

could the all-loving God fail to intervene to prevent the tragedy to happen? or, Does human suffering question the power of God? continue to be raised. These are precisely the questions that Russian religious thinkers struggled with in the nineteenth century and that are now once more on the agenda after the tragic Russian history of the twentieth century. Sometimes this preoccupation with suffering could be viewed from outside in a rather peculiar way. I remember reading an article in the British newspaper *The Independent* in which a journalist seriously maintained that Russians simply love to suffer. He treated the Russians as a nation of masochists.

Not being masochists, Russian religious writers have, however, again and again asked the same questions: How could the world be so evil? How can evil and suffering exist if God is all loving and merciful? The problem of suffering is a burning issue in Russian religious thought. This is epitomized by Dostoyevsky in Ivan Karamazov's rejection of a harmony in God's plan for the world should it be based on one tear of one tortured child. In my youth there was a group of Christian intellectuals in St. Petersburg who took Ivan Karamazov's position as a personal challenge. They exchanged letters as they reflected on this problem and tried to find an answer. Not surprisingly they did not find an answer that could be accepted as satisfactory, but a number of important issues emerged from their discussions and helped fill the gap between personal experience and philosophical abstraction. I think that taking a central human problem, one that is of concern to every religious person, is surely a promising way to begin a dialogue.

NOTES

1. H. P. Fry, ed., *Christian-Jewish Dialogue: A Reader* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), 35.
2. Nikolai Glubokovsky, *The Good News according to St Paul and Jewish Rabbinical Theology* (St. Petersburg: Svetoslav, 1998).
3. Andrej Kuraev, *How They Make Anti-Semites* (Moscow: Odisitria, 1998).
4. For a recent study in English of Solov'yev's thought, see P. Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology—Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov: Orthodox Theology in a New Key* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000).

6

Catholic-Jewish Agendas

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The introduction written by the editors of this volume could not have been clearer when it stated the aims of the book, the questions that it intends to address, and the kind of authors that the editors were looking for. With regard to the last item, the introduction reads as follows, "The choice of authors here has been guided by a selection of those who are able to combine an academic perspective on the subject with real practical experience of Jewish-Christian relations." I can assure you that Jewish-Christian relations have filled my days, and at times also my nights, for the past seven years. I shall reflect on the theme from that perspective.

I would first of all like to state that the theme is both relevant and timely as far as the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews is concerned. As a matter of fact, the question of agenda has preoccupied our minds for quite some time.¹ Looking back at our experience in this regard, one can say that our partnership with IJCIC (the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations) in the ILC (the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee), a body that was set up toward the end of 1970, has undoubtedly been fruitful in the past. The ILC was an official linking body between the Catholic Church, through the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, and the Jewish community, insofar as the Jewish community at large felt that IJCIC (i.e., the organizations and agencies of which IJCIC is composed) was in fact representing them. Over the years, especially the past five years, many Jews have come to

tell us that it is not. However, since the specifically religious component of IJCIC, that is, the Synagogue Council of America, disappeared from the IJCIC scene a few years ago, IJCIC became a body of secular organizations, each bringing its own agenda to the dialogue table—an agenda that we refuse to accept any longer as the basis for an encounter that should respect the aspirations and sensitivities of *both* parties involved. Moreover, we find a “partnership” with bodies and individuals that have engaged in a destructive campaign against us, and the situation is unacceptable.

An American Jewish leader, Rabbi Henry Siegman, already saw the point being addressed in a paper thirty years ago. In the reassessment of “Ten Years of Catholic-Jewish Relations” that he presented to the ILC meeting in Jerusalem in 1976, he made the following remarks:

If the past ten years have taught us anything, it is that we come to each other with different agendas.... Taking full advantage of the prerequisite of the injured party, Jews have successfully managed the dialogue so that it has focused entirely on what we consider to be Christian failings....

I suppose that Christian forbearance with this one-sided situation is compounded of a sense of guilt and of *noblesse oblige*. However, it is a situation which cannot persist for long... because our Christian partners are not likely to continue the dialogue on these terms....

I say all of this with diffidence and even trepidation, not only because, even now, sensitivities are still raw on both sides...., but primarily because I do not wish to encourage the notion that the *Shoah* be exploited as a device to generate Christian guilt, and thereby to manipulate the relationship in ways that give the Jewish side an advantage. Such manipulations must be seen as a desecration of the memory of the victims and utterly destructive of the real hope which the dialogue holds.²

On the same occasion Rabbi Siegman also made a reference, quite rightly—and courageously in my opinion—to a tendency among Jews to “weigh the volume of public statements made by Christian officials in

support of Jewish causes,” and to their use of pressure through the mass media. “I have come to the conclusion,” he said:

that there is something particularly distortive of the relationship, and misleading of its genuine character and depth in the frenetic efforts in which we engage with such monotonous regularity to extract public statements from Christian officials at every turn in Jewish affairs. Indeed, it seems to have become a major industry of American Jewish life, whose major beneficiaries, insofar as I can tell, are the advertising agencies and metropolitan newspapers. Of course, Jewish existence continues to be fragile and vulnerable, and we need understanding friendship and public support as desperately as we ever did. But if these are to have any meaning and practical consequence, then they must be spontaneous expressions rather than ritualistic responses to heavy-handed pressure exerted by Jewish organizations, including my own.³

This is plain language, and it is with the same diffidence that Rabbi Siegman felt thirty years ago that I am quoting it to you today.

At a symposium held at the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem in February 1997, Daniel Rossing, a Jewish educator with a long record of experience in Jewish-Christian dialogue in the West and in Israel, has been outspoken too. “I think it is obvious to all who have labored in the vineyard of Jewish-Catholic relations that nearly all of the changes which have brought about the vast improvements in relations have taken place on the Catholic side,” he said, and “in the light of the historic record of the Church’s relations with the Jewish people, it is fully understandable that the dialogue in the West has for the most part been a one-way street, at least in terms of the re-examination of traditional attitudes.” However, Rossing expressed the hope that today the “historic changes” that have occurred since the Second Vatican Council, “will also enter the consciousness of the inhabitants of this land [Israel], and most especially the hearts and minds of Jews.”

At a symposium held at the Columbus School of Law at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, in April 1997, I addressed the same issue, then quoting in a footnote some of the above-mentioned observations made by Henry Siegman. Today, unfortunately, they need to

be stated in the text itself. In fact, I did do this one year later, in April 1998, when I addressed an international conference on the Holocaust at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana.

In Washington, DC, when I was a little more optimistic than I am now with regard to relations with Jewish agencies and organizations (and I am speaking not about a great number of Jewish individuals, local community leaders, and scholars to whom we relate very well indeed), I insisted on the need to be truthful in our dialogue, the need for transparency in proposing (or imposing) agendas, the need to respect the feelings and understanding of *both* sides. Our relations, I said, must become far more a reciprocal discovery of one another, of one another's heritage and tradition, of one another's values and spiritual potential, as well as of one another's aspirations and fears. Such a venture, I insisted, rooted in a common spiritual patrimony and in respect for one another's faith convictions, but also in the human friendship that we can share could—far from being short-term opportunism—become a blessing to both ourselves and the rest of the world. A question that Rabbi Siegman had already asked twenty years before, namely, “what impels us to dialogue, and what does each of us seek to get out of it?” I had quite often asked myself with regard to the agendas of certain Jewish organizations that were in contact with us, agendas that were often disguised as, or wrapped up in, “interfaith dialogue.”

At Notre Dame, where I spoke on the theme “The Jewish-Christian Encounter: A Matter of Faith?” I looked at the meaning of those terms (dialogue, encounter, faith) in the realm of the Jewish-Catholic relations that I experience day after day. I stated then, as I do now, that before anything else I am a person of faith who does believe in interfaith encounter and interreligious dialogue, but I have a problem with what I feel is an ambiguous use of these words. There is great potential inherent in sharing and discovery, growth and promise, especially in the realm of Jewish-Christian relations and dialogue, which provide a space where hearts meet hearts and minds meet minds, and where these can be informed and transformed in the process. But this is all too easily emptied of its religious content and filled with something else. In my dealings with interfaith affairs, interfaith institutes, interfaith programs, interfaith relations, interfaith dialogue, interfaith groups, and interfaith directors, I often have difficulty with finding any religious content in those affairs, programs, or dialogues. I warned then, as I do now, that excessive concern for bolstering organizational and private ambitions, agendas,

and policies, and for the lobbying and media campaigns that go with it—at the expense of what I believe to be a genuine encounter between equal partners in which mutual trust and respect for sensitivities are essential—can easily become counterproductive. As a matter of fact it is becoming counterproductive. An increasing number of Catholic people who are quite open to the new spirit that is slowly growing between Catholics and Jews, and to which we in our commission are totally committed, are tired of unrelenting pressure in matters and issues that not only pertain to Jewish concerns but that also deeply touch *their own* concerns, convictions, and sensitivities. They refuse to be continually forced into producing so-called lasting answers to nagging doubts⁴ by people who, they suspect, are doing their best to keep those nagging doubts alive. What Rabbi Siegman had so clearly warned his fellow Jews about in 1976 (and which went unheeded) is unfortunately happening today.

However—and I would like to underline that I am entering now that part of my assessment that really matters—when I listen to people such as the Orthodox chief rabbi Jonathan Sacks or the Reform rabbi Tony Bayfield in the United Kingdom, both representing quite different traditions in Judaism, I realize that Jewish persons of *faith*, in spite of their differences, do in fact share with us an agenda for the future. Also the Orthodox rabbi David Rosen, the president of the International Council of Christians and Jews, pointed to this in an interview with the ecumenical news service of the World Council of Churches on September 17, 1998, spelling out what, in his opinion, the agenda is. “I think we have to try to have a deeper communion,” he said, “while respecting the very fundamental differences. I see us as partners in divine destiny with two different models of the message.” In spite of the serious problems and difficulties that both faith communities find themselves coping with, including their very relationships with each other, I too am convinced that we are able to move ahead in genuine dialogue and, in many instances, in giving common witness to the religious values that we share, the moral principles placed in our hands by the One who created this world and that are set down in the Holy Scriptures that both our faith communities revere.

The president of our commission, Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy, made the same point on February 10, 1997, on the occasion of the above-mentioned symposium at the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem, which reflected on the theme “The Future of Catholic-Jewish Relations in Israel.” Speaking on what our commission believes to be the current

issues in those relations, the cardinal stated that in our opinion the present task is to determine precisely what it is that we can do, what we should do, and *with whom* we should be in partnership in order to take forward the good work that has been done in the past. We must, it seems to me, he said, move on from the constant examination of difficulties in our bilateral relations to joint action in favor of the moral values that as *faith* communities we share. In fact, at this point in the history of our relations, our commission is convinced of the need for a dialogue that goes beyond the discussion of problems and enters into the very heart of what constitutes our identities as faith communities, in order to allow us to proceed – on that basis – along the path of common action in today's society.³

This direction in Jewish-Catholic relations had already been jointly decided upon (i.e., by Jews and Catholics together) at the thirteenth meeting of the ILC, which took place in Prague in September 1990. The statement that the Prague meeting made public began by acknowledging the monumental role of the Second Vatican Council's declaration *Nostra Aetate* as well as the role of later efforts by the popes and church officials to bring about a substantial improvement in Catholic-Jewish relations ("Nostra Aetate created a new spirit in these relationships," the statement says). It then proceeded to call for a deepening of this spirit, "which emphasizes cooperation, mutual understanding and reconciliation; goodwill and common goals to replace the past spirit of suspicion, resentment and distrust." Moreover, the joint statement insisted, this new spirit should also manifest itself in the work that our two faith communities could do together to respond to the needs of today's world. These needs were spelled out too, "This need is for the establishment of human rights, freedom and dignity where they are lacking or imperiled, and for responsible stewardship of the environment." The statement concluded on a hopeful note:

After two millennia of estrangement and hostility, we have a sacred duty as Catholics and Jews to strive to create a genuine culture of mutual esteem and reciprocal caring. Catholic-Jewish dialogue can become a sign of hope and inspiration to other religions, races, and ethnic groups to turn away from contempt, toward realizing authentic human fraternity. The new spirit of friendship and caring for one

another may be the most important symbol that we have to offer to our troubled world.⁶

What a worthwhile agenda this is!

The ILC Jerusalem meeting in 1994 embraced and reconfirmed this view in its conclusions by adopting Pope John Paul II's message to the people of his native land, Poland, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising: "As Christians and Jews, following the example of the faith of Abraham, we are called to be a blessing for the world (cf. Gen. 12:2 ff). This is the common task awaiting us. It is therefore necessary for us, Christians and Jews, to be first a blessing to one another," he said.⁷ In fact, the agenda we had before us in Jerusalem was intended to carry forward what took place at the Prague meeting and what had been confirmed two years later at the ILC meeting in Baltimore, where we decided to seek to become more effective instruments to respond to and indeed to anticipate a variety of challenges in today's world, to which both our faith communities are called to respond. The Baltimore statement emphasized our common duty to build together on a new world "in which differences are addressed in quiet and constructive dialogue rather than fractious accusations."⁸

At the 1994 Jerusalem meeting (in which, as in the previous meeting, Orthodox Jewish scholars also participated), we were able to produce a *Common Declaration on the Family*, and we started to work on a *Common Declaration on the Environment* that was published in the spring of 1998 at the last ILC meeting that took place in the Vatican.⁹ In the meantime the ILC steering committee, meeting in Geneva, had jointly prepared the draft of what I thought to be an excellent *Common Statement on Violence*, which was expected to be approved by the ILC at its sixteenth meeting, scheduled to take place in Buenos Aires in April 1996. However, this meeting had to be cancelled at the very last moment because—in my personal, but I believe informed, opinion—some of our IJCIC partners seemed to fear that someone else also belonging to IJCIC might steal the show. In fact, another Catholic-Jewish meeting was going to take place in Buenos Aires more or less at the same time. In any case, you might be interested to read the text of the *Common Statement on Violence*, which, as it turned out, was never stated at all.¹⁰ I must confess, however, that I have resented the fact that by the cancellation of the Buenos Aires meeting, on rather trivial grounds, the common good had been sacrificed on the altar of personal ambition, and the Catholic-

Jewish dialogue hijacked by an organizational agenda. On the other hand, it is also true that incidents such as this one contribute to a major transparency of certain dynamics at work. Far more important, however, is the fact that we in the Catholic Church, together with the many Jewish friends who do believe in the possibility of and the need for a common agenda, have continued to work in the meantime in fields such as education, knowing that *both* Jews and Christians badly need to be informed about the new reality that, in spite of destructive actions in some quarters, is emerging between us but that still needs to be received by the majority of the people in our respective communities. "We well know the abyss of ignorance in both our communities concerning the other, which includes dangerous myths and prejudices," the late Geoffrey Wigoder of the Jewish Council of Interreligious Consultations in Israel admitted in his keynote address to the participants of the 1994 ILC Jerusalem meeting. In those situations, though, where the process of reception does take place and where, therefore, a genuine interfaith encounter between Jews and Christians can really happen, Christians and Jews are enabled to discover an agenda that, I believe, is offered to us from above. Rabbi Irving Greenberg, an Orthodox theologian, has put it like this: "If committed and believing Christians and Jews can discover the image of God in each other, if they can uncover and affirm each other's proper role in the overall divine strategy of redemption, surely the inspiration of their example would bring the kingdom of God that much closer for everyone."¹¹ The point is that we are talking here about Jews and Christians of *faith*, believing people who are—in faithfulness to their respective faith traditions—committed to the will of God.

Cardinal Cassidy has spoken on this important matter also—important because it signifies a turning point in our relations with the Jews—in his opening address to the ILC meeting on March 23, 1998. "We have as our heritage twenty-seven years of difficult and important work done by the ILC," he said,

At the same time, there are serious questions that call for our common reflections. Has the ILC still a valid reason for existing? And if so, what should be our future role in regard to Jewish-Catholic relations? Now we need to set ourselves common goals, rooted in our separate but in many aspects similar faith traditions. We are called to be a blessing to the world. That is our common destiny. To do that effectively,

however, we must—as Pope John Paul II has pointed out—firstly be a blessing to each other. And for that we need mutual understanding, reconciliation and good-will. I should like that we ask ourselves, Jews and Catholics, if we are satisfied with the progress made in this connection. Have we, in fact, a *deep mutual understanding*, one of the other? Or, rather, do we not continue in some ways to cling to "the past spirit of suspicion, resentment and distrust"? The work of mutual understanding is not easy, yet it is essential if we are to build a solid relationship that will be able to resist whatever difficulties the future may hold. I can honestly say that we have tried to base our dialogue on this basis. Not everyone in our Church has fully absorbed the new spirit of mutual understanding. We continue our efforts. But I have to ask our Jewish friends, if they are making the same kind of effort to understand the Catholic Church and its position on [certain] matters.¹²

On quite a number of issues our positions converge because of the common heritage that Jews and Christians have. We do have a message, a vision, that we can share with the world, but as Rabbis Jack Bemporad and Michael Shevack have pointed out in their good little book *Our Age*, "this work has been weakened, because we have been unable to feel comfortable with the fundamental theological differences that have separated us, or because we have still been entrenched in past pain."¹³

As far as our commission is concerned, this awareness, this experience and vision, must set the agenda for the future, and we know that many of our Jewish friends share this vision with us. That is why we wish to relate to these Jewish brothers and sisters, to engage in a constructive and enriching dialogue with them, on a *religious* basis. We will gladly, and I am quite sure also fruitfully, work together with believing Jewish partners with whom we can *share* the agenda, whatever religious tradition within Judaism they belong to. Hence, Christians and Jews will be able to find one another on a far deeper level than has been the case until now, able to stand together in responding to the serious challenges that both faith communities have to face in today's society—rising secularism, religious apathy, and moral confusion in a world in which there is little room for God.

Moreover, as Cardinal Cassidy has pointed out in an address to the American Jewish Committee in May 1998, it may be wise to keep in mind the possibility that a society with little room for God may one day have little room for those men and women who believe in God and wish to live according to his law and commandments.¹⁴ In fact, the cardinal had already expressed this concern of ours at the last ILC meeting. Against a background of continuing pressure and lamentations on the part of some of the Jewish organizations that were rather eager to use the meeting for their own purposes, and undoubtedly having in mind the good resolutions of the 1990 ILC Prague meeting, he stated:

How much better would our world be were Catholics and Jews to come together better to know each other, and in common cause to act in order to uplift their communities! In most of the societies in which we live, the basic philosophy of life has in the past been firmly established on Judeo-Christian traditions and values. But that is becoming less and less the case. Is there anything that we should seek to do together in order to preserve these traditions that are so often threatened...?

The erosion of the fundamental God-oriented pillars of our Western civilisation will necessarily have a negative effect eventually on respect for human rights. The denial of the existence of God and a consequent understanding of good and evil result inevitably in a loss of respect for the other. What makes a man or woman valuable, irrespective of race or social standing, if there is no divine plan, if each man and woman is not created in the image of God?

Belief in the divinity and in the divine creation of human nobility are fundamental to Catholic and Jewish traditions. Here we have the possibility of building together, of standing together against ideologies and systems that can lead once again to men and women, children of the one God, being despised just for what they are, and even for the world to be considered a better place without them.... Let us not forget that there is still evil in the world. Those who created the gas-chambers and the gulags were atheists who, while denying the existence of a God, acted as though they themselves were God! There is no reason to

feel comfortable that future atheists will not again consider themselves equal to God.¹⁵

These phrases clearly spell out our vision and understanding. We do believe in the need for Jews and Christians to have a more profound knowledge of one another as faith communities, while maintaining their distinct identities, to witness together to a new conscience of *partnership* founded on a common nucleus of faith as contained in the Holy Scriptures that we share. It is indeed time for us to go "beyond apologies."¹⁶ Our communities need it, and the world in which we live needs it.

Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, a conservative Jewish scholar and professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, has put it even more strongly at a seminar on *Nostra Aetate* at Fordham University on November 20, 1995. "The time has come for us to move beyond dialogue," he said, so that Catholics and Jews can "address the weakening of the moral fiber of... society."¹⁷ In a different context, Pope John Paul II expressed a similar conviction in an address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See. "What the international community perhaps lacks most of all today is not written conventions or forums for self-expression," he said, "but a moral law and the courage to abide by it."¹⁸ Therefore, in Jewish-Christian relations the polemics and hurtful rhetoric should be left behind; instead, putting it in the words of Marcus Braybrooke, "religions should meet where religions take their course, in God."¹⁹

The well-known Jewish scholar David Novak has illustrated this "religious need," which is the point being made here, in the wake of the publication by our commission of the document *We Remember*. Addressing the Jewish criticism of this document, Novak writes, "My own view is that the Jewish response [to the document] is largely mistaken, and that it reflects a misunderstanding not only of Catholic theology but of Jewish theologies as well." After having analyzed the document theologically, he concludes (and this is quoted as a mere illustration of the point):

The document asserts [that] "the Nazi regime was determined to exterminate the very existence of the Jewish people, a people called to witness to the one God and the law of the covenant." No Jewish statement could have enunciated more precisely why Jewish people exist in the world.

Jews are committed to survival. Much of our language, uttered both to ourselves and to others, is the language of survival. Surely, that is quite understandable considering what the Jewish people have suffered, especially in this century. But survival for Jews is not enough. Jews always have to understand *for what*—better, *for whom*—we are surviving. Perhaps the true source of the Nazi venom against the Jewish people is that for which or for Whom the Jews are to survive.

This statement of the Catholic Church recognizes the chosenness of the Jewish people, the vocation of the Jewish people, a fact nothing short of *qiddush ha-shem*, "the sanctification of the name of God." If the Church, from the top down, recognizes this as the reason for the survival and continuing strength of the Jewish people, then, despite any reservations, Jews have to see this document as making a positive contribution to the always complex relationship between the Jewish people and the Catholic Church. It is a document Jews can and should embrace because its theological argument and conclusions have a resonance in our own theology and law. It is by no means the last word—nothing is in this world—but its integrity and wisdom should not be missed because of moral and political antagonism stemming from those having less integrity and less wisdom.²⁰

As mentioned above, Novak's essay is an illustration of the fact that a religious, and indeed theological, appreciation of one another can help us further along the road of dialogue, common discovery, and cooperation on the condition, though, that both parties are nourished by their own faith, feel realized in their own faith community, and feel secure in their own faith commitment. That is what Pope John Paul II meant when he said at the start of the World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi in October 1986, addressing persons of other faiths, "It is, in fact, my faith conviction which has made me turn to you."

When Jews and Christians meet each other in a religious "space," that is, under the gaze of God, and feel blessed by it, they enter on a road that may be one of struggle but also one of mutual discovery. In September 1997, addressing a conference of the International Council of Christians and Jews at Rocca di Papa, near Rome, Chief Rabbi

Jonathan Sacks spoke about the story of Jacob and Esau, and the strange encounter that Jacob had with the One who gave him his new name, and he commented:

At that moment, Jacob is cured of wanting to be Esau. For the first time he can meet Esau without aggression or deception or fear. He says to Esau, "I have seen your face as one sees the face of God," meaning I have recognized your otherness, and I have let it go. You are not me. I am not you. It is in our mutual otherness that we can have relationship. If I am I and you are you, we no longer threaten one another, for we each have our own blessing. We are affirmed in our otherness by Him who is ultimately Other. The Torah signals that this was not an easy discovery. It took many years, it took a deep inner struggle; after it Jacob limped. But after it Jacob became Israel—he who is content to be different, not to be Esau.

Judaism and Christianity, each in their different ways, have had to undergo that inner struggle, and we still do.... Yet it is only by being ourselves and not another that we create space for the other to be himself and not us. Only when I-am-not-Thou and Thou-are-not-I, can there be relationship. And because God lives in relationships, He lives in difference.

We are others. We are also brothers. We have been so for a long time.... When we look back on our past, we find much that we have in common.... We have shared origins, though our paths diverged.... Looking back on this long, strange story of two brothers, we stand hushed for a moment in awe....

It took a long inner struggle, and the darkest night of all, for Jews and Christians to reach the moment when we could meet without fear, each secure in our own blessing, each faithful to our particular truth.... We have reached that stage today, and we must never regress. For it is only if we are true to our separate vocations, if Christians are not Jews, and if Jews are not Christians, that we bring our respective truths to the world, and live, as brothers, in peace.²¹

Looking back on the past we realize, for instance, that too often Christians have pictured the law of the covenant as a burden rather than as a delight. Too often they have also forgotten that when Jesus was crucified by the Romans, with the complicity of some Jews, other Jews have mourned and lamented over him.²² They had forgotten what *Nostra Aetate* has reminded them of, namely, that "the Jews still remain most dear to God" who "does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues."²³ They had forgotten that Jesus was a faithful Jew and "that from the Jewish people sprang the apostles," the foundation stones and pillars of the church who "draw sustenance from the root of that good olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild olive branches of the Gentiles."

On the other hand, Jews too have forgotten that Jesus was a fellow Jew (their "great brother" as Martin Buber has described him),²⁴ that they can know him in a way that remains inaccessible to the Gentiles who follow him.²⁵ Jews have failed to "come to terms with the historical significance of the figure of Jesus," to "see the great parallel in our two religions on essential religious issues," to recognize and appreciate "the remarkably unique manner in which Christianity has expressed Jewish teachings," to "recognize that a place must be given to the reality that Christianity has been a vehicle through which the promises made to Abraham have to a large extent been realized," and to "recognize the degree to which Christianity has been and continues to be a vital influence on Jewish history, practice and self-understanding."²⁶

We need to remember though that if today we are able to talk about these things, it is because we are the beneficiaries of the changes that took place forty years ago, because, as Rabbi James Rudin has once put it, "we are all the children of Vatican II."²⁷ On the other hand, if today we can realistically hope to become a blessing to one another and thus a blessing to the rest of the world — "we should be taking holiness into the streets," is how Rabbi Irving Greenberg has beautifully expressed it²⁸ — it is because of changes that are taking place right now, and the key to these changes is a *religious* one: it is religious faith. It is my conviction that the more we, Jews and Christians, "seek the face of God" (Ps 27:8), the nearer we will come to each other; in this encounter we will encounter God in a new way.²⁹ If we do believe this, and if we dare to act on this belief, our hope will certainly exceed our present experience.

Another key to the changes in Jewish-Christian relations that are badly needed today is a joint reflection on the meaning of history and

on history itself, particularly the history of the parting of the ways. We need to reflect on history itself because, to put it in the words of the Jewish historian Ellis Rivkin in his classic study *What Crucified Jesus?*, "as seekers of truth, we would wish to know what occurred, why it occurred, and who was responsible for its occurrence; as seekers of reconciliation between the mother and the daughter religions, we would wish to build this reconciliation on the facing of facts rather than on the dissolving of them." For example, "it is tragic indeed," he writes, "that the birth pangs of Christianity were occasioned by an event [the crucifixion of Jesus] in which Jews were directly implicated. It is tragic because it spawned intense hostility between mother and daughter religions," and he then sets off on a historical study that he describes as "an odyssey from human bitterness, hate, and blindness to divine love, reconciliation, and enlightenment."³⁰ Father John T. Pawlikowski has made the same point, as indeed have other Christian and Jewish scholars: "Certainly there is a long history to overcome in transforming Good Friday into a period of Christian-Jewish reconciliation. But if we better understand the concrete political dynamics that brought Jesus to Calvary, we will be well underway toward beginning that process of transformation."³¹ The same is true with regard to any other period of history.

Also a joint reflection on the meaning of history could be very helpful. For instance, some of the insights that Irving Greenberg shared with us at the Jerusalem Conference on Religious Leadership in Secular Society, have greatly helped me to understand better certain Jewish attitudes, for example, what he calls the Jewish temptation of triumphalism of powerlessness (and what Rabbi Leon Klenicki calls the triumphalism of pain). To quote Greenberg:

Jewish Christianity was born within the body of the Jewish people — shortly before Jewry experienced catastrophic destruction, exile and powerlessness. For Judaism, over the course of the next few centuries, this became a moment of covenant renewal, the flowering of rabbinic Judaism.... In the course of history, the Rabbis developed an ethic of powerlessness which gave dignity and meaning to Jewish life. The rabbinic way sustained the patience to wait for a redemption that would some day sweep aside the secular and religious earthly rulers alike and restore Israel to its past

glory. This ethic became even more urgent and central as Christianity came into power and aggressively persecuted Jewry. To put it bluntly, the Rabbis wrote off history.

On the other hand, I am well aware that Christians also have often been tempted to write off this world and its history and to withdraw into spiritual security. Today, however, both sides are caught off guard by the upsurge of modernity. "The history which both religions denied in order to claim their absolute validity came back to haunt them," Greenberg said, and echoing the words of Pope John Paul II he added,

Whatever Judaism and Christianity try to do, they will have to do together and to each other first. Their moral and cultural credibility depends on overcoming the legacy and image of their mutual hatefulness, it depends on their ability to set a standard of mutual respect.... Whatever the differences and conflicts between them, they are lumped together in the same part of the cultural spectrum from the perspective of the secular majority in the West. Thus their authority is hopelessly tied one to the other by what they have in common and the gulf between that and the view of religion's cultured despisers.³²

I would like to conclude with a paragraph taken from a paper, *Catholics and Jews: Confronting the Holocaust Together*, written in December 1987 by Judith Banki, who was then the associate director for interreligious affairs of the American Jewish Committee. It summarizes my vision of the future of Jewish-Christian relations rather well:

Let us resolve to pursue [our efforts] toward the goal of understanding and combating the pathology of group hatred and persecution, in an atmosphere free of polemics. We are not responsible for the prejudices of the world into which we were born, but we are responsible for fighting them. We are not accountable for past events over which we had no control, but we are accountable for the future. We are jointly responsible for facing history and for forging new traditions of human and spiritual solidarity — for the sake of our children, our world, and the sanctification of the One who is Holy to all of us.

NOTES

1. At the time of writing I was the executive secretary of the commission.
2. International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, *Fifteen Years of Catholic-Jewish Dialogue 1970-1985* (Rome: ILC, 1988), 27-28. See also the opinion of David Klinghoffer in his article "Anti-Semitism without Anti-Semites," *First Things* 82 (April 1998): 10-13.
3. ILC, *Fifteen Years of Catholic-Jewish Dialogue*, 27-28. In an address on the theme "Catholic-Jewish Relations—The Unfinished Agenda," given in Baltimore on February 18, 1999, Cardinal Cassidy remarked: "Recent Jewish attempts to influence decisions concerning the internal life of the Catholic Church are strongly resented. Persons very dear to the Catholic faithful are condemned without proof, simply because they are not 'personae gratae' with the Jewish community."
4. See the Institute of the World Jewish Congress's *Policy Dispatches* 23 (November 1997) and 36 (November 1998). With regard to the latter, Ralph Leinoff, Jewish cochairman of the Rockaway Catholic Jewish Council (U.S.), reacted very strongly in a letter dated December 8, 1998, endorsed by Rabbi Joseph I. Weiss of the RCJC Advisory Board, and addressed to the Institute of the World Jewish Congress:

Gentlemen,...if the goal of this document was to call a halt to dialogue and further efforts to encourage the Catholic Church's march towards confronting the bitter history of its relations with the Jewish people, then I must congratulate you on your success. You could not have done a better job of instilling a sense of dismay and futility in all who have been engaged in the process of dialogue over the last two and a half decades. Your document reeks with half truths, innuendo, gossip and a total lack of appreciation for all the good that has been accomplished since *Nostra Aetate* in 1965....All your grudging acknowledgments of fundamental changes for good in the Church's teachings on Judaism are designed to minimize their great importance. Instead, you elevate unresolved lesser issues to high importance, thereby justifying the failing grades you give the Church for all the changes it has made and indeed, is still making. Your accusation that the Church is trying to "Christianize" victims of the Shoah is a point of view not shared by most Jews at this time. However, we do not doubt your capacity to peddle that kind of nonsense to those who are in ignorance about what has taken place in the last third of this century or to those who have a distrustful fear of any kind of dialogue.... Your we'll-tell-you-how-to-run-your-religion attitude is an onerous distortion of what dialogue is all

about....It will be interesting to see how you will continue to discount first hand eye witness reports of historical facts in favor of highly fictionalized Broadway productions about the Church's complete failure in WW-II....Catholics also have sensitivities....In a world where Jews find themselves so vastly outnumbered and besieged by so many enemies, why do we have to go out of our way to add another billion Christians by biting off their outstretched hands in fellowship?

5. In his above-mentioned address delivered in Baltimore, Cardinal Cassidy spelled it out:

The possibilities for common witness and co-operation are immense. Is there any reason why we cannot work together for a better, more just society? Or fight together against every form of evil in our societies, and especially every manifestation of racism and anti-Semitism? Are we not called by our common heritage to promote together the defense of the weak and oppressed? Have we not motives for defending together the family, protecting our children, and helping the young in their search for meaning, nurturing the hearts of all by sharing the treasures of our respective spiritualities? Could we not, for example, say something together to a world in which millions lack the basic necessities of human existence, while nations spend billions of dollars on armaments and weapons of mass destruction? Then there are challenges for us in the field of human rights, for the protection of the rights of religion, for dialogue with the other great religions of the world—with a special place in this context for dialogue with the believing followers of Islam—and for collaboration in the realm of culture....As two faith communities with common roots, I am convinced that the time has come for us to move beyond the agenda of the past 35 years and begin to examine more closely the spiritual bonds that unite us, while at the same time seeking to deepen our understanding of the various teachings of our faiths that constitute our separate identities... Will not a dialogue that goes beyond a discussion about problems and concentrates rather on what can bring us to a deeper understanding one of the other be valuable also in helping us to proceed further and more securely along the path of common action?

6. See *Information Service*, the official bulletin of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, 75 (1990).

7. See *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 17, 1993.

8. See *Information Service* 82 (1993). At that meeting I delivered a paper entitled "The Teaching on Jews and Judaism in Catholic Education," published in *Seminarium* 2 (1992).

9. See *Information Service* 98 (1998). It was at the 1994 Jerusalem meeting that a confidential progress report on the work we were doing in preparation for an official Catholic statement on the Shoah was immediately leaked to the media, in spite of our explicit request to keep it confidential for the time being. This incident was very serious because it not only meant a brutal breach of trust on the part of some of our Jewish dialogue partners (although other Jews who were present were as much disgusted about it as we were), but because it undoubtedly harmed our work and delayed the publication of the document *We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah* considerably. It was precisely those who leaked our report prematurely who, after the document came out in 1998, labeled it as "too little too late."

10. *Common Statement on Violence* of the ILG: In today's world, violence is an all-pervasive phenomenon. There is violence in the heart of persons. There is violence in families and communities. There is violence within and between nations and states. There is violence in fanaticism and especially in a religious fanaticism which distorts and destroys the message of peace inherent to religious belief.

We remember the violence and death that sought to annihilate not only individuals but entire peoples, including our own, our brothers and sisters. We stand here on the eve of *Yom Hashoah*, having this afternoon visited the site of the tragic attack on the Jewish Community Centre in this city. We cannot forget these horrors, also because we see today other peoples being systematically destroyed. We want, therefore, to stand together in strongly condemning such acts that are still occurring today, never forgetting those of the past. We want to stand together in preventing such atrocious evil from happening in the future.

We join our voices to those of many of our leaders, to the voices of all men and women of goodwill and reason, to the voices of millions of innocent victims of violence, past and present, and we proclaim together with all the conviction of our faith in God and in the equal dignity of all human persons, whatever their race or color, religion or culture, that violence is evil, that violence is totally unacceptable as a solution to problems, that violence is utterly unworthy of the human person.

Violence is a lie, because it goes against the truth that our religions profess, the truth of our humanity. Violence destroys what it claims to defend: the dignity of life, the freedom and the rights of human beings. Violence breaks down persons and relationships.

Today, we turn to one another in order to help one another to overcome violence wherever it may occur. We cannot do it alone; we do not want to do it

alone, for we firmly believe and proclaim that peace must be built on justice and trust and that this will happen only when we act together.

We, therefore, proclaim that we must stand together in choosing life, not death. We take this commitment together.

11. Eugene J. Fisher, "Judaism and Christianity: Their Respective Roles in the Strategy of Redemption," in *Visions of the Other: Jewish and Christian Theologians Assess the Dialogue*, ed. Eugene J. Fisher with Frank DeSiano, Studies in Judaism and Christianity (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994), 27.

12. C. C. Aronsfeld, author of the book *The Text of the Holocaust: A Study of the Nazi's Extermination Propaganda 1919-1945* (Marblehead, MA: Micah Publications, 1985), wrote in an article ("Jews and Christians in England," *Midstream* 39, no. 8 [November 1993]: 17):

I sometimes have the feeling that the Council of Christians and Jews [in Great Britain] tends to regard itself as a Society for the Enlightenment of Christians about Jews. This of course is legitimate and necessary, but it seems to me no less legitimate and necessary to enlighten Jews about Christians.... The fact is that any suggestion that for example Jews get to know the contents of the New Testament is resented by them.... If Jews may legitimately refuse to read the New Testament and be enlightened about it, I cannot help wondering what the future of Jewish-Christian relations will be.

13. J. Bemporad and M. Shevack, *Our Age: The Historic New Era of Christian-Jewish Understanding* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1996), 9.

14. See *Catholics Remember the Holocaust*, published by the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, DC, 1998.

15. *Information Service* 98 (1998).

16. David Novak, "Jews and Catholics: Beyond Apologies," *First Things* 89 (January 1999): 20-25.

17. Peter Feuerherd, *National Catholic Register*, December 17, 1995, p. 10.

18. On January 13, 1997.

19. In Marcus Braybrooke, *Time to Meet: Towards a Deeper Relationship between Jews and Christians* (London/Philadelphia, PA: SCM Press, 1990), 152.

20. Novak, "Jews and Catholics," *First Things* 89 (January 1999): 20-25.

21. The text of his address is published in *From the Martin Buber House* 25 (Heppenheim, Germany: ICCJ, 1998), 31-41.

22. Braybrooke, *Time to Meet*, 50.

23. Quotations from *Nostra Aetate* taken from W. M. Abbott, SJ, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II, with Notes and Comments by Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Authorities* (New York: America Press, 1966).

24. In the foreword to his study of the relationship of Judaism and Christianity, *Two Types of Faith* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1951), 12. See also Byron L. Sherwin, "'Who Do You Say That I Am?'" (Mark 8:29): A New Jewish View of Jesus," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 31, nos. 3-4 (summer-fall 1994): 255. In this essay Sherwin proposes a radical reassessment of the place of Jesus in Jewish theology. He describes this place in traditional Jewish theology as follows:

Though the twentieth-century philosopher Martin Buber called Jesus his "brother," much of classical Jewish theological teaching considered Jesus an "other" (*otoh ha-ish*; literally, a derogatory term for "that man")—an apostate who subverted the teachings of Judaism, a Jew whose teachings were utilized by his followers as a justification for the persecution of the Jewish people in many lands over many centuries, and the paradigmatic false messiah. Jews, in effect, excommunicated Jesus from the Jewish faith and from the Jewish people.

25. Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith*, 13, as quoted by G. Vermes in *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (London: Collins, 1973), 223. See also Jack Bemporad, "Jesus for Jews," *Church* (spring 1997): 11.

26. Jack Bemporad, "Jesus for Jews," 11-12. See also Michael Hilton, *The Christian Effect on Jewish Life* (London: SCM Press, 1994).

27. *New York Times*, January 23, 1985.

28. In his address "Jews and Christians: Facing the Modern World," given in Jerusalem on February 2, 1994, at the International Jewish-Christian Conference on Religious Leadership in Secular Society.

29. See Rabbi Albert Friedlander in E. Wiesel and A. H. Friedlander, eds., *The Six Days of Destruction* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 61, cited by Marcus Braybrooke, *Time to Meet*, 158.

30. E. Rivkin, *What Crucified Jesus? Messianism, Pharisaism, and the Development of Christianity* (New York: UAHC Press, 1997), 3-6 (originally published, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984). With regard to the need for Jews and Christians to reflect together on history and on the meaning of history, the Jewish authors Harold Troper and Morton Weinfeld, in the introduction to their book *Old Wounds* (London: Penguin Books, 1989), justly state that Christians and Jews "do not share a common historical memory. Both groups have confronted the same forces of history. But in the process whereby experience becomes memory and the memories of many converge to become communal

historical understanding, both....have inherited very different and distinct understandings of the past and the role played by the other in that past."

31. "Christian-Jewish Bonding and the Liturgy of Holy Week," *New Theological Review* (February 1997): 104.

32. *Ibid.*

7

Institutional Relations in Jewish-Christian Relations

Friedhelm Pieper

1. INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS — AN ISSUE FOR INTERFAITH RELATIONS?

Rabbi Leon Klenicki, director of the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) Department of Interfaith Affairs in New York, once stated in a dialogue with Jay T. Rock, director of Interfaith Relations and Christian-Jewish Concerns for the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States: "Inter-religious dialogue often starts with personal friendships among lay people, clergy or professionals in the field of interfaith relations. This is the very heart of the dialogue relationship. Interfaith dialogue is essentially an encounter." Against the background of the experience described in this quotation, one can question whether within the framework of Jewish-Christian dialogue it makes sense to deal with institutional relations.

My perspective on the topic is formed on the basis of my work in the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCI)—the oldest of today's international organizations in Christian-Jewish dialogue—where I am privileged to serve as general secretary. Reviewing the more than fifty years of work of the International Council of Christians and Jews I can only agree with Rabbi Klenicki: Jewish-Christian dialogue started as personal encounters. And in thinking about persons, I would like to recall the remarkable pioneering work in England of James W. Parkes, William W. Simpson, and, a little later, Rabbi Hugo Gryn.