

Confronting Christianity: Rabbinic Responses to the New Interfaith Reality

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DECLARATION ON
THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS
NOSTRA AETATE
PROCLAIMED BY HIS HOLINESS
POPE PAUL VI
ON OCTOBER 28, 1965

1. In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.

One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth.(1) One also is their final goal, God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men,(2) until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City, the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light.(3)

Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men: What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what is sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to true happiness? What are death, judgment and retribution after death? What, finally, is that ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?

2. From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrates their lives with a profound religious sense.

Religions, however, that are bound up with an advanced culture have struggled to answer the same questions by means of more refined concepts and a more developed language. Thus in Hinduism, men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustible abundance of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry. They seek freedom from the anguish of our human condition either through ascetical practices or profound meditation or a flight to God with love and trust. Again, Buddhism, in its various forms, realizes the radical insufficiency of this changeable world; it teaches a way by which men, in a devout and confident spirit, may be able either to acquire the state of perfect liberation, or attain, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination. Likewise, other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing "ways," comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself.(4)

The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize,

preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men.

3. The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth,(5) who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.

4. As the sacred synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.

Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ-Abraham's sons according to faith (6)-are included in the same Patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is mysteriously foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage. The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles.(7) Indeed, the Church believes that by His cross Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles, making both one in Himself.(8)

The Church keeps ever in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen: "theirs is the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the law and the worship and the promises; theirs are the fathers and from them is the Christ according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:4-5), the Son of the Virgin Mary. She also recalls that the Apostles, the Church's main-stay and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ's Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people.

As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation,(9) nor did the Jews in large number, accept the Gospel; indeed not a few opposed its spreading.(10) Nevertheless, God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues-such is the witness of the Apostle:(11) In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and "serve him shoulder to shoulder" (Soph. 3:9).(12)

Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues.

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ;(13) still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.

Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.

Besides, as the Church has always held and holds now, Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation. It is, therefore, the burden of the Church's preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.

5. We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: "He who does not love does not know God" (1 John 4:8).

No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and man or people and people, so far as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned.

The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion. On the contrary, following in the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this sacred synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to "maintain good fellowship among the nations" (1 Peter 2:12), and, if possible, to live for their part in peace with all men,(14) so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven.(15)

NOTES

1. Cf. *Acts* 17:26

2. Cf. *Wis.* 8:1; *Acts* 14:17; *Rom.* 2:6-7; 1 *Tim.* 2:4

3. Cf. *Apoc.* 21:23f.

4. Cf 2 *Cor.* 5:18-19

5. Cf St. Gregory VII, *letter XXI to Anzir (Nacir), King of Mauritania* (Pl. 148, col. 450f.)

6. Cf. *Gal.* 3:7

7. Cf. *Rom.* 11:17-24

8. Cf. *Eph.* 2:14-16

9. Cf. *Lk.* 19:44

10. Cf. *Rom.* 11:28

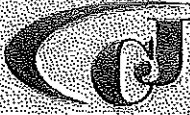
11. Cf. *Rom.* 11:28-29; cf. dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium* (Light of nations) AAS, 57 (1965) pag. 20

12. Cf. *Is.* 66:23; *Ps.* 65:4; *Rom.* 11:11-32

13. Cf. *John.* 19:6

14. Cf. *Rom.* 12:18

15. Cf. *Matt.* 5:45



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DABRU EMET

A Jewish Statement on Christians And Christianity

In recent years, there has been a dramatic and unprecedented shift in Jewish and Christian relations. Throughout the nearly two millennia of Jewish exile, Christians have tended to characterize Judaism as a failed religion or, at best, a religion that prepared the way for, and is completed in, Christianity. In the decades since the Holocaust, however, Christianity has changed dramatically. An increasing number of official Church bodies, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, have made public statements of their remorse about Christian mistreatment of Jews and Judaism. These statements have declared, furthermore, that Christian teaching and preaching can and must be reformed so that they acknowledge God's enduring covenant with the Jewish people and celebrate the contribution of Judaism to world civilization and to Christian faith itself.

We believe these changes merit a thoughtful Jewish response. Speaking only for ourselves -- an interdenominational group of Jewish scholars -- we believe it is time for Jews to learn about the efforts of Christians to honor Judaism. We believe it is time for Jews to reflect on what Judaism may now say about Christianity. As a first step, we offer eight brief statements about how Jews and Christians may relate to one another.

Jews and Christians worship the same God. Before the rise of Christianity, Jews were the only worshippers of the God of Israel. But Christians also worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; creator of heaven and earth. While Christian worship is not a viable religious choice for Jews, as Jewish theologians we rejoice that, through Christianity, hundreds of millions of people have entered into relationship with the God of Israel.

Jews and Christians seek authority from the same book -- the Bible (what Jews call "Tanakh" and Christians call the "Old Testament"). Turning to it for religious orientation, spiritual enrichment, and communal education, we each take away similar lessons: God created and sustains the universe; God established a covenant with the people Israel, God's revealed word guides Israel to a life of righteousness; and God will ultimately redeem Israel and the whole world. Yet, Jews and Christians interpret the Bible differently on many points. Such differences must always be respected.

Christians can respect the claim of the Jewish people upon the land of Israel. The most important event for Jews since the Holocaust has been the reestablishment of a Jewish state in the Promised Land. As members of a biblically based religion, Christians appreciate that Israel was promised -- and given -- to Jews as the physical center of the covenant between them and God. Many Christians support the State of Israel for reasons far more profound than mere politics. As Jews, we applaud this support. We also recognize that Jewish tradition mandates justice for all non-Jews who reside in a Jewish state.

Jews and Christians accept the moral principles of Torah. Central to the moral principles of Torah is the inalienable sanctity and dignity of every human being. All of us were created in the image of God. This shared moral emphasis can be the basis of an improved relationship between our

two communities. It can also be the basis of a powerful witness to all humanity for improving the lives of our fellow human beings and for standing against the immoralities and idolatries that harm and degrade us. Such witness is especially needed after the unprecedented horrors of the past century.

Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon. Without the long history of Christian anti-Judaism and Christian violence against Jews, Nazi ideology could not have taken hold nor could it have been carried out. Too many Christians participated in, or were sympathetic to, Nazi atrocities against Jews. Other Christians did not protest sufficiently against these atrocities. But Nazism itself was not an inevitable outcome of Christianity. If the Nazi extermination of the Jews had been fully successful, it would have turned its murderous rage more directly to Christians. We recognize with gratitude those Christians who risked or sacrificed their lives to save Jews during the Nazi regime. With that in mind, we encourage the continuation of recent efforts in Christian theology to repudiate unequivocally contempt of Judaism and the Jewish people. We applaud those Christians who reject this teaching of contempt, and we do not blame them for the sins committed by their ancestors.

The humanly irreconcilable difference between Jews and Christians will not be settled until God redeems the entire world as promised in Scripture. Christians know and serve God through Jesus Christ and the Christian tradition. Jews know and serve God through Torah and the Jewish tradition. That difference will not be settled by one community insisting that it has interpreted Scripture more accurately than the other; nor by exercising political power over the other. Jews can respect Christians' faithfulness to their revelation just as we expect Christians to respect our faithfulness to our revelation. Neither Jew nor Christian should be pressed into affirming the teaching of the other community.

A new relationship between Jews and Christians will not weaken Jewish practice. An improved relationship will not accelerate the cultural and religious assimilation that Jews rightly fear. It will not change traditional Jewish forms of worship, nor increase intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews, nor persuade more Jews to convert to Christianity, nor create a false blending of Judaism and Christianity. We respect Christianity as a faith that originated within Judaism and that still has significant contacts with it. We do not see it as an extension of Judaism. Only if we cherish our own traditions can we pursue this relationship with integrity.

Jews and Christians must work together for justice and peace. Jews and Christians, each in their own way, recognize the unredeemed state of the world as reflected in the persistence of persecution, poverty, and human degradation and misery. Although justice and peace are finally God's, our joint efforts, together with those of other faith communities, will help bring the kingdom of God for which we hope and long. Separately and together, we must work to bring justice and peace to our world. In this enterprise, we are guided by the vision of the prophets of Israel:

It shall come to pass in the end of days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established at the top of the mountains and be exalted above the hills, and the nations shall flow unto it . . . and many peoples shall go and say, "Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord to the house of the God of Jacob and He will teach us of His ways and we will walk in his paths." (Isaiah 2:2-3)

Tikva Frymer-Kensky, University of Chicago
David Novak, University of Toronto
Peter Ochs, University of Virginia
Michael Signer, University of Notre Dame

National Jewish Scholars Project

ORTHODOX RABBINIC STATEMENT ON CHRISTIANITY

C.JCUC No comments December 3, 2015

To Do the Will of Our Father in Heaven: Toward a Partnership between Jews and Christians

After nearly two millennia of mutual hostility and alienation, we Orthodox Rabbis who lead communities, institutions and seminaries in Israel, the United States and Europe recognize the historic opportunity now before us. We seek to do the will of our Father in Heaven by accepting the hand offered to us by our Christian brothers and sisters. Jews and Christians must work together as partners to address the moral challenges of our era.

1. The Shoah ended 70 years ago. It was the warped climax to centuries of disrespect, oppression and rejection of Jews and the consequent enmity that developed between Jews and Christians. In retrospect it is clear that the failure to break through this contempt and engage in constructive dialogue for the good of humankind weakened resistance to evil forces of anti-Semitism that engulfed the world in murder and genocide.
2. We recognize that since the Second Vatican Council the official teachings of the Catholic Church about Judaism have changed fundamentally and irrevocably. The promulgation of *Nostra Aetate* fifty years ago started the process of reconciliation between our two communities. *Nostra Aetate* and the later official Church documents it inspired unequivocally reject any form of anti-Semitism, affirm the eternal Covenant between G-d and the Jewish people, reject deicide and stress the unique relationship between Christians and Jews, who were called "our elder brothers" by Pope John Paul II and "our fathers in faith" by Pope Benedict XVI. On this basis, Catholics and other Christian officials started an honest dialogue with Jews that has grown during the last five decades. We appreciate the Church's affirmation of Israel's unique place in sacred history and the ultimate world redemption. Today Jews have experienced sincere love and respect from many Christians that have been expressed in many dialogue initiatives, meetings and conferences around the world.
3. As did Maimonides and Yehudah Halevi,[1] we acknowledge that the emergence of Christianity in human history is neither an accident nor an error, but the willed divine outcome and gift to the nations. In separating Judaism and Christianity, G-d willed a separation between partners with significant theological differences, not a separation between enemies. Rabbi Jacob Emden wrote that "Jesus brought a double goodness to the world. On the one hand he strengthened the Torah of Moses majestically... and not one of our Sages spoke out more emphatically concerning the immutability of the Torah. On the other hand he removed idols from the nations and obligated them

in the seven commandments of Noah so that they would not behave like animals of the field, and instilled them firmly with moral traits.....Christians are congregations that work for the sake of heaven who are destined to endure, whose intent is for the sake of heaven and whose reward will not be denied.”[2] Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch taught us that Christians “have accepted the Jewish Bible of the Old Testament as a book of Divine revelation. They profess their belief in the G-d of Heaven and Earth as proclaimed in the Bible and they acknowledge the sovereignty of Divine Providence.”[3] Now that the Catholic Church has acknowledged the eternal Covenant between G-d and Israel, we Jews can acknowledge the ongoing constructive validity of Christianity as our partner in world redemption, without any fear that this will be exploited for missionary purposes. As stated by the Chief Rabbinate of Israel's Bilateral Commission with the Holy See under the leadership of Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen, “We are no longer enemies, but unequivocal partners in articulating the essential moral values for the survival and welfare of humanity”. [4] Neither of us can achieve G-d's mission in this world alone.

4. Both Jews and Christians have a common covenantal mission to perfect the world under the sovereignty of the Almighty, so that all humanity will call on His name and abominations will be removed from the earth. We understand the hesitation of both sides to affirm this truth and we call on our communities to overcome these fears in order to establish a relationship of trust and respect. Rabbi Hirsch also taught that the Talmud puts Christians “with regard to the duties between man and man on exactly the same level as Jews. They have a claim to the benefit of all the duties not only of justice but also of active human brotherly love.” In the past relations between Christians and Jews were often seen through the adversarial relationship of Esau and Jacob, yet Rabbi Naftali Zvi Berliner (Netziv) already understood at the end of the 19th century that Jews and Christians are destined by G-d to be loving partners: “In the future when the children of Esau are moved by pure spirit to recognize the people of Israel and their virtues, then we will also be moved to recognize that Esau is our brother.”[5]
5. We Jews and Christians have more in common than what divides us: the ethical monotheism of Abraham; the relationship with the One Creator of Heaven and Earth, Who loves and cares for all of us; Jewish Sacred Scriptures; a belief in a binding tradition; and the values of life, family, compassionate righteousness, justice, inalienable freedom, universal love and ultimate world peace. Rabbi Moses Rivkis (Be'er Hagoleh) confirms this and wrote that “the Sages made reference only to the idolator of their day who did not believe in the creation of the world, the Exodus, G-d's miraculous deeds and the divinely given law. In contrast, the people among whom we are scattered believe in all these essentials of religion.”[6]

6. Our partnership in no way minimizes the ongoing differences between the two communities and two religions. We believe that G-d employs many messengers to reveal His truth, while we affirm the fundamental ethical obligations that all people have before G-d that Judaism has always taught through the universal Noahide covenant.

7. In imitating G-d, Jews and Christians must offer models of service, unconditional love and holiness. We are all created in G-d's Holy Image, and Jews and Christians will remain dedicated to the Covenant by playing an active role together in redeeming the world.

Initial signatories (in alphabetical order):

Rabbi Jehoshua Ahrens (Germany)
Rabbi Marc Angel (United States)
Rabbi Isak Asiel (Chief Rabbi of Serbia)
Rabbi David Bigman (Israel)
Rabbi David Bollag (Switzerland)
Rabbi David Brodman (Israel)
Rabbi Natan Lopez Cardozo (Israel)
Rav Yehudah Gilad (Israel)
Rabbi Alon Goshen-Gottstein (Israel)
Rabbi Irving Greenberg (United States)
Rabbi Marc Raphael Guedj (Switzerland)
Rabbi Eugene Korn (Israel)
Rabbi Daniel Landes (Israel)
Rabbi Steven Langnas (Germany)
Rabbi Benjamin Lau (Israel)
Rabbi Simon Livson (Chief Rabbi of Finland)
Rabbi Asher Lopatin (United States)
Rabbi Shlomo Riskin (Israel)
Rabbi David Rosen (Israel)
Rabbi Naftali Rothenberg (Israel)
Rabbi Hanan Schlesinger (Israel)
Rabbi Shmuel Sirat (France)
Rabbi Daniel Sperber (Israel)
Rabbi Jeremiah Wohlberg (United States)
Rabbi Alan Yuter (Israel)

Subsequent signatories:

FROM MISSION TO DIALOGUE?

Abraham Joshua Heschel

THE PRIMARY AIM of these reflections is to inquire how a Jew out of his commitment and a Christian out of his commitment can find a religious basis for communication and cooperation on matters relevant to their moral and spiritual concern in spite of disagreement.

A good many people in our midst still think in terms of an age during which Judaism wrapped itself in spiritual isolation, an age which I sought to revive in a book called *The Earth is the Lord's*. Nowadays, however, for the majority of our people, involvement has replaced isolation. The emancipation which has brought us to the very heart of the total society, has not only given us rights, it has also imposed obligations. It has expanded the scope of our responsibility and concern. Whether we like it or not, the words we utter, the deeds we perform, affect the life of the total community. It is necessary, therefore, to clarify our position in relation to the general community. We affirm the principle of separation of Church and State, but we are deeply conscious of the vital interrelationship of religious sensitivity and the human situation.

We pray for all men, for the fulfillment of their needs. Our religious commitment as Jews involves concern for the physical and spiritual welfare of all men. It is our most fervent prayer that all human beings will call upon God. We abstain from conversion and regard any attempt at depriving a person of a noble faith, of his heritage, as an act of arrogance.

This article has been adapted from Dr. Heschel's address to the 1966 Rabbinical Assembly convention. It also incorporates selections from his Inaugural Address at Union Theological Seminary, where he lectured as Harry Emerson Fosdick Visiting Professor last year. That address in its entirety may be found in Union Seminary Quarterly Review, Vol. XXI, Number 2, Part 1, January 1966.

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In the omer liturgy it is customary to recite Psalm 67.

May God be gracious to us and bless us

And make His face to shine upon us,

That Thy way may be known upon earth,

Thy saving power among all nations.

Let Thy peoples praise Thee, O God;

Let all Thy peoples praise Thee.

This is our prayer that God's way may be known upon earth.

The world we live in has become a single neighborhood, and the role of religious commitment, of awe and compassion, in the thinking of our fellowmen, is becoming a domestic issue. What goes on in the Christian world affects us deeply. Unless we learn how to help one another, we will only weaken each other.

Our society is in crisis not because we intensely *disagree* but because we feebly *agree*. The clash of doctrines is not a disaster, it is an opportunity" (Alfred Whitehead).

The survival of mankind is in the balance. One wave of hatred, callousness or contempt may bring in its wake the destruction of all mankind. Vicious deeds are but an aftermath of what is conceived in the hearts and hands of man. From the inner life of man and from the articulation of evil thoughts evil actions take their rise. It is therefore of extreme importance that the sinfulness of thoughts of suspicion and hatred and particularly the sinfulness of any contemptuous utterance however flippantly it is intended, be made clear to all mankind. This applies in particular to thoughts and utterances about individuals or groups of other religions, races and nations. Speech has power, and few men realize that words do not fade. What starts as a sound ends in a deed.

In an age when the spiritual premises of our existence are both questioned and even militantly removed, the urgent problem is not the competition among some religions but the condition of *all* religions, the condition of man.

The supreme issue today is not the Halakha for the Jew or the Church for the Christian, but the premise underlying both religions, namely, whether there is a pathos, a divine reality concerned with the destiny of man which mysteriously impinges upon history. The supreme issue is whether we are alive or dead to the challenge and the expectation of the living God. The crisis engulfs all of us. The misery and fear of alienation from God make Jew and Christian cry together.

Our era marks the end of complacency, the end of evasion, the end of self-reliance. Interdependence of political and economic conditions

all over the world is a basic fact of our situation. Disorder in a small obscure country in any part of the world evokes anxiety in people all over the world.

Parochialism has become untenable. There was a time when you could not pry out of a Bostonian an admission that Boston Common is not the hub of the solar system or that one's own denomination has not the monopoly of the holy spirit. Today we know that even the solar system is not the hub of the universe.

The religions of the world are no more self-sufficient, no more independent, no more isolated than individuals or nations. Jews and Christians share the perils and the fears; we stand on the brink of the abyss together. Energies, experiences and ideas that come to life outside the boundaries of a particular religion or of all religions continue to challenge and to affect every religion.

Horizons are wider, dangers are greater. No religion is an island. We are all involved with one another. Spiritual betrayal on the part of one of us affects the faith of all of us. Views adopted in one community have an impact on other communities. Religious isolationism is a myth. For all the profound differences in perspective and substance, Judaism is sooner or later affected by the intellectual, moral and spiritual events within the Christian society, and vice versa.

Many fail to realize that while different exponents of faith in the world of religion continue to be wary of the ecumenical movement, there is another ecumenical movement, world-wide in extent and influence: nihilism. We must choose between interfaith and inter-nihilism. Cynicism is not parochial. Should religions insist upon the illusion of complete isolation? Should we refuse to be on speaking terms with one another and hope for each other's failure? Or should we pray for each other's health, and help one another in preserving our respective legacies, in preserving a common legacy?

The world is too small for anything but mutual care and deep respect; the world is too great for anything but responsibility for one another.

Jews must realize that the spokesmen of the Enlightenment who attacked Christianity were no less negative in their attitude toward Judaism. They often blamed Judaism for the misdeeds of the daughter religion. The casualties of the devastation caused by the continuous onslaughts against biblical religion in modern times are to be found among Jews as well as among Christians.

On the other hand, the Community of Israel must always be mindful of the mystery of its uniqueness. There is a people that dwells

To meet a human being is a major challenge to mind and heart. I must recall what I normally forget. A person is not just a specimen of the species called *homo sapiens*. He is all of humanity in one, and whenever one man is hurt we are all injured. The human is a disclosure of the divine, and all men are one in God's care for man. Many things on earth are precious, some are holy; humanity is the holy of holies.

To meet a human being is an opportunity to sense the image of God, the presence of God. According to a rabbinical interpretation, the Lord said to Moses: "Wherever you see the trace of man there I stand before you...."

When engaged in a conversation with a person of different religious commitment, I discover that we disagree in matters sacred to us. Does the image of God I face disappear? Does God cease to stand before me? Does the difference in commitment destroy the kinship of being human? Does the fact that we differ in our conceptions of God cancel what we have in common: the image of God?

For this reason, man was created single collector of every other species many were created) . . . that there should be peace among human beings; one cannot say to his neighbor, my ancestor was nobler than thine. (Sanhedrin 37a).

I suggest that the most significant basis for the meeting of men of different religious traditions is the level of fear and trembling, of humility and contrition, where our individual moments of faith are mere waves in the endless ocean of mankind's reaching out for God, where all formulations and articulations appear as understatements, where our souls are swept away by the awareness of the urgency of answering God's commandment, while stripped of pretension and conceit we sense the tragic insufficiency of human faith.

We may disagree about the ways of achieving fear and trembling, but the fear and trembling are the same. The demands are different, but the conscience is the same and so is arrogance, iniquity. The proclamations are different, the callousness is the same, and so is the challenge we face in many moments of spiritual agony.

What divides us? We disagree in law and creed, in commitments which lie at the very heart of our religious existence. We say "No" to one another in some doctrines essential and sacred to us. What unites us? Our being accountable to God, our being objects of God's concern, precious in His eyes. Our conceptions of what ails us may be different, but the anxiety is the same. The language, the imagination, the con-

apart, not reckoned among the nations" (Numbers 23:19), says the gentle prophet Balaam. Is it not safer for us to remain in isolation and to refrain from sharing perplexities and certainties with Christians?

the anguish of humanity

THE JEWISH DIASPORA today, almost completely to be found in the Western world, is certainly not immune to the spiritual climate and the state of religious faith in the general society. The way in which non-Jews either relate or bid defiance to God has a profound impact on the minds and souls of the Jews. Even in the Middle Ages, when most Jews lived in relative isolation, such impact was acknowledged. To quote *Sefer Hasidim*, "The usage of the Jews is in accordance with that of the non-Jews. If the non-Jews of a certain town are moral, the Jews born there will be so as well." Rabbi Joseph Yaabez, a victim of the Spanish Inquisition, was able to declare in the midst of the Inquisition that "the Christians believe in Creation, the excellence of the Patriarchs, revelation, rehabilitation and resurrection. Blessed is the Lord, God of Israel, who left this remnant after the destruction of the second Temple. But for these Christian nations we might ourselves become nothing in our faith."

We are heirs to a long history of mutual contempt among religions and religious denominations: of religious coercion, strife and persecution. Even in periods of peace, the relationship that obtains between representatives of different religions is not just reciprocity of ignorance; it is an abyss, a source of detraction and distrust, casting suspicion and undoing the efforts of many an honest and noble expression of good will.

The Psalmist's great joy is in proclaiming: "Truth and mercy have met together" (Psalms 85:11). Yet so frequently faith and the lack of mercy enter a union, out of which bigotry is born, the presumption that my faith, my motivation, is pure and holy, while the faith of those who differ in creed—even those within my own community—is impure and unholly.

On what basis do people of different religious commitments meet one another?

First and foremost we meet as human beings who have so much in common: a heart, a face, a voice, the presence of a soul, fears, hope, the ability to trust, a capacity for compassion and understanding. My first task in every encounter is to comprehend the personhood of the human being I face, to sense the kinship of being human, the solidarity of being.

claim brotherhood by being subject to His commandments. We are sons when we hearken to the Father, when we praise and honor Him. The recognition that we are sons in obeying God and praising Him is the starting-point of my reflection. "I am a companion of all who fear Thee, of those who keep Thy precepts" (Psalms 119:63). I rejoice wherever His name is praised, His presence sensed, His commandment done.

The prerequisite of interfaith is faith

THE FIRST and most important prerequisite of interfaith is faith. It is only out of the depth of involvement in the unending drama that began with Abraham that we can help one another toward an understanding of our situation. Interfaith must come out of depth, not out of a void absence of faith. It is not an enterprise for those who are half learned or spiritually immature. If it is not to lead to the confusion of the many, it must remain a prerogative of the few.

Faith and the power of insight and devotion can only grow in privacy. Exposing one's inner life may engender the danger of desecration, distortion and confusion. Syncretism is a perpetual possibility. Moreover, at a time of paucity of faith, interfaith may become a substitute for faith, suppressing authenticity for the sake of compromise. In a world of conformity, religions can easily be levelled down to the lowest common denominator.

Both communication and separation are necessary. We must preserve our individuality as well as foster care for one another, reverence, understanding, cooperation. In the world of economics, science and technology, cooperation exists and continues to grow. Even political states, though different in culture and competing with one another, maintain diplomatic relations and strive for coexistence. Only religions are not on speaking terms. Over a hundred countries are willing to be part of the United Nations; yet no religion is ready to be part of a movement for United Religions. Or should I say, not yet ready? Ignorance, distrust, and disdain often characterize their relations to one another. Is disdain for the opposition indigenous to the religious position? Granted that Judaism and Christianity are committed to contradictory claims, is it impossible to carry on a controversy without acrimony, criticism without loss of respect, disagreement without disrespect? The problem to be faced is: how to combine loyalty to one's own tradition with reverence for different traditions? How is mutual esteem between Christian and Jew possible?

A Christian ought to ponder seriously the tremendous implications of

cretization of our hopes are different; but the embarrassment is the same, and so is the sigh, the sorrow, and the necessity to obey.

Above all, while dogmas and forms of worship are divergent, God is the same. We are united by a commitment to the Hebrew Bible as Holy Scripture, faith in the Creator, the God of Abraham, commitment to many of His commandments, to justice and mercy, a sense of conviction, sensitivity to the sanctity of life and to the involvement of God in history, the conviction that without the holy the good will be defeated, prayer that history may not end before the end of days, and by so much more.

There are moments when we all stand together and see our faces in the mirror; the anguish of humanity and its helplessness; the perplexity of the individual and the need of divine guidance; being called to praise and to do what is required.

I am a companion of all who fear thee

IN CONVERSATIONS with Protestant and Catholic theologians I have more than once come upon an attitude of condescension to Judaism, a sort of pity for those who have not yet seen the light, tolerance instead of reverence. On the other hand, I cannot forget that when Paul Tillich, Gustave Weigel, and myself were invited by the Ford Foundation to speak from the same platform on the religious situation in America, we not only found ourselves in deep accord in disclosing what ails us; but above all, without prior consultation, the three of us confessed that our guides in this critical age are the prophets of Israel, not Aristotle, not Karl Marx, but Amos and Isaiah.

The theme of these reflections is not a doctrine or an institution called Christianity, but human beings all over the world, both present and past, who worship God as followers of Jesus. How should I relate myself to them spiritually? The issue to which I am called upon to respond is not the truth of dogma but the faith and the spiritual power of the commitment of Christians. In facing the claim and the dogma of the Church, Jews and Christians are strangers and stand in disagreement with one another. Yet there are levels of existence where Jews and Christians meet as sons and brothers. "Alas, in heaven's name, are we not your brothers, are we not the sons of one father, and are we not the sons of one mother?"

To be sure all men are sons of one father, but they have also the power to forfeit their birthright, to turn rebels, voluntary bastards, "children with no faithfulness in them" (Deuteronomy 32:20). It is not flesh and blood but honor and obedience that save the right of sonship. We

a process begun in early Christian history, I mean the conscious or unconscious de-Judaization of Christianity, affecting the Church's way of thinking, its inner life as well as its relationship to the past and present reality of Israel—the father and mother of the very being of Christianity. The children did not arise to call the mother blessed; instead, they called the mother blind. Some theologians continue to act as if they did not know the meaning of "honor your father and mother"; others, anxious to prove the superiority of the church, speak as if they suffered from a spiritual Oedipus complex.

A Christian ought to realize that a world without Israel will be a world without the God of Israel. A Jew, on the other hand, ought to acknowledge the eminent role and part of Christianity in God's design for the redemption of all men.

Modern Jews who have come out of the state of political seclusion and are involved in the historic process of Western mankind cannot afford to be indifferent to the religious situation of our fellow-men. Opposition to Christianity must be challenged by the question: What religious alternative do we envisage for the Christian world? Did we not refrain for almost two thousand years from preaching Judaism to the Nations?

A Jew ought to ponder seriously the responsibility involved in Jewish history for having been the mother of two world religions. Does not the failure of children reflect upon their mother? Do not the sharp deviations from Jewish tradition on the part of the early Christians who were Jews indicate some failure of communication within the spiritual climate of first century Palestine?

Judaism is the mother of the Christian faith. It has a stake in the destiny of Christianity. Should a mother ignore her child, even a wayward, rebellious one? On the other hand, the Church should acknowledge that we Jews in loyalty to our tradition have a stake in its faith; recognize our vocation to preserve and to teach the legacy of the Hebrew Scripture; accept our aid in fighting anti-Marcionite trends as an act of love.

Is it not our duty to help one another in trying to overcome hardness of heart, in cultivating a sense of wonder and mystery, in unlocking doors to holiness in time, in opening minds to the challenge of the Hebrew Bible, in seeking to respond to the voice of the prophets?

the ecumenical revolution

WE ARE IN THE MIDST of an ecumenical revolution. Bulwarks of contempt and resentment are crumbling. There is soul-searching, questioning of prejudice, shaking of dogmatic foundations, breaking of petrified ignor-

ance, a longing to discover precious insights in the legacies of others. There is an effort to bring about an interior assumption that it is not necessary to despise other religions in order to be loyal to one's own religion, to attack other positions in order to protect one's own position. Instead of nurturing hostility to the Jews and resentment of Judaism, there is a new climate of appreciation slowly developing all over the Western world.

We Jews are being put to a new test. Christians, in many parts of the world, have suddenly begun to look at the Jews with astonishment. In particular, the attitude of the Christian community in America is undergoing a change. Instead of hostility, there is expectation, a belief that we Jews have a message to convey, significant insights which other people might share.

Many Christians believe that we Jews carry the Tablets in our arms, hugging them lovingly. They believe that we continue to relish and nurture the wisdom that God has entrusted to us, that we are loaded with spiritual treasures. This expectation is a challenge to the Jewish community, demanding responsible attention. The primacy, then, is not defense, but wisdom, self-understanding, communication.

The most important aspect of the new Christian understanding of Judaism is the gradual realization of the unfairness of proselytizing Jews. For nineteen hundred years the Church defined her relation to the Jews in one word: mission. What we witness now is the beginning of a change in that relation, a transition from mission to dialogue. Since the problem of mission is the most serious obstacle that stands in the way of mutual understanding, it will be necessary to explore it most thoroughly.

We must insist that giving up the idea of mission to the Jews be accepted as a pre-condition for entering a dialogue. The difficulty, however, is that our Christian friends are hardly aware of our sensitivity to this issue. They do not realize that mission to the Jews is a call upon the individual Jew to betray the fellowship, the dignity, and the sacred history of his people, that mission is more than an offense to the mind, it is an attack on the very existence of the Jews, a call to self-extinction. We are Jews as we are men. The alternative to our existence as Jews is spiritual suicide, disappearance. It is not a change into something else, Judaism has allies, but no substitutes.

It is only through conversations in depth that an understanding of our commitment can be brought about. Is it not our duty to aid our friends in bringing about a reorientation?

Gustave Weigel spent the last evening of his life in my study at The

Jewish Theological Seminary. We opened our hearts to one another in prayer and contrition and spoke of our own deficiencies, failures, hopes. At one moment I posed the question: Is it really the will of God that there be no more Judaism in the world? Would it really be the triumph of God if the scrolls of the Torah would no more be taken out of the Ark and the Torah no more read in the Synagogue, our ancient Hebrew prayers in which Jesus himself worshipped no more recited, the Passover Seder no more celebrated in our lives, the law of Moses no more observed in our homes? Would it really be *ad maiorem dei gloriam* to have a world without Jews?

My life is shaped by many loyalties—to my family, to my friends, to my people, to the U.S. constitution, and so on. Each of my loyalties has its ultimate root in one ultimate relationship: Loyalty to God, the loyalty of all my loyalties. That relationship is the covenant of Sinai. All we are we owe to Him. He has enriched us with gifts of insight, with the joy of moments full of blessing. He has also suffered with us in years of agony and distress.

None of us pretends to be God's accountant, and His design for history and redemption remains a mystery before which we must stand in awe. It is arrogant to maintain that the Jews' refusal to accept Jesus as the Messiah is due to their stubbornness or blindness, as it would be presumptuous for the Jews not to acknowledge the glory and holiness in the lives of countless Christians. "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth" (Psalm 145:18).

To this very day in the Collect for Good Friday, in the Anglican Prayer Book, the Church prays for the Jews, the Turks and the Infidels: "Fetch them home, Blessed Lord, to Thy fold."

Even the second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, in its Statement on the Hope of Israel, had the audacity to say that the Church cannot rest until the Jews accept the Christian faith.

Fortunately, there are some important Christian voices which have expressed themselves to the effect that missionary activities to the Jews be given up, foremost among them, Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich.

The Roman Catholic Church is in many respects ahead of other churches. I must say that I found understanding for our sensitivity and position on this issue on the part of distinguished leaders of the Roman Catholic Church.

The Schema on the Jews is the first statement of the Church in history—the first Christian discourse dealing with Judaism—which is devoid of any expression of hope for conversion. This is one of the reasons why

I consider this particular Schema to be of great importance in the history of Jewish-Christian relations.

And let me remind you that there were two versions, and even in the first version there was a reference to hope for conversion, that was eliminated.

There was another document, which did not come out of the Secretariat. It had a very strong expression of a hope of joining the Jews to the Church. This was omitted.

Let me also remind you that Pope Paul VI has revised the prayer in the Good Friday Liturgy, which included the famous prayer for the conversion of the Jews. It is now, according to the change, a prayer for the Jews.

In my own conversations with Catholic and Protestant leaders I have always maintained that unless the church will give up "the mission to the Jews" there can be no dialogue. What is required is mutual esteem for each other's faith and integrity rather than a confrontation of candidates for conversion.

The meaning of the ecumenical revolution goes beyond the level of critical interests or the level of exchange of theological opinions. Intellectual fermentation and self-examination have brought about a situation, unprecedented in almost two thousand years, in which Christians are eager to hear the message of Jewish thought. There is a receptivity in the Christian world to Jewish insights, to Jewish awareness of God and His demands, to Jewish understanding of Scripture and existence.

Here is a unique responsibility. Such occasions rarely come twice. Are we prepared for the task? Modern Jewish scholarship, for all its great achievements in history and philosophy, has neglected the realm of spiritual meaning, the dimension of intellectual relevance. Refusal to speak to Christian scholars would be barbarous. Yet to teach without competence, without commitment, would lead to confusion and frustration. We may not be ready for a dialogue in depth, so few are qualified. Yet the time has come for studying together on the highest academic level in an honest search for mutual understanding and for ways to lead us out of the moral and spiritual predicament affecting all of humanity.

CONFRONTATION

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Rosh Yeshiva at the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University, is the acknowledged intellectual leader of and spokesman for halakhic Judaism. That more of his original scholarly insights and creative philosophical ideas be made available in print has been the long-cherished hope of the many who seek his guidance on the baffling problems of our age. The Editors of this journal are deeply grateful to the revered mentor of the Rabbinical Council for having chosen TRADITION for the publication of his first major essay in English. Widely acclaimed as "*The Rav*," Dr. Soloveitchik, in his capacity as Chairman of the Halakhah Commission, is also formally recognized by the Rabbinical Council as its authority in all halakhic matters. Because of Rabbi Soloveitchik's pre-eminent position, his approach to one of the most delicate and sensitive issues that faces world Jewry is bound to have far-reaching repercussions on future developments. Portions of this paper, which was specifically prepared for TRADITION, were read by Rabbi Soloveitchik at the 1964 Mid-Winter Conference of the Rabbinical Council. Its presentation led to the formulation of a Rabbinical Council policy statement dealing with the major issues Rabbi Soloveitchik had discussed. The text of this statement is therefore appended to this essay.

I

1.

The Biblical account of the creation of man portrays him at three progressive levels.

At the first level, he appears as a simple natural being. He is neither cognizant of his unique station in the cosmos nor burdened by the awareness of his paradoxical capability of being concur-

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rently free and obedient, creative to the point of self-transcendence and submissive in a manner bordering on self-effacement. At this stage, natural man is irresponsive to the pressure of both the imperative from without and the "ought" from within — the inner call of his humanity surging *de profundis* — ממעמקים. For the norm either from within or from without addresses itself only to man who is sensitive to his own incongruity and tragic dilemma. The illusory happy-mindedness of natural man stands between him and the norm. Natural man, unaware of the element of tension prevailing between the human being and the environment of which he is an integral part, has no need to live a normative life and to find redemption in surrender to a higher moral will. His existence is unbounded, merging harmoniously with the general order of things and events. He is united with nature, moving straightforwardly, with the beast and the fowl of the field, along an unbroken line of mechanical life-activities, never turning around, never glancing backwards, leading an existence which is neither fraught with contradiction nor perplexed by paradoxes, nor marred by fright.

וכל שיח השדה טרם יהיה בארץ וכל עשב השדה טרם יצמח . . .
ואדם אין לעבד את האדמה. ואד יעלה מן הארץ והשקה את כל פני
האדמה. וייצר ה' א' את האדם עפר מן האדמה ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים
ויהי האדם לנפש חיה.

"And every plant of the field was not yet in the earth and every herb of the field had not yet grown, . . . and there was no man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground. And the Lord God formed the man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:5-7)¹

Man who was created out of the dust of the ground, enveloped in a mist rising from the jungle, determined by biological immediacy and mechanical necessity, knows of no responsibility, no opposition, no fear, and no dichotomy, and hence he is free from carrying the load of humanity.

1. While the Biblical phrase נפש חיה refers to natural man, Onkelos' רוח ממללא is related to a typologically more advanced stage.

Confrontation

In a word, this man is a non-confronted being. He is neither conscious of his assignment vis-a-vis something which is outside of himself nor is he aware of his existential otherness as a being summoned by his Maker to rise to tragic greatness.

2.

When I refer to man at the level of naturalness, I have in mind not the *Urmensch* of bygone times but modern man. I am speaking not in anthropological but typological categories. For non-confronted man is to be found not only in the cave or the jungle but also in the seats of learning and the halls of philosophers and artists. Non-confrontation is not necessarily restricted to a primitive existence but applies to human existence at all times, no matter how cultured and sophisticated. The *hêdoné*-oriented, egocentric person, the beauty-worshipper, committed to the goods of sense and craving exclusively for boundless aesthetic experience, the voluptuary, inventing needs in order to give himself the opportunity of continual gratification, the sybarite, constantly discovering new areas where pleasure is pursued and happiness found and lost, leads a non-confronted existence. At this stage, the intellectual gesture is not the ultimate goal but a means to another end — the attainment of unlimited aesthetic experience. Hence, non-confronted man is prevented from finding himself and bounding his existence as distinct and singular. He fails to realize his great capacity for winning freedom from an unalterable natural order and offering this very freedom as the great sacrifice to God, who wills man to be free in order that he may commit himself unreservedly and forfeit his freedom.

Beauty, uncouth and unrefined but irresistible, seducing man and contributing to his downfall, emerges in the Biblical arena for the first time — according to the Midrash quoted by Nachmanides (Genesis 4:22) — in the person of Naamah (the name signifies pleasantness), the sister of Tubal-Cain.

ומדרש אחר לרבותינו שהיא האשה היפה היא מאד שממנה מען בני האלהים והיא הנרמזת בפסוק ויראו בני האלהים את בנות האדם.

“Our sages offered another Midrashic interpretation, that Naamah was the fairest of all women, who seduced the sons of the

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mighty, and it is she who is referred to in the verse: 'and the sons of the mighty saw the daughters of man that they were fair.' " Her seductive charms captivated the sons of the mighty and led to their appalling disregard for the central divine norm enjoining man from reaching out for the fascinating and beautiful that does not belong to him. The sons of the mighty yielded to the hedonic urge and were unable to discipline their actions. They were a non-confronted, non-normative group. They worshipped beauty and succumbed to its overwhelming impact.

Naamah, the incarnation of unhallowed and unsublimated beauty, is, for the Midrash, not so much an individual as an idea, not only a real person but a symbol of unredeemed beauty. As such, she appears in the Biblical drama in many disguises. At times her name is Delilah, seducing Samson; at other times she is called Tamar, corrupting a prince. She is cast in the role of a princess or queen, inflicting untold harm upon a holy nation and kingdom of priests whose king, the wisest of all men, abandoned his wisdom when he encountered overpowering beauty. The Book of Wisdom (Proverbs) portrays her as the anonymous woman with an "impudent face" who "lieth in wait at every corner" and the Aggadah — also cited here by Nachmanides — as the beautiful queen of the demons tempting man and making him restless.

No less than their seductress, the sons of the mighty also represent a universal type. Non-confronted man — whether he be a primitive caveman, the king depicted in *Ecclesiastes*, or a modern counterpart — is dominated by two characteristics: he can deny himself nothing, and he is aware of neither the indomitable opposition he is bound to meet in the form of a restrictive outside, nor of the absurdity implied in man's faith that the beautiful is a source of pleasure rather than one of frustration and disillusionment. The aesthete of today, like the aesthete of old, is prisoner of — no matter what her name — beauty unethicized and unreclaimed from aboriginal immediacy. He enjoys a sense of oneness with the natural scheme of events and occurrences and his transient successful performance encourages him to strive for the absurd — an unopposed and uncontradicted hedonic *modus existentiae*.

ויפיע ת' א' גן בעדן מקדם וישם שם את האדם אשר יצר. ויצמח ה' א'

Confrontation

מן האדמה כל עץ נחמד למראה וטוב למאכל ועץ החיים בתוך הגן ועץ הדעת טוב ורע.

“And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God caused to grow every tree that is desirable to the sight and good for food; the tree of life in the midst of the garden and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” (Genesis 2:8-9)²

Man depicted in these verses is hedonically-minded and pleasure-seeking, having at his disposal a multitude of possibilities of sense-gratification. Before him stretches a vast garden with an almost endless variety of trees desirable and good, tempting, fascinating, and exciting the boundless fantasy with their glamorous colors.

3.

At the **second level**, natural man, moving straightforwards, comes suddenly to a stop, turns around, and casts, as an outsider, a contemplative gaze upon his environment. Even the most abandoned voluptuary becomes disillusioned like the king of Ecclesiastes and finds himself encountering something wholly other than his own self, an outside that defies and challenges him. At this very moment, the separation of man from cosmic immediacy, from the uniformity and simplicity which he had shared with nature, takes place. He discovers an awesome and mysterious domain of things and events which is independent of and disobedient to him, an objective order limiting the exercise of his power and offering opposition to him. In the wake of this discovery, he discovers himself. Once self-discovery is accomplished, and a new I-awareness of an existence which is limited and opposed by a non-I outside emerges, something new is born — namely, the divine norm. “ויצו ה' א' על האדם” — “And the Lord God commanded the man.” With the birth of the norm, man becomes aware of his singularly human existence which expresses itself

2. Maimonides translated טוב ורע into aesthetic terms as “pleasing and displeasing”. Paradisical man, violating the divine commandment by eating from the tree of knowledge, suspended the ethical and replaced it with the aesthetic experience (*Guide of the Perplexed*, I, 2).

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in the dichotomous experience of being unfree, restricted, imperfect and unredeemed, and, at the same time, being potentially powerful, great, and exalted, uniquely endowed, capable of rising far above his environment in response to the divine moral challenge. Man attains his unique identity when, after having been enlightened by God that he is not only a committed but also a free person, endowed with power to implement his commitment, he grasps the incommensurability of what he is and what he is destined to be, of the *יהי* and *יהיה*.

God, in answer to Moses' inquiry, gave his name as *אֲנִי אֲנִי* — I am what I am. God is free from the contradiction between potentiality and actuality, ideal and reality. He is pure actuality, existence par excellence.³ Man, however, is unable to state of himself *אֲנִי אֲנִי* since his real existence always falls short of the ideal which his Maker set up for him as the great objective. This tragic schism reflects, in a paradoxical fashion, human distinctiveness and grandeur.

Simultaneously with man's realization of his inner incongruity and complete alienation from his environment, the human tragic destiny begins to unfold. Man, in his encounter with an objective world and in his assumption of the role of a subject who asks questions about something hitherto simple, forfeits his sense of serenity and peace. He is no longer happy, he begins to examine his station in this world and he finds himself suddenly assailed by perplexity and fear, and especially loneliness. *וַיֹּאמֶר ה' א' לֹא טוֹב הָיְתָה הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ* "And the Lord God said: 'It is not good that the man should be alone'." The I-experience is a passionate one and real man is born amid the pains of confrontation with an "angry" environment of which he had previously been an integral part.

Confronted man is called upon to choose either of two alternatives:

1) To play an active role as a subject-knower, utilizing his great endowment, the intellect, and trying to gain supremacy over the objective order. However, this performance is fraught with difficulty because knowledge is gained only through conflict and the

³. See *Guide of the Perplexed*. I, 68.

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intellectual performance is an act of conquest.⁴ The order of things and events, in spite of its intrinsic knowability and rationality, does not always respond to human inquiry and quite often rejects all pleas for a cooperative relationship. The subject-knower must contest a knowable object, subdue it and make it yield its cognitive contents.⁵

2) Man may despair, succumb to the overpowering pressure of the objective outside and end in mute resignation, failing to discharge his duty as an intellectual being, and thus dissolving an intelligent existence into an absurd nightmare.

Of course, the Torah commanded man to choose the first alternative, to exercise his authority as an intelligent being whose task consists in engaging the objective order in a cognitive contest. We have always rejected the nirvana of inaction because the flight from confrontation is an admission of the bankruptcy of man. When man became alienated from nature and found himself alone, confronted by everything outside of him, God brought the "animal of the field and every fowl of the heaven unto the man to see what he would call it . . . and the man gave name to all the beasts and the fowl of the heaven and to every animal of the field."

4. The Latin *objectus* derived from *obicere*, to oppose, the German *Gegenstand*, denoting something standing opposite, the Hebrew עִבְרָה having the connotation of something intensely desired but not always attainable, are quite indicative of the element of tension which is interwoven into the logical subject-knower knowable-object relationship.

5. The element of tension in the subject-object relationship is a result not of sin but of the incongruity of "attitudes" on the part of the confronters. The attitude of man is one of dominion while the "attitude" on the part of the objective order is one of irresponsiveness. The knowable object refuses to surrender to the subject-knower. The result of man's sin was not the emergence of tension and resistance — since this state of affairs prevailed even before man's expulsion from Paradise — but the change from tension to frustration, from a creative, successful performance to defeat. In imposing this metaphysical curse upon man, God decreed that the latter, in spite of all his glorious achievements, be finally defeated by death and ignorance. Judaism does not believe that man will ever succeed in his bold attempt to unravel the *mysterium magnum* of being and to control nature as a whole. The human cognitive and technological gestures, Judaism maintains, have a chance to succeed only in small sectors of reality. וְקוֹץ וְדַרְדָּר תְּצַמֵּיחַ לָךְ — "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."

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ויצר ה' א' מן האדמה כל חית השדה ואת כל עוף השמים ויבא אל האדם לראות מה יקרא לו . . . ויקרא האדם שמות לכל הבהמה ולעוף השמים ולכל חית השדה.

Man no longer marched straightforwardly with the brutes of the field and the forest. He made an about-face and confronted them as an intelligent being remote from and eager to examine and classify them. God encouraged him to engage in the most miraculous of all human gestures — the cognitive. Confronted Adam responded gladly because he already realized that he was no longer a part of nature but an outsider, a singular being, endowed with intelligence. In his new role, he became aware of his loneliness and isolation from the entire creation. ולאדם לא מצא עזר כנגדו. “And for the man [God] had not found a helpmeet opposite him.” As a lonely being, Adam discovered his great capacity for facing and dominating the non-human order.⁶

4.

The Book of Genesis, after describing the four rivers which flow from the Garden of Eden, offers us a new account of the placing of Adam in this garden.

ויקח ה' א' את האדם וינחהו בגן עדן לעבדה ולשמרה.
“And the Lord God took the man and placed him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to keep it.” This sentence in Genesis 2:15 is almost a verbatim repetition of Genesis 2:8, yet the accounts differ in two respects.

First, in the second account, the Bible uses a verb denoting action preceding the placing of man in the Garden of Eden — “And God *took* (ויקח) the man and placed him” — whereas in the previous account, the verb “he placed”, וישם, is not accompanied by any preliminary action on the part of the Almighty. The expression ויקח does not occur in the first account. Second, there is no mention in the previous account of any assignment given to man while this account does specify that man was charged with the task of cultivating and keeping the garden.

The reason for these variations lies in the fact that the two accounts are related to two different men. The first story, as we have

6. See Nachmanides, (Genesis 2:9).

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previously indicated, is of non-confronted man carried by the mighty tide of a uniform, simple, non-reflective life, who was placed in the Garden of Eden for one purpose only — to pursue pleasure, to enjoy the fruit of the trees without toil, to live in ignorance of his human destiny, to encounter no problem and to be concerned with no obligation. As we stated previously, non-confronted man is a non-normative being. The second story is of confronted man who began to appraise critically his position vis-a-vis his environment and found his existential experience too complex to be equated with the simplicity and non-directedness of the natural life-stream. This man, as a subject-knower facing an almost impenetrable objective order, was dislocated by God from his position of naturalness and harmonious being and placed in a new existential realm, that of confronted existence. Confronted man is a displaced person. Having been taken out of a state of complacency and optimistic naivete, he finds the intimate relationship between him and the order of facticity ending in tension and conflict. The verb *ויקה* signifies that God removed man from one dimension and thrust him into another — that of confronted existence. At this phase, man, estranged from nature, fully aware of his grand and tragic destiny, became the recipient of the first norm — *'ויצו ה' א' על האדם* "And the Lord God commanded the man." The divine imperative burst forth out of infinity and overpowered finite man.

Alas, not always does creative man respond readily to the divine normative summons which forms the very core of his new existential status as a confronted being. All too often, the motivating force in creative man is not the divine mandate entrusted to him and which must be implemented in full at both levels, the cognitive and the normative, but a demonic urge for power. By fulfilling an incomplete task, modern creative man falls back to a non-confronted, natural existence to which normative pressure is alien. The reason for the failure of confronted man to play his role fully lies in the fact that, while the cognitive gesture gives man mastery and a sense of success, the normative gesture requires of man surrender. At this juncture, man of today commits the error which his ancestor, Adam of old, committed by lending an attentive ear to the demonic whisper "Ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil."

5.

There is, however, a third level which man, if he is longing for self-fulfillment, must ascend. At this level, man finds himself confronted again. Only this time it is not the confrontation of a subject who gazes, with a sense of superiority, at the object beneath him, but of two equal subjects, both lonely in their otherness and uniqueness, both opposed and rejected by an objective order, both craving for companionship. This confrontation is reciprocal, not unilateral. This time the two confronters stand alongside each other, each admitting the existence of the other. An aloof existence is transformed into a together-existence.

ויאמר ה' א' לא טוב היות האדם לבדו אעשה לו עזר כנגדו . . . ויבן ה' א' את הצלע אשר לקח מן האדם לאשה ויבאה אל האדם.
 "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make a helpmeet opposite him . . . And the Lord God made the rib which he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her unto man." (Genesis 2:18, 22) God created Eve, another human being. Two individuals, lonely and helpless in their solitude, meet, and the first community is formed.

The community can only be born, however, through an act of communication. After gazing at each other in silence and defiance, the two individuals involved in a unique encounter begin to communicate with each other. Out of the mist of muteness the miraculous word rises and shines forth. Adam suddenly begins to talk — ויאמר האדם — "And the man said." He addresses himself to Eve, and with his opening remark, two fenced-in and isolated human existences open up, and they both ecstatically break through to each other.

The word is a paradoxical instrument of communication and contains an inner contradiction. On the one hand, the word is the medium of expressing agreement and concurrence, of reaching mutual understanding, organizing cooperative effort, and uniting action. On the other hand, the word is also the means of manifesting distinctness, emphasizing incongruity, and underlining separateness. The word brings out not only what is common in two existences but the singularity and uniqueness of each existence as well. It emphasizes not only common problems, aspirations and

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concerns, but also uniquely individual questions, cares and anxieties which assail each person. Our sages, in explaining the graphic difference between the open and closed *mem*, spoke of מאמר פתוח and מאמר סתום — the enigmatic and the clear or distinct phrase. They felt that the word at times enlightens, at times, confounds; at times, elucidates, and at other times, emphasizes the unintelligible and unknowable.

When Adam addressed himself to Eve, employing the word as the means of communication, he certainly told her not only what united them but also what separated them. Eve was both enlightened and perplexed, assured and troubled by his word. For, in all personal unions such as marriage, friendship, or comradeship, however strong the bonds uniting two individuals, the *modi existantiae* remain totally unique and hence, incongruous, at both levels, the ontological and the experiential. The hope of finding a personal existential equation of two human beings is rooted in the dangerous and false notion that human existences are abstract magnitudes subject to the simple mathematical processes. This error lies at the root of the philosophies of the corporate state and of mechanistic behaviorism. In fact, the closer two individuals get to know each other, the more aware they become of the metaphysical distance separating them. Each one exists in a singular manner, completely absorbed in his individual awareness which is egocentric and exclusive. The sun of existence rises with the birth of one's self-awareness and sets with its termination. It is beyond the experiential power of an individual to visualize an existence preceding or following his.

It is paradoxical yet nonetheless true that each human being lives both in an existential community, surrounded by friends, and in a state of existential loneliness and tension, confronted by strangers. In each to whom I relate as a human being, I find a friend, for we have many things in common, as well as a stranger, for each of us is unique and wholly other. This otherness stands in the way of complete mutual understanding. The gap of uniqueness is too wide to be bridged. Indeed, it is not a gap, it is an abyss. Of course, there prevails, quite often, a harmony of interests, — economic, political, social — upon which two individuals focus their attention. However, two people glancing at the same object

may continue to lead isolated, closed-in existences. Coordination of interests does not spell an existential union. We frequently engage in common enterprise and we prudently pursue common goals, travelling temporarily along parallel roads, yet our destinations are not the same. We are, in the words of the Torah, an עֵרֵךְ — a helpmeet to each other, yet at the same time, we experience the state of כִּנְגְדוֹ — we remain different and opposed to each other.⁷ We think, feel and respond to events not in unison but singly, each one in his individual fashion. Man is a social being, yearning for a together-existence in which services are exchanged and experiences shared, and a lonely creature, shy and reticent, fearful of the intruding cynical glance of his next-door neighbor. In spite of our sociability and outer-directed nature, we remain strangers to each other. Our feelings of sympathy and love for our confronter are rooted in the surface personality and they do not reach into the inner recesses of our depth personality which never leaves its ontological seclusion and never becomes involved in a communal existence.

In a word, the greatness of man manifests itself in his dialectical approach to his confronter, in ambivalent acting toward his fellow-man, in giving friendship and hurling defiance, in relating himself to, and at the same time, retreating from him. In the dichotomy of עֵרֵךְ and כִּנְגְדוֹ we find our triumph as well as our defeat.

Modern man, who did not meet to the fullest the challenge of confrontation on the second level, does not perform well at the level of personal confrontation either. He has forgotten how to master the difficult dialectical art of עֵרֵךְ כִּנְגְדוֹ — of being one with and, at the same time, different from, his human confronter, of living in community and simultaneously in solitude. He has developed the habit of confronting his fellow man in a fashion similar to that which prevails at the level of subject-object relationship, seeking to dominate and subordinate him instead of communicating and communing with him. The wondrous personal confrontation of Adam and Eve is thus turned into an ugly attempt at depersonalization. Adam of today wants to appear as master-hero

7. The interpretation of כִּנְגְדוֹ as "opposing" was accepted by our Talmudic sages. See *Yebamot*, 63a.

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and to subject Eve to his rule and dominion, be it ideological, religious, economic, or political. As a matter of fact, the divine curse addressed to Eve after she sinned, וְהָיָה יְמוֹעַל בְּךָ—“and he shall rule over thee,” has found its fulfillment in our modern society. The warm personal relationship between two individuals has been supplanted by a formal subject-object relationship which manifests itself in a quest for power and supremacy.

II

1.

We Jews have been burdened with a twofold task; we have to cope with the problem of a double confrontation. We think of ourselves as human beings, sharing the destiny of Adam in his general encounter with nature, and as members of a covenantal community which has preserved its identity under most unfavorable conditions, confronted by another faith community. We believe we are the bearers of a double charismatic load, that of the dignity of man, and that of the sanctity of the covenantal community. In this difficult role, we are summoned by God, who revealed himself at both the level of universal creation and that of the private covenant, to undertake a double mission — the universal human and the exclusive covenantal confrontation.

Like his forefather, Jacob — whose bitter nocturnal struggle with a mysterious antagonist is so dramatically portrayed in the Bible — the Jew of old was a doubly confronted being. The emancipated modern Jew, however, has been trying, for a long time, to do away with this twofold responsibility which weighs heavily upon him. The Westernized Jew maintains that it is impossible to engage in both confrontations, the universal and the covenantal, which, in his opinion, are mutually exclusive. It is, he argues, absurd to stand shoulder to shoulder with mankind preoccupied with the cognitive-technological gesture for the welfare of all, implementing the mandate granted to us by the Creator, and to make an about-face the next instant in order to confront our comrades as a distinct and separate community. Hence, the Western Jew concludes, we have to choose between these two encounters. We

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are either confronted human beings or confronted Jews. A double confrontation contains an inner contradiction.

What is characteristic of these single-confrontation philosophers is their optimistic and carefree disposition. Like natural Adam of old, who saw himself as part of his environment and was never assailed by a feeling of being existentially different, they see themselves as secure and fully integrated within general society. They do not raise any questions about the reasonableness and justification of such an optimistic attitude, nor do they try to discover in the deep recesses of their personality commitments which transcend mundane obligations to society.

The proponents of the single-confrontation philosophy (with the exception of some fringe groups) do not preach complete de-Judaization and unqualified assimilation. They also speak of Jewish identity (at least in a religious sense), of Jewish selfhood and the natural will for preservation of the Jewish community as a separate identity. As a matter of fact, quite often they speak with great zeal and warmth about the past and future role of Judaism in the advancement of mankind and its institutions. However, they completely fail to grasp the real nature and the full implications of a meaningful Jewish identity.

2.

This failure rests upon two misconceptions of the nature of the faith community. First, the single-confrontation philosophy continues to speak of Jewish identity without realizing that this term can only be understood under the aspect of singularity and otherness. There is no identity without uniqueness. As there cannot be an equation between two individuals unless they are converted into abstractions, it is likewise absurd to speak of the commensurability of two faith communities which are individual entities.

The individuality of a faith community expresses itself in a threefold way. First, the divine imperatives and commandments to which a faith community is unreservedly committed must not be equated with the ritual and ethos of another community. Each faith community is engaged in a singular normative gesture re-

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reflecting the numinous nature of the act of faith itself, and it is futile to try to find common denominators. Particularly when we speak of the Jewish faith community, whose very essence is expressed in the halakhic performance which is a most individuating factor, any attempt to equate our identity with another is sheer absurdity. Second, the axiological awareness of each faith community is an exclusive one, for it believes — and this belief is indispensable to the survival of the community — that its system of dogmas, doctrines and values is best fitted for the attainment of the ultimate good. Third, each faith community is unyielding in its eschatological expectations. It perceives the events at the end of time with exultant certainty, and expects man, by surrender of selfish pettiness and by consecration to the great destiny of life, to embrace the faith that this community has been preaching throughout the millenia. Standardization of practices, equalization of dogmatic certitudes, and the waiving of eschatological claims spell the end of the vibrant and great faith experience of any religious community. It is as unique and enigmatic as the individual himself.

The second misconception of the single-confrontation philosophy consists in not realizing the compatibility of the two roles. If the relationship of the non-Jewish to the Jewish world had conformed to the divine arrangement for one human being to meet the other on the basis of equality, friendship and sympathy, the Jew would have been able to become fully involved together with the rest of humanity in the cosmic confrontation. His covenantal uniqueness and his additional mandate to face another faith community as a member of a different community of the committed would not have interfered in the least with his readiness to and capability of joining the cultural enterprise of the rest of humanity. There is no contradiction between coordinating our cultural activity with all men and at the same time confronting them as members of another faith community. As a matter of fact even within the non-Jewish society, each individual sees himself under a double aspect: first, as a member of a cultural-creative community in which all are committed to a common goal and, at the same time, as an individual living in seclusion and loneliness.

Unfortunately, however, non-Jewish society has confronted us throughout the ages in a mood of defiance, as if we were part of the

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subhuman objective order separated by an abyss from the human, as if we had no capacity for thinking logically, loving passionately, yearning deeply, aspiring and hoping. Of course, as long as we were exposed to such a soulless, impersonal confrontation on the part of non-Jewish society, it was impossible for us to participate to the fullest extent in the great universal creative confrontation between man and the cosmic order. The limited role we played until modern times in the great cosmic confrontation was not of our choosing. Heaven knows that we never encouraged the cruel relationship which the world displayed toward us. We have always considered ourselves an inseparable part of humanity and we were ever ready to accept the divine challenge, מלאו את הארץ וכבשה "Fill the earth and subdue it," and the responsibility implicit in human existence. We have never proclaimed the philosophy of *contemptus* or *odium seculi*. We have steadily maintained that involvement in the creative scheme of things is mandatory.

Involvement with the rest of mankind in the cosmic confrontation does not, we must repeat, rule out the second personal confrontation of two faith communities, each aware of both what it shares with the other and what is singularly its own. In the same manner as Adam and Eve confronted and attempted to subdue a malicious scoffing nature and yet nevertheless encountered each other as two separate individuals cognizant of their incommensurability and uniqueness, so also two faith communities which coordinate their efforts when confronted by the cosmic order may face each other in the full knowledge of their distinctness and individuality.

We reject the theory of a single confrontation and instead insist upon the indispensability of the double confrontation. First, as we have mentioned previously, we, created in the image of God, are charged with responsibility for the great confrontation of man and the cosmos. We stand with civilized society shoulder to shoulder over against an order which defies us all. Second, as a charismatic faith community, we have to meet the challenge of confronting the general non-Jewish faith community. We are called upon to tell this community not only the story it already knows — that we are human beings, committed to the general welfare and progress of mankind, that we are interested in combatting disease, in alle-

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viating human suffering, in protecting man's rights, in helping the needy, *et cetera* — but also what is still unknown to it, namely, our otherness as a metaphysical covenantal community.

3.

It is self-evident that a confrontation of two faith communities is possible only if it is accompanied by a clear assurance that both parties will enjoy equal rights and full religious freedom. We shall resent any attempt on the part of the community of the many to engage us in a peculiar encounter in which our confronter will command us to take a position beneath him while placing himself not alongside of but above us. A democratic confrontation certainly does not demand that we submit to an attitude of self-righteousness taken by the community of the many which, while debating whether or not to "absolve" the community of the few of some mythical guilt, completely ignores its own historical responsibility for the suffering and martyrdom so frequently recorded in the annals of the history of the few, the weak, and the persecuted.

We are not ready for a meeting with another faith community in which we shall become an object of observation, judgment and evaluation, even though the community of the many may then condescendingly display a sense of compassion with the community of the few and advise the many not to harm or persecute the few. Such an encounter would convert the personal Adam-Eve meeting into a hostile confrontation between a subject-knower and a knowable object. We do not intend to play the part of the object encountered by dominating man. Soliciting commiseration is incongruous with the character of a democratic confrontation. There should rather be insistence upon one's inalienable rights as a human being, created by God.

In light of this analysis, it would be reasonable to state that in any confrontation we must insist upon four basic conditions in order to safeguard our individuality and freedom of action.

- ① First, we must state, in unequivocal terms, the following. We are a totally independent faith community. We do not revolve as a satellite in any orbit. Nor are we related to any other faith community as "brethren" even though "separated." People confuse two

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concepts when they speak of a common tradition uniting two faith communities such as the Christian and the Judaic. This term may have relevance if one looks upon a faith community under an historico-cultural aspect and interprets its relationship to another faith community in sociological, human, categories describing the unfolding of the creative consciousness of man. Let us not forget that religious awareness manifests itself not only in a singular apocalyptic faith experience but in a mundane cultural experience as well. Religion is both a divine imperative which was foisted upon man from without and a new dimension of personal being which man discovers within himself. In a word, there is a cultural aspect to the faith experience which is, from a psychological viewpoint, the most integrating, inspiring and uplifting spiritual force. Religious values, doctrines and concepts may be and have been translated into cultural categories enjoyed and cherished even by secular man. All the references throughout the ages to universal religion, philosophical religion, *et cetera*, are related to the cultural aspect of the faith experience of which not only the community of believers but a pragmatic, utilitarian society avails itself as well. The cultural religious experience gives meaning and directedness to human existence and relates it to great ultimates, thus enhancing human dignity and worth even at a mundane level.

Viewing the relationship between Judaism and Christianity under this aspect, it is quite legitimate to speak of a cultural Judeo-Christian tradition for two reasons: First, Judaism as a culture has influenced, indeed, molded the ethico-philosophical Christian world-formula. The basic categories and premises of the latter were evolved in the cultural Judaic orbit. Second, our Western civilization has absorbed both Judaic and Christian elements. As a matter of fact, our Western heritage was shaped by a combination of three factors, the classical, Judaic, and Christian, and we could readily speak of a Judeo-Hellenistic-Christian tradition within the framework of our Western civilization. However, when we shift the focus from the dimension of culture to that of faith — where total unconditional commitment and involvement are necessary — the whole idea of a tradition of faiths and the continuum of revealed doctrines which are by their very nature incommensurate and related to different frames of reference is utterly absurd, unless

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one is ready to acquiesce in the Christian theological claim that Christianity has superseded Judaism.

As a faith individuality, the community of the few is endowed with intrinsic worth which must be viewed against its own meta-historical backdrop without relating to the framework of another faith community. For the mere appraisal of the worth of one community in terms of the service it has rendered to another community, no matter how great and important this service was, constitutes an infringement of the sovereignty and dignity of even the smallest of faith communities. When God created man and endowed him with individual dignity, He decreed that the ontological legitimacy and relevance of the individual human being is to be discovered not without but within the individual. He was created because God approved of him as an autonomous human being and not as an auxiliary being in the service of someone else. The ontological purposiveness of his existence is immanent in him. The same is true of a religious community, whose worth is not to be measured by external standards.

Therefore, any intimation, overt or covert, on the part of the community of the many that it is expected of the community of the few that it shed its uniqueness and cease existing because it has fulfilled its mission by paving the way for the community of the many, must be rejected as undemocratic and contravening the very idea of religious freedom. The small community has as much right to profess its faith in the ultimate certitude concerning the doctrinal worth of its world formula and to behold its own eschatological vision as does the community of the many. I do not deny the right of the community of the many to address itself to the community of the few in its own eschatological terms. However, building a practical program upon this right is hardly consonant with religious democracy and liberalism.

- ② Second, the *logos*, the word, in which the multifarious religious experience is expressed does not lend itself to standardization or universalization. The word of faith reflects the intimate, the private, the paradoxically inexpressible cravings of the individual for and his linking up with his Maker. It reflects the numinous character and the strangeness of the act of faith of a particular community which is totally incomprehensible to the man of a different

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faith community. Hence, it is important that the religious or theological logos should not be employed as the medium of communication between two faith communities whose modes of expression are as unique as their apocalyptic experiences. The confrontation should occur not at a theological, but at a mundane human level. There, all of us speak the universal language of modern man. As a matter of fact, our common interests lie not in the realm of faith, but in that of the secular orders.⁸ There, we all face a powerful antagonist, we all have to contend with a considerable number of matters of great concern. The relationship between two communities must be outer-directed and related to the secular orders with which men of faith come face to face. In the secular sphere, we may discuss positions to be taken, ideas to be evolved, and plans to be formulated. In these matters, religious communities may together recommend action to be developed and may seize the initiative to be implemented later by general society. However, our joint engagement in this kind of enterprise must not dull our sense of identity as a faith community. We must always remember that our singular commitment to God and our hope and indomitable will for survival are non-negotiable and non-rationalizable and are not subject to debate and argumentation. The great encounter between God and man is a wholly personal private affair incomprehensible to the outsider — even to a brother of the same faith community. The divine message is incommunicable since it defies all standardized media of information and all objective categories. If the powerful community of the many feels like remedying an embarrassing human situation or redressing an historic wrong, it should do so at the human ethical level. However, if the debate should revolve around matters of faith, then one of the confronters will be impelled to avail himself of the language of his opponent. This in itself would mean surrender of individuality and distinctiveness.

③ Third, we members of the community of the few should always act with tact and understanding and refrain from suggesting to the community of the many, which is both proud and prudent,

8. The term "secular orders" is used here in accordance with its popular semantics. For the man of faith, this term is a misnomer. God claims the whole, not a part of man, and whatever He established as an order within the scheme of creation is sacred.

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changes in its ritual or emendations of its texts. If the genuinely liberal dignitaries of the faith community of the many deem some changes advisable, they will act in accordance with their convictions without any prompting on our part. It is not within our purview to advise or solicit. For it would be both impertinent and unwise for an outsider to intrude upon the most private sector of the human existential experience, namely, the way in which a faith community expresses its relationship to God. Non-interference with and non-involvement in something which is totally alien to us is a *conditio sine qua non* for the furtherance of good-will and mutual respect.

④ Fourth, we certainly have not been authorized by our history, sanctified by the martyrdom of millions, to even hint to another faith community that we are mentally ready to revise historical attitudes, to trade favors pertaining to fundamental matters of faith, and to reconcile "some" differences. Such a suggestion would be nothing but a betrayal of our great tradition and heritage and would, furthermore, produce no practical benefits. Let us not forget that the community of the many will not be satisfied with half measures and compromises which are only indicative of a feeling of insecurity and inner emptiness. We cannot command the respect of our confronters by displaying a servile attitude. Only a candid, frank and unequivocal policy reflecting unconditional commitment to our God, a sense of dignity, pride and inner joy in being what we are, believing with great passion in the ultimate truthfulness of our views, praying fervently for and expecting confidently the fulfillment of our eschatological vision when our faith will rise from particularity to universality, will impress the peers of the other faith community among whom we have both adversaries and friends. I hope and pray that our friends in the community of the many will sustain their liberal convictions and humanitarian ideals by articulating their position on the right of the community of the few to live, create, and worship God in its own way, in freedom and with dignity.

4

Our representatives who meet with the spokesmen of the community of the many should be given instructions similar to those

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enunciated by our patriarch Jacob when he sent his agents to meet his brother Esau.

ויצו את הראשון לאמר כי יפגשך עשו אחי ושאלך לאמר למי אתה ואנה תלך ולמי אלה לפניך ואמרת לעבדך ליעקב מנחה היא שלוחה לאדני לעשו והנה גם הוא אחרינו ויצו גם את השני גם את השלישי גם את כל ההלכים אחרי העדדים לאמר כדבר הזה תדברון אל עשו במצאכם אותו. "And he commanded the foremost, saying, when Esau my brother, meeteth thee and asketh thee, saying: whose art thou and whither goest thou? And whose are these before thee? Then thou shalt say they are thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau, and behold he also is behind us. And he commanded also the second, and the third and all that followed the droves, saying in this manner shall ye speak unto Esau when ye find him." (Genesis 32:18-20).

What was the nature of these instructions? Our approach to and relationship with the outside world has always been of an ambivalent character, intrinsically antithetic, bordering at times on the paradoxical. We relate ourselves to and at the same time withdraw from, we come close to and simultaneously retreat from the world of Esau. When the process of coming nearer and nearer is almost consummated, we immediately begin to retreat quickly into seclusion. We cooperate with the members of other faith communities in all fields of constructive human endeavor, but, simultaneously with our integration into the general social framework, we engage in a movement of recoil and retrace our steps. In a word, we belong to the human society and, at the same time, we feel as strangers and outsiders. We are rooted in the here and now reality as inhabitants of our globe, and yet we experience a sense of homelessness and loneliness as if we belonged somewhere else. We are both realists and dreamers, prudent and practical on the one hand, and visionaries and idealists on the other. We are indeed involved in the cultural endeavor and yet we are committed to another dimension of experience. Our first patriarch, Abraham, already introduced himself in the following words: "I am a stranger and sojourner with you" — "גר ותושב אנכי עמכם" — Is it possible to be both — גר ותושב — at the same time? Is not this definition absurd since it contravenes the central principle of classical logic that no cognitive judgment may contain two

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mutually exclusive terms? And yet, the Jew of old defied this time-honored principle and did think of himself in contradictory terms. He knew well in what areas he could extend his full cooperation to his neighbors and act as a **תושב**, a resident, a sojourner, and at what point this gesture of cooperation and goodwill should terminate, and he must disengage as if he were a **גר**, a stranger. He knew in what enterprise to participate to the best of his ability and what offers and suggestions, however attractive and tempting, to reject resolutely. He was aware of the issues on which he could compromise, of the nature of the goods he could surrender, and vice versa, of the principles which were not negotiable and the spiritual goods which had to be defended at no matter what cost. The boundary line between a finite idea and a principle nurtured by infinity, transient possessions and eternal treasures, was clear and precise. Jacob, in his instructions to his agents, laid down the rule:

כי יפגשך עשו אחי ושאלך לאמר למי אתה ואנה תלך ולמי אלה לפניך?
“When Esau my brother meeteth thee and asketh thee, saying: whose art thou, and whither goest thou and whose are these before thee?” My brother Esau, Jacob told his agents, will address to you three questions. “Whose art thou?” To whom do you as a metaphysical being, as a soul, as a spiritual personality belong? “And whither goest thou?” To whom is your historical destiny committed? To whom have you consecrated your future? What is your ultimate goal, your final objective? Who is your God and what is your way of life? These two inquiries are related to your identity as members of a covenantal community. However, Jacob continued, my brother Esau will also ask a third question: “And whose are these before thee?” Are you ready to contribute your talents, capabilities and efforts toward the material and cultural welfare of general society? Are you ready to present me with gifts, oxen, goats, camels and bulls? Are you willing to pay taxes, to develop and industrialize the country? This third inquiry is focused on temporal aspects of life. As regards the third question, Jacob told his agents to answer in the positive. “It is a present unto my lord, even unto Esau.” Yes, we are determined to participate in every civic, scientific, and political enterprise. We feel obligated to enrich society with our creative talents and to be constructive and useful citi-

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zens. Yet, pertaining to the first two questions — whose art thou and whither goest thou — Jacob commanded his representatives to reply in the negative, clearly and precisely, boldly and courageously. He commanded them to tell Esau that their soul, their personality, their metaphysical destiny, their spiritual future and sacred commitments, belong exclusively to God and His servant Jacob. "They are thy servant Jacob's," and no human power can succeed in severing the eternal bond between them and God.

This testament handed down to us by Jacob has become very relevant now in the year 1964. We find ourselves confronted again like Jacob of old, and our confronters are ready to address to us the identical three questions: "Whose art thou? Whither goest thou? Whose are these before thee?" A milenia-old history demands from us that we meet the challenge courageously and give the same answers with which Jacob entrusted his messengers several thousand years ago.

STATEMENT ADOPTED BY THE RABBINICAL COUNCIL OF AMERICA AT THE MID-WINTER CONFERENCE, FEBRUARY 3-5, 1964

We are pleased to note that in recent years there has evolved in our country as well as throughout the world a desire to seek better understanding and a mutual respect among the world's major faiths. The current threat of secularism and materialism and the modern atheistic negation of religion and religious values makes even more imperative a harmonious relationship among the faiths. This relationship, however, can only be of value if it will not be in conflict with the uniqueness of each religious community, since each religious community is an individual entity which cannot be merged or equated with a community which is committed to a different faith. Each religious community is endowed with intrinsic dignity and metaphysical worth. Its historical experience, its present dynamics, its hopes and aspirations for the future can only be interpreted in terms of full spiritual independence of and freedom from any relatedness to another faith community. Any suggestion that the historical and meta-historical worth of a faith community be viewed against the backdrop of

Confrontation

another faith, and the mere hint that a revision of basic historic attitudes is anticipated, are incongruous with the fundamentals of religious liberty and freedom of conscience and can only breed discord and suspicion. Such an approach is unacceptable to any self-respecting faith community that is proud of its past, vibrant and active in the present and determined to live on in the future and to continue serving God in its own individual way. Only full appreciation on the part of all of the singular role, inherent worth and basic prerogatives of each religious community will help promote the spirit of cooperation among faiths.

It is the prayerful hope of the Rabbinical Council of America that all inter-religious discussion and activity will be confined to these dimensions and will be guided by the prophet, Micah (4:5) "Let all the people walk, each one in the name of his god, and we shall walk in the name of our Lord, our God, forever and ever."

שו"ת אגרות משה יורה דעה חלק ג סימן מג

שני תשובות בענין איסור לילך לאסיפה עם נוצרים בענייני התקרבות באמונה והתחברות עמם. א'
י"ט אדר ראשון תשכ"ז מע"כ ידידי הנכבד מהר"ר דובער לאנדער שליט"א

Moshe Feinstein, Iggerot Moshe, Yoreh Deah 3 Number 43 Two Responsa Concerning the Prohibition Against Attendance at a Meeting with Christians on Matters of Rapprochement in Faith and Association with Them I (19 Adar I, 5727 - March 1, 1967)

(Translated by David Ellenson)

Addressed to Rabbi Bernard Lander, then a young Orthodox rabbi and later president of Touro College, who was scheduled to attend a Protestant-Catholic-Jewish dialogue four days later. The rabbi had apparently promised to attend the meeting and expressed concern over his obligation to attend in light of this promise.

הנה בדבר שכתר"ה הבטיח לבא למקום שיתאספו בכ"ג אדר א' קאטאליקן ופראטעסטאנטן/קטולים ופרוטסטנטים/ יחד עם בני"י מחברי סינאגיאג קאנסול וגם חברים רבנים מהסתדרות הרבנים, אף שמה שידבר כתר"ה יהיה במילי דעלמא, פשוט וברור שהוא איסור חמור של אבירייהו דע"ז אשר פשטה המגפה עתה בהרבה מקומות ע"י יזמת הפויפסט/האפיפיור/ החדש אשר כל כוונתו הוא להעביר את כל היהודים מאמונתם הטהורה והקדושה ושיקבלו את אמונת הנוצרים, שיותר גור להעביר באופן זה מבאופן השנאה והרציחות שהשתמשו הפויפסטן שלפניו, ולכן כל מגע ומשא עמהם אף בדברים בעלמא ועצם ההתקרבות הוא אסור באיסור החמור דהתקרבות לע"ז, ויש להחשיב זה גם באיסור מסית ומדיח, שאף אם כתר"ה ועוד רבנים שילכו לשם יזהרו בדבריהם וגם לא יחניפו להכוזמים ואמונתם כמו שמחניפים הראבייס המסיתים ומדיחים מרעפארמער וקאנסערואטיוון/מרפורמים וקונסרבטיבים/ ילמדו מזה הרבה אנשים לילך לדרשות המיסיאונערן/המסיונרים/ וכדומה, וכן אין לכת"ר לשלח אף במכתב לשם מה שהיה חושב לדבר כי כל פגישה עמהם הוא סיוע למזימתם הרשעה ביותר. וכן אסור להשתתף בשום אופן באספות כאלו ששמעתי שרוצים לעשות בבאסטאן וברומא וכל המשתתף עמהם יהיו מי שיהיו הם נחשבים למסיתים ומדיחים את כלל ישראל, דמה שעמלו המיסיאונערן של הקאטאליקן כל השנים ולא עלה בידם רק מעט דמעט, ח"ו ע"י רבנים חסרי דעת כאלו שרוצים להשתתף עמהם אפשר שישתמדו ע"ז הרבה יותר, ואין טוענים למסית לומר שלא נתכוין לזה ויתחייבו בנפשם ח"ו בזה ובבא.

ולכן לא ישגיח על מה שלא יקיים הבטחתו לבא לשם ולדבר כי אדרבה אולי ע"ז שכתר"ה לא ילך מצד האיסור גם אחרים לא ילכו ויהיה בכלל מזכי הרבים. ידידו מוקירו, משה פיינשטיין.

In regard to the matter wherein you promised to attend a gathering on 23 Adar I, 5727 (March 5, 1967) where Catholics and Protestants will assemble together with Jews who are members of the Synagogue Council of America as well as rabbinical colleagues from the Rabbinical Council of America. Even though what you will discuss there will be nontheological in nature, it is clear and simple that such participation constitutes a grave violation of the prohibition against appurtenances to idolatry. For a plague has now broken out in many locales on account of the initiative of the new pope, whose only intent is to cause all the Jews to abandon their pure and holy faith so that they will accept Christianity. Indeed, it is much more convenient to convert

them in this manner than to employ the methods of hatred and murder that popes prior to him utilized. Consequently, all contact and discussion with them, even on worldly matters, is forbidden, for the act of "drawing near" is in and of itself forbidden, as it falls under the category of the grave prohibition against "rapprochement with idolatry- *hitkarvut im 'avodah zarah.*"

And one should also consider this [drawing near] as falling under the category of prohibition against the "the one who entices (*Ha-meisit*) and the one who leads astray (*Ha-madiah*)." For even though you and the other Orthodox rabbis (*rabbanim*) who will go there will surely be cautious about what you say, and will also not behave obsequiously toward the priests and their faith, as is the wont of the Reform and Conservative rabbis (*rabbis*) who by definition fall under the category of "those who entice and lead astray," nevertheless, many people will learn from your example and they will attend the sermons of missionaries and the like. Similarly, you should not even send a letter there expressing what you might be prepared to discuss, for all contact with them assists them in their most evil plot.

Similarly, it is forbidden to participate in any way in meetings like the ones I heard that they propose to hold in Boston and Rome. Anyone who participates with them, whoever they may be, will be considered among "those who entice and lead the community of Israel (*klal yisrael*) astray." Catholic missionaries have labored for years to convert the Jews. Nevertheless, they succeeded only in rare instances. God forbid that it would be possible that many more Jews would convert to Christianity on account of such joint ventures and because of rabbis like these, rabbis who lack good sense and who desire to engage in such joint meetings with them. And one cannot put forward a claim on behalf of the "one who entices" that this was not his intent, for their souls will be culpable, God forbid, in this world and in the world to come.

You should pay no attention to the fact that you will not have fulfilled your promise to go there and speak. On the contrary, perhaps through your decision not to attend on account of the prohibition, others too will not go. In this way, you will be among those who gain merit for the public.

II

ב' בע"ה ט' אדר שני תשכ"ז מע"כ ש"ב ידידי וחביבי הגאון הגדול המפורסם מרביץ תורה ברבים מהרי"ד סאלאוויציק שליט"א. שלו' וברכה כל הימים.

(Addressed to R. Joseph Soloveitchik on 9 Adar 11,5727 - March 21,1967)

בדבר אשר איזה רבנים מהצעירים נלכדו בפח של ראש הכומרים בוואטיקאן בשם המועצה האקומונית (עקומענישן ראט), אשר כוונתו הוא להעביר כל היהודים לאמונתם ח"ו והקראדנאלן והבישאפן /והקרדינאלים והבישופים/ נצטוו ממנו לעשות התחברות בין הכומרים ובין הרבנים בוועדות (בקאמיטעס) בכל מקום ומקום וגם בהתכנסיות (קאנווענשאנס), והצליח מעשה שטן שנתחברו ליה איזה רבנים בהוראת היתר שלא ידברו בענייני אמונה אלא בענייני חברה (סאציאלע אנגעלעגענהייטן), אשר לבד שכמעט כל הדברים הם ענייני דת שלהכומרים הוא השקפה אחרת, ולבד שכל כוונתם הוא רק לבא ע"י זה לענייני אמונה, הנה פשוט שעצם ההתחברות עמהם אף לדברים בעלמא הוא דבר אסור בכל עת ועידן, וכ"ש עתה שבא זה מעצה הרשעה של ראש הכומרים שאסור,

וכדחזינן שהעתונים מתפארים מזה שכבר הוא כבאו לשיווי אמונה ודעות ולהתפלל יחד וכדומה, וכבר שאל אותי אחד מרבנים הצעירים אשר נשלח מהסתדרות הרבנים לדבר בכ"ג אדר א' שהיה כעין התכנסות בנוא יארק מחבור הכומרים להבדיל עם רבנים אם מותר לו ללכת לשם באשר שבישיבה ההיא לא ידברו מעניני אמונה וכתבתי לו שאסור באיסור החמור דמסית אף שאין כוונתו לזה. וב"ה ששמע לדברי ועתה בקרוב יהיה התכנסות כזה באופן יותר גדול בבאסטאן, ולכן להפר עצת הרשעים והצלחת מעשה שטן ולהציל כלל ישראל משמד ח"ו היתה רצוני שגם הו"ג יחתום על הכתב שאני שולח במכתבי זה שאיסור גמור הוא להתחבר עם הכומרים בשום אופן אף לא לדברים בעלמא ולא להשתתף בהתכנסות שיהיה בבאסטאן ולא בשום התכנסות עמהם בשום מקום לא במדינה זו ולא ביוראפ ולא לסייע בשום דבר לעצת ראש הכומרים בעקומעניזם שלו. ומקוה אני שפס"ד של שנינו ימנע לכל הרבנים מזה, ותופר עצת הרשעים בעקומעניזם שעשו ואם הו"ג רוצה לכתוב בכתב עצמו ויכתוב לי העתקת נוסחו. וידוע לי טרדת הו"ג בימים אלו ה' ירחם אבל הוא כבוד שמים לעמוד בפרץ הגדול הזה שלכן בטוח אני שיבליג על צערו וטרדתו ותיכף יחתום ע"ז שאסור וישלח לי בחזרה.

והנני ידירו ש"ב מוקירו מאד גומר בברכה כפולה לרפואה שלימה, משה פיינשטיין.

I am writing because of my concern over those young rabbis who are trapped in the snare laid by the Head of the Priests in the Vatican in the name of the Ecumenical Council, whose intent is to cause all the Jews to convert to their faith, God forbid. The cardinals and the bishops are commanded by him to establish connections between priests and rabbis through committees and conventions in every locale. This deed of Satan has succeeded, as a number of rabbis have engaged in such associations on the basis of a *heter* (permission) that allows for interreligious dialogue on social-political, albeit not religious matters. For, aside from the fact that nearly every matter is one of religion, as the priests have another way of viewing such matters, and aside from the fact their only intention is to exploit these meetings to arrive at matters of faith, it is obvious that there is an *issur* (prohibition) against any connections with them, even on ostensibly social-political matters, at all times during every era. It is all the more so now as regards this evil design that emanates from the Head of the Priests. For we have seen that the newspapers take pride in the fact that this has already led to a leveling among faith and opinions, to joint worship and the like. I was recently asked by one of the young rabbis being sent by the RCA to speak at some type of joint meeting in New York on 23 Adar I between priests and *l'havdil* rabbis if it was permissible (*mutar*) to go there, since they will not discuss matters of faith. I told him it was forbidden, as the grave prohibited category (*issur hamur*) of "*meisit*—one who entices" applies, even if this was not his intent. Thank God, he listened to me.

And now there will soon be another larger convention like this one in Boston. Therefore, to overturn the conspiracy of the evil ones and the success of the deeds of Satan, as well as to rescue the Jewish people from apostasy (*sh'mad*), God forbid, it is my desire that Your Excellency sign the document I have included in this letter. It declares that there is an absolute prohibition (*issur gamur*) against associating with priests in any way. One can neither speak with them on social-political matters (*dmarim b'alma*), nor attend the convention that will be held in Boston. This applies to any such convention with them in any place, neither in this country, nor in Europe. One cannot in any way aid the conspiracy that the Head of the Priests has concocted through his ecumenicism. And I hope that the legal ruling issued by both of us will prevent any

rabbi from joining in this, and the conspiracy that the wicked ones have hatched with the ecumenical policy they pursue will thus be thwarted.

Or perhaps Your Excellency wants to write a document himself. If so, please send me a copy of your formulation. And I know of the trouble Your Excellency is experiencing during these days, May God have mercy. But it is for the honor of God to stand in this great breach. Therefore, I am certain you will repress your distress and sorrow and immediately sign the document, stating that it is prohibited to attend such gatherings, and send it back to me.

Formula of the Prohibition

נוסח האיסור בדבר ענין עקומעניזם אשר יצא בעצת ראשי אמונת הנוצרים אשר הכוונה היא להעביר לשמד ח"ו שהצליח מעשה שטן לפתות לזה גם איזה רבנים להתחבר בחבורה אחת עם כומרים בקאמיטעס/בוועדות/קבועים בכל מקום ומקום וגם בקאנווענשאנס במדינה זו וביוראפ, הנה אנחנו מודיעים כי הוא איסור גמור וברור שאסור לעשות חבורות יחד רבנים עם כומרים ולא להיות בקאנווענשאנס לא במה שיהיה בבאסטאן ולא בשום מקום לא במדינה זו ולא במדינות אחרות, ואף לא לדברים בעלמא שאינם עניני אמונה ודת בלא שום התנצלות ותירוצים, וכן אסור לסייע בשום דבר לענין העקומעניזם שיש בזה משום איסור מסית אף שלא יתכוונו לזה וע"ז באנו על החתום להודיע דין איסור זה לכל הרבנים שומרי דת תורתנו הקדושה ועומדים בפּרץ ביום תענית אסתר תשכ"ז.

Concerning the matter of ecumenicism that has been spread through the conspiracy concocted by the leaders of the Christian faith, whose only intent is to cause Jews to apostatize, God forbid. This act of Satan has succeeded in enticing a number of rabbis to join with priests in joint fellowship on permanent committees established in every locale, as well as in conventions held here in this country and in Europe. Behold, we declare that there is an absolute and clear prohibition against joint meetings of rabbis and priests. One should not participate in the convention to be held in Boston, nor anywhere, either in this country or any countries. Just as it is forbidden to dialogue on matters of faith and religion, so there should be no joint discussion on matters of social-political concern and there should be no excuses or rationalizations offered [by any rabbis for participating]. Indeed, it is prohibited to aid the project of ecumenicism in any manner, as the participants in such conversation fall under the *issur* (prohibited category) of "one who entices—*meisit*" even though those who participate in such joint Jewish-Christian endeavors have no intention at all of engaging in this. On account of this, we have come to sign this document so as to proclaim the *issur* (prohibition) against this to all rabbis who preserve the religion of our holy Torah, and we stand up against the breach on this day of the Fast of Esther, 5727.

ON IMPROVING CATHOLIC-JEWISH RELATIONS

A Memorandum to
His Eminence Agostino Cardinal Bea
President
THE SECRETARIAT FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Submitted by
Abraham Joshua Heschel
New York

May 22, 1962

INTRODUCTION

With humility and in the spirit of commitment to the living message of the prophets of Israel, let us consider the grave problems that confront us all as the children of God.

Both Judaism and Christianity share the prophets' belief that God chooses agents through whom His will is made known and His work done throughout history. Both Judaism and Christianity live in the certainty that mankind is in need of ultimate redemption, that God is involved in human history, that in relations between man and man God is at stake; that the humiliation of man is a disgrace of God; that the infamy of a wicked act is infinitely greater than we are able to imagine.

He who oppresses a poor man insults his Maker,
He who is kind to the needy honors Him.

Proverbs 14:31; see 17:5

The universe is done. The greater masterpiece still undone, still in the process of being created, is history. For accomplishing His grand design, God needs the help of man. Man is and has the instrument of God which he may or may not use in consonance with the grand design. Life is clay, and righteousness the mould in which God wants history to be shaped. But human beings, instead of fashioning the clay, deform the shape.

God calls for mercy and righteousness; this demand of His cannot be satisfied only in the temples, in space, but in history, in time. It is within the realm of history that man has to carry out God's mission.

We and the prophets employ different standards. To us the moral state of society for all its stains and spots, seems fair and trim, while to the prophets it is dreadful. So many deeds of charity are done, so much decency emanates day and night; to the prophet satiety of the conscience is callousness and flight from responsibility. Our standards are modest, our sense of injustice tolerable, timid, our moral indignation impermanent, yet human violence is interminable, unbearable, permanent. To us life is often serene, in the prophet's eye the world reels in confusion. The prophet makes no concession to man's frailty. Exhibiting little understanding for human weakness, he seems unable to extenuate the culpability of man. We and the prophets do not have the same quality of sensibility in common.

Who could bear living in a state of disgust day and night? The conscience builds its confines, it is also subject to fatigue, longing for some comfort. Yet those who are hurt, and He Who inhabits eternity, neither slumber nor sleep.

The prophet is sleepless and grave. The frankincone of some deeds of charity fails to fumigate the cruelties. Perhaps the prophet know more about the secret obscenity of sheer unfairness, about the unnoticed malignancy of established patterns of indifference, than most of us care to know, a knowledge which he does not ascribe to his own intelligence or power of observation.

The prophet's ear is directed to God, his soul is overwhelmed by His word. Yet the prophet's eye is directed to the human scene; society and its conduct are the main theme of his speeches. He is "an assayer and tester" of the people's ways (Jeremiah 6:27). This is the outstanding characteristic of the prophets: openness to the historic situation, to the divine call and its demands. In their eyes the human situation may be a divine emergency.

THE SINFULNESS OF HATRED

It is such a situation that we face today when the survival of mankind, including its sacred legacy, is in balance. One wave of hatred, prejudice or contempt may begin in its wake the destruction of all mankind. It is therefore of extreme importance that the sinfulness of thoughts of suspicion and hatred and particularly the sinfulness of any contemptuous utterance, however flippantly it is meant, be made clear to all mankind. This applies in particular to such thoughts and utterances about individuals or groups of other religions, races and nations. Speech has power and few men realize that words do not fade. What starts out as a sound ends in a deed.

PROPOSALS FOR IMPROVING CATHOLIC-JEWISH RELATIONS

The following proposals are offered in the sincere hope of improving mutually fruitful relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the Jewish community. They are also motivated by the

equally sincere conviction that the Church's vigorous repudiation of anti-Semitism - forthrightly expressed in various Papal statements and other Catholic writings - must be accompanied by an authoritative clarification of religious teachings which lend themselves to anti-Jewish interpretations and which have been frequently abused to support anti-Semitic ideology and activity.

Anti-Semitism is an ancient and complex evil, which cannot be ascribed to a single cause. Nor can responsibility for its perpetuation be invested in one particular institution. Yet, in response to the prophetic call for justice, and out of respect for the six million innocent martyred, we must ask that all institutions - political, civic, and religious - examine, and uproot possible sources of anti-Semitism in themselves; and we must confront each of the sources, including laudious religious teachings. Foremost among these is the slanderous claim that "the Jews" are collectively responsible for the Crucifixion of Jesus, that because of this the Jews are accursed and condemned to suffer dispersion and deprivation throughout the ages. This charge has been used by anti-Semites for centuries, to justify the most cruel and inhuman treatment of Jews; it has even been advanced to justify the fate of six million Jews during the Nazi holocaust.

Because we recognize that the Roman Catholic Church represents a rock of solidarity, belief, and morality in the world where so many values in the moral, ethical, and religious spheres

have foundered, we ask the Church's assistance in putting an end to such slanderous religious teachings, and in thus assuring that anti-Semites can claim no sanction in Catholic religious teachings.

We are conscious that the formularies used in the subsequent proposals may need further amplification and development as regards the detailed execution of whatever is decided upon, and we will be happy to continue our discussion for the purpose of greater clarification.

FIRST PROPOSAL

There has never been an age which has witnessed so much guilt and distress, agony and terror. At no time has the earth been so soaked with blood; at no time has man been less sensitive to God.

An age of supreme anguish and extreme horror calls for words of supreme spiritual grandeur, for actions the moral force of which will purify the lives of many generations to come.

The forthcoming Ecumenical Council, which has already evoked the sympathetic interest of the entire world community, provides an exceptional opportunity for the Church to exert its moral influence by reaffirming its opposition to persecution and bigotry, and its condemnation of the sin of anti-Semitism. We would hope that the Ecumenical Council will issue a strong declaration stressing the grave nature of the sin of anti-Semitism as incompatible with Catholicism and, in general, with all morality.

We recognize, however, that a condemnation of violent bigotry will not deal with one of the most profound and pervasive roots of the problem, that the urgent duty of fighting against the hatred that has brought upon the Jewish people unparalleled horror throughout the ages requires a rejection of false religious teachings:*

Therefore, we consider it a matter of supreme urgency for the Ecumenical Council to reject and to condemn those who assert that the Jews as a people are responsible for the Crucifixion of Christ, that because of this, the Jews are accursed and condemned to suffer dispersion and deprivation throughout the ages; and to declare that calling a Jew Christ-killer is a grave sin.

This condemnation should be disseminated widely under the highest authority of the Roman Catholic Church to all who are charged with the preaching and teaching mission of the Church and to all who are responsible for the spiritual guidance of the faithful.

Such a request seems to us consonant with Catholic doctrine as we understand it. It is our understanding that the Church holds the sins of all mankind responsible for the death of Jesus; and teaches that he foreordained his own death in keeping with the Church's doctrine of God's redemptive plan.

*With gracious encouragement of Vatican authorities, the American Jewish Committee submitted two memoranda, "The Image of the Jew in Catholic Teaching" (June 22, 1961), and "Anti-Jewish Elements in Catholic Liturgy" (November 17, 1961). In these documents, attention was drawn to sources of misunderstanding and hostility in Catholic textbooks and liturgy and it was requested that the Church seek appropriate measures to eliminate these possible bases of religious prejudice.

SECOND PROPOSAL

As St. Thomas said over 600 years ago, no man or group of men can be hindered in worshipping God in the way in which they consciously, freely, and in virtue of the light of their conscience choose to worship Him, provided that it is obvious this method of worshipping God is not anti-human or anti-social.

While we would not impinge upon the rights of any religious group to seek adherents through persuasion, we cannot but feel distressed that in the eyes of the Church the holiness of the existence of the Jews as Jews, in their loyalty to the Torah, is not acknowledged. Throughout the centuries our people have paid such a high price in suffering and martyrdom for preserving the Covenant and the legacy of holiness in faith and devotion. To this day our people labor devotedly and with commitment to educate their children in the ways of the Torah. [Genuine love implies that Jews be accepted as Jews.]

Thus, it is our sincere hope that the Ecumenical Council would acknowledge the integrity and permanent preciousness of Jews and Judaism.

THIRD PROPOSAL

The Biblical imperative includes more than the exercise of justice. More than doing, it asks for love; deeper than justice, it refers to good and evil. "Seek good and not evil... Hate evil and love good and establish justice in the gate" (Amos 5:14a.15a).

"It has been told you, O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you: but to do justice, and to love kindness (hesed), and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8) - doing justice as well as loving kindness. The prophets tried to excite fervor, to make hesed an object of love.

What the Lord requires of man is more than doing one's task, fulfilling one's duty. To love implies an insatiable thirst, a passionate craving. To love means to transfer the center of one's inner life from the ego to the object of one's love.

However, we do not love him who is unknown. Knowledge and charity are interrelated.

Ignorance breeds suspicion, just as false knowledge generates distortion. In our age, few Catholic priests and laymen possess adequate information about Jewish life and the spiritual and moral dimension of Jewish existence in the last two thousand years. It would be important to assert in a conciliatory statement the need on the part of Catholics to seek mutual understanding of Jews and their tradition. This would imply a program that would seek to eliminate abusive and derogatory stereotypes about

Jews and Judaism, e.g. the supposed contrast in the field of law between the harsh Jewish enforcement of the lex talionis and the God of Wrath of the Hebrew Bible and God of Love of the Gospels. It would help to counteract the misconception of the period between the return from the Babylonian exile and the beginnings of Christianity as one of continuous decline; to call attention to the great spiritual, moral, and intellectual vitality of the Jewish people during the last 2500 years, the teaching, worship and observance; to disseminate positive information about Jews and Judaism; to promote mutual understanding and a greater mutual comprehension of the issues between us and also of the richness of each other's heritage.

From the other side, there is substantial ignorance among Jews as to the true relationship between Jewish communities and the Church throughout history. Some Jews see the Church's record regarding the Jewish people as one of unrelieved antagonism and hostility; they know about the yellow star and the ghetto, but not about the many Papal declarations condemning anti-Jewish violence and the efforts of Church authorities to protect Jews. Thus, more knowledge and exchange of information is needed on two levels; knowledge and understanding about Judaism as a vital religion; and honest, unapologetic viewing of Catholic-Jewish relations in past and present. For these purposes, it could become a source of great blessing if:

1. A "forum" be established with the support and approval of the Church in which knowledge about Judaism would be made available to Catholic priests and theologians. Through

such a forum problems of great importance could be discussed, views exchanged and issues deliberated by Jewish and Christian scholars.

2. Research projects and publications arranged jointly by Catholic and Jewish scholars.

3. A declaration should be issued reaffirming earlier Papal and Vatican pronouncements encouraging cooperation among religious groups in civic affairs to promote the common good (i.e., neighborhood improvement, works of charity, combatting juvenile delinquency, group antagonisms, etc.) Fortunately, such cooperation already goes on in many parts of the world. In some places however, it is difficult to engage Catholics in even the most worthy civic cooperation projects, because of the resistance of local ecclesiastical authority. We believe that working together at an objective work for love of fellow man would in itself add considerably and decisively to the purification of the souls and the creation of a climate of mutual respect.

FOURTH PROPOSAL

The prophets' preoccupation with justice and righteousness has its roots in a powerful awareness of injustice, a sense for the monstrosity of injustice. Moralists of all ages have been eloquent in singing the praises of virtue. The distinction of the prophets was in their remorseless unveiling of injustice and oppression, in their comprehension of social, political and religious evils.

Justice is precious, injustice exceedingly common. One of the troubles seems to be that we have delegated the concern for justice to the judges, as if justice were a matter for a few specialists. The prophets insist that justice must be the supreme and active concern of every man. It was not to the judges but to every member of the people that the words of the Lord are directed: "Seek justice, correct oppression, defend the fatherless, plead for the widow."

There is an evil which most of us condone and are even guilty of: indifference to evil. We remain neutral, impartial, and not easily moved by the wrongs done unto other people. Indifference to evil is more insidious than evil itself; it is more universal, more contagious, more dangerous. A silent justification, it makes possible an evil erupting as an exception becoming the rule and being in turn accepted.

The knowledge of evil is something which the first man acquired; it was not something that the prophets had to discover.

The great contribution to humanity was their discovery of the 'evil of indifference. One may be decent and sinister, pious and sinful. I am my brother's keeper. The prophet is a person who suffers the harms done unto others. Wherever a crime is committed, it is as if the prophet were the victim and the prey.

Above all the prophet's word is a call to repentance. "Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean" (Isaiah 1:17). Such cleansing must be an ongoing process. As long as there is hatred in one heart, or prejudice disseminated in one public utterance, textbook, or journal, there is an overriding urgency to cry out against it.

Jews have recognized and recognize willingly and gratefully the sacrificial work done in the past by members of the Catholic community, both clergy and lay, in behalf of persecuted Jews. We can only thank the Almighty for this. Yet we must also recognize that for every Catholic who came to the aid and assistance of Jews, there were hundreds of others - also loyal Church members - who were at best indifferent to the fate of the Jewish community, and who failed to resist or condemn anti-Jewish utterances and atrocities, particularly during the time of the Nazi era. Many Jews are convinced that the failure of the great majority of European Catholic Church leaders to speak out frankly and publicly against anti-Semitism entailed suffering for Jews on many occasions and in many places. Therefore, in order for the Church to more fully and effectively disseminate to its

faithful throughout the world its abhorrence of anti-Semitism,
we respectfully propose the following:

1. We request that a permanent high level commission be established at the Vatican for the purpose of eliminating prejudice and of watching over Christian-Jewish relations everywhere.
2. We further request that at every diocese a similar commission be established to further the demands of justice and love.

May we say in conclusion that we are certain that positive action about these points in an Ecumenical Declaration would mark a revolutionary step of the highest significance. We are of course, respectfully aware of the far-reaching implications and the complexity of the issues involved in the proposals advanced in this memorandum. It is our faith in the magnificent blessings which the spirit of God bestows upon those who are dedicated to Him, that gives us the courage to pray; that in this grave hour of history His children may be granted the wisdom and the power by which obstacles can be overcome.