PART III

What Do We Want the Other to Teach About Our Historical Traditions?
David L. Coppola

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Although this volume began by presenting ideas to foster interreligious dialogue and cultivate theological exploration and collaboration, perhaps the most important first task at hand is for Jews, Christians, and Muslims to confront together their heartbreaking histories. To remember accurately is necessary in order to deal with the past and hope for the future. Unless people are willing to remember and understand the other's pain and seek to repair the world, there can be no dialogue for reconciliation or peace. In this sense, the 1998 Vatican document, We Remember, is accurate in saying, "there is no future without memory" (p. 6). However, remembrance is never neutral and recalls the choices, actions, and events from the past that are meaningful and essential for a community's present identity and intended future destiny.

There is an astonishing amnesia on the part of some historians about the collective crimes of the last century, as if these crimes were normal and to be expected in the ordinary course of wars. Such unprecedented violence and cruelty leaves humanity with choices for peace or war, hope or despair, forgiveness or revenge, faith or doubt, and love or hate. A religious and moral memory is essential if Jews, Christians, and Muslims are to realistically shape a safe future. The human community cannot forget the mistakes of religions, nor can such historical memory be removed by improved political governments or rational arguments alone. Rather, intelligent, ethical, honest, and respectful efforts on the part of religious people will help to ensure that peace happens in the future through a
gradual building of trust and understanding through friendships and relationships that will allow healing and a new history to be established.

For these and other reasons, two conferences were sponsored on the topic, "What Do We Want the Other to Teach About Our Historical Traditions?" one in Edmonton, Canada, and the other in Bamberg, Germany. Selected papers from both of these conferences are included in this volume.

The Conferences in Edmonton, Canada and Bamberg, Germany

On March 19–21, 2000, the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding (CCJU) of Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut, in cooperation with the Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action, (EICEA) Alberta, Canada, sponsored a conference where Jews, Christians, and Muslims participated in a dialogue at Beth Shalom Synagogue. Over 20 scholars from Canada and the United States attended the proceedings with the additional attendance of graduate students from Alberta University and several hundred observers who joined each of the sessions spread over the three days. The conference included presentations by noted scholars with prepared responses, followed by discussion, critiques, and suggestions by all of the participants. Presentation included an examination of the place and tradition of history from the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim faith traditions on "What Do We Want the Other to Teach About Our Historical Traditions?"

Before the conference formally began, a Harmony Brunch was held to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which the United Nations had designated for March 21, the day in 1966 when South Africa's Sharpeville Massacre occurred. Canadian Senator Douglas Roche, OC, and the president of the Canadian Multicultural Educational Foundation, Robinson Koilpillai, CM, were the guest speakers. They both challenged the audience to rise above prejudice and indifference and work to overcome systemic inequality in the world by seeking justice and working for peace, especially through local synagogues, churches and mosques. Later that evening, over 500 people gathered at Edmonton City Hall to participate at an interfaith prayer service to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial
Discrimination. Representatives from 15 religious traditions offered prayers in the forms of readings, song, dance, ringing of bells, lighting candles, and chants. At the conclusion of each prayer, the congregation said together, “We affirm this prayer, celebrate our diversity and may peace prevail on earth.” The mayor of Edmonton, William Smith, praised the citizens for working together for social justice and being a model for celebrating religious diversity. He said, “The walls that divide us must come down. The understanding you are building through the arts, religion, culture, knowledge, and commerce will have a global impact.”
LIST OF PRESENTERS, EDMONTON, CANADA

Rabbi Lindsey Bat Joseph, Temple Beth Ora, Edmonton
Dr. Jamal Badawi, Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Dr. David Coppola, Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding of Sacred Heart University, Connecticut
Rabbi Joseph H. Ehrenkranz, Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding of Sacred Heart University
Dr. Andrew Gos, University of Alberta, Edmonton
Dr. Adrian Leske, Concordia University College, Edmonton
Neil Loomer, Ritual Director, Beth Shalom Synagogue, Edmonton
Right Reverend Victoria Matthews, Anglican Bishop of Edmonton
Rev. Clint Mooney, St. Matthew's United Church, Calgary, Alberta
Mr. Hasan Nazarali, Al-Waez, Ismaili Muslim Community, Edmonton
Dr. Derek J. Penslar, Samuel Zacks Chair in Jewish History, University of Toronto
Dr. Saleem Qureshi, University of Alberta, Edmonton
Mr. Larry Shaben, president, Muslim Research Foundation, Edmonton
Dr. Leonard Swidler, Temple University, Philadelphia
The Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding also sponsored a second conference in cooperation with the University of Bamberg, Germany, on March 18–20, 2002, where Jews, Catholics and Lutherans participated in a dialogue at the University of Bamberg on the same topic. More than 30 scholars from Austria, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States attended the proceedings with the additional attendance of students from Bamberg University and dozens of observers who joined two of the sessions spread over the three days. The conference included presentations by distinguished scholars with prepared responses, followed by discussion, critiques and suggestions by all of the participants. Presentations included an examination of the place and tradition of history from the Jewish, Catholic, and Lutheran faith traditions on “What Do We Want the Other to Teach About Us?”

Bamberg, Germany, was chosen as the site of this conference because of the warmth and hospitality offered to the CCJU by the University of Bamberg community as well as Bamberg’s varied and rich history. The city was founded in the Second Century CE, and in 1007, Bamberg became a bishopric, when the Emperor Heinrich II (973–1024) created an imperial residence. Of special interest to the organizers of the conference was the fact that many crusaders left from Bamberg to fight against Muslims in lands to the south and east, including Hungary and Austria, as well as the more infamous crusades to the Holy Land. Also, on the highest hill of the city is a large cathedral (built 1215–37) called the Dom. It contains both Romanesque and Gothic elements and is rich in sculptures and history. In particular, near the southeast end of the nave of the cathedral is a statue of two women depicting the “Church Triumphant” and the “Synagogue Defeated.” A young, richly clad and beautiful woman represents the Christian Church, while a blindfolded, poorly dressed woman holding a broken rod symbolizes Judaism. Also, directly opposite is a statue of a beautiful young woman representing Mary, the mother of Jesus, and her cousin Elizabeth, the latter who is portrayed as a tired old woman. For medieval Christians, these two pair of women symbolized the triumph of the New Testament and Christianity over Judaism and the Old Testament and contributed to the notion that Christianity had superceded Judaism. Additionally, outside the Dom on
its north portal, near the majestic sculpture of the 12 Apostles, who are standing on the shoulders of the 12 Prophets, is a figure in a pointed cap (which in medieval art signified a Jew), with a devil pulling his ears. This derogatory depiction of what was then a contemporary Jew vividly illustrates the contradictory attitude of many Christians toward Judaism. On the one hand, Jews were seen as a devilish people who rejected the Church. On the other hand, Christians realized that the Church was founded on the Jewish religion, without which Christianity would be meaningless.

Until the Second World War, when practically every Jew was imprisoned or killed, the Jewish community in Bamberg had been one of the most flourishing and influential centers in Europe. Recently, a small and slowly growing Jewish community has begun to be formed as Jewish immigrants from Russia settle in the area. After learning of this city's mixed history and observing the concrete reminders of supercessionism, the conference topic; as well as the conference site was judged to be a significant sign of hope for the future of interreligious dialogue.

On one evening of the conference, an interfaith concert by the "Inspiration Chöir" was performed for the conference participants and interested members of the town at the 13th century building, Renaissance Hall, which had been newly restored. The concert theme was "Meeting Jewish Music." Nearly all of the members of the group were Christián and had committed themselves to understanding Judaism better by learning and performing Jewish music. The group was chosen by the CCJU as an excellent match for the conference theme because it had dedicated itself to "teaching" about the other by learning and performing the other's music. The evening was filled with warmth and celebration and some of the conference participants also contributed their musical talents by singing and dancing.
LIST OF INVITED PARTICIPANTS, BAMBERG, GERMANY

Dr. Ulrich Bauer, University of Bamberg
Rabbi Gilles Bernheim, Chief Rabbi of Paris, France
Professor Dr. Klaus Bieberstein, University of Bamberg
Dr. David Coppola, Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding of Sacred Heart University, Connecticut
Dr. Jon Gower Davies, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Great Britain
Rabbi Michael Dushinsky, Ostrava, Czech Republic
Rabbi Joseph H. Ehrenkranz, Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding, Connecticut
Mrs. Chriss Fiebig, Bamberg
Dr. Christoph Heil, University of Bamberg
Professor Dr. Alfred E. Hierold, Dean, School of Theology, University of Bamberg
Professor Dr. Paul Hoffmann, University of Bamberg
Professor Dr. Wolfgang Klausnitzer, University of Bamberg
Professor Dr. Wolfgang Kraus, University of Koblenz-Landau, Germany
Ludwig Krempfl, Focolare Movement, Nürnberg, Germany
Professor Dr. Verena Lenzen, University of Luzern, Switzerland
Dr. Herbert Loebl, University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Great Britain
Reverend Dr. Friedhelm Pieper, Martin Buber House; Heppenheim, Germany
Professor Dr. Martin Rothgangel, University of Weingarten, Germany
Professor Dr. Dr. Godehard Ruppert, President, University of Bamberg
Professor Dr. Hans-Joachim Sander, University of Salzburg, Austria
Invited Participants

Rabbi David Sandmel, Beth Tfiloh Community High School, Baltimore, Maryland

Mrs. Barbara Schmitz, University of Bamberg

Professor Dr. Walter Sparn, University of Erlangen, Germany

Rabbi Bonita Nathan Sussman, Staten Island Rabbinical Association, New York

Rabbi Gerald Sussman, New York Theological Seminary, New York

Professor Dr. Lothar Wehr, University of Bamberg

Professor Dr. Erich Zenger, University of Münster, Germany
For centuries, Jews, Christians and Muslims have mostly disputed. It is no small matter that they can even use the term conversation. They have a history, and it is God’s presence that challenges them to show profound respect to one another. Jews, Christians, and Muslims all believe in a God who acts in history and communicates in history through events and people. The story of God’s love gives breath, voice, and flesh to the bones of historical events and data. Similarly, God calls believers to discern the present signs of divine providence at work, as well as the ways in which the image of the Creator in humanity has been attacked and disfigured. By sharing what we want the other to teach about our history, we are making a covenant to trust and dialogue with each other.

As was discussed at the CCJU conference sponsored in Jerusalem on the topic of theology, the assumptions of modernity and postmodernity as well as the realities of diversity, pluralism, and relativism are important to understanding an accurate interpretation of history from the contexts of an insider’s religious identity, theology, spirituality, aesthetics, and liturgy. The language of history describes important relationships and values for the community in a particular context and representation. The acceptance of many of the views of modernity and its growth in democratic societies has opened the doors for interreligious dialogue that can be based on human rights and mutual respect. Jews, Christians, and Muslims are uniquely positioned for dialogue because of recent reexaminations of each religion’s identity in history, such as the Crusades, Inquisition, teachings
of contempt toward the other, and the Shoah. On the other hand, by employing a historical critical method in interpreting faith and religion, one could run the risk of reducing memory and the important ethical insights and wisdom essential to a religious identity to mere historical coincidences.

It is difficult to know whether teachers of the other should emphasize more the teaching of the history of each religion or the history of particular Jews, Christians, or Muslims. Perhaps for children, religious history is best understood through the lives of holy people and how those people added to the presence and understanding of that community's identity and faith. For adults, historians and teachers of the other can act as witnesses to the truth of life as well as for those who have lived a good life following God. Time and space are the paths where God walks and is revealed to all. It is essential for the health and integrity of a faith community to remember and teach about the past in an adequate and respectful way. To remember the past means that adults challenge young people to recognize their part in history, especially their participation in prejudice or discrimination against others. It is also the time to recognize the tendency to fear and mistrust that which they do not understand. Racism, sexism, ageism are still present because of what people say and do, and because of what they do not say and do. An honest examination of conscience is appropriate because the God of History is involved in the events of every human life. This connection of all life to God in history reminds humanity to "resee," that is, respect, that all peoples are related and have dignity. Remembrance is never neutral and recalls the choices, actions and events from the past that are meaningful and essential for one's present identity and future destiny.

An important aspect to remember when teaching about the other's history is that religious history has not always been historical, at least from a scientific definition based on verifiable evidence and facts. It seems true that one's relationship with a particular religious history is just as important as the history itself since religious history has to do more with the ethical interaction of people and how they respond in justice and compassion to God's call. Thomas Cahill in the 1998 book, The Gifts of the Jews, has wrestled with the idea of expanding the notion of history beyond the simple repeating of facts. Cahill writes, "We normally think of history as one catastrophe after another, war followed by war, outrage
by outrage—almost as if history were nothing more than all the narratives of human pain, assembled in sequences. And surely this is, often enough, an adequate description. But history is also the narratives of grace, the recounting of those blessed and inexplicable moments when someone did something for someone else, "saved a life, bestowed a gift, gave something beyond what was required by circumstance" (p. iii).

Religious history of the other is best taught by a model where the other is present and one that is grounded on its own internal affirmations and memory of experiences with God, others, and the world. Such assertions and the contexts and interpretations related to them need to be explained by an insider and compared to interpretations of those from outside the community. In such a process, the histories of all three religions will be broadened and understood through the eyes of the other and will take on deeper significance in the task of repairing the world for each. By honestly teaching about one's own history and the history of the other, it is clear that that religion can be a positive force that can foster unity, a reality that has been achieved too infrequently. Nonetheless, the past can be overcome by the good deeds of the present.
Berlin
5 February 2002
The Federal President
Johannes Rau

Message of Greeting to the International Symposium
"What Do We Want the Other to Teach About Our Historical Traditions?"
of the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding of Sacred Heart University
and the University of Bamberg
Bamberg, 18–20 March 2002

What do we want others to teach about our historical traditions? That is a
difficult but also an extremely important question. We can only find the right
answers if we ourselves have a clear image of our history and an idea of how
others see us and how we see others.

In history few things have a greater influence than traditions which have
grown over centuries. However, it is also true that in history there are aber-
rations and betrayals which cannot be predicted and which are very difficult
to understand in retrospect, if they can be understood at all.

One can, indeed must, say here in Germany that the Holocaust was such
a brutal betrayal. It was a complete breakdown in civilization. We must keep
the memory of the Shoah alive. But it would be a mistake to regard the
Holocaust as the sum total of German-Jewish history or the sum total of
Jewish-Christian relations. We also want others to pass on the Holocaust as
part of our history. However, we would also like our history before the
Holocaust to be told. Only if Christians and Jews discuss their history in its
entirety and not just parts of it will they have a common future. For this rea-
son, too, meetings such as yours in which we examine our own Jewish and our
own Lutheran and Catholic traditions are so important.

I wish you fruitful talks and encounters in Bamberg which will cause you
to look back with gratitude and to look forward with hope.
Professor Dr. Dr. Godehard Ruppert
President, University of Bamberg

I would like to extend a warm welcome to you, both personally and on behalf of the Otto-Friedrich University of Bamberg. We are very pleased that the invitation to this international conference has met with such a good response and that it has brought such illustrious guests to our alma mater; such a fact alone gives rise to encouragement.

After the events of September 11, 2001, little in the realm of international and interreligious relationships is simply the way it was. As representatives of the German universities, we can only react with horror that some of perpetrators involved in this terrible act were graduates from German universities. On the other hand, we must make clear that the university needs to maintain an international character. Academia is, per se, international, and wherever it confines itself to national borders it endangers its ability to produce authentic scholarship. In my opinion, universities have to act as role models for society in the coexistence of people of different origins and different faiths. We have to demonstrate in our daily contact and in our working together with others that this coexistence actually works. In these times, it is more important than ever that German and foreign members of our university should not allow themselves to be divided. I must admit that I am proud of our record in maintaining this international character. The University of Bamberg ranks at the top of the German universities in terms of the percentage of its students who complete part of their studies abroad—a third of our students do so at present.

It also is part of my duty here today to impart some information about Bamberg and the area of Franconia. This campus and area offers an excellent framework for the topic of this conference due to the fact that numerous examples of coexistence from its history are apparent. For example, this is the town that benefited from the most important Jewish community in the whole of southern Germany. It was also famous in the 17th and 18th centuries for its Hebrew printers and its Talmud school and thus served as an example for the peaceful cohabitation of Catholics, Protestants and Jews. The National Socialist regime forced the closure of the university in 1939. The teaching of theology and philosophy began again in October 1945, but teaching was also carried out in the fields of law, political science and the natural sciences, not least because other university towns and cities in Bavaria had more serious
effects of the war to deal with than Bamberg did. In our present day, the Jewish Museum in Schnaittach, founded in 1990, has the most important collection of artifacts from Jewish culture in the rural areas of southern Germany.

The University and its surroundings offer historical advantages and contemporary opportunities. In this era of globalization, we experience the strengthening of regions as a side effect of the ongoing globalization shaped by the economy and politics. This development points out the necessity of knowing the roots and traditions of the respective other party. Similarly, the Otto-Friedrich University of Bamberg represents both aspects in its present range of courses in teaching and research: research on ethnic and cultural studies of the regions and participation in the intercultural and interreligious dialogue, as well as in the international dialogue in the economic and social sciences.

I have often told students at the start of their studies that I hope they realize that studium in its range of meanings does not only mean “eagerness.” In my opinion, one’s studies should be a dialectical relationship of effort as well as leisure with friends. Bamberg offers the best conditions for both. I hope that you will experience something of this and that and wish you a successful and pleasant conference in Bamberg and at our university.
What do I want others to know and teach about the history of my faith?” The answer is quite simple in principle, though complex in practice. I would like others to know and teach precisely what Jews should understand about their own history and culture. Historical knowledge is not valid unless it is universally accessible and demonstrable. Although a member of a faith-community is bound to bring a different perspective to the history of that entity than an outsider, all students should be able to agree on a fundamental historical narrative and can identify a common matrix of methodological and interpretive questions regarding causation, significance, and outcome of events.

I have spent my teaching career at secular universities (Berkeley, Indiana, and Toronto), teaching classes composed of Jews, Christians, Muslims, and nonbelievers. My students have come from a vast variety of ethnic and social backgrounds, and they have entered my courses with widely varying degrees of prior exposure to Judaism and Jewish history. Each student carries his or her own cultural baggage. Some are Jews from assimilated backgrounds; they see in history a means of strengthening their sense of collective identity. Other Jewish students are from Orthodox backgrounds; for them, university-level history provides an opportunity to move beyond the pietist worldview inculcated by the heder and yeshivah and understand Judaism within a global context. Some are Muslims, drawn to Jewish history by a desire to understand Israel, which
they view with a mix of admiration, anger, and fear. And there are many types of Christian students, including, in addition to those motivated by mere curiosity, evangelical Protestants imbued with messianic messianism, Roman Catholics who feel a certain kinship with Judaism’s attachment to ritual and the Jews’ strong ethnic consciousness, and, finally, and quite frequently, young Christians of all denominations who have fallen in love with a Jewish boy or girl and who want to better understand the culture into which they might be marrying.

The Christian students whom I have taught are overwhelmingly sympathetic to the Jews and Judaism; they might not know very much about the Holocaust, but they are deeply troubled by the relationship between their religious heritage and the greatest act of genocide in history. On rare occasions, a Christian student will parrot anti-Semitic doctrines picked up at home, e.g., the case of the pleasant young Indiana University basketball player who asked me, in all innocence, if his father was right that Jews controlled all the banks in the United States. Similarly, African-American students have asked about the truth of accusations made by the Nation of Islam that Jews dominated the African slave trade. I have answered these students’ queries without recourse to apologetics, romanticization, or distorting self-criticism.

There is, then, one history for all students, Jew and Gentile alike. Moreover, there is only one history for students regardless of age. Obviously, children need to be given simplified views of history, but I believe that simplification should not justify distortion. Children have wide-ranging curiosity and powerful spiritual sensibilities. They ask penetrating questions and deserve thoughtful answers. If, for example, a Christian child asks me who is responsible for the death of Jesus, it serves no one’s interests to repeat the old cliché that it was entirely the Romans’ initiative and responsibility. Rather, the child can be told that although the Romans tried and executed Jesus, Jews and Romans alike feared Jesus because he seemed to challenge their authority. (This is an issue to which older children can easily relate.) If, to provide another example of a controversial issue, a Jewish child asks why there is so much fighting between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East, one can answer the question without denying either the Jewish or Arab claim to the land. That is, one can explain that Arabs lived in Palestine for many hundreds of years, that the city of Jerusalem is holy to them, and
that when Israel was created many of them were forced to leave their homes. "But it says in the Bible that God promised Israel to us!" protested my daughter when I told her this. (My daughter was in third grade at a Jewish day school at the time.) So I explained to her that God has spoken to many people, not just the Jews, and that we have to learn about each other's holy books to find what we have in common, and not just what separates us. She seemed satisfied with that answer—at least for a while.

The same is true for adults, especially seniors, who often have the time and motivation to engage in serious study of the things that matter most to them. I have taught Jewish history in many churches and synagogues and have encountered varying levels of receptivity to the kind of universal approach I am advocating here. Some find it stimulating, others find it troubling, because for them history has been a vehicle for the affirmation of faith or identity, not an open-ended process of constant discovery, whose outcome may overturn as well as confirm long-cherished beliefs. Clearly, it is my obligation as a teacher to display sensitivity to their background and experience; for example, one does not talk about Jewish history to a group of Jewish Holocaust survivors of East European origin in exactly the same language that would be used for an assembly of Methodist retirees from the American Midwest. But although the style may vary, the substance remains the same. In one form or another, Jewish history, I believe, boils down to five essential points, with which all students of the subject, regardless of creed or age, should be acquainted:

1. The history of the Jews is the history of a great civilization. (I define "civilization," following the late scholar of Islam, Marshall Hodgson, as a "grouping of cultures [that] share consciously... literary and philosophical as well as political and legal values carried in lettered tradition.") The centerpiece of the Jews' lettered tradition, their canon of sacred texts, led directly to the establishment of the world's most popular religion, Christianity, and inspired the founding of the world's second largest, Islam. Although Judaism is frequently referred to as the mother religion of Christianity, the two would best be described as siblings, sharing a common ancestor in the spiritual ferment that engulfed Palestine around the beginning of the Common Era. Although the
founders of Christianity were Jewish and imbued with Jewish beliefs, by the late first century, CE, Christianity and Judaism had parted ways. Judaism struck out on its own direction and developed the uniquely dynamic and worldly belief system known as Rabbinic Judaism. It accorded to human beings creative freedom in the interpretation of sacred texts while imposing upon the Jews a matrix of ritual activity that sanctified the everyday world. The centrality of the concept of salvific knowledge—gleaned from texts that were, in principle, obtainable by all—encouraged widespread male literacy, a flourishing of cultural production, and a fluidity of social relationships.

2. The dynamic quality of rabbinic Judaism was enhanced by the Jews' social conditions as a stateless, scattered, and primarily urban people. Deprived in the middle ages of land ownership (because of discriminatory taxation in the realm of Islam and the pervasive Christian ethos of the feudal system in Europe), the Jews lacked a hereditary aristocracy or a caste of serfs. The Jews were a people of burghers, concentrated in trade, and highly mobile, both geographically and socially. The elites of mercantile wealth and rabbinic learning overlapped and reinforced each other. The Jews' economic and intellectual ferment, never limited solely to the confines of Jewish society, came in modern times to embrace the societies in which they lived. The Jews—scarcely one percent of humanity at the beginning of the twentieth century and only one quarter of one percent at its end—have been overwhelmingly overrepresented in fields of creative endeavor, be they entrepreneurial, cultural, or academic.

3. The Jews' cultural and economic creativity is all the more remarkable given the persecution and discrimination that they have long endured. Jewish distinctiveness—at first religious, but over time, also economic and cultural—was a source of irritation among the Jews' host societies even in pagan antiquity. Islam tolerated Jews, as it did Christians, as a "people of the book," recipients of divine revelation, who would be accorded a safe, if inferior, position in Muslim society. Christianity, too, tolerated Jews, not out of a disinterested respect so much as vital, existential, need. Jews were to give testimony to the truth of Christianity by
the humbled circumstances in which they lived and their ongo-
ing allegiance to the ancient Jewish Law, which Christianity
revered while claiming to have superceded it. Moreover, the
eventual conversion of the Jews to Christianity was seen as a ne-
cessary precondition for the Second Coming of Christ. The ten-
sions inherent in depending upon a people scorned for having
killed and rejected the Saviour were ‘exacerbated by the Jews’
economic concentration (caused in part by Christian pressure) in
low-status occupations, the most famous of which was money
lending. The image of the Jew as parasite and pathogen survived
into modern times and, although mutated by the secularization of
European society in the 19th and 20th centuries, provided the
basis for the genocidal anti-Semitism of the Nazi regime and its
acolytes.

4. Powerlessness is not a virtue in and of itself, nor does it bestow
virtue. Ancient Israelite society was exceedingly violent, 
immersed in tribal war and murderous hatreds nursed by religious
zeal. Postbiblical Jewish society was no more pacific or tolerant
than Christendom or dar al-Islam. In the Middle East in the 8th
century CE, rabbinic Jewish authorities clashed with Karaism, an
anti-rabbinic Jewish sect. Medieval and early modern Jewish
communities employed coercive force against backsliders (such as
the philosopher, Baruch Spinoza). Rabbinic culture had strong
misogynistic elements and frequently viewed Islam, and especial-
ly Christianity, with disdain. Modern Jewish society has featured
numerous cases of internecine struggle, such as between the
pietist Hasidim and their opponents in late 18th-century Poland,
or between Orthodox and Reform Jews in 19th-century Germany.
Finally, the Zionist movement and state of Israel have featured
the brutality employed by any successful state-building move-
ment, past or present. These facts are to be neither denied nor
exaggerated, merely acknowledged as an inevitable part of the
human experience.

5. The greatest challenge confronting contemporary Judaism is the
dichotomy between a religious system forged in an atmosphere of
relative powerlessness vis-à-vis Gentiles and the current world
order, in which the state of Israel exerts considerable military and
political power. In this and many other ways, the Zionist project was revolutionary, an overthrow of the ancien régime of Diaspora-Jewish political and religious culture. Yet it is also true that many of the Zionist movement's goals, and the ways in which they have been achieved, reflect deeply preservationist impulses. Much of Israel's political, economic, and social structures, as well as many of its cultural norms, are remarkably consonant with those of the Diaspora communities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indeed, one could argue that Zionism was in many ways a countervoluntary movement, a defensive measure against assimilatory forces that were transforming modern Jewish society beyond recognition. Thus Israel, like all modern nationalist movements, is, like the Roman god Janus, a two-faced creature, with one side pointed toward the unknown future and the other gazing into the immemorial past.

I would like now to develop my arguments by dividing Jewish history into its ancient, medieval, and modern components, identifying in each case one or two particular conceptual problems that I have confronted in the teaching of Jewish history and believe to be central to understanding it properly.

II. Ancient Israel

Whenever I have taught surveys of Jewish history from antiquity to modernity, the first unit of the course—covering the period from the Israelites' origins to the origins of Christianity—has been the most difficult to teach. This is so because of the deep personal meaning of ancient Jewish history for the vast majority of students. The fundamental religious identities of Jews and Christians draw on a particular type of historical understanding drawn from the Hebrew Bible and Christian Scriptures, known to Christians as the Old and New Testaments respectively. This kind of understanding conceives of the scriptural narrative as a sacred history, that is, a demonstration of God's presence in history and a use of history to corroborate deeply cherished religious beliefs. Sacred history employs narrative as allegory; worldly events are shadows or reflections of meta-historical truths.
Sacred history is directly opposed to how I, as a professional historian teaching at a secular university, conceive of my discipline, which I will call critical history. The origins of critical history lie in the comparative and source-based historical methods pioneered in mid 19th-century Germany, and in large measure still employed to this day. Although scientific in its commitment to the systematic gathering and comparison of sources, as well as an ostensible claim to objectivity, critical history is also a deeply humanist discipline, empathetic with its subjects in a way that a chemist or physicist cannot be. Critical history is the collective biography of humanity, a biography nourished by spiritual yearnings but also by countless other factors, material and psychological. Critical history does not deny the presence of the divine in this world but contends that the historical method of modern scholarship cannot detect its presence, any more than chemists dating the production of the Shroud of Turin can determine if the image it depicts was of divine origin.

If sacred history is allegory, then critical history is metonymy. No contemporary historian would be pretentious enough to claim that the events and interrelationships described by the historian are consonant with reality in its entirety. They are fragments of reality, representative of broader, as yet unknown and perhaps unknowable, dimensions of experience, and forged, thanks to the historian's artful sifting of evidence and narrative prose, into a unified, comprehensible form.

Thus, the teaching of ancient Israelite history introduces all students to the clash between sacred and critical history. To be sure, the line between the two is often blurry, for many of the great Christian archaeologists and Orientalists of the twentieth century made an a priori assumption that the biblical narrative was historically valid, and they interpreted their findings within this preexisting paradigm. Similarly, Israeli scholars of antiquity have often read the ancient data in order to conform to the Zionist master narrative about the Jews' ancient claims to the land and the historic necessity to struggle for its possession. In the mid 20th century, for example, both North American and Israeli scholars agreed that evidence of destruction in Canaanite villages (e.g., Jericho) from the turn of the second millennium, BCE, testified to the truth of the narrative in the book of Joshua about the Israelite conquest of Canaan. Moreover, the extent to which the narratives from Genesis appeared to reflect ancient Middle Eastern social and cultural practices
was seen as confirmation of the fundamental truth of the Genesis narrative, even down to the historicity of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Since the late 1800s, scholars have assumed that the text of the Pentateuch consisted of strands, composed over many centuries and cobbled together only in the early Second Temple period. Over the past thirty years, the number and dating of these strands have become a source of constant controversy. Moreover, in recent decades scholars have increasingly questioned the value of the Hebrew Bible as a historical source given the paucity—at times the total lack—of corroborating documentation save for ambiguous archaeological remains. If there is no evidence to confirm any part of the Pentateuchal narrative, some scholars claim, that narrative must be seen as a purely literary source, a series of myths and tales crafted by a people to account for its origins and to justify its place in the world. When taken to its extremes, this approach takes on the name “Biblical Minimalism” and denies the historicity of not only the Pentateuchal narrative but even of the historical and prophetic biblical books as well. This new stream of biblical criticism, however, is not necessarily any less free of bias than its predecessor. Claims that the ancient Israelites emerged from within the indigenous Canaanite population, or that the United Kingdom of Saul, David, and Solomon never existed, can be motivated by an anti-Israeli animus that seeks to deny the Jews their historic and cultural claims to the land of Israel.

The claims of Biblical minimalists have been justly attacked. There is ample extra-Biblical evidence of the existence of the dual kingdoms of Judah and Israel after the breakup of the United Monarchy. The 1993 archaeological finding at Tel Dan of an inscription that may be read as “Beit David” might confirm the existence of the Davidic monarchy, although this piece of evidence seems to convince only those who are predisposed to believing in a real King David. Although the Bible must be read largely as a literary source, as a national epic, it has, like all national epics, undeniable historical value.

The difference between sacred and critical history of ancient Israel is not that the former is inaccurate and the latter presents objective truth. Scholars can be and often are believers of one kind or another, and their beliefs affect how they interpret the world. And even the most cool-headed scholar can make mistakes. The fundamental contrast between the
sacred and critical historical paradigms, however, is that the latter is by
definition open to self-correction, whereas the former is closed to it. Ancient Israel remains, if not a *tabula rasa*, then a *tabula obscura*. Every
generation of scholars approaches it in a new way, and the findings of
each generation are challenged by its successors. A responsible scholar of
ancient Israel must admit that we simply do not know how much of the
biblical narrative is historically valid. What is undeniable is the central-
ity of the Hebrew Bible as the underpinning of Jewish civilization. The
historicity of Jacob, Moses, or David is less important than the religious
system constructed in their name.

The clash between sacred and critical history is not limited, however,
to the obscure, anterior regions of antiquity. The conflict continues to the
end of the Second Temple period, an age well documented by late Biblical
and extra-Biblical sources. I will illustrate his point through a discussion of
the war of the 160s BCE between the Seleucid Greeks and the Jews of
Palestine, led by the Hasmonean family, better known as the Maccabees.

When Jews celebrate the Hanukkah festival, they sing folk songs and
tell stories to invoke the heroism and piety of the Hasmoneans, who in
167 BCE led a revolt against the Seleucid Greeks, whose emperor had
desecrated the Jerusalem Temple and outlawed the practice of Judaism.
But what do we make of the fact that after the conquest and rededication
of the Temple three years later, and the defeat of the Seleucid army in
Jerusalem in 162, the Maccabees continued to fight? Apparently they
fought for total independence from their rulers in Damascus, although
centuries of Jewish religious thought had legitimized Gentile domination
over the Jews. They proclaimed a Hasmonean kingdom, although they
were not descended from David, whose "branch," according to the bibli-
cal book of Zechariah, was divinely destined to provide the future messi-
ah. They installed members of their family as high priest, although they
were not descended from the line of Tsadok, the traditional source of the
high priesthood. Thus although the Maccabees certainly fought for the
Torah, they also fought for power.

These facts, known to the critical historian, have been extruded from
Jewish sacred history. The biblical books of 1st and 2nd Maccabees, which
tell the complete story, were excluded from the Jewish biblical canon,
although they were preserved in the Catholic, and later Protestant, Bibles.
But most Christians today know little about the Maccabees. I believe it is
important for anyone learning about ancient Jewish history to know about the fate of the Maccabees after their great victory: the court intrigues, the civil wars, their adoption of the Greek language and many Hellenistic customs. And perhaps most important, we all need to acknowledge that the Maccabean revolt was as much an internal struggle between traditional and Hellenizing Jews, who favored a radical assimilation of Greek culture, as it was between Jews and persecuting Gentiles.

Understanding the truth behind the Hanukkah story demystifies Jewish history. We learn that in many historical situations, Jews have been dynamic actors as well as passive victims. We appreciate that power politics and court intrigue could characterize the Jews as they did the Jews' Gentile neighbors. While celebrating the strength of the Jewish spirit, we can recognize the Jews' ever-present potential for civil strife. Dissecting the many layers of the Hanukkah story also helps us appreciate the essence of the Rabbinic Judaism that was formed in the centuries immediately following the Hasmonean kingdom.

Between the first and seventh centuries CE, Jewish jurists in Palestine and Babylon formulated a vast body of ritual and jurisprudence known as the Oral Law. These jurists, known as rabbis ("masters" of Judaic knowledge), believed that the Oral Law had been transmitted to Moses on Mount Sinai but that they, and they alone, were authorized to authenticate and interpret it. One reason why the rabbis were reluctant to accord to the Maccabees a central role in historical memory was because the Maccabees had assumed the authority to make changes in Jewish Law, e.g., they authorized fighting on the Sabbath and proclaimed the festival of Hanukkah.

Another central aspect of Rabbinic Judaism, messianism, also plays into the Hanukkah story. The rabbis' vision of the future was of a Davidic dynasty ruling over an independent, harmonious Hebraic kingdom, itself a part of a world at peace and in recognition of the one true God. This vision of the end of days was utopian, unrealizable by human action alone, thus rendering it impossible for any mere approximation, or, in fact, for any worldly, historical phenomenon such as the Maccabean kingdom, to be given a place in Jewish collective consciousness. Thus for the rabbis, commemoration of Hanukkah needed to be restricted to the Maccabees' one undisputedly meritorious act: the restoration of the Temple, the cynosure of Jewish life, whose joyous rededication appeared
all the more poignant to rabbis writing in the aftermath of its destruction by the Romans. But it was essential for the greatest victory of all to be the work of divine, not human power. Thus the miracle of the cruse of oil that lasted for eight days—a miracle related in rabbinic literature but not in the Books of the Maccabees.

Critical history should be respectful of its sacred counterpart even while rejecting its method and conclusions. The clash between critical and scientific history has continued throughout the ages because of the innate human need to find moral meaning and purpose in historical events. As the great Jewish historian Yosef Haim Yerushalmi has written, “There are myths that are life-sustaining and deserve to be reinterpreted for our age. There are some that lead astray and must be redefined. Others are dangerous and must be exposed.” The biblical narratives are, by and large, of the first sort: a mighty source of inspiration, comfort, and courage. But the Jewish historian must constantly be on the lookout for other, more baleful, types of myth. This brings us to a discussion of the Middle Ages, when Jews in Europe became the objects of demonic mythologization.

III. The Middle Ages

Historians of the Jews, and all the more so Islam and the Eastern religions, often feel uncomfortable applying to their own faiths forms of historical periodization originally developed by and for the Christian world. The very concept of a “Middle Age” is a Christian one, for it connoted a period between the first and second comings of Christ, that is, between ancient history, on the one hand, and the end of history, on the other. During the Renaissance, the tripartate division of time was altered to reflect the belief that Christendom had passed from an unenlightened Middle Age into a resplendent modern one, which embodied the humanist ethos of Greco-Roman antiquity. How, then, do the terms “ancient,” “medieval,” and “modern” apply to Jewish civilization?

If we associate ancient Judaism with the Israelite temple cult and medieval Judaism with the faith-system of the rabbis, then ancient Jewish history ended and medieval times began in the first century CE. Perhaps, instead, we should date the onset of medieval Jewish history to the
decline of pagan antiquity and the triumph of Judaism's sibling religions, Christianity and Islam, for Jewish culture was indelibly stamped by its encounter with these two dominant faiths. If so, then medieval Jewish history began in the 4th century CE in the West and the 7th century CE in the East. This is not a mere chronological quibble, for taxonomy constructs the conceptual paradigms within which historical thinking operates. If medieval Jewish history is defined in terms of the development of rabbinic Judaism, then its motive forces are primarily internal. (After all, although the destruction of the Temple by the Romans hastened the growth of rabbinic Judaism, its roots lie deep within the Second Temple period itself.) If, on the other hand, we look to Christianity and Islam to define the onset of Jewish medieval times, Jewish history becomes a contingent phenomenon, dependent upon external forces.

Does Jewish history develop primarily according to its own inner drives or its encounter with the other? There is no easy answer to this question. It points to a clash between two different views of Jewish history, views that I can call "essentialist" and "contextualist" respectively. Students of Jewish history must understand both perspectives. On the one hand, they must reject Christian and Islamic supersessionism in any form and perceive medieval Jewish life as an indigenous cultural force. Moreover, if the patterns of medieval Jewish life frequently resembled those of their Gentile counterparts, the reason is not that the former were mimicking the latter, but rather that the two confronted similar situations and shared a common pool of intellectual resources. Moreover, although the issues facing Jews and Gentiles in medieval times often overlapped, at times they diverged as well. Thus the approach to medieval Jewish history that I advocate is best described as comparative rather than merely contextual.

A second fundamental issue in the teaching of medieval Jewish history has to do with assessing the nature of Jewish-Gentile relations. For the Jews, the Middle Ages were both fraught with danger and replete with opportunity. We must appreciate both of these aspects equally.

All too often, the history of medieval Jewry is understood according to what the great Jewish historian Salo Baron critically described as the "lachrymose view" of Jewish history. According to the lachrymose view, Jewish history prior to the modern age was one of unending misery. This view has been propagated by not only Jewish scholars but also
well-meaning Christians, who look with justified horror upon the Church's anti-Jewish teachings, the burning of sacred Jewish books, forced conversions, libelous accusations of ritual murder and host desecration, expulsions and even massacres of Jewish communities. Violence was, unfortunately, endemic in medieval Christendom; acts of brutality against Jews must be placed against a background of what R. I. Moore has called a "persecuting society," obsessed, at least from the 13th century onwards, by fears of impurity and deviance, fears that led to systematic persecution of heretics, women, homosexuals, and lepers as well as Jews. Let us not forget that Muslims as well as Jews were expelled from Spain after the triumphant conquest of Grenada in 1492. And although Jewish converts to Christianity were specifically targeted for the cruelest of tortures by the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, the so-called "new Christians" were never expelled, unlike the moriscos, Muslim converts to the faith of Rome.

I try to avoid the oft-repeated phrase that Jews were "second-class citizens" in medieval Europe. How can one say this of a time when the concept of citizenship—of membership in a political entity that conferred inalienable rights—barely existed? If the position of the Jews was inferior to that of the nobility or urban bourgeoisie, it was far superior to that of the peasantry, the vast bulk of the population. True, Jews lived in towns according to privileges granted by a ruling authority, but such was the legal basis of feudal society as a whole—conditional privileges as opposed to fundamental rights.

Furthermore, the legal, social, and economic privileges of the Jews in medieval Christendom varied considerably across time. In the early Middle Ages, the reigning Catholic doctrine was that Jews must of necessity live among Christians, albeit in a humbled state. In the 13th and 14th centuries, however, the Church changed its tune, arguing that Jews lived among Christians by sufferance (the official language was "Christian love") alone. When a renegade Crusader army massacred Rhineland Jews in 1096, the local authorities tried to protect them. Three centuries later, the patricians of Germany's cities joined the chorus of voices accusing Jews of poisoning wells and murdering Christian children for their blood. In Charlemagne's empire, Jews played major roles as international merchants, and in 12th-century England, Jewish bankers held mortgages on the estates of some of the
realm's most powerful barons. By the 14th centuries, however, Jews had been reduced to petty money-lending, the more profitable banking positions long taken by Christians.

It is unfortunate that the history of Christian-Jewish relations in the Middle Ages is usually taught from the perspective of western Europe. The fact is that by the later Middle Ages, most of Christendom's Jews lived in the Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth, a multiethnic entity that offered Jews a relatively hospitable living environment. Although Jewish merchants faced considerable hostility from the burghers in western Poland's cities, Polish magnates encouraged Jews to colonize their vast estates in eastern Lithuania and Ukraine, thus creating the basis for a dense network of small towns (known in Yiddish as shtetlakh, sing. shtetl) with substantial Jewish populations. This became the core of Ashkenazic Jewish culture, expressed through the Yiddish vernacular and Hebrew sacred tongue, and which flourished for some three centuries before its obliteration by the Nazis.

Although the medieval Polish Church made some efforts to introduce the discriminatory legislation promulgated against Jews by the 13th-century popes, in practice Jews were rarely forced to wear the Jewish badge, nor were they economically marginalized as was the case in the West. Indeed, Jews were the pillar of the Polish manorial economy, buying and selling produce, managing noblemen's estates, and operating mills and taverns. During the 15th century, Jews expelled from the German lands were welcomed into Poland. During the Counter-Reformation, there was no parallel in Poland to the Jewish ghettos that were constructed in Germany and Italy. To be sure, Jewish life was never secure, even in the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom. In 1648, thousands of Jews in Ukraine were killed by supporters of Bogdan Chmielnitski, who saw in the Jews both the enemies of Christendom and the stooges of the hated Polish overlords.

Thus, the lachrymose view cannot be completely swept aside. It needs instead to be placed in an appropriate comparative framework. A similar, though in some ways opposite, observation must be made regarding Jewish life in the lands of Islam. In general, the legal status and personal security of Jews in the medieval Islamic world were higher than in Christendom. The most stunning example of Jewish success in dar al-Islam was 11th-century Grenada, where the Jew Shmuel ha-Nagid served as Vizier and commanded the kingdom's armies. But at times there has been a tendency to
over-romanticize the “Golden Age” of Middle Eastern Jewry during the period of the Abbasid caliphate (8th–13th centuries), its Egyptian and Spanish counterparts, and the Ottoman Empire of the 15th through early 20th centuries. To be sure, Jews were vital to the economic life of the medieval Middle East, and, during the 1500s the Ottoman Empire welcomed tens of thousands of Jews expelled from the Iberian Peninsula. The Ottoman Empire became home to a flourishing Jewish cultural centre, speaking Ladino, the Judeo-Spanish dialect taken from the Iberian peninsula, just as the Jews of Poland spoke the Yiddish that had originated in high medieval Germany. At the same time, the Islamic world had its share of forced conversions (in North Africa, Yemen, and Iran). The Islamic tradition contained a good deal of anti-Jewish animus, some of it rooted in the Koran’s depiction of Jews as a people of traitors and “slayers of prophets.”

Medieval Christendom and dar al-Islam were ethnically and confessionally diverse, but they were not “multicultural,” that is, accepting of different cultures and faiths as equally valid within a broad framework of natural- and positive-legal norms. Judaism was no different from its counterparts. Medieval Jewish thinkers considered it self-evident that their faith was the only authentic one and that the superiority of Judaism could be rationally demonstrated. Christianity was thought by many rabbis to be a form of idolatry. By the High Middle Ages that view had softened, most likely because of the need for medieval Jews, whose livelihoods depended on trade with Christians, to overcome talmudic prohibitions against doing business with idolaters. Although some medieval Jewish philosophers located common theological ground between the major faiths, Jewish mystics in Germany saw in the Christian world an ever-present source of moral pollution.

Jewish hostility to triumphant Christianity and Islam could be an important source of spiritual vitality. In the wake of the Crusader massacres of 1096, Ashkenazic Jews developed a commitment to martyrdom (kiddush ha-shem), a sort of inverted Christian chivalry, in which piety and bravery were expressed not via holy war against one’s enemy, but rather by a willingness to commit suicide when faced with the choice between conversion to Christianity or murder at the hands of Gentiles. Sephardic Jews, bewildered by expulsions, forced baptisms, and torture at the hands of the Inquisition were attracted to the mystical mythology of the 16th-century rabbi Isaac Luria. Luria developed a Gnostic doctrine of
a cosmological catastrophe that had caused God himself to be imprisoned by his own creation. The Chmielnitski massacres of the following century attracted Ashkenazic Jews to Lurianic mysticism, which became, admittedly with many modifications, the basis for the most successful pietist movement in modern Jewish history, East European Hasidism.

Medieval Jewish spiritual creativity was thus in part reactive, a product of interactions, frequently traumatic, with the Gentile world. But in keeping with my remarks at the beginning of this section, much of medieval Jewish life was internally driven. After all, Judaism had a rich mystical tradition going back to antiquity. The growth of Jewish legal commentary and codification certainly had parallels in other cultures but was not necessarily directly indebted to them. Medieval Jewish life was neither entirely indigenous nor contingent. Neither the essentialist nor the contextualist frameworks that I have mentioned above do justice to its richness and complexity. All the more so for the modern period, when Jews became intimately involved in virtually all aspects of their host societies yet maintained distinct religious, ethnic, and cultural features.

IV. Modernity

I am a modern historian, and most of my undergraduate teaching has focused on the 18th through 20th centuries. I have found that regardless of faith or ethnic origin, students tend to bring into the study of Jewish modernity an overwhelming fascination with one historical event: The Holocaust. My students have always been more absorbed by lectures on the Holocaust than any other subject. This fascination stems in part from noble sentiments: a desire to comprehend the causes of such an inhumane act and to prevent its reoccurrence; or feelings of vicarious identification with the victims and vicarious guilt about the actions of the perpetrators. Unfortunately, it can also reflect a desire for titillation in an era that has become desensitized to less spectacular forms of violence, a morbid obsession with Nazism, even a neo-pagan apocalypticism undergirded by deep anti-Semitic feeling. Anyone who has taught the Holocaust in a university setting has had unpleasant encounters with skinheads, white supremacists, and Holocaust deniers of various stripes.
The centrality of the Holocaust in popular perception of the modern Jewish experience has produced a serious distortion of history that I, as a teacher, labor to correct. Jewish history is, all too often, conceived in a deterministic, teleological manner; it is understood in reference to the Holocaust and interpreted as leading inexorably to that great catastrophe. In my teaching, I stress the contingent qualities of historical development, which, although explicable in terms of broad socioeconomic or collective-psychological forces, is not beholden to them. History has many futures. It is precisely this way of thinking that illustrates the magnitude of the horror of the Holocaust: modern Jewish history did not have to lead to Auschwitz because Auschwitz did not have to be built.

Furthermore, to what extent must the Holocaust, and by extension the history of modern anti-Semitism, be taught within the framework modern Jewish history? Aren’t these subjects’ essential components of modern history writ large? To be sure, the history of Jewish life in the concentration camps and ghettos, acts of resistance and collaboration, and the impact of the Holocaust on Jewish communities worldwide must be an integral part of any course in modern Jewish history. But the Nazis’ murderous anti-Semitism had nothing to do with real Jews; rather, it was a mixture of irrational phobias and fantasies. The Nazis drew upon both traditional Christian Jew-hatred and modern political anti-Semitism. The latter, which emerged in the 1880s, presented Jew-hatred as a systematic ideology, an “ism,” a secular worldview on par with the great competing ideologies of the era, liberalism and socialism. Political anti-Semitism identified the Jews as responsible for all the anxiety-provoking social forces that characterized modernity: ruthless capitalism, revolutionary communism; avant-garde artistic modernism. Modern anti-Semitism was thus far more than yet another form of bigotry or xenophobia. It was, as the historian Shulamit Volkov has put it, a “cultural code,” a signifier of social protest by individuals unwilling or unable to confront the real sources of their anxiety and despair.

It disturbs me that it is often left to the Jewish historian, within the contours of a course in modern Jewish history, to teach courses on anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. Moreover, I want my students to come away from a course in Jewish history with a sense that the modern Jewish experience was in many ways a positive one. If one defines the history of modern Jewry solely in terms of the Holocaust, then it was a sorry spectacle
indeed, a series of humiliations and atrocities leading inexorably to a vast valley of dry bones. But if defined in terms of spiritual and cultural creativity, political ferment, and ethnic solidarity, then Jewish history takes on flesh and blood and, for all its unique qualities, becomes not just the tragic tale of a pariah people, but the story of a people in the world, a world as beautiful as it is horrific.

How then should modern Jewish history be presented? It is the story of the Jews' engagement—at times enthusiastically receptive, at times hostile—with the new demands placed upon them and opportunities presented to them by the modern state. In West and Central Europe, Jews were forced to give up their long-cherished legal autonomy and to become fully subject to the laws of the state. In the late 18th and 19th centuries they were emancipated, freed of legal disabilities and, in time, allowed to take part in government and administration of the polities in which they lived. Jewish emancipation was part of the great modern project of human liberation that brought about the end of servitude and slavery, the introduction of freedom of movement and contract, and the rise of representative government. Russia's Jews were not emancipated for the simple reason that Tsarist society was incapable of emancipating its people as a whole from the prison of feudal privilege and leading them into the light of inalienable freedom. Conversely, the brave new world of North America offered Jews considerable social and political freedoms from the start. As white property owners, they had a place in the new civil society of the United States and British North America.

The autonomous communities that had been the natural habitat for Rabbinic Judaism evolved into voluntary associations that Jews could enter or abandon at will. Jewish ritual and education had been predicated upon, and in turn promoted, social segregation between Jew and Gentile, but Jews increasingly attended public schools, abandoned Jewish vernaculars for the language of the land, and questioned the value of the dietary laws and Sabbath observance, which hindered social and economic relations with Gentiles. Some Jews assimilated entirely into Gentile society. Others, particularly in East Europe and Russia, developed a zealous Orthodoxy that rejected modernity in any form. Most fascinating, however, was the sizeable bloc of rabbis and lay leaders who forged a new faith, linked with Rabbinic Judaism yet qualitatively different from it.
The Jewish Enlightenment, or Haskalah, saw in modernity a challenge to Jews to construct a coherent and meaningful culture, rooted in classic texts yet open to innovation in science and other forms of secular knowledge. The result was a Hebraic revolution: in East Europe, the birth of modern Hebrew journalism and literature; and in the West, the application to classic Hebrew texts of the methods of modern academic scholarship. In Germany, the Haskalah inspired the development of Reform and Conservative Judaism, which abandoned certain aspects of traditional Jewish practice while cherishing others. The most influential exponent of German Reform Judaism, the mid 19th-century rabbi Abraham Geiger, rejected Orthodox accusations that Reform watered down traditional Judaism and mimicked Protestant practices. Rather, he saw Reform as a spiritually progressive force, the legitimate heir of Rabbinic Judaism, which captured its essence while casting aside its anachronistic features.

Although Conservative Judaism was more cautious in its approach, it too accepted the basic notion that Judaism was subject to historical change. Thus history, a subject of no particular value in traditional rabbinic culture, became central to 19th-century Judaism. Jewish scholars inspired by the Reform and Conservative movements produced monumental works of Jewish history. The greatest of them, Heinrich Graetz's eleven-volume History of the Jews (1859–73), remains absorbing and vibrant to this day.

Modern Jewish society, like its Christian counterpart, secularized without abandoning religious sensibility or social links with one's religious community. Moreover, although Jews in the West integrated into their host societies and thought of themselves as fully English, French, German, and so on, they maintained strong senses of Jewish ethnic identity. Jews continued to care for their own poor, ill, and aged; they built up dense networks of philanthropic organizations, involvement in which provided a secular form of collective identity. Acculturated Jews also had a sense of global Jewish identity. French Jews spoke of Jews worldwide as a "community of fate;" German Jews used the same term or the even more telling noun "Stamm," or ancestral community.

Jews also developed a rich political life. In the West, Jewish politics primarily took the form of associations representing Jewish interests to governments and to public opinion, e.g., the French Alliance Israélite Universelle (f. 1860); the American Jewish Committee (f. 1906). In
Russia, Jewish political activity was perforce more radical, given the oppressive nature of the Tsarist regime. The Jewish workers' organization known as the Bund was, in the first years of the 20th century, a pillar of the socialist movement in Russia. Orthodox Jews adopted the organizational techniques of modern mass politics to promote their interests. The ultra-Orthodox Agudat Yisra'el, founded in Germany in 1912, was particularly powerful in interwar Poland, where it won a plurality of votes in many Jewish communal elections.

Jewish political life took form within a dense, three-dimensional space defined by the axes of religious, national, and economic identification. The extremes of these axes were, respectively, Ultra-Orthodoxy and secularism, nationalism and assimilationism, and revolutionary socialism and bourgeois liberalism. There were Jewish political organizations representing virtually every conceivable permutation of loci along the three axes. The Zionist movement was, then, but one element in the vast matrix of early 20th-century Jewish politics. Similarly, its ambitious project of creating an autonomous Jewish society in Palestine shared many points in common with other attempts in the early 20th century to engineer Jewish homelands throughout the globe, e.g., Argentina (by the Paris-based Jewish Colonization Association) or Ukraine and Crimea (by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee).

Ultimately, though, only the Zionists succeeded in establishing a viable Jewish homeland. Jewish politics and social engineering, divorced from the politics of independent state-building, always failed. At the same time, it would be inappropriate to dismiss all other forms of Jewish politics or social engineering as merely stepping stones toward the realization of the Zionist ideal. The relationship between Zionism and other forms of Jewish politics should be conceived not in mathematical terms of unidirectional vectors but rather in biological terms of lateral evolution from a common ancestor. Zionism and other forms of Jewish politics were cousins, sharing a common ancestor in the economic misery and political insecurity of East European Jewry in the early 1900s.

Just as Jewish politics existed apart from Zionism, neither is there an inextricable and all-embracing link between the Holocaust and the creation of the state of Israel. A few years ago, a journalist was interviewing me about Israel, and she was astonished to learn that there had been Jews in Palestine before 1945. She had assumed that Palestine was handed over
to the Jews as a gift by the United Nations as a form of reparations for the Holocaust. Although her ignorance was perhaps unusual, it does bespeak a general failure to appreciate the extent to which the state of Israel owes its existence to factors other than the Holocaust. By 1948, there were 600,000 Jews in Palestine; they had constructed a functioning political apparatus, national economy, and militia. When the United Nations' Special Commission on Palestine deliberated the future of that land, the Holocaust per se did not enter into their discussions. Rather, they viewed the land, rightly enough, as contested between two peoples, and the majority view (authored by, inter alia, Canada) was that the land must be divided between Jews and Arabs in order to prevent a descent into chaos.

To be sure, the Holocaust certainly exercised postwar international public opinion, and the British were forced to bring the Palestine issue to the U.N. in part because of global outrage at the sight of Holocaust survivors interned in detention camps when caught en route to Palestine. But the partition of Palestine between Jews and Arabs was, first and foremost, a recognition of the successes of the Zionist movement to date, and without a half century of gruelling Zionist effort, no amount of international sympathy would have brought about the creation of a Jewish state.

The State of Israel, like all states, owes its existence to assertions, and at times excesses, of power. It engages in statecraft and wages war. Israel's actions toward Arabs have been, on the one hand, romanticized and obscured by Israel's champions, and, on the other hand, trumpeted and overblown by its enemies. But just as I have tried throughout this paper to present Jewish history as part of universal history, I ask that we consider the relations between Israel and the Arab world within the framework of nationality conflict, not abstract theology, and that we teach its history accordingly.

Israel is more than a state inhabited mostly by Jews; it is a Jewish state, bound to the modern Jewish experience as a whole. Modernity did not of necessity engender Israel, but Israel was born bearing all the scars of Jewish modernity. Israel is a contested land, not merely in terms of the conflict between Jews and Arabs, but also in terms of the unresolved clash between all the elements in the matrix of modern Jewish politics that I have described above. Socialism versus market capitalism, secularism versus Orthodoxy, integration into a global culture or isolation within what the Talmud calls "four cubits of the halakhah": all of these historic tensions
are concentrated in one small, crowded space. As the poet Yehuda Amichai has written, Israel is "a package tied with string, bound together very tightly, and, sometimes, it hurts."

V. Conclusion

How one ends a historical narrative influences, via back-shadowing, one's perception of the narrative as a whole. It is not a mere pedagogic convenience, but a decision fraught with consequences, to end a class in Jewish history in 1945, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, or in 1948, with the creation of the state of Israel. Such endings retroactively project onto the course of modernity a lachrymose view of Jewish victimization or a blinkered view of Israel as the Aristotelian final cause of Jewish existence. Jewish history, like that of humanity as a whole, is open-ended; it is remade with every passing moment, as the present slides inexorably into the past.

Since the end of World War II, Israel has matured into a prosperous Mediterranean state, technologically sophisticated and, in large measure, heavily Westernized. It has produced a rich Hebraic culture, both secular and sacred, and its leading religious thinkers, e.g., the late Yeshiyahu Leibowitz, have struggled with the integration of the Jewish rabbinic tradition into the newly-spun fabric of Jewish empowerment. Israel's sunny Mediterranean climate is clouded, however, by its ongoing struggle with its Arab neighbors and with its own fissured identities.

The recent history of the Jewish Diaspora has been no less troubled. The Middle Eastern Jewish subcivilization all but disappeared with the mass immigrations to Israel in the 1950s. Most of the former Soviet Union's Jews have moved to Israel in the last fifteen years. The situation appears more stable in North America and West Europe, where the number of Jews has in recent decades remained constant, and Jews have experienced tremendous economic mobility. Yet low birth rates and significant levels of assimilation and intermarriage have caused the percentage of Jews within the total populations of the United States and other western lands to drop precipitously. In the wake of the Second Palestinian Uprising since September 2000, anti-Semitic attacks on Jewish property and persons have increased alarmingly. That said, there are many
signs of cultural vitality among the Jews of the Diaspora, particularly in the United States, Canada, and France, and Orthodoxy appears to be flourishing.

The futures of Israel and the Jewish Diaspora are unpredictable; thus let their history be unfinished and the interpretation of that history be indeterminate. The historian must, of necessity, recognize the limit of her craft. History provides an empathetic understanding of the human experience, but it does not pretend to bear ultimate truths. History does not and cannot provide satisfying “foundational myths”—not if it wishes to retain any shred of pretension to critical detachment. The historian is an assayer, who tests the claims of ideologues in the scales of reason. Let us hope that in a world where the veracity of the Holocaust—perhaps the most thoroughly documented act in human history—is increasingly challenged, where historical consciousness has been all but eclipsed by the hegemony of a cybernetic eternal future, where the Orwellian nightmare of history written anew with every day has been realized by paper shredders and media “spin”—the assayer’s task will not become a labor of Sisyphus.

Notes

What Do We Want the Other to Teach About Jewish History?

It gives me a great pleasure and an even greater honor to stand here today in this highly esteemed gathering. Our Sages command us “to open one’s speech with a tribute to host’s hospitality to scholars.” Therefore, I would like to greet, to honor, and to give thanks from the depth of my heart to the revered Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz for encouraging me in my Jewish and interreligious work over the past few years and to Dr. David Coppola, who has been so helpful to me in preparing this paper. Both of them are from the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding, Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut, which hosts this conference. Of course, I greet and thank all of the participants here at the University of Bamberg and all who will read this paper.

What do we want the other to teach about us? There are difficult and complex sets of questions within the title itself. Who are the “we?” Is it the whole Jewish People today? Is it only scholars, academics, Rabbis? Is it Reform, Conservative, Orthodox Jews? And, if so, then which groups within them? Hassidim, Sephardim, seculars, or others? Is it the Israeli Jew, the Diaspora Jew, or do I have to speak, to answer, to act, to refer to and demonstrate the theme only according to me personally? Should I concentrate on this last point and ignore any other influences of others?

“Want.” Why should I or we want anything? Is it my own wanting? Do Jews really want the “other” to learn or teach our history? I feel that I would want this to happen. But it is essential to bring to those who would listen, an authentic understanding and feeling of an “insider,”
rooted deeply in Jewish life, faith, practices, traditions, music, and teachings.

"The other"—or perhaps better, "others." Who are they? Why do they want to know, and more importantly, teach my history? I think the "others" are all people inspired with good will who would seek to understand and then teach authentic Judaism. The "others" who might read these papers to be gathered into a book will be clergy and religious leaders, seminarians and rabbinical students, religious educators and students taking interreligious courses on the undergraduate university level. The "others" will be teachers who may or may not be Jewish, who would like to see Judaism in a way that is true to the tradition but also expresses how that tradition is vital and lived today.

"To teach." To what extent must the teacher or the historian identify with the history that he or she conveys? Personally, I would ask my audience to be as empathetic as I am, and that includes not only detailed knowledge, but deep feeling too. How could I hope or expect the other to teach in such a way? It is very promising to see Jews, Christians—Roman Catholics, Lutherans and others—as well as Muslims as partners in dialogue who have agreed to respect each other enough to teach others' religious beliefs to the best of their ability. Also, it takes more effort and commitment from the person who humbly agrees to teach about another, rather than an academic enterprise that focuses primarily on learning for one's own knowledge or growth. My duty is to try to make a contribution, however modest it may be, to you my peers. My concern is that I authentically represent my forefathers, and therefore, my responsibility is somewhat overwhelming. My hope is to do them justice in my presentation.

"About our history." What do we see as history? Does our history remain in the past or is it an integral part of our present and future? The present is interpreted in light of how we understand the past. I do know that there is a strong connection in the three Abrahamic faiths to Revelation and G-d working in our history. This heavily impacts the way we understand the present that has been influenced by the past. And it is a lesson for the future.

It is a most difficult task to try to convey my thoughts and feelings about my history as a Jew, and it is particularly difficult to attempt to present the Jewish People as a whole in its interpretation of its history. The question that I have been asked to address is posed, therefore, in a very
personal way and the matter of presenting Jewish history is indeed, a very personal matter. For me, history begins with the heritage of my Central-European Rabbinical family. It is the story of my late grandfather Rabbi Michael Dushinsky as Chief Chaplain in the Kaiser Franz-Yosef’s army during the First World War. It is the fate of his Congregation in Rakospalota, Budapest, and its currently deserted synagogue, Miqve, school and cemetery. It is the life of his firstborn son, my late uncle Dr. Yechezkel-Edward Dushinsky. Having been born to an orthodox Hungarian patriot rabbi in 1899, he became an artillery officer in the Austrian-Hungarian army in World War I. This merit gave him the right, despite the “Numerus Clausus,” to study medicine and dentistry. During the Nazi occupation of Hungary, for a lot of money and with his contacts as a physician, he managed to hide my cousins, his two baby daughters in a village outside town. It did not help. In that village they were caught and from there sent to Auschwitz to be gassed. He and my aunt Betty survived. They never had other children. He died at the age of 97 in Tel-Aviv under the photograph of his dear daughters. We mentioned their names on his tombstone.

Also for me, Jewish history is the fate of Rabbi Michael’s youngest son, my uncle and mentor, Rabbi Professor Yerakhmi’el Ya’aqov, Eugene Jacob Dushinsky, who led that Rakospalota community through the Second World War. The Hungarian allies of Germany enslaved him in the mines of Bor, Yugoslavia. He was saved by Tito’s partisans and joined them. He received the rank of colonel as Chief Chaplain in the Hungary’s liberated, postwar army. Then he fled from the Communist regime to become Chief Rabbi of South Africa and a great Zionist leader.

For me, history is also my late Zionist father, Eliyahu Menachem Dushinsky, who settled in Tel Aviv in 1933, acquired Palestinian passports and hence caused me to be a proud born and bred Israeli citizen and soldier. And my late mother, Breindl Brachah ne’e Stein, born in Szighet, Transylvania to a Hassidic family, was a Zionist and came to Palestine in 1933 and married my father in Tel Aviv. Her brother, my late uncle Rabbi Shmu’el Be’eri-Stein, after losing his first family in the Shoah, he remarried. He was the first emissary of the Jewish Agency to the Jews of Ethiopia. His only daughter, my cousin, was born in Asmara. She is a white Ethiopian Jew. Later, he was Chief Rabbi in Finland and in the Netherlands, retired in Israel and passed away at the age of 90. Old and
young Ethiopian religious leaders were among those who mourned for him.

Jewish history is the survival of my People through four millennia. Both the private and the general histories are a vital part of my very being. Thus, I will now stay with those “events” of the past that bring meaning to me as a contemporary Jew. Part of the living Jewish history for me is the Creation, 5762 years ago by the L-rd, with “let there be light!” (Genesis 1:3), with the Tree of Knowledge and G-d’s commandments that Adam and Eve disobeyed. An understanding of G-d’s revelation to humanity begins in Noah and the seven Noachide Precepts, among them the sacredness of the life of human beings, compassion to animals and establishing courts. History is also the sins committed by the men and women of the Babylonian Tower, the Deluge generation, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the punishments the world suffered due to them.

From an academic perspective, Jewish history began with our ancestor Abraham, who discovered the oneness of G-d and proclaimed it to the world. The L-rd bequeathed him and his future generations the Land of Israel, my Land. History is the binding of his son Isaac and the angel who prevented that human sacrifice. This teaches me the origin of obeying the L-rd’s will even if all seems to be lost. History is the story of Simon and Levi in Shechem—adherence to tradition even then—when they demanded *millah*, circumcision, that remained since Abraham, and the *mitzvah* was observed by all Jews voluntarily. History is the story of Judah and Tamar who kept the law of *yibbum*, levirate marriage. And within this story we find the origin of the House of David, the spark of the Messiah. History is the brotherhood and compassion between the twelve tribes in the story of Joseph. History is righteousness in the judgments of Potiphar and the Pharaoh in Joseph’s time.

History is the Exodus from Egypt and the revelation in Mount Sinai. They mark the beginning of a journey of covenantal obedience to G-d that led to the 613 *mitzvot* of the Torah, given to us by G-d through Moses for all generations to come: “Everything that the L-rd hath said, we will do and we will listen to” (Exodus 24:7). History is the Books that remember and acclaim stories of great people and deeds: Joshua capturing the Promised Land, the Judges, the Prophets, the Kings, the Destruction of the First Temple in the 6th century BCE, the Babylonian
exile, the Cyrus Declaration and the rebuilding of the Second Temple after 70 years.

Jewish history also remembers and includes Alexander the Great in Judea (332 BCE), the Diadochs Ptolmei and Seleucos, the revolt of the Maccabees (167 BCE), the Hasmonean household, and Jewish life during the Second Temple period. Jewish history is Pompius of Rome in Israel, the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes and Zealots, the Great Revolt, Josephus Flavius, Vespasian, Titus and the second Destruction in 70 CE, Rabbi Akiva and the Bar-Kokhba Revolt, the books of the Apocrypha, the Dead Sea sects and scrolls and the Mishnah.

History is the story through the centuries of the Jewry living and contributing to communities all over the world. History is also the the fate of communities in Germany, Poland, France, Spain, Russia, and a multitude of others in the Holy Land and all the exiles. Blood libels and expulsions, decrees and bloodshed, yellow stars, forced conversions, pogroms, exiles, dispersions, hardships, the losses suffered by the State of Israel in its attempt to survive, thousands of destroyed and deserted cemeteries all over Europe, anti-Semitism, anti-Israelism, racism and the “non-cemetery memorial” of the Shoah in Auschwitz and elsewhere are all part of the Jewish historical memory. Jewish history also gratefully remembers the Righteous among the Nations: the monarchs, popes, statesmen, monks, philosophers and all the Gentile lovers and defenders of Jews and Judaism throughout the centuries.

Jewish history is also the stories, the cultures, the religions and even the music of the great and small nations and empires of past and present and their relationship with Judaism and Jews: the Sumerians and Akkadians, Egyptians and Babylonians, Persians and Parthians, Greeks and Romans, Byzantinians and Arabs, Mongols, Japanese and Chinese, all the different Europeans, the French and the British, the Nazis and the Communists, and the Americans. History is how my people managed to live their own Sabbath, Festivals and Yom Kippur with their cultural traditions that uplift the soul, their own calendar, family purity and dietary laws, Torah education and charity, and all that keeps them unique.

And history for me is names like the biblical: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Judah and Joseph, Moses and Aaron, Deborah and Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Jonah, Ezra and Daniel; the Mishnah's, Shma'yah and
Avtalyon, Hillel and Shammai, Rabban Gamliel, Rabban Yochanan b. Zakkai, and Rabbi Judah HaNassi; the Talmud's, Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Shimon b. Lakish, Rav and Shmuel, Abbayye and Rava, Ravina and Rav Ashi; the commentators, codifiers, poets, philosophers, kabbalists, and scholars; the Ge'onim Amram, Haii and Saadia, Rabbi Judah Halevi and Rabbi Shlomo Gabirol (Avicebron), RaSH'Y and Rabbenu Tam, Rabbi Yitzkhak Al-Fassi and R'Y Migash, Rabbi Yehudah HeKhassid and Rabbi Me'ir of Rothenburg, RaMBa'M and RaMBa'N (Maimonides & Nachmanides), HaMe'iri and the RaSHB'A, Rabbi Moshe Isserlish and Rabbi Yossef Qaro, the Ga'on of Vilna and the Baal-Shem-Tov, the MaHaRa'La and the Chata'm Sofer, Khafeetz-Khayyim and Ben-Ish-Khai, Rabbi Avraham Yitzkhao HaKohen Kuk and Rabbi Moshe Feinstein. I humbly, but proudly call these people "my short sacred list." Its aim is to emphasize my view that this astounding phenomenon of the handing down of halachah and customs through the generations is living history to every Jew. We would not and we shall not exist as a unique people, a unique belief and a unique entity without a list such as this.

What then is the most important educational message of traditional Judaism that I want conveyed to others and by others? The answer is precisely that Judaism is a living and dynamic organism, that is inextricably linked back in an unbroken chain, since time in memoriam. To emphasize this point, allow me to focus on the insights of the most outstanding Jewish personality of the Middle Ages, Rabbi Moses Maimonides, known as RaMBa'M. He lived a life of faithfulness to G-d and his scholarship continues to influence Judaism to the day. It has been said about RaMBa'M: "From Moses to Moses never arose one like Moses" meaning from Moses, the receiver of Torah, until Maimonides there has never been another. Later generations have bestowed Maimonides with the title, the Great Eagle.

In the long introduction to his commentary of the Mishnah, which he wrote at an early age, and also in his short introduction to his Code of Laws which he finished in 1177, at 42 years of age, Maimonides detailed the order of the generations in delivering the Torah, the Oral Law, since the time of Moses. He also made it some of his "Thirteen Principles of Faith," which Jews sing and say twice daily before and after our morning prayers. By making these connections to former generations, he made a statement that Judaism is a religion and belief that is rooted and lived in
JEWISH HISTORY

He wrote the Book of the Precepts, Sefer HamMitzvot, in which he lists all precepts. There are 248 positive precepts and 365 negative ones. For each precept, mitzvah, the source in the Torah is presented followed by a description of its contents. RaMBa'M also makes distinct applications whether the mitzvah applies for Kohanim, Levyyim or Yisre'elim or for all; is it for men or women or for both; and whether it applies to a particular time and place or to all periods.

There were disputes during the 13th and 14th centuries, resulting in the burning of some of Maimonides' philosophic works. The Code of Laws, however, was left untouched. This monumental work was written in the most beautiful and accurate Mishnaic Hebrew, so that all Jews would be able to study it and relate it to their part in history. In every traditional Jewish home-library one will probably find his Code of Laws. Maimonides wrote his Code for all times and ironically his teachings remain the source and the rock for Jewish life until today. He and his teachings are a living history for every contemporary Jew.

Daily, Jews say and sing the twelfth Principle of Faith, one of the thirteen written by Maimonides. Jews went into the gas chambers with this verse on their lips. This is part of our recent Jewish memory, so it should be sung:

I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah;
and although he may tarry, I await daily for his coming.

'ani ma'am be'emunah shele'mah bevi'at hammashiakh;
ve'aফ 'al pi sheyyitmah-meh, 'im kol zeh 'akhakkeh lo' bechol yom sheyyavo.

This is the way I want the other to teach my history.
DAVID FOX SANDMEI

Understanding and Teaching Jewish History

Before I begin my formal response to Rabbi Dushinsky, let me first offer a few words of introduction to give you a sense of how I might approach our topic. I am a rabbi and I received my rabbinic ordination from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio, and I am, therefore, a Reform or liberal rabbi. I am also an academic having just completed a PhD at the University of Pennsylvania where I studied the history and literature of Judaism and Christianity in the Greco-Roman world from a Religious Studies perspective. Finally, I claim some experience and expertise in Jewish-Christian relations. Both parents were active in Jewish-Christian dialogue. Among my earliest memories are Shabbat dinners and Passover Seders with priests and nuns as guests sitting at our table. More recently, I served as the Jewish Scholar at the Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies in Baltimore, Maryland, where I directed the project that produced Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity, which was published in September 2000. What I bring to a discussion like this is the passion of one who has committed himself to serving the Jewish people and the intellectual rigor of critical scholarship. There is some tension between these two perspectives that I try to balance, but I also feel they give me some insight into the dynamics of interfaith dialogue.

Rabbi Dushinsky’s wide-ranging paper highlights the challenge of the topic we have been asked to speak about. I would like to focus on and expand upon several of the issues that he raised or alluded to in his paper, especially his meditation on the question that also serves as the
topic of this conference: What do we want the other to teach about us? While sitting at my computer typing this last sentence, I made what I think is a revealing slip. Instead of the word “teach,” I typed the word “think.” So the question read, “what do we want the other to think about us?” When I saw this on the computer screen, I immediately deleted the mistake and typed in the correct word, and although “think” was no longer on the screen, that question remained in my mind and continued to intrigue me. At first, I thought that as an academician, my hope should be that others would teach about my tradition as objectively as is humanly possible, according to the most up-to-date scholarship, and that the learner would draw his or her own conclusions from the material that was presented. But I am also a Jew, a diaspora Jew, and in light of our history, what others think about Jews and Judaism also concerns me a great deal.

What makes a gathering of Jews, Christians, and Muslims and this discussion so important is that several Jews are being offered the opportunity to shape both the teaching and the thinking of the other. This is a remarkable revolution in interreligious relations that demonstrates that the perception both of the religious other and of the other’s religion has undergone a radical transformation. In the past we—and here I mean all of us—defined the other from the perspective of our own particular tradition’s frame of reference, using our own categories and terminology. The goal was not the accurate portrayal of the other, but rather to create an image of the other that made it easy to draw simple (often false) distinctions between “us” and “them” and to demonstrate that “we” were definitely superior to “them.” The task before us that lies behind the topic question is quite different—it is to allow the others to define themselves, to make their self-understanding the standard for what we teach about them, to choose our words in such a way that if the other were standing in front of us, he or she would recognize themselves in what was being taught and not be horrified by stereotypes, caricatures, polemics, or even well-intentioned ignorance.

When we teach about the other, we must always imagine that other is standing in front us. As a Jew, if I am teaching Jews about Christianity, then I must imagine that one of my Christian friends is in the room. I should not say anything to this group of Jews that I would not say directly to my Christian friend, or better, that my Christian friend would not
say if he or she was doing the teaching. A Jewish scholar, Amy-Jill Levine, teaches New Testament at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. She relates that each year she brings one of her young children to her classes and she instructs her students, most of whom are Christian divinity students, to be sure that nothing they teach their students or their congregation would ever cause harm to this child. My colleagues and I used the same principle when we edited the book, Christianity in Jewish Terms.* Though, as the title shows, the book is written by and primarily for Jews, we asked Christian scholars to respond to each chapter as a "reality check." The specific assignment for the Christian respondents was to reflect on whether their understanding of Christianity was accurately reflected in the writing of the Jewish scholars. Indeed, I am tempted go so far as to say that in an ideal situation; "we" would not teach about the other at all. Rather, when we want to learn about other, we should invite the other into our classroom or into our pulpit to teach. The presence of the living, breathing other is itself a lesson that we can never duplicate. I recognize that there are many situations where this is either impossible or impractical, but I say it nonetheless, to underscore the delicacy, the challenge of teaching about the others as they would want us to teach about them.

Rabbi Dushinsky ruminated on the word "we"—he wondered which "we" was intended by the question, and he listed a number of possibilities for the identity of that "we." He said: "Is it the whole Jewish People today? Is it only scholars, academics, Rabbis? Is it Reform, Conservative, Orthodox Jews? And, if so, then which groups within them? Hassidim, Sephardim, seculars, or others? Is it the Israeli Jew or the Diaspora Jew?" I would respond to Rabbi Dushinsky's rhetorical questions because I believe it needs to be spelled out.

When teaching about Judaism, I believe it is essential to stress the variety, pluralism and the diversity that has characterized the Jewish community, not only today but in every period of Jewish history. Here I think the term "Judaisms" first used by Jacob Neusner is a useful concept. Neusner used the term to describe the vibrancy and variety of expressions of Judaism in the Second Temple Period, in part as a counterbalance to the once common tendency to describe Judaism in this period, the period that includes the life of Jesus, as a monolithic and petrified religion. Nothing could be further from the truth for that period or, for
that matter, for any period of Jewish history. Dynamism and dissention have always been part of the Jewish reality. Even in Biblical times, we see religious conflict and diversity around issues such as centralized worship versus local shrines in the Josianic reformation in the 6th century BCE. A unique feature of the Mishna, as compared to any Jewish literature that preceded it, is that it preserved and even honored differences of opinion. I would suggest that this was a conscious choice on the part of the early *tannaim* in response to the catastrophe of the failure of the Great Revolt and the destruction of the Second Temple. In attempting to unite the fractious parties that had, in the eyes of the rabbis, contributed to the loss of Jerusalem, they tried to include as many opinions as they could. So unlike the literature of the Second Temple Period, which tends to see things in black and white, for example, the sons of light and the sons of darkness of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the rabbis tried to legitimize differences of opinion, at least within certain parameters.

In this regard, I would point out that Rabbi Dushinsky chose to concentrate his presentation of Maimonides on his *halachic* works, and mentioned only in passing his philosophical works, which, as the Rabbi stated, were burned in the 13th and 14th century. For those who may not be familiar with Maimonides, the controversy over his philosophical writing, over his *Moreh Nevuchim*, his *Guide for the Perplexed*, is another example of the diversity within Judaism. When I think of Maimonides, I think of him first as a philosopher, who in the tradition of the Arabic philosophy of his day, attempted to synthesize Judaism and neo-Aristotelianism, much as Philo had tried to synthesize Judaism and neo-Platonism in 1st century Alexandria. That Rabbi Dushinsky focused on Maimonides the halachist, and that I think of him first as a philosopher is instructive. In good rabbinic fashion, I can say that I am right and Rabbi Dushinsky is right. Or, to quote the Talmud, *elu v'elu divrei elohim chayim*, both this opinion and that opinion are the words of the living God.

Therefore, when one teaches about Judaism, one should be careful about any statement that begins with the phrase “Jews believe” or “Judaism teaches” for it cannot avoid being a gross oversimplification or generalization that does apply to all Jews in every time or place. Indeed, whether Jews or Christians, all of us must be careful about imposing a false unity of Jewish history and tradition. It may be useful to think of
the Jews as a community of fate rather than a community of faith. That is, we Jews share a history, literature, ethical, and religious convictions, and perhaps, a culture, although we disagree vociferously about their meaning, authority, and significance. We feel a kinship with one another as Jews, even while we disagree on such fundamental issues as the nature of God or the content and meaning of revelation. In this regard, then, what makes a person a Jew is not only a matter of faith or belief as it is the recognition of belonging to an ancient people, to the extended family that, according to Genesis, is descended from Abraham and Sarah. It is being a member of the People of Israel or b'nei Yisrael, the children of Israel.

As a rabbi, I have worked with potential proselytes and I have made the point that “conversion” is not really an accurate translation of the Jewish concept of giyur. Conversion, at least from a Religious Studies perspective, implies a numinous experience that radically changes one's understanding of and relationship to God. In contrast, when a Gentile chooses to become Jewish, the process is more like becoming a naturalized citizen of country; it is being adopted into the family of Abraham and Sarah, and, over a period of time, learning that family's history and traditions. It is a family in which loyalty and commitment to one another is a primary value. As in many families, loving and defending the other members of the family is often quite different from liking them or agreeing with them, even on essential issues. Thus, another point in teaching about Jewish history and Judaism is stressing, not only the diversity within the Jewish community, but also that religion and faith are components, but not the totality of what Judaism is or what it means to be a Jew.

I also want to say a word, not about what one teaches, but rather how one teaches about Judaism. I would hope that others would be sensitive to the reality that teaching occurs not only in classrooms, but in other settings, as well. Focusing specifically on the Christian tradition, there is much teaching about Jews and Judaism that takes place through liturgy, hymnody, the lectionary, and even in church art, as can be seen, for example, in the message being communicated in the statues of Ecclesia and Synagoga that are found in the cathedral in Bamberg and elsewhere in European churches. Indeed, the challenge of changing liturgy and lectionary is much greater than changing what one teaches in an academic
setting. But I think we must be cognizant that many more people will learn about Jews in church than in school. So Christians must ask themselves how the Old Testament is being read and preached as part of their worship. Is there any acknowledgment on their part that the Christian Old Testament is also the Jewish Tanach, that which Jews read and interpret differently than Christians? Insights from traditional Jewish midrash or from contemporary Jewish commentators might both enrich the understanding of the text and affirm that these scriptures can be read in rich and different ways.

Hymnody and liturgy are more difficult questions, for liturgy, music and song operate on a deep emotional level. It is most disturbing to Jews to go to a synagogue other than one’s own, and not know any of the melodies. Hymns are like old friends. But precisely because they work affectively as well as cognitively, it is essential to be careful of the messages that they communicate. In English speaking countries, the words to a favorite Christian hymn in preparation for Christmas is, “O come, O come Immanuel and ransom captive Israel.” Try to remove this hymn from holiday worship and one might have a congregation in revolt. But who and what is “captive Israel,” what do these words teach and how do they influence how people think? Or what is the message when in some churches during the Easter vigil, the Old Testament readings are done in candlelight or darkness and then the lights are turned on for the reading of the Gospels. These examples are specific to certain churches, but they underscore the importance of examining carefully the kinds of teaching other than classroom instruction.

The lectionary is probably the most challenging aspect of worship. As most people know, there are many “difficult texts” regarding Jews and Judaism in the New Testament that have affected the historical relationship of Jews and Christians with disastrous results. In part, the onus is on the preacher who must not rely on the facile tropes of traditional homiletics, such as incorrectly contrasting the wisdom and compassion of Jesus with that of the legalistic and heartless Pharisees. Although the preacher can mitigate some of the challenges posed by difficult texts, I think it is also fair to ask whether certain passages should be read at all, or if they should be read without addressing directly the anti-Jewish sentiments that they contain. I know that there is much being done in this regard by many different churches. I merely want to emphasize that the
messages that are communicated in worship, the teaching that takes place in that setting, must be congruent with what is taught in the classroom or contained in official pronouncements. I also recognize that no one is going to edit the New Testament, just as Jews are not going to edit the difficult passages of the Tanach. Liturgy, lectionary, and hymnody pose difficult challenges as well as opportunities to strengthen the positive advances in interreligious dialogue of late.

I would like to conclude by affirming that teaching about the other does not require us to compromise our traditions' commitment to what each believes to be ultimate truth. There are differences between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam (and between Judaism and other traditions) that should not be glossed over because we seek to understand each other better and avoid the hatred and violence that are part of our tragic history. Our traditions and beliefs are not interchangeable; as we said in Dabru Emet, they are "humanly irreconcilable." Our challenge is to teach those differences with humility and respect so that we can understand and appreciate the uniqueness of our own tradition and that of the other. In doing so, we can live with each other in peace and become a blessing to each other and the world.

Note

What Do Christians Want Jews and Muslims to Teach About Christianity?

Introduction

The first thing to be aware of about Christianity is that there have been, and are, many understandings and lived versions of Christianity. To begin with, there are three major branches of Christianity: Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism. Further, some versions of Christianity have been more optimistic, some pessimistic, some absolutist, some tolerant, some other-world-directed, and some this-world-directed. However, in the latter half of the twentieth century most of Christianity took a dramatic turn in the direction of what might be called modernity. What I aim to do now is to present a general picture of that modern Christianity, and then point out some of the common ground that all three of the Abrahamic traditions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam stand on together. But before I can turn to that fivefold Copernican Turn of contemporary Christianity, I need to trace the founding and subsequent trajectory of Christianity leading up to it, albeit in a most compact manner.

At the heart of all of the versions of Christianity stands the Jew, Jesus of Nazareth (or Yeshua ha Notzri, as he was called in his native Semitic tongue). Hence, to understand something of Christianity we must first understand something of Yeshua, and that in turn entails understanding something of the Hebrew and Jewish traditions.
Hebrew Religion

The ancient Hebrews thought and spoke in a theistic mode. Moreover, they eventually came to a monotheistic understanding, which became characteristic not only of their religion but also of the three major religions that sprang from their root: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The story of the development of the Hebrew religion is set down in “The Book” (biblos in Greek). In its beginning, it tells of one God who is the source and creator of all reality. The crowning point of creation was humankind, who was made in God’s image, that is, someone who could know, could freely decide, and could love. In this tradition, everything that exists is good simply because it has being and this being springs from God, who is all good.

Then whence came evil? To the Hebrews, as to everyone else, it was obvious that there was evil in the world, indeed, in every human being. Their answer was that human beings themselves are the source of evil, for by their free will they can refuse to choose the good, and those choices are called evil. This understanding is embedded in the story of the “Fall” at the beginning of the book of Genesis: because humans did not follow the right order of their nature, their true “self,” as created by God, in God’s image, their nature became “disordered” in relationship to its own self and its creator, and hence in turn, to the rest of creation. Here was the first “domino theory.” The way to live an authentic human life is to live according to one’s authentic self, one’s Image of God (Imago Dei, in Latin). Perceiving that true self, that Imago Dei, became difficult. However, after the Fall, according to the Hebrews, God arranged for special help to be made available, at least to the Hebrews, a “Chosen People,” who in turn were to be “a light unto the nations.” This special help was God’s Instructions, God’s Torah, on how to live a true human life, one in accordance with one’s true self, the Imago Dei.

Thus, the Hebrew religion was basically optimistic, for the source of all reality was the one God, who was goodness itself, and God’s creation was, as it says in Genesis, “good,” tou, and at the end of the creation story, “very good,” mod tou. But it also took account of the presence of evil in humans and prescribed its elimination by humans returning to their original authentic self, the Imago Dei, the clear path to which was indicated by God’s Torah. And the heart of the Torah is justice and love, or
even simply love, for, as Pope Paul VI much later said, "justice is love's minimum."

The summary of the Torah was the twofold commandment of love of God and love of neighbor, and the former could be carried out through the fulfillment of the latter, the love of neighbor. Then, who is the neighbor; who is to be loved? The Hebrew prophets appeared throughout the history of the Hebrew people to make it abundantly clear that what God desired was not "burnt offerings" but rather a just life. The prophets called for treating everyone fairly, but preeminently loving the oppressed, the powerless of society, specifically the poor, widow and orphan, the most vulnerable of society.

**Judaism**

In the first millennium before the Common Era, the Hebrew people became a united kingdom, and then suffered division into two parts; one of which, Israel, was largely destroyed in the seventh century BCE and the second of which, Judah, was carried off into Babylonian exile in the sixth century, only to return to rebuild Jerusalem. By this time, the Hebrews had rather firmly committed themselves to monotheism and more and more focused on carrying out God's Torah as the essence of an authentic human life. It is from this postexilic period onward that one speaks of Judaism. Later, around 167 BCE, the Pharisees, who have had unwarrantedly bad press in the Christian tradition, appeared on the scene. Among other things, they were responsible for prayers referring to God as a loving "Father" and such teachings as the resurrection of the body. But most of all, they showed the "way" (halachah in Hebrew) to lead a just life, a distinctly Jewish life, by laboring to make concrete the more general obligations found in the written Torah, the Bible. Eventually their specifying commentary came to be understood as the "oral Torah." It should be noted that for the Pharisees, as for Jews in general, the main question was not, "What must I think?" as it was for the Greeks and later for most Christians, but rather, "What must I do?"

The Pharisees, of course, were not the only Jews at the beginning of the Common Era who laid claim to have the-right teaching on how to live an authentic human, Jewish life. There were others such as the
Sadduccees, Essenes, Zealots, Hellenists, among others. One of those "others" was the Galilean Jew, Yeshua ha Notzri, who in many ways was close to the Pharisees, but also critical of them, as would be appropriate in his tradition.

Yeshua of Nazareth

As noted, Yeshua was a Jew, religiously as well as ethnically. He was born of a Jewish mother, studied the Jewish Scriptures (the Hebrew Bible, of course, not the New Testament), was addressed as "rabbi," carefully kept the Torah, or Law. Like the Pharisees, Yeshua also specified the general great twofold commandment of love of God and neighbor; all his teaching and all his stories were aimed at making God's instructions—God's Torah—concrete. And similar to other Jewish prophets, his followers called him a prophet because he epitomized the love of neighbor in reaching out to the powerless: When asked, who is leading an authentic human life, who will "enter into the kingdom of heaven?" he answered, "Those who give drink to the thirsty, food to the hungry, clothing to the naked. . . ." (Matthew 25:31-46). For Yeshua, because he was a good Jew, the main question was not, "What must I think?" but "What must I do?" In brief, the "Good News," the "God-spel," that Yeshua taught was that the Reign of God was near, indeed, "within you" and that letting God reign in their lives would lead them to joy now, and "in the world to come." Thus, the first followers of Yeshua, who were Jews, found in him a special "way" (halachah) to "salvation" (the term comes from the Latin salus, meaning primarily a full, healthful, whole, and therefore (w)holy life) by what he thought, taught, and wrought. They sensed in him an inner wisdom and authenticity (what he "thought"), which issued in his extraordinarily insightful and inspiring teachings (what he "taught"), which in turn were reflected in his self-emptying life, and death, for others (what he "wrought").

Yeshua made it clear that although he understood himself called to address in his lifetime the "children of the House of Israel," his notion of neighbor was broad: It included not only one's geographical neighbors, one's relatives, one's ethnic fellows; but it even included one's enemies, as the story of the Good Samaritan graphically illustrates. Yeshua attempted
to even break through that most ancient pattern of oppression—sexism—by welcoming women as followers, even to the point that some ancient writers claimed this was one of the reasons for his condemnation! The first followers of Yeshua obviously grasped the heart of what he “thought, taught, and wrought,” though unfortunately, his feminist example faded from Christian view until this century.

Despite the view that the end times were near, the followers of Jesus did not understand the “way” of Yeshua (hodos in New Testament Greek, similar to halachah in Rabbinic Hebrew) to be one of preaching “in the sky by and by.” Rather, the fulfillment of the commandment to love God could be accomplished only through the fulfillment of the commandment to love one’s neighbor: “If any one says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 John 4:20).

Christology

Yeshua clearly was an extraordinary charismatic teacher, healer and prophet. But some of his first followers saw something else very special, very Jewish, in him; they saw him as the Messiah (christos in Greek), the Anointed One, who, as promised in the Scriptures, would free Judea from the despised Roman military occupation. But he did not. Instead, the Romans crucified him. At first, Yeshua’s followers were crushed. Two of them were reported to have said, “But we had hoped that he would be the one to set Israel free” (Luke 24:21). But the power of Yeshua was too great for it to end on the rock of Golgotha. For his followers, Yeshua rose bodily from the dead and further empowered them to go forth to preach his “Good News.”

But what about the messianic claims of Yeshua’s followers for him? He did not become the new political king of Israel. They, or at least some of them, did not drop the messianic claims, they transformed, spiritualized the understanding of Messiah. Moreover, as the “Way” of Yeshua moved from a Jewish to a Greek world the Greek term “Christ” grew in usage and importance, and it became fused with another Jewish title given to Yeshua, namely, “son of God.” The latter, which was a term used by Jews to refer to kings and holy men, was meant in a relational or metaphorical
way. However, in the Greek world the metaphorical title, "son of God," moved in a few centuries to the ontological title, "God the Son," as reflected in the Trinitarian formula of the Council of Nicaea (325 AD).

One way some theologians have described this shift in understanding and expression is that the early followers of Yeshua saw in him a transparency of the divine. He appeared to them to be so radically open to all being, including the root of being, God, that he was completely filled with Being. Thus, he was a human meeting point of the human and the divine, an enfleshment, the incarnation of the divine. In this way Yeshua becomes for Christians a model of how to live an authentic human life. In him they meet ultimate reality, the divine, so that in a preeminent way he is for them the door to the divine, the one that informs all others.

At the same time, it is also clear from the New Testament, especially from the writings of Rabbi Saul (later called St. Paul) and John's Gospel, that there was a tendency early in the history of the followers of Yeshua to be more Christocentric than theocentric, that is, a tendency to focus the disciple's gaze more on the mediator, Christ, than pointing to God (Theos). This did not mean that Paul and John forgot about God and concentrated solely on Christ. It does mean, however, that in their writings there is a great emphasis on reaching God through Christ, whereas in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark, Matthew, and Luke), which mainly portray Yeshua's teaching and actions, the stress is more on God rather than on Christ. Moreover, it is important to note that Paul overwhelmingly talks about, not Yeshua, not Jesus, but about Christ, Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus. For Paul, most often Christ was not a concrete human person, but much more a spiritual force or life, so that he could write things such as, "I live now not I, but Christ lives in me." This notion of a "spiritual life" entering into one's own interior life fit quite well with the Semitic way of understanding and speaking of the world.

A Christian must choose Yeshua and his way if he or she wants to be a Christian, because for such a follower, the Jew, Yeshua of Nazareth, is the key to the meaning of life and how to live it. It is obvious that he must be spiritualized in a variety of ways so he can be interiorized in a person's life and consequent external behavior. A Christian can build his Christian life on the foundation of Yeshua—on what he thought, taught, and wrought—as a model, and having thus been inspired, strive to live
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accordingly and at the same time understand and refer to that interiorized life as Christ, as Paul did, for example.

The Christian Religion and Its Development

By the fourth century, and even before, the religion of Yeshua had largely become the religion about Christ. It was no longer simply Yeshua’s “way;” it had become Christianity, the state religion of the mighty Roman Empire. In the ensuing centuries, the Christian Church spread throughout the Roman Empire and eventually beyond it. It took on many of the elements of the Greco-Roman culture, including a strong emphasis on “what to think,” generating a plethora of lengthy creeds. These creeds were the source not only of unity but also of divisions. Each time a new creed was insisted on, a new division was enacted and many of the divided churches still exist today.

A large and unfortunate division occurred in 1054 with the split between Eastern and Western Christianity, usually known as Orthodox and Catholic Christianity. This was further followed by another major division of Western Christianity in the sixteenth century known as the Protestant Reformation. Each of these three major branches of Christianity took a rather absolutist view and insisted that they were the only ones who were correct and true, and the others who differed from them were consequently wrong. Of course, for almost all Christians, non-Christians were considered even more wrong!

The Christian West, Modernity and Global Civilization

Modernity is characterized by a focus on this world, on freedom, by a critical turn of mind, and eventually a historical sensibility. This began to happen in Western Christendom with the Renaissance and accelerated with a series of revolutions as Christendom evolved into Western Civilization, and is now emerging into Global Civilization: The sixteenth century World Discovery Revolution, the seventeenth century Scientific Revolution, the eighteenth century Industrial Revolution, the eighteenth/nineteenth century Political Revolutions, the twentieth century

In effect, the twentieth century began in 1914 with the beginning of World War I, hit its nadir in 1939–45 with World War II, and ended in 1990 with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. About two-thirds of the way through, momentous changes began to surface, starting in a number of instances in America, but not limited to there. In fact, the 1960s was a momentous turning point in time for the entire world: 1) American Catholics broke out of their isolationist approach to religion in the election of President Kennedy; 2) the American civil rights movement began a transformation of the Western psyche; 3) the antiwar, environmentalist, antiestablishment and related movements in the West brought global transformation to a fever pitch; 4) through the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) the Catholic Church took a dramatic turn and leapt into what might be called modernity, and edged even beyond. It is to that last event I want to now turn, for it must be recalled that the Catholic Church has over one billion of the world’s population of six billion. If Catholics are significantly changed and each of them interacts with non-Catholics in important and ethical ways, two-thirds of the world would be significantly impacted.

A Fivefold Copernican Turn of the Catholic Church

Some refer to this dramatic turn in the Catholic Church as a Copernican turn, for, as in the 180-degree turn in astronomy led by Copernicus from geocentrism to heliocentrism, much of Christianity through Catholicism has made a dramatic turn in the last four decades. That fivefold turn included: 1) the turn toward a historical sense; 2) the turn toward freedom; 3) the turn toward this world; 4) the turn toward inner reform; and 5) the turn toward dialogue.

First, for centuries the thinking of official Catholicism was dominated by a static understanding of reality. It resisted not only the democratic and human rights movements of the 19th and 20th centuries, but also the growing historical, dynamic way of understanding the world, including religious thought and practice. That changed dramatically with the
Second Vatican Council (1962–65) where the historical, dynamic view of reality and doctrine was officially embraced.

Second, the image Catholicism projected at the end of the 1950s was of a giant monolith, a community of hundreds of millions who held obedience in both action and thought as the highest virtue. With Vatican II, however, this constraining image and reality was utterly transformed. Catholics became aware of their “coming of age,” and with it their freedom to think and choose as adults, as well as the corresponding responsibility of such choices. This was clearly expressed in many places, but the clearest document was Dignitatis Humanae, the “Declaration on Religious Liberty.”

Third, until recently, salvation was understood exclusively to mean a person’s going to heaven after death. As such, Catholicism tended to be more concerned with the next life than this one, and was often removed from issues of social justice. But that focus shifted radically with Vatican II, especially as reflected in the document, Gaudium et Spes, “The Church in the Modern World,” which launched a concern for shaping a just world in this life.

Fourth, since the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, the internal Catholic Church leadership was strongly opposed to even the use of the word “reform,” to say nothing of the reality. But Pope John XXIII called for the Second Vatican Council and spoke about “throwing open the windows of the Vatican” to let in fresh thought. He called this effort to bring the Church up to date an “aggiornamento.” Indeed, the Vatican II documents even used that painful word, “reformation.” In Unitatis Redintegratio, “The Decree on Ecumenism,” the Council declared, “Christ summons the Church, as she goes her pilgrim way, to that continual reformation of which she always has need,” and “All [Catholics] are led to . . . , wherever necessary, undertake with vigor the task of renewal and reform;” and all Catholics’ “primary duty is to make an honest and careful appraisal of whatever needs to be renewed and achieved in the Catholic household itself.”

Fifth, especially since the 16th century, the Catholic Church has been caught in a kind of solipsism, talking only to itself, and shaking its finger at the rest of the world. Again, Pope John XXIII and Vatican II changed an inward-looking posture to an outward one. Ecumenism was formerly forbidden and now “pertains to the whole Church, faithful and clergy
alike. It extends to everyone” (“The Decree on Ecumenism”). Pope Paul VI issued his first encyclical letter, *Ecclesiam suam*, in 1964 on dialogue:

Dialogue with children is not the same as dialogue with adults, nor is dialogue with Christians the same as dialogue with non-believers. But this method of approach is demanded nowadays by the prevalent understanding of the relationship between the sacred and the profane. It is demanded by the dynamic course of action which is changing the face of modern society. It is demanded by the pluralism of society, and by the maturity man has reached in this day and age. Be he religious or not, his secular education has enabled him to think and speak, and conduct a dialogue with dignity (#78).

At Vatican II, Catholics were taught in the “Constitution on the Church,” the “Declaration on Religious Liberty,” the “Decree on Ecumenism” and the “Declaration on the Relationship with Non-Christian Religions” that to be authentically Christian, Christians must a) cease being limited by their tribal forms of Christianity—they must stop their fratricidal hate; b) they need to recall their Jewish roots and the fact that the Jewish people today are still God’s chosen people—for God’s promises are never revoked; c) they need to turn from their convert-making among Muslims, Hindus, and other religious peoples and turn toward bearing witness to Jesus Christ by their lives and words, and toward helping Muslims be better Muslims and Hindus better Hindus. This will make Christians love their own liberating traditions not less, but more, for these traditions will then be even more fully Christian.

**Jewish-Christian-Muslim Dialogue**

I would like to reflect here further on dialogue. As the term is used today, dialogue is characterized as encounters between persons and groups with different religions or ideologies. In the past, when different religions or ideologies met, it was mainly to overcome or to prove the other wrong and to teach the other because each was completely convinced that it alone held the secret of the meaning of human life. More and more in recent times, people of good will and of different religions and ideologies
have slowly come to the conviction that they did not hold the secret of the meaning of human life entirely unto themselves and that in fact, they had something very important to learn from each other. As a consequence, they approached their encounters with other religions and ideologies not primarily in the teaching mode, holding the secret of life alone, but primarily in the learning mode, seeking to find more of the secret of the meaning of life. That is dialogue.

The question we are addressing in this series of dialogues is why it is important, beyond this general reason, for specifically Jews, Christians and Muslims to enter into dialogue. The impetus for dialogue in the contemporary world has come mainly from Christians and then from Jews. Thus, it is natural that when Islam enters into dialogue, it is most likely to first be with Christians and then Jews. To be sure, there is need for dialogue between Islam and Hinduism, and even Buddhism, as well is underlined almost daily in the newspaper reports of mutual hostility and killings in Kashmir, India, and elsewhere. But it is overwhelmingly the encounter with the other two Abrahamic religions, Judaism and Christianity, which has been the motor driving Islam toward dialogue. As a prolegomenon to understanding why this is true, it is important to list at least some of the major elements these three Abrahamic religions have in common.

Elements the Abrahamic Religions Have in Common

First, all three religions come from Semitic roots and claim Abraham as their originating ancestor. Second, the three traditions are religions of ethical monotheism, that is, they all claim there is one, loving, just, creator-God who is the supreme source, sustainer and goal of all reality and expects all humans, as beings created in the image of God, to live in love and justice. In other words, belief in God has ethical consequences concerning oneself, others, and the world. This is a common heritage of the three Abrahamic religions, which is by no means shared by all elements of the other major world religions. Third, the three traditions are historical religions, that is, they believe that God acts through human history and that God communicates through historical events, through particular human persons—preeminently Moses for Jews, Jesus for Christians,
and Muhammad for Muslims. Historical events—such as the exodus, crucifixion, and *hijrah*—as well as individual human agents do not play the same central role in many other world religions, as, for example, in Hinduism and Taoism.

Fourth, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are all religions of revelation, that is, they are convinced that God has communicated—revealed—something of God's own self and will in special ways through particular persons, for the edification, the salvation, or for the humanization of all humanity. In all three religions this revelation has two special vehicles: prophets and scriptures. In Judaism, the men prophets Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, Jeremiah, and the women prophets Miriam and Huldah, etc., are outstanding “mouthpieces” of Yahweh, and the greatest of all the prophets in Judaism is Moses. For Christianity, Moses and the other prophets are God’s spokespersons and also within the prophetic witnesses in early Christianity are Anna (Luke 2:36–38), and the two daughters of Philip (Eusebius, Eccl. Hist. III.31). Most of all, Jesus was originally understood to be a prophet, although most Christians later came to claim much more than prophethood for him. For Islam, the Jewish and Christian prophets are also authentic prophets, God's revealing voice in the world, and to that list they add Muhammad, the seal of the Prophets.

For these three faiths God's special revelation is also communicated in “The Book,” the “Bible.” For Jews, the Holy Scriptures are the Hebrew Bible or *Tanakh*; for Christians it is the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament; and for Muslims it is a selective inclusion of some of Jewish and Christian scriptures as well as the *Qur'an*, which is corrective and supercedes the first two. For Muslims, Jews and Christians have the special name: “People of the Book.”

There are many more things that the Abrahamic faiths have in common, such as the importance of covenant, law; faith, and community. But just looking at this brief list of commonalities will provide us only with an initial set of fundamental reasons why it is imperative for Jews, Christians, and Muslims to engage in serious, ongoing dialogue.

If Jews, Christians, and Muslims believe that there is only one, loving, just God in whose image they are created and whose will they claim to try to follow, then they need to face the question of why there are three different ways of worshiping the same God. Obviously that question can be faced only in dialogue. Also, if Jews, Christians, and Muslims believe
that God acts through human history, through historical events and particular human persons, then they need to face the question of whether all religiously significant historical events and persons are limited to their own histories. In other words, do Jews, Christians and Muslims believe that they have God in their own historical boxes or by their own principles, does God transcend all limitations, including even their sacred historical events and persons? Finally, if Judaism, Christianity, and Islam believe that God is revealed to humans not only through things, events, and human persons in general, but also in special ways through particular events and persons, then they are going to have to face the question of whether God's will as delivered through God's spokespersons, that is, the prophets and the Holy Scriptures, is limited to their own prophets and scriptures.

In concrete terms, Jews will have to reflect on whether Jesus and the writings of his first Jewish followers (the so-called New Testament) have something to say about God's will for humankind to non-Christians. Jews and Christians will have to reflect on whether the prophet Muhammad and the Qur'an have something to say about God's will for humankind to non-Muslims. Muslims already affirm the importance of the Jewish and Christian prophets and scriptures. These questions, and others of serious importance concerning the ultimate meaning of life, can be addressed only in dialogue among Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Once this is recognized, however, it also becomes clear that all the questions just listed which challenge the absoluteness and exclusivity of the three Abrahamic traditions' claims about truth, history, prophets, scriptures and revelation, could also apply to the non-Abrahamic religions and ideologies, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Marxism.

Different Dialogues, Different Goals

Pragmatically, one cannot engage in dialogue with all possible partners at the same time. Moreover, all the goals of one dialogue with a certain set of partners can never be fulfilled by another set of dialogue partners. For example, the goal of working toward denominational unity between the "Lutheran Church in America" and the "American Lutheran Church" would never have been accomplished if Catholics had been full
partners in that dialogue with Lutherans. Or again, Jews and Christians have certain items on their mutual theological agenda, e.g., the Jewish claim that the Messiah has not yet come and the Christian counterclaim, which will not be adequately addressed if Muslims are added as full partners. And so it goes with each addition or new mix of dialogue partners.

There is a special urgency about the need for Christians to dialogue among themselves to work toward the goal of some kind of effective, visible Christian unity: the absurdity and scandal of there being hundreds of separate churches all claiming “one foundation, Jesus Christ the Lord,” is patent. The need for intra-Jewish dialogue I will leave to my Jewish sisters and brothers to inform me about, but it nevertheless appears noticeable in general. However, for Christians, dialogue with Jews has an extraordinarily high priority that cannot be displaced, and where it has not been both initiated and continued, that exigency demands to be addressed with all possible speed and perseverance. If nothing else, the twentieth-century Holocaust of the Jews in the heart of Christendom makes this dialogue indispensable.

Nevertheless, there is something similar, though not precisely, to a relationship of parent and offspring which could incline Jews to enter into dialogue with Christians, and Christians with Muslims. Furthermore, there are today many reasons for Jewish-Christian dialogue with Islam that flow from the reality of the earth now being a global village and the unavoidable symbiotic relationship between the Judeo-Christian industrialized West and the partly oil-rich, relatively non-industrialized Islamic world.

Expectations from Triologue

A special word of caution to Jews and Christians entering into dialogue with Muslims is in order. They will be starting such a venture with several disadvantages: 1) the heritage of colonialism, 2) ignorance about Islam, 3) distorted image of Muslims, and 4) a culture gap.

The vast majority of Muslims trained in Islam’s beliefs and thought are non-Westerners, which means they likely come from a country that was until recently a colony of the West. Many Muslims are still traumatized by Western colonialism and frequently identify Christianity, and to
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a lesser extent Judaism, with the West. Jewish and Christian dialogue partners need to be aware of this and move to diffuse the problem. Jews and Christians will need to make a special effort to learn about Islam beyond what was required for them to engage in the Jewish-Christian dialogue, for in the latter they usually knew at least a little about the partner's religion. With Islam they will probably be starting with a negative quantity, compounded from sheer ignorance and massive misinformation.

Most often, the Western image of a Muslim is a gross distortion of Islam. Indeed, it is frequently that of some kind of inhuman monster. But the Ayatolla Khomeni distortion of Islam is no more representative of Islam than the Rev. Ian Paisley of Northern Ireland is of Christianity or the Jewish murderer of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin is of Judaism. Most difficult of all is the fact that a huge cultural gap exists between the great majority of Muslims and precisely those Jews and Christians who are open to dialogue. In brief: Islam as a whole has not yet experienced the Western “Enlightenment,” or “modernity,” and come to terms with it, as has much of the Judeo-Christian tradition, although obviously not all of it. Only a minority of Muslim Islamic scholars will share a “deabsolutized” understanding of truth needed to be able to enter into dialogue with “the other,” that is, to converse with the religiously “other” primarily to learn from her or him. This means that many attempts at dialogue with Muslims will, in fact, be foundational efforts and a preface to true inter-religious dialogue. Frequently such attempts will be not unlike a so-called “dialogue” with many Orthodox Jews or evangelical Christians or with Roman Catholics before Vatican II. But these foundational efforts and discussions must be experienced in order to reach authentic dialogue.

There is no short cut. Surely the words of the Second Vatican Council and Pope Paul VI included above apply in this case to all Christians and Jews and Muslims, who “must assuredly be concerned for their separated brethren . . . making the first approaches toward them . . . . Dialogue is demanded by the pluralism of society, and by the maturity man has reached in this day and age. Be he religious or not, his secular education has enabled him to think and speak, and conduct a dialogue with dignity.” (Ecclesiam suam #78) It is toward that end all Christians, Jews, and Muslims are urged to strive, first among themselves, and then with each other in pairs, and then all together.
Hans-Joachim Sander

God’s Own History: The Pastoral Process of Revelation

History offers the Church the opportunity and pastoral challenge to present God to the world. I dare to propose this as a Catholic abstract about the meaning of history for Christian faith. From this perspective, Catholic doctrine solves a problem the Church had to struggle with for centuries; namely, in a pastoral approach, the Church stands on the side of the eternal God and at the same time is deeply within an ever-changing world. The Church need not be disrupted by a power struggle to immunize itself against the real historical situations of people and can lead them to God without seeking to fight against approaches of other religions. On the contrary, Christians can find a language for the power of God, which can heal all wounds and create new life within the powerlessness of human beings and peoples suffering in history. Confessing faith in the eternal God means to look for the signs of the times revealing the decisive events for a human future or the danger of inhuman developments. The pastoral nature of the Church is born of the creative tension between the Gospel and the signs of the times. A pastoral contact with history frees Catholic theology to be curious about other religious traditions and their insights into the inner relationship between God and history. Pastorally conceived, history is concerned with making the world into a better place for human beings, and therefore is a fitting context for dialogue between Christians and other religions and also among themselves.

For the Catholic Church and Catholic theology, to come to terms with this framework of history is a major step, since it was not an
invention of Catholics to consider history as a basis for faith, religion, and God-talk. On the contrary, for most of their modern existence the Catholic Church and Catholic theology have tried to step aside as soon as it was confronted by religious arguments out of history. In the grammar of the Catholic world, one would look upon the Church and its faith as powers that transcended history. Both were viewed as elements in the world and in history, of course, but fundamentally they were thought of being nonhistorical so as not to be looked upon as products of social and mental developments but as realities with an eternal nature. To understand what Catholic theology and doctrine have to say about history, one has to begin by analyzing history as a ‘not-subject.’

1) The Not-Subject History—a Constitutive Element for the Church in Modern Times

For the modern Catholic Church, i.e. the Church after Reformation, there were reasons to avoid history in relation to Christian faith. Arguments out of histories and historical developments are always critical and these arguments could give the impression that faith and God are relative, especially as they confront plurality. Relativity means powerlessness to some extent; plurality means accepting the other to some extent. And powerlessness and otherness were not ideas the Church was eager to embrace after the Reformation. The ecclesial strategy to present the Church was societas perfecta, i.e., a complex analogy that rejected the model of the up-and-coming national states and their ever-growing influence. A societas perfecta is not constituted by history but by an ahistorical idea. In the case of the Church, this idea has a transcendent, theological origin; it is an idea of God. Therefore, the Church claimed to be a religious community with a transhistorical character. This religious community ought to be treated and had to be shaped as a social complex out of its own authority and rights, under the leadership of its own chosen personnel, territorial integrity, and with unique truth-claims not to be the subject of open debate by outsiders, and especially not open to a completely enlightened discourse. A strict line had been drawn between the inside and the outside of this religious community. History belonged to the outside. The relativity of history could be the subject of ecclesial
interest in relation to the world but it must not be brought into the inside as an ecclesial factor for this religious community. Such relativity was thought to certainly lead to the damage of the eternal purity of the truth which resided inside the Church.

It is easy to understand that, for most of the modern times, the Catholic tradition strictly tried to avoid this relativity and feared plurality. Catholic theology did not take part in the developments of the modern natural sciences or in the critical reviewing of the history of Holy Scripture. After the trial against Galileo Galilei, theology was not considered any longer as a serious partner in discourses about nature, which discussed the position of human beings in the universe in a relative and reduced way: Exegetical scholarship of the Old Testament and New Testament remained a more or less Protestant project until the encyclical “Divino Afflante Spiritu” in 1943, by Pope Pius XII. It was not by chance that while historicism held the intellectual leadership in Europe, Darwin’s evolution-theory uttered convincing arguments and data about the origin of life on this planet, and the theory of relativity became the most exciting perspective on the Universe; in theology, neoscholastics dominated the subjects to be treated and the debates to be followed. And neither these subjects nor those debates would raise serious points about the importance of history for dogma, the reality of evolution in faith-matters, or the meaning of relativity for God. The simple reason is that scholasticism is not able to take history seriously enough for presenting God’s presence in historical developments. Scholasticism deals with history only indirectly, in terms of authority. We will come back to this concept, which may be productive for another subject.

Only a very few theologians like the Dominicans Marie-Dominique Chenu and Yves Congar and the Jesuits Henri de Lubac and Karl Rahner were realizing that the relativity of history and the plurality of historical experiences give an excellent opportunity to present the universality of the Christian faith and the meaning of its doctrine for the others. This universality cannot be presented without serious debates with other people—ideas and realities outside of the Church. Such a debate urges one to deal critically with one’s own truth-claims. At the same time, the acceptance of plurality in history opens up a closed religious society for the truth-values of ideas and realities outside of the
Church. Acceptance of this relativity creates deeper relations with other religions and a higher respect for the historical experiences of other Christian denominations.

In the Catholic Church and theology, this did not happen before the end of the modern era. It belongs to the recent history of the Church that the Catholic tradition respects history as a primary locus to search for truth about God and on behalf of God's own presence in the world. This respect is one of the major achievements of the Second Vatican Council. This Council took place in the name of derived history and it discovered the bearing of historical concerns on the truth of Catholic doctrine while including the perspectives of others. At the Council's very beginning, Pope John XXIII urged the bishops to respect history as a "teaching master of life" and warned them not to follow those who viewed the world as nothing but decadence and evil. The pope saw that the Church had to take a major step to understand more deeply its own Christian faith and to present it to people over the world in a more convincing way.

The Council fathers followed the pope's vision and confronted the Catholic Church with a historical problem: the Church became the major subject of the Council. And under this confrontation with historical reality, the Council discovered the plurality of the Church and the value of oneness for its existence in God. The Church undertook a twofold self-examination: ecclesia ad intra and ecclesia ad extra, i.e. "Church, what do you present to yourself about yourself?" and "Church, what do you present to others about yourself?" Originally a plan of the Belgian Cardinal Suenens, this two-sided plurality became the cornerstone of the Council's doctrine. It led to the Council's two constitutions on the Church, the dogmatic constitution, Lumen Gentium [Dogmatic Constitution on the Church] and the pastoral constitution, Gaudium et Spes [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World]. Both deal with history and develop a doctrine out of a specific history of God relating with his people. Lumen Gentium presents God's solidarity with his own people wandering through its history; it looks into the Church's own path through the history of humankind to discover God's presence. Gaudium et Spes presents God's solidarity with every human being wandering through his or her own existence; it looks outside the Church to discover God's presence.
What *Lumen Gentium* teaches is that God’s history is with his people, beginning with the people of Israel, a people he called to himself and guided through the ages to be fulfilled at the end of time. This history is the history of the Church. The Church is the “People of God” constituted by the mystery of God’s presence in the community, but also constituted by all that hinders the Church to realize fully and completely what God’s own history with his people means for humankind. This means that the Church continually needs to be sanctified. In other words, in *Lumen Gentium*, the Church learned to look at itself and its ambiguous history—the Church finds sinners in its inner reality and is, at the same time, the holy Church deeply in need of purification. The Church has to follow the way of penitence and renovation again and again. Jesus Christ is God’s own history with humankind, but it is a history of the risen Christ from out of time and a history of the crucified Jesus from within time. In analogy to Jesus Christ’s two natures, the Church lives its own history out of a human and out of a divine element. The Church’s existence is realized in a historical and a transhistorical process, its reality presents a historically ordered society and a Christological mystery. Being the Body of Christ, the Church is a social being with a historical being and a transhistorical becoming.

What *Gaudium et Spes* teaches about history is that God’s history is with every human being. It is a special history: the vocation every woman, every man, every child has received as a free gift from God. There is a divine seed in every human being and the Church seeks to cooperate with all humankind to build a community of brothers and sisters with equal rights to life. This divine vocation is not specifically prescribed but can be interpreted as a call to every human being to become a full human being. Everyone is called by God to behave humanly and not to behave abhumanly or even to act by inhuman deeds. This vocation is a history of God with every human being and the Church has to serve this history. So whatever deep human experience or dangers of inhumanity that people are confronted with, the Church must be open to and realize its history in solidarity with the histories of all people. In consequence, the Gospel cannot be presented by the Church without its relation to history. The Church must address those events that have a significant meaning for what is human and what is inhuman in the present time. These significant facts in history are the “signs of the times.” In discerning and
realizing these signs right now, the Church is led into a contrast between history and the Gospel, and this contrast opens up God’s presence in history as well as the human meaning of the Gospel. On the other hand, this process is constitutive for those actions that are significant for the history Christ has built for the Church. This twofold constellation was called “pastoral” by the Council. Pastoral processes are constitutive for the Church in the actual world.

This is the appropriate doctrinal framework for Catholics to approach history. This teaching, pastorally shaped by Vatican II, is the first and primary answer for the question: “What Do We Want the Other to Teach About the Catholic Historical Tradition?” This teaching has built a locus theologicus (a locus for theology) to wrestle with history in terms of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit and to shape religion in a manner necessary for the faith of the Church. God’s pastoral relation with humankind and his presence in relation to the signs of the times constitutes a history that transforms the Church from a purely religious community to primarily a pastoral one.

The pastoral perspective also solves the challenges of relativity, plurality and relativism to the Christian faith. The community of faith lives in deep solidarity with all peoples, with every human being on earth. It cannot find its own inner and outer actuality by God and in front of God if this community avoids others. Who they are, how they live, what they are suffering from, what they are longing for—all of these things are the subjects for a pastoral transformation of history. In the pastoral framework, one’s own history does not necessarily come first. Rather it is God’s history with humankind in the first place. So, the Church is always a secondary historical consideration when compared with the first. It is this pastoral turnaround of doctrine that enables the Church to engage in a real and intense dialogue with other religions. At the same time, dialogue takes on a realistic character and will have a pastoral meaning, or it will not be able to change the world into a better place for people and their relationship with God. From this perspective, one can freely examine the major issues of the religious community of the Church that have been marked by history. Some examples are the issues of the Church’s origin, the nonidentity between Scripture and Tradition, papal infallibility, human rights and religious pluralism. In all of these matters, the pastoral nature of doctrine makes
a significant difference. Of course, one has to start with what comes first.

2) Jesus and the Kingdom of God—Religious Origin and Difference of Christian Faith

In the Catholic tradition, the Gospels have always been given preference before Paul’s letters. The perspective of the Kingdom of God had a deeper impact on the Church than justification. “Kingdom” marks a concept of power and justification, not one of powerlessness. In the Kingdom of Heaven there is the presumption of ruling people, whereas in justification the individual is given dignity and the choice to respond to God in faith. However, Jesus’ Gospel of God’s Kingdom and Paul’s teaching of the risen Christ are not contradictory to each other. Both are linked by a healing mixture of power and powerlessness, which is a specific Christian perspective and may be common ground for ecumenical discourse among Christians. Nevertheless, both messages imply a contrast, which in special contexts, may grow to intellectual, cultural and political difficulties and did so in the past. These harsh difficulties do not necessarily come out of the perspective of powerlessness in front of an overwhelming history of sin, but rather out of a perspective of power in front of an overwhelming concurrence of power.

The constellation of Jesus with his Kingdom of God and Paul with his teaching of justification brings forward another problem of plurality and relativity caused by history. One of the reasons that the Catholic tradition is linked much deeper with the Kingdom of God than a longing to be justified comes out of the communitarian aspect of Jesus’ history. Jesus was surrounded by a community of followers (disciples) and his words and deeds prestructured this community. Both are an experience of power. The Church started up from these historical experiences and looked upon itself as faithfully and loyal fulfilling the will of Jesus for all peoples’ history. This position gave to the Church a historical identity and a basis for a will-to-power in human history after Jesus’ death. In the first centuries of Christian era, this will-to-power saved the Church while suffering from bloody oppression. It was understood that whatever happened was God’s will. The early Christians realized that their life in God could not be
stopped by an opposite will of any emperor on earth. The history of God's people would not lie in the hands of temporary powers and forces. As Saint Augustine put it, Christians are the civitas Dei (city of God), not to be identified with civitas terrena (city of the earth); but at the same time Christians could not be separated from earthly problems in a dualistic Manichean-like manner. The solution was that the historical destiny of the Church must therefore lie in the hands of an atemporal power. We will return to what this power is all about.

After Constantine, the ecclesial will-to-power would grow into a greater, historical horizon. It was the timely impetus of a religious community looking for intellectual and political leadership on earth. This resulted in the millennial struggle between Christians and non-Christians, between pope and emperor, between representatives of the Church and the different peoples on earth, between the Reformation and Counter-reformation, between the Holy See and the national states, between revolution and restoration, between science and faith, between the Enlightenment and Scholasticism, between integralism and democracy, between the working poor and clerical moralists, between fundamentalism and modernism, and between mission and religious pluralism. One of the major aims of Christians, especially Catholics, was not to be overpowered by any other religious, social, cultural, or political power. In this historical struggle, the Church conquered one powerful position after another until the beginning of the modern times at the end of 15th century. But this time in history, under different circumstances and in a more pluralistic context, the Church had to give up position after position in terms of power. These experiences deeply and negatively shaped the Church's attitude toward secular history in modern times. They were understood as a deprivation of God's own history with humankind. For example, it was quite difficult for a theologian like Karl Rahner to defend a position relating the secular history and the history of salvation to each other. Rahner did not say that they were more or less the same. But he saw an inner relation between both and encouraged the Church to realize God's anonymous presence in the midst of secular history. Until Vatican II this position was vigorously attacked by the theological and ecclesial mainstream. The pastoral turnaround of Vatican II changed the picture completely.

A historical event like Vatican II cannot be explained by a historical logic; this would be an idealistic, Hegelian-like misunderstanding of the
open field of history. Nevertheless, one can name systematic reasons why this process materialized. Jesus had primarily taught about and stood for the Kingdom of God, not the institutional Church that had developed over time. Both are intertwined with each other, but they are not identical. As a consequence, one has to relate the Kingdom of God to the Church, but this relation contains a historical problem since the Kingdom of God has an eschatological quality. The Kingdom of God cannot be fully realized now, although its presence right now is what is most important for us to consider. There is a relation, and at the same time, a difference between being and becoming. This difference has to be accounted for when looking to the meaning of history for Christians. This has a large impact on the historical problem of Christian faith itself. Whatever power Christians are able to accumulate in the history of humankind is not necessarily the actual status or sign of the Kingdom of God, a kingdom for which Jesus gave his life and out of which God has revealed his Christological character. The power the Church is obliged to seek historically is the power of the Kingdom of God and not the earthly power of civitas terrena. But the Kingdom of God is a reality of historical power since "Kingdom" represents power. But the grammar of this power is based on powerlessness. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 functions that way. So, the major difference between the Church and political powers is not set by a different will-to-power but by the grammar this will has to pay attention to in Jesus’ example.

The power of the Kingdom of God does not fear powerlessness but evolves out of it. This grammar is very important to solve a historical problem that is even more difficult than the relation between Church and the Kingdom of God. This historical problem is Jesus himself and the relation of the Church to him. Jesus represents the historical origin of the Church. Without his existence there would be no Christian faith, no Christian community and no ecclesial history. But this historical origin implies a special religious problem. The founder of Christianity is not a member of the ecclesial community starting with his history. Jesus was a Jew, not a Christian. And it appears that he had no intention whatsoever to be someone else in religious terms. As far as we know, he wanted to and did remain a Jew his entire life. The very founding figure of the Christian community does not stand in the midst of this community but—historically speaking—witnessed outside of it. This is
very disturbing for Christians to encounter, and it has been a source for violence.

For a long time, Christians tried to close and destroy the gap between Jesus the Jew, and themselves, the non-Jews. This resulted in Christians fighting and overpowering Jews and Judaism in the history of Christian Europe. This was a strategy of power. And it failed completely in human history. The religious gap between Jesus the Jew and Christians following Jesus cannot be closed, especially not by means of historical power. But it can be lived with by means of powerlessness. Powerlessness is a historical concept for the restored and proper relation between Jews and Christians; i.e., Christians cannot do anything else other than accept this gap between Jesus and their own religious community as God’s will. Historically and systematically Jews represent the otherness of the Christian faith. This otherness is the historical basis for Christians themselves. The otherness does not mean that Jews have to be forced to be incorporated into the Christian Churches but that these Churches have to look to be accepted by Jews. Jews can live religiously without relation to Christians; they can live out of their own religious relationship to God in historical terms. But Christians cannot exist in the tradition of their historical origin without a welcoming relation with Jews. This is the Christian powerlessness in history. But this powerlessness brings them close to the very founding figure of their historical existence. For Christians, the Jews are the necessary historical bridge to Jesus.

This does not mean that Christians have to become Jews or have to become Jews first before becoming Christians. And this does not deny Paul’s concept that all people have an independent access to the resurrected Jesus. On the contrary, Paul’s concept of a mission to all people (1 Corinthians 9) remains the religious strategy Christians must employ throughout history. But neither does this mean that the Jewish origin of Christians is past history. There exists a major power standing between Jews and Christians. This power is not Jesus. Jesus is standing on the Jewish side; his historical position is not in-between. The power attacking all relations between Jews and Christians is violence, a short history of violence by Jews against Christians and a very long history of violence by Christians against Jews. Without resisting this power, violence will rule over every positive, healthy relation between both religions. When one deals honestly with the question of historical guilt and confronts
one's religious community with the violence that has stood and continues to stand between Jews and Christians, one is resisting the power of violence. This subversive action is a religious task. At the same time, this resistance is building the bridge for Christians to come to Jesus the Jew. In this sense, there is no future for Christians without clearing up the history they have in common with Judaism. Christians can use this bridge as soon as they realize and present their sins to Jews. Without naming their historical sins toward Jews, Christians will lose their historical origin. This is a harsh truth for Christians but it is redeeming from the terrible habit of resentment. Resentment feeds all kinds of triumphal attitudes over the failure of others and opens the door to violence. Religions that run into situations of concurrence with each other, risk being lured to resentment against each other. One has to take this danger into account if one aims at a successful and creative religious dialogue.

There is no religion without weak points and without real religious strength. For a dialogue between religions that is led by a pastoral aim, there is only one possible strategy: to search for the religious strength of the other. The strength of the other is of great interest, especially for Catholics after Vatican II. The pastoral redefinition of doctrine by Vatican II cannot work with resentment against others but encourages solidarity with all human beings and welcomes the contrast in the signs of the times and the Gospel. The pastoral effort depends on the ability to realize the genuine human situation and to find ways to improve the living conditions for all people. For Catholics, the religious strength of the Christian faith does not depend on the weakness in the faiths of other religions, especially not in the case of the Jewish faith. In fact, the pastoral strength of Christians is to realize and to accept the strength of the other. This is not an act of philanthropy, owing to a civilized behavior in modern pluralistic societies, but an act of religious necessity, even an act in the religious self-interest of Christians. In realizing and accepting this strength of the other, Christians can realize their own weaknesses and can learn how to overcome them.

For Christian-Jewish dialogue this is a very important point. Christians can never avoid religious relations with Jews, simply because Jesus was a Jew. In the past, there was too much resentment from Christians against Jews. In societies with Christian majorities, there was a
forceful interest to seeing that Jews were powerless. As soon as Jews found ways to gain social and political power, the Christian majority found ways to counter strike this power. Anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism are strategies with such an aim; it is not by chance that they are full of resentment. They cannot be political forces without nurturing resentment against Jews. Of course, it is possible that there is weakness even in the Jewish religion. But for Christians with a pastoral perspective toward the other, it is not this weakness that is the proper focus of Christian-Jewish dialogue. For Christians, the strength of Judaism and Jews is important and any weakness is a reality to be dealt with by Jews. But their strength is a true value for Christians. In a dialogue between Jews and Christians it belongs to the strength of Jews to have a living memory of the violence that Christians have unleashed on Jews for centuries. By realizing this strength, Christians have the opportunity to be confronted with their own guilt. This guilt can become a religious weakness of Christians and give birth to new resentment unless there is repentance. The strength of Jews forces Christians to find ways to confess this guilt and to overcome the destructive force of resentment.\(^{14}\)

This structure of being close to the strength of the other by setting a distance to a false history in one’s own tradition is significant for the Christian faith. It even marks the concept of revelation that Christians are obliged to present in the history of humankind.

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3) Scripture and Tradition—Discursive Continuity and Discontinuity of Christian Revelation

Revelation is a key concept for history in the theological tradition. It is in itself a historical event, because it is done and communicated by language. It is not essential for revelation to be an actual spoken word but it has to be something that can be presented. There is no language without context or without representation. Both are historical facts. If there exists a revelatory language that has meaning to realize who and what God is, then God has a history of his own. It is not a history like that of humans with a clear beginning and a definite end in time. It is a history of language with a real context and an actual meaning for human beings. It is not a history meaningful only for Christians or something like a specific
Catholic history, but rather, God's history touches the entire human race. This history is a gift for all people to live a more-human life.

In the case of revelation confessed by Christians, this language is a twofold affair: Scripture and Tradition, the Bible and the dogmatic tradition of the Church. For a long time many thought that these were identical with the revelation itself. But if so, then one has to face a difficult problem: Which of the two languages is more revelatory? Which is more powerful in terms of revealing God? Which has more force for closing the gap between God and the world? This has been a major subject between Protestants and Catholics since the Reformation. It is the question of "sola Scriptura," the word of the Bible alone, and on the other hand, the question of Scripture and Tradition with a higher value placed on Tradition. For centuries this problem separated the major Christian denominations. Each thought to stand for the only truth and therefore, each denomination sought to claim more authenticity and authority to present God. At the same time, these claims for a higher authority in the language of revelation meant more power-claims over the other. The religious wars in Baroque Europe are a result of these claims.

In Vatican II, the dogmatic constitution, Dei Verbum, Catholics found a solution for this thorny problem: they gave up the strategy that there is more power in one of these languages and decided that both languages must be interwoven with powerlessness. They have to be treated as language forms to bring revelation to the hearers of the Word. But the revelatory event is not the Bible itself and not Tradition itself. Neither of the two has the power to be the complete manifestation of God. Scripture can be treated simply as a book and this cannot be stopped by the force of Scripture itself. On the contrary, the method, historical criticism, was developed by people working with the Bible. And Tradition can also be treated simply as a history of religious ideas and there are no means in Tradition to overcome such a treatment.

Nevertheless, in both there is revelation and in both one can experience the power of revelation. But no Scripture and no Tradition have the power of revelation alone. Revelation itself is God presenting himself and designating his will of salvation for every human being. There is revelation in Scripture and in Tradition, but in the sense that they are forms to communicate this revelation to people all over the world and
through all times still to come. They belong to the transmission of Divine Revelation. Therefore, Scripture can always be a critical counterbalance toward Tradition. In this sense, the critical enterprise of biblical scholarship is a gift for the systematic enterprise of dogmatic theology. Otherwise the communication of revelation and revelation itself can be dangerously mixed with each other. So, neither by Scripture nor by Tradition can one get an unbroken hold of God’s revelatory power. It is a pastoral strategy to be confronted with revelation itself in terms of powerlessness. It is God presenting himself to humans as a friend. No one is the owner of revelation but everyone can be inspired by it through Scripture and Tradition. In this pastoral framework of revelation another controversial problem can be solved, namely the special truth claims in the papal grammar of Catholic tradition.

4) Authority and Infallibility—Ecclesial Topology of Catholic Doctrine

At the beginning, I said that Catholics did not employ history as a basis to present God because they feared the relativity inherent in such an enterprise. But of course, Catholics were confronted with the problem of history like any other religious community in modern times. In the modern period, no religious standpoint could avoid dealing with history. During the 16th century, a relevant question became the discussion of how arguments are able to produce authority, especially after the Reformation because the unity of history had come to an end; the one truth for all had fallen apart into different truth claims. By searching for loci theologici; i.e., searching in theology for a language with authority in terms of God’s presence on behalf of faith, theology began a new intellectual enterprise. It is that what is now called “dogmatic.” Doing God-talk in dogmatic terms is a modern product and it results from a new historical era.

Papal infallibility belongs to this program of the loci theologici. Doctrine and Dogma in the Catholic faith is understood in the tension of history and eternity. Infallibility stands for a locus to be active in history by terms of faith. Whatever proposition of faith is marked with the
authority of papal infallibility, must have authority within history. Its truth is not "produced" by the pope but the pope can and has to trust in the truth of this proposition. If the pope produced the truth then history would not matter. But this is not the doctrine of papal infallibility, although it is often misunderstood in this way. Such a misunderstanding must read authority ahistorically and mixes it with power. In practical terms, a proposition of faith is not true because the pope says so, but rather, the pope can define and has to define a proposition if it is true. Vatican II adds a pastoral character to doctrine and raises the need of people to find a public voice in situations of social, political and religious danger for their humanity and the necessity of the pope to confront the world with the truth about this human situation. So, human rights become a major field for papal pronouncements. In this perspective, religious dialogue is no longer an intellectual enterprise between scholars of religions but has to be viewed as a social and religious contribution to the welfare of humankind.

The doctrinal authority of the pope is a strong help for promoting the importance of religious dialogue. In the case of dialogue between Jews and Christians this is already a historical fact. Papal authority was necessary for the religious paradigm shift of Catholicism toward Jews. If the pope wants to improve this dialogue, no one in the Catholic Church can stop it. But the pope has to do it and did it because of pastoral considerations. Without this dialogue, the truth of Christian faith cannot be presented in the world of our times. Slowly and convincingly this dialogue has become a locus theologicus of our times. As a consequence, the dialogue between Jews and Christians presents an older dogmatic perspective: history is the place to act with infallibility. Therefore, the pope is a historical figure and is able to represent the doctrine of the whole Church in the present situation of history. But at the same time, history is the problem for papal infallibility. Whatever is presented with such an authority has to be presented within a historical situation. So, it has to remain an authority within history and has to deal with the authority of history itself. Papal infallibility is necessarily related to pluralism. It cannot work without pluralism. It is not an ahistorical power in the sense of absolutism. It means a historical power in the sense of pastoral relativism and this does not deny its ability to stand up for real truths.
5) Human Rights and Plurality of Religions—Historical Confrontation and Opportunity for a Catholic Identity in Postmodern Times

In the modern times humankind had to learn a harsh lesson. If one does not respect the elementary rights of every human being in society, the horror of violence will rule and in the end everyone will be victimized by this violence. These rights are the human rights. They are not a product of historical powers; i.e., states, religions, churches, or economies. On the contrary, they come out of a powerless resistance against such powers. And this struggle is far from over. The invention of human rights by the powerlessness of basic human resistance against public violence was a harsh lesson for the churches to learn too. There is no religious community in the modern Christian tradition that has not violated elementary human rights in its religious history. So, for the Church, it is a major step to respect and champion human rights, because such a stance helps to overcome a sinful history and pattern. In Vatican II, the Catholic Church had the courage to take this step and even accepted a schism for the recognition of religious freedom as a divine commandment. Inevitably, human rights do mean relativity for the claims of any religious community, especially for the claim to be the sole religious power for people.

Religious truth claims have to be presented from a different perspective if human rights are to be respected by a religious community such as the Church. In the Catholic tradition we are standing in the midst of this historical process that is far from over. Two recent examples point to positive advances in authentically presenting Catholic truth claims. First, the Catholic Church does respect the plurality of religions and of religious truth claims. The doctrine of Vatican II—the declaration about religious freedom, Dignitatis Humanae, and the declaration about the relationship of the Church with non-Christian religions Nostra Aetate—empowered this kind of recognition. This means that Catholics are called to treat with respect all human truths that other religions have found in their history. This respect is owed to the pastoral enterprise. Second, the Church recognizes its historical guilt in relation to other religious people and violations of their human rights. Without a confession of guilt, the truths of the Catholic historical tradition cannot be presented convincingly or with integrity. Pope John Paul II’s reconciliatory act at the Day of Pardon on March 12, 2000, significantly empowered this enterprise.25
This act is owed to the pastoral framework of the Christian faith. The Church has taken an important historical step toward the future locus of the Christian faith in the midst of humanity. These two examples are significant for the future of the Catholic tradition in terms of its authentic historical memory and future identity. Based on these initial advances, there is hope that the Catholic historical tradition will have meaning for humanity in general because it gives a small hint for God’s own history within human history.

Notes


3. ibid., Nr. 15, 135–137.


5. Gaudium et Spes, n. 2, Denzinger-Huenermann, 4302.


7. Lumen Gentium, n. 8, Denzinger-Huenermann, 4120.

8. Lumen Gentium, n. 8, Denzinger-Huenermann, 4118.

9. Gaudium et Spes, n. 3, Denzinger-Huenermann, 4303

10. Gaudium et Spes, n. 4, Denzinger-Huenermann, 4304


14. The declaration of Vatican II about the Relationship of the Church with Non-Christian Religions Nostra Aetate, is the decisive step toward a dialogue that overcomes resentment toward the Jews. The focus of this declaration lies in the strength of the Jewish religion and of the lasting relationship between God and the Jews. The Christians are described as “Abrahamae filios secundum fidem” (n. 4, Denzinger-Huenermann 4198); they depend on the strength of the Jewish faith. In consequence the Church had to stand up against resentment toward the Jews: “Judei tamen neque ut a Deo reprobat neque ut maledicti exhibeantur” (ibid.). The tribute to this resentment by Christians during the history of the Church is not yet thoroughly discussed in Nostra Aetate. Pope John Paul II’s lasting contribution to the Christian-Jewish dialogue is the naming of this guilt at the Day of Pardon in March, 2000.


17. The doctrinal basis for Vatican II’s declaration Nostra aetate was the importance Pope John XXIII issued to this subject; his famous welcoming address to a Jewish delegation in 1960 is much more than an anecdote. His words, “Son io, Giuseppe, il fratello vestro! (It’s me, Joseph, your brother)” was a sign for the path the dialogue between Jews and Catholics may realize and still has to realize. With Pope John Paul II’s many dialogues with Jewish religious leaders this doctrinal strategy has become irreversible in the Church.


19. Papal infallibility and papacy in general are subjects to a new theological discourse. This is a result of the invitation by the Pope toward all Christian denominations to discuss the role papacy may play for all Christians. Cf. John R. Quinn, The reform of papacy. The costly call to Christian unity, New York: Crossroad, 1999. See also Hermann J. Pottmeyer’s proposal for a „primacy in communion”, in Hermann J. Pottmeyer, Toward a papacy in communion. Perspectives from Vatican I & II, New York: Crossroad, 1998. From my point of view, the meaning of pastoral relativity is underestimated in this discussion.

the Roman Catholic magisterium takes its own Biblical Commission. So, the instance of Matthew 16:18 is a good example how historical investigation—or the neglect of it—can improve or harm theological statements and pastoral approaches. Professor Sander’s paper provides an important and necessary correction by allowing the historical dimension to play a decisive part in theology, which makes theology more human and more attentive to the needs of individual, concrete people.

The Catholic Church has long identified itself as the institution founded by Jesus to embody the Kingdom of God on earth. And it has identified its own tradition with the intention of Holy Scripture. Both identifications have led to a triumphalistic, self-assured theology and pastoral method. It is to be regarded as great progress that the Catholic Church has revisited and sought to correct the historical distance between itself and Jesus the Jew, his proclamation of the Kingdom of God and the Holy Scriptures. This includes a new, honest view by the Catholic Church in its relation to Judaism. Much progress has been made recently, but much more needs to be accomplished.

Another important point that Professor Sander presents is that a historical approach allows for development and progress in defining the Catholic faith. The New Testament does not deal with concepts such as human rights or religious pluralism as they are understood in the modern world. Only after the Catholic Church allowed for new insights given by God in the course of history, was the acceptance of human rights and religious pluralism possible. This acceptance is still fragile and disputed, but the Second Vatican Council laid the foundation on which the Catholic Church must proceed.

Judaism is credited with being open to and articulating God’s self-revelation in history with his people. The Jewish tradition is the prime example for how the historical dimension of faith contributes to a better understanding of God and others. Christian theology is well-advised never to marginalize this historical inheritance from Judaism. Thus, the main point of convergence Professor Sander’s paper presents to Judaism’s and Protestant Christianity’s understanding of history is that finally Catholic Christianity is prepared to take the historical dimension of faith as seriously as they do. The Second Vatican Council marks the official paradigm change for the Catholic Church in accepting this historical dimension. Of course, individual Catholic theologians had long before
text and institution means that the institution will eventually fail its own mission, its reason for its own existence.

Professor Sander also emphasized the idea of “powerlessness,” which is inherent in using the historical approach in theology. By taking their histories seriously, Jewish and Christian theologians are indeed challenged to accept their own powerlessness vis-à-vis the revealing God. As in Jesus’ parables or in the apostle Paul’s doctrine of justification, God is acting as the subject of history and invites us to be humble and faithful disciples.

The historical approach is best suited to enhance understanding and cooperation between Jews and Christians, and also between Lutheran and Catholic Christians. We should acknowledge the clear distinction between historical reconstructions and developments and how each of us interprets those reconstructions and developments. In the case of scholarly investigation, the biblical or historical scholar should not try to be a better systematic theologian, although the systematic theologian should take exegetical and historical insights seriously as the foundation and inspiration for her or his work. Both the historical and the systematic approaches have their own right, and both can learn from each other. But a perfect harmony between them is not the ideal; the ideal is critical exchange and dialogue.

The exegetical and historical disciplines are indeed, a good example of how Jews and Christians can work well together. Think about Jewish and Christian authors in the Anchor Bible Commentary series and in the new Herder Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament series. In New Testament studies, the cooperation of authors from different denominations is common in the Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar series and in the Okumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar series. At exegetical or historical conferences such as the Society of Biblical Literature’s annual meetings, there is excellent cooperation between Jewish and Christian scholars. The differences, however, must become visible when the exegetical and historical data is interpreted in a systematic fashion. Key historical concepts, such as the primary events of Revelation, Scripture, Tradition, faith, covenant, and community are viewed differently in Jewish, Lutheran, or Catholic statements of faith. The agreement in exegetical/historical reconstruction, but disagreement in the interpretation of it, must be made transparent and must be
What Do We Want the Other to Teach About the Recent History of Protestant-Jewish Dialogue?

From November 5 to November 10, 2000, the synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, EKD) met in Braunschweig. The synod was followed by a publication called “A Statement on Christians and Jews, 50 Years after the Declaration of Weißensee.” The publication referred to a text which marks a tremendous turning-point in the development of Protestant-Jewish relations in Germany: the declaration of the synod of the EKD in Berlin-Weißensee, which was passed in April 1950.

Today, more than 50 years later, we are looking back and we are trying to recall what has been achieved in the Protestant-Jewish dialogue of the last 50 years. Examining the reasons for the often fatal attitude of the Church toward Judaism, the Declaration of Berlin-Weißensee admits that the church was “involved in the systematic destruction of European Judaism by the fateful tradition of alienation from and hostility toward Judaism. This theological tradition made attempts to form a new relationship with the Jewish people very hard and led to a delay.”

This is a rather cautious statement. Klaus Haacker, New Testament scholar in Wuppertal, had expressed the same facts with more detail in his essay, “The Holocaust as a Date in the History of Theology:” “The contribution of the Christians to the Holocaust was presumably mainly
the spreading of a naive anti-Judaism, which was almost universal, and which paved the way for the militant, racist anti-Semitism. This naive anti-Judaism cannot be overcome with a programmatic philo-Judaism, but only with a patient and complete inspection of the whole theological tradition of the church.” I hold the view that Haacker speaks rightly of a “date” in the history of theology. I am picking up the semantics of the word referring to its Latin root when saying: it is something that has been given, it is a task that has been set. Thus, examining the shortcomings and failures of the church in regard of the Holocaust was the most important step toward a new beginning of a Christian-Jewish dialogue.

The main reason why the Protestant churches came up with a reassessment of Christian-Jewish relations after 1945 was the realization that church authorities and Christian theology had been involved in the millionfold murder of Jewish people. Haacker claims that the naive anti-Judaism, which had spread among Christians, made the paralysis of church and theology regarding the genocide understandable. He also says that it was naive anti-Judaism that paved the way to militant anti-Semitism. Haacker does not speak of a direct link between the ecclesiastical anti-Judaism and the racist anti-Semitism. However, we do have to be aware of the relation between the two. It is not an easy task at all to overcome old traditions, even if they have always been wrong. Only a “patient and complete inspection of the whole theological tradition of the church” can make a new beginning possible.

Being aware of this terrible time in history, which overshadows Christian-Jewish relations up to this very day, I have often been amazed about the fact that there is a dialogue between Christians and Jews at all. I am grateful for this dialogue. In order to maintain and strengthen the dialogue, it is essentially necessary to be constantly aware of the mistakes of Christian Theology regarding Judaism. One major mistake was a Christian ecclesiology that denied Israel’s continuing election by God. I will deal with this crucial point in detail toward the end of this paper.

This paper is divided into three parts: I) the most important stages of the Protestant-Jewish dialogue since 1945; II) the development during the last two decades; and III) some important perspectives for Christian-Jewish dialogue in the future.
In order to regain contact with the international ecumenical movement after 1945, German Protestant church leaders were forced by their ecumenical partners to express somehow that the churches in Germany had a share of the blame. In October 1945, such an admission was attempted in the so-called Stuttgart Confession (Stuttgarter Schuldbekennnis): "Endless suffering was brought upon peoples and countries by us. . . . We accuse ourselves of not having stood up more courageously, of not having prayed more faithfully, of not having believed more happily and of not having loved more dearly." In my opinion, this is not a confession, but a list of shortcomings. And the crime against the Jewish people did not play a role in this text of 1945.

Another confession from the time after the Second World War, the so-called ‘Word of Darmstadt’ (1947) was more precise in naming the guilt. But the murder of the Jews was not mentioned either. In 1948, the so-called Council of brothers of the Evangelical church in Germany (Bruderrat der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland) passed a declaration which was called “Word concerning the Jewish question.” The council clearly speaks about the guilt of the Christians concerning the Jews. Disappointingly, it goes on to name all false traditional theological aspects of Israel’s rejection: Israel had crucified its Messiah and thus lost its election and its position as the chosen people. Therefore, it was the church that had been turned into the chosen people. Israel was under the curse of God and therefore a constant warning for the Christian community not to mock God. To treat the Shoah as a mere warning was an unbearable offense not only to Jews and thwarted the document’s intended purpose. Moreover, the declaration was lacking a fundamental questioning of previous Christian positions. Church authorities tried to carry on where they left off in 1933. After 1945, only few churches issued words of repentance, which went beyond the general statements of the Stuttgart Confession.

A reorientation on the level of the Evangelical Church in Germany began with the declaration of the synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) in Berlin-Weißensee in 1950. The declaration constitutes a major turning point. Seven issues were mentioned, which have had a tremendous impact on all further developments. These seven subjects dominate the conversation even today.
1) Jesus the Jew  
2) the Church—consisting of (former) Jews and gentiles  
3) God’s enduring promise to His chosen people Israel after the crucifixion of Jesus  
4) the Christians’ responsibility for the persecution and death of (the) Jews  
5) Christians are asked to accept God’s judgment  
6) the rejection of anti-Semitism and  
7) the plea for eschatological completion together with the saved Israel  

“God’s promise to His chosen people, Israel, remained unchanged after the crucifixion of Jesus.”¹⁰ This point of view, which occurs in the Berlin-Weiβensee declaration for the first time in an EKD document, has become dominant in almost all ecclesiastical declarations. God’s promise to Israel to be His chosen people remains valid.¹¹ The covenant has not been terminated. However, these ecclesiastical declarations did not yet reflect the predominant opinion of theological teachers and church members. This is the reason why those declarations could only function as a prospect, but not as a description of the status quo.  

We could sum up the conflicts in Christian-Jewish relations of the 1960s with the heading: dialogue versus proselytizing. This time was mainly dominated by the conflict between supporters of the dialogue and supporters of the mission among the Jews.¹² There were people, especially on the Lutheran side, who rejected the core statement of the declaration of Berlin-Weiβensee.¹³ Looking back, we have to admit that sometimes they argued in strange ways.  

Following an international consultation of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) in Logumkloster, Denmark (1964), the ‘Study-Committee for Church and Judaism’ of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) was established in 1967, and the ‘Study Group Church and Judaism’ of the United Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Germany (VELKD) in 1968. In 1975, the first EKD study of the EKD-study-committee “Christians and Jews” was published.¹⁴ It was a central aim of this study to make a consensus among Protestants possible. This study was another major step after Berlin-Weiβensee. Even its structure was different from what had been issued before. It contains three parts: 1) The reflection on common roots of Jews and Christians, and an important
decision on fundamental principles: Jews are considered to be partners of Christians and not to be recipients of Christian goodwill; 2) The partings of the ways, which deals with the different interpretations of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible and with Jewish as well as the Christians' self-understanding as God's-chosen people; and 3) Christians and Jews today have strong possibilities for developing their relationship.

The EKD study commission is significant, because Jewish members have been included in the discussions from the very beginning. So it has not just been Christians reflecting on their relationship toward Judaism, but the study has been a common task for Christians and Jews. The EKD study of 1975 helped to cope with the burdens of the past and made it possible for Jews and Christians involved in dialogue to meet as partners.

During the 1980s, several declarations were passed by various Protestant regional churches in Germany, starting with the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland in January 1980. The resolution of the synod of the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland was a very important step in the development of Christian-Jewish dialogue. It was a resolution of a church synod that had legal power, and not simply a commission's study such as that of the EKD in 1975. The resolution of the synod of the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland was the first attempt to go beyond the description of the status quo. It had the same motto as the EKD study of 1975: “Thou bearest not the root, but the root thee” (Rom 11:18). Various statements in the synod's resolution have given rise to vehement debates. Examples include:

1. The historical necessity of a renewal of the relationship, mainly because of the Shoah.
2. The perception of Jesus as “Jew, as the Messiah of Israel, and the saviour of the world, who joins the gentiles with God's people.”
3. The statement that the church was being included in God's covenant with Israel through Jesus Christ.
4. The statement concerning the church's mission among the Jews. The resolution says that there has to be a difference made between the church's testimony toward Jewish people and the mission to the gentiles.
5. Finally, the understanding of Israel's continuing existence and its homecoming to the promised land, as well as Israel's regained existence as a state being a sign of God's faithfulness.
Several regional Protestant Churches have followed the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland by issuing statements right after the synod’s resolution of 1980. Up to now, all churches of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and of the Council of the Reformed Churches have begun processes over the last two decades, which have led to declarations of synods and church leaders. These processes have mainly been initiated by work groups and committees. The first study of the EKD “Christians and Jews” of 1975 and the “Resolution of the Synod of the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland” of 1980 were significant for the development during the 1980s. Most additional reflection in other German churches was based on either the approval or the rejection of the statements issued in these texts. During the 1980s, several other regional churches, besides the Church of the Rhineland, issued declarations about the Christian-Jewish relationship. After 1990, more churches issued declarations on this topic. With one exception these texts were newly published in a collection from 2001.

II. Where Are We? Developments Since 1990

The declaration of the Lutheran European Commission Church and Judaism (Lutherische Europäische Kommission Kirche und Judentum, LEKKJ) of 1990 and the second EKD study “Christians and Jews: The Theological Reorientation of the Relation Toward Judaism” of 1991 led to a new stage. With the declaration of the Lutheran European Commission Church and Judaism (LEKKJ), the Lutheran Churches in Europe followed suit after consistently having been more reserved than the Reformed Churches and the Churches of the Union (United Churches). The second EKD study of 1991 was another milestone in the Christian-Jewish dialogue. It mainly deals with the conceptions of the church and the Jewish people as God's chosen people. In this study, we find a nascent New Testament ecclesiology. Since the publication of these texts, a basic consensus has begun to emerge within the churches of the EKD and the Reformed Council. This consensus can be described by the phrase: 'the election of Israel as God's people remains valid.' Even if one states that this topic is still controversial in scholarly theology, there was not a single ecclesiastical statement during the 1990s in which this basic consensus would have been questioned. However, the consequences drawn from this consensus vary.
Two theological questions played a special role in the declarations of the 1990s: Firstly, how can we think of the participation of the church in God’s covenant? Secondly, how do we address the question of proselytizing? In its 1980 resolution, the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland tried to answer the first question when saying that through Jesus Christ the church was integrated in God’s covenant with Israel. This can hardly be appropriate and scarcely any other church followed this example. As far as the question of mission among Jews is concerned, there is a consensus among the churches that belong to the EKD or to the Reformed Council: proselytizing is rejected by all churches but one: a minority vote of the church council in Württemberg. Study groups of regional churches and councils have documented this change of perspective by changing their names. The discussion, however, is far from being over. On the contrary: there was a fierce discussion in the run-up to the ‘German Protestant Church Congress’ (Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag) of 1999. There are still a few groups in favor of proselytizing, but their impact on the Christian-Jewish dialogue is rather small, if not insignificant.

The fact that the Christian-Jewish dialogue has led to changes in the church order, and especially in the constituting articles, deserves particular attention. The Evangelical Church of the Rhineland again was the first to change its church order in 1987, by mentioning the dialogue between Christians and Jews as an obligation for the Church as a whole and as a necessity for all congregations. The Evangelical-Reformed Church was the first to change its constitution in 1988. After that, other churches also changed fundamental articles of their church constitutions. It is striking that there are only a few Lutheran Churches among them.

I would like to give an example, of the significance of these changes by citing the central passage, which the churches of Berlin-Brandenburg and Pommern inserted in their constitutions: “She (the Church) recognizes and recalls that God’s promise for his people Israel remains valid. . . . and recognizes her obligation to take an interest in the course of the Jewish people. She (the Church) is connected with it (the Jewish people) in listening to God’s commandments and in the hope of the completion of the kingdom of God.”

Another stage in the renewal of the relation of the churches toward Judaism will hopefully follow the third EKD study “Christians and Jews. Steps Toward a Renewal of the Relation Toward Judaism” which was
published in the year 2000, and the declaration of the Leuenberg church community\textsuperscript{35} of 2001. On the one hand, the EKD study includes topics on covenant and proselytizing, which are still in need of discussion. On the other hand, the study names specific areas in which Jews and Christians can work together in a secular world. The study was only published in 2000. The time that has passed since the publication of the study is not yet long enough. We will have to wait and see which impact this study and the Leuenberg statement will have.

The peace process in the Middle East is of great significance for Christian-Jewish relations. The Protestant churches accompanied the process with statements and declarations. The 1991 Gulf War was a political event that caused various reactions by churches. In this context, it became obvious that the solidarity of the church with the Jewish people cannot be expressed without a clear approval of the state of Israel.\textsuperscript{36}

Finally, it is significant to state that several church councils reacted immediately to right-wing anti-Semitic riots. It is also important to mention that churches issued statements concerning the integration of Jews in Germany coming from former Soviet states. These statements show a new awareness of concerns for the Jewish Community in Germany.\textsuperscript{37}

If we look at the topics of the declarations of the last two decades, we can state that the following issues were of particular interest:

- the lasting connection of the church with the Jewish people,
- the continuing election of the Jewish people,
- the refutation of anti-Semitism/anti-Judaism,
- the question of participation in the covenant,
- the position not to withhold the diverging opinions between Christians and Jews,
- the question of the church's witness to the Jews,
- the question of how to assess the state of Israel theologically,
- the consequences of the dialogue for our everyday lives.

III. Where Are We Going? Perspectives and Topics for Future Conversations

What I have depicted so far is the situation based on official declarations of the regional Protestant churches and the Evangelical Church in
Germany (EKD). I think that there is reason to say that significant progress has been made within the last decades. It is now important to pass on the insights that have been gained in cause of the process to the local congregations. Here, the new thinking needs to be established so that we can come to a new form of Christian-Jewish relations. We are still at the beginning, or to speak with the title of a book: ‘On the Way to a New Beginning.’

I would like to list five issues, which I think to be of particular importance on the way to a new beginning.

1. The problem of anti-Judaism

Without any doubt, there are passages in the New Testament that—on a first glance—contain anti-Jewish polemics. There are different historic reasons for this fact. It is our task to work with these texts in a hermeneutic way that tells us how to deal with the crucial passages. This enables us to understand:

- anti-Jewish polemics as a phenomenon of detachment (detachment of the subsidiary religion from the parent religion, cf. Mark 12:28–34; Matthew 22:34–40),
- anti-Jewish polemics as indices of disagreements between Christian and Jewish communities in the time of the New Testament, which can be shown by sociohistorical exegesis (cf. Matthew 22:1–14; Luke 14:16–24),
- anti-Jewish polemics as a reaction to the events of the year 70 AD: the destruction of the Temple (cf. Matthew 22:7),
- anti-Jewish polemics as a temporary faux pas (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:14–16),

Theology will need to teach how to differentiate between texts written by a suppressed minority (in times of the New Testament) and deeds of a political majority (since the time of Constantine). Concerning the interpretation of the polemical texts, there are several tasks for theology: Firstly, theologians will need to demonstrate that
these anti-Jewish polemics within the New Testament have to be understood within the context of the historical time and not as propositions of eternal truth. Secondly, these passages have to be seen as an expression of rejected love, filled with emotions, and not as statements about the nature of Jews and Judaism. Thirdly, the authors of these polemical texts come from a Jewish background. There has to be differentiation between those polemics and statements coming from people in the following centuries not rooted in a Jewish background. Fourthly, we must not forget the interest of the church to define itself as the true heir of the Old Testament. Finally, we must learn to distinguish which statements within the New Testament are of greater or lesser importance and which ones are essentially problematic.

Is anti-Judaism essential to Christianity? Is anti-Judaism the left hand of Christology? In a debate with the Jewish scholar David Flusser, conducted in the periodical Evangelische Theologie in the 1970s, the Protestant New Testament scholar Ulrich Wilckens spoke in favor of considering anti-Judaism inherent to the system of Christianity. Wilckens spoke of it as if anti-Judaism was theologically necessary.39 The New Testament scholar Günter Klein followed the same line.40 Similarly, but with a quite different aim, Rosemary Ruether wrote, "We have recognized that the anti-Jewish myth was neither a superficial nor a secondary element of Christian thinking. The foundations for anti-Judaism were laid in the New Testament."41

Looking at the position of the apostle Paul, I consider this evaluation inappropriate. I would even say it is theologically incorrect. Naturally, one must admit that in Matthew or John, for example, the view of Judaism should be seen as depending on a particular Christological approach. But Paul himself shows in Romans that Christological argumentation must not necessarily sound anti-Jewish—although I admit this has certainly been seen differently in the traditional interpretations of Romans. Rosemary Ruether asks, "Is it possible to say Jesus is the Messiah without simultaneously saying implicitly and the Jews must be damned?"42 And my answer is, yes, it is perfectly possible, as Paul demonstrates in the letter to the Romans. The problem of anti-Judaism becomes even more complicated if we turn to questions of religious pedagogy and homiletics. But this would be a topic of its own.
2. Israel's/the Jewish people's continuing election as a fundamental concept in the hermeneutics of Scripture

As I already said: almost all ecclesiastical documents of the last twenty years mention the "continuing election of the Jews as God's people."43 However, this does not mean that a consensus has been reached on this topic within Protestant theology. Let me demonstrate this with just one quotation, although there would be many more examples. A well-known exegete concludes from the fact that the church is being called "God's chosen people" in the New Testament (Romans 9:25f; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6) that "Israel was substituted by the church."44

The problem derives from the New Testament itself. In the New Testament, various conceptions of the Jewish people as God's chosen people exist side by side in an unbalanced way.45 It is not easily possible to bring them down to a common denominator. On the contrary, they reflect an unfinished problematical issue, which was not resolved uniformly even in the New Testament period and had to be left open.46 The question of who were God's chosen people played a decisive role after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The answers given, however, varied.47

The reason for these variations is that most New Testament texts were written in a time when the relationship between Christian congregations and Jewish synagogues was extremely tense. After the Jewish War against Rome (66–70 CE), Judaism had to redefine its identity without its former center, the Temple. At the same time, Christianity had to define itself within the Roman Empire and vis-à-vis Judaism. During this time there were fights about the heritage of the Old Testament. Some extreme expressions within the New Testament can only be explained within this context (cf. Matthew 23; John 8:39–47; 9:22).

We find a totally different statement in Romans 9–11. It is the only text within the whole New Testament in which the relations between Church and Israel are treated as a topic of its own.

Romans 9–11 is a popular text within Christian-Jewish dialogue and it is often quoted. But why should we relate to Romans 9–11? Why should we not start our theological reflection with John 8 or Matthew 23? This is a question that demands critical examination and a theological decision. According to Paul, the Gentiles called by Christ have an
equal right to belong to the eschatological people of God because of baptism: they are children of God, descendants of Abraham and thus heirs of the promise (Galatians 3:26–29; Romans 8:14–17). But for Paul this does not exclude the Jewish people from remaining the people chosen by God (Romans 9:1–5; 11:1ff, 28ff). Thus, Paul is the only writer in the New Testament who has explicitly done justice to the problem of God's chosen people in its double form, to the question of the “Church” and of “Israel/the Jewish people.” However, in order to reach the solution expressed in the letter to the Romans, Paul too, followed highways and byways, which are reflected in different arguments in his letters. Even he could only solve the problem after several attempts (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2,14–16; Gal 4,21–31).

This is the decisive problem that Paul tried to solve—and, in my opinion, did solve—in the letter to the Romans: How can the conception of a lasting promise of God to the Jewish people continue to exist alongside the message of the redemption of all people through Christ alone, especially when one considers Israel's persistent rejection of Jesus as the Messiah? Does this mean that the doctrine of the election of Israel stands against Christology? We should not underestimate the sensitivity of this problem. Other New Testament authors also recognized the problem. When they dealt with this particular issue, they generally argued that Israel as God's chosen people had been substituted by the Church. That was not at all Paul's view in the letter to the Romans, a letter that is rightly estimated by exegetes as the summit of Paul's theological thinking or as his “summa evangelii.”

The special feature of Paul's approach is that Paul describes God's righteousness as revealed by the coming of Christ (Romans 3:21). This event triggered the question of whether God's promises to Israel were still valid (Romans 9:1ff; 11:1). God's righteousness, in the sense of his faithfulness to the covenant, does not let go of Israel even though Jesus is not recognized as the Messiah by the majority of Israel. In his faithfulness to the covenant, God will lead Israel to final salvation by means of the “Deliverer of Zion” (Romans 11:26f). In this way, the doctrine of justification itself, which is often interpreted as being irreconcilable with the continuing election of Israel, becomes the possibility for maintaining the solus Christus at the same time as the validity of the divine promises to Israel. The answer to which Paul comes in the letter to the
Romans differs from those in the first letter to the Thessalonians (esp. 1 Thessalonians 2:14–16) or in the letter to the Galatians (esp. Galatians 3:15–22; 4:21–31). There is a controversial debate about whether one can speak of a development in Pauline theology. But the point at issue is not the term "development;" it is much more important to recognize that, in the letter to the Romans compared with the statements in 1 Thessalonians and Galatians, there is a conscious correction or withdrawal of arguments.

The important theological, critical, and hermeneutic problem concerning the doctrine of justification, as it is presented in the letter to the Romans, is to demonstrate whether the Pauline approach found there is an appropriate expression of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the question that must point the way for our reflection. What is at stake is nothing less than objective theological criticism in the Bible itself. By demonstrating in Romans 11:25–27 that Paul is speaking of the salvation of “all Israel,” only half of the problem has been solved since we are left with the problem of Jesus being rejected by the majority of Israel (G. Strecker, H. Räisänen et al.)

There are several questions to be answered: Does the conclusion of Romans 11 fit into the overall context of Romans 9–11 and of Romans 1–8? Does Romans 9–11 only constitute the discussion of a question which arises in Paul’s biography or is it an expression of what must be said according to the apostle’s doctrine of justification? In the latter case, these statements would have brought us to the heart of his theology. But then how do Paul’s other statements about Israel fit in? And how should we define the relation to other New Testament views where there is no reference to all Israel being saved? And finally: the Christian Bible comprises the writings of the Old and New Testaments. How should the Pauline statements and the (sometimes contradictory) statements of other New Testament authors be seen in the context of the Bible as a whole? To put it in a nutshell: If the objective theological necessity of the statements in Romans 11:25–27 (and also 11:28ff; 15:7–13) cannot be demonstrated within the context of the Pauline theology of justification, then there are no conclusive reasons against marginalizing them in a psychological or some other way.

Then it is also not difficult to unhinge the popularity of this text and the insistence on its statements—which is often found among those
involved in Christian-Jewish dialogue. Is Romans 11:25–27 exceptional or can it be seen in the context of Paul’s theology and general biblical statements? Is it an appropriate expression of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—and therefore an appropriate expression of the charity and the righteousness of the God of Israel, with all the consequences this has for the church and for Christian theology? We are now at the heart of the debate. And here, a theological decision is required which, in my view, can only be: In the letter to the Romans Paul indicates the criterion for our relation to Judaism; God has not rejected the people that he had previously chosen (Romans 11:2). The source of this statement is at the heart of the Pauline doctrine of justification and it is a genuine expression of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.49

3. Israel as an integral part of Christian ecclesiology

According to Romans 15:7–13, Jesus did not fulfill God’s promises made to the fathers, but he confirmed these promises. Christ came into the world in order to become a servant of ‘the circumcision’ (i.e. of the Jews) with the aim of confirming the promises made to the fathers. This means that Israel remains God’s people because of God’s promise. Also in times of destruction and suppression, when there is no visible sign for the election, it remains nevertheless real.

According to the New Testament, the church was chosen to belong to God’s people through Jesus Christ. Therefore, Judaism cannot only be seen as the historical root of Christianity, but has to be seen as the continuing partner vis-à-vis God. Judaism, as a living religion, is a permanent challenge to the church’s understanding of itself. This could be one reason for the defensiveness against a fundamental renewal of the Christian-Jewish relationship, which unfortunately still exists in certain circles. The EKD study of 1991 demanded that the church must express its self-understanding in such a way that Israel’s self-understanding is not demoted.50 This is an important task, but only one part of the challenge that is still ahead of us. It is one thing to recognize that Christianity has Jewish roots. To some, even this recognition has not come easily. It is another thing to express one’s own self-understanding in a way that does not demote the Jewish people, i.e. the chosen people. It does fundamentally
question the Christian identity if it is recognized and admitted that the Jewish people must constitute an integral component when formulating the church's understanding of itself.\textsuperscript{51}

When the church recognizes that God has established a lasting relationship between Israel and himself, the church must realize that it does not stand alone as “God's chosen people,” and for precisely this reason Israel must necessarily be included in the description of the Christian identity. A real partnership with Israel as the chosen people must necessarily create a Christian self-definition which has to include Israel. A Christian self-definition which excludes Israel appears inadequate. Here, we still have much to learn from Paul (cf. Romans 15:7–13). In other words, an adequate Christian ecclesiology can only exist if it also includes the first chosen people of God.\textsuperscript{52}

4. The Jewish aspect of Christology

A famous statement by the German scholar Julius Wellhausen says: “Jesus was not a Christian, he was a Jew.” This statement still sounds strange to some Christians. Christian art has always portrayed Jesus as if he was one of the artist’s contemporaries. To give an example: In the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth, there are different representations of Mary and Jesus as a child. Mary and Jesus look like the inhabitants of the countries where the pieces of art were made: They look like Europeans, Africans, South Americans, Asians, etc. Such representations of Jesus are justified by the claim to portray Jesus as a ‘true human being’ who offers the possibility of identification for all people in the world. But still, we must not forget the Jewish identity of Jesus.

Hans Joachim Iwand, a famous German Lutheran theologian, wrote in a letter to the Czech theologian, Josef Hromádka in 1959, in which he looks back to the struggle between the church and the state in Nazi times:

We did not see clear enough . . . that the attack on Jews met Him, Jesus Christ himself. We stuck to Jesus as a human being, but we considered irrelevant that Jesus was a Jew. We considered it irrelevant in a dogmatic sense and in the sense of a general ethical humanism. We saw
the inner connection between the old and the new covenant less clearly and less sharply than our opponent did, who discovered the weakest spot in our modern Christianity. In this case the veil lay upon the eyes of the church rather than upon those of the synagogue. We did not see that we should lose our ecumenical state as church and that we would have lost it by being cut off from our Jewish roots. . . . The souls of those who did not betray their Jewish friends were sheltered by this confession.53

So the search of the Jewish Jesus is not just an eccentricity of very few theologians, but it is a theological necessity. The question about Jesus within Judaism has been pushed forward on the level of exegesis during the last decades, without having reached a consensus yet.54 In consequence, the question has to be asked, whether New Testament exegesis has tried (in a fatal attempt) to separate Jesus from Judaism by overrating the criterion of differentiation, promulgated by some New Testament scholars.55 Jesus was always interpreted in a way that allowed us to distinguish him categorically from Judaism. It is very difficult to break with the rigid belief that Jesus had overcome the Law or Judaism itself. I, however, hold the view that we can only learn about who Jesus was by seeing him for what he was: a Jew. In order to do so, we will need to work on New Testament studies as well as on Judaic studies constantly and patiently in the future. If we want to do Jesus of Nazareth justice, we need to place him where he belonged: in his Jewish environment.

The Jewish dimension of Christology makes us aware of another aspect: Originally, the doctrine of the Trinity was worked out in order to enable us to hold on to the unity of the God of Israel and—at the same time—to the revelation in Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. This was the aim of the dogma formulated in Constantinople in 380/1 CE. The Christian practice of praying sometimes makes me doubt whether this connection is seen correctly. Christian prayers address the triune God. They must not arouse suspicion of tritheism. The church fathers said: we pray to God, in the name of Jesus, through the Holy Spirit. People addressing Jesus with their prayers have to keep in mind the basic aims of the doctrine of the Trinity—and, eventually, look for adequate way of prayer.
5. Transformation of the Christian claim of absoluteness into eschatological terminology

Christian theology needs to recognize that it is not sufficient to declaim that salvation has come in Christ. Theology needs to spell out what that means and in doing so, it must not glibly ignore experiences of suffering and of the absence of salvation. Christian theology must translate its statements about the salvation that has come in Christ, into eschatological terms in a way that continues to make these statements clear so that they cannot be confused with ontological affirmations. We have been saved—but in hope! (Romans 8:24) Or, as it is expressed in 1 John 3:2: What we will be has not yet been revealed. Outwardly, salvation is not yet visible.

In 1 Corinthians 15:25, Paul states that Christ has been set in his ruling position but he has not yet made his rule prevail. So Paul's statements about the presence of salvation have the character of prolepsis and anticipation. This concept makes it possible to maintain the dignity of both beliefs: salvation through the coming of Christ as well as the integrity of Israel. This does not mean that the salvation that has come in Christ is reduced, but it is expressed more precisely: 'What is the reality of salvation? Here I would speak like Martin Luther about a “reality in the word,” the reality of the promise. The biblical message states, that at the end of time, there will be a visible establishment of God's kingdom, the prevalence and recognition of the divine name. And here, the Jewish and Christian traditions are very similar: Zechariah 14:9 (On that day the LORD will be one and His name one), the final verse of synagogue worship, and 1 Corinthians 15:28 (God will be all in all) have the same aim in mind. In this eschatological hope Christians and Jews are not far from one another.

The last paragraph of the Jewish declaration Dabru Emet says that Jews and Christians have to work together for peace and justice in today's world. In Koblenz, where I taught, we had a conference in 1997, which was entitled: “Bioethics and the Understanding of Humanity in Judaism and Christianity.” Jews and Christians, theologians and scientists, came together for three days and discussed the questions posed by modern biotech engineering and the tremendous opportunities which are given to us by the biotechnological developments. At the end of the conference,
we formulated a joint statement on these questions. We observed that, in spite of our different opinions in several theological issues, we are united in our understanding of humankind and in our understanding of creation. And we are united in our obligation to work against the temptations of the world of today and modern technologies. We saw it as our obligation to say together what it means, that humanity was created in the image of God. This is just one example that shows how Jews and Christians can work together for peace and justice in our world by maintaining the dignity and integrity of the religious beliefs of Judaism and Christianity. May there be many more in the future.

Notes

1. It might be helpful to mention that in German Protestantism we find regional churches in the different states of the Federal Republic of Germany. Some of them are Lutheran, some are Reformed, and some are United Churches (Lutheran and Reformed together). All of these churches belong to the Evangelical Church in Germany, an umbrella organization, the EKD (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland). The Lutherans organized themselves in the United Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Germany (Vereinigte Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche in Deutschland, VELKD). The Reformed churches form the Reformed Council (Reformierter Bund). The United churches form the Evangelical Church of the Union (Evangelische Kirche der Union, EKU). These Churches are members of worldwide organizations such as the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) or the Ecumenical Council of Churches (ECC). Until 1991, the churches in the German Democratic Republic formed the Council of Evangelical Churches of the GDR [Bund der Evangelischen Kirchen in der DDR, BEKDD]. In this article, I will focus mainly on the situation in Germany, discussing both Lutheran and other Protestant churches, while I will only touch on other Protestant Churches from all around the world. One additional note: the use of the word “evangelical” in the names of German churches differs from the use of “evangelical” in the US context.


article the author is responsible. I thank Karin Lange and Steffen Link from Saarbrücken for their substantial help—not only to improve my English.

4. cf. fn. 3.


8. When ‘Israel’ is mentioned here and in the following texts, the term is always meant as a theological concept, not as the state of Israel.


10. Text in Rendtorff/Henrix, 548f.

11. In my opinion, the restricted interpretation of R. Rendtorff, Hat denn Gott sein Volk verstoßen?, ACJD 18, München: Kaiser 1989, 22f, whereas not Israel’s election but only God’s eschatological promise is held up, is not justified.


13. Cf. e.g. Rendtorff, Hat denn Gott, 22 Fn. 21.


16. This motto already came up in a text on the relations of Christians and Jews by Karl-Heinz Becker, a minister of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Bavaria, written in 1934! I thank Axel Töllner, Nuremberg, for his notice. He is dealing with this text in his dissertation on the so-called ‘non-arian’ pastors in the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Bavaria between 1933 and 1945 which is on the way to publication in the Kohlhammer publishing house in Stuttgart.

18. The Evangelical Church of Baden (1984), the Reformed Church of Bavaria and North-West Germany (1984), the Evangelical Church of Berlin-Brandenburg (1984), the Evangelical Church of Pommern (1985), the Evangelical Church of Württemberg (1988), the Evangelical Church of Westfalen (1988), the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Sachsen (1988), the Evangelical Church of the Palatinate (1990), the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Mecklenburg (1990), and the Reformed Council (1990).


21. Cf. Henrix/Kraus, E.II.2'.
22. Cf. Henrix/Kraus, E.III.24'.
27. Cf. Henrix/Kraus, E.III.27'; E.III.30'; E.III.74'.
29. Cf. Henrix/Kraus, E.III.36'; E.III.46'.
32. The Synod of the Reformed Church in Bavaria and North-West Germany, 1988, the Evangelical Church of Hessen and Nassau, 1991 (Henrix/Kraus, E.III.25'), the Evangelical Church of the Palatinate, 1995 (E.III.40'), the Evangelical Church of the Rhineland, 1996 (E.III.47'), the Evangelical Church of Berlin-Brandenburg, 1996 (E.III.54'), the Evangelical Church of Pommern, 1997 (E.III.57'), the Regional Church of Lippe, 1998 (E.III.68'), the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of
Oldenburg, 2001, the Evangelical Church of Baden, 2001, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Nordelbien, 2002. The Evangelical Church of Westfalen and the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Braunschweig are in the process of discussion about whether and how they should change their constitutional articles.

36. Cf. Henrix/Kraus, E.III.34'.
38. Cf. W. Kraus, Hg., Auf dem Weg zu einem Neuanfang, München: Claudius 1999. I have also to admit, that the consensus we are beginning to see in various church statements has not been reached on the level of university theology either.
42. Ruether, Nächstenliebe, 229.
43. cf. fn. 23.
48. Cf. the articles mentioned in: Kraus, Paulinische Perspektiven 158 fn. 41 and 159 fn. 45.
51. Even the Jewish roots of Christianity can degenerate into a merely historical memory.
52. I suggested that they include this aspect in the text of the first draft of the EKD declaration concerning the 50th anniversary of Berlin-Weißensee in year 2000 (cf. above fn. 2). It would have been another major step, comparable to the step that was taken in Berlin-Weißensee in 1950. The EKD was not able to make a decision in favor of this suggestion.

53. Hans Joachim Iwand, Brief an Josef L. Hromádka, 8.6.1959, in: ders., Briefe, Vorträge, Predigtmeditationen. Eine Auswahl, hg. von Peter-Paul Sänger, Berlin (Ost): Evangelische Verlagsanstalt 1979, 122–133, 126. The text goes on: “We came across an astonishing secret. But the price. Was it not too high? Who is going to take away the blame from us and our fathers—where it began? What must happen so that we can put this behind us? How can a people that has rebelled against Israel and against its God become clean again?”


Jamal Badawi

What I Want the Other to Teach About Islamic History and Faith

All praise is due to Allah who is the sole creator, sustainer, and cherisher of the universe; and may his peace and blessings be upon his last messenger and prophet, Muhammad, and upon all prophets and messengers who preceded him in history. My dear brothers and sisters, I greet you with the greeting of all the prophets in its most complete and beautiful form, may the peace, blessings and mercy of Allah, God, be with you all.

I wish to start off by thanking the organizers and the inspirers and all the attendees of this conference in Edmonton, Canada, who participated in this very worthwhile dialogue. I would like to indicate that this morning I am speaking on behalf of some Muslims, but not all. I will try to deal with issues that I believe have common acceptance among the majority of Muslims. Most particularly, I will be making references to the Qur'an which is regarded as the first and primary source accepted by all Muslims of all schools and applying certain rules of exegesis that are recognized by almost all Muslims.

I have five basic topics to present: 1) Islam and Muslim are not necessarily identical terms; 2) Islam as a universal faith of all of the prophets; 3) Connections between the Abrahamic faiths from an Islamic perspective; 4) Islam and pluralism; and 5) Common misconceptions about jihad and Islam.
We are living in a generation of humanity that is able to leap on the moon, yet is unable to walk on earth living with one another in peace, justice, and human love—even though God is loving for all his creation. There is a plethora of problems that humanity is facing today—economic, social, and political—and those problems appear on all levels from the family to the world at large. At the heart of the problems though is a spiritual vacuum in the lives of many people.

We also are living in what is appropriately called a “global village” with a great deal of interdependence, and that is where interfaith dialogue and relations play a pivotal role in bringing people together. In fact, I would like to clarify at this juncture, again referring to the Qur’an, how interfaith dialogue is viewed. The Qur’an is dialogical by nature. Let me offer a few examples. In Chapter 3:64 there is an open invitation to the People of the Book—particularly Jews and Christians—to come to the common term or common denominator between themselves and Muslims, namely to worship none but Allah. The word “Allah” in Arabic simply means the one and only true universal God of all. It implies that we will not associate others with God in his exclusive, divine attributes.

The mode of that dialogue is also explained in Chapter 29:45–46, which basically instructs Muslims not to argue with the People of the Book except in ways that are best, most effective, and most courteous. Also, that same part of the sura (chapter) provides a guide for Muslims in dialogue to try to capitalize on common ground, since one cannot force people to believe the same way as another. Muslims are encouraged at least to look at the common ground and say, “We believe in what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to you in its original form. Your God and ours is one in the same, and unto whom we all submit.”

Chapter 34:24 speaks about the attitude to approach another in dialogue. The Qur’an, says that even when people discuss their differences, they do not begin by saying, “I’ve got the truth, I am right, and you are wrong, and let me tell you how you’re wrong.” Rather, there is a firmness balanced with openness where the Muslim is to say “You and we could be either guided or in manifest error,” implying: so let’s discuss this, look at the evidence, and reason together. I must say before I leave this point that
the same attitude that the Qur'an recommends for interfaith dialogue should also govern the actions of intra-faith dialogue. If that spirit of tolerance and understanding is required between different faiths, all the more should it be promoted also within various groups of people who claim to belong to the same faith.

Islam and Muslims

Islam and Muslims are not identical any more than Christianity and Christ or Christianity and Christians are identical. Similarly, Judaism and the action of Jews or some Jews are not identical. Muslims can be "Islamic" to the extent they abide by the behaviors and ethics that are taught by Islam in its pristine original sources. Any lapses on the part of Muslims historically is their fault, not Islam's. Individual Muslims lapse but Islam does not.

There are two primary sources for Islam and both are believed to be authentic revelation. The first is the Qur'an. The Prophet Muhammad—peace be upon him—reported that Qur'an is the verbatim word of God dictated through the agency of the archangel Gabriel. Since the Qur'an is the exact word of God implies that no human being, even the greatest of prophets, has any right to supersede or to cancel it, or else one would be claiming to have greater knowledge and wisdom than the Creator. A second primary source of revelation for Islam and Islamic jurisprudence, is known as sunnah (sometimes called hadith): the teachings, the words, actions and approvals of Prophet Muhammad, which is believed also to be revelation, but the words are not the words of God. They are Muhammad's own words and unlike the Qur'an which is completely authentic, there are degrees of authenticity in the sunnah. A hadith is a narration about the life of the Prophet or what he approved, as distinct from his life itself, which is the sunnah.

The secondary sources, however, are not infallible and they apply reason in the light of the text and spirit of the Islamic law in order to come up with solutions or answers to different problems with the variations of time, place, and circumstances. This process materializes into a legal opinion. It is not uncommon for one to find more than one legitimate jurisprudential opinion presented or advocated by two equally.
qualified scholars or even the same scholar, depending upon the situations or settings.

I believe this process is relevant to some of the issues concerning how faith can be relevant in the daily lives of people today. Much like the solar system—constantly in motion while at the same time exhibiting a dynamic of stability in orbit—there are certain things that are constant in Islam while Muslims respond and interact with the forces of modernity. In fact, if one looks at how the Qur'an itself was revealed, its nature was one of dynamism. It was an interactive book—interactive revelation—not an abstract concept. Often revelation comes to the prophet in response to a question directed to him about an event in society while he was guiding the communities in Mecca and Medina. The revelation of the Qur'an spans about 22 years amidst the events of history—war, peace, marriage, divorce, all kinds of situations on the social, political, and economic levels, and the Qur'an is intended to guide humanity step by step on its road. Again, the Qur'an is not an abstract book, it is interactive and relevant by its very nature.

Can the Muslim come in humility to engage in dialogue with others with the purpose of not instructing them, but learning from them? Since dialogue is a human effort and will be prone to fallibility and imperfection, there is also the possibility that good can arise from it. So there is no problem in participating in a dialogue. In fact, the prophet Muhammad taught his followers to look for wisdom with others. He said that wisdom is the lost property of the believer and wherever a person finds it, he or she is most deserving of it. So, there is no restriction to dialogue and learning from others, so long as one is not diverted from the basics of his faith or compromised in those essentials.

**Islam Is a Universal Faith of All of the Prophets**

Islam and Muslims as people are not tied to a particular geography or ethnic background. Islam is, in its nature, a generic, universal faith. Unfortunately, I have seen instances where even some universities have classified Islam under eastern religions with Hinduism and Buddhism. It is understandable that many people would consider Islam an Arabic religion or Middle Eastern. And yet, historically speaking, both Judaism and Christianity began as Middle Eastern religions. Many people are surprised
to learn that Arabs are a minority among Muslims—no more than 20 percent—of a population of approximately 1.3 billion or one fifth of humanity. The largest Muslim country in the world, Indonesia, has about 200 million people. Approximately 120 million Muslims live as a minority in India—a number that is twice as much as the total population of the largest Arab country, Egypt.

The term “Islam” comes from the Arabic root, S-L-M. These three letters are also found in Muslim, and mean peace, submission to Allah, or surrender. If a person is true to his or her faith and has peace with God, and thus, peace from within, then he must have peace with all of the creation of God—humans, with their variety of beliefs and cultures, animals, plants, and the environment. But, that kind of attitude can only be achieved if the person willingly and consciously chooses to obey God and submit to his will. Such an attitude is at the core of the message of all the prophets.

For that reason, some people may become puzzled when they read in the Qur’an that prophet Abraham was a Muslim. I remember someone asking, “Abraham was a Muslim even though he lived and died centuries before Muhammad was even born? That’s like saying Thomas Jefferson loved Kentucky Fried Chicken.” He failed to understand that the term “Islam” has two meanings. Of course, Islam refers to what Muslims believe and follow as revealed by the Prophet Muhammad. But the second meaning is one referring to that which all of the prophets followed to achieve peace through submission to God. So, in this second sense, all the prophets were Muslims because they submitted themselves to the will of God. In fact, one could say that the whole universe is Muslim. The sun, the moon, and all things submit to God, except that as humans we have the freedom of choosing to submit or not.

Abrahamic Connections of Islam to Judaism and Christianity

Some people have raised the question about the relationship between the Qur’an and the Bible, or more broadly, between the teachings and beliefs of Islam and those of its two sisters—Judaism and Christianity. Some people might be tempted to conclude simply that Jews believe in the Torah, Christians believe both in the Hebrew Scriptures and the New
Testament, and that Muslims believe in both plus the Qur'an, as if the Qur'an was no more than a supplement or rehashing what has been said in the Torah or the Old Testament and New Testament.

First, the Qur'an does not use or refer to the terms equivalent to Bible, Hebrew Scriptures, or Old or New Testament. The Qur'an does refer to the leaves or manuscripts of Abraham, presumably now gone. The Qur'an also speaks about the Torah in Arabic, but it is unlikely that the term is meant in the same way our Jewish brothers and sisters understand the term. When the Qur'an refers to Torah, there is a restricted definition that Torah means exclusively what Moses received on Sinai, nothing more.

The Qur'an also speaks about what most translators call "the psalms of David." I defer to the biblical scholars, but I do know that there is a dispute as to whether all the psalms of David were written by David. Whatever the case, when the Qur'an refers to the psalms, it refers only to what David received. Similarly, according to the Qur'an, only the words that Jesus himself spoke are authentic teaching—not the biographies about Jesus written by his followers, nor the religious experiences of those who encountered that beautiful personality and reported the feeling, but exclusively what Jesus himself said, provided it is authentic. So, it is important to be precise when we make comparisons. To say that the Qur'an is a continuation is, in one limited sense, true, but it came to confirm what remained intact of the Bible and be like a guardian over the previous scriptures—a guardian that is taking the liberty to clarify and indicate where misinterpretation of God's message might have taken place—to sift through what the prophets actually received by way of divine revelation and what their followers articulated or elaborated, making a clear line of distinction between both (Chapter 5:47–52).

I have read that some people say that Muslims believe the Bible is corrupted and not to be accepted, that nothing is true about it. If this indeed were the case, what did the Qur'an come to confirm? If the entire Bible had no value, no importance, no authenticity whatsoever, why does the Qur'an say that it came to confirm what remained intact of that Bible? The presumption here is obviously clear that there are things that a careful Muslim looking into the Bible will find consistent with the teaching of Islam and the Qur'an. The most obvious example is the Shema Israel, found in Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear O Israel, The Eternal is
our God, the Eternal is One.” Muslims agree completely that Allah is the one and only God eternal. On the other hand, of anything that is found in the Bible that is totally opposed to what is in the Qur’an, the Muslim would very politely say, “This is what I believe to be the word of God and the word of God supersedes human ideas and theology.” And regarding texts in the Bible that neither contradict nor have been confirmed by the Qur’an, the prophet taught we cannot accept them or reject them. It may have divine origin or it might be someone’s opinion, so we must leave it in abeyance.

So, with these understandings, we see similarities and parallels, but not in the usual way that Islam is often portrayed—with Judaism and Christianity as the original branches of a tree from which Islam draws its identity. Obviously there is a very strong connection between Christianity and Judaism since Jesus was a Jew and taught Torah. However, from a Muslim’s perspective, another conception could be to have God at the center and have that same God reveal to Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, and all other prophets in world history, especially since the Qur’an has been revealed directly from God.

There are many uniting things between the three Abrahamic religions—belief in the one true God, prophets, belief in revelation and scriptures and taking responsibility for our deeds in this life, a code of ethics, and a belief in the hereafter. One does not have to be in the physical lineage of Abraham to claim to belong to Abrahah. One of the most beautiful expressions in the Qur’an says that those who have the greatest claim on Abraham are those who follow him and his teachings (See chapter 3:67-70).

Islam and Pluralism

Does the history of normative Islam accept plurality; namely, living with others and showing respect for the rights of others, not treating them as inferiors or persecuting them? In Chapter 4, the Qur’an instructs all humankind to be dutiful to the Lord who created us from a single soul and of like nature, and of both of them he multiplied multitudes of men and women. Notice that the passage does not say all Muslims or all believers, but all mankind. The same instruction—to all mankind—
appears in Chapter 49:13, where we were created from a single pair of a male and female. This means that we are all one family. True, there are different branches and sometimes we disagree and fight with each other, but this happens in families and ultimately, we are one family. Chapter 49 continues by saying that God made us into nations and tribes so that we may come to know and recognize one another, although the most honored in the sight of God is not based on gender, wealth, color, or nationality. The most honored in the sight of God is one who is most righteous.

Earlier in the Qur'an, Chapter 30:22, it explains the variations of human languages and colors as a sign of the power of God creating diversity, not for superiority or inferiority, but as signs of his power, mercy and compassion. The creation of heavens and earth and the variations in the languages and complexions of people is, as I like to put it, a bouquet of flowers where the white flower is beautiful in its own right, so is the red, the yellow, and the pink; but more beautiful are all of them together. That is what one can derive from the Qur'an and its stances on human brotherhood.

But, within the scope of human brotherhood, we have also the People of the Book. This is a complimentary title given in the Qur'an to distinguish them from other religions that do not have as much in common with Islam as they do. People of the Book are those whose religion is based on revealed books or revealed scriptures. One of the most amazing things in the Qur'an is found in Chapter 5:5, which indicates the proper Muslim attitude toward the People of the Book who are living in peace with him. It allows for the women of the People of the Book to marry a Muslim, which is a form of interfaith marriage. And it also says that animals killed by the People of the Book for food are acceptable for Muslims to eat, whereas he is not supposed to eat meat that is slaughtered by a person who is an atheist or polytheist. So the relationship between Muslims and People of the Book goes well beyond a polite or courteous relationship to one where both can share food and also be a part of the same family.

And then, in the same chapter, some quote another verse in the Qur'an out of context and sometimes the translation is incorrect. There are some translations that say to the believers, do not take Jews and Christians for your friends. That is erroneous. The original context and
Arabic meaning implies that Muslims should not take alliance with Jews and Christians for the sake of their own defense. In other words, Muslims must defend themselves.

But, perhaps one of the most important issues is the question of plurality. According to the text of the Qur'an, there is an assumption of living with people of other faiths and other religions—and that is God's design. In Chapter 118 it says that if God or Muhammad had willed it, he would have made all people one nation or one community of believers. It is true that Christians will believe that they should share the good news and Muslims will feel that we have to share the good news. However, the difference is that is it one thing to share the good news and quite another to try to force someone to believe. We do not understand why people differ but we are convinced that plurality is part of God's design. Therefore we have no right to condemn one another or to mistreat each other.

From this acceptance of plurality as God's will, two important concepts follow: universal justice and dignity. The Qur'an speaks about the importance of speaking truth and acting justly even if it goes against one's self interest or one's family. In fact, justice must be extended even to one's enemy. Chapter 5 says that not even hatred should dissuade one from doing justice. This is because Muslims must be witnesses of God who witnesses all things.

In the arena of law, there is a concept of *wahmme*, which means "covenant," implying the covenanted people who possess the covenant of God and his messenger, that by virtue of being a minority, certain rights shall be granted. This is different from a democracy. In Islamic law by making this distinction, giving a special status to the *wahmmes*, the covenanted people, it means that God has given them these rights and as such, no majority rule can revoke those rights because this is the covenant that the God has given. They can go to their own religious courts for proper justice.

Since Islam is a complete way of living—religious, economic and political—it presumes also a righteous community or a righteous society that establishes justice and looks after the needs of everyone. In addition to the tremendous contributions to the areas of science over the past 650 years, Islamic civilization has also developed a compassionate view of humans in society. According to Islamic law, all citizens—Muslims and
non-Muslims alike—are entitled to what we call today social security. An Islamic state finances this kind of program by paying a zakat, which is a tax and also a religious duty, one of the pillars of Islam. So not to offend other members of the community, non-Muslims were asked to pay a jizya, a tax to assure that they would be beneficiaries of protection and support in their sickness, poverty or old age. The jizya was not a punishment for not being Muslim. When there has been unfairness in Muslim societies, it is not because of the Islamic system. It is because of unfair rulers who at the time were unfair to Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Jihad and Islam

I would like to look carefully at some common stereotypes and challenge them. The first is the notion of jihad—mistakenly called holy war—which brings to mind images of terrorism and senseless violence. There is no single occurrence of the term “holy war” in the entire Qur’an. Jihad means to exert effort. According to the Qur’an and the teaching of the prophet, there are different levels of jihad. First, on the individual level, one struggles within oneself for self purification and obedience to God.

Second, jihad also appears on the social level, and the Qur’an describes itself actually as a means of jihad. A Muslim is to make jihad with the truth that is contained in the Qur’an. It is quite common also for a person to make jihad with his tongue or jihad with his pen, that is, one must exercise restraint when tempted to be uncharitable. Actually, the Qur’an also describes charity as jihad and says to make jihad with one’s property or wealth.

Third, there is also jihad in the battlefield, and according to the Qur’an it is for self defense and a last resort to fight against oppression. Although going to the battlefield may become necessary, it is not desirable, and Muslims share with everyone the hope and the desire that there would be no war. But the reality of human life past, present and possible future is quite different. For Muslims to rightfully engage in war, peaceful means of resolution must have been attempted and this is the last resort; there must be a purification of motives—which does not permit duty, pride, nationalism or superiority to be the guiding motive; and the war must be declared publicly by a legitimate authority. There is also clear
instruction by the prophet and his successors that noncombatants must be spared—women, children, old people, religious people, farmers minding their fields, and even the mutilation of animals.

To conclude, I would want others to teach that Muslims respect the right of others to differ with them, and that Islam can never be forced on another. I believe that the principles of Islam rooted in the Qur'an and the Prophet have guided Islamic history, and will continue to guide the way that righteous Muslims live in the world. The future offers us a wonderful opportunity to focus on issues of common concern such as peace and justice. And, in my humble view, peace and justice are like the two wings of a bird. Without both wings, freedom and dignity will fail. It is my great honor and pleasure to be a participant in this very noble effort to move in that direction. There is no better time than now. Peace be with you.
PART III - WHAT DO WE WANT THE OTHER TO TEACH ABOUT OUR HISTORICAL TRADITIONS?

For Further Discussion and Study

What is the process or method by which one accurately expresses through limited language what is most important to the greatest number of people of a religion? Who decides what is important historical revelation? Are contemporary events less important than past ones? What are the values and the shortfalls of the historical-critical approach in adequately describing all of religious experience?

Are religions prone to teaching more about transhistorical, eternal beliefs rather than temporal events? Why, why not? What are the advantages or limitations of a methodology that takes history seriously as a primary category in hermeneutics and revelation?

How do Judaism, Christianity, and Islam understand their historical roots? What are the primary stories or events that are central to the other's identity? How were these stories or events chosen? What are the diverse historical expressions within each of the religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam?

Are Jewish, Christian, and Islamic histories in concert with other histories? Where and why do the subjects and goals of religious history differ? What are the possible ways to teach about the other's history and historical tradition without situating them in a Western timeline and analysis?

For a history of interreligious dialogue itself, examine some of the prominent documents, namely, the 1947 Seelisburg Statement, Nostra Aetate (1965), the Lambeth Conference (1988), the World Council of Churches (1988), "We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah" (1998), and "Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity" (2000). All of these sources and many others can be found on www.ccju.org.
Judaism, Christianity, and Islam share a chronological historical relationship and encountered each other negatively or violently at different times throughout history. How can we teach about the other as an ongoing valid religion today without pointing to times in the past that would situate and demean the other as a relic or cultural prisoner of the past?

Describe the principal holidays, festivals, and life-cycle events that recall the historical events that connect the present religious community to the ongoing story and history of each religion.

How do Jews, Christians, and Muslims balance the religious, cultural, political, eschatological, and national dimensions of their faiths?

How is Jewish, Christian, and Islamic history tied theologically to land, for example, in the case of the State of Israel, Holy Land, Palestine?

How is it possible to overcome the asymmetrical cultural and political relationship between Jews, Christians, and Muslims? Are the Jewish partners too disadvantaged in numbers to meaningfully and authentically participate? Are Christians believed to be imperialist crusaders by the others? Are Muslims unfairly portrayed as a violent, foreign culture resistant to dialogue or exchange of ideas?

How have Jews, Christians, and Muslims dealt with Enlightenment and modernity in their theology, identity, mission, ethics, anthropology, ecclesiology, and spirituality?

For Action in the Community

Are historical studies the proper starting point for Jewish, Christian, and Muslim relations, or is social justice, ethics, scriptural study, spirituality or theology more appropriate? What is best for this specific dialogue group and why?

What are some of the stereotypes of the other? What are the ways educators can present other religions fairly without comparing the best of one's religion and the worst of the other's? How does one overcome the
negative stereotypes based on the other’s or one’s own religious extremists who may be prone to violence and oppression?

How can Jews, Christians, and Muslims interpret and productively respond to the signs of the times, such as: secularization, industrialization, economic disparity among people, immigration, urbanization, and the rapid expansion of information?

Describe how the other engages its sources and applies them to the ethical demands of daily life. How is that similar or different than your own religious tradition?

Is it possible to describe oneself as is, rather than over and against others? Is it possible for Christians to understand Jews and Muslims outside the categories and contexts of European history?

What would be your short sacred list that exemplifies the depth and breadth of your religious history as an individual and as a religious community? For example, name your most important or favorite ideas, stories, values, laws, prophets, holy people and leaders who have contributed to your living religious history.

How can dialogue partners effectively and respectfully deal with historical revisionists?

Jews and Christians have been developing and refining a dialogue for the past forty years. As such, there are many Jewish-Christian documents that have begun to deal deeply with Jewish and Christian concerns. There are also very recent statements and efforts (such as these conferences) to meaningfully include participation by Muslims. How can Judaism and Christianity invite and engage the believers of Islam in a more concerted way?

Is it possible to institutionalize in a curriculum each religion’s memory together with the other, so that creation, the seven Noahide laws, the commandments, etc., can lead people closer to peace and salvation? Why, why not?
What are the various informal or unconscious ways that religions teach about the other that require more careful attention? For example, history, laws, worship, art, songs, others?