the prevailing theology among the Church Fathers with only a few exceptions.

We can illustrate this theology of “perpetual wandering” with references from certain central figures in the patristic era. Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 265-339 C.E.), for example, speaks of how the royal metropolis of the Jews (i.e., Jerusalem) would be destroyed by fire and the city would become inhabited no longer by Jews, “but by races of other stock, while they [i.e., the Jews] would be dispersed among the Gentiles throughout the whole world with never a hope of any cessation of evil or breathing space from troubles.”⁵ St. Cyprian of Carthage (c. 210-58 C.E.), relying on various prophetic texts, which suggest desolation and exile as a result of sin, envisioned Israel as having entered its final state of desolation and exile. Following in the same vein, St. Hippolytus of Rome (fl. 217-35 C.E.) insisted that, unlike the exilic experiences suffered by the Jews at the hands of the Egyptians and the Babylonians in earlier times, the postbiblical exile would continue throughout the course of human history. In the East, St. John Chrysostom (344-407 C.E.) clearly linked the now permanent Jewish exile condition with the “killing of Christ.” And St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 C.E.) in his classic work, *City of God*, speaks several times of the Jews as having “their back bent down always.”

While the patristic writings were far more than an extended anti-Jewish treatise, Christians cannot ignore this dimension of their thought, this “shadow side” of their theology, which in other aspects remains a continuing source of spiritual richness. Jews know this theology very well. Unfortunately, it has been

omitted in our basic Christian teaching texts far too often. Yet, we cannot understand the treatment of Jews in subsequent centuries without a basic understanding of this theology. The history to which it gave rise is filled with persistent forms of social and religious anti-Semitism, which brought upon the Jewish community continual humiliation as well as social and political inequality. On occasion, this further degenerated into outright physical suffering and even death, especially in such periods as that of the Crusades.

This legacy of anti-Semitism, with its profoundly negative social consequences for Jews as individuals and for the Jewish community as a whole, remained the dominant social pattern in Western Christian lands until the twentieth century. While we can point to some notable breaks in this pattern on occasion in such countries as Spain and Poland, as well as for individual Jews in the liberal democracies created in parts of Europe and North America, the respite was sometimes short-lived and, as in the case of Spain, followed by even more flagrant forms of attack on the Jewish community.

At the dawn of the twentieth century the theology of perpetual divine judgment upon the Jewish people did not vanish overnight. Rather, it continued to exercise a decisive role in shaping Catholicism's initial reactions, for example, to the idea of restoring a Jewish national homeland in Palestine. It also had a central role in shaping popular Christian attitudes towards the Nazis and their stated goal of eliminating all Jews from Europe and beyond through deliberate extermination. While we shall return to this question of classical anti-Semitism and its role during that period, there is little question that this persistent tradition provided an indispensable seedbed for the Nazis' ability to succeed as far as they did in their master plan. They would not have secured the popular support they enjoyed were it not for the continuing influence of traditional Christian anti-Semitism on the masses of baptized believers in Europe.

It is only in the three decades or so since the beginning of the Second Vatican Council that this negative theology of the Jewish people has lost its theological foundations. For, in Chapter Four of its historic document on non-Christian religions, the Council clearly asserted that there never was a valid basis either for the charge of collective guilt against the Jewish community for supposedly "murdering the Messiah" or for the consequent theology of permanent Jewish suffering and displacement. With its positive affirmation (following St. Paul in Romans 9-11) of continued covenantal inclusion on the part of Jews after the coming of Christ, the Council permanently removed all basis for the long-held "perpetual wandering" theology and the social deprivation and suffering that flowed from it.

My predecessors in the U.S. Catholic hierarchy played a central role in the development and passage of *Nostra Aetate*. They worked hand-in-hand with European bishops and theologians, who had played an important role in Catholic resistance movements to the Nazis in France and the Netherlands, as well as with pioneer thinkers in the United States, such as the late Msgr. John Oesterreicher of the Institute for Judaean-Christian Studies at Seton Hall University. As a result, the U.S. bishops helped overcome initial hesitation on the part of some Council Fathers regarding the proposed document. This conciliar declaration represents one of the most important contributions made by U.S. Catholicism to the Council.

The strong support given *Nostra Aetate* by the U.S. bishops must be seen in the context of a developing relationship between Catholics and Jews (together with some Protestant groups as well) that dates back to the twenties. It was at this time that Catholics and Jews, in particular, with a shared experience of exclusion from important facets of national life, began to forge coalitions through labor unions and other social organizations to wage a joint struggle against discrimination in

such areas as employment and housing. Both had seen the signs in the large metropolitan areas of the country: "Neither Catholics nor Jews need apply."

These social bonds grew even closer in the following decades. As a result Catholic and Jewish leaders cooperated on promoting the passage of major new social legislation during the period of the New Deal.⁶ While this unprecedented cooperation in the social sphere did not immediately lead to wholesale changes in the way Catholic religious materials presented Jews and Judaism, it resulted in a sense of new trust and commitment between Catholics and Jews. This had a decidedly positive impact on the U.S. bishops when they took up consideration of the proposed text of *Nostra Aetate*. Their experience left them convinced of a basic compatibility between the Christian and Jewish traditions, despite what "displacement" theology had maintained. The human bondedness forged out of three decades of intensive social cooperation eventually was translated at the Council into support for *Nostra Aetate*'s sense of theological bondedness.

The U.S. bishops at the Second Vatican Council and their official consultants had the advantage of recent studies on the teaching materials most widely used in Catholic schools and CCD programs. These studies were undertaken by a team of Catholic researchers at St. Louis University: Sisters Linus Gleason, Rita Mudd, and Rose Thering. The first two studies, covering literature and social studies texts, basically revealed a minimal focus on Jews and Jewish history. So, Catholic students would learn little, if anything, about Jews and Judaism from these texts.

Sister Thering's study of catechetical texts showed quite a different result from the first two. Jews were the most visible among the religious, racial, and ethnic minorities about whom she gathered data. Moreover, they and their religious practices and beliefs were presented in a very unfavorable light, including

widespread denunciations of the Pharisees, continued collective accusations against the Jewish community at large for direct involvement in Jesus' execution, and the Jewish "inheritance" of a permanent divine curse as a consequence of murdering the Messiah.⁷ Confronted by this data from their own teaching materials, and conscious of a growing consensus among Catholic scholars that such a picture of Jews and Judaism had little basis in fact, the U.S. bishops took a leadership role at the Council. They pressed for a substantial reformulation of the theology of the Church's relationship to the Jewish People, one that, unlike its predecessor "displacement/perpetual wandering" perspective, set the relationship on a fundamentally positive course.

The Second Vatican Council's removal of the classical "displacement/perpetual wandering" theology from contemporary Catholic catechesis has been enhanced in subsequent documents from the Holy See and Pope John Paul II. The Holy See's 1985 *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church*, issued in commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, made two very important constructive affirmations, especially when these are set over against the history of Catholicism's traditional approach to Jewish existence after the coming of Christ. Both occur in paragraph #25 where the *Notes* maintain that "the history of Israel did not end in 70 A.D. [i.e., with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by the Romans] . . . It continued, especially in a numerous Diaspora which allowed Israel to carry to the whole world a witness. . . . while preserving the memory of the land of their forefathers at the heart of their hope" and, subsequently, that "the permanence of Israel (while so many ancient peoples have disappeared without a trace) is a historic fact and a sign to be interpreted within God's design."⁸ These statements clearly repudiate the "displacement" theology.

Pope John Paul II, who has contributed significantly to the development of the Church's new theological outlook on Jews and Judaism,⁹ wrote the following in his 1984 statement *Redemptionis Anno*:

For the Jewish people who live in the State of Israel and who preserve in that land such precious testimonies of their history and their faith, we must ask for the desired security and the due tranquillity that is the prerogative of every nation and condition of life and of progress of every society.¹⁰

The statement clearly exhibits on the part of the Holy Father a sense of the deep intertwining of faith and continued attachment to the land on the part of the Jewish People, a sense that further draws out the profound implications of the renewed theology of the Christian-Jewish relationship put forth by the Second Vatican Council.

Two recent documents of the Holy See further seal the coffin of the biblically unfounded "displacement" theology. The first is the text of the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* which reaffirms the two major points on which the Council built its new theological approach to the Jews. In paragraph #597 the Catechism rejects any idea that all Jews then or now can be charged with the responsibility for Jesus' death. It reminds Christians that their sins were largely responsible for the need for Jesus to die on the Cross in order to save the human family. And paragraph #839 speaks of the distinctiveness of Jewish faith as an authentic response to God's original revelation and underlines the permanence of the divine promises made to the people Israel.¹¹

The second document is the recent Holy See-Israeli Accords, which led to the establishment of a full diplomatic

relationship between the Holy See and the State of Israel. While this is fundamentally a political document that develops a framework for dealing with concrete issues, there is an underlying theological significance to this document, recognized in its Preamble, given the longstanding theological approach to Jewish political sovereignty on the part of the Catholic tradition. The Preamble has set this essentially political document within the overall context of the Catholic-Jewish reconciliation underway in the Church since the Second Vatican Council,

aware of the unique nature of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people, and the historic process of reconciliation and growth in mutual understanding and friendship between Catholics and Jews.

Various Catholic leaders, in commenting on the Accords' significance, have made similar connections. William Cardinal Keeler of Baltimore, President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, has described the Accords as providing "a major step forward in the dialogue of reconciliation between the Roman Catholic Church and the Jewish people emphasized by the Second Vatican Council." And John Cardinal O'Connor of New York, episcopal moderator for the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Catholic-Jewish Relations, has said that the signing of the Accords represented "an historic moment in the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people in this country." He added that, for him, they serve as a concrete expression of the intimate bond between Jews and Christians and of the Church's rootedness in Judaism.

I endorse the perspective on the Accords of my brother bishops. I also point out that article #2 of the Accords contains a very strong and unequivocal condemnation by the Holy See

of “hatred, persecution, and all other manifestations of anti-Semitism directed against the Jewish people and individual Jews.” I welcome this forthright statement as well as the accompanying pledge by the Holy See and the State of Israel to cooperate in every possible way

in combating all forms of anti-Semitism and all kinds of racism and of religious intolerance, and in promoting mutual understanding among nations, tolerance among communities, and respect for human life and dignity.

(article #1)

This makes concrete the renewed theological vision of the Christian-Jewish relationship developed at the Second Vatican Council. It also solidifies the notion that all forms of racism, including anti-Semitism, are fundamentally sinful, as first expressed in the 1989 Holy See document on racism.¹²

The Holy See’s action in formally recognizing Israel through the Accords represents a final seal on the process begun at the Second Vatican Council to rid Catholicism of all vestiges of “displacement theology” and the implied notion of perpetual Jewish homelessness. By so doing, it has refocused the Jewish-Christian conversation. The Accords represent the Catholic Church’s full and final acknowledgment of Jews as a *people*, not merely as individuals or of Judaism as a religion. For the vast majority of Jews, Israel signifies their ultimate tie to Jewish peoplehood, their central point of self-identity. And, as the Holy See’s 1974 *Guidelines* on Catholic-Jewish relations pointed out, authentic dialogue requires that all partners come to understand and respect one another as they define themselves. As Arthur Hertzberg has shown very well in his classic work, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews*,¹³ even democratic societies that were prepared to grant Jews a measure

of individual and civil freedom were unable to accept the Jewish notion of peoplehood.

Let us now return to the issue of Nazism and anti-Semitism which continues to elicit considerable discussion today. Some perspectives on this question draw virtually a straight line from classical Christian anti-Semitism to the Nazi effort to annihilate all the Jews of Europe. They point, for example, to Hitler's often-quoted remark to Church leaders, who came to see him to protest his treatment of Jews, that he was merely putting into practice what the Christian churches had preached for nearly two thousand years. These perspectives also highlight the acknowledged impact of Martin Luther's writings on the Jewish question as well as the close similarity between much of Nazi anti-Jewish legislation and laws against Jews in earlier Christian-dominated societies.

As I have already pointed out, there is little doubt that classical Christian anti-Semitism was a central factor in generating popular support for the Nazi undertaking, along with economic greed, religious and political nationalism, and ordinary human fear. For many baptized Christians, it constituted the primary reason for their personal collaboration with the Nazi movement. Some even went so far as to define the Nazi struggle against the Jews in explicitly religious and theological terms. In the Church today, we must not minimize the extent of Christian involvement with Hitler and his associates. It remains a moral challenge that we must continue to confront.

Nevertheless, in the final analysis, I have come to accept the perspective of those Jewish and Christian scholars who argue for the ultimate distinctiveness of the Holocaust. It was not simply the final and most gruesome chapter in the long history of Christian anti-Semitism. Rather, it was rooted in modern theories of inherent biological and racial inferiority coupled with the escalation of bureaucratic and technological

capacities. The Nazi leadership coalesced several important modern strains of thought into a master plan for the supposed advancement of humanity.

To bring this plan to realization required, as the Nazis envisioned it, the elimination of the “dregs” of society. These they defined as first and foremost the Jewish people, but the category also was extended to embrace the disabled, Gypsies, the Polish leadership, homosexuals, and certain other designated groups. Proper distinctions need to be maintained between the wholesale attack on the Jewish people, for whom there was absolutely no escape from Nazi fury, and the others subjected to systematic Nazi attack. But there is also a linkage with the victimization of these other groups whose suffering and death were integral, not peripheral, to the overall Nazi plan. This is what makes the Holocaust *sui generis*, even though the fate of its primary victims had important ties to classical Christian anti-Semitism.

Confronting the legacy of anti-Semitism will not prove easy, but confront it we must. The Catholic Church's continued moral integrity demands it. There are several ways in which this needs to be done. First, a history of anti-Semitism and of anti-Judaic theology must be restored to our Catholic teaching materials. Innocence or ignorance is not a pathway to authentic virtue in this regard; courageous honesty is. In our religious education programs we should be prepared to tell the full story of the Church's treatment of Jews over the centuries, ending with a rejection of that history and theology at the Second Vatican Council. We can and should highlight moments of relative tranquillity and constructive interaction, but these stories should never be allowed to obscure the more pronounced history of hostility and subjection.

What is true of the history of anti-Semitism in general applies even more strongly to the Holocaust. While defending the Church and Church leaders against unwarranted

accusations, we must be prepared to deal with the real failures of the Christian churches during that critical period and to allow a full scrutiny of Church activities by reputable scholars. Education about the Holocaust should also become a prominent feature in Catholic education at every level.

Above all, in light of the history of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, as a Church we need to engage in public repentance. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, with whose members Catholics in several parts of the country, including Chicago, are united in covenant, has recently provided the entire Christian family with a fine example of how this may be done. Its sensitive, yet decisive, rejection of Martin Luther's later teachings on Jews and Judaism, which proved so attractive to Hitler, stands as a model for all Christians. Hopefully, the time may not be too far off when the ecumenical body of Christian believers can take equal responsibility for those parts of the Christian tradition shared by all the baptized that have led over the centuries to disastrous consequences for the Jewish people.

In this context we need to take very seriously the challenge recently presented to the Church at large by Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Letter on the approaching third millennium of Christianity. The Holy Father calls upon the Christian community, in preparation for the millennial celebration, to foster a genuine spirit of repentance for "the acquiescence given, especially in certain centuries, to intolerance and even the use of violence in the service of truth." The Church, he adds, bears an obligation "to express profound regret for the weaknesses of so many of her sons and daughters who sullied her face, preventing her from fully mirroring the image of her crucified Lord, the supreme witness of patient love and of humble meekness."¹⁴

We must also attend still further to the quality of our educational materials relative to the Christian-Jewish

relationship. A recent study by Dr. Philip A. Cunningham has reported very significant progress in most areas in a large majority of the currently available materials.¹⁵ However, it is important that teachers fully understand the scope of the changes introduced by *Nostra Aetate* in its repudiation of Christian claims about Jewish collective responsibility for Jesus' death and its reaffirmation of the Pauline vision of Jews as continuing members of the covenanted family of believers. To that end, I encourage efforts, such as those of the Institute of Catholic-Jewish Education, co-sponsored by the Sisters of Zion and the American Jewish Committee in Chicago, which bring the new Catholic teaching on Jews and Judaism directly to teachers in Catholic parochial and Jewish day schools. Similar efforts are required throughout the country.

The new Catechism, as I have already indicated, has fundamentally incorporated the perspective of *Nostra Aetate* on the Church and the Jewish people into its basic plan for Catholic catechesis.¹⁶ Nonetheless, we must continue to exercise sensitivity regarding the proper interpretation of certain statements in the Catechism lest they be misunderstood, and we should continue to note some continuing concerns raised by Jewish leaders in the dialogue, like Rabbi Leon Klenicki.¹⁷

Liturgy and preaching are additional areas that require continued attention by the Church. In 1988, the U.S. Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy released a set of guidelines for the presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic preaching.¹⁸ They offer directions for implementing the vision of *Nostra Aetate* and subsequent documents of the Holy See in the Church's ministry of the Word during the various liturgical seasons. Especially highlighted are the seasons of Lent/Holy Week and Easter, whose texts can serve to reinforce classical Christian stereotypes of Jews and Judaism if not interpreted carefully. The great challenge of these liturgical seasons is that they become times of reconciliation between Jews and Christians

rather than conflict and division as they were in past centuries. Christians need to recognize their profound bonds with the Jewish people during these central periods of the liturgical year in accord with the vision expressed by the Second Vatican Council and Pope John Paul II.

Unfortunately, too few of those commissioned to preach the word of God are as yet acquainted with this key document. This must change if we are to remove all possibility of the liturgy serving as a source of continued anti-Semitism within the Church. There is also need for a group of liturgical scholars and experts in the Christian-Jewish dialogue to meet on a sustained basis in order to examine how well the current liturgical texts measure up to the constructive theological vision of the Jewish-Christian relationship set forth by the Second Vatican Council and Pope John Paul II.

In the more than three decades since the close of the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church has made significant progress in overcoming the legacy of anti-Semitism. But our work is far from complete. The words of the Holy Father, spoken on a visit to Hungary in 1991, continue to serve as our guide, as the basis for a renewed commitment to the urgent task of repentance and reconciliation:

In face of a risk of a resurgence and spread of anti-Semitic feelings, attitudes, and initiatives, of which certain disquieting signs are to be seen today and of which we have experienced the most frightful results in the past, we must teach consciences to consider anti-Semitism, and all forms of racism, as sins against God and humanity.¹⁹

Notes

1. Edward Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985).

2. Wayne A. Meeks and Robert L. Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978), and Robert L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

3. Anthony Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1988), and *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

4. Raymond Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 41-42; see also "The Passion According to John: Chapters 18 and 19," *Worship*, 49 (March 1975), pp. 130-31.

5. Eusebius, *Demonstration of the Gospel*, I, 1.

6. John T. Pawlikowski, "A Growing Tradition of Ethical Critique," in John T. Pawlikowski, O.S.M. and Donald Senior, C.P., ed., *Economic Justice: CTU's Pastoral Commentary on the Bishops' Letter on the Economy* (Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1977), pp. 43-45.

7. John T. Pawlikowski, O.S.M., *Catechetics and Prejudice: How Catholic Teaching Materials View Jews, Protestants and Racial Minorities* (New York: Paulist Press, 1973), pp. 75-86.

8. Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church*, #25. The text can be found in Helga Croner, ed., *More Stepping Stones to Jewish-Christian Relations* (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), pp. 230-31.

9. Eugene J. Fisher and León Klenicki, ed., *John Paul II on Jews and Judaism* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Catholic Conference, 1987).

10. See *The Pope Speaks*, 29:3 (1984), pp. 219-20.

11. See *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994), #597, #839.

12. Pontifical Justice and Peace Commission, "The Church and Racism: Toward a More Fraternal Society," *Origins: CNS Documentary Service*, 18, No. 37 (February 23, 1989), pp. 613, 615-26.

13. Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews: The Origins of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York: Schocken, 1968).

14. Pope John Paul II, "As The Third Millennium Draws Near," *Origins: CNS Documentary Service*, 24, No. 24 (November 24, 1994), p. 411.

15. Philip A. Cunningham, *Education for Shalom: Religion Textbooks and the Enhancement of the Catholic and Jewish Relationship* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1995).

16. Eugene J. Fisher, "The New Catholic Catechism and the Jews: an Interfaith Jewish Reading," *SIDIC*, 27, No. 2, pp. 2-8.

17. Leon Klenicki, "The New Catholic Catechism and the Jews: an Interfaith Jewish Reading," *SIDIC*, 17, No. 2, pp. 9-18.

18. Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *God's Mercy Endures Forever: Guidelines on the Presentation of Jews and Judaism in Catholic Preaching* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Catholic Conference, 1988).

19. Pope John Paul II, "The Sinfulness of Anti-Semitism," *Origins: CNS Documentary Service*, 21, No. 13 (September 5, 1991), p. 204. The Holy Father sounds a similar theme in reflecting on the meaning of Auschwitz in his new book, when he calls anti-Semitism "a great sin against humanity." See *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, ed. by Vittorio Messori (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), p. 96.

Why Dialogue? Some Reflections on Catholic-Jewish Dialogue

EDWARD IDRIS CARDINAL CASSIDY

When the question “Why dialogue?” is asked, my thoughts turn at once to those many problems which so deeply disturb the peace of this world in which we live: at the international, national, social, family, and individual levels.

We have been helpless bystanders now for all too long as in the former Yugoslavia Serbs, Croats, and Muslims engage in a bloody battle that has its origin in age-old enmities that have not been reconciled through dialogue. We have in recent months witnessed the most terrible of crimes committed in Rwanda by peoples divided on tribal lines, who also have harbored in their hearts old wounds and have sought healing

not in dialogue, but in vengeance. Just as I write these lines, innocent people have been shot down in the streets of the holy city of Jerusalem in a cruel gesture aimed at preventing the reconciliation through dialogue of Jews and Arabs.

One could go on adding to this list, especially if we were to consider family and personal conflicts. Each one of us has our own experience to reflect on in this regard.

Often when listening to the news or reading our daily newspaper, the thought comes to mind: why cannot these people put aside their enmity, sit down and talk about their differences and seek to be reconciled? From time to time, almost as if in answer to our prayer, developments take place which give new hope for peace and reconciliation between those who have been for long in conflict. Northern Ireland is such an example.

Another such example is, I believe, the new relationship that has grown between Jews and Catholics as a result of our contacts, conversations, and dialogue over the past thirty years. This particular effort at dialogue and reconciliation is very dear to my heart and is at the center of our activity within the Holy see's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.

1. Reconciliation in Jewish and Catholic Traditions

The Oxford Dictionary tells us that dialogue is a conversation between two or more persons. In our use of the word, however, we tend to limit the word dialogue to conversations which seek to resolve problems, and in Catholic-Jewish dialogue we see these conversations as being oriented towards reconciliation, which in turn is defined by the same Oxford Dictionary as the act of bringing a person or persons again into friendly relations after an estrangement. In both our Christian and Jewish traditions, reconciliation in turn is linked to forgiveness. We read in the *Talmud* (Bez. 32b):

The unforgiving man is not of the seed of Abraham.

while in the Christian tradition, all Christians pray:

Heavenly Father . . . forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

(Matthew 6:12)

There are differences in the Jewish and Christian understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation. I believe, however, that despite much that has been written to the contrary, the Christian teaching on this subject of reconciliation and forgiveness is not something fundamentally new in respect of Jewish understanding. As was so often the case, Jesus based his teaching on the Jewish tradition of a God who forgives, and whom we are commanded to emulate.

Certainly, in the Christian teaching, readiness to forgive the offenses of others is a pre-condition of receiving God's forgiveness. The classical example is in Matthew 5:24, where Jesus teaches his followers:

So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

And in Luke, we read the command or the promise: "Forgive and you will be forgiven" (6:37).

Of course we who come together in dialogue today cannot forgive or pardon the sins that were committed in the past. Nor can we be condemned for what was done in the past. What is asked of us is sincerely to regret the sins of the past, so

as to create new relationships in the present and to hold out new hope for the future.

2. Dialogue and Reconciliation between Christians and Jews

A brief moment of reflection on the history of Christian-Jewish relations will suffice to show the importance of dialogue and reconciliation between our two communities. Jews remember all too well the Church's "teaching of contempt," as well as the sufferings imposed on them by Christians down through the centuries. The ghettos are there to recall discrimination, the Shoah is a fact of contemporary history, which took place certainly under a pagan regime, but on Christian soil and in a Christian culture.

If ever there was need for two traditions to be reconciled, then surely that is true of the Jewish and Christian traditions. Given the facts of history, it is of course clear that the initiative for dialogue and reconciliation had to be taken by Christians. Yet there could not have been any reconciliation without the Jewish response.

3. Dialogue, the Path to Reconciliation

Hence, we cannot speak of reconciliation between Jews and Catholics without acknowledging the prophetic and determining role played by Pope John XXIII in this connection. Only a few months after his election to the See of Rome, he gave instructions on Good Friday 1959 for the adjective "perfidious" to be omitted from the customary prayer for the Jewish people in the liturgy of that day. And when in 1960 the same Pope called the Catholic Bishops from all over the world to come together in the most solemn form of Council within the Catholic Church, he placed on the agenda for their discussions the question of a new approach to the relations between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people. This resulted in a document approved almost unanimously by

the Bishops, in which an entirely new relationship was envisaged with the Jewish people. While Cardinal Augustin Bea was the most influential protagonist in preparing this document and guiding it through the discussion within the Council, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel exercised a notable influence on its elaboration.¹

It is under No. 4 in this monumental document, which has the significant title of *Nostra Aetate (In Our Time)*, that we find outlined this new approach to relations with the Jewish people.

The document speaks first of the great spiritual patrimony which the Christian Church has received from the Jewish people, including of course the Old or First Testament. It reminds us too that "the apostles, the pillars on which the Church stands were of Jewish descent, as were many of those early disciples who proclaimed the Gospel of Christ to the world." It stresses that Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed, since neither all Jews indiscriminately at the time of the death of Christ nor Jews today can be charged with crimes committed during the Passion of Christ. The Council then calls for greater mutual understanding and appreciation between Catholics and Jews.

If we read *Nostra Aetate* today, in the light of the new relationship and understanding established over the past thirty years, some expressions may seem inadequate and outdated, or even triumphalistic. It must, however, be read in the context of its own time and there can be no doubt that it was truly a milestone in Catholic-Jewish relations, a new beginning after a long history of conflict and isolation. With this solemn declaration, the wall between Judaism and Christianity, which had stood for almost 2,000 years, began to collapse.

Immediately after the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* had been approved by the Council, Rabbi Heschel, in September 1966, set down four principles for following up what the Church had now taken as its new approach to Catholic-Jewish relations, namely:

- 1) no religion is an island — we are all involved, one with the another;

- 2) the most significant basis for a meeting of people of different religious traditions is the level of fear and trembling, of humility and contrition;
- 3) a Christian should realise that a world without Israel will be a world without the God of Israel. A Jew on the other hand ought to acknowledge the eminent role and place of Christianity in God's design for the redemption of all men;
- 4) what then is the purpose of cooperation between religions? . . . to help one another, to share insight and learning, to cooperate . . . and what is more important to search . . . for the power of love and care for man.²

Thus a solid base was established for a new dialogue and for permanent reconciliation between Catholics and Jews. Of course, not everything changed at once. Age-old suspicions and hostile mentalities do not readily give way to new documents or decrees. From the Catholic side, therefore, a special Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews was set up after the Council by the Holy See to promote this entirely new relationship.

I should like to take the opportunity offered me in this reflection to pay tribute to those Jewish leaders who reacted so positively to this new situation. Like so many others of their community who remained suspicious of the Catholic Church, they too had ample reason to wonder what "hidden agenda" might be behind this move. They too remembered the past; they too had lost their dear ones during the Shoah. Yet they held out the hand of friendship, they were ready for dialogue, and thanks to them the process went ahead.

For its part, the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews sought *within the Catholic Church* to promote this

understanding of Christian-Jewish relations. Guidelines and suggestions for implementing the Conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate No. 4* were issued on 1 December 1974; and on 24 June 1995 the Commission published *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Catholic Church*.

From the Jewish side, a new organization was set up in 1970 with the title: the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC). This organization brings together today representatives of orthodox, conservative, and reformed Judaism from all over the world, from the World Jewish congress, B'nai B'rith International, the Synagogue Council of America, and the Israel Interfaith Committee.

Thanks to the creation on the part of both Jewish and Catholic communities of international organizations having as their aim the promotion of dialogue and cooperation, it has been possible to develop at this level a sound and positive relationship, which since 1970 has found its principal expression in and through the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee. The ILC has met regularly fifteen times over the past twenty-four years, and closely connected with, and to some degree dependent on these developments at the international level, a series of parallel initiatives have taken place at the regional and local levels.

For the success of any international dialogue, corresponding efforts are required at other levels of human co-existence. So much in fact depends on public opinion, and it does little good to work at building reconciliation between leaders, so long as feelings of hostility, contempt and distrust, as well as racial hatred and unbending ideologies, continue to divide peoples and place them in opposing camps.³

This process towards reconciliation of Catholics and Jews, through dialogue, has not always been constant or smooth. There have been difficult days in our relationship even after the Vatican Council. Our Jewish partners were baffled by the readiness of the Pope to meet with Yasir Arafat and President Kurt Waldheim. They found it difficult to accept the

beatification of Edith Stein. The presence of a Carmelite Convent at Auschwitz proved almost too much for the continuing dialogue. And the lack of diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the State of Israel was interpreted as a sign that the Catholic Church had not completely abandoned its former attitude towards the Jewish people as expressed by the so-called "teaching of contempt."

The closing years of the 1980s were indeed dark days for our relationship. Then in 1990, the International Liaison Committee met in Prague, in an attempt to give new life to the reconciliation process. A wonderful meeting of minds and hearts took place on that occasion. As the recently-appointed President of the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, I was able to assure the Jewish representatives that in the eyes of the Catholic Church anti-Semitism is considered to be sinful, and I went on to state:

It seems to me that as Christians we have a particular obligation to take the initiative in working to eliminate all forms of anti-semitism, for the faith that we profess is in a God of love, who reconciles man to God and man to man. If we are to serve Him we must too love each and every one of those whom he has created; and we do that by showing respect and concern for our neighbour, by promoting peace and justice, by knowing how to pardon. *That anti-semitism has found a place in Christian thought and practice calls for an act of Teshuva and of reconciliation on our part as we gather in this city, which is a witness to our failure to be authentic witnesses to our faith at times in the past.*⁴

As our meeting progressed we realized that for us Jews and Catholics a new springtime was in the air, reminiscent of the Prague Spring of 1968. At the conclusion of this meeting, the

Jewish and Catholic representatives there present approved a Statement in which they called for a deepening of what they saw as "a new spirit in Jewish-Catholic relations, a spirit which emphasizes cooperation, mutual understanding and reconciliation, good will and common goals, to replace the past spirit of suspicion, resentment and distrust."⁵

This Statement stressed that systematic efforts must be made to uproot sources of religious anti-semitism wherever they appear and went on then to identify certain areas in which this new spirit could be given flesh, as it were, by actions that would promote greater understanding. Such action would include the translation into the vernacular languages and broad dissemination of documents concerning our new relationship; the teaching and formation given in schools and theological seminaries; the monitoring of all trends and events which threaten an upsurge of anti-semitism, with a view to countering promptly such developments; ongoing actions aimed at guaranteeing freedom of worship and religious training for all, irrespective of religion.

Actions taken over the past four years to implement that Statement have led to much-improved Jewish-Catholic relations. Of particular significance in this connection was the visit of a Delegation of the ILC, in February 1992, to Poland, the Federation of the Czech and Slovak Republics, and Hungary. This was preceded a few months earlier by a Declaration of the Catholic Bishops of Europe, gathered together in Rome for a Special Synod for Europe, which pledged the Church "to work for the blossoming of a new Spring in its relations with the Jewish people."⁶

The recent establishment of normal diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the State of Israel removed one further obstacle to our search for reconciliation. In fact, we read in the introduction to the Fundamental Agreement between the Holy See and the State of Israel that this accord is the fruit of "the historic process of reconciliation and growth in mutual understanding and friendship between Catholics and Jews."⁷

We still suffer from misunderstandings and from what our Jewish friends see as inconsistencies within the Catholic Church. It is, however, a sign of our new relationship that we are able to speak to each other frankly about these problems without our relationship being threatened. Moreover, in the most recent meeting of the International Liaison Committee of Catholics and Jews, in Jerusalem last May, we were able to publish a joint statement on the family, in harmony with the initiative taken by the United Nations Organization in dedicating this year in a special way to the family, and we now look forward with confidence to future work together in promoting responsible stewardship of the environment.⁸

Jews and Catholics are beginning to see that there are many fields of activity in which they can work together, without entering into questions of theology or in any way blurring their identity as Jews or Catholics. After all, we are not just two distinct peoples, but rather two religious traditions, having a common scriptural understanding of God and of creation, of the relationship between God and man, and of the brotherhood of those who are children of the one God.

Addressing representatives of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, in the Vatican, on 12 March 1979, Pope John Paul II expressed this relationship in the following words:

To God, then, I would like to turn at the end of these reflections. All of us, Jews and Christians, pray frequently to Him with the same prayers, taken from the Book which we both consider to be the word of God. It is for Him to give to both religious communities, so near to each other, that reconciliation and effective love which are at the same time His command and His gift (Cf. Lev. 19:18; Mark 12:30). In this sense, I believe, each time that Jews recite the "*Shema Israel*," each time that Christians recall the first and second great

Commandments, we are, by God's grace, brought nearer to each other.⁹

And on another occasion, His Holiness made it clear that:

this reconciliation should not be confused with a sort of religious relativism, less still with a loss of identity.¹⁰

It is not only the Catholic Church that is engaged in Christian-Jewish dialogue. The World Council of Churches and the Orthodox Churches have pursued a similar path in recent years. And all Christians most certainly rejoice and are encouraged by political developments in the Middle East, which augur well also for future progress in the relations between Jews and the followers of other religions.

We are all well aware in this connection of the importance of the holy city of Jerusalem. This remains for Jews, Christians, and Muslims a delicate and complex question that calls for dialogue between all the parties concerned. I should like to recall in this connection a statement from Pope John Paul II, made already on 5 October 1980:

Towering high over all this world, like an ideal centre, a precious jewel-case that keeps treasures of the most venerable memories, and is itself the first of these treasures, is the holy city, Jerusalem, today the object of a dispute that seems without a solution, tomorrow — if only people want it! — *tomorrow a crossroad of reconciliation and peace.*¹¹

4. *The Catholic and Jewish Response*

As has already been mentioned, the question of reconciliation between Christians and Jews cannot be solved only by decrees and statements. These joint declarations, the

fruit of dialogue between the partners, have to become part of the life of our communities. I should like therefore to add a word, firstly about the reception so far within our communities, and then concerning strategy for future promotion of this new spirit of understanding and cooperation at the international level.

I think that I can honestly state that within the Catholic community at large, there is indeed a new approach to Catholic-Jewish relations. This is certainly true at the level of the hierarchy and of the great majority of priests and pastoral agents. The documents of the Holy See on Catholic-Jewish relations have been translated and distributed throughout the world. In Eastern Europe, which was so isolated under the Communist regimes, constant efforts are being made within the Church to make known these documents. I would just mention, by way of example, Poland, where the Conciliar Decree *Nostra Aetate* No. 4 and subsequent documents of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews have been translated into Polish and widely distributed. The Polish Bishops have also issued an important pastoral letter on Catholic-Jewish relations that has been read in all the churches.

Much, however, remains to be done. There are still those who are ignorant of the new approach of the Church to the Jewish people; others who continue to see the Jewish people configured under the stereotypes of the past; again others who are anti-semitic or racist.

For his part, as head of the Catholic Church, Pope John Paul II has sought to lead the members of the Church in this new direction. I have already quoted from some of his early speeches on Catholic-Jewish relations. I could refer to many more from the great number of interventions which this present Pope has made on this subject over the past sixteen years. Rather let me remind you of two particular events which must be considered as unique steps forward in Jewish-Catholic relations.

I refer, in the first place, to the historic visit which Pope John Paul II made on 13 April 1986, to the Great Synagogue of

Rome. It was the first time in history that such an event took place, and the Pope saw in this happening — his desire to visit and the warm welcome extended to him by Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff and the Jewish community — “the close, after the Pontificate of John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council, of a long period which we must not tire of reflecting upon in order to draw from it the appropriate lessons.” His Holiness spoke in this regard of “acts of discrimination, unjustified limitation of religious freedom, oppression also on the level of civil freedom in regard to the Jews” as being “gravely deplorable manifestations.” He intended that his visit would make “a decisive contribution to the consolidation of the good relations between our two communities and pointed out how, according to the Conciliar Decree *Nostra Aetate* No. 4, the Church of Christ discovers her “bond” with Judaism by “searching into her own mystery,” and so the Jewish religion cannot be conceived as something purely extrinsic to the Christian religion, but in a certain way intrinsic to it. “With Judaism therefore we have a relationship which we do not have with other religions. You are our dearly beloved brothers and, in a certain way, it could be said that you are our elder brothers.”¹²

In welcoming the Pope to his Synagogue, Chief Rabbi Toaff indicated the key to reconciliation with the following words: “We cannot forget the past, but today we want to begin, with trust and hope in the future, this new period of history which promises to be rich in common undertakings.”¹³

My second reference is to a concert which was performed, on 7 April 1994, in the Vatican to commemorate the victims of the Shoah. In the presence of Chief Rabbi Toaff of Rome and 80 survivors of the Holocaust, Pope John Paul II urged Catholics and Jews not only to remember the past together, but above all to cooperate together to resist the “many new manifestations of the anti-Semitism, xenophobia and racial hatred which were the seeds of those unspeakable crimes. Humanity cannot permit all this to happen again.”¹⁴

As regards the Jewish response to this new situation, my Jewish readers will be much more capable than I am of making an appraisal. Let me just comment on how I see that response from my own contacts with Jewish leaders and ordinary Jewish people.

I am told by many of my Jewish friends that there is still much ignorance among Jews about the changed approach of the Catholic Church to them as a people. Jewish leaders who have done much for Jewish-Catholic relations in the United States and elsewhere complain that the documents of the Second Vatican Council and of our dialogue are little known even to Jewish rabbis and to those responsible for the formation of future Jewish leaders.

Already I have mentioned that there remains among some Jews the suspicion that the Catholic Church may have in this new approach a "hidden agenda," that all this could be just a new tactic to win Jewish converts to Christianity. There are those memories which cannot be so easily be put aside, those sins of anti-semitism that cannot so easily be forgiven.

For all who enter into dialogue with a view to seeking reconciliation, the question of memories is a great problem. We cannot forget; we should not forget! But as human beings, with a will and a heart, we can put aside our memories in order to face together the present and to build the future. Memories can be most valuable to us in order that we do not commit again the errors of the past: they are among our most precious possessions, but they can also be like chains that hold us back from the joys of a new beginning, a new present, a new future.

In his message to the Jews of Poland on the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Rising, Pope John Paul II wrote: "We remember, and we need to remember, but we need to remember with renewed trust in God and his all-healing blessing."¹⁵ And even more recently, when speaking to the youth of Sicily, in the *Cibali* Stadium, Catania, on 5 November 1994, His Holiness urged his young audience: "Don't lose your memories, because a person without memories is one without a future."¹⁶

I understand the difficulty that reconciliation, which requires a delicate balance between the need for justice and the need for a new beginning, places today before the Jewish people. But does not the Jew, like the Christian, seek pardon rather than justice from God? And is not the liturgy of the great feast of Yom Kippur directed to bringing the faithful Jew to understand that one cannot ask pardon of God unless one asks pardon, as a pre-condition, of one's neighbor? And how often in the First Testament do we see the just God being also merciful and compassionate? I realize of course that it is not easy to pardon or to win pardon. We read in the Proverbs of Solomon that "a brother offended is harder to conquer than a fortified city" (18:19).

Yet I am convinced that the way of reconciliation is the only way forward for us as Christians and Jews. We cannot go on forever living with the chains of the past. We have an obligation to ourselves and to future generations to overcome the evils of the past and to build together a new period of Jewish-Christian cooperation, which would correspond to what Pope John Paul II saw as already being realized in 1985, when he addressed these words to a group of Jewish leaders:

The relationship between Jews and Christians has radically improved in these years. Where there was ignorance and therefore prejudice and stereotype, there is now growing mutual knowledge, appreciation and respect. There is, above all, love between us: that kind of love, I mean, which is for both of us a fundamental injunction of our religious traditions and which the New Testament has received from the Old.¹⁷

In this the Jewish and Catholic communities in the United States of America have a vital role to play. Nowhere else in the world are the two communities present together today in such numbers; nowhere else is there such frequent contact; nowhere else is so much thought being given to this relationship.

5. What Remains For Us to Do?

When the ILC meet at Baltimore in the United States, in May of 1992, emphasis was placed on the need to intensify our cooperation particularly in the fields of education and in the formation of those who are to be leaders in our religious communities. Special mention was also made of working together to uphold the rights of all minorities, and to fight sexual and economic exploitation of women and children. In our Jerusalem meeting, the ILC accepted a shared commitment for family values and for the promotion of human and social environments in which the values of marriage according to the biblical tradition are respected. The family in fact has its own essential vocation and responsibility in creating a civilization of love according to God's plan for mankind.

It is above all the promotion of this common vision of the biblical tradition, which Jews and Christians share, that can be, I believe, the key to our future cooperation.

Personally, I feel sure that the day will come when we shall be able to enter into a profound dialogue, as Catholics and Jews, on the relationship between the First and Second Covenants. Pope John Paul II has made it clear that the first Covenant has not been revoked. There can be no doubt that God who surely loves all his children has shown a special love towards the Jewish people and towards those who are followers of his Son, Jesus Christ, who was born and who died a Jew.

6. Conclusion

I should like at the end of this presentation, which has concentrated on Jewish-Christian relations, to point out that the reconciliation for which we are working is not merely an internal matter for our two communities, but has a much wider significance. Pope John Paul II put it well in an address on 22 March 1984, to representatives of the Anti-Defamation League, when he affirmed:

the encounter between Catholics and Jews is not a meeting of two ancient religions each going its own way, and not infrequently, in times past, in grievous and painful conflict. It is a meeting between brothers. . . . Yet we are not meeting each other just for ourselves. We certainly try to know each other better and to understand better our respective distinctive identity and the close spiritual link between us. But, knowing each other, we discover still more what brings us together for *a deeper concern for humanity at large*.¹⁸

This same thought was expressed in other words by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, in his address on *Israel, the Church, and the World*, given in Jerusalem earlier this year:

Jews and Christians should accept each other in profound inner reconciliation, neither in disregard of their faith nor in its denial, but out of depth of faith itself. In their mutual reconciliation they should become a force for peace in and for the world. Through their witness to the one God, who cannot be adored apart from the unity of love of God and neighbour, they should open the door into the world for this God so that his will be done and so that it become on earth as *it is in heaven; so that His Kingdom may come*.¹⁹

“Why dialogue?” So that we Catholics and Jews may create a genuine culture of mutual esteem and reciprocal caring, and in this way become together a sign of hope and inspiration to other religions, races, and ethnic groups to turn away from contempt, towards authentic human fraternity. This new spirit of friendship and caring for one another between Catholics and Jews could become the most important symbol of reconciliation that we have to offer to a troubled world.²⁰

Notes

1. See Stjepan Schmidt, *Augustin Bea, The Cardinal of Unity* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: New City Press, 1992), p. 535, note 183.
2. *Union Theological Seminary Quarterly*, No. 21: 2,1.
3. See the "Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," *Gaudium et Spes*, No. 82.
4. *Information Service of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, No. 75 (1990), p. 175.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
6. Final Declaration of the Special Assembly for Europe of the Synod of Bishops, Rome, 14 December 1991, No. 8.
7. English Translation of *The Vatican-Israel Fundamental Agreement*, published also in *Origins: CNS Documentary Service*, 23, No. 30 (January 13, 1994).
8. The documents related to the XV meeting of the International Liaison Committee between Catholics and Jews held in Jerusalem (May 23-27, 1994) on the theme *The Family: Traditional Perception and Contemporary Realities* will be published in the *Information Service of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, No. 86.
9. *Information Service of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, No. 40 (1979), p. 17.
10. Address to delegates to a meeting of representatives of Episcopal conferences and other experts on Jewish-Catholic relations, Vatican, 6 March 1982, *Information Service of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, No. 49 (1982), p. 38.
11. Homily of Pope John Paul II during the Mass celebrated in Otranto (Italy) at *Colle San Martino* in Otranto (Italy), *L'Attività della Santa Sede 1980*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, pp. 649-50.
12. *Information Service of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, No. 60 (1980), p. 27.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
14. *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 7, 1994.
15. *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 17, 1993.
16. *L'Osservatore Romano*, November 5, 1994.
17. *Information Service of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, No. 57 (1985), p. 8.
18. *Information Service of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, No. 54 (1984), p. 12.

19. International Jewish-Christian Conference on *Religious Leadership in Secular Society*, 1-4 February 1994; English text published in *Origins: CNS Documentary Service*, 23, No. 36 (February 24, 1994), p. 628.

20. See the Address of His Excellency Archbishop Edward Idris Cassidy, Sao Paolo, Brazil, 5 November 1990, *Information Service of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity*, No. 77 (1990), p. 77.

John Cardinal O'Connor: An Appreciation

CHAIM HERZOG

John Cardinal O'Connor played an important part, both on stage and above all behind the scenes, in the developments that led to the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and the Vatican. The main channel for contact and negotiations was directly with the Vatican, in which such important personalities as Cardinal Casserolli played a major part over the years. However, undoubtedly, Cardinal O'Connor with his seat in New York was more conscious of the anomaly of the lack of existence of relations between Israel and the Vatican than other Catholic leaders throughout the world. He certainly would have been aware of the problems created by the allegations against the Vatican's behavior towards the Nazi oppression of the Jewish people during World War II. The

debate on this issue continues as an historic debate, but somebody in the position of Cardinal O'Connor would have felt the intensity of feeling amongst the public in the largest Jewish community in the world.

I had occasion to meet Cardinal O'Connor three times in the course of my terms of office as President of the State of Israel.

A small political storm blew up early in 1987 in connection with the visit of the Cardinal to Jerusalem. He was obviously visiting on the instructions of the Vatican, which was aware of the importance of his constituency in New York. However, it was clear that the hard-liners in the Vatican had made conditions which placed obstacles in the way of Cardinal O'Connor visiting leaders in Israel, and thus in fact of recognizing the State. The Apostolic Delegate had been calling on me in the Presidency, and therefore it seemed strange that Cardinal O'Connor would not call on me. The proposal was that Cardinal O'Connor would visit me "at my home" in Jerusalem and the next day would call on Foreign Minister Peres at his apartment. In fact, my office was in Beit Hanassi, the Presidential Residence, and our home was in the upper floor above the offices.

Cardinal O'Connor arrived in a clerical day suit but not in his official robes. I received him in my office, and no mention was made during the meeting about the debate whether or not he would visit me. I gave him a rundown about the situation, about Israel's relations with the Arab world, and the relations between the Jews of Israel and the Arabs of Israel.

Our second encounter took place on the occasion of my State Visit to the United States of America in November 1987 — indeed the first State Visit made by a President of Israel to the United States.

In the evening, after the Sabbath, Cardinal O'Connor called on me at his request. He told me that he was due very soon to

visit Castro in Cuba, at his invitation. The Pope was planning a visit the next year to the Soviet Union to mark 1,000 years of Christianity in Russia. The main problem was the Pope's desire to visit Lithuania, about which the Russians were not too keen.

Then in a very matter-of-fact manner he said that the Pope could decide to come one day to Israel. My reaction was that this would be a very important development. The previous visit by a Pope had taken place in 1964 during the Presidency of President Shazar, when Pope Paul VI had visited. We were very unhappy at that time about his visit, because he had not in fact visited the State of Israel officially, and had entered Israel from the West Bank in the area of Megiddo. We would be very happy to welcome the Pope and accord him all the honors due to his exalted position, on condition that his visit to Israel was in accordance with the requirements of a visit by a Head of State to a sovereign state. We would not agree to his entering by any side door, and would insist that all the mutual courtesies and honors normal on such occasions would be maintained. The Cardinal's reply was that this was understood. He said he would be seeing the Pope the following month, as a member of a special public advisory body of fifteen Cardinals, and that the Pope's visit would be part of the historic reconciliation which was taking place between the Vatican and Israel.

He was sorry to note that the Pope's speech to a Jewish delegation in Miami had not been understood. In all previous references to Israel, the Vatican had emphasized three points: one, the Palestinian homeland; two, the special status of Jerusalem; three, the position of the Christian church in the Middle East. In his remarks in Miami, the Pope had omitted any reference to the second point, namely, the status of Jerusalem. Furthermore, for the first time the Pope had referred to "the State of Israel" and "the Israeli nation." This all our experts, according to him, had overlooked and ignored.

Our third meeting took place in 1992, when Cardinal O'Connor visited Israel and called on me. At this stage negotiations were already afoot between the Vatican and the government of Israel. The Apostolic Delegate was already becoming more involved in the life of the diplomatic corps in Israel and was attending events in the Presidential Residence.

Cardinal O'Connor called on me, and this time as opposed to the previous time, he came dressed in full canonicals, with a delegation, having made it quite clear that he was coming on an official visit. He told me that he had come from the Pope, and on his way to us he had visited in Egypt and Jordan. His message was that the Vatican wanted to improve relations with us. I reiterated what I told him years ago, that we would be very happy if the Pope would visit Israel, but it must be understood that it would be on the basis of Head of State to Head of State, and there would be no more crossing the border at some unofficial point like Megiddo, as had occurred during the visit of Pope Paul VI in 1964. The head of the Vatican State would have to arrive at Beit Hanassi in Jerusalem and be received by the Head of the State of Israel. He indicated that this was understood.

I gave him an upbeat evaluation of the current peace process, and talked at length about the greatest danger facing us, namely, Islamic Fundamentalism. In my view, Islamic Fundamentalism constituted a common danger for Jews and Christians alike, and it seemed to me that because of prejudices of the past, the Vatican was not enough aware of this. His reaction was that I was echoing the words of the Pope to him a few days ago. It was as if we had coordinated. The Pope was in full agreement with me on this issue.

He advised me that the Vatican had changed its policy as far as Jerusalem was concerned. They no longer expressed political reservations about Israel's control of the city, but they wanted to insure the safety and freedom of Christians and

Christian institutions in the city, and also the freedom of religion and freedom of access. I told him that such conditions had always been acceptable to Israel and would continue to be so. His statement represented a major policy change on the part of the Vatican.

Cardinal O'Connor suggested that I introduce the Apostolic Delegate to the public and diplomatic life of the country. He affirmed to me that from now on, the Apostolic Delegate would appear at every event to which I invited him.

Later, our Ambassador in Rome, Avi Pazner, called on me to confirm the opening of a dialogue with the Vatican. There was definitely a desire in the Vatican to open up negotiations for the improvement of relations on the basis of the new policy enunciated by them, namely, that they had no political demands on Jerusalem. All that they required was freedom for the Christians to live in Jerusalem, freedom of access to the holy places, and freedom of worship, to all of which Israel had always been agreeable.

It was clear to me all along that Cardinal O'Connor's input on the issue of Israel-Vatican relations was a positive one, and he undoubtedly was one of the group in the Vatican who led to the final establishment of relations and exchange of Ambassadors between the Holy See and the State of Israel. A major anomaly had been removed from the world of diplomacy and a more healthy approach characterized now the dialogue between the Jewish people and the Catholic Church. The important decisions made in this respect were those made by His Holiness Pope John Paul II, and to him must go the credit for the historic advance in this respect. However, in defining the approach to Israel and giving the necessary input for the Pope's consideration, it is quite clear to me that Cardinal O'Connor's views were of great importance and influence. He may be said to have been an important element in bringing the Vatican to the decision that was finally made by the Pope.

Some Jewish Reflections on
The Splendor of Truth

JACK BEMPORAD

As a Jew and as a rabbi it is not for me to comment on the elements in this encyclical which are addressed to the bishops of the Catholic Church in the context of the authoritative head of the Church speaking to the faithful, which is after all what an encyclical is. However Pope John Paul's encyclical deals with themes of utmost concern to all of us. It confronts many of the questions of ethics and morality that address the ethical malaise pervading our contemporary society and is a profound analysis and evaluation of modernity offering a significant and comprehensive alternative. As such it not only concerns the faithful among the Catholic Church but also all individuals concerned with ethical questions. It addresses those confused about the place of ethics in their lives.

Because it is an encyclical, it is written in a form that appeals to both Scripture and Catholic tradition as well as to the natural law doctrine prevalent in Catholic teaching. It is not written as a philosophical treatise establishing its theses and offering rational arguments for them as well as critically analyzing and refuting those doctrines it finds distasteful and alien. Rather it is in the form of a lesson employing a homiletic style which presents an authoritative teaching for those who, themselves sincerely concerned with moral questions, must take seriously the moral disquiet of our time and strive to deal with it. The lessons it depicts and the doctrines it sets forth are meant as a guide to all individuals who are concerned with what makes for true satisfaction and an abiding good for human beings and for society.

My approach to *The Splendor of Truth* will be primarily from a Jewish and to a lesser degree from a philosophical perspective. It is my hope to show that there is much in *The Splendor of Truth* that is consistent with Jewish teaching and that in many ways Judaism and Catholicism stand on common ground in confronting what may loosely be termed modernist trends. That many of the trends of modernism and post-modernism should be of concern to all individuals concerned about such values as trust, personal integrity, truthfulness, and justice can be seen from the statement of a rather mild academician, John Findlay, who in a perceptive essay entitled "The Systematic Unity of Value" states:

How do we counter the determined relativist, the true Nietzschean who is now becoming so abundant, or, worse still, the proponent and advocate of values of the abyss, of the utterly abominable and repugnant: the values attributed to meaningless arbitrariness occurring on a sorrowful background of equal meaning-

lessness, the values of surrender to a dark divinity who first demands the sacrifice of one's reason and one's morals, the values of gratuitous disturbance of social patterns which tends only to further disturbance, the value attached to cruelty and absurdity loved and cherished for their own sake? Our age has exceeded all previous ages in the richness of its perversions, and without some principle that can sort the valid from the deviant forms, it will not be possible to carry our value-constitution very far.¹

Perhaps it may be helpful to indicate what this common ground which Judaism and Christianity share consists of. First and foremost, we believe that all human beings are made in the divine image (Genesis 1:26; cf. Psalms 8:5) and hence have an intrinsic dignity and sacredness that must be respected and enhanced through personal dedication and communal and social action.

Second, we agree that we are called upon to realize the good for ourselves and others so as to bring out the best in ourselves and others, and that that good can best be achieved through the love of God and our fellow human beings. Such love entails taking upon ourselves the obligations uniquely and decisively given to us as Jews and Christians and to all human beings in Prophetic teachings.

The Jewish tradition interprets Scripture, the Hebrew Bible, in the light of Rabbinic traditions and teachings. *The Splendor of Truth* quite appropriately presents its teaching through its heritage, which consists of the Hebrew Bible, Catholic Scriptures, Catholic tradition, and the teachings of the Magisterium.

Jewish tradition holds the love of God and the love of one's fellow human beings as central. It sees the highest good

as living a life in proper relationship to God, which consists of loving and knowing God, walking in his ways, and manifesting his attributes. The more one beholds or hearkens to the divine, the more the individual gains a real part in the being of what is known. The classic texts illustrating this teaching can be found in the book of Leviticus, where it states "you shall become holy for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2), and in the Book of Exodus, wherein the ways God is to be imitated are compassion, graciousness, patience, abundant steadfast love, and truth (Exodus 34:6). The alternative is also true. Jeremiah states, "They went after useless things and became useless" (Jeremiah 2:5), and Hosea states, "They went after detestable things and became detestable" (Hosea 9:10). We take on the character of what we worship and pursue, both the holy and profane.

As the Prophets continually stress, the knowledge of God comes primarily through ethical living. Leo Baeck has stated that "to know God and to do right have thus become synonymous in prophetic speech."² Jeremiah states "He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him. Is not this to know me? saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 22:16). Also pertinent is Jeremiah's marvelous delineation of what man should glory in, quoted by Maimonides as the crowning chapter of his *Guide to the Perplexed*: "Thus saith the Lord, let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understand and knoweth me that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on the earth" (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

On the other hand, not to know the Lord is to be insensitive to justice, righteousness, and truth. Hosea states that "there is no truth, no mercy, no knowledge of God in the land" (Hosea 4:1); and Jeremiah says, "For they proceed from

evil to evil and they know not me, saith the Lord" (Jeremiah 9:5).

The Prophet Micah calls to us to "do justice, love mercy and walk humbly" with God (Micah 6:6) and Deuteronomy sets before us the choice between life and death. God tells Israel that what is set before them is life and death, blessing and curse, "therefore choose life that you and your children may live" (Deuteronomy 30:29). True joy and spiritual fulfillment come from knowing and serving God. This is best achieved through the responsible commitment to our fellow human beings fully respecting the divine image indwelling within them.

Third, both traditions firmly believe that the truths of our respective religious traditions are truths that can be arrived at through one's rational faculties as well as revelation, and that both the Rabbinic and philosophical traditions' teaching on this can be summarized by Halevi's statement "God forbid that we should believe anything contrary to reason."³ Unfortunately, today misology is rampant and there is a sustained attack on reason and rationality.

Perhaps the most distressing development affecting contemporary thought has to do with its relativizing of the nature and function of reason. I cannot devote too much space to this issue, but it is central to *The Splendor of Truth* and to present-day Jewish concerns. There is no point discussing objective values and intrinsic goods and evils if reason is merely an arbitrary use of language for purposes of power. This doctrine, which some have traced to Nietzsche, can be stated as follows: The law of contradiction may be true of thought, but there is no reason to believe that it is true of things. Philosophers in this tradition argue that reason is a "project" or a "venture" or a "language game," and as such is strictly arbitrary and relative. It seems to me that all such arguments are shipwrecked on the shoals of making a claim that means

something that is identifiable and storable, and the very statement of it presupposes the very theses it wishes to negate.⁴

Finally, both traditions are agreed on the question of autonomy. Both reject the overvaluing of autonomy so that it becomes the highest good, independent and separate from what autonomy chooses. Is it autonomy for autonomy's sake or is it autonomy for the sake of the good? Autonomy for God's sake? Yes, it is part of respect for persons to respect their individuality and their decision-making and their right to choose, but this in no sense negates that what we choose must be evaluated independently of the act of choice itself. For example, in the Bible, true freedom is not limited to the Exodus from Egypt, wherein one is no longer restrained physically or emotionally and thus has the power to do as one wills, but was only achieved at Sinai, when the teaching was given to educate the children of Israel on what is the good they should use their freedom to achieve.

To argue that one is free to do as one wishes as long as we do not hurt anyone else or as long as the other party consents to our behavior seems to be a highly questionable position, since it denies that we have a positive responsibility to promote the good of others and not simply avoid doing them harm. It appears to me that we have as much of a responsibility, in the words of E.F. Carritt, "to help a man out of a hole as not to shoulder him callously into it; to assist him in escaping from wrongful imprisonment or economic slavery as not to oppress him."⁵

Unfortunately, the view that claims that we can do what we want as long as we do not hurt others or if others consent to our acts, ends up more often in diminishing the "dignity" and "sanctity" of other individuals, since they are not perceived as persons in the full and proper sense. So when it comes to relating to them we tend to use them for our own ends rather than treating them as ends in themselves.

This *laissez faire* attitude not only fails to touch the issue of the rightness or wrongness of our choice as it affects others but also leaves out the important element that while we are free to act, free to choose, we are not free from the consequences of our acts, of our choices — and these consequences not only affect others, but, equally important, the consequences affect our future selves; the person we become.

The significant fact here is that what we do determines the type of people we become and the traits of character we possess. So as it has often been observed, the key question is not what would most satisfy myself but what kind of a self do I most want to become. What I do builds character and it develops habits of mind and heart and action which will affect how I live my life.

With respect to the importance of character and the formation of character, in a recent report investigating cheating at the U.S. Naval Academy, Richard Armitage, who headed the inquiry, said that he “found that character development and honor were relatively on the back burner in the Navy’s mind and at the [Naval] Academy for a long period.” Commenting on this situation, Prof. Dennis McCabe of Rutgers University said that the excuse people give is that everybody cheats, but even more significant to my mind is that he noticed that the emphasis is “not on what you’ve learned or what kind of person you are anymore, but what kind of score you got on the standardized tests or what your grade point average is.”⁶

There is a fundamental difference between a technological way of dealing with problems, which is an application of a technological mentality, and a religious moral way, which appeals to an individual’s conscience and awareness of the right way to act. Unfortunately, technological solutions have increased our power to act and thus have made the issue of autonomy central in our day. Technological expectations

discourage educational appeals to our rationality and our capacity to be in control of our lives and our actions.

What made me think of this is a new ad campaign which shows two youths kissing passionately and beginning to undress. The woman asks the man if he remembered the condom. He says that, he forgot it, so she says forget it, no sex. The implication is that the condom is the technological magic bullet that will keep one safe and invulnerable, and therefore we are able to do whatever we want with impunity. Nothing is said about the relationship. Is it a married relationship? Is it a tender loving relationship? The issue is not an issue of right and wrong, but of technology. If you have the condom then all is permissible. The ad impresses me as a form of pornography, and as my teacher, Edward Ballard has, I think, correctly defined it, pornography ends up as always being a form of violence. He states,

I define it [violence] as treating a whole as if this whole were identical with one or some of its parts. In particular, violence offered to a person consists in behaving toward the person or self as if he were identical with some role or some special aspect of the self which is found to be interesting or which can be used. Thus the criminal who mugs a passerby is acting out of a partial view of the passerby, treating him as nothing more than an object which prevents access to the desired wallet. Pornography is a form of violence in that it ignores or finds valueless all aspects of a person except his sexual attributes. Similarly, the investigator who persists in maintaining an objective attitude towards persons in order to play a fate like role in studying them or manipulating

them in the interests of his curiosity or the unlimited Progress of science and technology is treating them as if they were identical with one of their attributes. He is therefore doing them violence.⁷

This typifies exactly our distorted technological approach to everything. Medicine tells us we will find a cure, a medicine that will make up for our self-destructive behavior. This raises the whole issue of means and ends. Our generation has unfortunately suffered overwhelmingly because of this doctrine that the ends justify the means and that you cannot have an omelet without breaking eggs. But as Haim Greenberg convincingly demonstrated in dealing with questions of politics, ends and means in morality are analogous to form and content in art. Form in art is not merely technique; means in morality are not merely instruments: "the content must be felt in the form. The means must contain the basic elements of the end."⁸

It seems to me that *The Splendor of Truth* raises the real issue of what our responsibilities are and what we should do to respect persons in the fullest and broadest context. The failure to treat persons as ends in themselves causes tremendous havoc and tragic pain and destruction of human life: not just sex and money scandals, but individuals betrayed, careers ruined, and souls sullied. The setting forth of intrinsic goods and evils offers a standard by which present as well as past and future acts can be evaluated. Thus, *The Splendor of Truth* is not just a theoretical but an eminently practical teaching which can help us reflect on what we do and how it affects persons in the broadest sense of that term. Respect for persons becomes the central focus and here this is not because persons are high-grade animals but because they are recognized as beings made in the image of God and thus have a sanctity and dignity that cannot be ignored, taken for granted, or abused.

It is within the context of respect for persons that the pursuit of pleasure has to be understood. Pleasure is an important element in life. We all seek satisfaction and joy. We should note, though, first, that there is a difference between pleasure and joy. Second, pleasure itself must be analyzed and understood. There are pleasures that leave us pretty much the way we were before we satisfied them. There are pleasures that make us worse by habituating us to actions that in the long run and if done repeatedly make us worse. For example, pleasures that come from smoking and drinking and indulgence in destructive pleasures habituate us to actions that ultimately make us worse. These actions destroy our health, make us obsessed with needs that do not help but rather hurt us, and then we are forced to do what we can to correct them. Many pleasures come from hurting others, like wanting to lord over others or indulging our ego so as to get pleasure from wielding power over others, humiliating them or feeling good not by doing anything worthwhile but by pushing someone down.

Here there is a connection between the Rabbinic teaching of the evil and good inclination and the Christian doctrine of Original Sin. There are of course obvious differences between these two views, but they both recognize the need to overcome that in us which is egotistical and which is proud and vain and wants to feel good by falsehood and pretense rather than truth and humility. Both religions recognize that the first step in religious life is to recognize one's place in the scheme of things and that it takes effort and courage and will power to overcome whatever in ourselves is egotistical and vain. In this sense the Rabbinic teaching here is to realize the *yetzer Ha Tov*, which is the formative power to do good, to realize and fulfill our true self, and the first step in this is to seek the truth about ourselves. In contrast the *yetzer Ha Ra*, the formative power for evil, is to actualize the false self which can be recognized as that part of us that seeks to be praised and have power and

importance not from any positive thing we have done but simply by putting others down. Unless we can overpower our evil inclination it is impossible to have genuine respect for persons, since we simply are incapable of seeing other persons in themselves but rather only as extensions of ourselves.

But there are also pleasures that neither leave us where we are nor make us worse but which fulfill the best in us and give us not really just pleasure but what can be expressed as joy. It is this latter pursuit that puts us in touch with our creativity that comes from realizing our souls and not our ego. Such soul-realization puts us in control of our lives and avoids the predicament of having life run us. It is this which the religious life tries to present to us so as to fulfill the best in each of us and relate to others so as to fulfill the best in them.

In conclusion, I am very sympathetic to the Pope's closing comments in *The Splendor of Truth* dealing with martyrdom. Years before he was interned in Thereseinstadt, the extermination camp, Leo Baeck wrote of religious optimism:

it is the optimism that is contained in the decision for God, the optimism that becomes the commandment and therefore sometimes demands heroism and martyrdom. It is also the capacity, and the determination to make the great resistance, to be zealous and earnest, to do and dare to the end.⁹

For the Jewish people throughout the ages, and especially in this darkest of centuries, martyrdom has been an all-too-pervading reality for this people of martyrs, as my teacher Hans Jonas has so eloquently pictured "the gassed children of Auschwitz" dying *al kiddush hashem*, sanctifying the name of God. This is not a pious utterance, but a reality according to the "flesh" (see Isaiah 58:7), which, as the Pope has fittingly

described, is a cry, a howling scream of warning to the world. If the teachings of *The Splendor of Truth* are to be heeded, then its intrinsic values and the pursuit of the dignity of persons, especially the most vulnerable and helpless individuals, cannot be forsaken or neglected, since we must embrace martyrdom ourselves rather than let the victims again be martyred. So that the image of God will not again be defaced, we must act in such a way that never again will God repent that he created us because of what we have done and not through our action or inaction must we ever cause God to grieve in his heart that he created us.

Notes

1. John Findlay, *Ascent to the Absolute: Metaphysical Papers and Lectures* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970), p. 214.

2. Leo Baeck, *The Essence of Judaism*, trans. Victor Grubweiser and Leonard Pearl (New York: Macmillan, 1936), p. 37.

3. Yehuda Halevi, *Kuzari* (New York: Schocken, 1966).

4. On this issue, see especially the works of Brand Blanshard, particularly *Reason and Analysis* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1962) and *Reason and Goodness* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1966), and also Van Harvey's essay "Nietzsche and the Kantian Paradigm of Faith," in *Witness and Existence: Essays in Honor of Schubert M. Ogden*, ed. Philip E. Devenish and George L. Goodwin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

5. E.F. Carritt, *The Theory of Morals* (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), pp. 101-02.

6. Quoted in *Bergen Record*, January 16, 1994, Editorial page.

7. Edward Goodwin Ballard, *Man and Technology: Toward the Measurement of a Culture* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1978), p. 229.

8. Haim Greenberg, *Inner Eye* (New York: Jewish Frontier Publishing Association, 1953), I, p. 256.

9. Leo Baeck, *God and Man in Judaism* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1958), p. 8.

Prayer and Message at the
Jewish Memorial, Auschwitz
August 19, 1986

BERNARD CARDINAL LAW

It is a distinct privilege to contribute to this Jubilee Festschrift in honor of a great Churchman whom I am privileged to call a dear friend. I remember clearly, and no one who was there will have easily forgotten, Cardinal O'Connor's Mass of Installation as the Archbishop of New York. He literally hit the road running, and he has not stopped since. As a matter of fact, he has given energy a new meaning. What drives this indomitable disciple of Christ is a sure faith, an unwavering hope, and a boundless love for God and for every human being from the first moment of conception to the last moment of natural death. Jesus came that we may have life and have it more abundantly. Cardinal O'Connor understands that truth with a clarity that has illumined the path for

many of us. May the Lord grant him many years in service to the Church and to all humanity.

My brothers and sisters, fellow pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Boston. Words fail. What can be said here at this place? What is that in our hearts and in our minds that seeks expression but does not find it, cannot find it. It is at once a numbness and a silent scream. A numbness that is a silent scream.

It is first a scream of fear. Fear that the earth will open up again here and we might fall into hell. Fear of the fury of hell. Fear of the fury of hell that can destroy the human heart and replace it with . . . with what? What do we call that monstrosity?

Then it is a scream of protest and determination. Never again! Never, ever again! Millions died here. But here, whatever one might believe, wherever one comes from, here every man and woman becomes Jewish or ceases to be human. Here the human cry becomes the Jewish cry or one has died spiritually. Never again! Never again!

Then comes the scream that is a prayer. However we express it. *Miserere Mei, Domine. Kyrie Eleison. Hannenu Adonai.* Lord, have mercy. And so the human capacity for evil becomes a cry for God, a cry to God. To the silent God. To the God hidden. Hidden from those of his chosen people who come here, who remember or who discover, who imagine or rediscover. Hidden even from those who believe that the Word became flesh, human flesh, Jewish flesh, hidden even from those who believe in the Incarnate Word and have seen His glory. A cry to Him. A thirst for Him. A need for Him.

The twentieth century is coming to an end. It has been said to be the century of humankind come of age. Whoever says this does not know Auschwitz. The twenty-first century will

begin soon. Another chance? For what? Whoever does not think of it with trepidation does not know Auschwitz.

Then the silent scream becomes a cry of forgiveness from our elder brothers and sisters as children of the God of Abraham. It becomes a plea: Never let us forget. Never again.

For those of us who believe in Him, the Son of a Jewish mother like the ones exterminated here, our cry joins the tears of Peter when Jesus looked at him who had betrayed him as he was condemned to death for us, for our sins, for the sin of the world, the sin of the world in which Auschwitz is possible.

Finally, we must dare say it, yes we must, for those who died here — our cry becomes a reaffirmation. Not just that we must not tolerate it ever again, but that this immense vestibule of hatred and death was also the place where love and life triumphed. We who are Christians, we who claim redemption has taken place, have to deal with Auschwitz. We must say it right here in what Pope John Paul II called the Calvary of modern man: Lord Jesus, you did not die in vain. Men and women are not evil. God created the world and saw that it was good. The last word of the world may be death, but the last word for the world is not death, but life. God is the God of the living.

Here, where evil and faith clashed throughout the 2,000 days in which Oswiecim was called Auschwitz, we must take a stand for faith and life.

The clash between evil and faith continues, and here we must take our stand.

That clash was acted out before an eighteen-year old girl named Magda in 1944, on a summer afternoon like today. One hundred elderly rabbis had arrived one day at the camp. Packed together under the blazing sun, these anguished men of faith were ordered to dance. Driven by whips, they formed a large circle and began to move unsteadily over the rough ground, their eyes and arms lifted toward heaven. Then they were

ordered to sing. Together they began the *Kol Nidrei*, a chant traditionally associated with Jewish martyrdom. From the infirmary, Magda clearly heard its haunting melody. As the rabbis were driven to the gas chambers, they intoned the *Shema*, the profession of faith which pious Jews hope to recite at the hour of death. The rabbis' prayer seemed to proclaim defiance of their tormentors. Even after the gates of the chambers had been locked, they cried out, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, The Lord alone."

Magda heard and ran to the door of the infirmary. Other inmates restrained her and asked where she was going. "Outside by myself to tell these people that they're going to the gas chambers, just like the rabbis," she shouted. The women restraining her answered sadly, "But those people won't believe your words."

"But those people won't believe your words." How could prisoners have denied their own vulnerability to the evil which reigned here? The desire to survive and a reluctance to believe that humans are creative in their evil led many prisoners to deny reality. The evil of Auschwitz touched all its victims: Gypsies, Russians, Germans, and Poles — including 300 who were killed in the earliest experiment with cyanide gas. They must never be forgotten. But Auschwitz was the scene of a novel horror: the systematic effort to exterminate a whole people. Christians who suffered and died in this factory of death were victims of epidemic evil. The determination to kill all Jews because of their Jewishness was an unprecedented form of evil. We must *never* forget this. It seemed unbelievable, not only to those who were sheltered by distance, but also to those whom Magda wanted to warn.

Despite the perpetual reminder of Auschwitz, our generation finds it difficult to admit the human capacity for evil. How often has the creator of this and the other extermination camps been labeled as "mad." Why do we refuse to

believe that human beings like us can resolve, "Evil be thou my good," and act on their resolution with cool efficiency? Two formidable obstacles keep us from accepting this reminder. We must face them before we can hope to overcome them.

First is our desire to deny responsibility for good and evil. All of us crave ease of soul. Insofar as the past assaults our complacency, it offends us. The greater its assault, the harder we try to forget it. We corrupt language and thereby stunt our moral imagination. The perpetrators of the evil that reigned here created a euphemistic jargon to describe their murderous acts. "Special Treatment 14 f 13" was prescribed for "non-Aryans" before the first gas chamber was built at Auschwitz. Thousands were killed. The "Final Solution of the Jewish Question," itself a euphemism, was originally termed "an evacuation in view of the possibilities in the East." Those responsible for Auschwitz invented such euphemisms to mask their evil doing. We oblige them when we casually label their malice as madness and acquiesce in a stunted idea of the human capacity for evil, one which will not assault our ease of soul.

The second obstacle to accepting the perpetual reminder of Auschwitz is confidence in the unaided moral progress of the human race. To a remarkable extent so many times we fail to recognize the hollowness of this fantasy. Standing here, how can we ever believe that humanity by its independent efforts can steadily improve, not merely in technology, but in virtue? Yet we want to cling to the fantasy that humanity can get better on its own in every way, if not every day. We want to believe that applying techniques of rational calculation and control to people can subdue, or at least confine, our capacity for evil. So tenacious is this illusion of moral self-reliance that we try to evade the evidence of our inhumanity. Confronted with the devastation wrought in this place by human malice, we seek to minimize crimes and to diffuse blame. Monstrous

evil is portrayed as essentially banal. Victimizerers are treated as victims, and victims as accessories. The persistence of the human capacity for evil, demonstrated here, must eliminate the fantasy which inspires these evasions.

Only then will we be prepared to take a stand for faith and for life. While the reign of death prevailed here, its very existence seemed an indictment of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, who is also the God of Jesus. One of the inmates restraining Magda was amazed that pious Jews could maintain their faith "in the light of the bestiality" of this place. Many still share her amazement. To them the faith professed by 100 elderly rabbis as they were martyred seems a delusion.

The *Shema* which the rabbis intoned on the way to the gas chambers explains why Auschwitz is a perpetual reminder of our need for God. Their profession of faith supports the moral heritage shared by Jews and Christians. It contains what Jesus declared to be "the greatest and first commandment": "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul, and with all your mind." This commandment is at once God's promise of His love for us and His appeal to us to respond with love for Him and for one another.

Such love is a light which searches the life of every man and woman. It illuminates all evil, whether ordinary or bestial. Far from being deluded, those who have known God's love and tried to return it can admit the human capacity for evil without flinching. Their own half-heartedness and failure warn them against any complacent ease of soul or illusion of moral self-reliance.

Even more; those who have known God's love and tried to return it understand that the human capacity for evil will finally be vanquished. Countless men and women gave this witness here in Auschwitz, as those 100 rabbis did, as did St. Maximilian Kolbe, as did Edith Stein. Like the psalmist and Jesus at Golgotha, they may experience the anguish of an

apparent abandonment by God, but they are convinced that God's reign of love is glorious and eternal, stronger than the greatest evil, stronger than the reign of death. Like the psalmist and the faithful of every age, they must proclaim, even at Aušchwitz: "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; all the families of the nations shall bow down before Him. For dominion is the Lord's and He rules the nations. To Him alone shall bow down all who sleep in the earth; before Him shall bend all who go down into the dust." Never again, but with God's grace — and only with God's grace. Amen.

Some Comments on the Encyclical
Veritatis Splendor of Pope John Paul II:
Jewish and Philosophical

DAVID NOVAK

1. Introduction

At the *prima facie* level, it might seem rather inappropriate for a Jewish thinker to offer comments on an encyclical that the Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church has specifically addressed to his fellow bishops, whom he designates as “venerable brothers in the episcopate.” What would we Jews say if a Catholic thinker offered his or her comments on a responsum written by a rabbinical authority to other rabbis, or even to Jewish laypeople? Nevertheless, *Veritatis Splendor* is not a document that is confined to matters that only apply to

Roman Catholics, be they clergy or laity. Its concern is not with specifically "Church" dogmas or practices. It is, instead, a document that addresses *ab initio* "the ultimate religious questions" and "the moral conscience" (sec. 1).¹ Surely, these are not matters that are confined to the Roman Catholic faithful. They are matters of universal human concern. Moreover, they are matters of specific concern to faithful Jews, with whom the Pope has insisted more than once the Church stands in a unique relationship, one closer than it has with any other religious community in the world.² Indeed, in the Jewish tradition too, there have also been statements that have addressed a wider world than just that of Jewry, statements as early as some of the utterances of the biblical prophets.³ By their very nature, these statements too have surely intended some sort of response from those to whom they have been addressed. Finally, the Pope has been and remains a philosopher, who has incorporated philosophical reflection in his papal statements. As such, comments that come from the larger world, comments of a Jew, and comments that concentrate on the philosophical content of this encyclical in particular, are certainly in order. Indeed, the whole career of this pope has demonstrated his sincere desire for dialogue with the larger world, with Jews, and with philosophers.

2. *The Relation of Truth and Goodness*

Although the basic questions of faith and morals are perennial, the immediate historical condition that has prompted the Pope to speak as he does here and now is because he senses a "overall and systematic calling into question of traditional moral doctrine on the basis of certain anthropological and ethical presuppositions" (sec. 4). I can safely assume that by "traditional moral doctrine" he primarily means the doctrine of natural law, which being seen as rationally evident is thus

accessible to all intelligent humans. For him, "the natural law expresses the dignity of the human person and lays the foundation for his fundamental rights and duties, it is universal in its precepts and its authority extends to all mankind" (sec. 51). Thus the "anthropological and ethical presuppositions," which seem to be at work in the thought of those Catholic moral theologians whom the Pope sees as straying from the authentic teaching of the Church, are taken to be those that either weaken natural law or ultimately deny it altogether.

Those Catholic moral theologians, who certainly have much in common with many other moral theorists elsewhere today, are judged to be those who "detach . . . human freedom from its essential and constitutive relationship to truth" (sec. 4). Later, he sees "the question about morally good action" as being one that must be brought "back to its religious foundations, to the acknowledgment of God . . . the final end of human activity" (sec. 9). Two sentences earlier, he says "the goodness that attracts and at the same time obliges man has its source in God, and indeed is God himself." The relation between all of these terms raises many questions, but the chief question seems to be: What is the relation between God as truth and good human action? More formally, one can see this as the question of the proper relation between ontology and ethics.

In any relation of ontology and ethics (which all moral theorists by no means affirm, but John Paul II certainly does) ontology must be constituted priorly, that is, being is to be seen as prior to action. The key to this question seems to be the dual designation of God as both "source" and "end" of good human action. The meaning of this dual designation of God is by no means easily ascertained. For it could be argued that a "source" and an "end" are mutually exclusive of each other, or they only function in tandem as regards God when natural law is precluded. This dilemma can be seen in four different ethical theories.

First, in those ethical theories grounded in Platonic or Aristotelian ontologies, God is the end of human action but is not its source. That is, in a world constituted as essentially teleological, all action ultimately intends an end which is insuperable. Such an end is good *per se*, the *summum bonum*. Thus everything points to it, but it only points to itself. In Aristotle's classical formulation, it is "thought thinking itself."⁴ That is the highest end towards which all intelligent beings aspire. This end of all ends is itself incapable of any transitive relationships because any such involvements would compromise its immutable perfection. It is pure object to everything beneath it; it is only a subject for itself. Transitive action, conversely, would mean that God functions differently at different times, hence God is not immutable. For temporality is by definition transition from one moment to another. Even to designate God as a person (namely, a "thinker") is at best metaphorical. And God is only a source in the way that a major premise is a source of a logical proposition, that is, a ground having consequents. However, it is not a source in the more realistic way we would use the term as, for example, "Leonardo is the source [maker] of the Mona Lisa." For source in this realistic sense entails a relationship with a product, and that relationship can only be transitive, thus temporal. On these grounds, it is contrary to the immutability of God as the supreme *telos* of all other activity to be engaged in any transitive/temporal relationships.

By contrast, all other, non-divine activity (including human activity) is transitive and is thus necessarily temporal. For this reason, moral theories that are teleological in this primary ontological sense (that is, where ends are already there objectively, and are not simply values projected subjectively) cannot coherently see God as the real source of good human action. That source is in human persons themselves, who have the perspicacity to discern the good, and the freedom to act *towards* it (but not *from* it) in time.⁵

Second, in those ethical theories we now usually designate as "deontological," that is, those based on the priority of obligation over purpose, there is a source of obligation, but that source is in no way the end of the obligation. In some of these theories, God is precluded from being the source of obligation at all. Thus if the autonomy of moral agents themselves is seen as the source of obligation, then the Pope is right when he asserts "With regard to man himself; such a concept of autonomy . . . eventually leads to atheism" (sec. 39). For even when there is an attempt to find some place for God in such an ethical theory, that "God" is always secondary to the prime autonomy of human nature. Thus, for example, Kant's attempt to affirm the existence of God as a "postulate" of pure practical reason makes this God the means for linking the real world of the senses to the ideal world of practical reason, both of which are already present for human existence.⁶ Some of us today would call such an invented deity a "God of the gaps." But, surely since Anselm, one cannot convincingly even use the word "God" without intending "that which nothing greater than can be conceived."⁷ Such a "god" is no God *de facto*, even if mentioned *de jure*.

Third, if God is considered to be the source and end of moral action in a deontological ethical theory, then natural law cannot be included in it. For if morality is seen as being confined to what God has directly commanded by revelation in history, such as the revelation at Mount Sinai to Moses and Israel, and if that revelation is both *from* God (*qua* source) and *for the sake of* God (*qua* end), such a historical revelation is still addressed to a singular community and not to humankind *in se*.⁸ Moreover, even if it be posited that this singular community of revelation is to extend itself or be extended by God to all humankind ultimately, that means that humankind *in se* will be included into the life of the singular community. Thus humankind lies on the horizon of the singular

community of revelation, not within its background, in this view. Humankind in general is thus overcome (to use Hegelian language, it is *aufgehoben*) by the singular community of revelation; it is not continually presupposed by it. In other words, the connection between the singular community and humankind generally lies at the eschatological juncture of revelation and redemption, not at the ever contemporary juncture of creation and revelation. But if this is the case, there can be no pre-revelational morality already known in advance through the natural order of creation.⁹ Hence no natural law is possible here: For the theological premise of this view allows no a priori role either for humankind *in se* or human reason *per se*.

Fourth, morality can be seen as something God has effectively turned over to humans after creation; as the Pope characterizes this view (which he rejects), "human reason exercises its autonomy in setting down laws by virtue of a primordial and total mandate given to man by God" (sec. 36). But when this is the case, natural law becomes the non-ontologically grounded "natural rights" of the social contract theorists. And, in this view, these natural rights become not only necessary for human fulfillment but sufficient for it as well. The relationship with God here turns out to be, at best, offering thanks for past services rendered, but not a living, perpetual relationship with the Presence who is with and for humans.¹⁰ In other words, it makes revelation in history and its continual commemoration by a historically self-conscious community superfluous. Moreover, since human reason now functions here independently, the continuing affirmation of an original divine source adds no intelligibility to ethical reasoning. By means of "Ockham's Razor," it should be rejected as having useless premises. And it might actually burden ethical reasoning with concerns that seriously divert our attention from the moral urgencies ever before us. The God of

the past is to be left in memory, but not commemorated in present action. Here man is God's successor, who can only succeed if God remains in retirement. Nietzsche was right when he concluded that such a "God is dead (*tot*)," which does not mean that God never has been, but that God "has died" (*starb*), that God is past, and the present and the future now belong to man.¹¹ So it seems, that Jews, Christians and Muslims must show that this "god" has not been and is never to be the Lord whom they still serve.

3. *God and Natural Law*

So it would seem that if there is to be a natural law, and if that natural law is to be in perpetual relation to God as its end, are we not then left with a merely teleological God, who is ever end and never source? This might well explain Aristotle's long attraction to Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scholastics. But how could Christians be satisfied with such a God, when they stand together with us, the Jews, in affirming God as the prime source of all being and within in it all law, when they affirm God as *creator mundi*? As John Paul II affirms, "In the '10 words' of the covenant with Israel and in the whole law, God makes himself known as the one who 'alone is good' . . . in order to restore man's original and peaceful harmony with the Creator and with all creation" (sec. 10).

Now when we reach this question, I wish that the Pope had explicitly expressed himself more in the language of phenomenology with which he has previously distinguished himself philosophically, and had fallen back less on what seems to be the language of Aristotelian teleology, language that entered Catholic discourse through Thomism. To put it boldly, I have not seen the Pope thinking like a traditional Thomist in his previous writings (especially his previous philosophical writings), so why does he sound so much like one here? Has

not traditional Thomism too easily assumed that the God of Aristotle is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?¹² Of course, one could argue that in an encyclical, as opposed to a philosophical treatise (such as his major philosophical work, *The Acting Person*), traditional language is more appropriate, whatever philosophical problems it entails. (And, for Catholics, Thomas Aquinas has been designated *Doctor Angelicus*.) Nevertheless, in his earlier encyclicals, the Pope has not hesitated to use more modern philosophical language, such as his extensive use of “rights talk” in *Centesimus Annus*.

Not knowing the Pope’s reasons for his choice of language here or elsewhere, and not being bound to the authority of the Pope’s words *per se*, I can only attempt to supply a line of reasoning that is closer to the phenomenological approach than the language of *Veritatis Splendor*. This is a line of reasoning that cannot be taken as foreign to the concerns of the philosopher Karol Wojtyła. I do this as one who basically agrees with his insistence on the essential relation of truth and goodness, of ontology and ethics, of God and human moral action. I do so for the sake of greater philosophical clarity in expressing that insistence, and also to show how that insistence can be more deeply rooted in the patrimony of the Hebrew Bible and Judaism, which we both accept — *mutatis mutandis*.

4. Teleology

What John Paul II has not done adequately enough in this document, to my mind, is to explicate just what is meant by the term “end.” Only such a constitution can resolve the paradox we have seen earlier in speaking of God as both end and source of human moral action.

When we understand the term *end* as that which is intended (and thus as more than just a temporal limit), it can have two very different meanings. On the one hand, it can

mean a state of being as when Aristotle says that the end of human life is happiness (*eudaimonia*), which he explains to mean a state of present human activity that requires no external justification.¹³ On the other hand, end can mean a person as when Kant says that morality is treating other persons as ends in themselves (*Zweck an sich selbst*), which is to say that a person is not to be treated as a means to something else, presumably some state of activity from which this other person is excluded.¹⁴

Now we have already seen that when the term *end* is consistently used to denote a state of activity, going from ethics up to the level of ontology, as Aristotle most impressively did, we are left without God as the source of human action. And we have already seen that when the term *end* is consistently used to denote the human actor himself or herself, as Kant most impressively did, we are left without God as either source or end. And when source and end are seen as only functioning in specific revelation, then we are left without any doctrine of natural law that could be consistent with this revelation. Is there any other alternative philosophically so that we can still use the terms *end* and *source* in tandem coherently, theologically and philosophically?

Despite the need to reject Kant's ethical theory on theological grounds, his use of the term *end* to denote persons might be helpful theologically if we shift his specific denotation of person from the human subject of moral action to the human object of moral action. Now in Kant's own view (and perhaps that of Aristotle as well), the other person who is the object of my moral action is discovered after I have constituted myself as a moral subject *a priori*. This other person, then, is essentially an analogue of my fully self-conscious moral personhood.¹⁵ Our commonality is our mutual autonomies interacting *a posteriori*. Authentic human community, what Kant called a "kingdom of ends" (*Reich der Zwecke*), is simply the projection

of what each of us has now into the future where we plan to exercise it more fully together.

But what if, by a phenomenological constitution of the moral realm (following some but not all the points of the man who seems to be the Pope's favorite Jewish philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas), I discover that the object of my moral concern presents himself or herself to me *before* I have constituted myself as a moral subject?¹⁶ We then have a very different concept of human mutuality. For here both the source and the end of my action are one and the same by the very act of the other person presenting himself or herself to me, without my prior permission as it were.

This other person's very existence (*qua* source) is attractive (*qua* end) to me. My existence is the same to him or her. Our mutuality is not something that each of us already has; rather, it is something new and unexpected, wherein we co-exist, going together into a largely unpredictable future. Each of us, then, to a certain extent, is a revelation to the other. Furthermore, my constitution of myself as a moral person is not initially based on my inner self-perceptions but, rather, it is my response to the presence of that other person. Minimally, as we shall see, it is my preparation for such a possible personal presentation. Action is response.

5. *The Imago Dei*

What is it about the other person that I am to find attractive? Are there not many other persons who are decidedly unattractive, not only aesthetically but morally as well? Can that other person's attractiveness be anything more than his or her moral goodness, either actual or potential, that I perceive? Can the range of existential attraction include those who do not act well, and even those who cannot act at all in terms of tangible, transitive acts? None of these questions can be

answered satisfactorily by any ethics that attempts to constitute an ontology out of itself and its own operations. It inevitably reduces being to the level of immanent action and thereby obscures the transcendent dimension of human being in the world.

John Paul II does not fall into this trap because his ontology is essentially biblical. He refers to “man, made in the image of the Creator” (sec. 9). Human dignity, then, is because human beings *are* more than they ever *do* or *make* of themselves.¹⁷ But, here again, philosophical commentary is in order so that we might better appreciate the implications both of what the Pope has said and also what he has not said. Philosophical commentary must seek further clarity about what is meant by the “image of God” (*imago Dei*) and what is not meant by it.

I think that one can conceive of the *imago Dei* both positively and negatively. And each way of conceiving of it must be carefully nuanced so that wrong implications are not drawn from its assertion.

There has been a whole trend in the history of Western theology (both Jewish and Christian, where the *imago Dei* doctrine is explicitly presented, unlike Islam where it is not) to positively conceive of the *imago Dei* as consisting of some quality or capacity that man shares with God by virtue of a divine transfer at the moment of creation. Going back at least as far as Philo in the first century, many theologians have identified the *imago Dei* with reason. Just as God is the rational power in the macrocosmos, so is man the rational power in the microcosmos. Creation in the image of God means, then, that reason is what distinguishes humans from the rest of creation by enabling humans to have something substantial in common with God.¹⁸ This view nicely dovetails with philosophical notions, going back at least as far as Plato, and most widely discussed by the Stoics, that reason is what unites man and the

gods, and that reason is, therefore, what separates man from the animals.¹⁹

However, this ontology is insufficient to ground an ethics that embraces all of humankind. For by essentially identifying humanity *in se* with reason (as opposed to more modestly seeing reason as an excellence to be developed by humans whenever they can do so), there is no way one can designate those of humankind (that is, stemming from human parents) who are without this capacity as essentially participating in humanity. In our day, especially, when essential humanness is denied by some to those at the edges of human life — the unborn, the permanently and severely retarded, the irrevocably comatose — such an ontology must be rejected. The issue is now surely anything but merely academic as it once may have been. Maximally, it must be rejected because of the immoral conclusions one can draw from it, such as overt permission of abortion and euthanasia. Minimally, it must be rejected because even when its adherents avoid drawing immoral conclusions from it in practice, they are still unable to reject with adequate reason such conclusions when drawn by others.²⁰ Thus, although arguments from silence are hardly convincing by themselves, considering his public stands regarding the sanctity of all human life from conception to death, I cannot help but assume that John Paul II has avoided this type of ontology in presenting his moral theology here for the reasons just mentioned.

Positively, the Pope stresses the human capacity for a relationship with God. Such a capacity is not like reason, which is a power one has within oneself; rather, it is a possibility to participate in a relationship which itself totally encompasses the human person from without. True to his primary religious commitment as a Catholic Christian, the Pope sees that positive relationship being centered in Christ. That reality, being *mysterious* (that is, known only from within

the circle of Christian faith, and partially at that short of beatific vision), is not one that I as an outsider can authentically comment on. I cannot do that anymore than a Christian can comment on the mystery of the Jewish relationship with God.²¹ The best an outsider can do at this point is to respect the relationship and appreciate its power in the world. Philosophically, however, one can also infer that without the positive content of a revelation (be it Jewish, Christian, or Islamic), there is little chance that any relationship with God could be sustained in the world.

Nevertheless, one can conceive the *imago Dei* negatively, using the tradition of the *via negativa*, which attempts to determine what God is *not* in order to move up to a knowledge of what God *is*.²² In our case here, the *via negativa* helps us to determine what man is not, thereby preparing us to know what man is. That positive knowledge, for Jews, Christians, and Muslims, can only come from God's revelation, namely, where man's identity in relationship with God is concretely presented. This *via negativa* can be better appreciated when we look at the etymology of the Hebrew term for *imago Dei*, which is *tselem elohim* (Genesis 1:26 *et al.*).

A plausible etymology of the word *tselem* is that it might come from the noun *tsel*, which means a "shadow."²³ Now whereas an "image" positively reflects what is being "imaged," a shadow only indicates that something lies behind the blank form that is cast. A shadow is more primitive than an image since it is more inchoate. Unlike an image that gives us positive knowledge (form and content), a shadow only gives us negative knowledge, a bare outline.²⁴ Minimally, a shadow only indicates that something lies behind it. As such, it prevents us *via negativa* from making two erroneous assumptions. First, it prevents us from assuming that the shadow comes from ourselves. It thus reminds us that everything we can possibly say about the shadow is only tentative until the real presence

behind it makes itself known. Second, it prevents us from appropriating the shadow into any of our own schemes. The shadow itself is nothing without its connection to what lies behind it. As a shadow of something else, it limits what use we can make of the space that it occupies. (The relation of the shadow to its source, which thus limits our pretensions, is quite similar in its logic to the way Kant sees the relation of phenomena to the *Ding an sich*.²⁵)

Translating this into a philosophical anthropology (which is the proper juncture between ontology and ethics), that is, with a theory of human nature, we are better to see how such a *via negativa* works in terms of a minimal (hence most immediately universal) concept of the *imago Dei*. For if man is the “shadow of God,” then even before God presents himself to us in revelation, we still have some notion of why the human person cannot be definitely categorized by any category with which we determine the nature of the things of the world. Any such categorization, including the category of *animal rationale* reduces the human person to a merely worldly entity. It is thus a distortion of man’s true being, which humans themselves cannot name. No matter how much humans might share with other creatures in the world, they are always *in* the world but never fully *of* it. Any attempt to reduce human persons to some worldly category is a distortion of truth, and it inevitably leads to acts of great injustice against them as well.

The force of this negative anthropology, as it were, comes out in the great insight of the rabbinic sage Akibah ben Joseph:

Rabbi Akibah used to say that man (*adam*) is beloved being created in the image (*be-tselem*). It is an additional act of love that it is made known to him that he is created in the image as Scripture states, “in the image of God (*be-tselem elohim*) He made man” (Genesis 9:6).²⁶

Following Rabbi Akibah's line of thought, we could say that even before revelation, humans have some inchoate notion of their special loveliness (*hibbah*). But only in revelation do they learn the truth from the One who is the source of that love, and who by giving positive commandments enables humans to respond to that love as their desired end. "As for me, God is my good; I have put my refuge in the Lord God, to tell of all his works" (Psalms 73:28).²⁷ God is our end because God has performed the transitive act of self-revelation. Moral action, then, being interaction with other humans *qua imago Dei*, becomes in truth a participation in this covenant between God and his people. The other human person reflects both this source of all sources and end of all ends, whether he or she knows it or not.

But this is all preceded by the sense of being distinct *via negativa*. (As Spinoza put it, *determinatio negatio est*.²⁸) This is necessary precondition for being able to receive the positive truth of revelation. (To use a term of another philosopher from Karol Wojtyla's intellectual universe, Martin Heidegger, it might be called a *Seinlassen*, a "letting-be.")²⁹ But the second type of knowledge of human being, and by far the more important one, is that which is *made-known*. This first type, conversely, is only intuited. It is a desire, which feels its own lack before its proper object can be received.³⁰

The negative knowledge of God and the *imago Dei* has important ramifications for the precepts of natural law, which is the basic concern of *Veritatis Splendor*.

6. *Negative Ethics*

For John Paul II and the traditions he explicates, the precepts of natural law are both positive and negative. Nevertheless, at the level of universal immediacy, the negative precepts have priority. Why is this so? The encyclical answers,

“The commandment of love of God and neighbor does not have in its dynamic any higher limit, beneath which the commandment is broken” (sec. 52). What is meant here is that there is no limit to how much one may love God and neighbor; hence the observance of these precepts will vary from person to person.³¹ But there are certain acts that are, as he puts it just a few sentences earlier, “*semper et pro semper*, without exception, because the choice of this kind of behavior is in no case compatible with the goodness of the will of the acting person, with his vocation to life with God and to communion with his neighbor.”

At the most immediate universal level, the negative precepts of natural law (such as the prohibitions of murder, adultery, theft) function as a *conditio sine qua non* of a life worthy of human involvement. In Jewish tradition, the “Noahide laws” (which include the prohibitions of murder, adultery, theft), which are taken by the Rabbis to be binding on all humankind, are also negative (with the exception of the procedural social obligation to politically enforce the other, negative, prohibitions).³² The question is how these negative precepts are related to the positive precepts.

In much of Catholic natural law theory, the positive precepts are seen as being logically prior to the negative ones. This has followed the Platonic assumption that the negative presupposes the positive (as in *malum privatio boni est*).³³ Following this logic, it is assumed certain “natural goods” are apprehended. Then we conclude, anything that contradicts them is *ipso facto* proscribed.³⁴ Thus, for example, marriage is posited as a natural good and, therefore, adultery is proscribed being a contradiction of the spousal fidelity essential to that good.

The problem with this approach, which has been noted by its many theological critics, is that it seems to allow revelation only a supplementary role in presenting “super-

natural goods” that succeed the natural ones where the natural ones leave off.³⁵ However, the Pope’s emphasis on a certain priority of the negative precepts to me seems to suggest a different logic. Let us see how this logic differs from the one just presented.

If the positive precepts are not themselves natural, but are basically revealed, then one does not derive the negative precepts from them by a subsequent inversion. For, in this view, the positive precepts presuppose the negative ones as the general condition of their subsequent, singular revelation. Without both the logical and chronological priority of the negative precepts, the positive ones would have no possible place in the world to be received. The priority of the positive precepts is ontological.³⁶

Thus, for example, it is not from the general concept of the good of marriage that I infer that adultery is evil; rather, it is my absolute rejection of the moral possibility of infidelity that enables me to practice marital fidelity, whose content is much more than just the mere avoidance of multiple sexual partners. For marriage is a singular good, a sacrament, and therefore, not something that could be taken as natural.³⁷ It is the singular dedication of *this* man and *this* woman to each other in the ultimate context of their joint dedication to *this* God.³⁸ Minimally, then, marriage requires the prior prohibition of adultery (as in “forsaking all others”); but, maximally, its reality is “super-natural,” that is, revealed and singularly oriented to God. It is a covenantal reality.³⁹ But here again, the overall thrust of the Pope’s words, which I have just elaborated on, seems to require more of a departure philosophically from Aristotelian scholasticism than he is willing or able to do here. (But I am aware of the restraints of the traditional language of an encyclical where a pope enunciates the tradition of the Church rather than his own mind.)

7. *Closing Thought*

By drawing out these implications of the words of the encyclical, tapping the insights of Jewish tradition, and employing the approach of phenomenological philosophy, I have tried to enter into a dialogue with John Paul II. My differences with him are largely due to what I sense are discrepancies between his philosophical concerns and his magisterial statements here. Since I agree with his basic moral conclusions, I am only questioning his grounds for arriving at them. Hence my differences with him are more theoretical than practical. Indeed, he himself has stated here that “the church’s magisterium does not intend to impose upon the faithful any particular theological system, still less a philosophical one” (sec. 29). If that is the case, then even an outsider such as myself can respectfully suggest how the Pope’s admirable reaffirmation of moral truth could in places be made in a more persuasive way philosophically.

Notes

1. I use the official Vatican English translation of the original Latin text of the encyclical, published in *Origins: CNS Documentary Service*, 23 (October 14, 1993), pp. 297, 299 ff.

2. See John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold*, ed. Vittorio Messori (New York: Knopf, 1994), pp. 95 ff.

3. See, e.g., Amos 1:3 ff.; Jer. 46:1 ff.; also, Maimonides, *Responsa* (Heb.), ed. Joshua Blau (Jerusalem, 1960), 1:248-249, no. 149.

4. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 12.9/1074b35.

5. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 3.1/1110a15; 3.3/1112b11-15; also, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 9, a. 3 and a. 6.

6. See *Critique of Practical Reason*, 1.2.5. Whether God is needed by Kantian ethics or is precluded by its very premises is a long standing debate among Kantian philosophers. For the first (theistic)

view, see Hermann Cohen, *Ethik des reinen Willens*, 4th ed. (Berlin: B. Cassirer, 1923), p. 455. For the second (atheistic) view, see James Rachels, "God and Human Attitudes," in *Divine Commands and Morality*, ed. Paul Helm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 34 ff.

7. See Anselm, *Proslogion*, chap. 2; also, Karl Barth, *Fides Quarens Intellectum*, trans. I.W. Robertson (London, 1960), pp. 74-75.

8. See, e.g., Exod. 19:4-5; Isa. 43:10, 21.

9. See David Novak, *The Election of Israel: The Idea of the Chosen People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 248 ff.

10. See John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, 5.25-35.

11. See Nietzsche, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, 1.2-3; 2.2.

12. See David Novak, *Jewish Social Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 67 ff.

13. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1.12/1102a1-4.

14. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H.J. Paton (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), p. 101.

15. See Kant, *Groundwork*, pp. 105-106; also, Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 9.5/1166a30-34.

16. See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), pp. 289 ff.

17. See Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*, trans. K. Farrer (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 131-32.

18. See, e.g., Philo, *Legum Allegoria*, 3.31-32.96; *De Opificio Mundi*, 69.

19. See Plato, *Phaedrus*, 248A; *Theaetetus*, 176A-B; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 10.7/1177b25-1178a8; Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.9; Cicero, *De Legibus*, 1.7.23.

20. See David Novak, *Law and Theology in Judaism* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1976), 2:108 ff.

21. See David Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 114-15.

22. See Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 1.58.

23. Note: "Man walks about as a mere shadow (*be-tselem*) . . ." (Psalms 39:7).

24. Cf. Philo, *Legum Allegoria*, 3.31:96, who employs the etymology of "shadow" (*skia*), but then identifies it with a positive "image" (*eikon*).

25. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B311.

26. *Mishnah*: Avot 3.14.

27. Note the comment of Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra (d. 1167) thereon: "And when the insightful person attains wisdom and apprehends the work of the Lord and is able to recount it to himself or to another person, then he shall attain the highest knowledge for which every human being has been created." (His commentary on Psalms is found on the margins in the standard editions of *Miqra'ot Gedolot*, the "Rabbinic Bible.")

28. Spinoza, *Epistola*, no. 50, *Opera*, ed. J. van Vloten and J.P.N. Land (The Hague: M. Mijhoff, 1914), 3:173.

29. See Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," trans. J. Sallis, in *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings*, ed. D.F. Krell (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), pp. 127-28.

30. Along these lines, see Acts 17:23, 28; Romans 2:14-15; Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.1.

31. See *Mishnah*: Pe'ah 1.1.

32. See *Babylonian Talmud*: Sanhedrin 56a-b, 59a; also, David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism* (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1983) for a complete study of the content and history of this rabbinic doctrine.

33. See Plato, *Republic*, 409E.

34. See, e.g., John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 85 ff.

35. See John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 96 ff.

36. See *Babylonian Talmud*: Yevamot 3b-4a; Nahmanides, *Commentary on the Torah*: Exod. 20:8.

37. In the Talmud the word for marriage, *qiddushin*, comes from the root *qadosh*, "holy." See *Babylonian Talmud*: Qiddushin 2b and Tosafot, s.v. "d'asar."

38. See *Palestinian Talmud*: Berakhot 9.1/12d re Gen. 1:26.

39. See Mal. 2:13-16.

Progress in Jewish-Christian Dialogue

MORDECAI WAXMAN

In 1991, I was part of a Jewish group which was served a kosher lunch in the Vatican. This may have been the first kosher meal served and eaten there since the days of St. Peter. The event reflected the remarkable change in Catholic Jewish relations in the last thirty years. It came in the context of the biennial meeting between the Catholic Committee on Religious Relations with the Jews and the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation (IJCIC). These committees and their subsequent meetings were born out of the Second Vatican Council and the *Nostra Aetate* proclamation of Pope John XXIII, which overturned almost 1900 years of Catholic teachings about Judaism and the Jewish people.

Since I have been an active participant in these meetings for the last twenty years, I thought that a recounting of some of the events and results of the encounter between representatives of the Jewish people and the Catholic Church might be a proper contribution to a volume honoring Cardinal O'Connor, who has been a major force in the revolutionary change of attitude.

The very first international meeting that I attended was in Venice in 1975. It was held at a Catholic Retreat House and throughout the several days of the meeting, kosher food was served to Catholics and Jews alike. The meeting was characterized by frank and open discussion which seemed an outgrowth of the very cordial relations developed between the participants in the two or three held since the creation of the two committees in 1971.

The Jewish committee consisted of five bodies — the World Jewish Congress and the Synagogue Council, which had been the organizing and founding bodies of the Jewish side, the anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith, the American Jewish Committee, and the Israel Interfaith Committee. The key figures on the Jewish side were Dr. Gerhardt Riegner, the Secretary General of the World Jewish Congress, Rabbi Henry Siegman, Executive Vice President of the Synagogue Council of America, and the late Rabbi Mark Tanenbaum who was Director of Interfaith Relations for the American Jewish Committee. The key Catholic figures were Cardinal Willebrands, who headed the Catholic body and continued to do so almost until 1990, and Monseigneur Jorge Mejia; who was Vice President of the Catholic Commission on Religious Relations with the Jews.

The discussion in the meetings was far ranging, but it became clear that there were several underlying premises which tended to guide the discussion. One was the general acceptance of the idea that it was necessary to change the perceptions and teachings about the Jewish people. A major step had already

been taken in *Nostra Aetate*, which repudiated the attribution of deicide to the Jewish people as a whole and in their various generations and called for new relationships. Another underlying premise which was referred to and clearly affected both Catholics and Jews was that the Holocaust represented a watershed in the history of modern man and a failure of Christian teachings. The implications of this had to be considered and the meaning of the Holocaust and its effects became the central subject of several subsequent meetings. Incidentally, it should be noted that, as years passed, Catholic participants began to use the Hebrew term *Shoah* rather than Holocaust and began to refer to the Hebrew Bible by the Hebrew term *Tanakh* rather than Hebrew Bible and Old Testament.

A third implicit premise which became more and more central to later discussions but was already present in the meeting in 1975 was a recognition that Judaism had not been succeeded and replaced by Christianity but, rather, that Judaism and Christianity, starting from the same tree, had branched out in different directions and that Judaism had not ended its spiritual history with the Bible but, rather, had continued to develop a religious and spiritual culture of which the Church had to be aware and which Catholicism had to study.

In the course of discussion, too, the issue of the diplomatic recognition of Israel by the Church was put on the table. While the Catholic representatives, disavowed their right or ability to deal with the subject since, they asserted, they were not empowered to consider political matters, it nonetheless inevitably surfaced as an issue central to Jewish self-perception and was a sometimes formal and sometimes informal agenda item of every subsequent meeting.

While these spoken and unspoken premises did much to shape the agenda, discussion, and character of the meeting, the principal focus of the meeting was the paper of Professor Tomaso Federice. Professor Federice considered the issue of

conversion as applied to the Jews and advanced the thesis that any attempt to secure mass conversion of the Jews was unnecessary and undesirable. Basing himself upon the statement of St. Paul in Roman 11:28-29 that God has not revoked his covenant with the Jews, he took the position that the Jews, unlike the Gentiles, did not require conversion in order to be "saved." This advocacy of what was, in effect, a two-covenant doctrine, was a revolutionary reversal of Catholic theology. In concert with *Nostre Aetate* it signaled that the Church was prepared to overturn its 1800 year old theology about Judaism and the Jewish people and to seek a new relationship.

At the same time, the question of the relation of the Catholic Church to another monotheistic faith, Islam, was broached. Catholic representatives made the point that while Christianity must see itself as having a definite relationship with Judaism, it had no such relationship with Islam. Nor did they apply to Islam the "double covenant" doctrine that they were applying to Judaism. They therefore did not mean to apply the new conversion doctrine to Islam.

Some social gestures which were symbolic concluded the meeting. One was the visit of the entire assembled body to the Ghetto and the synagogue with some attendant ceremonies. The other to which Jewish leaders of the area were invited was the visit paid to the meeting by the Cardinal of Venice, who very soon thereafter became the short-lived Pope John Paul I. Apologizing for the lateness of his arrival because "my gondola was held up in traffic," he made it plain that he agreed with the purpose, the time, and the unspoken premises of the meeting.

I left Venice with the conviction that there was a historic opportunity for our generation, which had already witnessed a revolution in history as a result of the Holocaust and the birth of Israel as a sovereign Jewish state after 1900 years, to effect a basic change in the relationship between the Catholic Church

and the Jewish people and to strike a major blow against anti-Semitism.

Nonetheless, there were limitations on the process which required a great deal of understanding and forbearance on both sides. On the Catholic side there were, as we were warned, elements who were strongly opposed to what were regarded as fundamental changes in Catholic theology: certainly there was more reciprocity to it in the Catholic circles in the United States, who functioned in a pluralistic society than in the more monolithic European communities. On the other hand, there were Cardinals and Bishops in Europe who had witnessed the Holocaust at first hand and who felt that the Church had a grave moral responsibility to respond to it and to battle anti-Semitism. In the leadership of this group were Cardinal Willebrands and, when he came to head the Church, Pope John Paul II.

On the Jewish side, there was a limitation on relationships which stemmed largely from the Orthodox component of the Synagogue Council of America. They were in part skeptical of the sincerity of the Church and hesitant to engage in a situation which might result in a discussion of theological issues. A basis for their participation was proposed by the late Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik, a major Halachist and philosophic mentor to the modern Orthodox group, who proposed that discussion be limited essentially to social issues. The Jewish side was limited by this formula since the Orthodox group was able to veto the participation of the Synagogue Council of America, the overall representative of synagogue and religious Jewry in the committee. Nonetheless, as Rabbi Soloveitchik himself had stated, rabbis and priests inevitably brought a religious outlook to their discussions, and, thus, a healthy dose of theological and religious thinking invariably found its way into our meetings.

However, it was largely Catholic theology that was in discussion and that needed rethinking on two scores. First,

Christianity had to develop a theology about Judaism in order to define itself, and it did so. Judaism had no similar need. Second, the Church has been the oppressor of Jews in the name of its theology. Accordingly, the new approach to Jews and Judaism was followed by the proclamation of guidelines on teaching Judaism to Catholics. Two such guidelines were issued, one in 1975 after consultation with Jews and one; in 1985, which was issued without prior involvement.

The *Guidelines* which appeared in 1975 clearly carried further the themes dealt with in *Nostra Aetate*. Reflecting both Papal statements made by Pope Paul VI and discussions between the Jewish and Catholic communities, it proceeded to amplify subjects which had been left vague in *Nostra Aetate*. The value of ongoing dialogue between people who appeared again and again at the meetings of the two committees was demonstrated by increased sensitivity on both sides to the concerns and language of their partners. To cite an example: *Nostra Aetate* makes no mention of the post-biblical religious and cultural tradition of Judaism. In the *Guidelines* in 1975, the statement is made that the history of Judaism did not end with the destruction of Jerusalem, but went on to develop a religious tradition. The notes in 1985 have a section on Judaism and Christianity in history; they refer to the permanence of Israel as a sign to be interpreted within God's design and go on to speak of "the continuous spiritual fecundity by Judaism in the rabbinical period, in the Middle Ages and in modern time." In this regard, it is interesting to note that when the committees met in Rome in 1990, the Pope, who in his address had previously quoted only from the Bible, made it a point to quote from the Talmud. Monseigneur Francesco Fumagalli, who was then serving as Secretary of the Catholic Committee made it a point to call my attention to it as a special gesture.

However, despite the progress of the dialogue, the Jewish Committee was upset by some of the statements in the 1985

notes and by some of the things which were not said. This document, unlike the 1975 *Guidelines*, was not submitted to Jewish evaluation prior to its appearance.

These notes contained many positive statements. Among them was the declaration of Pope John Paul II that the covenant between God and Jewish people "has never been revoked." Furthermore, the notes elaborated on the Jewish roots of Christianity, emphasizing that "Jesus was always and remained a Jew." They also called attention to interpret hostile statements in the New Testament to early historical circumstances and called on clergy to take account of this in Lenten sermons. They went on to give a more favorable definition of Pharisees and condemned anti-Semitism. Reference for the first time was made to the Holocaust and to the State of Israel. Both references were deemed inadequate by the Jewish body.

While appreciating the positive thrusts of the notes, the Jewish Committee felt that some elements were lacking from the declaration and that some statements reflected a Christian triumphalism. Specifically, it was felt that the universal meaning of the Holocaust was ignored, that the religious significance of Israel was denied, that there seemed to be a new emphasis on "typology" and interpretation of the Hebrew Bible as a preparation for Jesus.

At that time, I was the chairman of IJCIC and I was in touch with Cardinal Willebrands to indicate that we wanted a serious discussion of the notes. The whole matter was, indeed, discussed at our biennial meeting in October. Explanations and interpretations of the text were offered by Monseigneur Mejia and Dr. Eugene Fischer and several critiques from the Jewish side were set forth by Dr. Riegner, Dr. Geoffrey Wigoder, and Rabbi Leon Klenicki. The Christian explanation was basically twofold. First, that the document was entitled: *Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catachresis in the Roman Catholic Church*. It was, therefore,

couched in theological language which had meaning for Catholics and sought to clarify and set new approaches to Judaism within the context of traditional Catholic theology. The other approach was to point out the progress that had been made and reflected in the *Notes* in the twenty years since *Nostra Aetate*.

There was much validity in both points and the IJCIC participants were, I believe, convinced of the good will of our Catholic fellows and also felt that there was increasing sensitivity to the Jewish position. However, I raised the point in my address to the Pope that language which needed a great deal of interpretation and which was defended as a private Catholic theological language was undesirable in an era when communication was to the world at large.

Nonetheless, several major ideas emerged from our confrontation. One was an acceptance of the idea that the Jewish body ought to be consulted before any major pronouncement bearing upon Judaism was made. The second, which had far reaching consequences, was the increasing recognition of the idea that Jews and Judaism ought to be seen as they see themselves. The imperative emerging from the acceptance of this notion was that Catholics needed to study post-biblical Judaism and to be sensitive to the central concerns of the Jewish people.

Two incidents may make it clear how important recognition of these ideas was, and is. The first was my experience in speaking to the faculty and students of a Catholic college in Minnesota. After my lecture, a group of nuns approached me to say that as devotional literature they were reading the writings of Abraham Joshua Heschel on the grounds that it spoke to their spiritual needs more profoundly than anything in contemporary Catholic devotional literature. The second incident, far more significant, is what emerged at a meeting of our two committees which was held in

Amsterdam. Dutch Jewry had refused to meet with the Pope on his visit to Holland. The Dutch Jews who were present at our meeting made it plain why they had rejected the invitation. They spoke of the fact that there had been more than 125,000 highly integrated Jews in Holland prior to the second World War and that there were now only 25,000 who had survived. They complained of the fact that despite the horrors of the Holocaust, the Catholic Church refused to acknowledge and act upon what was a central element in the life and thought of the surviving Jews, the State of Israel. Cardinal Willebrands, presiding at the meeting, and himself a Dutch man, was visibly moved at the intensity of feeling which was displayed and promised to convey the message to the Vatican.

This sense of a need to see the Jewish people and Judaism as they see themselves and to understand that the Jewish community was prepared to be forthright and aggressive in stating its position was central to the controversy which developed in 1987. It broke forth at a time when I was chairman of IJCIC and, as a result, I had a significant share in the developments and in the resolution of the matter. Moreover, it was a watershed in the relations between the two faiths, a central event which has had ongoing consequences.

The whole matter started with a proposed papal visit to the United States during which the Pope proposed to engage, as had been his habit, with Jewish leadership. From the Jewish side, it was decided that American Jewry should be represented by the four groups who played a role in interfaith relations, the Synagogue Council of America, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, and the B'nai Brith Anti-Defamation League. It was agreed that a formal meeting would be held in Miami in a hall which seated 196 people and that to it would be invited major figures of the American Catholic Church and of Jewish organizational leadership. The Pope was to speak and a representative of American Jewry was

to speak. I advocated that the Jewish spokesman should be the President of the Synagogue Council of America, the representative body of religious Jewry and an organization of which I had previously been president. The suggestion was accepted and Rabbi Gilbert Klapperman, who was then the president of the Synagogue Council and an Orthodox rabbi, was the designated speaker. It was anticipated that this would be a formal meeting in which no new ground would be broken.

However, something notably unexpected occurred. The Pope had received Kurt Waldheim in an audience. A former Secretary General of the U.N., Waldheim had been elected President of Austria in a campaign in which it was revealed that he had concealed and lied about his membership in the Nazi party and about his participation in army actions which involved shipping Jews and others to concentration camps. The election campaign evoked anti-Semitic attitudes in Austria and his success profoundly disturbed the World Jewish community. Leaders of western nations had refused to meet with Waldheim. The papal audience, therefore, aroused great feeling among Jews. While various explanations were offered, the matter was never properly explained. The reaction of the Jewish organizations to the reception of Waldheim was to announce that they would not meet with the Pope when he came to America. The confrontation which ensued captured the attention of the press, television, and radio and was widely discussed. As Chairman of IJCIC I presided at meetings at which the matter was debated and I would descend from the meeting to find TV and radio and press teams waiting for a report.

Matters continued in this vein for some weeks while Cardinal Willebrands and I corresponded in search of a solution. Clearly, Catholic-Jewish relations, which had been developed with so much effort, were in danger of being broken off. Finally, Cardinal Willebrands suggested that Bishop Keeler of Harrisburg, who was in charge of the ecumenical elements

of the papal visit, and I should be in touch. Bishop Keeler, indeed, contacted me and advised me that he, Cardinal Casseroli, the Secretary of State of the Holy See, the Papal Nuncio, and Cardinal O'Connor had met on the matter. He told me that Cardinal Casseroli who was in the States for a two-day visit, would remain an extra day if I and some associates would meet with him at the residence of the Papal Nuncio. I appeared the following day, together with Rabbis Mark Tanenbaum, Wolfe Kelman, and Henry Michelman. Our meeting was frank and cordial. We expressed our anger at the Waldheim meeting and indicated that we felt that the Church had to confront its role in relation to the Holocaust and to anti-Semitism in general. I went on to say that the limitations which were placed upon the Catholic committee — that they could deal only with religious matters and that political matters were beyond their competence — were unacceptable to us, since the political and religious aspects of Israel and the Holocaust could not be separated. Cardinal Casseroli expressed appreciation of the nature of the discussion, said that this was the first time that he had met with a group of rabbis, and that he had to get back to Rome "to talk with the boss."

The American Catholics who were eager that we meet with the Pope were not very hopeful that much would result from our meeting. Bishop Keeler felt that the best we could hope for was a statement by the Pope deploring the Holocaust. In point of fact, some ten days later I heard from Cardinal Willebrands inviting me to come to Rome with four others and to meet with his committee, which would now include a representative of the Secretary of State, to meet with Cardinal Casseroli in the Vatican, and to meet with Pope John Paul II informally in his summer residence in Castel Gandolfo. It was an unexpected but welcome invitation and we set a date for the meeting in late August. I then took off on vacation to Europe and Israel.

We gathered later that Cardinal Casseroli had been impressed by the direction of the exchange which had occurred with a small group and sought to repeat the discussion in the meeting with the Pope. Ultimately, other Jewish organizations asserted their claim to participate and we ended up with nine members, a number I had to negotiate from Jerusalem with Cardinal Willebrand. Nonetheless, the meeting with the Pope was informal, although there was less of interchange than there might have been with a smaller group. It did, however, conclude with all of us standing around and making casual talk, during which the Pope reminisced about his boyhood and also expressed a desire to visit the Holy Land.

Once in Rome, we were entertained at their home by the American Ambassador and Mrs. Raab who were tremendously interested in the meeting. Dr. Gerhardt Riegner, who, as always, was an indispensable part of the process and who had remained in touch with the Vatican authorities throughout, and I, met with Cardinal Willebrands. We agreed on several propositions, among them that there would be representation of the Holy See on the Catholic committee.

However, there were two major elements in the agreement. The first was that the Catholics stated that there were no theological objections to the existence of a sovereign Jewish state and that the issues were political. They thus disputed the widely held belief among Jews and Christians that there were theological reservations. This, it seems to me, laid the groundwork which came some years later, for mutual recognition between Israel and the Holy See.

The second major statement was the proposal advanced by Cardinal Willebrands, in line with previous discussions, that a major Catholic statement would be developed and, ultimately, issued, assessing the role of the Church in the growth of anti-Semitism from the Lateran Council (thirteenth century) on and the role of the Church in relation to the Holocaust.

The communiqué setting forth the results of our meetings was presented at a Press Conference which involved Bishop Pierre Duprey, Vice-President of the Catholic body, and me, and which was widely reported and featured on Italian television.

As a result of these meetings, IJCIC and the American bodies involved decided to restore the meeting with the Pope ten days later in Miami. However, meanwhile some significant changes took place. The Orthodox bodies in the Synagogue Council resolved not to participate and forbade the Orthodox President of the Synagogue Council, Rabbi Klapperman, from participating. As a result, I returned on a boat from Europe several days before the meeting in Miami to learn that I had been designated by the Jewish bodies to deliver the address on behalf of the Jewish communities.

It was a strong statement of our feelings on the Waldheim matter, a review of our relations with the Catholic Church, a statement of what we thought needed to be accomplished, and an expression of hope for the future. It had been somewhat modified, but I felt quite comfortable in delivering it, save for changing one or two words which I felt were no longer appropriate — an action for which I paid a considerable price for several years with some of the Orthodox contingent. The Pope, in turn, spoke of the relationship between Jews and Catholics in highly positive terms and spoke movingly of the Holocaust.

The whole event in Miami, given the background of controversy, elicited unusual interest. It was widely reported in the newspapers and pictured on television. The *pièce de résistance* was provided by the *New York Times* which not only printed both my speech and that of the Pope, but had the unexpected picture on the front page, showing me delivering my speech and the Pope listening attentively, rather than the more obvious picture of the Pope speaking. This picture was widely

reprinted abroad and for some months I kept receiving copies of papers from Europe and even from Asia.

There were some other interesting touches to the occasion. One, which I had not appreciated at the time, mentioned to me by Mrs. Wexler, President of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, was that it was unprecedented for the Pope and another to sit on the same level.

The second was that when I went over to congratulate the Pope on his speech, he said to me that he was worried about his pronunciation. I assumed that he referred to the six Hebrew words which he had used, among them *Shanah Tovah*, since Rosh Hashanah was close. I replied that pronunciation comes from the heart, not from the lips. And the remark was quoted by a reporter who had overheard it, without really being aware of the context.

The whole confrontation of 1987 had positive effects in that it led to a more open and forthright relationship between us, and put Israel and the Catholic role in anti-Semitism squarely on the agenda. These subjects were not followed up as rapidly as they should have been, partly as a result of further Jewish dissatisfaction with some remarks of Cardinal Ratzinger which were subsequently explained by the Cardinal. Nonetheless, the meeting held in Prague in 1990 was centered around the Catholic Church and anti-Semitism and there was, further, a major statement of responsibility set forth by the German Bishops in the meeting in Jerusalem in 1994. These statements have been supplemented by major statements of the Pope condemning anti-Semitism. We all look forward to a formal statement in the name of the Catholic Church on the whole issue.

One major outcome of all of these events was the development of new and warm relations between the Jewish community and the American Catholics. Bishop Keeler picked up my remarks, that no matter what the outcome of that

meeting, American Jews and American Catholics needed to talk and act together. Some few weeks later he called me to propose that a committee of Bishops be set up, to supplement the splendid work of Dr. Eugene Fisher, and to meet on a regular basis with representatives of the Jewish community. I proposed that the Jewish partner be the Synagogue Council of America. As a result, the two committees were set up and have met twice a year to explore issues of common concern and with agreement on common actions. The role of Bishop Keeler, now Cardinal Keeler, was invaluable in developing the pattern and his involvement and concern rapidly made him the central figure in relations with the Jewish community. His statesmanship and his warmth, of which I have been a grateful beneficiary, have given a special and unique tone to Jewish-Catholic relations.

The impact of the relationship has been felt in Catholic seminaries, in changes in Catholic textbooks, in the teaching in Catholic schools, in public statements of the Church, and in the ease of relationships between Catholic and Jewish representatives. The strength of the relationship has been tested on issues in which there was potential disagreement as there was in the position on the Middle East mandated by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and drafted by a committee consisting of Cardinal O'Connor and Archbishops Keeler and Mahoney. Much attention was given to Jewish input and reaction, with the result that the document presented was essentially acceptable to all and quieted controversy.

A further test of the new relationship between the Jewish World and the Catholic Church came in connection with Auschwitz. A group of Carmelite nuns had taken over a building in Auschwitz as a convent, with the intention of offering prayers and memorials for the 1½ million people who had been killed there. This evoked a strong reaction among Jews, led by European survivors. Jews felt that Auschwitz-

Birkenau was, essentially, a Jewish cemetery of 1½ million souls, although non-Jews had died there too, and that it should not be pre-empted by any religious group. Various Catholic dignitaries, both in Europe and in America, agreed and decided that the nuns ought to be moved to a location outside the camp. Several European Cardinals met with Jewish representatives and agreed to raise the money to provide a convent and educational facilities outside the camp. Everyone was agreed except the nuns and, as a result, the matter dragged on for several years with much delay and consequent bitterness. By now, the matter is largely, though not totally, concluded. However, there was a very unpleasant interlude and it required the intervention of the Pope to get the nuns out.

In an attempt to bring matters to a head, Rabbi Avi Weiss, a convinced activist, started to climb the fence around the convent within Auschwitz. He was attacked by Polish workers at the site and the whole event was much publicized. It led to a rise of anti-Semitic feeling in Poland, a country in which only six thousand Jews remain of the 3½ million whose history in Poland dated back for almost a thousand years. This, in turn, led to a homily by the Primate of Poland, Cardinal Glemp which he later contended was designed to quiet the anti-Semitism outburst, but which was widely regarded as a highly anti-Semitic statement. As a result, when Cardinal Glemp proposed a visit to the United States to meet the very considerable Polish element in the country, the Catholic authorities in America dissuaded him for fear of evoking very hostile reactions in this country. However, a year later he raised the issue of a trip again and this time the Catholic hierarchy here agreed on the condition that he offer an apology/explanation of his remarks. They sought a meeting with representative Jewish bodies. Most of them, however, refused to meet with him. Several organizations and several individuals who were active figures in interfaith relations, I among them, did

assemble for a meeting in Washington. Twelve of us were there together, with members of the Catholic hierarchy including Cardinal Law and Archbishop Keeler, to hear Cardinal Glemp indeed offer an apology and explanation of his motives. In the course of his comments, he pointed out that he had been born in a small mining town in 1930 and did not know any Jews, since he was only nine when Poland was conquered by the Germans. I suggested that this might explain why he did not understand how odious his remarks were to Jews and further suggested that he add to his statement that what he had said about Jews had been based upon misinformation. He agreed and, indeed, said the same at the press conference which followed. The whole incident was so unusual and unprecedented that I remarked at the press conference that the distance we had travelled in Catholic-Jewish relations could be measured by the fact that, in the past, a Jew would not have met a Cardinal, would not have dared to be critical of him, and would certainly never have received an apology.

“From the bitter there came forth the sweet.” The result of the whole matter was that Cardinal Glemp invited us to come to Poland, and to bring lecturers on Judaism and Jewish history to Catholic theological schools and universities. The lectures have, indeed, been undertaken by the American Jewish Committee Interfaith Department under the admirable leadership of Rabbi James Rudin. A group of five Jews, of whom I was one, did visit Poland and met the Catholic hierarchy. We were received by Cardinal Glemp with a very positive statement about the role of Jews in Poland and very cordially by Cardinal Franciszek Macharski in Crackow. We were accompanied on the trip by Monseigneur Francesco Fumagalli, then serving as the Secretary of the Vatican Committee on Religious Relations with the Jews, who had made all the arrangements for the meetings. Monseigneur Fumagalli, it should be noted, was valued by us for the dedication and

concern he brought to his role. One unusual element of our relationship is that he had studied at the Hebrew University and was fluent in Hebrew. We frequently talked in that language. We were accompanied throughout by Bishop Muszynski (now Archbishop) who had undertaken the role of ecumenical relations with the Jews and who discharged it with great warmth and concern. Younger than Cardinal Glemp, he had never encountered Jews until he met the few remnants after the war and had to learn about the Holocaust and its enormity when he undertook his role. The conclusion of our visit to Poland was a visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau, with all its chilling impact, heightened by the fact that we were there in the middle of February. But almost equally chilling was the site of the razed ghetto in Warsaw and the monument at the place from which Jews had been shipped. It consisted of two great tablets and they were inscribed with representative Jewish and Hebrew names, according to the letters of the alphabet, a few lines for each letter. All the names were there, including my own name, that of my wife and those of our children.

The same trip took us briefly to Czechoslovakia and for several days to Hungary, where we met with the cardinals and other important elements of the Catholic hierarchy to discuss Jewish-Catholic relations. The message was clear. The Vatican was interested and the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people was undergoing a revolution.

I would be delinquent if I failed to mention the vital role that Cardinal O'Connor has played in this revolutionary process. As the Archbishop of the city which has the largest Jewish community in the world, he has been sensitive to Jewish thinking and, more than that, has been sympathetic to it and given it expression. Thus, to a gathering of Arab Ambassadors, Jewish representatives, of whom I was one, and Catholics, held at his residence in connection with the Catholic position paper on the Middle East, he stated that he believed that the Catholic

Church ought to recognize Israel. At the same time he resorted to Catholic theology to express his sentiments about the Holocaust and Israel and said that he regarded the Holocaust as the crucifixion of the Jewish people and the State of Israel as symbolizing the resurrection of the Jewish people. He conveyed the same sentiments to Rome and was an active figure in urging the recognition of Israel.

The same candor was evident in his remarks to Cardinal Glemp just prior to his return to Poland. In the presence of assembled Jews and Catholics, he said to Cardinal Glemp that American Catholics indeed regarded Auschwitz as a Jewish cemetery and urged him to seek the removal of the nuns. Moreover, he suggested that it would be very appropriate, given what had happened to the Jews of Poland and what Israel meant in Jewish life, if a Polish Cardinal would urge a Polish Pope to recognize Israel.

My involvement in a historic revolution of attitudes and relations between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people has certainly been a high point in my own life. But it would be idle to pretend that that revolution has yet been achieved. It is in process and it may take three generations if it is to continue to bear its full fruit. The prospect has been greeted with skepticism by many Jews and has run counter to long held attitudes of many Catholics. But there is a possibility that it will help to change the world and substitute understanding for prejudice and friendship for hatred. And there is reason to hope that another generation will build upon the achievements of this generation and transform possibility into reality. It would be nice to believe that our greatest songs are still unsung.

United Against Fanaticism

ELIE WIESEL

Dear Cardinal O'Connor,

May I too congratulate you on this special occasion? We have been friends and allies for many, many years. You as a Christian and I as a Jew have fought numerous battles on behalf of human dignity and freedom. What we have in common is a conviction that God is God and we are all His children who must be respected for what we are. Each and every one of us is thus entitled to his or her belief, tradition, and memory. Neither of us is better or worthier than the other. My Jewish faith is as important to me as your Christian faith is to you. In other words: in matters of religious commitment, we are both trying to be as tolerant as we possibly can.

For we also have an adversary in common and his name is: the fanatic.

What is fanaticism? What motivates a person to choose fanaticism as a mode of reflection or behavior? What need does it come to fulfill, what fears is it meant to disarm in his or her life? What does it do to those who invest their energies and passions to celebrate its laws and rituals?

Fanaticism has various degrees and names: fundamentalism, integrism, absolutism, intolerance. One or the other can be found here or there — and everywhere. Bernard Shaw put it correctly: all society is founded on intolerance, all improvement stems from tolerance.

Intolerance, in simple terms, means to possess the authority to impose one's views or will on others. That is to a certain degree unavoidable and even necessary.

Teachers know more than their pupils; parents govern the conduct of their children and are in turn disciplined by policemen and judges; physicians order their patients to medications or surgery; they all tell you that they know better what is good for you — would anyone describe their attitudes as intolerant?

Clearly they are not fanatics. The authority of the parent, the teacher, and the policeman is only temporary; the one invoked by the fanatic is not. The fanatic's intolerance implies a determination to acquire absolute authority — which makes it dangerous and harmful.

The father's authority ends with the child's reaching maturity; the teacher's with the student's graduation; the physician's with the patient's discharge from hospital. Both sides know that, in their case, submission is at best a social contract or at worst a phenomenon of temporary injustice, whereas the fanatic wants his right to be intolerant to last forever.

Intolerance is anchored in the fanatic's unshakable conviction that his ideas and principles are and will remain purer, better, and loftier than all others. There is no room in him for hesitation or doubt. He has answers but not questions. He is always sure of himself and everything he says and does. In his eyes, everything is either black or white. How did Nietzsche put it? Madness is not a result of uncertainties but of certainties. Substitute madness for fanaticism and the equation remains valid. His system is hermetically closed. If there is movement it is in one direction alone: from him to the outside world. Thus intolerance is blind; it refuses to see anything but its own reflection. Remember the burning of the great library in Alexandria? It was an act of incommensurate fanaticism. "Who needs books?" the culprits explained. "If what they say is true, it is already in the Koran; if it is not, who wants them?"

A similar attitude has been adopted in political spheres as well. Your views are not in agreement with ours? Then you must not be allowed to voice them, declares the dictator. In fact, you must not be allowed to live.

It is a fact that religious absolutists are close to political potentates. George Orwell's description of the Big Brother could easily apply to religion (isn't communism a secular religion, a religion without God?). Political heresy was equal to religious apostasy: both were considered deadly sins.

In other words: intolerance may wear many masks but fanaticism is fanaticism, whatever its name and purpose.

Pushed to its grotesque limits, intolerance leads to idolatry: if what the fanatic says is the truth — the only truth permissible and available — then it ought to be protected from outside influence. If what the fanatic says is above what anyone may say, then he deems it his absolute right to claim that his voice alone is worthy of being heard.

The next step? Self-idolatry, self-worship. In due course, he will consider himself not only as the emissary of the gods but also as their peer.

Consequently, anyone who uses another language, advocates other ideas or uses other symbols is to be muted, disarmed, and humiliated.

Humiliation plays a crucial role in intolerance. The fanatic feeds his arrogance on someone else's shame. His wish is not only to inspire fear but also to elicit shame that comes from submission.

The fanatic seeks to oppress all those surrounding him. He uses political oppression, economic domination, social slavery, and, the worst of all, oppression of the mind.

For the fanatic is not satisfied with his position of tangible superiority; what he seeks to obtain is metaphysical superiority. He defines himself by his victim's pain and fear rather than by his creativity. He feels threatened by a mind or a soul that is free. Whoever questions others or himself is to the fanatic an enemy to be defeated and his mind chained.

A fanatic wants everyone to give up his freedom in order to enhance his own. He thinks he is free because others are not. For him to feel free, he must first put others in prison. In doing so, he does not realize that he himself will thus remain in jail, as a jailer if not as a prisoner.

A fanatic has answers, not questions.

Strange as it may sound, the fanatic understands better another fanatic — belonging to another ideology, another faith — than those who oppose both of them. In spite of their basic differences, Stalin and Hitler understood one another, and their 1939 non-aggression pact was for neither out of character. A Moslem fundamentalist has somehow a common language with Jewish or Christian extremists: all agree that absolutism is the

answer and have problems with anyone who believes that truth is one yet the roads leading to it are many.

Hence my conviction that intolerance, a legacy of the twentieth century, may become the most serious threat facing the coming one.

Look around us: ideological conflicts, racial nonsense, ethnic cleansing, religious wars in so many lands. When will it all end?

Haven't we learned anything about the dangers of intolerance?

The intolerance some of us have seen and endured remains unprecedented and unparalleled in recorded history. Paradigmatic event or point of reference, it ought to serve as warning.

Nazism was based on brutal intolerance and self-justified fanaticism. It romanticized cruelty and ridiculed humanity. Factories and vehicles of death became instruments of a supremacist ideology and political theology. The SS saw himself as a prince, and his general a divinity: in Auschwitz, the prisoners were forbidden to look into their eyes.

How did it all begin? It began with traditional prejudice, bigotry, and anti-Semitism. It began with the senseless attitude of legally inflicting various punishments on entire communities. The Slavs. The Gypsies. The sick and the old. The Communists, the Socialists, the Freemasons, all considered enemies of the National-Socialist State. And of course, the Jews. It was legal to hate Jews and torture them. The Law of the land wanted their annihilation. It began with words and ended in Birkenau.

And so, dear Cardinal O'Connor, we know at least one lesson that can be drawn from those times.

We have learned that political fanaticism aims at destroying humanity as well as its creator. That is true of religious fanaticism too. Does it mean that we must give up on politics

and religion? Quite the contrary: we must work harder to safeguard their moral and spiritual dimensions.

How are we to convince our fellow men and women that the opposite of intolerance is not necessarily tolerance but humaneness? The human being in all of us must reject the false notion that one nation alone, one religion alone, one philosophy alone has the monopoly over definitive answers to essential questions.

Whatever our origins and beliefs, we are all worthy of redemption for we are all children of the same father. Why did God create one man alone in the beginning? It was to teach his descendants lessons of humility and equality. So that no one could claim to be superior or worthier than others: the king may not say "I am a son of kings" and the believer "I am the son of believers." We are all Adam's children. None of us is superior or inferior to another.

I a Jew and you a Christian can walk together and work together for the betterment of humanity.

Religion and Morality

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The relationship between religion and morality cannot be discussed in abstraction. There are many varieties of ethical systems and religions, which radically diverge from each other with respect to the values, norms, and ideals advocated. One can, therefore, examine their interrelationship only after specifying what particular religions or ethical systems one has in mind.

It may surprise us but there are religions (e.g., paganism, Shintoism) which are purely cultic and make no ethical demands on their adherents. But, contrary to the claims of many religionists, the absence of religious sanctions need not adversely affect the standards of morality prevailing within a given society.

Some religionists argue that commitment to ethical values on the part of secularists attests to the residual impact of

religion, the root of our ethical beliefs. Just as cut flowers can retain their beauty for a short period of time after they are severed from their roots so, they claim, commitment to ethical values in a secular society is a "survival" of a religious age. They are convinced that sooner or later, an ethical system which has been uprooted from its religious roots, is bound to wither away.

It is, however, simply not the case that ethical systems must originate within a religious setting or can flourish only on religious soil. Although there is little doubt that many of our own moral beliefs derive from religious cultures, it does not follow that their ongoing viability depends upon the continued existence of the factors and conditions that originally brought them into being. After all, a house can outlast the death of its builder. We would be guilty of committing the "genetic fallacy" were we to maintain that in order to function properly our moral beliefs must continue to be buttressed by religious underpinnings.

That ethics can be completely independent from religion was driven home to me several years ago during a visit to Japan. I discovered to my amazement that, although most Japanese professed a religious faith which revolved exclusively around cultic acts and was completely lacking in moral requirements, there was far less crime in Japan than in the United States, where most religions mandate ethical conduct. Comparison between the incidence of crime in the two countries clearly shows that strong societal pressures to conform to an ethical code can at times be more effective than religious sanctions as incentives for ethical conduct.

Be that as it may, it is certain that monotheistic religions demand moral conduct. As opposed to polytheistic cults which worshipped their gods as sources of power, the monotheistic God figures not only as the omnipotent Source of Being but is worshipped as the supremely moral Being, Who demands

righteousness and justice. In the words of Micah (6:8), "He has told thee, Oh man, what is good and what the Lord demands of thee; only to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with thy God."

A monotheistic perspective makes it possible to subscribe to a divine command theory of ethics. Accordingly, what renders an action, state of mind, or intention good is the fact that it is commanded by God. But it is equally plausible to hold that goodness is by no means synonymous with the property of being commanded by God. Instead, God, as the supreme moral authority, commands whatever is good. It is not His command that makes actions or states of mind good; on the contrary, they are commanded by Him because they are good.

This issue has been debated ever since the time of Plato. Because of his polytheistic premises, he could not define goodness in terms of divine approval, especially since the Greek gods were conceived as powers rather than exemplars of morality. Since different gods may possess divergent desires, they are likely to issue conflicting commandments or be pleased by mutually exclusive forms of conduct. Plato, therefore, had no choice but to insist in his *Euthyphro* that goodness is a property which is independent of divine command or approbation.

In recent history, G.E. Moore contended that when we define goodness in terms of being commanded by God we commit the "naturalistic fallacy." To be sure, many critics observed that it was only on the basis of his highly controversial views on the nature of analysis that Moore could charge those who define goodness in terms of non-ethical properties with committing a fallacy.

While religious believers have every right to disagree with Moore's thesis and contend that goodness actually means pleasing to or commanded by God, there is really no reason why they should do so. Were they to define goodness in terms

of divine approval, they would no longer have a common universe of discourse with atheists or agnostics. Were religionists to insist that the very meaning of the term "good" amounts simply to "it is commanded by God," they could not engage in moral arguments with individuals who do not share their theistic beliefs. It is only when it is granted that the meaning of goodness is independent of divine approval or command that it makes sense to debate moral issues with non-believers.

Although religious believers can agree that the meaning of the term "good" is not directly connected with divine approval, they may assert that the proposition "it is good," without being synonymous with the proposition "it is commanded or approved by God," nonetheless is its equivalent. While the term "good" does not actually mean "it is commanded by God," it, nevertheless, is logically necessary that whatever is commanded by an omni-benevolent God be good. This, however, need not lead to the Kantian position that the fact that something is commanded by God is totally irrelevant to morality. For we may well argue that a divine commandment is bound to be moral, even if human intelligence is unable to discern its goodness.

The most blatant illustration of a conflict between what is commanded by God and what is perceived as moral by human intelligence is provided by the biblical account of Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son Isaac. Kant argued that Abraham should have refused to abide by a command which ran counter to the dictates of his autonomous conscience, since it is inconceivable that God would have issued a command which contravenes moral requirements. Kierkegaard also agreed with Kant that Abraham's conduct was unethical. But it was precisely because his "suspension of the ethical" demonstrated his readiness to subordinate all ethical concerns to the demands of faith that he became the "knight of faith" *par excellence*.

Kierkegaard's approach, however, leaves us with serious difficulties. For it hardly makes sense to claim that God as the supremely moral being would command an immoral act. Thomas Aquinas' approach is far more palatable. In his view, there is an ethical requirement that we obey the dictates of a higher moral authority. In view of the fact that Aquinas adopted a consequentialist ethical perspective, he had no problem with God's ordering an act which strikes us as immoral. As the omniscient moral authority, He obviously knows best what would lead to the most beneficial results. Murder, as a general rule, will result in evil consequences to society. But when directly ordered by God, the supreme expert on goodness, an act of killing is bound to result in the best possible consequences.

Professor Fackenheim¹ has shown that even on the basis of a purely deontological ethics one can contend that it is one's supreme duty to obey the dictates of the highest conceivable moral authority. Killing a person as a divinely ordained sacrifice does not constitute murder. It seems puzzling that Kant, who regards the execution of a murderer as a moral imperative cannot find it acceptable to kill a person at the specific command of God. Hence, there is no need to justify Abraham's conduct by invoking the "suspension of the ethical," a notion that strikes us as absurd when applied to a religious faith that extols God as the perfectly good Being.

In sharp contrast with modern ethical theories, biblical moralities treat ethical imperatives as objectively valid norms or values. Unlike emotivism or prescriptivism, which ultimately ground ethical imperatives on subjective factors, biblical moralities emphasize that they represent the Will of God. It is this responsibility to God which distinguishes biblical from Greek moralities. The latter, while also claiming objective validity because they reflect the requirements of human nature, are essentially prescriptions for personal well-being. In the

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felicitous formulation of Professor Nozick, they constitute "push moralities."² They are designed to help the individual attain the best possible life, which is evaluated solely in terms of his/her happiness. Because of this self-centered conception of morality, Aristotle, who regards friendship as an integral part of a good life, recognizes the obligations deriving from the needs of a friend but has no concept of charity. For him, there were no requirements to concern oneself with the needs of strangers. This is why during the middle ages charity was classified as a "theological virtue."

Biblical morality, on the other hand, is not ego-centric but is responsive to the claim of "the other." Its basic premise is that human beings are responsible to God, Who demands that we concern ourselves not only with our own individual good (be it happiness, self-realization, pleasure, etc.) but acknowledge the claims of the other. As Leviticus (19:19) puts it, "Love thy fellow human being as thyself; I am the Lord."

Our moral obligations to our fellow human beings arise not simply from nature or from rationality, but they derive their obligatory character from their being apprehended as divine imperatives. Even the most rationalistic classical Jewish philosophers do not treat moral duties simply as rational requirements or dictates of nature but as "rational commandments." The concept of autonomy does not figure at all in Jewish ethics. The human self does not create or impose moral obligations; human conscience or reason merely discover divine imperatives. Even those Jewish thinkers who subscribe to the conception of natural law which can be discovered unaided by supernatural Revelation, nonetheless maintain that they amount not merely to rational or natural duties but to divine commandments apprehended by our rational faculties.

Alasdair MacIntyre³ has called attention to the difficulties encountered by secular ethics. Ever since Descartes rejected the notion of final causes, science has become value-free. With the

delegitimization of teleology, it is no longer possible to adopt the Aristotelian approach and base ethics upon the foundations of immanent purposes within nature. Kant's attempt to provide a secure foundation for morality by grounding it on rationality was also doomed to failure. As Anscombe has pointed out,⁴ reverence for the moral law hardly makes sense without a divine law-giver. It therefore is not surprising that we have arrived at a point where ethics, as in the emotive and prescriptive theories currently in vogue, ceases to possess any objective validity.

I have shown elsewhere⁵ that the characteristic of "overridingness" which distinguishes the ethical norm from other prescriptions or evaluations can also best be explained by reference to a divine commander. This option is available to all adherents of monotheistic religions. Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike accord their moral beliefs the status of an absolute norm that is due to a divine imperative, the highest possible source of authority.

Kant contended that with the exception of providing sanctions or incentives to abide by the moral law through the prospect of eternal bliss in the hereafter, religion had nothing to contribute to morality. We see now that Kant was completely wrong when he claimed that the only contribution that religion could make to morality was the ability to provide sanctions and incentives for moral conduct by promising reward in the hereafter. In the light of our preceding discussion it becomes clear that theistic belief affects the very nature of the authority of a moral norm. After hearing "performing X is irrational," one may ask "So what?" But one cannot reply in the same fashion to the statement, "Performing X is a transgression of a divine imperative."

Kant's claim may have had some plausibility in his time when it was taken for granted that there could be only one universally valid ethics, especially since he managed to

incorporate within his ethical system all the ethical beliefs of the dominant religion of his society. One could well claim that his entire approach was an attempt to hide a liberal Christian approach under the cloak of pure rationality. But with the sharp disagreements on moral issues which divide various segments of society, we can no longer appeal to a moral consensus. The controversies raging about abortion, assisted suicide, or euthanasia provide telling examples of the wide gulf between the various camps, each defending their respective positions on the basis of mutually irreconcilable moral beliefs.

In a pluralistic and democratic society, these issues must be resolved by recourse to democratic processes. But it is the height of absurdity to allow fear of the breakdown of the separation of Church and State to disqualify from public debate any moral opinion engendered by religious faith. Since the validity of moral opinions cannot be demonstrated on either scientific or rational grounds, it simply does not make sense to recognize moral opinions of atheists or agnostics but discriminate against the opinions of those whose moral outlook has been molded by religious faith.

One of the most basic features of biblical morality is the emphasis upon the sanctity of human life. Human beings must not be treated in the same fashion as other members of the animal kingdom, because "He made man in the image of God" (Genesis 5:1). The Palestinian Talmud⁶ goes as far as to assert that the verse, "on the day when God made man, He created him in the image of God" represents the most fundamental principle of the entire Torah. Whereas the Bible in describing the creation of various organic creatures states that they were formed "in accordance with their species," no mention whatsoever is made of the species with respect to human beings. The Mishnah already notes, that "man was created as a single creature to teach us that the destruction of one person

is the equivalent of destruction of the entire universe.”⁷ Each human being is irreplaceable. After all, so the Mishnah continues, “each human being bears the image of God in a unique way . . . and each human being is required to say “for my sake was the world created.” Since each individual possesses infinite value, no individual may be sacrificed on the altar of the collective welfare. Quantitative or qualitative factors are irrelevant. Euthanasia and suicide are categorically forbidden. Moreover, there is an overriding obligation to save life. According to Jewish law, one is duty-bound to make efforts to preserve one’s own life.

To be sure, Jewish law recognizes the distinction between killing and letting die. In the latter case, priorities must be assigned when it is not feasible to save every one. Similarly, when prolongation of life would only result in severe suffering for the patient, some medical interventions designed to keep the patient alive may be discontinued. Under no circumstances, however, would Jewish morality sanction any form of active euthanasia.

Jewish law operates with the principle, that no human life may be displaced for the sake of another life and, for that matter, any number of lives. There is only one exception to this rule: One is required to take the life of a pursuer, whenever necessary to save the life of an individual, regardless of whether one’s own life or that of a third party is endangered. When threatened by a pursuer, one is mandated to protect one’s own life, and, when necessary, even by taking the life of the aggressor. Non-resistance to evil is not the hallmark of a saint, but a grievous offense against God, Who has conferred upon us the precious gift of life and human dignity. This is why Jewish law permits abortions in life-threatening situations. If the embryo imperils the life of the mother, it is regarded as the pursuer. We must perform all actions deemed necessary to save the life of the mother.

The implications of the biblical doctrine that man bears the image of God are by no means limited to considerations involving the sanctity of life. As Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik has pointed out,⁸ the Rabbinic doctrine of *Kevod ha-beriot* (human dignity), which stipulates that at times various religious requirements are set aside when their observance would entail the violation of a person's sense of dignity, is a corollary of the unique status which, according to Genesis, is assigned to human beings. Each individual matters, because each person bears the image of God in a unique manner and is entrusted with a unique mission which no one else can duplicate. So sensitive were the Talmudic sages to concern for human dignity that they compared causing embarrassment to 'shedding blood.'⁹ Jewish law not merely prohibits libel, but frowns upon disclosing unfavorable information about an individual, unless disclosure of such information is necessary to protect another individual from harm.

Moralities that have developed within the matrix of religion tend to praise as virtues traits of character which would not be acceptable to secular moralities. We need but recall Nietzsche's strictures against "slave morality" which extols pity, compassion, humility, etc., in order to realize the enormity of the chasm gaping between biblical and non-biblical moralities. Similarly, Aristotle's and Spinoza's disdain for humility are poignant examples showing how strongly the absence of religious foundations impinges upon the formation of value-systems.

The central role which benevolence plays in modern secular systems such as Humean ethics or utilitarianism also attests to the residual impact of biblical influences even upon agnostic philosophers. Social hedonism owes much more to the biblical imperative "Love thy neighbor as thyself," which precludes exclusive concern for one's own welfare, than to Greek ethical thought which revolved around the ideal of self-sufficiency and

which fostered an essentially egotistical outlook, which runs counter to the basic thrust of biblical religion.

Although, according to numerous Jewish thinkers, ethical laws¹⁰ are geared to promoting the well-being of society, there are instances where they clearly transcend considerations of social utility. Thus the obligation to assist the needy is defined in individualistic rather than general terms. Basing themselves upon the biblical verse which mandates helping others "in accordance with his needs" (Deuteronomy 15:8), the Rabbis maintained that one should help individuals to enjoy luxuries to which they have been accustomed, even if they are beyond the reach of ordinary individuals.

It must be emphasized that, as the Talmud observes,¹² performing acts of loving kindness constitutes *imitatio dei*. Hence, even if Ayn Rand and Adam Smith were correct and the pursuit of our own self-interest guided by the "invisible hand" would in the long run maximize social utility, we still would be required to perform acts of loving kindness.

Since the divine ethical attributes as enumerated in Exodus (24:6) are supposed to function as exemplars of the virtues to be cultivated by human beings,¹³ it is especially significant that the term "abundant" is employed only in connection with His loving kindness and not with respect to other ethical properties such as graciousness, compassion, patience, or truthfulness. This is another illustration of the primacy of *Chesed* (loving kindness) in the hierarchy of values of a theocentric ethics. For all its concern for justice, biblical morality treats justice not just as a formal property but views it as the proper distribution of love.¹⁴

Under the influence of Kabbalistic categories, many Jewish thinkers point to the linkage between *Chesed* and humility. In this view, it was out of God's concern for beings other than Himself that He created all creatures. In order to make space for the world, it was necessary for God to engage in *Tzintzum*

(self-contraction). It is this self-limitation that constitutes the very essence of humility. According to the Talmud, God's power is always associated with His humility.¹⁵

Some Kabbalistic thinkers such as Cordavaro treat humility as the very core of virtues. Without going so far, even a rationalist such as Maimonides attaches such importance to humility that he treats it as one of the few exceptions to the general rule that moral virtues are supposed to strike a balance between extremes. In the case of humility, Maimonides unequivocally advocates extremism rather than the "golden mean" or the "middle road."¹⁶ In his brief but seminal essay, "Majesty and Humility,"¹⁷ Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik contended that Jewish ethics reflects the dialectical tension involved in imitating both the majesty as well as the humility of the divine Creator.

The impact of religious norms upon ethical attitudes can be gauged when we compare the prevailing sexual ethics with that of the beginning of the Enlightenment, when, as MacIntyre has demonstrated,¹⁸ secular moralities basically reflected the prevailing moral standards of Christian Europe. Thus Kant, for all his rejection of theological ethics and his insistence upon autonomy, nonetheless found it possible to condemn masturbation (self-abuse), extra-marital sex, and homosexuality, and even advised women to choose death rather than submit to rape. But with the decline of religious influences and the growing secularization of the modern ethos, nowadays very few secular moralists would be prepared to endorse these recommendations. Incidentally, most Jewish religious authorities would permit women to endure rape if necessary to save their lives.

Another feature distinguishing biblical from secular moralities is the emphasis upon obligations arising from concrete historic situations rather than from general principles. When Nietzsche ridiculed the love-ideal as *Fernsten-Liebe*, he

was unfair to many religious traditions. Judaism, for example clearly mandates that when dispensing charity, members of our own families should be given priority and the Talmud operates with the principle that "the poor of one's own city take precedence over the poor of another city."¹⁹ Moreover, as we noted previously, the extent to which we are supposed to render assistance to the needy is not a function of "average" or minimal standards of living but is based upon the specific requirements of the particular individual concerned.

It has been argued that the biblical preoccupation with the requirements of humans has bred utter insensitivity and indifference to the welfare of all other organic and inorganic creatures. There is a widespread feeling that man's alienation from nature resulted from the biblical doctrine which granted human beings the right to exercise dominion over all other creatures. It has been argued that the exploitative and manipulative attitudes towards nature, which now imperil our very survival, are in large measure due to the radical dichotomy between man who was created in the image of God and the rest of nature which was completely desacralized.

To be sure, as some theologians have noted,²⁰ the Bible can hardly be accused of licensing irresponsible exploitation of nature, since the Torah's charge to humanity "to fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28) does not stand in isolation but is counterbalanced by the observation of the second chapter of Genesis that Adam was placed in the Garden of Eden "to work it and to guard it" (2:15). The latter statement unequivocally affirms human responsibility for proper stewardship of the resources placed at our disposal.

Upon closer analysis it can be readily seen that the ontological as well as axiological primacy which the Bible assigns to humankind cannot be blamed for the ecological crisis. On the contrary, awareness of our responsibility to God for the preservation of the world acts as a much needed curb

on human arrogance which is frequently engendered by technological triumphs. There is a tendency to treat technology and science as ends in themselves to be pursued for their own sake, irrespective of the ecological and human cost. Judaism teaches that the world does not belong to man but to God — the Creator and, therefore, Owner and Master of the universe (Psalms 24:1). Interference with natural processes is regarded as legitimate only to the extent that it contributes to the fulfillment of divine purposes. Conservation of non-replenishable resources and protection of the environment are not merely matters of prudence but ethico-religious imperatives. Disregard of the limits to man's right to harness the forces of nature adversely affects human welfare. When scientists ignore the potential damage that may be caused by genetic research, their *hubris* may cause unimaginable suffering to future generations. Similar considerations dictate that we exercise caution and restraint with respect to any technological progress, lest it contribute to the pollution of the environment. Before embarking upon further expansion, we must carefully determine whether the benefits will outweigh the negative effects upon the ecology. We cannot make these decisions based upon the operation of the open market, since the laws of supply and demand are much more responsive to short-term selfish considerations than to the long-range requirements of humanity. As stewards of resources placed at our disposal by the Creator, we are duty-bound to expand our concern beyond instant gratification and economic benefits and assign much greater weight to the impact of our policies upon posterity.

While it is questionable whether secular ethics can sustain the notion of ethical obligations towards future generations, for Jewish ethics it is axiomatic that we bear responsibility for survival of the human species. In addition to the specific commandment be "fruitful and multiply" (Genesis 1:28), the verse "He created it not a waste, He formed it to be inhabited"

(Isaiah 45:18) is interpreted in the Talmud as the source of the duty to procreate.²¹ The paramount importance of the commandment is also highlighted by Rabbi Eliezer's statement that "he who does not engage in the propagation of the human species is treated as if he had shed blood."²²

Since for Jewish ethics preservation of the environment is mandated to insure that the earth will be able to serve as a suitable habitat for humanity, it follows that population control for the purpose of reducing the strain on natural resources is unacceptable. Because of the sanctity of life, not only is it forbidden to take life, but procreation takes precedence over maintaining a high quality of life. Although the Talmud forbids procreation during a famine,²³ as long as minimal requirements for sustenance can be met, Jewish law demands that we lower our standard of living rather than limit population growth.

Although biblical morality primarily revolves around concern for people, it is also solicitous for the well-being of other creatures. Provision for the preservation of the various species of the world of nature is one of the salient features of biblical morality.²⁴ The first chapter of Genesis records the divine blessing bestowed upon the various *species* comprising the animal kingdom. In a moral system based upon *imitatio Dei*, we are mandated not only to insure the survival of the species but also to be solicitous for the well-being of all sentient creatures. Since "God is good to all and His Mercy is over all His creatures" (Psalms 145:9), we, too, must display compassion towards the animal world. This is why the Jewish tradition strictly prohibits inflicting unnecessary pain upon animals.

It must, however, be reiterated that Judaism assigns pre-eminent status to human beings, because they alone bear the image of God. Jewish morality rejects the extremism of the advocates of animal rights, who equate the suffering of animals with that of human beings. As long as all necessary steps are taken to reduce the suffering of animals as much as possible,

Jewish morality would unquestionably allow the performance of painful experiments on animals, whenever necessary for medical research. Concern for the sanctity of human life overrides solicitude for the well-being of other creatures.

Notes

1. See the chapter, "Abraham and the Kantians," in Emil Fackenheim, *Encounters Between Judaism and Modern Philosophy* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 33-77.

2. Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 40 ff.

3. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

4. G.E.M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 33 (1958), pp. 13-14.

5. See my *Ethics of Responsibility: Pluralistic Approaches to Covenantal Ethics* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1994), p. 24.

6. P.T. Nedarim 9:4.

7. Sanhedrin 2:5.

8. Joseph Soloveitchik, *Yeme Zikaron*, trans. by Mosheh Kroneh (Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, Department of Torah Education and Culture in the Diaspora, 1986), pp. 9-11.

9. B.T. Bava Metzia 58b.

10. See my *Ethics of Responsibility*, pp. 40-66.

11. B.T. Ketuvot 67b.

12. B.T. Sotah 14a.

13. B.T. Shabat 133b; Sifrei Ekev, 49, Sifra Kedoshim, 1.

14. Compare Paul Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954).

15. B.T. Megillah, 31a.

16. Hilkhot Deot, 2:6.

17. Joseph Soloveitchik, "Majesty and Humility," *Tradition*, 17, No. 2 (1978), pp. 25-37.

18. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*.

19. B.T. Bava Metzia, 71a.

20. Theodore Hiebert, "Ecology and the Bible," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin*, Fall 1989, p. 7.

21. B.T. Gittin 41b and Tosafot *ad loc.* s.v., "Lo tohu bera'ah lashevet yetzarah." Especially significant is the statement of Tosafot, B.T. Pesachim 88b s.v., "Kofin et rabbb" which emphasizes that the obligation is so strong that, although as a general rule one does not recommend to an individual to commit a sin in order to save another from another more serious sin, an exception is made in the case, because the transgression of a prohibition is necessary to enable another individual to fulfill the commandment to procreate. See also B.T. Hagigah 2b, Tosafot s.v., "Lo tohu bera'ah."

22. B.T. Yevamot 63b.

23. B.T. Taanit 11a. See C.H. Medini, *Sedei Chemed*, vol. 5, p. 331.

24. It is noteworthy that according to Maimonides, God's special Providence extends only to human beings. The rest of creation is subject only to the exercise of the general Providence governing the species.

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