

CCJU *Nostra Aetate* Awards: Openness to the Other

On October 20, 1998, the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding honored His Eminence Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger and Chief Rabbi Rene-Samuel Sirat with the prestigious *Nostra Aetate* Award, named after the Second Vatican Council's groundbreaking document on the Catholic Church and its relations with Jews and other non-Christians. Presenting the awards were Dr. Samuel Pisar and His Eminence John Cardinal O'Connor. The event took place at the Sutton Place Synagogue, New York City, and was emceed by Mitchell Krauss, former CBS news correspondent. As part of the CCJU Awards Ceremony, Cardinal Lustiger and Chief Rabbi Sirat each delivered a paper.

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Rabbi Rene-Samuel Sirat, Rabbi Joseph H. Ehrenkranz and Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger confer after the 1998 CCJU *Nostra Aetate* Awards Ceremony and Lecture.



Dr. Mary Boys Speaks

"What has happened in the past 35 years in Christian-Jewish dialogue is unimaginable in the history of our relationship. We need to carry it forward," stressed noted theologian Dr. Mary Boys in a lecture at Sacred Heart University April 29, 1999.

"What Do You Believe? The Challenge for Christian-Jewish Dialogue" was the theme of her address, which was sponsored by the University's Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding as part of its ongoing efforts to encourage discussion and promote understanding on issues of mutual concern.

Dr. Boys is the Skinner and McAlpin Professor of Practical Theology at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Long active in ecumenical and interfaith circles, she invited her audience to consider ways that Christians—

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To the Editor:

Do you really believe that authentic dialogue is possible? It seems to me that most people are just trying to convince and convert each other. The whole thing is risky and politically motivated.

Courtney Childs
Harrisburg, PA

[Ed. Note: We have included Dr. Leonard Swidler's "Dialogue Decalogue" in our Crosscurrents section of this *Perspective*, which in addition to *Nostra Aetate* is a signpost on the road to authentic dialogue.]

Dear Rabbi Ehrenkranz,

I deeply appreciated your thoughtfulness in writing and your very kind and generous words. My meeting with you in Poland and my first experience of Auschwitz left a lasting impression with me. I shall never forget the impact that Auschwitz made on me, and I have reflected on it, spoken about it, written about it and prayed about it, ever since. It was, as I said at the time, very difficult to address the Conference just after the tour of the site which has experienced so much evil, and which still has the stench of sin and evil upon it.

Nevertheless, the Conference gave me great hope for growing understanding and reconciliation between the two Peoples of the Covenant, who are the Jews and the Christians. May God inspire and bless your own dedication to that cause and your work in the ministry of reconciliation.

With warm regards and with all good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Cahal B. Cardinal Daly
Belfast, Ireland



Mrs. Joan Jackson Joins CCJU Staff

Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz is pleased to announce that Mrs. Joan Jackson has assumed the position of administrative secretary at the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding. Previous to joining the Center, Mrs. Jackson worked with several departments at Sacred Heart University, as well as in corporate and legal environments. Her responsibilities include secretarial support for the Center in its many activities to help promote Christian-Jewish understanding.

CCJU PERSPECTIVE

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Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding
of Sacred Heart University

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Visit to the Holy Land

Anthony J. Cernera, Ph.D., and Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz visited Israel in November 1998. Besides visiting several of the religious sites that are sacred to Christians, Jews and Muslims, they went to the Papal Forest in Jerusalem. This forest commemorates the extraordinary efforts of John Paul II in his work to bring understanding and harmony between Christians and Jews. Dr. Cernera planted a tree where over 200,000 trees will stand in the future. Rabbi Ehrenkranz said, "The teachings of *Nostra Aetate* and this Pope have done more for Jewish-Christian relations than anyone or anything in the last 2000 years. The CCJU is able to flourish because of his support and example, so we want to be a part of this tree project."

Dr. Cernera and Rabbi Ehrenkranz also met with leaders of the Ratisbonne Institute. Sponsored by the Vatican, the Ratisbonne is a pontifical

institute where Judaism is taught to Christians. Dr. Cernera hopes to create a formal academic association with the Ratisbonne Institute, the CCJU and Sacred Heart University. The CCJU is planning a conference for February of 2000 at the Ratisbonne and will include presentations by Christian, Jewish, and Muslim scholars. Scholars from each religious tradition will present papers on what they would like others to know and teach about them. ❖

Dr. Anthony Cernera reads a prayer before planting a seedling in the Papal Forest at Nazareth.



Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz and Dr. Anthony Cernera pause at the monument commemorating the Papal Forest.

It is incumbent upon reasonable people to speak with conviction, compassion and faith. . . .

We have good thinkers, but spirituality is essential if we are to respect each other.

Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz

Rabbi Ehrenkranz said in his address, "It is incumbent upon reasonable people to speak with conviction, compassion and faith. . . . We have good thinkers, but spirituality is essential if we are to respect each other. The good word has not yet reached the person in the pew." He encouraged the religious leaders attending the conference to take a more active role in promoting peace.

Rabbi Balfour Brickner, senior rabbi emeritus of the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue, Manhattan, spoke about the advances in the last 30 years between faiths and said, "In particular, the Vatican has made great outreaches we need to trust them. This is a new era and their actions are sincere."

Founded by Franklin H. Littell, professor of Holocaust Studies at Richard Stockton College, in 1970, the annual conference seeks ways to bridge the gaps that separate religious, national, ethnic and cultural groups from coming to terms with the Holocaust, each other and their mutual human responsibilities. Now in its 29th year, the conference is an international, interfaith, and interdisciplinary gathering of scholars, educators, clergy and other individuals. ❖

Spirituality Is Essential

On Wednesday, January 27, 1999, the Nassau Community College and the Unitarian Church of Manhasset, Long Island, invited Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz to the interfaith conference: "The Role of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights in Our Congregational Lives." This conference was a prelude to the March 6-9 event celebrating the annual Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust at Nassau Community College, Garden City, New York.

News and Notes

Dr. Coppola speaks on Micah 6

David Coppola, Ph.D., spoke for two sessions at Sacred Heart University as part of the Campus Ministry Advent series. The theme for the talks was based on Micah 6:8: "To do justice, to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God."

Addressing the challenge of acting justly in a consumerist society, Dr. Coppola said, "We must stop talking about everything in economic terms. We talk too much



Dr. David Coppola, director of conferences and publications, speaks at Sacred Heart University.

about the bottom line, as if virtue were a commodity that could be used up and thrown away.

Unfortunately, everything in our society, even life, seems a bit too expendable. This is probably because our culture has no past. We need to be woven into the larger story of God's creation and see how we are related with all life.

The place of faith is essential in order to weave this wisdom into actions that are peaceful, good and just. God

is always pointing to the ideal where virtue and good works are continuously renewed through communities of faith."

When asked by a participant if it was possible to love goodness in today's world, Dr. Coppola said, "Be more passionate about life. Have a passion for compassion." He continued, "No good deed or gesture of reconciliation is wasted. Nothing is wasted, not even tears. Love is a seed that can only grow in the soil of forgiveness. Forgiveness is God's middle name. Forgiveness is not a certain number of generous actions, it is a way of life. Without forgiveness the cycle of suspicion and violence continues because there will always be someone who is 'the other.' By passionately living forgiveness we can do goodness and have the true family reunion that God has promised." ♦

Festival of Faiths

Rabbi Joseph H. Ehrenkranz participated as a panel speaker in the Cathedral Heritage Foundation's Third Festival of Faiths, November 14, 1998, at Louisville, Kentucky. The topic for the session was a continuation of the May 1998, CCJU Auschwitz Conference topic, "Religion and Violence, Religion and Peace." The panel featured religious and lay leaders from the three Abrahamic faith traditions including Rev. Marcus Braybrooke, Rt. Rev. Hon. Lord Runcie, the 102nd Archbishop of Canterbury, Hon. Thomas Graham, Jr., Rev. Canon Richard Marsh, Hon. David A. Shaheed, Rt. Rev. William Swing, and Sr. Mary Schmuck, RSM. Rabbi Ehrenkranz said, "It is important to acknowledge that a misuse of religion can contribute to violence, but the true aspects of all religions lead to peace."

The Cathedral Heritage Foundation created the Festival of Faiths as a way to gather together people of different faith traditions to celebrate through prayer, teaching, song, and art the gift of their faiths in an open and hospitable environment. Much like the CCJU, the members of the Foundation believe that understanding among religions is essential to fostering greater tolerance and respect in the world. ♦



From left to right: Dr. Adrian Leske, Lutheran minister and professor of Religious Studies at Concordia University; Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz, executive director of the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding; and Rev. Martin Moser, Roman Catholic priest and professor of Theology at Newman Theological College, addressed an interfaith forum at Beth Shalom Synagogue in Edmonton, Canada, on Sunday, November 29, 1998. Rabbi Ehrenkranz also participated as Scholar-in-Residence at Beth Shalom delivering sermons and participating in adult and youth educational sessions November 27-28.

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Anthony J. Cernera, Ph.D., president of Sacred Heart University, Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz, executive director of the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding, and Rabbi Allan Schranz of the Sutton Place Synagogue also offered brief remarks.

An interreligious audience of 600 people attended the public lecture at the synagogue. Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, Archbishop of Paris, said that “a page is being turned” in Catholic-Jewish relations with the renewal of the Church begun by Vatican II. In his hour-long address, he said, “Christians have opened their eyes and ears to the Jewish pain and wounds.”

At a tense moment in the ceremony, Dr. Pisar wondered whether the August 9 feast day commemorating the recently canonized saint, Edith Stein (Sr. Teresa Benedicta) was appropriate for Catholics to remember the *Shoah*—a concern voiced by several Jewish leaders. He noted that the traditional Jewish remembrance of *Yom Shoah* had been established 50 years earlier on the 27th day of Nissan, and he hoped that the Vatican would not be insensitive to such concerns.



Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger, Archbishop of Paris, and Rabbi Rene-Samuel Sirat, Chief Rabbi of Europe, embrace each other in friendship at the CCJU Nostra Aetate Awards ceremony.

Cardinal O'Connor said he believed that the Pope had been misunderstood by a journalist and he would ask Pope John Paul II for further clarification to remove any suspicions. Cardinal Lustiger went a step further and said in his lecture, “I will not fail to invite the Catholics of Paris to join the Jewish communities in prayer on *Yom Shoah*—the Day of the *Shoah*—in the spirit of penance and an act of faith in the Lord of the living and the dead.” Cardinal O'Connor also

approved of this suggestion and said that the same invitation would be extended to Catholics in New York. These comments elicited enthusiastic applause from the standing-room only audience.

Commenting on the event, Rabbi Ehrenkranz said, “It was wonderful for me to see Cardinal Lustiger and Rabbi Sirat turn an obstacle [the Edith Stein controversy] into a bridge of understanding and trust. These are exceptional leaders and role models. They were willing to reach out to each other in respect and honesty. To see their genuine

Christians have opened their eyes and ears to the Jewish pain and wounds. They accept to be held responsible and agree to bear that burden without rejecting it on others. They have not tried to declare themselves innocent.

Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger

openness and their ability to come to an agreement in such a short time, is the most significant thing that has happened this year in Christian-Jewish understanding.”

Aron Lustiger was born in 1926 to a non-observant Jewish family in Paris. During World War II, when his mother was killed by the Nazis in a death camp, he was sheltered by Christians and eventually became a Christian as a teenager. He said that the roots of anti-Semitism can be traced to envy and jealousy among the early Christians, which led them to become involved in “passionate polemics, and these eventually nurtured anti-Judaism.” He said that this jealousy was based on a misreading of St. Paul who did not preach an “arrogant and homicidal envy,” but rather an “emulation in faithfulness to the election by the living God.” This misreading caused Christians to “marginalize or throw out the Jews” and many Jews dismissed the early Christians as “only *goyim*,” the Hebrew word for Gentiles, thus sending them “into the same spiritual vacuum as the other pagans.”

In modern times, Cardinal Lustiger observed, Jews have often joined Christians in “the miscalculations and faults which were caused by human presumption . . . [where] the Jews were the first victims of these advances, which backfired with unprecedented selective cruelty.” Since the end of the war, Christians have recognized “the gifts granted to the Jewish people” and have rediscovered “their own wealth and vocation,” he said.

The Cardinal did not address the French bishops’ 1997

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Declaration of Repentance at length. Some have faulted the French bishops for not emphasizing that many Catholics did help Jews. Cardinal Lustiger said, "But how could we then have not yielded—even unconsciously—to the temptation to justify ourselves?" He asked the Jewish people to take part in the Church's examination of conscience and said, "In Christian-Jewish relations, Christians have opened their eyes and ears to the Jewish pain and wounds. They accept to be held responsible and agree to bear that burden without rejecting it on others. They have not tried to declare themselves innocent."

The unity of the Israeli people can be rebuilt only if we move beyond the ideological rifts and definitely assert our political will to focus on the goal and the means of strengthening our social fabric.

Rabbi Rene-Samuel Sirat

In his paper entitled, "What Can We, Jews, Learn From *Nostra Aetate*," Rabbi Sirat began by remembering the Shoah and acknowledging the *teshuva* of the Catholic Church. He admitted that there remains a long way to go for this *teshuva* to reach its full achievement. The rabbi said that an act of collective *teshuva* is necessary and proposed four ways for this to be accomplished: 1) *teshuva* towards Jewish mothers, sisters, spouses and daughters; 2) *teshuva* towards the Jewish people; 3) *teshuva* towards the Palestinians and the peoples of the Middle East; and 4) *teshuva* towards the world.

First, Rabbi Sirat spoke about the status and the role of the modern, observant Jewish woman in the framework of the community. He acknowledged that in the synagogue, there needs to be a literal and figurative place for women. He said that he had achieved some progress in academia but "failed miserably" as the Chief Rabbi of France by not following up on his proposals towards "a progressive change of our ways of thinking and reacting" towards women. He asked, "When will we take up the noble challenge of the Bible where a woman like Deborah was named supreme judge in Israel? Will the *halakha* forever be against the recovering of those great principles?"

Second, Rabbi Sirat spoke of the importance of Jews making *teshuva* with each other because the study of Jewish tradition by the majority of the people had been forsaken. He said, "The unity of the Israeli people can be rebuilt only

if we move beyond the ideological rifts and definitely assert our political will to focus on the goal and the means of strengthening our social fabric."

Third, Rabbi Sirat outlined the need of Jews to extend *teshuva* towards the Palestinians and the peoples of the Middle East. He extolled many of the accomplishments of Zionism in the last 50 years, such as the miraculous resurrection of the Hebrew language; the integration of Jews from 70 regions of the world; the production of high-quality technologies; the creation of a nation which can defend itself when being attacked; and the cultivation of a land that lives



Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz, executive director of the CCJU and Rabbi Rene-Samuel Sirat, Chief Rabbi of Europe speak at the Nostra Aetate Awards Ceremony and Lecture.

in abundance. Despite these accomplishments, he said, "Peace towards everyone is necessary," and Israel must avoid "any vain moral or physical sufferings." He continued, "There is no holy war. Only peace is holy."

Finally, Rabbi Sirat concluded by saying that the nations of the world have shown signs of a real *teshuva*. He said, "Our *teshuva*, followed by the *teshuva* of humankind will lead to universal peace and harmony."

Named after the 1965 Vatican II document that opened the doors of dialogue and mutual respect between Christians and Jews, the *Nostra Aetate* Award is given to those outstanding individuals who are known and respected for their commitment to interreligious dialogue, understanding, and reconciliation. Past recipients have been John Cardinal O'Connor, Sen. Joseph Lieberman, William Cardinal Keeler, Bishop Krister Stendahl, and Rabbi Mordecai Waxman.

[For a free copy of the complete addresses of Cardinal Lustiger, Rabbi Sirat, Dr. Pizar and Cardinal O'Connor, please contact the CCJU.] ❖

Executive Summary

of Nostra Aetate Lectures

Dr. Samuel Pisar

International Attorney
Author and Holocaust Survivor

Dr. Pisar began by saying that his two credentials for speaking that night were the Auschwitz numbers engraved on his arm, and the shared determination with everyone present that the horrors perpetrated in this barbaric century would “never be repeated again.” He said that he was convinced that if Jesus, his mother Mary, and the 12 Apostles had lived in his time, they would have been with him at Auschwitz. He confessed that his pain had been so great that he had often raised a blasphemous fist to heaven and asked: “Where is God? Where is the Pope? Do they know what is happening here to us? Do they care?”



Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger receives the 1998 CCJU Nostra Aetate Award, presented by Dr. Samuel Pisar.

Dr. Pisar praised the Church of France and Cardinal Lustiger who played a crucial role in the writing of an extraordinary *mea culpa* for Catholic passivity and silence during the tragic period of Nazi genocide and Vichy collaboration. Speaking to Cardinal Lustiger, Dr. Pisar said, “We heard these words of repentance with tears in our eyes: Tears which came from the same well of sorrow, because our mothers, yours and mine, had both perished in the gas chambers of Auschwitz.”

Dr. Pisar also praised Pope John Paul II and prayed that God would give him “strength to continue to speak out against the venomous roots of religious and secular anti-Semitism, which have bred so much hatred and violence.”

Dr. Pisar then related that Edith Stein, recently canonized as St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, was gassed at

Auschwitz in 1942 “not because she was a Carmelite nun, but because she had been born a Jew.” He said he was encouraged by the Pope’s announcement that Catholics will annually commemorate the *Shoah*, but added, “Such commemorations on August 9th, the day of the new saint’s death, rather than the 27th of Nissan, established under the Hebrew calendar half a century ago as *Yom Hashoah*, to mourn the six million Jewish martyrs, may generate needless confusion and pain. Let us hope that the Vatican will not be indifferent to such concerns.”

Returning his focus to Cardinal Lustiger, Dr. Pisar said, “Eminence, on behalf of the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding, and in recognition of your immense and life-long contributions to interfaith harmony, it is now my great honor to confer upon you the *Nostra Aetate* Award.”



Rabbi Rene-Samuel Sirat, Chief Rabbi of Europe, and his wife enjoy a light moment after the CCJU Nostra Aetate Awards Ceremony.

Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger

Archbishop of Paris
“Jews and Christians, Tomorrow”

Cardinal Lustiger began his lecture in the 100-year-old Sutton Place Synagogue by noting the contrast of Europe, with its still-open wounds of the past, and America, which has allowed the conditions of trust and freedom for Jewish-Christian relations to thrive. In the spirit of that trust and freedom Cardinal Lustiger responded to Dr. Pisar’s earlier concerns by saying, “I will not fail to invite the Catholics of Paris to join the Jewish communities in prayers on *Yom Shoah*—the Day of the *Shoah*, April 13, 1999; 27 Nissan, 5759.” Cardinal O’Connor agreed that the same invitation would be made to the Catholics of New York.

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Cardinal Lustiger's paper focused on four areas: 1) New relationships between Jews and Christians; 2) Election and jealousy; 3) Historical time and world history; and 4) Universality of the blessing.

The cardinal said that geographical changes have corresponded to "cultural and spiritual transfers, and also to new types of relationships between Jews and Christians." With this gradual evolution of the Jewish condition and the renewal of the Catholic Church, he said, "Christians have opened their eyes and ears to the Jewish pain and wounds. They accept to be held as responsible. They agree to bear that burden without rejecting it on others. They have not tried to declare themselves innocent."

Briefly commenting on the 1997 French Bishops' *Declaration of Repentance*, Cardinal Lustiger explained that the bishops did not want to emphasize the role played by numerous Catholics who saved Jewish lives in France. The bishops were afraid that they would have yielded, even unconsciously, to the temptation of justifying themselves. He said that only an honest declaration of repentance was the proper beginning of a meaningful dialogue in order to acknowledge what still divides people. He said, "It would be an illusion to think that preaching tolerance or even educating to it is enough to eradicate incomprehension and rejection. Together, we still have to identify the causes of such fierce tensions . . . [that] cannot be eliminated by human determination."



Mrs. Joan Jackson and Mrs. Berni Capozziello of the CCJU staff and Mrs. Jill Nichols, art director of Sacred Heart University, talk with Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger at a reception before the *Nostra Aetate Awards Ceremony*.

In the second part of his paper, Cardinal Lustiger presented the historical background to the concepts of election and jealousy in the Christian Church. He said, "As early as 50 or 60 AD, Saul of Tarsus—Paul—had tried to arouse the jealousy of his Pharisee brothers against the pagans who were followers of the Messiah. . . . Under his pen, this suggests emulation in faithfulness to the election by the living God, not arrogant and homicidal envy. The 'jealousy' that

Paul expected was not the murderous envy which seized Jacob's sons in front of their brother Joseph (Genesis 37) but the divine jealousy which is the burning face of loving predilection." Cardinal Lustiger noted that the double meaning of the word "jealousy" in the Bible has induced two contradictory interpretations of the Scriptures and contradictory behavior in history. He said, "What has happened between Jews and Christians over the last 20 centuries is a

But we have entered a new age in the history of humankind and the fundamental conditions are being upset and turned upside down.

Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger

tragedy of human jealousy usurping the appearance of divine jealousy. This jealous zeal, which was only too human, took up a different disguise depending on whether the simulators were Jewish or Christian."

Despite the fact that the best minds knew that the Scriptures, Revelation, and the Source of Salvation were all received from the Jews, Cardinal Lustiger said that the Christians' jealousy of Israel took the shape of a claim for an exclusive legacy which resulted in Christians competing with, marginalizing, pushing out, and even persecuting Jews. It is true, he admitted, that the Jews reciprocated by exiling and ignoring Christians as impure *goyim*. However, due to the eventual large numbers of Christians and unequal power between the two groups, Cardinal Lustiger said that the symbols of the Christian faith came to be understood by the Jews as "symbols of the violence and death whose victims were the Jews. These emblems could no longer in any way signify mercy, forgiveness or love. They were but horrible pictures, which were better not to look at, which must not be thought of or mentioned, as forebodings of death and supreme blasphemies!"

The third part of Cardinal Lustiger's paper compared Jews and Christians in world history. He pointed out that the last destruction of the Temple and the great dispersion left the Jewish communities only with synagogues where they were no longer able to offer sacrifices and were forced to practice a life of prayer and fidelity that approached the "monastic." Cardinal Lustiger said, "For centuries the Jews participated only marginally in human history . . . [and] allowed themselves to be buried in history in order to be the witnesses of their faith and of their prophecies. They were hidden inside history and absent from history—except

through misfortunes and persecutions. Without a land of their own, without being citizens, they used the languages of the nations that accepted their particularity, but they kept at the heart of prayer the language of the Revelation. They were present everywhere and absent from everything.”

On the other hand, “Christians of the nations,” said Cardinal Lustiger, “should have remained aware that they were offered gratuitously – as a grace which they had not deserved – to take part in what God had granted to Israel. But they were permanently tempted, in the course of these last two millennia, to reduce to the particularities of their own history the final accomplishment of the divine design. . . . Such religiosity, which was bound to be oppressive and intolerant, was incomprehensible and in any case unacceptable for the Jews whose only king was God and who knew that no kingdom could claim to be God’s kingdom, unless it was governed by God Himself in peace and justice.”

The final part of Cardinal Lustiger’s paper addressed the universality of the blessing. Comparing Jews with Christians, Cardinal Lustiger said that Jews needed to protect themselves and lived through the dispersion by “stressing their particularity and preserving their identity behind the fence of the Law.” Christians, who were pagans of all languages, cultures and races, reacted in a similar way and received the whole of the Scriptures as the Word of God. The difference was that Christians were able to accomplish a more universal mission by adapting to the languages, ethnic groups, cultures, kingdoms and empires where they lived. National and ethnic divides remain today the most serious threat to the unity that Christians are called to bear witness to and to foster. Cardinal Lustiger said, “But we have entered a new age in the history of humankind and the fundamental conditions are being upset and turned upside down.”

The Cardinal said that both Jews and Christians have worked for a secular universalism which is based on reason and the ambition of human rights. He confessed, however, “Jews have often joined Christians in the miscalculations and faults which were caused by human presumption, while they were the first victims of these advances, which backfired with unprecedented, selective cruelty.”

Cardinal Lustiger concluded by saying that the rediscovery of perpetuity of the existence of the people of Israel, and of its fidelity, is the fruit of Christians rediscovering their own wealth and vocation. He said, “There is no steering away from the direction we are now following. This is part of the movement through which humankind is being united, even at the cost of confrontations. This orientation testifies to the Catholic Church’s determination to carry out her mission in the service of this world, to do the will of the Creator of Israel and Redeemer of humanity.”

John Cardinal O’Connor

Archbishop of New York

Cardinal O’Connor shared his trademark blend of humor and spirituality and elicited applause and laughter when he pointed to his keepo [skullcap] and said that he enjoyed coming to the synagogue where all the men dressed as he did. He also informed Cardinal Lustiger that he would never be invited to St. Patrick’s Cathedral. [The last two places where Cardinal Lustiger was scheduled to speak were both destroyed by fire.]



John Cardinal O’Connor, Archbishop of New York, speaks at the Sutton Place Synagogue with his characteristic blend of faith and humor. He presented Rabbi Rene-Samuel Sirat with the Nostra Aetate Award.

Cardinal O’Connor said that he would seek clarification from the Pope about the confusion over an alternate *Shoah* commemoration, as Dr. Pisar had mentioned. He believed that Pope John Paul II did not propose a replacement date for *Yom Shoah*, but some journalists has misrepresented what the Pope meant when he said that Christians would also remember the victims of the *Shoah* when they remembered the feast of St. Teresa Benedicta. He said that the Pope is “deeply pained when he is interpreted as saying something that would be justifiably considered offensive. I will be in Rome in a couple of weeks and I will be audacious enough to ask the Holy Father’s clarification of this.”

Turning to Rabbi Sirat, Cardinal O’Connor said that Rabbi Sirat has been consistently a professor and teacher: “He is a man who has spent his life seeking understanding, seeking clarification, and trying to transmit his own insights—especially to students.” Again eliciting applause, the Cardinal said, “I consider him a rather young man. He was born in 1930. As one who was born in 1920, I do not want to offend him by calling him a youngster.”

Cardinal O’Connor closed with a Hassidic tale often told by professor Elie Wiesel. The story concludes when the rabbi of the tale is asked by his students what he sees as he is being burned to death in the scrolls he has been wrapped in.

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The rabbi in the story responds, "The parchments are burning, but the letters remain alive. The letters are indestructible!" Cardinal O'Connor concluded, "Words do not disappear. It is as a teacher that he leaves them. Rabbi Sirat, it is as a teacher that I presume to ask you to accept this *Nostra Aetate* Awards."



Jean-Marie Cardinal Lustiger, Israeli Ambassador Shmuel Sisso and John Cardinal O'Connor speak at Cardinal O'Connor's residence.

Rabbi Rene-Samuel Sirat

Chief Rabbi of Europe

"What Can We, Jews, Learn From *Nostra Aetata*?"

Rabbi Sirat first began by acknowledging the *teshuva* of the Catholic Church concerning the *Shoah*, and prayed that this process would reach full achievement. He confessed that this would be difficult because of the past silence and lack of concern on the part of world leaders as Jews were being murdered during World War II. He also mentioned the recent canonization of Edith Stein as "an offense inflicted upon the survivors of the *Shoah* who remained faithful to the God of Israel during these hard times."

Remembering with joy the 50th anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel, Rabbi Sirat said, "We should also mention the explicit assertion of a policy of making friendly overtures with Middle East countries—the will to be on good terms with neighboring countries and to live with them in peace and in mutual respect. Also striking is the determination to emphasize the democratic character of the newborn state by granting its citizens equal rights and duties, regardless of sex, ethnic group or religion."

He admitted that difficult times lay ahead, as the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin clearly demonstrated. But he said that such tragedies should not muffle the voices of the rabbis, princes of peace, to comment untiringly on the *Pirke Abot*, the maxims of the Fathers of the Synagogue. Rabbi Sirat said that he had spoken modestly of peace, fraternity and love for humanity but received "almost no feedback to [his] words. Obviously, peace speeches are not popular in these times." He said, however, that the courage of the Church to speak out and

work for justice could serve as an example for Jews.

Rabbi Sirat said that an act of collective *teshuva* is necessary and began his paper by describing the need for *teshuva* towards women. He said, "Our sisters, our spouses, our daughters have achieved by sheer willpower (and alas, without our help, when it wasn't against our will!) their legitimate place in society." He acknowledged that there needs to be a literal and figurative place for women in the synagogue. He criticized the Jewish community for not codifying the *Bat Mitzvah* where "a 13-year-old brother receives all the honors and his 12-year-old sister, a quiet and hasty ceremony, with no real participation of the young girl entering into the community of Israel."

He said that he had achieved some progress in the advancement of women in academia but had "failed miserably" as the Chief Rabbi of Europe by not following up on his proposals towards "a progressive change of our ways of thinking and reacting." He wondered if modern Jews had become more religious than their fathers or grandfathers by not allowing women into the prayer area. He invited the audience to "take up the noble challenge of the Bible where a woman like Deborah was named supreme judge in Israel." He also asked for compassion and change in the policies that require women to go to rabbinical seminary for matters of divorce or conversion and the injustice of the inadmissibility of a woman's oath.

Since 1945, after the dreadful Shoah, the nations of the world, in their entirety, have shown signs of a real teshuva. In return, in a conscious or unconscious manner, they are expecting Israel to become again the wise and discerning people referred to in the Bible.

Rabbi Rene-Samuel Sirat

The second part of Rabbi Sirat's paper was a call for *teshuva* towards the Jewish people. Citing political divisions, Rabbi Sirat said, "The unity of the Israeli people can be rebuilt only if we move beyond the ideological rifts and definitely assert our political will to focus on the goal and the means of strengthening our social fabric. The setting up of a social plan, fundamentally different from the current rage of uncontrolled liberalism, of which America experiences today, with its risks and limits, is necessary." He lamented that the study of the Jewish tradition by the majority of the Chosen People has waned and implored those who had

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A Pilgrimage of Faith

For those of us working in interreligious dialogue, it is difficult to remember what was it like before October 28, 1965, when the Catholic bishops of the world voted to approve the shortest and most controversial document of Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, which addressed the relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions. [Ed. Note: *Nostra Aetate* is reprinted in this *Perspective* on p. 13] Before that time it was not uncommon for Christian churches to advocate teachings of contempt towards Jews and reduce Judaism to an antiquated or outmoded religion that had been replaced and superseded by Christianity. Most Christians probably believed that Jews needed to be converted. Interfaith marriages were rare and interreligious meetings were exercises in apologetics more than discussion.

The *Nostra Aetate* document was written for Christians, but it signaled to Jews and the world that the Catholic Church was willing to begin anew on a pilgrimage of faith. A member of Cardinal Bea's staff who had helped to draft the document, Rev. Thomas Stransky, said at the time, that by voting to endorse this document, the bishops had irrevocably committed themselves to a *heshbon ha-nefesh* [a reconsideration of soul]. The document was not intended to be a perfect, static or all-inclusive proclamation. Rather, it was the first step on a long journey which encouraged Christians to look for opportunities, signs of God's love, to dialogue and cooperate with other religions.

Nostra Aetate is properly understood in the context of subsequent statements by the Holy See, the Popes and the conferences of bishops that are trying to implement it. The sustained willingness of the Church to continue to refine her understandings and teachings is striking. Official Vatican documents such as the *Guidelines* (1974), the *Notes* (1985), *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), and *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* (1998) all follow the lead of *Nostra Aetate* and deplore all persecutions, hatreds, prejudice, discrimination and displays of anti-Semitism leveled at any time or from any source.

1 One notable advance in Catholic-Jewish understanding is a growing mutual respect and trust between Christians and Jews. A posture of dialogue, where Jews and Christians allow each other to define themselves, has moved conversations from conversion to cooperation,

ignorance to interest, and prejudice to appreciation. Local dialogue groups in congregations and dioceses regularly meet for spiritual enrichment and prayer. Christians and Jews also come together to discuss educational and moral values, and gather for joint efforts that relate to social justice and human rights issues such as aiding the poor and homeless, health care, immigration, violence and hunger.

2 This leads to a second point. What makes dialogue possible is that Christians and Jews have moved from a place of estrangement to working at rekindling a relationship with their long-lost siblings. Not only did Vatican II open the Catholic Church's doors to look outward at the modern world, but its teachings also gave the Church a fresh look at the family tree. The Council's documents stress the fact that Christians and Jews share a special bond, a spiritual patrimony and heritage. The fact that Jesus, his mother, his family and the Apostles were all Jewish was rarely discussed by Christians. However, for Christians, the profound theological implication of highlighting this rather obvious historical point implies that the Jewishness of Jesus et. al. is part of God's plan, not an accident of culture, place, or time. This is practically taken for granted in today's teaching and preaching, but was rarely the case before Vatican II.

3 This "rekindling of family relationships" began in the friendship of Pope John XXIII with the French historian Jules Isaac and now burns at the heart of the words and deeds of Pope John Paul II. In 1986, Pope John Paul II became the first Pope in well over a millennium to visit a synagogue in Rome and pray with the people there. In his message on April 13, 1986, the Pope said, "With Judaism, therefore, we have a relationship which we do not have with any other religion. You are our dearly beloved brothers and, in a certain way, it could be said that you are our elder brothers."

4 Building on the process of dialogue, the Jewishness of Jesus, and the spiritual bonds between Jews and Christians, the Church's self-understanding has shifted in relation to Jews. The Church believes that God has made a promise to the Jewish people and God never breaks promises or take back blessings. The conclusion: If Jesus practiced Judaism, then Judaism is also a valid and viable religion for today. The Church no longer "supersedes" or "replaces" an antiquated Judaism but is rooted in Judaism and grafted on the good stock of Israel. Catholics who formerly prayed for

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the “perfidious Jews” on Good Friday, now pray “that the Jews will be faithful to the covenant as they hear it.” In short, it is impossible for the Church to understand her mission without understanding the Jewish people.

5 A fifth advance in Christian-Jewish understanding since *Nostra Aetate* is the decided effort to purge all anti-Jewish material from textbooks and catechisms. The infamous teaching of contempt begun in the second century CE is gone from most texts, and Christian children are taught that to practice anti-Semitism is anti-Christian. Furthermore, Christian religious education texts more clearly indicate the Jewish roots of concepts such as covenant, law, prophets, messiah, manna, Passover, redemption and testament, to name a few. However, changes in texts alone will not alleviate the understandable caution of many people. As the recently deceased pioneer in Catholic-Jewish relations, Rev. Edward Flannery, wrote in his book, *The Anguish of the Jews* (1965), “Most Christians have torn out of their history books the pages that Jews have memorized.”

6 The document *Nostra Aetate* encouraged mutual understanding and appreciation between Christians and Jews by way of “biblical and theological enquiry and friendly discussion.” Centers and institutes of Jewish-Christian studies and interreligious studies, as well as Jewish studies departments have proliferated to many Catholic and secular universities. The frequency of workshops and conferences, where scholars and students share biblical and theological insights, is increasing, and the warmth of that shared wisdom is beginning to bear fruit in excellent collaborative publications by scholars of different faiths.

7 A major event occurred May 18-20, 1998, in Auschwitz, Poland, where the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding of Sacred Heart University sponsored an international conference on “Religion and Violence, Religion and Peace.” Participating with the notable scholars and religious leaders were five Orthodox rabbis. The Catholic Church had been trying to enter into a theological dialogue with the full range of Judaism for decades. In the past, Orthodox rabbis have considered interfaith discussion of religious doctrine to be forbidden, due to practices in the Middle Ages when “disputations” between rabbis and priests frequently resulted in a beaten or killed rabbi. The CCJU conference at Auschwitz represents the first time that a group of prominent Orthodox rabbis participated in an interfaith discussion of a theological nature. At the end of the conference, the rabbis asserted that such encounters will continue.

8 Almost every Jewish-Christian encounter begins with or must eventually address the brooding darkness of the 20th century, the *Shoah*. Holocaust centers, Holocaust studies programs and departments, and Holocaust muse-

ums and memorials are being erected all over the world. These are important efforts to ensure an accurate memory for future generations. However, a deeper movement is occurring in the hearts of people (in no small measure due to the witness of Pope John Paul II) to make a teshuva [a turning away from wrong and returning to a right relationship] towards the Jewish people for the *Shoah*. It is probably true that people truly know each other only when they know and feel each other’s pain. Cardinal Lustiger, Archbishop of Paris, said at the 1998 CCJU *Nostra Aetate* Awards Ceremony and Lecture, “Christians have opened their eyes and ears to the Jewish pain and wounds. . . . They have not tried to declare themselves innocent.” Statements by the bishops of Hungary (1992), Germany (1995), the United States (1995), Poland (1995), Switzerland (1997), and France (1997) as well as the 1998 Vatican document, *We Remember*, all reflect these or similar sentiments made by the Cardinal.

9 An important advance in Christian-Jewish relations since *Nostra Aetate* is the 1993 Vatican establishment of full diplomatic relations with the State of Israel. This is a far cry from when the Zionist Theodor Herzl and Pope Pius X met earlier in this century. (Herzl says in his diary that he had anticipated the Catholic Church’s support only to be told, “The Jews have not recognized our Lord; therefore, we cannot recognize the Jewish people. . . . And so, if you come to Palestine and settle your people there, we shall have churches and priests ready to baptize all of you.”) Jews and Christians view the land of Israel differently. However, by formalizing diplomatic relations, the Vatican has opened the doors to deeper political, moral and theological dialogue between Jews and Christians in a politically complex and religiously diverse part of the world.

10 A final point to be mentioned here is the result of the above nine advances. With fewer attempts by Christians to convert Jews, a mutual respect and trust exists which has resulted in greater dialogue being initiated by Jews. The dialogue process has challenged many Christian denominations to write significant statements and publish recommendations for future relations with the Jewish people. But now several Jewish organizations and individuals have also published promising statements which attest to their willingness to continue the conversation.

There have been and will be disagreements and misunderstandings. Only time and the integrity of relationships will allow further progress to occur. These 10 advances in Christian-Jewish relations after *Nostra Aetate* are noted here not so that people will rest on their accomplishments. Rather, these are steps on the pilgrimage of faith where companions breaking the bread of friendship and sharing the wine of peace have chosen to walk for a long time. ❖

David Coppola, Ph.D.

Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions

Vatican II
Nostra Aetate
28 October 1965^a

1. In this age of ours, when men are drawing more closely together and the bonds of friendship between different peoples are being strengthened, the Church examines with greater care the relation which she has to non-Christian religions. Ever aware of her duty to foster unity and charity among individuals, and even among nations, she reflects at the outset on what men have in common and what tends to promote fellowship among them.

All men form but one community. This is so because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth (cf. Acts 17:26), and also because all share a common destiny, namely God. His providence, evident goodness, and saving designs extend to all men (cf. Wis. 8:1; Acts 14:17; Rom. 2:6-7; 1 Tim. 2:4) against the day when the elect are gathered together in the holy city which is illumined by the glory of God, and in whose splendor all peoples will walk (cf. Rev. 21:23 ff.).

The Church, therefore, urges her sons and daughters to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture.

Men look to their different religions for an answer to the unsolved riddles of human existence. The problems that weigh heavily on the hearts of men are the same today as in the ages past. What is man? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is upright behavior, and what is sinful? Where does suffering originate, and what end does it serve? How can genuine happiness be found? What happens at death? What is judgment? What reward follows death? And finally, what is the ultimate mystery, beyond human explanation, which embraces our entire existence, from which we take our origin and towards which we tend?

2. Throughout history even to the present day, there is found among different peoples a certain awareness of a hid-

den power, which lies behind the course of nature and the events of human life. At times there is present even a recognition of a supreme being, or still more of a Father. This awareness and recognition results in a way of life that is imbued with a deep religious sense. The religions which are found in more advanced civilizations endeavor by way of well-defined concepts and exact language to answer these questions. Thus, in Hinduism men explore the divine mystery and express it both in the limitless riches of myth and the accurately defined insights of philosophy. They seek release from the trials of the present life by ascetical practices, profound meditation and recourse to God in confidence and love. Buddhism in its various forms testifies to the essential inadequacy of this changing world. It proposes a way of life by which men can, with confidence and trust, attain a state of perfect liberation and reach supreme illumination either through their own efforts or by the aid of divine help. So, too, other religions which are found throughout the world attempt in their own ways to calm the hearts of men by outlining a program of life covering doctrine, moral precepts and sacred rites.

The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although differing in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men. Yet she proclaims and is in duty bound to proclaim without fail, Christ who is the way, the truth and the life (Jn. 14:6). In him, in whom God reconciled all things to himself (2 Cor. 5:18-19), men find the fullness of their religious life.

The Church, therefore, urges her sons and daughters to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. Let Christians, while witnessing to their own faith and way of life, acknowledge, preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians, also their social life and culture.

3. The Church has also a high regard for the Muslims. They worship God, who is one, living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth,¹ who has also spoken to men. They strive to submit themselves without reserve to the hidden decrees of God, just as Abraham submitted himself to God's plan, to whose faith Muslims

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eagerly link their own. Although not acknowledging him as God, they worship Jesus as a prophet, his virgin Mother they also honor, and even at times devoutly invoke. Further, they await the day of judgment and the reward of God following the resurrection of the dead. For this reason they highly esteem an upright life and worship God, especially by way of prayer, alms-deeds and fasting.

Over the centuries many quarrels and dissensions have arisen between Christians and Muslims. The sacred Council now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding; for the benefit of all men, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values.

4. Sounding the depths of the mystery which is the Church, this sacred Council remembers the spiritual ties which link the people of the New Covenant to the stock of Abraham.

The Church of Christ acknowledges that in God's plan of salvation the beginning of her faith and election is to be found in the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all Christ's faithful, who as men of faith are sons of Abraham (cf. Gal. 3:7), are included in the same Patriarch's call and that the salvation of the Church is mystically prefigured in the exodus of God's chosen people from the land of bondage. On this account the Church cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament by

Sounding the depths of the mystery which is the Church, this sacred Council remembers the spiritual ties which link the people of the New Covenant to the stock of Abraham. The Church of Christ acknowledges that in God's plan of salvation the beginning of her faith and election is to be found in the patriarchs, Moses and the prophets.

way of that people with whom God in his inexpressible mercy established the ancient covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws nourishment from that good olive tree onto which the wild olive branches of the Gentiles have been grafted (cf. Rom. 11:17-24). The Church believes that Christ who is our peace has through his cross reconciled Jews and Gentiles and made them one in himself (cf. Eph. 2:14-16).

Likewise, the Church keeps ever before her mind the words of the apostle Paul about his kinsmen: "They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the

promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race according to the flesh, is the Christ" (Rom. 9:4-5), the son of the virgin Mary. She is mindful, moreover, that the apostles, the pillars on which the Church stands, are of Jewish descent, as are many of those early disciples who proclaimed the Gospel of Christ to the world.

Since Christians and Jews have such a common spiritual heritage, this sacred Council wishes to encourage and further mutual understanding and appreciation. This can be obtained, especially, by way of biblical and theological enquiry and through friendly discussions.

As holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize God's moment when it came (cf. Lk. 19:42). Jews for the most part did not accept the Gospel; on the contrary, many opposed the spreading of it (cf. Rom. 11:28). Even so, the apostle Paul maintains that the Jews remain very dear to God, for the sake of the patriarchs, since God does not take back the gifts he bestowed or the choice he made.² Together with the prophets and that same apostle, the Church awaits the day, known to God alone, when all peoples will call on God with one voice and "serve him shoulder to shoulder" (Soph. 3:9; cf. Is. 66:23; Ps. 65:4; Rom. 11:11-32).

Since Christians and Jews have such a common spiritual heritage, this sacred Council wishes to encourage and further mutual understanding and appreciation. This can be obtained, especially, by way of biblical and theological enquiry and through friendly discussions.

Even though the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ (cf. Jn. 19:6), neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his passion. It is true that the Church is the new people of God, yet the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy Scripture. Consequently, all must take care, lest in catechizing or in preaching the Word of God, they teach anything which is not in accord with the truth of the Gospel message or the spirit of Christ

Indeed, the Church reproves every form of persecution against whomsoever it may be directed. Remembering, then, her common heritage with the Jews and moved not by any political consideration, but solely by the religious motivation of Christian charity, she deplores all hatreds, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism leveled at any time or from any source against the Jews.^b

The Church always held and continues to hold that Christ out of infinite love freely underwent suffering and death because of the sins of all men, so that all might attain salvation. It is the duty of the Church, therefore, in her preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's universal love and the source of all grace.

Therefore, the Church reproveth, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against people or any harassment of them on the basis of their race, color, condition in life or religion.

5. We cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people in other than brotherly fashion, for all men are created in God's image. Man's relation to God the Father and man's relation to his fellow-men are so dependent on each other that the Scripture says "he who does not love, does not know God" (1 Jn. 4:8).

There is no basis therefore, either in theory or in practice for any discrimination between individual and individual, or between people and people arising either from human dignity or from the rights which flow from it.

Therefore, the Church reproveth, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against people or any harassment of them on the basis of their race, color, condition in life or religion. Accordingly, following the footsteps of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, the sacred Council earnestly begs the Christian faithful to "conduct themselves well among the Gentiles" (1 Pet. 2:12) and if possible, as far as depends on them, to be at peace with all men (cf. Rom. 12:18) and in that way to be true sons of the Father who is in heaven (cf. Mt. 5:45).

Nostra Aetate [Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions]. (1965). In A. Flannery (Ed.), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (pp. 738-742). Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources.

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Notes a) Translated by Father Killian, O.C.S.O.

1) Cf. Pope St. Gregory VII, Letter 21 to Anzir (Nacir), King of Mauretania (PL 148, col. 450 ff.).

2) Cf. Rom. 11:28-29; Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium* (AAS 57, 1965, 20).

b) See *Guidelines on Religious Relations with the Jews* (1974). ❖

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become secular or agnostic: "Come back, make *teshuva*, study the Torah, even without practicing the *Mitzvoth*. In it, you will find the answers to questions that assault you, when the death of ideologies—all ideologies of right and left—leave you in a state of utter confusion. At least, allow your children to find the roots which you so badly lack."

Rabbi Sirat's third section focused on *teshuva* towards the Palestinians and the peoples of the Middle East. Rabbi Sirat extolled many of the accomplishments of Zionism in the last 50 years, namely, the remarkable resurrection of the Hebrew language, the integration of Jews from 70 regions of the world, the production of superior technologies, and the creation of a nation which can defend itself when being attacked.

Rabbi Sirat observed that on 36 occasions the Torah says that Jews shall love strangers as they love themselves. He said, "Considering the conciseness of the biblical text, such an insistence bears considerable weight. It is by this moral obligation that the success of the Project of Return, of the redemption of the Land of the Promise, should be evaluated." Unfortunately, Rabbi Sirat confessed, much work still needs to be accomplished in this area. He emphatically stated that the notion that Jews would seek to rule over other peoples was not acceptable. He said, "For this, Rabin and Peres completely deserved the Nobel Prize for Peace. Yet, the duty of the rabbis to make *teshuva* towards the Palestinians remains. It is the duty of Israel to avoid any vain moral or physical sufferings and to call the people to make *teshuva*."

He continued, "There is no holy war. Only peace is holy. But peace cannot be unilateral. If your enemy wants your destruction, you must use all the means of defense at your disposal, even the death of the assailant."

The final part of Rabbi Sirat's paper advocated that Jews should make a *teshuva* towards the world. Rabbi Sirat said, "Since 1945, after the dreadful *Shoah*, the nations of the world, in their entirety, have shown signs of a real *teshuva*. In return, in a conscious or unconscious manner, they are expecting Israel to become again the wise and discerning people referred to in the Bible." He said, the Jewish people "can become again the People of the Word, the People of the Message, the People of Ethics, in short, the light of the nations."

He concluded by saying, "Our *teshuva*, followed by the *teshuva* of humankind will lead to universal peace and harmony. In other words, the messiah riding on an ass will enter into a Jerusalem of justice, faithfulness, holiness, fraternity and peace. In that time, Israel will have accomplished God's will and will be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." ❖

and Roman Catholics in particular—have institutionalized a kind of anti-Judaism in their beliefs and public practices. This bias against Judaism is sometimes subtle and sometimes blatant, she stated, but always unacceptable.

Emmanuel” which begs God to “ransom captive Israel that mourns in lonely exile here.” Dr. Boys suggested that such lyrics, so ancient and so beloved, could subtly teach Christians that Judaism has, in effect, been “superseded” by the New Covenant of Christianity. This may well encourage a kind of arrogance among believers who feel they alone have received “the fullness of redemption.”

I would like to see both Christians and Jews so solidly grounded in their own traditions that they are able to enter openly into dialogue and discussion. . . .

Understanding does not always mean agreement.

Dr. Mary Boys

As an example, she cited the familiar Gospel reading concerning a man born blind who is cured by Jesus. When the man’s parents are questioned about the matter, they refuse to answer because of their “fear of the Jews.” Too many Christians, she said, fail to recognize the potential damage caused by teaching this seemingly harmless phrase until they begin to imagine how such a passage might sound to Jewish listeners.

The author of more than 60 articles and several books on related topics, Dr. Boys noted the power of public worship to teach. Too often, she explained, it has taught a negative lesson regarding the value and validity of Judaism and the Jewish people. Solemn prayers offered in the traditional Good Friday Liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church, for example, beseeched God to touch the hearts of the “unbelieving” or “unfaithful” Jews and remove the veil from their hearts. Present-day versions pray that Jews will receive the fullness of redemption, which to some listeners still seems to pit one covenant against another.

A more accessible example is in the Advent hymn, “O Come, O Come,

The speaker admitted that she posed more questions than she answered, which is the prerogative of a teacher, she explained. “I would like to see both Christians and Jews so solidly grounded in their own traditions that they are able to enter openly into dialogue and discussion,” Dr. Boys said. “Understanding does not always mean agreement.”

After the CCJU Lecture, a smaller group gathered for dinner and discussion with Dr. Boys at Sacred Heart University’s Board Room at the Pitt Center. The dialogue centered on an article written by Dr. Boys and Dr. Sara S. Lee, in 1996, which reported on the work of “Religious Particularism and Pluralism,” a Lily Endowment-sponsored project involving Jewish and Catholic educators and academics.

This year’s CCJU lecture was in memory of Frank H. Brennan, Sr., who was the founder, publisher and editor of *National Dialogue Newsletter*. Mr. Brennan was a remarkable man of integrity and faith, who worked to further the Christian-Jewish dialogue in this country until his death in 1992. Mrs. Mary Brennan, joined by her daughter, Sally, were present at the lecture and dinner. ❖



Dr. Mary Boys, a prominent theologian, speaks at Sacred Heart University April 29, 1999. Her talk, “What Do You Believe? The Challenge for Christian-Jewish Dialogue,” was sponsored by the University’s Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding.

This issue of the CCJU *Perspective* features the Vatican II document, *Nostra Aetate* which stresses the importance of dialogue. Dr. Leonard Swidler, editor of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* and professor of Catholic thought and interreligious dialogue at Temple University, published in the *Journal* (Winter, 1983), the "Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious, Interideological Dialogue."

Dr. Swidler says, "Dialogue is a conversation on a common subject between two or more persons with differing views, the primary purpose of which is for each participant to learn from the other so that he or she can change and grow. . . . But dialogue is not debate. In dialogue each partner must listen to the other as openly and sympathetically as he or she can in an attempt to understand the other's position as precisely and, as it were, as much from within, as possible." The following are his fundamental ground rules, or "commandments," of interreligious dialogue that must be observed if dialogue is actually to take place.

First Commandment: The primary purpose of dialogue is to learn, that is, to change and grow in the perception and understanding of reality, and then to act accordingly.

Second Commandment: Interreligious, interideological dialogue must be a two-side project within each religious or ideological community and between religious or ideological communities.

Third Commandment: Each participant must come to the dialogue with complete honesty and sincerity.

Fourth Commandment: In interreligious, interideological dialogue, we must not compare our ideals with our

partner's practice, but rather our ideals with our partner's ideals, our practice with our partner's practice.

Fifth Commandment: Participants must define themselves. Conversely, those interpreted must be able to recognize themselves in the interpretation.

Sixth Commandment: Each participant must come to the dialogue with no hard-and-fast assumptions as to where the points of disagreement are.

Seventh Commandment: Dialogue can take place only between equals, or "par cum pari," as Vatican II put it.

Eighth Commandment: Dialogue can take place only on the basis of mutual trust.

Ninth Commandment: Persons entering into interreligious, interideological dialogue must be at least minimally self-critical of both themselves and their own religious or ideological traditions.

Tenth Commandment: Each participant eventually must attempt to experience the partner's religion or ideology "from within"; for a religion or ideology is not merely something of the head, but also of the spirit, heart, and "whole being," individual and communal.

Dr. Swidler concludes, "All this of course will have to be done with complete integrity on each side, each partner remaining authentically true to the vital core of his/her own religious tradition."

[For a copy of the full text see: "The Dialogue Decalogue, by Leonard Swidler" at www.ccju.org under Interreligious Articles.] ♦

*O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much
seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.*

From "Peace Prayer," attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi

*I will light a candle of understanding in your heart
which shall not be put out.*

2 Esdras 14:25

*The best of life is conversation, and the greatest success is
confidence, or perfect understanding between sincere people.*
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Many can argue, not many can converse.
Amos Bronson Alcott

Understanding is joyous.
Carl Sagan

Book Reviews

The CCJU *Perspective* includes reviews of two books that are instructive and foundational works for those interested in pursuing Christian-Jewish dialogue and understanding.

Time to Meet: Towards a Deeper Relationship Between Jews and Christians.

by Marcus Braybrooke

(1990). London: SCM Press and Trinity Press. 162pp.

Although this book has been in print for almost a decade, it represents a contemporary work by a pastor and international leader in inter-faith dialogue for over 25 years and how those encounters have profoundly influenced his understanding of the Christian faith. This is an excellent book for newcomers to the Christian-Jewish dialogue and a valuable resource for those familiar with recent developments in this area.

The first part summarizes recent (since 1965) official statements and teachings of representative church bodies (statements by the Roman Catholic Church, World Council of Churches, 1988 Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops, Church of Scotland, and the American Episcopal Church) which are familiar to many religious leaders but still not known to most church members. These official statements agree inasmuch as they reject any teaching of contempt, persecution, or charges of deicide leveled at Jews and affirm that all religions have a place in God's purposes and of the special bonds that exist between Christians and Jews. There is considerable discussion, however, as to what those bonds mean when applied to the State of Israel or the theological nature of covenants.

Part II of the book finds the author exploring in a frank, scholarly and pastoral manner topics such as the Jewish Jesus, deicide, Christian superiority, misconceptions of Pharisaic Judaism, eschatology, christology, the question of one or two covenants, and mission to the Jews.

Many readers may find the author's treatment of christology unsettling as Rev. Dr. Braybrooke challenges several traditional categories and creedal statements taught by councils of the Church. He says that there are several christologies in the New Testament which do not "impose on future generations a single orthodox Christianity" (p. 67) and suggests that there is a need to develop a contemporary christology that is less negative towards Judaism.

All dialogue between Christians and Jews has the dark and undeniable shadow of the Shoah hanging over it. The author accurately and thoroughly raises the main theological and philosophical challenges to individual and communal faith after the Shoah and outlines the difficulty of forgiveness for Christians and Jews. He notes that Christians understand their salvation in the contexts of original sin and the redemption of humanity through the suffering and death of Jesus who lived and preached a radical forgiveness and requires present-day followers and the Church to do the same. For Jews, forgiveness only comes from God, not the rabbis, and requires restitution to the harmed party. This is obviously impossible when it comes to the victims of the Shoah. Furthermore, the idea that suffering leads to salvation is not a Jewish notion.

Chapter 11 presents an informative historical section on the State of Israel followed by the author's challenge to believers to agree to a shared responsibility in working for peace and justice. The final chapter offers excellent principles, pastoral reflections, and suggestions on how Christians and Jews can pray together. Dr. Braybrooke says that prayer requires trust, time and careful cooperation in preparation, and Christian-Jewish understanding is "vital to Christian wholeness—a wholeness which can only be rediscovered with Jewish help."

Our Age: The Historic New Era of Christian-Jewish Understanding.

by Jack Bemporad & Michael Shevack

(1996). Hyde Park, NY: New City Press. 96pp.

This is a solid introduction to contemporary Catholic-Jewish relations written by two rabbis actively involved in interreligious dialogue. The book is named after the historic 1965 Vatican II document, *Nostra Aetate* (In Our Age) and takes the reader through the recent events that demonstrate a dramatic transformation in Christian-Jewish relations and understanding.

The book succinctly highlights the history of Jews and Christians from their common origins to their separation and their eventual enmity which often resulted in persecution and violence inflicted on Jews by people who were Christian in name and culture. This so-called "teaching of contempt" was radically severed at the Second Vatican Council inaugurated by Pope John XXIII, who had been profoundly influenced by

the French historian, Jules Isaac.

Nostra Aetate opened the doors to understanding by acknowledging a spiritual bond between Jews and Christians, repudiating any form of hatreds or persecutions or displays of anti-Semitism, and inviting Jews into real dialogue of mutual respect not for the sake of conversion.

The book discusses significant events such as the 1986 papal visit to the Great Synagogue in Rome in which the Holy Father addressed the Jewish people there as "elder brothers"; Episcopal conferences issuing statements of repentance for the *Shoah*; and the 1994 Catholic Catechism which reinforced positive relations with all non-Catholics, especially the Jews. In short, the authors focus on what the Catholic Church is doing to eliminate anti-Semitism and how others can follow the her lead.

The topic of the 1993 signing of full diplomatic relations with Israel is treated with refreshing honesty and eschews politics and jargon. The book points out how some Jews think that the Church denies that Israel is a Jewish state or that modern Israel is the continuation of God's promise to Abraham because the *Notes* (1985) say that the state of Israel should be supported because of the principles of internation-

al law. This moves the Church out of the narrow theological debates and sectarian political interests which could easily be manipulated by radical fundamentalist extremists to foster war. The authors comment, "The Church would never deny that God keeps his promise and continues to love and help the Jewish people. However, since no one can know God's will completely, the Church is cautious in drawing theological conclusions from contemporary political events." (p. 79)

The authors say they have written this book for "those who dare to believe that the past need not condemn the future, that enmity can be transformed into trust, that good can be chosen over evil." They believe that Jews and Christians are called to educate a new generation in understanding and forgiveness. Forgiveness is a process of growth, not an isolated action, that has already begun in our age, in our time. This is the sign of the times. Jews and Christians are called to a *tikkun olam*, a repair of the world through forgiveness. This book would be excellent for those who are seeking an understanding that builds a foundation for substantive reconciliation on the local level. ♦

Reviews by David Coppola, Ph.D.

Vatican II: The Continuing Agenda Edited by Anthony J. Cernera, Ph.D.

Vatican II: The Continuing Agenda, takes up the task of examining the spirit of Vatican II at work during a period of rapid changes and profound transitions within the global community.

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