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# A rationale and proposed curriculum for Jewish-Christian dialogue

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A RATIONALE AND PROPOSED CURRICULUM FOR JEWISH-CHRISTIAN  
DIALOGUE

*Iowa State University*

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A rationale and proposed curriculum for  
Jewish-Christian dialogue

by

Barry Daniel Cytron

A Dissertation Submitted to the  
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Iowa State University  
Ames, Iowa

1982

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iv

DEDICATION

To Phyllis

Jeremiah 31:3

## INTRODUCTION

To read of the encounter between Christian and Jew is to reflect on a chronicle marked by disharmony and distrust, religious dispute, and social isolation. The first nineteen centuries of the relationship are ones overwhelmed with anguish. To be sure, there are breaks in that bleak record, historical circumstances which permitted or required Jews and Christians to draw together.<sup>1</sup> But such occasions were the exception rather than the rule.

Perhaps it will be said that the two faith communities altered permanently that relationship in the middle of the twentieth century. When Pope John XXIII convened Vatican Council II in 1962, it precipitated an entirely new attitude among many adherents of both faiths. For the Pope challenged those present to participate in aggiornamento, in a "bringing up to date" of the Church, and he wanted the Church to include in any renewal its attitude toward the Jewish people.<sup>2</sup> The "Declaration of the Church to

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Joachim Schoeps, The Jewish-Christian Argument: A History of Theologies in Conflict, trans. David E. Green (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), passim.

<sup>2</sup>Robert McAfee Brown, The Ecumenical Revolution (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1969), pp. 180-181.

Non-Christian Religions" adopted by the Council was applauded for the new orientations towards other religions which it expressed, as well as criticized for the timidity of the language and the conservatism of its range.<sup>1</sup> But no matter which estimate is correct, the Council signaled a new era in a two thousand year old encounter, not only between Catholic and Jew, but between Protestant and Jew as well.

This current study views the year 1962, with the beginning of the Council, as a landmark by which to chart the history of Jewish-Christian dialogue. While there were efforts, even substantial ones at Jewish-Christian rapprochement prior to 1960, the Council's work widened and deepened those efforts. The opening chapters of this work trace the history of dialogue from that time to the present, and survey the attitudes of both Christian and Jewish theologians who have written both in support of or in opposition to lay theological dialogue.

The third chapter sketches the profile of the adult lay participant who would be invited to join in dialogue. Recent studies of adult personality development are compared

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<sup>1</sup>See the essays in Lily Edelman, ed., Face to Face: A Primer in Dialogue (Washington, D.C.: B'nai B'rith Adult Jewish Education, 1967), pp: 75-107.

with the vision of adulthood which emerges from the theologies of the two religions, so as to illustrate the correspondence between the two fields of thought on the qualities which characterize the persons whose faith would be mature enough to take part in dialogue.

The fourth chapter outlines the curriculum considerations for adult dialogue. These considerations include an analysis of the subjects to be included in the exchange, and a review of the methodological principles for adult learners in a group setting. Some thoughts are then offered about the appropriateness of evaluating dialogue.

The fifth chapter utilizes the conclusions of the earlier chapters as criteria for surveying and evaluating previously published materials which could be utilized in lay dialogue. The results of the survey indicate that no current materials exist which satisfy the criteria. Accordingly, the sixth chapter represents a detailed description of such a curriculum. The curriculum outline describes eleven sessions, and includes a listing of session objectives, a summary of readings for each, and suggested strategies for reaching the objectives. The Appendix to the work contains the packets of readings for two sessions, demonstrating how such material could be organized for the dialogue.

## CHAPTER I

CONTEMPORARY JEWISH ATTITUDES TOWARD  
INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

Contemporary Jewish attitudes toward interfaith dialogue with Christians, as will be seen, are extraordinarily diverse. A survey of Jewish writings from the period under study (1960-present) reveals that the topic has received ongoing attention. Throughout the two decades, there were significant cleavages between proponents of dialogue and their adversaries. This diversity among contemporaries will be best appreciated when viewed in the context of Judaism's historical perspective toward other religions, specifically Christianity.

## Judaism's Historic View of Christianity

The Jewish faith expresses a seemingly contradictory evaluation toward other religions. On the one hand, Judaism insists that the only appropriate faith is a monotheistic one. Biblical, rabbinic, medieval and modern Judaism make constant reference to the errors of pagan worship and idolatrous behavior. Yet, Jewish thought is decidedly accepting of a pluralistic approach to the

achievement of a monotheistic faith.<sup>1</sup>

The classical Jewish sources assert that Judaism is, by its nature, all inclusive, and that it possesses a universal mission. The prophet Zechariah anticipated a time when the God of Israel would be universally acknowledged.<sup>2</sup> The traditional liturgy incorporated the prophet's words into a selection that, to this day, occupies a central place in the worship service of Jewish congregations in the orthodox, conservative, and reform movements. In the prayer, the worshiper expresses the hope that "To You, may all men bow in worship, may they give honor to Your glory."<sup>3</sup>

While there is the hope expressed in Judaism that all peoples would recognize its God, the faith did not

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<sup>1</sup>See contributions by representatives of orthodox, conservative and reform Judaism in Relations Among Religions Today: A Handbook of Policies and Principles, eds. Moses Jung, Swami Nikhilananda and Herbert W. Schneider (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963), pp. 86-92. See, too, Steven T. Katz, Jewish Ideas and Concepts (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), Chapter 1. A demurrer to the attitudes contained in the above citation may be found in Immanuel Jakobovitz, a contributor to The Condition of Jewish Belief: A Symposium Compiled by the Editors of Commentary (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), pp. 112-13.

<sup>2</sup>Zechariah 14:9.

<sup>3</sup>The Aleinu prayer concludes every worship service and any prayerbook, of every denomination, would contain it.

insist on conversion to it as a prerequisite for redemption. On this the rabbinic tradition is most emphatic: "The righteous among the gentiles have a portion in the world to come." (Tosefta, Sanhedrin 13.2) The rabbinic sources condemned paganism, then, but did not insist that Judaism possessed the only avenue to the divine. A well-known interpreter of Jewish thought in this century expressed this succinctly when he wrote that:

Provided there is no idolatry, which Judaism condemns not so much because it is false religion as because it is false morality, humanity as a whole is not charged to accept the conception of Hebrew monotheism.<sup>1</sup>

While Judaism recognizes the validity of other monotheistic religions, such an attitude did not preclude Jews from seeking to share their faith with others. In their evangelical missions designed to spread Judaism, such zealots could rely on Biblical attitudes in order to legitimize their activity. Reference has already been made to Zechariah. In addition, the prophet Deutero-Isaiah anticipated that the Jewish community would serve as a light to the nations enabling all people to recognize

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<sup>1</sup>Isidore Epstein, Judaism (New York: Penguin Books, 1945), p. 25.

Judaism's God.<sup>1</sup>

During the rabbinic period, there were widespread efforts to bring the gentile to Judaism. Scholars conclude that such activity met with considerable success. Estimates of the Jewish population at the time of Jesus suggest that there might have been eight million Jews. Such numbers would be possible, it is argued, only if one can assume large scale conversions.<sup>2</sup> It was in these centuries (100 B.C.E.-200 C.E.) that Judaism formalized the process of proselytization. But such concerted evangelical activity did not go unopposed. Members of the Jewish community spoke out against missionizing, asserting that such efforts destroyed group integrity and threatened the people's solidarity. So too did the Roman authorities begin to take a dim view of such efforts. After Christianity was enrolled in the service of the Roman Empire (in the early part of the Fourth Century C.E.), active and vigorous conversionary attempts ceased.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Isaiah 42:6.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph R. Rosenblum, Conversion to Judaism: From the Biblical Period to the Present (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1978), p. 37.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 60. See also, David Max Eichhorn, Conversion to Judaism: A History and Analysis (New York: Ktav Publishing Co., 1965).

As Jews were forced and then chose to withdraw unto themselves, seeking the safety that accompanies such a posture, they seem to have foregone not only missionizing but any active encounter with spokesmen of other religions, especially Christians. In medieval writings, it is true, there were references to Christianity and Jesus. This material is quite varied in its evaluation of other religions. Early writers, such as Saadia Gaon and Judah Ha-Levi are highly critical of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> But other voices, like those of Maimonides and Menchem Ha-Me'iri, are conciliatory and indeed laudatory towards Christianity.<sup>2</sup> Periodically during the middle ages Jewish theologians were required to enter into debates with their Christian counterpart. Given their minority status and relative powerlessness, such debates were not welcomed, but were accepted as the dues which Jews had to pay as a powerless minority.<sup>3</sup> Despite these occasional contacts, the medieval

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Joachim Schoeps, The Jewish-Christian Argument: A History of Theologies in Conflict, trans. David E. Green (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), pp. 58-68.

<sup>2</sup>Jacob Katz, Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Jewish-Gentile Relations in Medieval and Modern Times (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), pp. 114-128.

<sup>3</sup>See Frank E. Talmage, Disputation and Dialogue (New York: Ktav Publishing Co., 1975), passim; Daniel J. Lasker, Jewish Philosophical Polemics Against Christianity in the Middle Ages (New York: Ktav Publishing Co., 1977), passim.

period is best viewed as a time when the Jewish community adopted an attitude that is now surely the prevailing one-- "live and let live."

The pace of Jewish-Christian encounter quickened in the modern period. With the Enlightenment in Western Europe, Jews found themselves in an intellectual climate which facilitated more critical evaluation of other faiths. In addition, they did not have to run the risk of political repressions that were constantly a possibility in the medieval debates. Moses Mendelssohn is the first great modern Jew to address the issue of Judaism in its relationship to other faiths, and his pioneering work has been followed and then supplanted in the years since he wrote.<sup>1</sup>

In the twentieth century, in Europe, Israel and especially the United States, Jewish writings on Christianity, Jesus, and the New Testament are legion.<sup>2</sup> Though the level of activity in all these areas has been hastened

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Jacob, Christianity through Jewish Eyes (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1974), pp. 15-23. See also Jacob Fleischman, Baayat Hanazroot Bemachshava Hayehadoot [The Problem of Christianity in Modern Jewish Thought] (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1964), passim.

<sup>2</sup>For extensive bibliographical references see Frank E. Talmage, "Judaism on Christianity; Christianity on Judaism" in Disputation and Dialogue (New York: Ktav Publishing Co., 1975).

during the recent past, it was the specific topic of Jewish-Christian dialogue that received an exceptional impetus from Vatican II. In the twenty years that have followed, as will now be seen, Jewish writers have not been hesitant to address the challenge of interfaith dialogue. Opinions crossed institutional and ideological affiliations; most of orthodoxy opposed any theological contact between Jew and Christian, and some few conservative rabbis joined in that dissent. But there were orthodox writers who supported dialogue, and who joined themselves on this issue to their more liberal conservative and reform colleagues.

#### Opponents of Dialogue

Jewish opposition to dialogue surfaced during and soon after Vatican II. Those who spoke out against inter-religious discussion invoked a number of different reasons in support of their position. A given author might have relied on several different arguments, or just on one. As one reads through the opposition's papers, it is possible to identify three major areas from which opponents of dialogue drew their arguments.

#### Theological Reasons

Among the very first, and surely most influential voices raised against Jewish-Christian dialogue was that of

Joseph B. Soloveitchik, widely considered the intellectual leader of orthodox Jewry.<sup>1</sup>

Rabbi Soloveitchik's essay opens with a description of man's place in the world. The biblical account treats man as natural, naive, unaware of the human predicament that stalks him--a sense of loneliness and a demand for self-definition. When man encounters God, suggests the author, man leaves behind his naiveté and simplicity, trading it for an awareness that he is "in a new existential realm, that of confronted existence."<sup>2</sup> There is a realization that man lives alone, and yet will often be surrounded by intimates and friends. Soloveitchik's point is that man must endure this paradox. Each man is singular and completely unlike his fellow. It is this quality, this sense of being unique and wholly other, which creates a chasm that precludes mutual understanding. Individuals may share common interests; they may cooperate in political, social and economic endeavors; they may, in fact, marry one another and join in what appears to be common endeavor.

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "Confrontation," Tradition 6 (Spring/Summer 1964):5-29. In Soloveitchik's essay, he uses "man" in a generic sense. That terminology has been retained in this current review of his work.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

But appearances are not reality:

We think, feel and respond to events not in unison but singly, each one in his individual fashion....In spite of our sociability and outer directed nature, we remain strangers to each other. Our feelings of sympathy and love for our confrontor 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.<sup>1</sup>

As man is essentially a loner, so, too, claims Soloveitchik, is each faith. Identity bespeaks uniqueness, not only for people but for religions. And uniqueness results in wholly otherness for religions as well as people. Religions may cooperate with each other in communal, cultural and social activities, but no matter what the nature of the common endeavor, it in no way minimizes the abyss, an unbridgeable one, separating one religious entity from another. Each religion's identity, claims Soloveitchik, is predicated on three distinct elements: a special set of rituals and ethological manners, an exclusive axiological system and a singular eschatological vision.<sup>2</sup> As individuals cannot penetrate to the inner recesses of our fellow neighbor, so too is a member of one religious faith community incapable of understanding the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 18-19.

tenets, values, or ways of a different religious group. Indeed, Soloveitchik's concluding paragraphs strike a decidedly solipsistic note:

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 criteria.<sup>1</sup>

The union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, in response to Soloveitchik's presentation, approved a policy statement reflecting his views.<sup>2</sup> The views become pervasive throughout much of the orthodox movement, and appear in various articles written by its rabbis.<sup>3</sup>

#### Historical Reasons

As the article written by Joseph Soloveitchik established the theological framework for opposition to dialogue, so too did an essay by Eliezer Berkovits supply the historical argument for those who wished to shun Jewish-Christian encounters. The title of the piece itself,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 28-29.

<sup>3</sup>Bernard Rosensweig, "The Gates of Interfaith," Jewish Life 31 (July-August 1964):6-10. See also Norman Lamm, "The Jewish-Christian Dialogue: Another Look," Jewish Life 32 (November-December 1964):23-32; Walter Wurzbürger, Judaism and the Interfaith Movement (New York: Synagogue Council of America, 1963), *passim*.

"Judaism in a Post-Christian Era," summarizes Berkovits' evaluation of Christianity in the modern world. Berkovits begins by recounting how, for two thousand years, Jews lived in a position of subservience to Christendom.<sup>1</sup> The Jew was subject to the pleasure or enmity of the Christian overlord in Europe. If there was any theological dispute in the middle ages, he insists, it was held at Christian bequest, so as to substantiate the superiority of the daughter faith to the mother. Jews participated out of fear, not from any desire to enter into meaningful theological discussion. But with the twentieth century, the author says, the world finds itself in the post-Christian era. Communists, atheists officially, control vast regions of the world; Hindus, and Moslems exert enormous influence in growing geographical spheres. Christianity, as he sees it, no longer has the power to persuade. It must contend, rather, with many other ideas and forces, some non-Christian, others decidedly anti-Christian. In such a context, insists Berkovits, Jews should feel neither compulsion nor inclination to enter into any theological discussion with Christians. Surely Jews can explore ideas of Christian

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<sup>1</sup>Eliezer Berkovits, "Judaism in the Post-Christian Era," Judaism 15 (Winter 1966):74-84.

theologians, but just as legitimately can they study writings from scholars in the non-Christian community. There is no rationale for specific Jewish-Christian dialogue.<sup>1</sup>

History provides us with an even more cogent reason, says Berkovits, to avoid any exclusively Christian-Jewish encounters. We live not only in a post-Christian era, but in a post-Holocaust epoch. He insists that it is impossible, emotionally, for the Jew to participate with the Christian in any meaningful dialogue so recently after Auschwitz. The Jew is haunted by the memories of those World War II years; it is impossible to expect the Jew to engage in rational conversation with his Christian neighbors, and yet simultaneously retain his sanity, as he remembers:

...the extermination of six million Jews, among them one and a half million children, carried out in cold blood in the very heart of Christian Europe, encouraged by the criminal silence of virtually all Christendom, including that of an infallible Holy Father in Rome....What was started at the council of Nicea was duly completed in the concentration camps and crematoria.<sup>2</sup>

Berkovits' piece elicited much controversy within the columns of the journal in subsequent issues. Many took

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 80. See also Eliezer Berkovits, "Facing the Truth," Judaism 27 (Summer 1978):324-326.

<sup>2</sup>Berkovits, "Judaism Post Christian," p. 77.

exception to his position, and urged continued support for interfaith efforts.<sup>1</sup> For those who agreed with Berkovits, there was about his essay a prophetic quality. As they saw it, dialogue between Christians and Jews in the years prior to the June, 1967, Middle East War had failed to live up to its expectations. Theoretically, such encounters would enable each faith community to understand the principles and urgencies of the other. Ideally, at least, Christians should have come away from those encounters aware of the central place that the State of Israel occupied in the thinking of the contemporary Jew, of the centrality of Israel and its security for all but a handful of contemporary Jews. And it was precisely with regard to Israel that Christians disappointed the Jews, at least the vocal ones who perceived American Christians as largely silent and uncaring at a crucial moment for the Jewish state and its worldwide diaspora supporters. Whether or not their perceptions are accurate was the subject of some debate among writers. But their perceptions shaped a message, one which found its way into any number of written forms. The respected and independent Jewish Spectator editorialized thusly:

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<sup>1</sup>See Judaism 15 (Summer 1966):359-363.

The Christian behavior in recent months, not unlike that of the Holocaust years, has served effective notice on Jewish proponents of interfaith dialogues that they have been chasing an illusion.<sup>1</sup>

Even more sharply, an orthodox rabbi, Emanuel Rackman, participating in a debate in the January, 1968, issue of Hadassah Magazine, observed:

Perhaps it is Israel's crisis, more than anything else that has happened in the last five years, that ought to pinpoint the bankruptcy of any program to get Christendom to revise its attitude towards Jews, Judaism, and the survival of both our people and our heritage.<sup>2</sup>

Berkovits had struck a dissonant chord; the events of the June Six Day War continued the resonance, the result being that many Jews turned back in upon themselves, lest they continue to be frustrated by extending themselves on behalf of interfaith discussion.<sup>3</sup>

#### Pragmatic Considerations for Opposition

While theological and historical arguments are the major ones put forth to oppose dialogue, other factors are

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<sup>1</sup>Jewish Spectator 32 (November 1967):2.

<sup>2</sup>Emanuel Rackman, "Is Jewish-Christian Dialogue Worthwhile?" Hadassah Magazine 49 (January 1968):24.

<sup>3</sup>Malcolm Diamond, "Christian Silence on Israel: An End to Dialogue?" Judaism 16 (Fall 1967):411-422. Jacob Neusner, "After the Six-Day War," Continuum 5 (Winter 1968): 713-718.

also mentioned. Many writers on both sides of the issue raise the question of the qualifications for those who participate in the discussion. Heschel's remark, made in support of dialogue, may be the most often quoted: "The first and most important prerequisite of interfaith is faith."<sup>1</sup> Opponents of dialogue insist that the lack of sufficient Jews who are knowledgeable about their own faith, much less that of the Christian, is the best argument against any interreligious conversation on theological matters.<sup>2</sup>

In large measure, those who stand opposed to theological dialogue do so because they are not trusting--not of the knowledge of the Jewish members, nor that dialogue can ever move beyond amenities and superficialities, but most of all, not convinced about the motives of the Christian participants. Jewish opponents acknowledge the sincerity of the Christian who wishes to learn more about Judaism. But there remains the suspicion that beyond dialogue there is conversion, and that the participant to interfaith conversation has not renounced the missionary

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<sup>1</sup>Abraham J. Heschel, "No Religion Is an Island," Union Seminary Quarterly Review 21 (January 1966):130.

<sup>2</sup>Norman Lamm, "The Jewish-Christian Dialogue: Another Look," Jewish Life 32 (November-December 1964):23-32.

call of the Church and his faith. Perhaps, then, it is appropriate that, in moving to a discussion of those in favor of dialogue, one finds proponents who raise the same issue, but with a much different response.

#### Hesitant Endorsements of Dialogue

If the major Jewish opposition to dialogue emanates from within the orthodox movement, that does not mean that all who identify themselves with orthodoxy take an equally dim view of religious interaction. While Soloveitchik and Berkovits articulate a majority position within their movement, there are other voices that seem to be speaking in a far different tone. It is possible to discern within this simultaneously less strident and more restrained posture, a backing away from the positions championed by Soloveitchik and Berkovits.

In 1970, Tradition, the major journal of orthodox Judaism, published a piece by Gerald Blidstein.<sup>1</sup> The author begins by reviewing the reasons which have been offered for opposing Jewish-Christian dialogue. In that opening section, in fact, Blidstein seems to be substantially in agreement with the drift of opposition by orthodoxy to any type of

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<sup>1</sup>Gerald Blidstein, "Jews and the Ecumenical Dialogue," Tradition 11 (Summer 1970):103-110.

ecumenical venture. He, as Berkovits, is suspect of Christianity's universalism. Christian clergy are committed to bringing the message of the Gospel to the entire world, he claims; in light of that commitment, Blidstein questions the wisdom of entering into any conversations that might result in a weakening of the Jewish participant's religious faith. Yet, at the same time, he is critical of the position voiced by Berkovits and Soloveitchik (though he does not specifically mention them by name) that inter-religious cooperation be limited to areas of common social activism. Indeed, Blidstein views that stance as a "pose," because he claims that orthodoxy has never taken a leadership position in social activism. To suggest that the movement can now cooperate with Christianity in improving society appears to Blidstein but a mere political device, which will not be taken seriously by either Christians or liberal Jews.<sup>1</sup>

Having thus suggested that orthodoxy needs to reconsider its attitude toward involving itself in social melioration, Blidstein offers a challenge to his own traditionally minded brethren on the specific issue of Jewish-Christian encounter:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

There is first the deep (if not pressing) need to first objectively and non-apologetically probe the traditional Jewish stance towards a pluralistic world and towards the humanity of men and its claims, and then to interpret our own reality in the light of that stance.<sup>1</sup>

Blidstein is convinced that an analysis of Jewish legal sources will be more positive in its evaluation of Christians and their faith, than was seen in the writings of Berkovits, for example. Whether or not Blidstein is correct in that supposition, he certainly exhibits far less triumphalism than does Berkovits. The latter had, after all, flatly asserted that:

As far as Jews are concerned Judaism is fully sufficient. There is nothing in Christianity for them.<sup>2</sup>

But Blidstein's acknowledgement that Christianity is a source for goodness and humaneness surely suggests that Jews have need to explore the relationship of Christian faith to ethical living.<sup>3</sup> Blidstein's remarks seem tentative and searching. Cautiously, he urges his orthodox compatriots to be more open to, and sensitive of, Christians and their faith. His words are cautious, and he clearly is not

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>2</sup>Berkovits, "Judaism Post-Christian," p. 80.

<sup>3</sup>Blidstein, "Jews Ecumenical," p. 110.

embracing any theological dialogue. But neither is he rejecting Christianity with the privatism and triumphalism of, respectively, Soloveitchik and Berkovits.

Several years after Blidstein's piece appeared in Tradition, this official journal of the orthodox Rabbinical Council of America featured an article by Joseph Lookstein. The journal identifies "the author as one of the most distinguished figures in world Jewry, who for many decades has occupied a leading role in the American rabbinate."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Lookstein had, at the time of publication, served for several years as the president of the Synagogue Council of America, the umbrella organization for virtually all of organized American synagogues. As such, his views carried extraordinary weight within his own denomination, and throughout American Jewish life. Lookstein's views represent a different perspective from the orthodox ones examined previously. The stimulus for writing the article was his then recent return from a series of meetings with Catholics appointed to the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with Jews. He writes that he came away from those meetings impressed by the sincerity and interest of those Christians toward Judaism, and flattered by their respect for the Jews and their religious ways. As to the

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph H. Lookstein, "The Vatican and the Jews--1975," Tradition 15 (Spring/Summer 1975):5-24.

substance of the discussions, their purpose was to review the newly issued Catholic guidelines for establishing relations with Jews. Lookstein finds the guidelines to be sensitively drawn, indicative of a "fresh wind" within the Vatican and the entire Catholic Church.<sup>1</sup>

Lookstein begins with a discussion of the definition of dialogue suggested by the 1975 Catholic guidelines, and what he feels ought to be a response by Jews to them. The guidelines define dialogue

as a desire by each side to know and understand each other, to increase and deepen the knowledge that each has of the other; to cultivate respect each for the other; above all to manifest that respect for the faith and religious convictions of each other.<sup>2</sup>

Lookstein's evaluation of that definition is succinct and direct: "This is a very laudable and honest definition of the concept of dialogue and one which ought to satisfy Catholics and Jews."<sup>3</sup> As will be seen shortly, not all

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>"Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration Nostra Aetate (n.4) by the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, January 1975." Reprinted in Helga Croner, Stepping Stones to Further Jewish-Christian Relations (New York: Stimulus Books, 1977), pp. 11-15.

<sup>3</sup>Lookstein, "The Vatican," p. 12.

Jewish thinkers are as enthusiastic as Lookstein about that definition (these other scholars endorsing a broader, more substantive meaning than even the one applauded here). But from a traditional perspective, Lookstein's positive evaluation is something of a rarity.

Indeed, he even moves beyond that position, chastising his orthodox colleagues for their insensitivity and cynicism towards the entire ecumenical enterprise. Lookstein is critical of his coreligionists, who defensively posture that no dialogue is possible as long as the Catholic church maintains its stance of universal mission. The guidelines do reflect that stance with the words: "In virtue of her divine mission, and by her very nature, the church must preach Jesus Christ to the world."<sup>1</sup> Those who oppose any form of dialogue see such statements as positive proof that the church is conversionary in its very nature, and that Jewish-Christian dialogue is but another vehicle for promoting such proselytizing. Lookstein goes out of his way to defend the guidelines, Christian theology, and even its universal tendency:

What shall the Jewish reaction be to the statement that 'the church must preach Jesus Christ to the world'? Have we a right to expect the

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<sup>1</sup>"Guidelines," p. 12.

Catholic church to surrender a cardinal principle of its faith? Shall we refuse an intelligent, honest and liberal interpretation of that principle by Catholic authorities? Can we find too much fault with an apologetic caveat that Catholics 'must take care to live and spread their Christian faith while maintaining the strictest respect for religious liberty....' Are not Catholics virtually saying: 'We are not out to convert you; we merely want to talk to you and to understand you and have you understand us.'<sup>1</sup>

There is a sense in which these words bespeak a radical shift of one representative. For in contrast to Soloveitchik, here is an equally well-regarded orthodox rabbi who admits to the possibility that people of different faith communities can hope to understand one another. And in opposition to Berkovits, who had commented that "all we want of Christians is that they keep their hands off us and our children," Lookstein insists that Jews enter into conversations with Catholics and accept wholeheartedly their statements of good faith and intent.<sup>2</sup> Indeed Lookstein's experience of participating in interreligious dialogue with the Catholic scholars at the Vatican is the most powerful argument in his entire essay. For to the orthodox audience to which he is addressing his remarks, Lookstein's visit to

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<sup>1</sup>Lookstein, "The Vatican," p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Berkovits, "Judaism Post-Christian," p. 82.

Rome, and his conversations with the Vatican staff reveal that one can enter into rigorous theological discussion, and yet remain faithful to one's native heritage. As shall now be seen, that is the viewpoint of many Jewish thinkers who advocate Jewish-Christian dialogue.

#### Proponents of Dialogue

Those who advocate Jewish-Christian theological discussion, like those who oppose it, use many arguments to defend their positions. While writers frequently utilize many different reasons in support of their claim, this analysis is based on grouping the arguments into one of four different thematic categories: contextual, historical/pedagogical, theological, and social activist. Beyond the substantive reasons offered by proponents, one finds their writings to be cast in a far different tone. These advocates speak of living in a time of new Jewish-Christian relationships, and of a need to respond accordingly. The manner of writing is open and inviting, proud but not defiant. These writers who shall be considered now seek to build sturdy bridges to another faith community, and insist that there are many good reasons for pursuing and enlarging that process.

### Contextual Reasons

For many Jewish supporters of interreligious dialogue, the environment of America provides the very best reason why Jews and Christians should join together in mutual discussion and learning settings. These writers begin with an obvious assertion, that America is a religious plurality. To be sure, some religious adherents in America have sought to insulate themselves from the allurements and threats of contemporary society. There are enclaves of Christians and Jews living isolated existences.<sup>1</sup> Yet the vast majority of Americans have not chosen to pursue an existence within an insulated faith community, and many would assert that they are no less committed than isolationists to the practice of their religion. Plurality is, for most religious Americans, including Jews, an accepted reality. And as long as they choose to remain in that setting, "interreligious dialogue--not as an artificial contrivance, but as a natural sequence of their socially and intellectually non-separatist life style--is inescapable."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Sydney E. Ahlstrom, A Religious History of the American People (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), Chapter 15.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Seigman, "Dialogue with Christians: A Jewish Dilemma," Judaism 20 (Winter 1971):102. Also, Jacob Bernard Agus, "The Dialogue Movement: Retrospect and Prospect," in Dialogue and Tradition, ed. J. B. Agus (London and New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1971), p. 28.

Other Jewish authors suggest that the social setting of America, with its plethora of religious groupings, not only recommends dialogue but indeed demands it. In the view of these authors, the religious community in America is besieged. They look out at a world which they believe to be radically non-religious. For them, it is a world devoid of the symbols and values which lend some meaning to human existence. And the Jewish writers who concentrate on this theme as the rationale for pursuing Jewish-Christian dialogue--a theme, it should be noted, that is among the most frequently cited in the researched literature--argue that Christians are no less besieged culturally than are they. They hold that the Christian faith communities have as much to lose as they have in a non-religious world. At a time of mutual danger, it is good for compatriots to join together. Such cooperation will require understanding, based on study of each other's faith and life. Theologians, public relations spokesmen, and rabbis serving in congregations--all utilize a similar logic to advocate Christian-Jewish discussion.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Herbert Bronstein, "Jewish-Christian Dialogue: Problems and Prospects," Criterion 15 (Spring 1976):16-20. Also Balfour Brickner, "A Time for Candor in Interreligious Relationships," CCAR Yearbook 77 (1967):117-122; Eugene Borowitz, "On Theological Dialogue with Christians" in How Can a Jew Speak of Faith Today?, ed. E. Borowitz (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), pp. 209-210.

Jacob Neusner, professor of the history of religion at Brown University, explores the relationship of secularism to Jewish-Christian dialogue at great length. On the one hand he sees secularism as a boon to religion. Judaism, he asserts, has historically been in the world but not of it. When the Jewish people went into exile in 70 C.E., their faith was transformed. As an exiled faith, Judaism lived in the world, but also above it, critical, and cautious. Now that the world is no longer Christian, and now that Christendom is a part of history, Neusner asserts that Christians may find, like the Jews, new opportunities for regeneration:

Having lost the world, or wisely given it up, Christians too may recall that "the whole earth is full of His holiness," and that every day and every where the world provides a splendid opportunity for witness.<sup>1</sup>

But if the secularized world represents an opportunity for Jews and Christians to search out the real strengths of their religious heritages, it also constitutes a threat. The new secular age is a challenge to the religious person. There is a wholly new view of man, self-sufficient, reliant upon his own skills, unmysterious and unmoved by a sense of wonder. Neusner wonders whether

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<sup>1</sup>Jacob Neusner, "Judaism in the Secular Age," Journal of Ecumenical Studies 3 (Fall 1966):524.

religion may be perceived as irrelevant and religious values as archaic. In circumstances such as this, Neusner believes that Judaism and Christianity have need to turn toward one another. Of course the past needs to be understood. Christians and Jews should seek to realize the historical realities which have distanced themselves from one another. But beyond the past, Christians and Jews have to look toward the future, and common cooperation in a struggle against a desacralized pagan world. For the Jew, Neusner believes, there is much to be gained in seeking out his Christian neighbor, and not his secular one. For the former, at least, has the potential for understanding the Jew; the secularist cannot comprehend any religious categories:

To the Christian, our Scriptures are revealed truth. To the secularist they are literature. The Christian finds us a question to his faith. The secularist sees us as curiosities....Whether or not we were well off in a Christian age, we are not better off in a post-Christian age. Both are ages of unredemption, but we can say so to the Christian.<sup>1</sup>

#### Historical/Pedagogical Reasons

For a number of Jewish advocates of dialogue, the primary reason to support Jewish-Christian dialogue should

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 530.

be located in the tragic history of the two religions. The past, littered with pain and destruction, demands a response. Jews and Christians need to study and understand what has happened for the last two millenia. And then they need to reshape the future in reaction to that understanding. These writers would insist that there is great promise in dialogue--an educational promise. For from such conversations, these writers maintain, will emerge different attitudes towards each other. The misconceptions which each religious group has of the other will hopefully be eliminated; dialogue will, it is asserted, alter time-worn errors that lead to bias and prejudice.

To some, the eradication of mutual prejudices will be one of the foremost rewards of ecumenical dialogue. From the very beginning, Jews and Christians have held hostile attitudes about each other. There is a vast corpus of research which has documented the relationship of Jew and Christian in medieval times, and the impact of their attitudes towards one another.<sup>1</sup> Modern thinkers, looking

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<sup>1</sup>James Parkes, The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1961). Also, Jules Isaac, The Teaching of Contempt: Christian Roots of Anti-Semitism, trans. Helen Weaver (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964); Malcolm Hay, Thy Brother's Blood: The Roots of Christian Anti-Semitism (New York: Hart Publishing Co., 1975).

back at the tragic history of such relationships, believe that a better future can be guaranteed only by mutual study of each other's faiths.

Jacob Agus, a conservative rabbi, views the impetus for dialogue as deriving primarily from the need to extirpate anti-Semitism. His contention is that anti-Semitism begins and festers in areas of isolation, where there are no Jews to correct the stereotypes and satisfy questions. If Jews wish for Christians to be rid of religious prejudice, then it is their responsibility to assist in that task. Agus believes that dialogue is the most effective means for enabling Christians to learn about Judaism and its adherents.<sup>1</sup> In a speech presented at Cambridge University, Rabbi Agus suggests that such dialogue be the educational activity of a specific graduate institute. Such a school would invite academicians and clergy to participate in an ongoing dialogue, based upon studies in religious texts and historical documents. The school would allow for a permanent interreligious confrontation that will go far towards eradicating the prejudices and pains of "this muddy and bloody planet of ours."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Jacob B. Agus, "Is Dialogue 'a Necessity' for Jews?" The Ecumenist 9 (September/October 1971):84-88.

<sup>2</sup>Agus, "The Dialogue Movement," p. 33.

It is not only the Christian participants to the dialogue who will learn, suggest some writers; Jews too have need to correct their skewed perceptions of Christians. Several years ago, Father Andrew Greeley of the National Opinion Research Center created a minor stir when he accused Jews of harboring anti-Catholic prejudices. He urged Jews to examine the anti-Catholic sentiment which he believed persisted among Jews in this country. While he admitted that not all Jews displayed such negative sentiments, he insisted that Jewish academicians and leaders had not been sufficiently reflective about such prejudice among their co-religionists:

I think that Catholics have acknowledged the existence of anti-Jewish feelings in the last years since the Vatican Council. As far as I can see, there has been no reciprocity at all from the Jewish side.<sup>1</sup>

Greeley's judgment about the desirability of Jews examining their own prejudices is shared by several writers. Reference was made earlier in this chapter to the call by one orthodox rabbi to Jews to search out their tradition and its attitude toward the gentile.<sup>2</sup> It was his hope that such a study would yield a more enlightened attitude toward

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<sup>1</sup>The New York Times, 13 May 1976.

<sup>2</sup>Blidstein, "Jews Ecumenical," p. 107.

the non-Jew than exists in the folklore and common mentality of some Jews. And a liberal rabbi, Eugene Borowitz, asserts that both religious groups have need to rid themselves of their prejudiced views of each other. It is his contention that while facts alone will not correct the ancient misconceptions, knowledge of each other's faith and commitments will go far towards affirming the worth and dignity of people of religious diversity. Borowitz advocates dialogue because of the positive pedagogic results that will result:

...the word 'Jew' will sound differently when Christians know the countless lives of sanctity created by post-Biblical Judaism, and the term 'goy' will lose its repulsiveness when Jews know what the mass and the cross and the creeds represent.<sup>1</sup>

For all of these advocates of dialogue, then, its justification is to be located in the educational attainments that will result, in the removal of stereotypes and their replacement with a fresh and more sensitive view of another's faith. But for some authors, the learning that will occur among the participants in dialogue extends beyond the abolition of bias and the inculcation of the tolerance that follows upon knowledge. Dialogue will have

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<sup>1</sup>Borowitz, "On Theological Dialogue," pp. 205-206.

enormous theological impact, they contend, for it has the potential to enlarge and alter the patterns of faith of those who brave such interreligious contact.

### Theological Reasons

Many Jewish writers who have explored the rationale for interfaith contact maintain that dialogue can and ought to be more than just exercises in comparative religion. Scholars from all three movements in contemporary American Judaism assert that there are real theological gains to be made as Jews and Christians enter into serious conversations with each other. And there is an assumption present in each of their presentations. It is a claim which, while not always expressed, stands at odds with the assertion made by Rabbi Soloveitchik and referred to earlier in these pages. Rabbi Soloveitchik had argued that religious faith is essentially a private affair, and that as such, it is impossible for people to share their faith and their vision, in any meaningful way, with another person. But the scholars to be examined here disagree with that notion. Abraham Heschel, one of the most widely known Jewish theologians in America, and an articulate proponent of dialogue, rejects such insularity. In his inaugural address, given when he assumed a visiting post at the Protestant

Union Theological Seminary, Heschel begins with a rebuff to such intellectual and religious protectionism:

No religion is an island. Spiritual betrayal on the part of one of us affects the faith of all of us....Today 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....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 one's respective legacy, in preserving a common legacy?<sup>1</sup>

While faith is often perceived as being an affair of the heart, in many religious traditions there is an intellectual component. Surely Christianity and Judaism have always placed a significant weight on cerebral matters in defining the nature of faith. As some rabbis see it, engaging in rigorous intellectual discussion with members of different religions will help strengthen one's beliefs. Eugene Borowitz, for example, argues that dialogue can help the participant to understand even better the nature of his or her faith. By listening to other religious people define their faith and express their convictions, a person is enabled to discover whether he agrees with such ideas, or

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<sup>1</sup>Heschel, "No Religion Is an Island," p. 120.

not, and whether he can come to believe in it or not. Dialogue pushes the participants to clarify their thoughts, and to justify their patterns of living. As a participant tries to explain his belief to another, that process will assist him in explaining that belief to himself.<sup>1</sup>

There is a second way in which dialogue can help the believer comprehend the essentials of his or her faith. There are certain constants in many religions, categories of thought that cross denominational or religious boundaries. Terms like revelation, redemption, Messiah, and prayer are part of both Christianity and Judaism. While many Jewish thinkers point out that such terms have their unique meaning in Judaism, they also acknowledge that such terms have a certain objective quality about them. As such, it is possible for members of different religious traditions to join in examining how they use the terms in constructing their faith.<sup>2</sup> Heschel, among others, suggests that Christianity and Judaism can gain much from interreligious dialogue. The causes that both religions hold close, the inculcation of a sense of wonder and mystery, the

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<sup>1</sup>Borowitz, "On Theological Dialogue," p. 219.

<sup>2</sup>Agus, "The Dialogue Movement," p. 25. Also Neusner, "Judaism Secular Age," pp. 529-531.

enhancement of a transcendent sense of time, a response to the moral challenges of the prophets--all these are instances in which religions can learn one from the other how each has helped to work for the victory of these causes in its distinct way. And perhaps, from exploring that manner by which a particular religion concretizes a given religious value in its own system, the other religion will learn a new and unimagined way by which it may realize the same value in its own construct.<sup>1</sup> In a similar fashion, historian Jacob Neusner suggests that dialogue is worthy of support because of the theological illuminations which it confers. He recalls the time when ancients sat in Egypt and discussed matters of great religious import. As then, so today the aim is "mutual illumination." And Neusner offers items which each religion can reflect upon in examining its sister faith, so that it itself can further the goals to which it subscribes:

What does it mean to affirm faith in a relativistic, pluralistic society? What does it mean "to take this earthly realm...in utter seriousness"? How may Israel and the Church alike carry out the task of bearing witness? of healing? of affirming the humanity of man? How indeed may we speak of God, separately or together, among men who cannot hear us?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Heschel, "No Religion Is an Island," p. 126.

<sup>2</sup>Neusner, "Judaism Secular Age," p. 540.

Dialogue serves theological functions in two ways: it enables participants to better understand their own faith, as they explore the elements of other faiths that they cannot believe in themselves; and dialogue allows participants to gain a broader understanding of their own religion by learning of the religious categories that form the substance of the other religion. Finally, dialogue can contribute to the theology of the participant's faith by expanding his horizons, by giving different emphasis and stressing different religious concepts than are present in the participants' own religious system. As has been seen, it was these types of claims that had made many within the orthodox branch of Judaism hesitant and indeed hostile to interreligious conversation. And yet it is a rabbi, Irving Greenberg, associated, at least nominally, with the orthodox movement, who champions dialogue because it will enlarge the theological perspectives of both the Jewish and Christian representatives.

Greenberg traces the breakdown of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism to the very beginning of the separation. To legitimize itself, and to permit itself an opportunity for self-definition, the early Christian community insisted that it was the new Israel, and that the old Israel contained nothing which should "continue to

represent a claim upon it."<sup>1</sup> The intervening two thousand years were given over to exacerbating the wounds and strengthening the barriers between the religious groups. Each group insisted that there was nothing which it could possibly expect to gain from the other. Today, Greenberg suggests, it is different. The reality of a secular world, the separation of church and state, and the realization that both religious communities were yet vital and valid-- these, among other reasons, initiated the rapprochement between the communities. As relations grow more cordial, there will be a willingness, asserts Greenberg, to tackle weightier theological issues. And not only will theological issues be on the agenda; discussions about them will precipitate major repositionings by each faith.<sup>2</sup> Greenberg senses, for example, that Christianity has much to learn theologically from the Jewish concept of Galuth. Translated by the English term "diaspora," it often conveys only a geographical meaning. But there is a temporal meaning to the Hebrew word too, so that perhaps the word "exile" better captures both nuances of the original. Galuth bespeaks a

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<sup>1</sup>Irving Greenberg, "The New Encounter of Judaism and Christianity," The Barat Review 3 (June 1968):115.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

time in history in which God's presence is obscured, and each human being's compassion for the other person is equally hidden from view. Greenberg, like Neusner in the Conservative movement and Petuchowski among the Reform Jews, argues that Christianity has entered into a new exile.<sup>1</sup> As such, the experience of Jews, who have survived and even thrived in such circumstances, might be particularly instructive. Moreover, Jewish emphasis on making the secular sacred, on being always oriented towards the world, as opposed to being withdrawn from or offended by it, would be a second major theological gain to be made by Christians interacting with Jews. Finally, the latter's historic emphasis on peoplehood could be important for Christians, whose sights have so often been set on universal goals that they often lose sight of the particular person and nation.<sup>2</sup>

Jewish theology will also experience a repositioning as a result of its contact in dialogue with Christians. History has forced the Jews to delimit their horizons, to

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<sup>1</sup>Jakob J. Petuchowski, "The Dialectics of Salvation History," in Brothers in Hope, Vol. V of The Bridge: Judaeo-Christian Studies, ed. John M. Gesterreicher (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), p. 77. See Neusner, "Judaism Secular Age," p. 532.

<sup>2</sup>Greenberg, "The New Encounter of Judaism and Christianity," p. 120.

concentrate on their own people. The universal perspective, struck by the prophets, and refashioned in the early Rabbinic period, gradually fell victim to Jewish historical experience, and the attendant need for self-preservation. Now emerged from the ghetto, the particularist mentality of Jews has need to broaden itself by turning to the universalistic stresses so evident within Christianity. Greenberg writes that he is

...certain that the classic dialectical balance in Judaism of concern for all mankind, of seeing Judaism as something responsible for the world and which seeks to speak to the world at large must be recovered in all its range. This may be one of the gifts of dialogue and modern life to Judaism.<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, dialogue can provide the setting in which Jews can uncover elements of the Christian tradition which have never received particularly weighty consideration with Jewish thought, despite their presence within the original sources. Greenberg makes particular reference here to the concept of grace, and the sacramental dimension of life, two qualities which are much more predominant in Christianity than in the mother faith.<sup>2</sup>

Theological development, as a consequence of dialogue, is predicated on the assumption that the two

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 122.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

religions are sufficiently similar that participants can understand the universe of discourse, and sufficiently different so that something beyond mere assent and corroboration can be gained from speaking. Jewish and Christian clergy, in the early attempts at goodwill and brotherhood often tended to minimize the differences between the faiths. The hyphenated term "Judeo-Christian," whether used in reference to "tradition" or "civilization" achieved great currency. The notion also attracted some attention from scholars. Paul Tillich wrote a short piece in the journal Judaism, in which he defended the concept. He was answered by an orthodox rabbi, Bernard Heller, who asserted that there was no such entity.<sup>1</sup> And one Jewish thinker, Arthur Cohen, has over the course of some fifteen years returned again and again to explore the theme of the "Judeo-Christian" tradition. He believes that it is a myth, a fictitious entity fabricated successively by eighteenth century rationalists who disliked all religion, by nineteenth century Biblicists who wanted to justify their scholarship, and by twentieth century public relations experts whose forte is

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Tillich, "Is There a Judeo-Christian Tradition?", Judaism 1 (April 1952):106-109. Bernard Heller, "About the Judeo-Christian Tradition," Judaism 1 (July 1952):257-261.

neither clear thinking nor theology.<sup>1</sup> Cohen believes that the concept of the Judeo-Christian heritage is a myth because Jews and Christians spent two thousand years staring at each other, not developing a common discourse. But it can become a reality, as Jews and Christians join together to search out the foundations of their own separate existences:

The Christian comes to depend upon the Jew who says salvation has yet to come, to interpret for him what happens when power collapses, how men shall behave when the relative and conditional institutions of society crumble, for the Jew is an expert in unfulfilled time, whereas the Christian is an adept believer for redeemed times only....The Jew, on the other hand, must look to Christianity to ransom for him his faith in the Messiah, to renew for him his expectation of the nameless Christ. This is the center of the Jewish-Christian nexus, but such a nexus has just begun in our times.<sup>2</sup>

Theological dialogue will not only be mutually fructifying for Judaism and Christianity. It will, if Arthur Cohen is correct, permit the filling in of a concept which has up to now been only a rhetorical and not an actual reality.

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur A. Cohen, The Myth of the Judeo-Christian Tradition (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. xxvii-xx.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. xx-xxi.

Social Activism as a Reason for Dialogue

The relationship of religion to the enhancement of the social environment is the one area that seems to elicit universal support among Jewish thinkers. As was noted earlier, orthodox theologians, opposed to dialogue, nevertheless support cooperation in working in behalf of societal issues.<sup>1</sup> Rabbis associated with the Jewish defense agencies, such as the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress, advocate sustained conversation with other religions so that together they may address themselves to the needs of their fellow human beings.<sup>2</sup> One conservative rabbi suggests that the most proper way by which Jews and Christians come to know each other's faith is through joint cooperation in ethical and political causes, and that the only way in which they will come to work together is when they understand each other theologically.<sup>3</sup> There is a certain circularity to that assertion. Yet there is an inherent logic to it as well, a logic that can

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<sup>1</sup>Norman Lamm, "Jewish-Christian Dialogue: Another Look," Jewish Life 32 (November-December 1964):29-30.

<sup>2</sup>Marc Tanenbaum, "Is Jewish-Christian Dialogue Worthwhile?," Hadassah Magazine 49 (January 1968):24-25.

<sup>3</sup>Seymour Siegel, "Jews and Christians: The Next Step," Conservative Judaism 19 (Spring 1965):10-11.

appeal to both Jewish and Christian ways of thinking. For Jews do tend to measure the truth of thought by its relation to action; and Christians seem more attuned to evaluating action by the manner of its predicated intention. If there is a circularity to such a view, advocates of dialogue argue that it is a circle of completion, uniting Christian and Jew, act and intent, matters of politics and theology. For many Jews, then, dialogue pushes participants to a more active involvement in improving society, and is justified alone on those grounds.

This analysis of Jewish attitudes toward interfaith dialogue confirms a wide range of views present in the American Jewish community. Those who resist it do so out of deeply held conviction. Yet clearly they reflect a minority position. For this survey demonstrates clearly that there is widespread support, crossing Jewish denomination lines, for serious interfaith education.

## CHAPTER II

CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF  
INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

## Historic Background

The Gospel of Matthew concludes with a description of the eleven disciples encountering their master Jesus in the Galilee. In the final charge to his followers, Jesus places upon them the obligation to spread their faith throughout the world:

Jesus then came up and spoke to them. He said: 'Full authority in heaven and earth has been committed to me. Go forth therefore and make all nations my disciples; baptize men everywhere in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach<sub>1</sub> them to observe all that I have commanded you.'<sup>1</sup>

The responsibility to preach the Christian faith to everyone everywhere, expressed in this New Testament passage, is one of the central motifs of Christianity. Martin Marty, the Church historian, observes that there are certain elements of the Christian faith which have "been believed everywhere, always and by all Christians, the four notes of the Church (one, holy, catholic, apostolic)."<sup>2</sup> It is the

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew 28:18-19 (NEB).

<sup>2</sup>Martin Marty, A Short History of Christianity (Cleveland: William Collins, 1959), p. 9.

third of these four qualities--the "catholic" nature of the church--the desire to be all embracing and universal--which demands of Christians that they reflect upon other religions and other peoples.

This consideration of other religions is especially significant in the context of Jewish-Christian dialogue. Christian faith begins within the fabric of Jewish life and religion in first century Palestine. As such, the Jewish faith has been a distinctive part of Christian writings since the very beginning of Christianity. The New Testament itself can be read as the earliest Jewish-Christian debate, a polemic which has continued to occupy a position of some prominence in Christian writings throughout the church's history. The task in the pages to follow is to review the recent writings of those Christian thinkers who have written about interfaith dialogue. Though the focus in this chapter will be on writings from only the last two decades, the issues raised by these writers reflect themes present in Christian theology from New Testament times. A brief review of the way earlier generations have perceived the relationship between Christianity and Judaism will provide a context for considering current Christian attitudes.

New Testament Perspectives

Modern Biblical scholarship has gone a long way towards determining the sources of Testamental literature. In so doing, it enables the student to comprehend better the often complementary, as well as frequently contradictory statements, of the New Testament. Most scholars are agreed that three of the four Gospels share a common origin; these books have been assigned the term "Synoptic Gospels." The three synoptic Gospels (Mark, Matthew and Luke) tell essentially the same story, and often in similar ways. There is both a contextual and literary relationship.<sup>1</sup> The fourth Gospel, John, stands apart in unique ways, both in terms of language and theology, from the synoptic books. What has emerged from this vast corpus of scholarship undertaken in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is a new appreciation of the context within which each of the books was composed. This context is what the scholars call the sitz-in-leben (the life setting) of the books. As scholars understand it, the Gospel writers imposed their own views on the material which was transmitted to them. They reworked it so that it would reflect their particular

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<sup>1</sup>Norman Perrin, The New Testament: An Introduction (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1974), pp. 8-9 and references cited there.

theological outlook, take note of the faith community in which they themselves resided, and the particular audience for which their work was intended.<sup>1</sup>

It should not be surprising, therefore, that New Testament scholars find that the Gospels exhibit many inconsistencies in their perception of Jews and Judaism. As in every other area, so here too the sitz-in-leben of the Gospel writer influences what he has to say about Jews and their religion. There are scholars who believe that the New Testament is decidedly hostile to the Jewish people, and to their faith.<sup>2</sup> While acknowledging that certain sections of the Gospels express a more benign attitude than others, these scholars insist that the major thrust of the Gospels and Acts is to assert that

the Christians have completely and unreservedly supplanted the Jews, the Jews having been cast off by God....The view that God and Christians had entered into a new covenant, as a result of which the covenant between God and the Jews was annulled, is found exclusively in the New Testament....<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. See also W. D. Davies, Invitation to the New Testament (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1966), Chapters 7-11.

<sup>2</sup>Rosemary Ruether, Faith and Fratricide (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974), pp. 64-116. See also Samuel Sandmel, Anti-Semitism in the New Testament? (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), *passim*.

<sup>3</sup>Sandmel, p. 140.

By way of contrast, there are other scholars who believe that the authors of the Gospels, with the exception of John, exhibit a far more positive evaluation of Judaism than is generally recognized.<sup>1</sup> They acknowledge that certain sections of New Testament writings do convey negative attitudes towards the Jews of those times. But they contend that the criticism found in the New Testament is, by and large, directed against the leadership of the time, and not at the total Jewish population of then Palestine. One historian argues, for example, that the New Testament should be seen as markedly positive in its evaluation of Judaism, noting that "...not a single one of our subjects [the authors of the New Testament books] ever quite wraps up his relationship with Israel, the chosen people of God."<sup>2</sup>

Reaching some consistent conclusions about the new attitude towards the Jews and Judaism becomes more complicated as one considers the writings of Paul, which form

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<sup>1</sup>Gregory Baum, Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic? (Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1960), passim. Baum now disagrees with the views expressed in this volume, as can be seen in his introduction to Ruether's Faith and Fratricide, pp. 1-22. A recent book which substantiates the earlier position of Baum is John Koenig, Jews and Christians in Dialogue: New Testament Foundations (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), passim.

<sup>2</sup>Koenig, p. 137.

the bulk of the remaining New Testament literature. His attitude is also open to wide interpretation. Paul himself acknowledged the essential Jewishness of his early life. In his various writings, he tells of his training in the ways of his ancestors, the growing frustrations at his inability to be totally faithful to the law, and his eventual conversion to the faith of the Christ, whose early adherents he had once persecuted. Following his conversion and his ascendancy to a position of some prominence, Paul is pulled between the various competing Christian groups and thought of the time, as he attempts to formulate a theology and plan of action. In the book of Galatians, for example, there appears to be a tension present in Paul's own words, pulling him in one direction towards the gentiles, while simultaneously beckoning him to the plight of his Jewish kin, the poor of Jerusalem.

That tension in Paul's thinking, between his attachment to his Jewish origins, and his disappointment at the refusal of his fellow Jews to accept Jesus as the Messiah, is best reflected in Romans. In that letter to the congregation in Rome, Paul speaks forthrightly of the Jews and their faith, his rejection of Judaism's concept of faith through law, and of his thoughts about the future of his former people. He theorizes that the Jews were given a favored opportunity to embrace salvation through Jesus as

the Messiah. With their refusal to heed that message, he believed that conversionary efforts must turn toward the gentiles. But Paul believes that there will come a time when some of the Jews will be enlightened and when at least a portion will come to accept the teachings of his newly adopted faith. In the interim, Paul says, partially blinded though the Jews may be, "God has not rejected the people which he acknowledged of old as his own."<sup>1</sup>

The above-cited chapter from Romans, which contains Paul's well known image of Judaism as the tree unto which Christianity has been grafted as a branch, is central to an understanding of how Paul conceived of Judaism within the divine plan. There is wide disagreement about what Paul means to imply by his assertion that God does not intend to cut himself off from the Jewish people. Some contemporary Christian theologians have used this chapter in Romans (along with chapters 9-10) as an example of Paul's belief that God has not rejected the Mosaic covenant. These scholars assert that Paul is proclaiming in these chapters his belief in the validity of Judaism for Jews, while also

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<sup>1</sup>Romans 11:2 (NEB).

proclaiming it to be an incomplete faith without the Christ.<sup>1</sup> Other scholars sharply disagree with that evaluation. The Roman Catholic theologian Rosemary Ruether, for example, insists that these chapters of Romans represent the ultimate declaration within Pauline theory that the Jews have been rejected by God. As she sees it, Paul's assertion that there will be a mysterious occurrence at which time the hearts of the Jews will be unhardened, enabling them to convert, is not to be read as implying any validity to their faith until such time as they do convert. Paul is suggesting only that God retains an interest in Jews, as potential members of the New Church founded by Jesus. What is to be found here, in Romans, is that Paul "enunciates a doctrine of the rejection of the Jews (rejection of Judaism as the proper religious community of God's people) in the most radical form, seeing it as rejected not only now,

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<sup>1</sup>Krister Stendahl, Paul Among Jews and Gentiles (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), pp. 3-4. Also Alan Davies, Anti-Semitism and the Christian Mind (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), pp. 92-107. See, too, Gregory Baum, Is the New Testament Anti-Semitic?, pp. 275-342. Also Markus Barth, "Was Paul an Anti-Semite?" Journal of Ecumenical Studies 5 (Winter 1968):78-104.

through the rejection of Christ, but from the beginning."<sup>1</sup>

Depending on the meaning one assigns to Paul's words, significant implications for the relationship of Christianity to Judaism follow. If Paul is read as affirming the eternal validity of Judaism, then Judaism and Christianity ought to be able to coexist peacefully, if not lovingly. More specifically, Jews are not proper candidates for conversion to Christianity if their religion is a valid one. But if Ruether's interpretation of Paul is correct, then that alters the way in which Christians approach Jews. For if Judaism is no longer valid, then Christians ought not to spare any efforts in bringing the Christian message to those who were born Jewish.

#### Medieval and Modern Interpretations

The history of the interaction between the two faith communities indicates that both interpretations of Paul's writings seem to have been operative. There were

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<sup>1</sup>Ruether, Faith and Fratricide, pp. 106-7. Opposition to Ruether's conclusion can be found in John M. Oesterreicher, Anatomy of Contempt: A Critique of R. R. Ruether's "Faith and Fratricide" (Seton Hall University, N.J.: The Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies, 1975); Thomas A. Indinopulos and Roy Bowen Ward, "Is Christology Inherently Anti-Semitic? A Critical Review of Rosemary Ruether's Faith and Fratricide," Journal of American Academy of Religion 45 (June 1977):193-214.

some few times when Christians recognized the ongoing vitality to Jewish faith. During the middle ages, there were occasions when the Roman Catholic Church quite strongly protected the rights of the Jewish minority residing within its jurisdictions. One historian, Yosef Yerushalmi asserts that the Jews were afforded this protection because of the specific theological conviction that Jews and Judaism must continue to exist until the second coming of the Christ. At that time, it was the Church's expectation that the Jews would acknowledge Jesus as their own.<sup>1</sup>

Most often, the zealous advocates of Christianity have predominated. In their active pursuit to convert Jews, Christian thinkers relied on many arguments to justify their actions. Generally, the argument included the reasoning that Jesus was a gift and a necessity for all peoples. Because Jesus was a gift, everyone should be gracious enough to acknowledge and accept the present of Christianity. And because Jesus was a necessity, said these thinkers, there is no salvation outside the church.<sup>2</sup> Often specific New

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<sup>1</sup>Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, "Response to Rosemary Ruether," in Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?, ed. Eva Fleischner (New York: Ktav Publishing Co. for the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1977), pp. 101-2.

<sup>2</sup>B. Z. Sobel, Hebrew Christianity: The Thirteenth Tribe (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1974), pp. 129-133.

Testament verses, especially John 1:1-14, were used to authorize such missionary activity. Throughout antiquity and during the middle ages, serious Christian thinkers directed their sights to other religions. While Judaism was recognized by these writers as a quite unique instance of a religion that shared much with Christianity, the truth is that Christian theologians did not have much positive to say about any religion save their own. Either the other religions were considered to be blatantly false and sinful, or they were viewed as divine educative tools. In the latter case, the other religions are acceptable as elementary forms of correct faith; it was to be expected that as men progressed, they would outgrow these "lower" religions and embrace the ultimate goal set by God, the belief in Christ.<sup>1</sup> In this context, Judaism too was understood to be an incomplete or unfulfilled religion, one in need of perfection that would come when its adherents, the Jews, accepted Jesus.

In the earlier review of the historical background of Judaism toward Christianity, it was observed that the European Enlightenment precipitated new ways of thinking

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<sup>1</sup>Owen C. Thomas, Attitudes Toward Other Religions: Some Christian Interpretations (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), pp. 15-17.

among Jews about other religions, specifically Christianity. The reverse is also true. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as Christian writers began to respond to the challenges of scientific thinking and the realities of numerous religious traditions, new conceptions arose. The traditional view of Christianity as true and all other religions as false was maintained in some quarters. But other positions evolved too. Some writers asserted that each culture develops a religion appropriate to itself, and that other religions perform functions for their adherents in the fashion that Christianity does for its adherents. There were some theologians who suggested that all religions share in a common essence, and hence all religions which partake of aspects of this essence are valid. Other theologians look upon the non-Christian religions as either developmental stages toward true religion, i.e., Christianity; or ascribe to those religions a significant measure of validity because they do serve as true paths to salvation.<sup>1</sup>

The twentieth century, with its increasingly secular orientation and broader recognition of religious

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 19-28. Also Donald G. Dawe, "Christian Faith in a Religiously Plural World," in Christian Faith in a Religiously Plural World, ed. Donald G. Dawe and John B. Carman (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1978), pp. 13-33.

pluralism, has effected continuing self-evaluation among Christian writers about the place of their faith in the universe of religions. New Christologies have emerged as Christian writers have redefined the content of the "catholic" mission of the church, and its relationship to the world.<sup>1</sup> In this process of reformulation, the specific relationship of Christianity to Judaism has received much attention by thinkers. The pages that follow are a review of those Christian writers who, in the years since Vatican II, have written about Jewish-Christian dialogue. It will be seen that a variety of positions exists among Christian writers, much as it did among Jewish authors. This review will contrast two widely divergent positions: the arguments of these Christian thinkers who affirm the traditional conversionary posture towards Jews, and the claims of those writers who urge a radically new Jewish-Christian relationship which abandons the historic concept of a Christian mission to the Jews. In both analyses, the aim will be to summarize the reasons offered for interfaith dialogue.

While the focus is centered on those thinkers whose work has appeared in the years following the ecumenical and

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<sup>1</sup>Michael B. McGarry, Christology After Auschwitz (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), pp. 64-98.

interfaith thrusts set in motion by Vatican II, this review begins by looking at the writings of two masters of Protestant thought from the 1950s--Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr. The seminal writings of these theologians on the theme are worthy of consideration at this stage in the discussion because of the premier positions which they occupied in the American religious enterprise prior to Vatican II, because of the significant new lands which their essays charted, and because their influence is present in so many of the post-Vatican II writings which shall be considered.

#### Pre-Vatican II Influences

##### Paul Tillich

Paul Tillich, in the Brampton lectures delivered at Columbia University in the early 1950s, and published later as Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions, maintained that there are three possible attitudes of Christianity toward other religions: (1) a rejection of everything the group stands for; (2) a partial rejection and a partial acceptance of the opposite group's assertions; (3) a "dialectical union of rejection and acceptance in the

relationship of the two groups."<sup>1</sup> Tillich believes that all three have been present in Christian thought, but that the third has been the most dominant. He admits that there have been times when Christianity has been radically exclusive in its faith assertions, denying any validity to the claims of other religions. But there have been times when Christianity, feeling itself secure, was able to reassert what Tillich considers its New Testament attitude, that of viewing itself as all inclusive, as if to say: "All that is true anywhere in the world belongs to the Christians."<sup>2</sup>

Tillich insists that this universal, non-particularist conception has its origin in a proper understanding of Jesus. Too often, he believes that Christianity identified the institutions which it created with the source of its existence--Jesus as the Christ. But for Tillich, Jesus is the universal symbol par excellence. For Jesus is the representative of a personal life that shows:

...no break in his relation to God and no claim for himself in his particularity. What is particular in him is that he crucified the particular in himself for the sake of the

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Tillich, Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), pp. 29-30.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

universal. This liberates his image from bondage both to a particular religion and to the religious sphere as such; the principle of love in him embraces the cosmos, including both the religious and the secular spheres.<sup>1</sup>

Tillich insists that no religion could possibly reflect the fullness represented by Christ. It was always possible that the universal church, which for Tillich comprised the "assembly of God" gathered from all the peoples would become identified with a national or local institution.<sup>2</sup> When that happened, there was a likelihood that the universal, all-inclusive message of Jesus would be lost in the institutional church. That is why, for Tillich, the Protestant principle--the principle that no church can truly speak for God, the principle of opposition to all heteronomy, was so central. Tillich feels that the true message of Christianity was that God's grace was not channeled through any particular group of clergy, nor through any institution, but that God's grace was open to all:

The central principle of Protestantism is the doctrine of justification by grace alone, which means that no one individual and no

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Tillich, Theology of Culture (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1959), p. 39.

human group can claim a divine dignity for its moral achievement, for its sacramental power, for its sanctity, for its doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

Christianity, in its institutional forms, must be open to mutual judging by other religions and even quasi-religions. In the process of that critical evaluation, it is Tillich's hope that the ideals and visions of Jesus as the Christ would be most completely realized.

Paul Tillich was no religious relativist, to be sure, even though there are sections of his works which convey that impression. In his thinking, Jesus as the Christ represents the moment when history was fully manifested, when history achieved its greatest meaning. The tradition of Jesus obliterating himself and becoming Christ, affirms that Jesus was the center of all time. Those who accepted Jesus as the Christ, Tillich feels, were living after that central point of history; all others were living before the event. It was, and is the task of the universal church to work towards the completion of the presence of Jesus as the Christ throughout the world. For those who are living before the event, for Jews and humanists and pagans, Tillich insists that it was a period in

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Tillich, The Protestant Era (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1949), Chapter XIV, passim.

which the church was only latent; among them, the theologian asserted, missionary work must move forward.

But that missionary work will not be the type, he believes, that has long been characteristic of the church. He asserts that the other, older forms of missionary work, which looked upon missionaries as loyal Christians working to save heathens from damnation, or as enlightened Christians pursuing a religious version of cultural cross fertilization, were mistaken misinterpretations of missionizing. He considers missions as the attempt to "transform the latent church, which is present in the world religions, in paganism, Judaism, and humanism, into something new, namely, the New Reality in Jesus as the Christ."<sup>1</sup> Missionary work represents the universal thrust of the church, of bringing all people, in whom this "New Reality" resides furtively, into manifestation, so that "Christ must become what he potentially is, the center of history for all historical developments."<sup>2</sup>

Tillich views Jews and Judaism as occupying a particular place in a divine plan. In his interpretation

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Tillich, "The Theology of Missions," Christianity and Crisis 15 (April 4, 1955):36.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

of Romans, Tillich notes that Paul believed that the conversion of the Jews, or what Tillich might call their "transformation," had to await the evangelization of the pagans. Yet Tillich believes that paganism is a part of history and that the church itself often exhibits pagan tendencies. Judaism has historically been the surest, most vocal critic of paganism, he feels. As such, to the end of history, Judaism had the essential function of serving out its prophetic heritage, as a judge against all paganism, both without and within the church:

Judaism always stood against them (paganism and idolatry) as a witness and a critic, and perhaps it is the meaning of historical providence that this shall remain so, as long as there is history. Individual Jews always will come to Christianity; but the question whether Christianity should try to convert Judaism as a whole is at least an open question...I, myself, in light of my many contacts and friendships with Jews, am inclined to take the position that one should be open to the Jews that come to us wanting to become Christians. Yet we should not try to convert them, but should subject ourselves as Christians to the criticism of their prophetic tradition.<sup>1</sup>

Tillich's view that Jews and Judaism had a place in the divine scheme, and that Judaism will remain till the end of days, is not especially unique among Christian

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 38. See also D. Mackenzie Brown, Ultimate Concern: Tillich in Dialogue (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), pp. 100-110.

thinkers. As has been previously noted, there have been periodic instances in which Christian philosophers have argued against massive Jewish conversion to their faith, insisting that God was reserving some special role for Israel.<sup>1</sup> But Tillich's assertion that Judaism acts as a corrective to Christianity, and especially to what he views as its pagan tendencies, is unusual. It is all the more unique because he believes that Judaism's critical function precludes the Christian from overt, active attempts to convert the Jew. In the years following the publication of Tillich's essay, an equally famous Christian thinker, Reinhold Niebuhr, turned to the same theme, elaborating different reasons why Christians must turn away from the missionary stance toward Jews, and embrace instead a dialogic posture.

Reinhold Niebuhr

In 1958, Reinhold Niebuhr published an essay on Jewish-Christian relation that touched off much controversy.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Stephen Neill, Christian Faith and Other Faiths (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 23-24.

<sup>2</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Relations of Christians and Jews in Western Civilization," in Pious and Secular America, ed. R. Niebuhr (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1958), pp. 88-113.

Yet the views expressed therein should scarcely have been seen as radical in the context of Niebuhr's thought. Indeed, his assessment of Jews and their religion are a natural outgrowth of his entire theological system.

Niebuhr's religious thought is built on a conception of the human being as insecure, who because of the terror of uncertainty, grasps at partial securities and makes them absolutes in life. Human beings are sinners because they are proud. There are three particular ways in which that pride is manifest: the pride of power, the pride of knowledge, and the pride of righteousness.<sup>1</sup> Exalting power enables persons to think that they can stand above the flux, and thus avoid the hazards that lay lurking in life. The pride of knowledge convinces persons that their perspective is all inclusive, and that what they pronounce is identical with the truth. The sin of righteousness leads persons to deify themselves or their institutions, or ideology.

This last sin, self-righteousness, Niebuhr believes, is the ultimate one and the most spiritual of all. It is also the sin which religions are most guilty of committing.

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<sup>1</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, The Nature and Destiny of Man (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1941), 1:188.

In support of their theology, religions insist on proclaiming their superiority. In quest for the divine, they assert that they have reached it, and even dominated it. Niebuhr's criticism of religious fanaticism, and self-assuredness, completes his analysis of human pride:

Religion, by whatever name, is the inevitable fruit of the spiritual statue of man; and religious intolerance and pride is the final expression of his sinfulness. A religion of revelation is ground in the faith that God speaks to man from beyond the highest pinnacle of the human spirit; and that this voice of God will discover man's highest not only to be short of the highest but involved in the dishonesty of claiming that it is the highest.<sup>1</sup>

Later in the Gifford Lectures, from which the previous quotation comes, and which were published as The Nature and Destiny of Man, Niebuhr returns to the theme of pride. The second time it is from the perspective of tolerance. Again, Niebuhr saves his strongest words of criticism for religion. He reviews the instances of intolerance practiced by both Catholics and Protestants, seeing them as reflections of having failed to incorporate the New Testament's insistence on "the truth in Christ."<sup>2</sup> That is the only valid truth because it is both self-assuring and humble, because it simultaneously enables man to hope for

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 1:203.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 2:215.

self-transcendence, and insists that man realize and abide by his finiteness.

Niebuhr is critical of all systems, religious and political, which believe themselves sole possessors of truth and righteousness. Here Niebuhr's view is closely akin to Tillich's, especially the latter's emphasis on the importance of the Protestant principle. Niebuhr holds that Christian faith taught that it was impossible to fully know the truth and that it was equally impossible to avoid the error of thinking that it knew the truth. Even though that was a teaching of Christian faith, it was the institutions created by that faith which were among the most frequent and forceful examples of this tendency to proclaim that they possessed the truth. For Niebuhr, this is a lesson which the church, along with all political institutions, have to absorb into their understanding:

However we twist or turn, whatever instruments or pretensions we use, it is not possible to establish the claim that we have the truth.... We may have it; and yet we do not have it. And we will have it the more purely in fact if we know that we have it only in principle. Our toleration of truth opposed to those to which we confess is an expression of the spirit of forgiveness in the realm of culture. Like all forgiveness, it is possible only if we are not too sure of our own virtue.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., 2:243.

As concerns the specific matter of Christian posture to Jews and Judaism, Niebuhr's views are at one with the preceding line of thought. His insistence that Christians must open themselves to the patterns of faith and knowledge of others is particularly manifest in his appreciation of the Jewish religion. He maintains that Christianity had, for too long a period, emphasized the Greek elements of its faith, and ignored the Jewish components. He wrote that "I have as a Christian theologian sought to strengthen the Hebraic-prophetic content of the Christian tradition."<sup>1</sup> He was moved not only by theological considerations in his estimate of Judaism. Historical reasons, particularly the plight of the Jews through the centuries, had an enormous impact upon him. This no doubt accounts for the strong support that he gave to the Zionist movement, a cause to which he remained deeply devoted to the very end of his life.<sup>2</sup>

Yet Niebuhr had more than just theological

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<sup>1</sup>Quoted in A. J. Heschel, "A Hebrew Evaluation of Reinhold Niebuhr," in Reinhold Niebuhr, His Religious, Social, and Political Thought, eds. Charles W. Kegley and Robert W. Bretall (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1961), p. 392.

<sup>2</sup>William Hordern, A Layman's Guide to Protestant Theology (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1955), p. 147.

appreciation for the insights of Biblical Judaism, and more than just a Christian's acknowledgement of his faith's participation in anti-semitism as an explanation for his Zionism. There is more than just liberal toleration of different cultures that accounts for Niebuhr's views towards Jews. Niebuhr was critical of Christians, in fact, who in his days insisted on proclaiming their tolerance of Jews. For him, that toleration itself was a problem for Christianity, since behind it lurked the ulterior motive that, if Christians were tolerant of Jews, it might eventually enable the Christian to succeed in assimilating the Jews ethnically and converting them religiously.<sup>1</sup> To that goal, Niebuhr was clearly opposed.

In his essay on the relationship of the two faith communities, Niebuhr outlines those qualities which both religions have in common. Beyond those shared elements--a sense of history, and a belief in the responsibilities to the God who is the Creator and nourisher of that history--Niebuhr defines three areas in which Christianity and Judaism have had long standing disagreements: (1) the role and meaning of Jesus as the Messiah; (2) the place of law and grace in each of the faiths; (3) the emphasis on particularism and universalism. In spite of these differences

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<sup>1</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, "The Relations of Christians and Jews," p. 88.

and of what he believed to be the better psychology of Christianity--namely that it paints a truer portrait of the human being as sinner and in need of spiritual assistance to counter the weakness of will--Niebuhr rejected the conclusion that might follow--that Jews ought to convert to the Christian religion. Even if the Jewish religion possesses a less powerful psychology of the human being than did Christianity, he suggests that does not render Judaism handicapped. He points out that Jews have historically contributed much to society, so much in fact, that it must mean that their religion provides both the skills and the will for its adherents to be as equally altruistic as are Christians. Indeed, the religions share such a vast amount in common, affirm so many shared values, that conversion of the Jews should not be a goal of Christianity:

Our analysis assumes that these activities [missionary activities to the Jews] are wrong not only because they are futile, and have little fruit to bear for their exertions. They are wrong because the two faiths despite differences are sufficiently alike for the Jew to find God more easily in terms of his own religious heritage than subjecting himself to the hazards of guilt feelings involved in a conversion to a faith, which whatever its excellencies, must appear to him as a symbol of an oppressive majority culture.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

Unlike his colleague Tillich, moreover, Niebuhr does not hold out the expectation of the eventual flowering of the latent universal church among the Jews, nor in their ever accepting Jesus as the Christ. The history of the two faiths, Niebuhr believes, underscores that the Jews will always have difficulty with the symbol of Christ, which can represent only to them the sign under which they suffered. For him, Christians would be much better if they attempted not to preach to the Jews, nor to convert them, but rather to acknowledge and appreciate the "strange miracle of the Jewish people, outliving the hazards of the diaspora for two millenia and finally offering their unique and valuable contributions to the common Western civilization...."<sup>1</sup>

Evaluations of Dialogue by  
Christian Traditionalists

In the brief historical excursus which opened this chapter, it was noted that there was a fairly consistent attitude toward Jews during the past two millenia. Most Christian theologians supported the church's missionary goal, insisting that it included the conversion of the Jews and the absorption of Judaism by its daughter faith. Even though events in the modern period have motivated a number

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

of Christian thinkers to modify their religion's views in this area (and some shall be considered in the next section), many Christians have not abandoned the historical conversionary thrust of their church. Indeed, these traditionalists (and this is the term which shall be used here when speaking of those thinkers who believe that the Jewish people are appropriate objects of conversionary efforts) affirm that they are not free to do so. In their estimation, the New Testament is permeated with the conviction that Jesus is central to the divine plan and that hope for humanity rests only upon its acceptance of and belief in Jesus as the Christ. In a recent article in Missiology: An International Review, author David Maria Saeger reviews recent Christian documents touching on missionary activity towards the Jewish people. He concludes that official statements emanating from Protestant and Catholic sources reinforce a traditional conversionary attitude towards all peoples. Not only do the documents cited agree on the goal of evangelizing the world; they are at one as to the justification for such activity:

The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father (Eph. 3:9) it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit.... Mission therefore has its unique and ultimate origin in God (the Father), is directed to the

created world, which is the place of its realization, and finally finds its fulfillment in the return to God (the Father).<sup>1</sup>

Traditionalists assert that the Triune God, the very heart of Christian teaching, mandates that the Church and its adherents exist as vessels for spreading the faith. Missionizing does not proceed from the Church; actually it is quite the opposite, for the Church exists only because there was and is missionary activity. For these thinkers, the Church risks losing its identity and forgetting its raison d'etre when it questions its role as an evangelical agency. Notwithstanding their reiteration of classical Christian doctrine, these writers believe that interfaith dialogue can serve a number of useful purposes.<sup>2</sup>

#### Educational Reasons

Traditionalists assert that interreligious dialogue with Jews can have rich pedagogic rewards. Dialogue enables Christians to understand the sources of their own

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<sup>1</sup>David Maria A. Jaeger, "Towards Redefining Our Mission--with Respect to the Jewish People," Missiology: An International Review 7 (October 1979):462-463.

<sup>2</sup>Jakob Jocz, Christians and Jews: Encounter and Mission (London: S.P.C.K., 1966), p. 8.

tradition, to know the meanings and significance of Hebrew scripture, to discover again that Jesus was a Jew and to perceive Jesus afresh in the context of the faith into which he was born. Dialogue would facilitate Christians better understanding the meaning of Biblical concepts like "election" and "covenant." Such conversations would help the Christian to appreciate the common roots of his faith, and its connection to that of his Jewish neighbor. Dialogue would also serve as a vehicle to help break down the barriers of prejudice that have overlain the relationship between the two faith communities; it would go a long way toward identifying the ways in which Christian scripture and teaching have contributed to anti-Jewish attitudes.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond the mere absorption of cognitive knowledge, important as that is, traditionalists assert that dialogue has educational values of a significantly different and more exalted order. Dialogue with Jews could facilitate an enlargement of Christian theology. As Jews and Christians

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<sup>1</sup>See the collection of documents compiled by Helga Croner in Stepping Stones to Further Jewish-Christian Relations (London: Stimulus Books, 1977), passim. The scores of documents in this volume touch on these and other educational gains to be derived from entering into dialogue with Jews. For a concise summary, see Isaac C. Rottenberg, "Should There be a Christian Witness to the Jews?", The Christian Century 94 (April 1977):352-356.

engage in open and probing discussions, the Christian expects

not only the growth of mutual understanding but also and especially a movement drawing both partners of this dialogue more deeply into what is God's will for them. Through sincere human dialogue both partners undergo a change, both partners become more profoundly engaged in the dialogue of salvation which God wishes to carry on with them.<sup>1</sup>

Theological interaction with Jews will enable the groups to cross-fertilize each other's most profound spiritual insights. What does it imply to speak of God in a secularized world? What is the meaning of man after Auschwitz? What does human life mean, for example, to Jews who emphasize the centrality of God as Creator?<sup>2</sup> In what sense can Judaism be enhanced by the Christian insight about "grace?" Theologians lament that over the years, serious questions such as these were no longer jointly explored. In that nearly 2000 year-old rift, Christianity suffered a great deal. For when serious conversation with Judaism was broken off in the second century, the daughter faith lost

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<sup>1</sup>Gregory Baum, "Christianity and Other Religions: A Catholic Problem," Cross Currents 16 (Fall 1966):461. Also see G. Baum, "The Doctrinal Basis for Jewish-Christian Dialogue," Dialog 6 (Summer 1967):201-209.

<sup>2</sup>Paul D. Opsahl and Marc Tanenbaum, Speaking of God Today: Jews and Lutherans in Conversation (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), Introduction and Parts One and Three.

its most effective defense against philosophical spiritualization, pagan mythologizing and Jewish legalism, and her defense against an arbitrary interpretation of<sup>1</sup> the Old Testament and the situation of Jesus.

Tillich, as has been seen, expressed a similar argument in behalf of Judaism. What is different here is that Tillich derived from his argument a hesitant attitude about missionary outreach to Jews. The traditionalist who was just quoted expresses no such hesitations. While it is true that in interreligious dialogue, serious questions about each faith will be raised, it does not alter the elementary belief of the traditionalist. For they believe Christianity to be superior to Judaism; the latter must eventually give way to the daughter faith. These thinkers reckon that dialogue will be mutually beneficial, that Christians and Jews will enjoy broader horizons as a result of their interaction. Yet they feel certain that the results of the interchange, no matter how mutually edifying, will not alter their eschatological vision--the incorporation of Judaism into Christianity and the union of Jew to the Church. For them, that would be the ultimate sign that the educational goals of dialogue had been fulfilled.

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<sup>1</sup>Leonhard Goppelt, "Israel and the Church in Today's Discussion and in Paul," Lutheran World 10 (October 1963): 371.

### Social Action Concerns

In this discussion of Jewish perspectives on dialogue, it has been seen that advocates of the process, as well as opponents, had supported joint Jewish-Christian social and political endeavors. This has been one of the few areas that has always seemed safe for members of different faiths to join in common pursuit.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, then, it should not seem unusual to find that traditionalists invoke "social action" as one of the benefits that could arise from interreligious dialogue with Jews. Yet there is a sense in which it seems quite peculiar. For evangelical Christianity, at least during the recent past, rarely has distinguished itself in the domain of humanitarian action. An historian of the movement notes that evangelical Christianity once boasted a strongly social action conscience, but that "a great reversal in this century led to a lopsided emphasis upon evangelism and omission of most aspects of social involvement."<sup>2</sup> Apologists within traditional Christianity can point to the numerous positive

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<sup>1</sup>Robert McAfee Brown, The Ecumenical Revolution 2d ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1969), pp. 375-395.

<sup>2</sup>David O. Moberg, The Great Reversal (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1972), p. 35.

programs which have been initiated over the last two decades, thereby altering the earlier trends of the evangelical churches.<sup>1</sup>

Many theologians within evangelical Christianity, as well as other theologians from those denominations which adhere to a traditionalist interpretation of mission, welcome Jewish-Christian dialogue because of its potential to effect social programs. The Lutheran Church, representing the three major branches of Lutheran affiliation in this country, issued a document urging its churches to vigorously engage in dialogue with Jews. The official declaration enunciated what it hoped could result from such interaction:

If we have been open and have shared our assumptions, prejudices, traditions, and convictions, we may be able to share in realistic goal setting, especially in regard to further understanding and common cause in spiritual and social concerns such as fostering human rights.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Paul E. Toms, "Evangelical Christians and Social Responsibility," in Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation on Scripture, Theology and History, eds. Marc Tanenbaum, Marvin R. Wilson and A. James Rudin (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978), pp. 233-247. Also Leighton Ford, "A Letter to Richard," in same volume, pp. 298-310.

<sup>2</sup>Excerpted from "Some Observations and Guidelines for Conversations between Lutherans and Jews," prepared by the Lutheran Council in the U.S.A., representing the American Lutheran Church, the Lutheran Church in America, and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Reprinted in Paul D. Opsahl and Marc Tanenbaum, Speaking of God Today, pp. 163-165.

Similar statements, urging broadened contact between Jews and Christians, can be found in official statements of the United Methodist Church, the Catholic Church and in declarations of intent convening dialogue between Jews and Evangelicals.<sup>1</sup> Interreligious cooperation in this country has largely been founded on the common social goals of both Biblical religions. Various inter-church and pan-religious groups, be they the National Conference of Christians and Jews, or the numerous local bodies, reflect the commitment of Jewish and Christian groups to realize their shared values in common humanitarian pursuits. For traditional Christians, the shared values are best identified, the agenda for action best set, in the context of open, forth-right dialogue.

#### Conversionary Motives

To a number of traditionalists, dialogue is to be welcomed because it can serve as an effective vehicle for realizing the goal of winning the Jews to Christianity.

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<sup>1</sup>Sources for the Methodist denomination can be found in Helga Croner, Stepping Stones to Further Jewish-Christian Relations, pp. 114-15, and for the Catholic Church in the same volume, pp. 21-2. Evangelical support of dialogue for social action aims is found in the introduction to the above cited volume, Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation, pp. x-xii.

One theologian who is bold enough to express this motive acknowledges that the concept of "mission" has not been successful among Jews for a variety of reasons. The Church, splintered as it is into national and regional bodies, has not served as the universal symbol which it must represent if Christianity is to be at all welcomed by the Jewish people. Moreover, the church has been so tainted with hatred of the Jews that any mission designed to bring them into the church was doomed. Dialogue cannot rectify the fractured nature of the Church, to be sure. But it can help remove the anti-Jewish teachings and sentiments, making the Church a more hospitable location for the would-be converts from Judaism.<sup>1</sup>

These traditionalists suggest that dialogue ought to be welcomed as a device for removing the barriers which have grown up over the centuries between the faith communities. Once the barriers are hurdled, then Christians will emerge from the ignorance which has so often typified their relationship to Judaism. But these writers claim that Jews have much more to gain. For Jews can emerge from inter-religious dialogue--which traditionalists insist must

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<sup>1</sup>Heinz David Leuner, "From Mission to Dialog-- Rethinking the Relation of Christians and Jews," Lutheran World 10 (October 1963):385-399.

always be a form of "witness"--with an acceptance of the rightness of Christianity. If dialogue is conducted in the appropriate mode, then Christians will be such exemplars of the spirit of their faith that it will make Jews "jealous."<sup>1</sup> Dialogue must be a form of Christian testimony to the Jews. Not to do so would be a form of anti-Jewishness, for it would be to deny the Jew the opportunity for salvation that comes only through the Christ:

...even when the Jew does not see things as we see them, it is incumbent upon us as Christians, by our conversation, in our theology, and through our life hidden with Christ in God, to witness to him that the wall is down, and so, perhaps even mutely, to invite him to bring his special calling into the fullness which already includes all that both he and we have to offer...That fullness is Christ alone, and to him the whole of Israel is called to witness.<sup>2</sup>

For the traditionalist, dialogue cannot be any other. For their reading of New Testament vouchsafes to them a yoke which cannot be thrown off. "Dialogue" is a better term than "mission"; but its goal would be identical--to open up to the Jew the salvific opportunities that inhere

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<sup>1</sup>H. Berkhof, "Israel as a Theological Problem in the Christian Church," Journal of Ecumenical Studies 6 (Summer 1969):329-353.

<sup>2</sup>George A. F. Knight, "Beyond Dialogue," in Jews and Christians: Preparation for Dialogue, ed. George A. F. Knight (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), pp. 175-179.

only in the acceptance of the Christian faith.

Perspectives on Dialogue Among  
Non-Traditionalists

Those Christian authors who have been considered to this juncture, with the possible exception of Reinhold Niebuhr, may be classified as theologians of "discontinuity." This terminology, which appears first in the pioneering work of A. Roy Eckhardt, is meant to serve as a convenient means of identifying the predominant attitude toward Judaism in the Christian tradition. Theologians of "discontinuity," under the influence of classical New Testament interpretation,

declare the brokenness of original Israel's election. If these representatives speak of Christian faith as the "fulfillment" of Jewish faith, this is in order to emphasize that Christianity is the "successor" of Judaism, is the "faithful remnant" that truly carries forward the sacred role of Israel.<sup>1</sup>

These Christian theorists feel duty bound to insist on the supremacy of their Christian faith, while yet advocating, as has been seen, many reasons why interreligious dialogue is to be pursued with Jews.

In contrast, Eckhardt writes of a unique approach to

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<sup>1</sup>A. Roy Eckhardt, Elder and Younger Brothers: The Encounter of Jews and Christians (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), p. 51.

Judaism by modern Christian thinkers. This alternate understanding affirms the ongoing validity to the Jewish faith. It recognizes the presence within the contemporary Jewish community of a vital exalting religious system, which testifies to the continuing fulfillment of the Biblical covenant entered into between God and the people of Israel.<sup>1</sup> As this theology of continuity, in the several guises which it assumes in contemporary Christianity, perceives this living faith of Judaism within the context of Jewish peoplehood, it eschews any sense of "mission" to the Jews, at least in the traditional understanding of that term. These non-traditional theologians do not yearn after mass Jewish conversion, not even if it were single file. They do not see dialogue as a vehicle to evangelization. Rather, the entire process of Jewish-Christian interaction is meant to educate one another, to instill a non-triumphalistic humility within the Christian about his faith, and to bestow a common hope upon both Jew and Christian--that their religious traditions are capable of renewal and spiritual guidance for an increasingly secularized and inhumane world.

This final section, then, reviews the writings of several theologians of "continuity." The concern here, as

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., Chapter 5.

it has been throughout these pages, will be to uncover the reasons proffered for Jewish-Christian dialogue.<sup>1</sup> This review looks first at theologians within the Protestant tradition, then briefly turns to examine several Roman Catholic thinkers.

### Protestant Thinkers

This current effort to review Christian attitudes toward dialogue opened with an analysis of Paul Tillich and Reinhold Niebuhr. Many of those who wrote in the year following publication of the relevant essays of those masters struggled, consciously or otherwise, with the positions articulated by them. Traditionalists as Jocz and Knight, to whom reference was made, felt compelled to deny, sometimes point by point, the work of Niebuhr and/or Tillich.<sup>2</sup> Now, on the other side of the spectrum, it shall be seen that liberal, non-missionary thinkers also have to pause, if only to show deference to Tillich and Niebuhr, before they proceed on their own.

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<sup>1</sup>Michael B. McGarry, in his Christology After Auschwitz (New York: Paulist Press, 1977) has used Eckhardt's categories in his analysis of recent Christologies. While germane to the subject, McGarry does not attempt, except by way of implication, to identify the values which theologians of continuity might find in Jewish-Christian dialogue.

<sup>2</sup>See above, pp. 60-73.

John Macquarrie, a younger colleague of both Tillich and Niebuhr, enunciates a position one or two steps beyond theirs. Macquarrie acknowledges the pioneering effort of Tillich and Niebuhr. He too decries a view of Christianity that arrogates unto itself the claim that it was the exclusive repository of God's revelation. He argues that careful New Testament studies would never support such a position, and suggests that Roman Catholic and Anglican thinkers are far more enlightened than neo-Reformation thinkers like Barth in recognizing the value of other religious traditions.<sup>1</sup>

In his major theological work, Principles of Christian Theology, Macquarrie takes issue with both Tillich and Niebuhr. Tillich had suggested that Christianity recognizes and respects the presence of a divine revelation vouchsafed to the religious non-Christian. Yet Tillich insisted that such revelation was in no way "final" in the same fashion as was the Christian testament. For Macquarrie, any such assertion of revelatory superiority was both intellectually indefensible and morally objectionable. Moreover, he is not ready, as was Niebuhr, to insist on any

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<sup>1</sup>John Macquarrie, "Christianity and Other Faiths," Union Seminary Quarterly Review 20 (November 1964):39-47.

necessarily superior attributes for Christianity: "We therefore utterly reject the view that one religion is true and all the rest false; or (what we take to be a subtle restatement of the same error) that all religions are judged and rejected, including the Christian religion so far as it is a religion, by the one and only veridical revelation in Christ."<sup>1</sup> Macquarrie contends that one must build a Christian theology that accepts the possibility, in fact the likelihood, that other faiths share in divine revelation, equal in substance and force, to that of Christianity.

Such a tolerant view of other religions effectively blunts the idea of Christians missionaries functioning as proselytizers for their own faith. Nevertheless, Macquarrie reserves a place for missionary work in his theology, in at least two respects. On one level, he believes that it is necessary for the missionary to carry on the historic task of offering faith to those who do not know of religious values and are not part of any spiritual community.<sup>2</sup> Like his Jewish counterparts, Macquarrie is sensitive to the

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<sup>1</sup>John Macquarrie, Principles of Christian Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), p. 155.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 393.

threats to spiritual values present in contemporary secular society. The Christian missionary has plenty of candidates towards whom to turn. As Christianity comes to terms with the need to direct its conversionary orientation towards those bereft of spiritual values, it will correspondingly turn away from those committed to the other great world religions. Macquarrie is critical of any missionary from Christianity who would seek to proselytize adherents from other faiths. He suggests that they would desist from such efforts if they were only to ask themselves a series of questions:

Do we really think it is a good thing, or a Christian duty, to aim at the conversion of the Jews? Would Martin Buber, for instance, have been any better or any nearer to God if he had become a Christian? Would his conversion have been of any benefit to Christians or mankind? I, for one, have no hesitation in answering these questions in the negative. I think it is better that this man should have realized God's grace and brought us God's message (as I believe he did) within the context of his own culture and religion. There he was authentic. But if we concede the case with the Jews, then, in principle we have conceded it with all non-Christian faiths.<sup>1</sup>

There is a second meaning which Macquarrie assigns to the word "missionary." For him, the missionary is the individual in the vanguard of interfaith or ecumenical dialogue. The task of the missionary is to spread love and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 394.

truth. Such values are best revealed in a process of interaction with adherents of other faiths. As differences are explored and creative theological tensions examined, each religion will be "reconceived." It is Macquarrie's belief that in that process of reconceptualization, religious truths can be made even more secure, and religious love can be more widely dispersed.<sup>1</sup> The missionary, then, should not be seeking to convert others; the missionary should rather be instrumental in bringing about the conversion of his or her own faith to higher levels of truth and love.

Macquarrie observes that there are Anglican theologians whose views are less triumphalist and more hospitable to Jewish-Christian encounter than certain neo-Reformation thinkers. James Parkes would most certainly fit that description. Moreover, he is widely considered the intellectual forebear of liberal Christian attitudes towards Judaism. If Macquarrie is prepared to acknowledge that other faiths can share in revelation, Parkes would go even further. To him, Judaism and Christianity are equals, sharing a belief of a God who is active, and whose primary activity is moral. Sinai and Calvary are, to Parkes,

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<sup>1</sup>Macquarrie, "Christianity and Other Faiths," p. 47.

equally valid incarnations of God in history. The power of Sinai did not cease with the atonement on Calvary; nor did the incarnation displace the Torah as a perpetual, life bestowing source to the world.<sup>1</sup>

Since both religions are true and valid, of what value would dialogue be between faith adherents? Parkes maintains that interreligious exchange would open Christian and Jew to the respective thoughts and weaknesses of the other. While they are equally true, the religions are also distinctive and unique. There is much that can be learned by members of each faith about the other through dialogue. Judaism's emphasis upon each person's responsibility to the world can enrich Christianity. So, too, Christianity's belief that, through the Incarnation, the human being's ultimate worth is vindicated can chart new vistas for Jews. Parkes insists that both religious groups will profit from each others' views. Even more critically, Parkes believes the world requires both traditions. For it is Judaism

where God says to man: fulfill my plan for creation, and man replies: I will. In Christianity, man returns to God to say: fulfill that part in creation which I cannot because I am foolish and sinful, and God says: I will.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>James Parkes, Prelude to Dialogue (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), pp. 199-200.

<sup>2</sup>James Parkes, Judaism and Christianity (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), p. 39.

Thirty years after those words were written, Protestant theologians of "continuity" still continue to struggle with the challenge of Parkes' affirmation that there is a double, binding covenant--one Jewish, the other Christian.<sup>1</sup> Catholics too are seeking to discover what meaning dialogue can have if both religions are accepted as true.

#### Recent Catholic Directions

Protestant writers like Tillich and Macquarrie wanted to express a more tolerant attitude toward other religions, while yet maintaining the traditional language of "mission." This required them to reformulate the content of missionary activity so as to bring it into conformity with their larger theological perspectives on other religions.

The celebrated Roman Catholic Hans Küng expresses a position quite similar to that of Macquarrie. He believes that the relationship of Catholicism to other faiths is of fundamental importance for any proper self-understanding of the Roman Catholic tradition. He suggests that the

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<sup>1</sup>See John T. Pawlikowski, What Are They Saying About Christian-Jewish Relations? (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), Chapters 2 and 7.

classic formula of "no salvation outside the faith" must be reformulated in modern terminology so as to allow for the validity of other religions and believers.<sup>1</sup> Missionary activity would be directed, therefore, not to the winning of converts but to the exploration of theological differences and the broadening of spiritual ties between religious persons of different faiths. Küng expresses caution, as do other writers, that such interfaith discussion should not be allowed to descend into any form of syncretism. But just as surely, Catholics must renounce any sense of triumphalism as they engage in interreligious discussions:

The real aim [of Christian missionary activity] would be to enter into genuine dialogue with the religions as a whole, giving and taking, in which the most profound intentions of the latter could be fulfilled.... The truth of other religions would be acknowledged, honored and appreciated; but the Christian profession of faith would not be relativized or reduced to general truths. In a word, then, there would be neither arrogant absolutism, not accepting any other claim, nor a weak eclecticism accepting a little of everything, but an inclusive Christian universalism claiming for Christianity not exclusiveness, but certainly uniqueness.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Küng, On Being a Christian, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: Pocket Books, 1976), pp. 89-98.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

Küng believes that it is important for Christians to open themselves not only to all religions in general but to Judaism in particular. But here Küng seems to find himself on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, he urges his Christian contemporaries to acknowledge the part that their religion has played, directly and otherwise, in the two thousand year persecution of the Jew. Such an admission, he is convinced, will assist Christians in moving to a more profound recognition of the spiritual values of the Jewish people. Yet he seems to draw back from the total renunciation of missionary activity toward the Jew, a renunciation that was present in the work of other writers have been considered. To be sure, Küng does not urge the dispatching of the faithful to work among the Jews. But neither does he foreclose the possibility that conversion might be a by-product of interfaith dialogue. The word "merely," appearing as it does in the following citation indicates a certain hesitation by Küng about the desirability of totally abolishing missionizing toward the Jewish people:

The Church has stood too often between Jesus and Israel. It prevented Israel from recognizing Jesus. It is high time for Christendom not merely to preach "conversion" to the Jews, but to be "converted" itself: to the encounter which has scarcely begun and to a not merely humanitarian but theological discussion with Jews, which might be an aid not

merely to a "mission" or capitulation, but to understanding, mutual assistance, and collaboration.<sup>1</sup>

The Roman Catholic scholar Rosemary Ruether, to whom reference was made earlier in the discussion of Pauline doctrine about the meaning of Israel, has carried her Biblical scholarship to the point of a new Christian theology. There is significant debate among scholars about certain aspects of her work.<sup>2</sup> But there is also widespread agreement that her now famous statement--"anti-semitism is the left-hand of Christology"--requires Christians to reformulate a theology which will acknowledge the truth and perpetual covenanted relationship of Judaism. Ruether believes that Christianity must not only look with a critical eye to the entire New Testament, Patristic, and Medieval tradition. She insists that all Christian theology will require a re-writing in light of Auschwitz and Christian recognition of its responsibility for the persecution of Jews.

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Küng, "From Anti-Semitism to Theological Dialogue," Christians and Jews, ed. Hans Küng and Walter Kasper (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), p. 13.

<sup>2</sup>Alan T. Davies, ed., Anti-Semitism and the Foundations of Christianity (New York: Paulist Press, 1979). This volume is an anthology of scholarly discussions on the chapters of Ruether's Faith and Fratricide.

In the recasting of Christian thought that will adjust its boundaries so as to reestablish Judaism as the premier Biblical faith, Ruether develops a new meaning to the concept of messianism. "Fulfilled" messianism, which is the traditional Christian interpretation of Christ, asserts that all promises have been completed, and that the Church is the repository of all hope. Such a monopolistic theology, Ruether writes, is unfaithful to the New Testament's own anticipation of the Second Coming. For her, Jesus does not at all represent the fulfillment of the messianic dream; rather, "Jesus is our paradigm of hope, aspiring man, venturing his life in expectation of the kingdom and Christ stands as the symbol of the fulfillment of that hope."<sup>1</sup>

Both Judaism and Christianity live, therefore, in an unfulfilled time. As such, interreligious exchange would be valuable, especially for the Christian. Ruether expects that new forms of religious identity would emerge from Jewish-Christian discussion:

It may become a real mutuality, an imaginative appreciation of each other's revelatory stories, an interpenetration of each other's identities.

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<sup>1</sup>Rosemary Ruether, "In What Sense Can We Say That Jesus was 'The Christ'?" The Ecumenist 10 (January-February 1972):22.

It is doubtful that these two streams will soon merge. It is, more importantly, not necessary to anyone's salvation that they should. Today, the tyranny of unity needs to be replaced by a valuing of the enrichment of dialogue that happens when various traditions cultivate their distinct perspectives....The fratricidal side of Christian faith can be overcome only through genuine encounter with Jewish identity. Only then might a "Judaean-Christian tradition," which has heretofore existed only as a Christian imperialist myth, which usurps rather than converses with the Jewish tradition, begin to happen for the first time.<sup>1</sup>

Among the numerous Christian thinkers whose views have been explored in these pages, the positions articulated by Macquarrie, Eckhardt and Ruether may be considered examples of a revolution in the religious history of the two communities. Accepting the continuing "call" to each other, these theologians expect that religious experience will be made complete as the two faiths interact with each other:

Not "mission to the Jews" or "mission to the Christians" but "Jewish-Christian conversation." Each--the Jew on his part and the Christian on his--is obliged to make a confessional statement of his faith and to make it in "conversation...And so Jew and Christian stand separated yet united. The unity transcends the separation, for we are united in the common

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<sup>1</sup>Ruether, Faith and Fratricide, pp. 260-1.

allegiance to the living God and in our common expectation of, and longing for, the One who is to come.<sup>1</sup>

The chapters which follow will assess previous attempts at dialogue and suggest some paths which would more adequately respond to the vision, and standards for Jewish-Christian encounter enunciated by the theologians whose work have been explored.

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<sup>1</sup>Will Herberg, Faith Enacted as History: Essays in Biblical Theology (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 62. See also A. Roy Eckhardt, Your People, My People (New York: Quadrangle, 1974), pp. 187-193.

## CHAPTER III

## INTERFAITH DIALOGUE AND ADULT DEVELOPMENT

Among the Christian and Jewish theologians whose writings were consulted in the opening chapters, dialogue was endorsed by many. A number of them insisted on conditions or requirements which they considered crucial to the process of interfaith discussion. The stern warning of A. J. Heschel, himself a staunch advocate of such an enterprise, is among the most powerful expressions of the conditions required under which such a project should be launched:

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.<sup>1</sup>

Heschel, no doubt speaking for a sentiment shared by many religious thinkers and leaders, suggests in these words that interfaith dialogue requires participants who have attained to a level of readiness. Though he did not flesh out the specifics as to what might constitute such a "spiritually mature" person, recent work in adult

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<sup>1</sup>A. J. Heschel, "No Religion Is an Island," Union Seminary Quarterly Review 21 (January 1966):117-134.

personality development goes a long way toward responding to Heschel's challenge. Considerable psychological research conducted over the last two decades has much to say about adult "maturity," about the personal ego tasks and skill achievements of the adult, and about the various levels of faith.

It appears, therefore, that the words of Heschel were predictive of efforts which have yielded responses to his demands. In the pages ahead, the task will be to explore these studies of adult personality development, and to suggest the manner in which the findings of these theorists correlate with the vision of humanhood which emerges from contemporary Christian and Jewish writings. Having considered the relationship between these two domains of thought from a generalized perspective, it will be appropriate then to touch specifically on how such a relationship might affect the entire effort of Jewish-Christian dialogue. This chapter, then, is an attempt to outline the psychological foundations for dialogue among the adult laity, in anticipation that it can be demonstrated that such dialogue would be not only acceptable, but indeed desirable, for those Jews and Christians who wish their individual faith to reflect the most mature perspective.

## Adult Personality Development

The historian Winthrop D. Jordan has marshalled impressive evidence to substantiate his claim that "adulthood" as the term is now used and understood is a notably recent concept.<sup>1</sup> Not until the mid-nineteenth century was the term "adulthood" used in the English language, and it was only in the early twentieth century that the word finally entered common usage. Jordan's contention is that it took a century and a half (from 1750 to 1900) for the country to free itself from Puritan thought patterns. Fundamental Calvinism exerted a profound influence on eighteenth and nineteenth century American mores, he writes, and

a predestinarian theology, no matter how much modified by covenants that restrained God's arbitrary power, was scarcely the body of thought to encourage notions of personal growth, maturing, or becoming psychologically adult.<sup>2</sup>

If Jordan is correct that America "discovered" the adult only in the early twentieth century, more than a half century elapsed before the psychological

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<sup>1</sup>Winthrop D. Jordan, "Searching for Adulthood in America," in Adulthood, ed. Erik Erikson (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1978), p. 192.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 190.

profession turned itself to that earlier discovery. It is just in the last two decades that there has been sustained and vigorous work in the area of adult psychological development. There are those who claim that Freud's profound influence, and especially his insistence that the early childhood experience essentially completes the process of personality development, precluded substantive inquiry into adult development for many years.<sup>1</sup> Others suggest that only as the American life span has grown longer, and the experiences and changes of life have significantly increased in pace, has there been a need to scrutinize more carefully what happens during the years between adolescence and death.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the explanation for the earlier delay, in the past twenty years there has been a substantial number of clinical studies of adult development. The work of Daniel Levinson, Roger Gould, George Vaillant and Jane Loevinger, among others, demonstrates many convergences of thought, even though their methodologies and foci of

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel J. Levinson, The Seasons of a Man's Life, with assistance of Charlotte Darrow, Edward Klein, Maria Levinson, and Braxton McKee (New York: Ballantine Books, 1978), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Newsweek, June 6, 1977, p. 83.

interest are each slightly varied.<sup>1</sup> In general terms, these researchers conclude that life unfolds in a series of sequences or stages. Each stage seems to be marked by a crucial turning point, one that is fraught with great personal vulnerability but also immense potential for growth. The crisis either enables one to progress, or is so overwhelming that one falls back. These psychologists concur that the person's future is substantially different as a result of the turning points. Moreover, they believe that each stage brings with it new responsibilities and sequence-specific tasks, which cannot be denied if the person is to mature.

Before examining the specific tasks and orientations unique to adulthood which these students of adult development describe, it is appropriate to take note of the theoretical foundations of their work. For such purposes, a cursory look at the work of Erik Erikson and Abraham Maslow is most revealing. For it appears that what the psychologists have discovered in their empirical studies of

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<sup>1</sup>Levinson, The Seasons of a Man's Life; Roger Gould, Transformations: Growth and Change in Adult Life (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978); George Vaillant, "How the Best and Brightest Came of Age," Psychology Today 11 (September 1977):34-39; Jane Loevinger and Ruth Wessler, Measuring Ego Development (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1970).

recent years confirms, in a most significant way, the theoretical insights of both Erikson and Maslow.

In his seminal Childhood and Society, Erikson maintains that the first sixteen to eighteen years of life present the person with the opportunity of accomplishing many of the tasks of human development. He believes that individuals pass through eight specific stages of growth, which he calls "the eight ages of man."<sup>1</sup> He labels each of these stages by a twin set of polar terms. This is so because his clinical works reveal that the individual must face the challenge of each time span, winning in the process a positive mode and virtue, or she or he will slip back into a regressive or negative posture. In Erikson's system, the sixth, seventh and eighth "ages of man" are those which adults must transverse. Using his terminology of polarity, the sixth stage is called "intimacy vs. isolation." After the young person has successfully achieved a measure of ego stability--"identity" is Erikson's term--he or she can move on to the first task of adulthood, achieving a level of personal intimacy which he defines as

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<sup>1</sup>Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society 2d ed., revised and enlarged (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1963), p. 261.

the capacity to commit himself to concrete affiliations and partnerships, and to develop the ethical strength to abide by such commitments, even though they may call<sub>1</sub> for significant sacrifices and compromises.

By Erikson's own acknowledgement, it is the seventh age--"generativity vs. stagnation"--which is the central one within adult personal development. This is so because it is in the human being's function of generativity--that mode of being which calls the person to establish and guide the next generation--which motivates human beings to teach, institute and learn, and which spurs the person to reach out, respect and care for others. It is within this mode that the human being is most essentially defined.<sup>2</sup> If generativity is dominant over stagnation, the virtue of "care" emerges:

Care is a quality essential for psychosocial evolution, for we are the teaching species.... Only man, however, can and must extend his solicitude over the long, parallel and overlapping childhoods of numerous offspring united in households and communities. As he transmits the rudiments of hope, will, purpose and competence, he imparts meaning to the child's bodily experiences, he conveys a logic much beyond the liberal meaning of the words he teaches, and he gradually outlines a particular world image and style of fellowship. All of this is necessary to complete in man the analogy

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 266-268.

to the basic, ethological situation between parent animal and young animal. All of this, and no less, makes us comparable to the ethologist's goose and gosling. Once we have grasped this interlocking of the human life stages, we understand that adult man<sub>1</sub> is so constituted as to need to be needed.<sup>1</sup>

The final age of humanity in the schema developed by Erikson is that of "ego integrity vs. despair." This ultimate span of human living is one that is characterized by the individual's acceptance of his or her own mortality, and willingness to be concerned about individual life even as one confronts one's impending death. To be able to actively pursue living, and yet be sufficiently philosophical so as to be detached from it, is to acquire the virtue of wisdom which comes with the ego integrity of this last age of the human being.<sup>2</sup>

A different theoretical perspective on personality development is to be found in the work of Abraham Maslow. Like Erikson, Maslow's work has exerted profound influence on the contemporary understanding of adult personality. Maslow is regarded as one of the pioneers in humanistic

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<sup>1</sup>Erik Erikson, Insight and Responsibility (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1964), p. 130.

<sup>2</sup>Erikson, "Reflections on Dr. Borg's Life Cycle," in Adulthood, ed. by Erikson, p. 26.

psychology, and his theory of personality motivation is an attempt to fuse the theoretical insights of Freud with the functional insights of Dewey. In many of his writings, Dewey emphasized the individual's ongoing reliance on homeostasis, and the corresponding need to move and accommodate when that equilibrium is disturbed. Maslow utilizes this powerful concept in a similar fashion as he constructs a hierarchy of needs. Maslow insists that the individual must satisfy those needs which are on a more elementary level before attempting to meet higher needs.

Maslow's construction of the individual's needs can be viewed as a hierarchial triangle. First, the individual must address his basic physiological needs. If those can be satisfied (once hunger, for example, has been sated), they are no longer important in the dynamic workings of the person.<sup>1</sup> Safety needs, which is the rubric under which Maslow places such items as freedom from fear, a sense of structure and order, and an attendant feeling of security, emerge only after the physiological needs have been addressed. In like sequence, the individual can proceed to the next realm of needs only when and if those safety needs

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<sup>1</sup>Abraham H. Maslow, Motivation and Personality 2d ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 37.

have been met, and no longer continue to effect behavior patterns. It is Maslow's contention that the next realm is what he calls the "belongingness and love needs."<sup>1</sup> And while he admits that there is little scientific evidence about these needs, the work of the social scientists who shall be considered in the pages ahead affirm the widespread presence of this need for attachment and care.

Maslow's theory of personality maturation includes two additional domains of needs. When the individual has begun to successfully meet his belongingness needs, then a host of feelings become all the more crucial to address-- that which he calls "esteem needs." The adult must satisfy such self-esteem requirements, for to do so confers a sense of adequacy and usefulness, while the thwarting of these needs results in the individual perceiving himself or herself as helpless and inferior. Finally, Maslow unites all of the preceding concepts into a category of ultimate needs--the necessity for "self-actualization":

This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one idiosyncratically is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming....What a man can be, he must be.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 46. See also pp. 97-104 and 149-180.

In returning now to consider the current research in adult personality development, it may be noted that the concepts utilized by Erikson and Maslow are evident throughout. Words like "stages" and "hierarchies" appear constantly in the empirical studies. Likewise, the psychologists studying adults identify within their subjects (either male or female, and generally members of the American middle class) those same facets of personality which Erikson and Maslow had pointed to in their theoretical studies. The researchers specializing in adult development are agreed that there is a uniformity of shape about adult lives and that in some ways each person's life possesses an identical and predictable "form." What is all the more significant is that the researchers agree that there is a common "content" as well to the struggles of adulthood. Adults must wrestle with certain tasks, and these social scientists affirm that maturity results from successful conquest of the tasks and the attendant acquisition of certain qualities of personality.

One of the tasks essential to adulthood involves the continuing formation of the individual sense of personhood. The young child tests himself or herself against the environment, measuring the sense in which it is possible to have a measure of personal control over one's

destiny. This is especially the ongoing, nearly all-consuming task of adolescence. The struggle for "identity" so assiduously studied by many theorists, including Erikson, is a mandatory constituent of teenage years. Yet what is interesting is the degree to which the social scientists who study adults confirm that the winning of autonomy is the ongoing occupation of the maturing years as well.

Daniel Levinson has characterized this task by an acronym--BOOM (Becoming One's Own Man). During this stage of growth, the adult wishes to achieve a greater measure of authority, to become both internally and externally less dependent. The individual wishes to escape not only reliance on other people, but also outside institutions. But Levinson concludes that paradoxically at the same time, the individual seeks the sense of approval and confirmation that only others can provide:

Speaking with his own voice is important, even if no one listens--but he especially wants to be heard and respected and given the rewards that are his due. The wish for independence leads him to do what he alone considers most essential, regardless of consequences; the wish for affirmation makes him sensitive to the response of others and susceptible to their influence.<sup>1</sup>

Roger Gould agrees with this assessment. In some ways, he extends the power of its message by the personal

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<sup>1</sup>Levinson, The Seasons of a Man's Life, p. 144.

manner in which he summarizes this aspect of adult growth:

We live with a sense of having completed something, a sense that we are whoever we are going to be--and we accept that, not with resignation to the negative feeling that we could have been more and have failed, but with a more positive acceptance: "That's the way it is, world. Here I am! This is me!" And this mysterious, indelible "me" becomes our acknowledged core, around which we center the rest of our lives.<sup>1</sup>

Gould's analysis of his subject's lives reveals that during the most active and productive years, the late thirties and early forties, the individual is finally able to achieve a large measure of inner directedness. With this momentous achievement, the person is enabled to discern more assuredly the directions of life worthy of pursuit, and thus locate the meanings which are of ultimate significance.

While the work of Levinson, Gould, and Vaillant, among others, has been only with males, other studies indicate that females pass through the same stages. Gail Sheehy's work has confirmed a similar phenomenon among her female subjects.<sup>2</sup> And in a considerably more detailed undertaking, Jane Loevinger identifies an identical growth pattern. Her studies, based on a manual which she

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<sup>1</sup>Gould, Transformations, pp. 310-311.

<sup>2</sup>Gail Sheehy, Passages: Predictable Crises of Adult Life (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1974), passim.

developed in order to measure ego development, were centered on adolescent girls and mature women. The early years of the individual are marked by physical and emotional dependency and an overriding concern for self-protection. During most of the school years, the child's sense of identity is achieved through conformity with the authority of family members and then peers. As the female enters adulthood, in the final teen years and early twenties, a new stage of development occurs. Loevinger labels this by the term "conscientious." During these years the young woman pays increasing attention to differentiating her feelings from others, while at the same time honing her skills of communication and heightening her sensitivities to others. The period is succeeded by the "autonomous" stage, which is

marked by a heightened sense of individuality and a concern for emotional dependence. The problem of dependence-independence is recurrent throughout ego development. What characterizes this transitional stage is the awareness that even when one is no longer physically and financially dependent on others, one remains emotionally dependent.<sup>1</sup>

With continual development, Loevinger discerns a seventh and final stage of ego development, one to which she

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<sup>1</sup>Jane Loevinger and Ruth Wessler, Measuring Ego Development, Vol. I (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1970), p. 6.

assigns the name "integrated." She believes that few people are successful at realizing the qualities which accompany this ultimate transition: an ability to reconcile inner conflict, renounce the unattainable and resolve tensions that stand in the path of achieving a sense of personal harmoniousness.<sup>1</sup>

In the work so far discussed, it has been shown that adults proceed through a number of steps to an ultimate goal, variously described by such terms as "integrity," "ego integration" or "self-actualization." Researchers have also concluded that a necessary component of this maturation process is a movement toward others. Writers have employed a plethora of terms, such as "generativity," or "belongingness" to describe this sense of commitment to others.<sup>2</sup>

There is one additional orientation to their surroundings which these researchers assert is present in the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>For a particularly poignant example, see Mwalimu Imara, "Dying as the Last Stage of Growth," in Death: The Final Stage of Growth, ed. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975), pp. 145-163. The author uncovers, in the process of interviews with terminally ill patients, a tri-fold emphasis on self-identity, commitment to others, and a coherent, directional style of living.

adults whom they studied. As in the other examples, writers rely on different terminology to describe a quite persistent phenomena, one that can be summarized as a growing toleration for others, a willingness to accept paradox and ambiguity, a recognition of complex feelings and situations.<sup>1</sup> There is in the adult an increased relativistic stance, one which is indeed contingent upon the acquisition of personal autonomy. As these researchers see it, the individual is drawn toward an ever-greater realization of personal selfhood. The achievement of autonomy brings with it the recognition that others must be enabled to attain a similar self-directedness. Loevinger concludes that this orientation results from the individual's own quest for self-realization:

The autonomous stage is so named partly because one recognizes other people's needs for autonomy. ...There is a deepened respect for other people and their need to find their own way and even make their own mistakes....The autonomous person has a broader scope; he is concerned with social problems beyond his own immediate experience. He tries to be realistic and objective about himself and others.<sup>2</sup>

The investigations of Levinson confirm the same

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<sup>1</sup>See Alan B. Knox, Adult Development and Learning (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1977), pp. 358-360.

<sup>2</sup>Loevinger and Wessler, p. 6.

process in the subjects which he studied:

As a man becomes more individuated and more oriented to the self, a process of "detrribalization" occurs. He becomes more critical of the tribe--the particular groups, institutions, and traditions that have the greatest significance for him, the social matrix to which he is most attached. He is less dependent upon tribal rewards, more questioning of tribal values, more able to look at life from a universalistic perspective. He can better appreciate his social origins without having to disparage other peoples and cultures. Having less need to idealize certain individuals and groups, he is less inclined to condemn others.<sup>1</sup>

While the social scientists whose works have been reviewed in these pages may not agree about all details, they generally are in harmony about the basic flow of adult development, and the components which distinguish those persons who can be called "mature." Those qualities include a sense of self-integration, or inner directedness, a concern for others, and a growing respect and acceptance of other persons in their own quests for autonomy.

This summary of adult developmental studies was undertaken, it will be remembered, in order to search out an appropriate response to the challenge presented by Abraham Heschel, who insisted that only those who were "spiritually mature" should participate in interfaith

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<sup>1</sup>Levinson, p. 242.

dialogue.<sup>1</sup> From the above review, it is clear what psychologists believe maturity entails. But do those findings correspond to the perspectives on adulthood found within both Judaism and Christianity? If they do, and if it can be determined that Christianity and Judaism thus set off adulthood in a distinguishable manner, Heschel's challenge will have been met. For then it should be clear what Heschel might have been striving for when he cautioned that interfaith dialogue is not for the "spiritually immature," but rather only for those who are fully grown in their faith.

#### Christian and Jewish Perspectives on Adulthood

In a comprehensive survey of the Christian understanding of adulthood, William J. Bouwsma of the University of California at Berkeley draws a distinction between "historical" and "normative" Christianity. The historical Christian understanding of the human being is heavily dependent on ideas from the classical and medieval world which circulated and thus shaped Christian writings throughout the ages. Historical Christianity, Bouwsma asserts, rejected individuality, distrusted

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<sup>1</sup>See above, p. 18.

spontaneity, and viewed the human being as suspect and eternally in need of self-discipline and self-denial.<sup>1</sup>

Normative Christianity, on the contrary, has as the goal of human development the conception of an adult in "total conformity to the manhood of Christ."<sup>2</sup> Bouwsma does not intend any sexually specific qualities by relating manhood to Christ. He is asserting, however, that a Christian understanding of adulthood cannot be realized unless one accepts that the goal of the human being is to grow--much like Christians believe that the Gospels reflect Jesus' growth and full realization of his divine potential. Of equal significance, the individual Christian's modeling of self after Christ, of necessity, implies a recognition of the transcendent quality of that goal. No person can be expected to attain that goal. Though the attainment of such perfect maturity is an impossibility in human life, normative Christianity asserts that growth toward such a goal is the ongoing task of life:

The duty of the Christian is simply to develop constantly toward it. The essential element in the Christian idea of adulthood is, accordingly,

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<sup>1</sup>William J. Bouwsma, "Christian Adulthood," in Adulthood, ed. Erik Erikson, pp. 82-83.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

the capacity for growth, which is assumed to be potentiality of any age of life.<sup>1</sup>

Bouwsma goes on to speak of those same qualities which the research psychologists utilized in their depiction of adult personality development. The human being should be viewed as a living whole; the Christian person must be willing to risk vulnerability in the quest of growth. The ultimate sin is that of non-growth. For to stop growing is to become "like the Gods." To stop growing is to assert that one is above all others, that one is as the center of the universe. According to Bouwsma, normative Christianity would maintain that to stop growing is to commit idolatry. And to recognize the tendency to do so is the first step toward resuming growth:

Once man sees himself as he is, acknowledges his limits, perceives the contingency of all his constructions, and admits that they have their sources only in himself, he is well on the way to accepting his creaturehood and open to the possibility of faith.<sup>2</sup>

It is not surprising that one should find a parallel viewpoint expressed within Judaism. Indeed, Bouwsma's claim is that normative Christianity, unlike its historical

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 89.

counterpart, shares much in common with its Biblical heritage. Within the Jewish sources, one encounters similar outlooks. Introducing a series of sources readings entitled What is Man?, Arnold Wolf writes:

For a Jew, God is the One who makes us able to be man....For Judaism, what man is depends on what he becomes. Under God, man is the maker of man.<sup>1</sup>

This sense of the human being's capacity for change and growth is at the very center of the Jewish understanding of the human being. The Hebrew concept of Teshuvah--the inherent capacity for human beings to alter their behavior and grow in stature--is the fulcrum on which Jewish theology's understanding of humanity rests.<sup>2</sup>

Teshuvah is most often translated by the word "repentance." But contemporary Jewish ethicists assert that the Hebrew word is more accurately rendered "turning."<sup>3</sup> This understanding of the Hebrew implies that to do teshuvah is to turn back to oneself, to search out one's

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<sup>1</sup>Arnold J. Wolf, What is Man? (Washington, D.C.: A B'nai B'rith Book, 1968), pp. xiii-xiv.

<sup>2</sup>Pinchas Peli, On Repentance in the Thought and Oral Discourses of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik (Jerusalem: Orot Publishing Co., 1980), pp. 158-159.

<sup>3</sup>Malcolm Diamond, Martin Buber: Jewish Existentialist (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 147-148.

strengths and unique qualities, and strive to maximize them. In that sense, teshuvah is the Biblical and Rabbinic equivalent for "self-realization."<sup>1</sup> Martin Buber expresses this central concept of Jewish thought in these terms when he writes:

Every single man is a new thing in the world, and is called upon to fulfill his particularity in this world. Everyman's foremost task is the actualization of his unique, unprecedented and never recurring potentialities, and not the repetition of something that another, and be it even the greatest, has already achieved.<sup>2</sup>

The goal of human existence, according to a number of Jewish sources, therefore, is to fashion a life in harmony with one's singular nature, thereby becoming attuned to the Source of one's being.

Generally, religious teachings are perceived as arguing for the sublimation of human will and freedom to Divine control. Yet as has been observed, there is ample room for interpreting both religious traditions, Christianity and Judaism, as defenders of human growth and freedom. The Exodus story, consistently viewed as the central

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<sup>1</sup>Jacob Agus, The Vision and the Way: An Interpretation of Jewish Ethics (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1966), pp. 167-169.

<sup>2</sup>Martin Buber, The Way of Man (Secaucus, N.J.: The Citadel Press, 1966), p. 16.

teaching of the traditions, proclaims that the only appropriate condition of the human being is that of freedom and self-determination. Going forth from bondage, in the eyes of contemporary writers, carries with it the message that human beings are to be autonomous, subservient to no human person, idea, or institution. Human loyalty is owed only to an abstract, commanding God whom these writers perceive as essentially yearning only that the human being take that freedom, and then reach out and care for others.<sup>1</sup>

In that sense, there is an intriguing correspondence between the psychological description of adulthood earlier examined and the religious perspective on human growth. The psychologists who study adulthood find that the goal of the individual is to move along a continuum, toward an autonomy which respects the freedom of others, reaching out then to care for those other human beings, thereby participating in the generative process that guarantees the future of the species. Similarly, the writings of the above cited Christian and Jewish writers envision a conception of the human being growing and

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<sup>1</sup>Erich Fromm, You Shall Be As Gods (New York: Fawcett World Library, 1966), pp. 59-61. See Harvey Cox, The Secular City (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1965), pp. 211-235.

changing, constantly striving towards a sense of fulfillment, towards a realization of one's personhood, which comes through attention to oneself, one's fellow human being, and one's God.<sup>1</sup>

One additional correlation between the findings of the psychologists and the perspectives of the theologians has interesting ramifications for interfaith dialogue. It was noted earlier that the studies of both male and female adults had confirmed a persistent drive within them for autonomy. Accompanying that movement towards personal independence was the realization within the individual that other persons must be accorded like opportunity for achieving their autonomy. The researchers concluded that the mature adult is one characterized by a tolerance of diversity and an acceptance of plural forms of living and expression.<sup>2</sup>

This tendency of the adult to "detrribalize"--to be critical of truth claims made by particular institutions and groups and rather endorse a more universalistic orientation--has its counterpart in religious thought. For it does not require too great a leap of thought to view

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<sup>1</sup>Buber, The Way of Man, pp. 38-39.

<sup>2</sup>See above, p. 114.

this "detrribalization" process as the psychological equivalent of religious iconoclasm. The Biblical sin of idolatry has to do, not so much with the worship of physical objects as with the sacralization of the work of human hands. The demand within Hebrew Scripture to destroy idols is really a statement affirming that all human products are partial and relative, and that all of them must stand under judgment.

The Biblical tirade against idolatry is a

...deflation of man's natural inclination to deify himself or his society, or the State, or his culture...a relentless exposing of the manifold, constant proclivity to elevate the finite to the level of the Infinite, to give the transitory the status of the permanent, and to attribute to man qualities that will deceive him into denying his finitude.<sup>1</sup>

From both adult psychology and contemporary theology emerges, then, a common idea. Human beings are fully human when they reject the tendency to absolutize the relative. When adults are able to embrace their values and institutions and faiths without needing to deify them, when they can accept diversity and respect alternate ideas and institutions as equally valid for others as those to which they give allegiance, then they may be said to be psychologically mature and theologically sophisticated. The

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<sup>1</sup>Gabriel Vahanian, Wait Without Idols (New York: Braziller, 1964), p. 24.

importance of this process of "detrribalization" or iconoclasm will be evident in the discussion within the final section of this chapter, dealing with interfaith dialogue and mature faith.

#### The Adult Person in Interfaith Dialogue

Beyond showing the affinity between the religious and psychological visions of the individual, the above review of the adult developmental literature has indicated that certain attributes considered hallmarks of maturity would seem to facilitate interfaith discussion. These include acceptance of and concern for others, a recognition of diversity, and a willingness to abide the ambiguities and complexities of a pluralistic world. While the psychological research which has been considered to this point does not specifically touch on religious or faith categories, there are recent studies in the psychology of religion which do argue for the presence of stages of faith development. What emerges from these studies is the realization that maturity of person and maturity of faith are one, in a form that is directly relevant to interfaith dialogue.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Henry C. Simmons, "Human Development: Some Conditions for Adult Faith at Age Thirty," Religious Education 71 (November-December 1976):563-570.

John Westerhoff, III, has suggested that the individual passes through four styles of faith.<sup>1</sup> Childhood faith is that which is experienced in the presence of family and other "faithing" selves. The child learns about what it means to have faith as he or she observes others practice the faith and exercise its ritual patterns. The first style of faith, which Westerhoff calls "experienced," is subsequently complemented by "affiliative" faith. This second faith style results from uniting with others in a joint self-conscious community. As a community, these persons share their ideas and ideals, and seek to strengthen each other through similar patterns of belief and behavior.

The third style bears the name "searching faith." This faith emerges when the individual exercises critical judgment and experiments with other modes of faith. In this mature style of faith, the person is willing to meet other persons, to learn from their faith and then rethink and reformulate his or her faith in light of the encounter with persons of other faiths. A successful transition through the searching phase will bring the person to "owned" faith. Persons reaching this style will "...want to put

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<sup>1</sup>The synopsis of Westerhoff's theory follows its explication in John Westerhoff, III, Will Our Children Have Faith? (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), pp. 89-99.

their faith into personal and social action, and they are willing and able to stand up for what they believe, even against the community of their nurture."<sup>1</sup>

A considerably more extensive description of the stages of faith may be found in the pioneering work of James A. Fowler. He begins with a broadly conceived definition of faith. He accepts the view that faith is that which orients the total person, giving to the person meaning and purpose:

Faith, at once deeper and more personal than religion, is the person's or group's way of responding to transcendent value and power as perceived and grasped through the forms of the cumulative tradition.<sup>2</sup>

Stimulated by the investigation of Lawrence Kohlberg, who had studied the developmental sequence of moral judgments, Fowler directed himself to a like effort in faith. As a result of in-depth personal interviews, which have been replicated now by other researchers, and then through literary analyses of personal autobiographies published through the centuries, Fowler concludes that there are six stages of faith. As a child, in stage one, called

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>2</sup>James W. Fowler, Stages of Faith (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 9. In Chapter IV of this work, a more detailed analysis of "faith" will be undertaken.

"intuitive-projective faith," faith is essentially a reflection of the moods, actions and stories of the youngster's faith community. In sharp contrast, the final stage, called "universalizing faith" describes an individual who possesses a type of faith demanding enough to discard the limitation of parochialism in a quest to incarnate within his or her person "a universal compassion."<sup>1</sup>

Each of the stages of faith development identified by Fowler corresponds to the cognitive, moral and personality developmental stages which researchers have uncovered. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the fifth stage of faith--"conjunctive faith"--should share attributes with stages equally far along in the other schemas of adult development. Whereas earlier faith stages centered around the individual, this fifth sequence is typified by an acceptance of others' faith as equally valid. While earlier stages were concerned with the individual's personal identity, this stage is marked by an increasing realization of a diverse and complex world:

What the previous stage struggled to clarify, in terms of the boundaries of self and outlook, the stage now makes porous and permeable. Alive to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 200. See Fowler's review of the six sequences in Stages of Faith, pp. 119-211.

paradox and the truth in apparent contradictions, this stage strives to unify opposites in mind and experience....The new strength of this stage comes in the rise of the ironic imagination--the capacity to see and be in one's or one's group's most powerful meanings, while simultaneously recognizing that they are relative, partial and inevitably distorting apprehensions of transcendent reality.<sup>1</sup>

Maturity of faith, as maturity of personality, is marked by a respect for the autonomy of others, and an acknowledgement of the truths which others would proclaim in the name of their faith. Heschel was intuitively correct in his warning about interfaith dialogue being reserved for only those who are "spiritually mature." Only those who are mature, in their personal growth index, and in their life of faith, can interact with others in a meaningful and mutually growth producing process. Fowler's research meets and answers the challenge of Heschel:

Stage 5 sees that the relativity of religious traditions that matters is not the relativity to each other, but their relativity, their relate-ivity, to the reality to which they mediate relation. Conjunctive faith, therefore, is ready for significant encounters with other traditions than its own, expecting that truth has disclosed and will disclose itself in those traditions<sub>2</sub> in ways that may complement or correct its own.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 186.

Interfaith dialogue can foster the process of faith development. Only the mature are ready to participate in it. And it would seem to be true, as well, that only those who can embrace interfaith encounter, with its premise of multiple religious truths, may be said to be mature in faith.

## CHAPTER IV

## CURRICULUM CONSIDERATIONS FOR DIALOGUE

The theological rationale for dialogue, and the psychological profile of the participants, have now been completed. This chapter addresses the central topic of this project, the curriculum design for interfaith encounter between Christian and Jewish lay persons.

According to Ralph Tyler, there are four fundamental questions which must be addressed in developing a program of study:

1. What educational purposes should the program seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?<sup>1</sup>

The opening pages of this chapter will be devoted to outlining the specific content areas--that which Tyler

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<sup>1</sup>Ralph W. Tyler, Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950), p. 2.

labels the "educational purposes." What then follows is a consideration of those methodological principles appropriate to the adult lay participant for whom this project is intended. Finally, some preliminary thoughts will be offered as to how one might evaluate whether the purposes of the dialogue have been achieved.

#### Dialogue and Faith: Definitions as Determinants

Throughout these pages, reference has been made to the concept of interfaith dialogue. By design no attempt has been made to define the terms "faith" and "dialogue." Instead, the analysis undertaken in previous chapters has been predicated on the assumption that when religious writers use the construct "interfaith dialogue," they have the same general referent in mind. It is appropriate now, in designing a curriculum, to look more closely at the terms "dialogue" and "faith." By defining the manner in which the terms will be used in this current effort, the logic which compels the curricular designs will be more easily comprehended.

The Oxford English Dictionary traces the word "dialogue" back to a Greek source meaning "to speak alternately."<sup>1</sup> As both an academic and art form, dialogue

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<sup>1</sup>The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 715.

was perfected by the celebrated philosopher Socrates and his even more illustrious disciple Plato. Both these eminent Greek thinkers imbued the concept of dialogue with meanings far beyond the mere exchange of information. For them, dialogue was an intellectually demanding exercise in which the participants were required to substantiate their reasoning and prove the correctness of their opinion, or capitulate to their adversary. Dialogue was a type of academic method for these ancients, essentially a vehicle for exposing untidy thinking and redirecting it. In this sense, dialogue as an activity shares much in common with debate.

Yet when dialogue entered the religious arena in the 1960s, it did not do so as another type of debate. Both the ecumenical and interfaith movements did not intend for dialogue to be just an opportunity for theologians to engage in rhetorical contests. On the contrary, dialogue took on a wholly new meaning when used in the context of the religious environment. And there can be little doubt that the understanding of dialogue as an activity in the religious sphere owed much to the influence of Martin Buber.

The concept of dialogue is situated at the very center of Buber's philosophy. His writings are considered reflections of an overall orientation called "the philosophy

of dialogue." His expositors go to considerable length to explore the plethora of interpretations and to highlight the many nuances which Buber assigns to the concept of dialogue.<sup>1</sup> The human being lives in a world of I-It, a world of objectivity, of manipulation. In this I-It orientation, that which exists outside of the individual remains there. It may be used, appreciated, or even worshipped. But for Buber, it is still an "it." In contrast, there are instances when the individual can approach another person (or thing) in such wholeness, with such immediacy, mutuality and openness that the relationship takes on a different cast. This alternate state is the relationship, writes Buber, of an I to a Thou. It is the relationship of "dialogue":

Each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and them. The essential element of genuine dialogue is 'seeing the other' or 'experiencing the other side.'<sup>2</sup>

This last phrase, "experiencing the other side," is to be distinguished from either a mystical or empathetic

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<sup>1</sup>Two well known expositions of Buber's work are Maurice S. Friedman, Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1955), and Malcolm Diamond, Martin Buber: Jewish Existentialist (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960).

<sup>2</sup>Martin Buber, Between Man and Man (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1965), p. 20.

state of being during which the individual relinquishes her or his own sense of uniqueness. Buber is quite adamant that no such obliteration of identity takes place in his conception of dialogue. To this sense of "experiencing the other" Buber gave the term "inclusion," which is of the very essence in the act of meeting of another person:

Its [inclusion] elements are, first, a relation, of no matter what kind, between two persons, second an event experienced by them in common, in which at least one of them actively participates, and third, the fact that this one person, without forfeiting anything, at the same time lives through the common event from the standpoint of the other.<sup>1</sup>

To be sure, the times when one is able to enter into dialogic relationships of the type which Buber is describing are rare indeed. He admits that most lives are spent in the world of I-It, though he insists too that the opportunities for an I-Thou relationship are frequent and everyday. Among the various religious writers who speak of dialogue between persons of faith, there is certainly an expectation that aspects of the dialogic relationship as described by Buber will be realized. A Christian theologian puts it this way:

By dialogue I do not mean the exchange of views between theologians of different religions. Interesting and necessary as it is, it is not "dialogue"

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 97.

but "comparative religion." The real dialogue is an ultimate personal depth....Real dialogues challenge both partners, making them aware of the presence of God, calling both of them to a metanoia from an unknown depth. Dialogue stems, in other words, from a profound recognition of the mutuality of our common life.<sup>1</sup>

Over the years, as other thinkers, both Jewish and Christian, have addressed themselves to dialogue, they have expressed similar sentiments. The "guidelines" which have been suggested, or the "hallmarks" which religious writers consider essential or the "conditions" upon which successful dialogue rest seem to reflect the vision enunciated by Buber.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Klaus Klostermaier, "Dialogue--The Words of God" in Inter-Religious Dialogue, ed. Herbert Jai Singh (Bangalore: The Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, 1967), p. 119.

<sup>2</sup>Hence S. J. Samartha speaks of "guidelines" such as "openness to others," and "mutual trust," and even uses Buber's terminology of I and Thou. See S. J. Samartha in "The Progress and Promise of Inter-Religious Dialogue," Journal of Ecumenical Studies 9 (Summer 1972):463-475.

Similarly, a Reform Rabbi, Samuel Karff, suggests that among the "hallmarks" of theological dialogue, a readiness "to confront another's vision...and hear those nuances alien to our own" is the most central. See Samuel Karff, "Toward a Theological Dialogue," Journal of the Central Conference on American Rabbis 13 (Spring 1966):52.

And Robert McAfee Brown has listed six conditions for dialogue which are an attempt to mirror the basic insights of Buber in the specific interfaith context. See Robert McAfee Brown and Gustave Weigel, S. J., An American Dialogue (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1960), pp. 25-32.

Over the years, too, other philosophers have analyzed the principles by which one person comes to understand another. David Hamlyn has formulated conceptual principles which are necessary for one person to be considered knowable by another. Interpersonal understanding is predicated, argues Hamlyn, on knowing the other person's "forms of life."<sup>1</sup> To know these "forms of life," one must satisfy two conditions: (1) to know someone else, one must know what it is to stand in relationship to a person rather than an inanimate thing; and (2) to know someone else, one must know through experience those things which stand in relation to the person whom it is wished to understand.<sup>2</sup>

R. S. Peters amplifies what Hamlyn calls these "forms of life" when he writes:

Personal relationship proper usually involve close personal contact with others, though such contact is possible in role relationships as well... Secondly, developed personal relationships and friendship are characterized by mutual disclosures of private matters and by the laying bare of motives, fears, hopes and aspirations. These are fundamental for discerning the main threads which determine the pattern of a man's life. Thirdly, a great deal of detailed information is necessary to understand how another person

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<sup>1</sup>David Hamlyn, "Person-perception and our Understanding of Others," in Understanding Other Persons, ed. Theodore Mischel (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1974), p. 36.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 12-16.

sees the world. It is necessary to know how much he knows, what he takes for granted when he faces any situation, as well as some details about his past history which predisposes him to respond in certain ways.<sup>1</sup>

It is at this juncture that the definitions of "dialogue" and "faith" converge. For what Peters is suggesting as the necessary components of dialogue--"the laying bare of motives, fears, hopes and aspiration" that reveal "the main threads" of individuals' lives--these components represent the very essence of faith in the eyes of many theologians. Paul Tillich described "faith" as the "state of being ultimately concerned." By this he meant that faith is the name given to the relation of the person to that demanding, orientating core of his or her life around which all else revolves. Faith is an "act of the total personality...[and] a matter of freedom. Freedom is nothing more than the possibility of centered personal acts."<sup>2</sup> Will Herberg, writing several years earlier than Tillich, had expressed the Jewish conception of "faith" in similar terms:

Faith is not mere 'feeling'; nor is it intellectual assent to a creed. It is orientation

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<sup>1</sup>Richard S. Peters, "Personal Understanding and Personal Relations," in Understanding Other Persons, pp. 57-58.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), pp. 1, 4-5.

of the whole man; it is total existential commitment that brings with a new way of seeing things, new perspectives and categories in the confrontation of reality.<sup>1</sup>

Such definitions of faith, put forward by theologians, demonstrate a marked congruity with the conclusions reached by the historian Wilfred Cantwell Smith. In his studies of both Eastern and Western religions (his specialty is Islam, though he is conversant in the Hindu and Buddhist traditions as well as Judaism and Christianity), Smith has found that there are at least three meaningful separate categories--traditions, beliefs and faiths.<sup>2</sup> Each religion has a cumulative tradition. The contents of tradition--ritual, folkways and liturgy--express the faith of the adherents, as well as encourage its articulation by them. Beliefs are the holding of certain ideas by the adherents. Differing down through the ages, the beliefs seem to arise out of the need for the people to express in conceptual terminology their experiences of, and relationship to, the transcendent.

Yet traditions and beliefs are to be distinguished

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<sup>1</sup>Will Herberg, Judaism and Modern Man (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1951), p. 40.

<sup>2</sup>Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Faith and Belief (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 13.

from faith. They are informed by faith, says Smith, but they are not identical with it:

Faith is deeper, richer, more personal. It is engendered and sustained by a religious tradition, in some cases and to some degree by its doctrines; but it is a quality of the person, not the system. It is an orientation of the personality, to oneself, to one's neighbor, to the universe; a total response; a way of seeing whatever one sees and of handling whatever one handles.<sup>1</sup>

Smith contends that the concept of "religion" is more confusing than helpful, that there is no such thing as "religion" in a generic sense but only specific "traditions." Moreover, he holds that the notion of individual "religions" is no less perplexing. Difficult to define, so comprehensive in scope as to be almost meaningless, Smith argues that historians and adherents speak of "religions" in four distinctive, and contradictory manners.<sup>2</sup> Rather than try to rehabilitate the word, Smith suggests that we abandon it, and concentrate instead on its constituent parts--the cumulative traditions, the conceptual beliefs, and the personal faith of the individual. As for the specific instance of "dialogue" between members of various

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Wilfred Cantwell Smith, The Meaning and End of Religion (New York: A Mentor Book, 1962), pp. 19-48.

religious groups, Smith suggests that intercommunication between members of the various religious groups could best proceed by utilizing the terms "personal faith" and "cumulative tradition." Dialogue would be personal and self-revealing. It would demand more than the exchange of information about creed or ritual practice. It would rather involve participants in a process by which they could express the orientations which guide their lives, and the way in which the cumulative traditions of their religious community both inform their faith, as well as express it.

As Peters has argued that one comes to know a person only through understanding the "patterns" of his or her life, and as Buber has described dialogue as a process of one person knowing "the other side" of an individual, so now Smith's analysis of various religious components would seem to serve as a fitting focus for unifying "dialogue" and "faith." If the aim of interfaith dialogue is to understand the "faith" of the other person engaged in the process, then it must not be only a discussion of rituals, or creeds, or even doctrines. It should be, first and essentially, a self-revealing, mutual interaction that probes the participants' "orientation" to their lives, their "way of seeing" whatever they see. Equally, dialogue should seek to enable the participants to understand the essential drift of their cumulative tradition and that of

their dialogue partner and the manner in which that tradition speaks to and for their faith. In the pages ahead, as the various subjects suggested by theologians for inclusion in dialogue are discussed, it will be sought to categorize these subjects in a fashion consistent with the understanding of the terms "faith" and "dialogue" as they have been explicated here.

### The Agenda of Dialogue

The labyrinth of writings on Jewish-Christian dialogue provides more than theological justification for the process. Many of the writers also suggest topics which they consider crucial. While the theologians are not of a piece about all of the issues appropriate to dialogue, there is surprising convergence on a number of topics considered essential.

The initial impression which one gathers in reviewing the writings of the theologians who outline the various agenda items of dialogue is that they heed history as well as theology. There are some few theologians who are perceived as carrying on their work within a context that can be described as ahistorical.<sup>1</sup> Most of the writers, on

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<sup>1</sup>A. Roy Eckhardt, "Christians and Jews: Along a Theological Frontier," Encounter 40 (Spring 1979):89-127. Eckhardt criticizes a number of Christian theologians who write without substantive reference to historical events and makes special reference to Jürgen Moltman.

Jewish-Christian dialogue, however, recall the historical circumstances in setting the agenda for dialogue. Some speak of the initial rift between faith communities in the early years of the first millennia. Others write of the bitter history of the medieval ages, with Jewish subjugation to the ruler of Christendom. There are those who make reference to the Enlightenment, and the increasingly secular nature of western society. Most write of the Holocaust. As theologians reflect on the essential subjects of dialogue there is a sense that each faith, and its cumulative traditional expression, must be viewed through the prism of what two thousand years of interaction between the religious groupings mean.

It is in this context that one of the important items is placed on the agenda of interfaith dialogue--the historical impact of each faith community upon the other. For Christianity, the relationship of the Jewish community at the time that Jesus lived to both his life and death has always been a critical problem. It was one of major items included in the Vatican II declaration on the Jews.<sup>1</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>Nostra Aetate (n. 4). October 1965. Conciliar statement as part of the Declaration of the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions. Reprinted in Helga Croner, Stepping Stones to Further Jewish-Christian Relations (London: Stimulus Books, 1977), pp. 1-2. A similar evaluation by other Catholic and Protestant denominations is included in the above volume.

historical reality as well as the theological significance of the life and death of Jesus is the paramount symbol of Christianity. Christian theologians consider it vital, therefore, that dialogue touch, at least in some way, on the recent historical studies about the role of the Jewish community during the time of Jesus. There is general unanimity that such a discussion, carried on in the light of contemporary research, will be enlightening and liberating for the relationship between Jew and Christian.<sup>1</sup>

For the Jew, the historical issue which deserves a prominent place on the agenda of dialogue is the relationship of the Christian Church to the anguish which accompanied the Jewish community through the last two thousand years. To explore the connection between anti-Semitism and Christian theology is considered a sine qua non of any interfaith dialogue. It is self-evident from the earlier discussion that Jewish thinkers believe this to be so. But so, too, do many Christian writers. A number of Protestant and Roman Catholic writers have addressed themselves to this painful topic. Perhaps the challenge voiced

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<sup>1</sup>John B. Sherrin, "Catholic-Jewish Relations," New Catholic World 220 (July-August 1977):173-178. Also Eugene Fisher, "New Directions in Jewish-Catholic Relations," Origins NC Documentary Service 7 (January 5, 1978):461-464. A more extended treatment may be found in John T. Pawlikowski, "The Jewish/Christian Dialogue: Assessment and Future Agenda," Conservative Judaism 32 (Winter 1979):39-54.

by one notable scholar in the field, Franklin Littell, summarizes adequately the sentiments of many Christian thinkers:

For dialogue is not empty social conversation; it is verbal encounter aimed at a deeper perception and appropriation of truth. Dialogue which does not lead to self-examination and self-correction is a foolish sham. If we who profess Christ do not, when push comes to shove, care whether Jews lived or died, sooner or later it will be evident to the partner--even if not to ourselves--that our dialogue is but foolishness, our utterances but a tickling of the jaded ears.<sup>1</sup>

Having acknowledged the obligation that dialogue must include a forthright examination of the historical encounter between the communities, theologians go on to identify other subjects. For many, the crucial element on the theological agenda of dialogue is "covenant." Reference was made in the earlier chapters to the manner in which each religious community evaluates the validity of the other. It was seen that there are elements of Christian thought which interpret Judaism as false and which declares its covenant to have been broken asunder. Many contemporary Christian writers, however, have sought to formulate a theology which intentionally seeks to substantiate the continuing validity of Judaism and hence

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<sup>1</sup>Franklin H. Littell, The Crucifixion of the Jews (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p. 3.

insists that the covenant between Israel and its God, in the eyes of Christianity, is intact and indeed eternal.<sup>1</sup> In this effort to balance the evaluation, Jewish writers have also sought to explicate quite specifically the sense in which their faith tradition recognizes and even celebrates the pluralism of the religious heritages.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, Christian and Jewish writers insist that the meaning of a covenant which will embrace both faiths must occupy a primary place in dialogue. Jakob Petuchowski represents a Jewish perspective on this crucial area when he says:

At the present time I can believe in the contemporaneous validity of the various covenants, so that no one covenant, made by God with a particular segment of the human race, invalidates the others. After all, who am I to dictate to the Almighty into what covenantal relationships he can or cannot enter? That my [qua Jew] way may not be his [qua Christian] way, nor his way mine, is a fact of life....It makes religious life so much more fascinating and exciting. And if, as we all do, we expect God to bear with us in all of our diversity, we can certainly learn to imitate the ways of God by not only living with, but by actually appreciating the kind of religious pluralism which has become a fact of our lives.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Michael B. McGarry, Christology After Auschwitz (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), pp. 72-97.

<sup>2</sup>Pinchas Lapide, Israelis, Jews, and Jesus (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1979), pp. 138-156.

<sup>3</sup>Jakob Petuchowski, "The Religious Basis for Pluralism," Origins NC Documentary Service 6 (May 12, 1977):743-746.

Other writers, both Catholic and Protestant, likewise maintain that the theological dialogue between the communities must commence by coming to terms with an understanding of covenant that will validate both religions.<sup>1</sup>

From the perspective of both religious heritages, certain components of each faith's formulation of its covenant need to be an essential part of the dialogue. Monika Hellwig, in a piece primarily devoted to a discussion of covenantal theology, observes:

Central points of Christian systematic theology--questions of Christology, the triune God, the nature of redemption--seem to be most often evaded in attempts at Judaeo-Christian dialogue. When they do surface, perhaps unintended by the participants, we almost uniformly experience a convulsive hardening of positions....<sup>2</sup>

Other Christian writers write in a similar tone, urging that the elementary building blocks of Christian thought must be included in the dialogue program. Too many misconceptions exist about each faith within the perception of the other. Dialogue should include the basic theological

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<sup>1</sup>A. Roy Eckhardt, Elder and Younger Brothers, pp. 141-162. A Catholic perspective may be found in Peter Chirico, "Christian and Jews Today from a Christian Theological Perspective," Journal of Ecumenical Studies 7 (Fall 1970):744-762.

<sup>2</sup>Monika Hellwig, "Christian Theology and the Covenant of Israel," Journal of Ecumenical Studies 7 (Winter 1970):49.

constructs of Christianity, thereby enabling the Jewish partner to appreciate a Christian conception of redemption, for example, or what is meant, in personal terms, by affirming the identity of Jesus as Christ, and as God.<sup>1</sup>

Jewish writers confirm that dialogue should address the substantive theological issues which define the other. Earlier, it was noted that Yitzchak Greenberg had anticipated that dialogue would enable each religion to learn from the other, and to become more sensitive to elements in its faith system which were not highlighted in the same way as the other participant's faith.<sup>2</sup> So too does Arthur Cohen, who writes:

Both communities are communities of history and grace, of the natural and supernatural. Only when the community of the unbroken covenant confronts the community of the new covenant can there be religious dialogue--for both are complete and exclusive ways before God and both are incomplete ways in the order of time and history.... Only in this way, the way wherein the natural and the supernatural are so joined as to be indivisible (in which the Christian is in fact according to Christ and the Jew is in fact according to the Covenant) that the way of repair and renewal becomes possible.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Eugene Fisher, "Typical Jewish Misunderstandings of Christianity," Judaism 22 (Winter 1973):21-32.

<sup>2</sup>See above, pp. 40-42.

<sup>3</sup>Arthur A. Cohen, "Silence in the Aftermath," Christianity and Crisis 22 (June 25, 1962):112.

Accordingly, Cohen argues that dialogue must enable Jews and Christians to encounter each other's most basic and deeply held theological concepts.

If the nature of the triune God, or the proper understanding of Christology and redemption are the central elements of Christian theology that must be on the agenda of dialogue, then for the Jew, there can be little doubt that the concept of peoplehood, and its relationship to Israel as idea and reality is certainly the most crucial. It was noted that the early euphoria of interfaith dialogue in the years following Vatican II was followed by a difficult period during the June, 1967, war between Israel and the Arab countries surrounding it. Many in the Jewish community perceived that the Christian clergy and laity with whom their Jewish counterparts had interacted in those heady days of interfaith cooperation had abandoned the Jewish community when understanding was most crucial.<sup>1</sup> Some concluded that dialogue between Jew and Christian should be abandoned.<sup>2</sup> Others argued that the evidence of Christian concern for Israel was not as monolithically negative as

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<sup>1</sup>Malcolm Diamond, "Christian Silence on Israel: An End to Dialogue?" Judaism 16 (Fall 1967):411-422.

<sup>2</sup>See above, pp. 16-17.

perceived. More to the point, this second group suggested that the wrong lessons were being learned as a result of the experience. Rather than break off dialogue, these writers urged an accelerated pace to the process, in which the Jewish community should be more forthright in elaborating the theological and social relationship between the Jewish diaspora, the State of Israel, and Jewish theology.<sup>1</sup>

One conservative rabbi, Jacob Agus, puts it this way:

Christians have to accept the existence of the State of Israel and its security as an objection of all who undertake to speak for the evolving conscience of humanity....Far from serving as a stumbling block to the Jewish-Christian dialogue, the state of Israel with all its manifold domestic and foreign problems should become a major focus of the ecumenical discussions.<sup>2</sup>

And Rosemary Ruether, the Roman Catholic thinker, makes a similar point when she writes:

In Israel, the Jewish people have tasted salvation. Yet, they must now take their stand on this, not as an ultimate but as a new historical ground from which to continue the struggle for that final redeemed earth which still eludes both Jew and Christian. The collapse of Christendom and the founding of Israel, then, provide Christians

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<sup>1</sup>Marc H. Tanenbaum, "Is Jewish-Christian Dialogue Worthwhile?" Hadassah Magazine 49 (January 1968):4.

<sup>2</sup>Jacob Agus, "Israel and the Jewish-Christian Dialogue," Journal of Ecumenical Studies 6 (Winter 1969):30.

and Jews with a new historical situation from which to rethink their relationship.<sup>1</sup>

To be sure, many different subjects have been suggested for inclusion in dialogue between Jew and Christian. There are a myriad of historical, theological and contemporary American societal issues that have been offered as appropriate.<sup>2</sup> But those that have been discussed here--the historical encounter between the two communities, the covenantal relationship of each and between them, and the central theological thrusts which each exhibit--are the topics which theologians recommend frequently and so convincingly that they constitute the foundation of dialogue.

#### Methodology of Dialogue

This chapter, focusing on the content and method of interfaith dialogue, had opened by defining the two central

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<sup>1</sup>Rosemary Ruether, Faith and Fratricide (New York: The Seabury Press, 1974), pp. 227-8.

<sup>2</sup>Historical issues suggested include the New Testament themes on the Pharisees, and the development of the synagogue liturgy and its relationship to Church worship. See John T. Pawlikowski, "The Jewish/Christian Dialogue: Assessment and Future Agenda," Conservative Judaism 32 (Winter 1979):39-54. Other theological issues include the respective meanings of mission, revelation and eschatology tradition. See Arthur Gilbert, "The Mission of the Jewish People in History and in the Modern World," Lutheran World 9 (July 1964):296-310. Finally, some of the societal issues that have been offered for inclusion in dialogue are abortion and public support of parochial education. See Miles Jaffe, "Toward Successful Jewish-Christian Dialogue," Origins NC Documentary Service 6 (May 12, 1977):747-749.

terms of this project, "dialogue" and "faith." In discussing the subjects which ought to constitute the core of the dialogue sessions, it was noted that those definitions were important in determining the choices of the content areas. In this present section, on methodology of dialogue, the definitions of those words also compel the selection of certain principles of how dialogue can best proceed.

There are several significant educational implications which emerge from the definition of dialogue used in these pages.<sup>1</sup> To speak to other persons of one's motives and hopes, which means, in theological terms, to speak of one's faith, would represent for the participants a unique effort in communication. It had been noted earlier that Martin Buber had admitted that true dialogue, because of the demands which it places upon the practitioners, happens infrequently. Even if the forms of interaction between the participants in these sessions only approximate the depth envisioned by Buber, what will happen between the participants needs to be structured in a manner conducive with the goals of dialogue--an open, sincere, intelligent process of speaking and listening.

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<sup>1</sup>See above, pp. 133-135, where the word "dialogue" is defined.

Interfaith dialogue, therefore, reflects two functions of education often highlighted by scholars in the field. On the one hand, dialogue has a cognitive function. Participants will be involved in the act of processing and conceptualizing information, about other persons and their relationship to their religious tradition. As well, participants will be engaged in affective aspects of instruction, since dialogue requires those taking part in the sessions to confront their own attitudes and dispositions, about themselves, their faith and that of other members.

In some respects, then, the educational form of the dialogue needs to incorporate and fuse aspects of educational theory often viewed as dissimilar. There are, for example, a number of educational theories which dwell exclusively on the cognitive realm.<sup>1</sup> In similar fashion, there are those who stress the affective instructional function.<sup>2</sup> Since dialogue comprises both cognitive and affective functions, it reflects the insight of Jean Piaget, who wrote:

There is no behavior pattern, however intellectual, which does not involve affective factors....

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<sup>1</sup>Morris L. Bigge, Learning Theories for Teachers (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).

<sup>2</sup>Gerald Weinstein and Mario D. Fantini, eds., Toward Humanistic Education: A Curriculum of Affect (New York: The Ford Foundation and Praeger Publishers, 1970).

The two aspects, affective and cognitive, are<sup>1</sup> at the same time inseparable and irreducible.

There is another implication for the methodology of dialogue which stems from the definition assigned to it. Dialogue is a process of communication between participants. Without constant attention to ways of enabling the participants to reveal themselves in the sessions, what would happen could not be considered dialogue. Perhaps that sounds self-evident; it is not therefore unimportant. Those participating in the sessions will be involved in conversations about ideas and feelings that, for most individuals, matter most. The methodology of dialogue must be one that encourages and illustrates the ways in which the participants themselves can interact with each other. Those responsible for initiating the dialogue, who are likely to be the clergy of the congregations, will serve in some leadership capacity. But the form of that leadership must be one which minimizes the clergy's role as speakers, and enhances their function as facilitators. In educational terms, the stress must be on the learner (or lay participant) rather than on the teacher (or clergy person who is responsible for encouraging and organizing the dialogue).

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<sup>1</sup>Jean Piaget and B. Inhelder, The Psychology of the Child, trans. Helen Weaver (New York: Basic Books, 1969), p. 158.

Adult education principles for dialogue

The emphasis upon the learner, rather than the teacher is at the very heart of adult educational theory. Several of the theorists who have written about the processes of adult education have argued for a new terminology which would denote that the unique emphases of adult education is on the needs and wants of the learner, not the teacher. To this end, Malcolm Knowles has suggested the term "andragogy."<sup>1</sup> J. R. Kidd has championed a different term, "mathetics."<sup>2</sup> Whether one or the other, or neither eventually gains currency, what Knowles and Kidd are suggesting is that adult education must begin with the "consumer"--with the adult learner. Adult education is different from other forms of learning precisely because

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<sup>1</sup>Knowles prefers the word "andragogy" from the Greek meaning "leading the man." For him, this word is more indicative of what adult education should be than "pedagogy," which is from the Greek too, and means "leading the child." See Malcolm Knowles, The Modern Practice of Adult Education (New York: Association Press, 1972), pp. 40-42.

<sup>2</sup>J. R. Kidd says that a more appropriate term for adult education would be "mathetics." Both pedagogy and andragogy, in Kidd's view, dwell on the teacher because of the Greek stem "agogy," meaning "to lead." The word he suggests places the emphasis upon the learner. Mathetics, he writes, "is the science of the 'pupil's' behavior while learning." See J. R. Kidd, How Adults Learn (Chicago: Association Press/Follett Publishing Co., 1972), p. 23.

adults come with a set of assumptions, experiences, and needs which are singular.

K. Patricia Cross, in a recent study, refines the work of both Kidd and Knowles. She suggests a framework called "Characteristics of Adults as Learners," or CAL.<sup>1</sup> The uniqueness of CAL is that it incorporates physiological and psychological developmental stage research into adult learning theory in an especially dynamic manner. Cross argues that while adults are indeed different from children in many respects, it is also true that age is not necessarily a determinant of developmental growth. Accordingly, she urges adult educators to be sensitive to the cognitive and moral developmental plateaus of adults in formulating educational programs.

What are some of the principles of adult education which distinguish it from education for younger persons? One principle often mentioned is that adults are moving toward self-direction. In Chapter Three of this work, it was seen that the developmental psychologists had laid heavy stress on purposeful movement by adults to shape their life and their experiences. Adult educators are sensitive to

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<sup>1</sup>K. Patricia Cross, Adults as Learners (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1981), p. 234.

this flow, and believe that the educational process must be one in which the teachers facilitate this movement.<sup>1</sup> Supporting such personal growth among adult learners means that they should have an important role to play in determining how and what they learn. One researcher, Allen Tough, has demonstrated how effective adults are in planning and executing their own educational experiences. His studies have convinced him that the vast majority of adult learning is self-directed, and conducted individually.<sup>2</sup> Curriculum planning for the adult learner must abide the tension between the need for the learner's participation in determining the learning experience, while not abandoning the basic requirements of the subject matter itself.

Since interfaith dialogue represents a form of adult education, it should be sensitive to this tension noted by Tough between the need for adult direction in learning and the demands of the content area. This conflict is one which is particularly evident in religious communities. Many members of congregations profess to an

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<sup>1</sup>Knowles, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Allen Tough, "Self-Planned Learning and Major Personal Change," in Adult Learning: Issues and Innovations, ed. Robert M. Smith (DeKalb, Ill.: Department of Secondary and Adult Education, Northern Illinois University, 1976), pp. 72-73.

inadequacy about theological issues.<sup>1</sup> Most of the laity have not had the opportunity to study substantive theological issues. To ask them to choose the subjects of dialogue, therefore, might be placing upon them a burden too heavy to bear. Yet the planning of dialogue must take account of the insight of adult educators that the adult learners want to be involved in shaping the experience they are about to have. This tension would best be resolved by enabling the participants to select certain topics in the curriculum from a range of choices which emerge from the writings of experts in the field.

A second principle of adult education relevant to interfaith dialogue centers on the adult learner's previous life experiences. Educators stress that adults bring an entire range of past experiences to bear in every new learning situation.<sup>2</sup> As the educators see it, there are both advantages and liabilities to the learning process because of the experiences of the adults. On the one hand, the

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<sup>1</sup>James J. Beboy, Getting Started in Adult Religious Education (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 23-24. Also see Cross, pp. 238-239. She argues that in many instances adults might demonstrate "dependency" with regard to certain elements of their learning experiences.

<sup>2</sup>Kidd, pp. 120-21.

accumulated experiences can serve as resources of learning, and greatly increase the connections and meaning of the new instruction. However, the previous experience of adults means that they have acquired certain ways of thinking and feeling, which might mean that they are less open-minded.<sup>1</sup>

Structuring religious dialogue, should, therefore, account for the participants' previous experience. The most effective way to realize this aim is through the utilization of participatory, experiential exercises that enable the adult to articulate his or her storehouse of ideas and experiences as they touch on the religious themes being discussed. There are a number of techniques which have been developed in the last decade which provide the means for persons to share their experiences responsibly and forthrightly within an educational setting.<sup>2</sup> Utilizing some of these methods within the dialogue sessions would permit all participants to tap in to their previous experiences, making the learning experiences of the session much more personal, and thus more in keeping with the individual aspects of faith previously defined.

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<sup>1</sup>Knowles, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup>Lyman Coleman, Encyclopedia of Serendipity (Scottsdale, Penn.: Serendipity House, 1976).

There is another aspect of adult educational theory which has an impact upon the dialogue sessions. Adult learners are concerned with the immediate application of that which they are learning to their life. One educator writes as follows:

Where youth educators can, perhaps appropriately, be primarily concerned with the logical development of subject matter and its articulation from grade to grade according to levels of complexity, adult educators must be primarily attuned to the existential concerns of the individuals and institutions they serve and be able to develop learning experiences that will be articulated with these concerns.<sup>1</sup>

Adults elect a learning experience because, say many adult education theorists, they confront a living issue that perplexes them. They want help, in understanding and resolving that which has motivated them to learn. And they want an answer that is relevant to their needs and to their immediate future.<sup>2</sup>

From the perspective of religious dialogue, this principle of adult education is most significant. The subjects of the dialogue sessions identified in these earlier pages had been selected by the theologians for a

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<sup>1</sup>Knowles, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup>J. R. Kidd, "Adult Learning in the 1970's," in Adult Learning: Issues and Innovations, p. 13.

specific reason. They had opted for certain subjects because, in their estimation and from their experience, those subjects were ones most central to the cumulative traditions and most relevant to the practitioner's life. Here the insight of the adult educators and the theologian merge. For those topics relevant to theological dialogue are none other than those topics which, as has just been noted, the educators insist as the only appropriate ones for adults, i.e., "the existential concerns of the individuals and the institutions they serve." From a methodological perspective for the dialogue, this would mean that the topics and the manner of their discussion must always be related back to the personal living situation of the participants. Since the substance of the dialogue sessions will be built around readings to be distributed to the participants, those which are selected, and the manner of their presentation must be such that they respect the call from adult educational theorists for curricula that have a "problem" rather than a "subject" orientation.<sup>1</sup>

It is contemplated that the readings for the dialogue will be accompanied by introductory material that establishes the appropriate context for the selections.

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<sup>1</sup>Knowles, p. 54.

There would be a follow-up to each of the readings, consisting of a series of questions which stimulate the reader to react to the material. The choosing of the questions must be such that they encourage the participant to connect the particular reading with his or her "existential concerns." The dialogue sessions should encompass questions that best enable the participants to analyze and evaluate their own religious tradition, and their historic perspectives toward other faiths. Various educational tools are available which can assist in selecting those educational "prompters" which will serve just such a goal, and these will be used in the writing of the curriculum.<sup>1</sup>

Those principles of adult education already noted-- that the adult assists in planning the educational experience, that the adult's own living experiences are themselves an extensive resource for learning, and that the adult's learning orientation is task or problem centered-- all of these principles are applicable whether the adult studies alone or with others. But dialogue involves a group process, and hence the methodology of these interfaith sessions must be cognizant of insights which emerge from the

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<sup>1</sup>Norris M. Sanders, Classroom Questions--What Kinds? (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), pp. 153-164.

work of communication experts. There are a number of studies, dealing with the theoretical constructs of communication, and ways in which verbal and non-verbal communication takes place within a group context, which illustrates the complexities inherent in fostering effective dialogue. Despite these complexities, scholars suggest that certain insights from their analysis and specific techniques which they have developed, tested and evaluated, can contribute to effective group discussion.<sup>1</sup>

Given that the interfaith discussions being contemplated would require of the participants involvement on the most meaningful levels of feeling and thought, the group discussion characteristics must be those sensitive to the dialogue goals enunciated earlier in this chapter. The work of Carl Rogers is particularly instructive in this area. Much of his study is directed toward elucidating ways in which persons can communicate in true dialogue manner. Rogers contends that there are three conditions which are required in human interaction if educational and emotional

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<sup>1</sup>See Ronald L. Appibaum, et al., The Process of Group Communication (Chicago: Science Research Associates, Inc., 1974), Chapters 2, 10 and 11. Also Rachel Davis DuBois and Mew-Soong Li, Reducing Social Tension and Conflict Through the Group Conversation Method (New York: Association Press, 1971), pp. 43-57.

growth is to occur. Whether the relationship be one between client and therapist, teacher and students, or parent and child, he believes that the same qualities must be present.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly he would agree that these same qualities must undergird the meeting of Jews and Christians.

The first condition which fosters growth among communicators in a group is a sense of honesty.<sup>2</sup> Rogers uses the term "congruence." Effective communication depends upon the degree of genuineness in each person's presentation. What they feel they must verbalize. Secondly, each of those taking part in groups must accept and trust the other participant. Rogers is convinced that only as members of any group articulate, in word and action, their respect and unconditional acceptance of the other person, will growth take place. Lastly, Rogers believes that each person in the group must demonstrate his or her empathic understanding of others, by which Rogers means the

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<sup>1</sup>Carl R. Rogers, A Way of Being (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1980), p. 115.

<sup>2</sup>Carl R. Rogers, Freedom to Learn (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 106-112. Rogers has written in many contexts about these three characteristics; the present citation reflects one of his more complete presentations of his views, which have been briefly condensed into the above paragraph.

ability to anticipate and feel the depth of meanings of the other partner in the dialogue. Admittedly, fulfilling these conditions is not easily realized. Yet due to the work of Rogers and other humanistic psychologists, there exists today an extensive literature detailing many means for assisting persons in meeting these conditions within groups.<sup>1</sup> Certain of these techniques would be appropriate, therefore, for inclusion in the dialogue series.

In summary, the methodology of these dialogues draws together insights from the theory of both adult education and humanistic psychology. There is no contradiction in such a fusion. In many ways, the language of those two disciplines is similar. Both adult learning theory and humanistic psychology emphasize the individual learner, esteem the person's strength and beliefs, and respect the individual's right to shape his or her learning/growing/changing experience.<sup>2</sup> Both these disciplines, with their emphasis on personal growth and

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<sup>1</sup>Dov Peretz Elkins, Teaching People to Love Themselves (Rochester, N.Y.: Growth Associates, 1977). The author provides an extensive bibliography of various techniques available to group facilitators and leaders, on pp. 136-157.

<sup>2</sup>Malcolm Knowles, The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species (Houston: Gulf Publishing Co., 1978), pp. 71-72.

individual integrity in the group process articulate the principles and techniques that can assist in making inter-faith group discussion into the genuine dialogic experience to which the philosophers and theologians aspire.

#### Evaluating the Dialogue

Selecting mechanisms for evaluating the success of education experiences is certainly an integral part of the curriculum design. Yet in the particular instance of this proposed project in dialogue, there are several issues which complicate the search for evaluative measurements. Some of these issues result from the very nature of what dialogue is supposed to be. Still others emerge from the general field of adult education.

It has been acknowledged earlier in these pages that it is likely that the interfaith sessions being planned will only approximate dimly the intensity of dialogue as the term has been defined. Genuine dialogue between persons is so demanding that one cannot expect it to happen with great frequency. Determining objective criteria by which one can measure whether dialogue has been realized is almost an impossibility. For how can one hope to assign a standard or a scale to an interhuman process described in this manner:

In genuine dialogue the turning to the partner takes place in all truth...[The partner] does not merely perceive the one who is present to him in this way; he receives him as his partner, and that means that he confirms the other being, so far as it is for him to confirm. The true turning of his person to the other includes this confirmation, this acceptance.<sup>1</sup>

Not only would it be inherently frustrating to seek out a formula by which one could measure the degree of "dialogue" present in a discussion. Buber would insist that trying to do so would itself destroy what one is attempting to do. For when dialogue becomes just another measurable, scientifically observable phenomenon, it is no longer dialogue.<sup>2</sup> There is thus a sense in which any attempt at evaluation of the dialogue session will alter and diminish the goal.

However, there are some inferences which can be drawn which at least point to ways of determining if the

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Buber, The Way of Response, ed. N. N. Glatzer (New York: Schocken Books, 1966), p. 105.

<sup>2</sup>Martin Buber, I and Thou, trans. Ronald G. Smith (New York: Scribner and Son, 1958), p. 9. See also Carl Rogers, who has written in a similar way: "...personal growth is hindered and hampered, rather than enhanced, by external evaluation. Whether the evaluation is favorable or unfavorable, it does not seem to make the development of a more mature, responsible or socialized self, but indeed intends to work in an opposite direction." Carl R. Rogers, Client-Centered Therapy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1951), p. 417.

dialogues have succeeded in reaching their goal. Some of these inferences can be made during the process itself. It had been noted that adult learners want to assist in shaping the learning experience and demand that it be relevant to their life. Accordingly, if the level of participation and the degree of personal learner involvement remains constant, it would be a fairly valid indicator that the curriculum was meeting the needs of those participating.<sup>1</sup> Adult educators also point out that the learners are themselves the most appropriate judges of the experience. Accordingly, it is suggested by several adult educators that the assistance of the learners be requested in the evaluation process.<sup>2</sup> Questionnaires can be helpful in determining the acquisition level of cognitive material.<sup>3</sup> Feedback forms and interviews can assist in discovering the attitudes of the participants to both the content and method of the dialogue and might therefore be included in the series of dialogue sessions.

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<sup>1</sup>Cyril O. Houle, The Design of Education (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1978), pp. 170-71.

<sup>2</sup>Kidd, How Adults Learn, pp. 286-290.

<sup>3</sup>Knowles, The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species, p. 126.

Two additional perspectives, both from the domain of psychology, can provide some insight into the evaluation effort of this interfaith dialogue. In the previous section, reference was made to the work of Carl Rogers. It was noted that he specifies three necessary conditions for effective communication and resultant personal growth. In recent years research conducted has verified the basic assumptions of Roger's approach that "when these facilitative conditions are present, changes in personality and behavior do indeed occur."<sup>1</sup>

One specific piece of research touches pointedly on interfaith dialogue. In an extensive project, the researcher sought to measure the relative effectiveness of changing the attitude of the Christian about the Jew through one of two methods. One he called the indirect group method, in which Christian students had the opportunity to study academic material about the Jewish people and their tradition. In the second method, the students were exposed to the same cognitive material, but also provided with occasions for frank, open discussion of their attitudes toward members of the Jewish faith, and an analysis of contemporary views on intergroup relations. The research, by

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<sup>1</sup>Rogers, A Way of Being, p. 117.

Henry Kagan, verified that the second of these methods did effect significant changes:

This Direct Group Method stimulates group involvement in the Christian-Jewish problem; corrects misinformation about contemporary Jews; affords a group catharsis for hostility; and gives an opportunity for a reorientation of values in relation to the Jew.<sup>1</sup>

It would appear, therefore, that the planning and execution of the interfaith dialogue sessions can move forward confidently. It might be argued that effective measurement of success is impossible. It has been seen that some agree that there shouldn't be any. Yet for those who desire some means of evaluating the success of the dialogue in enabling the Jewish and Christian participants to grow cognitively and affectively, it has been seen that there are methods to assist in such an effort. And it seems that research in affiliated realms substantiates the view that adults do and will grow through the direct, genuine human encounter of these planned dialogues.

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Enoch Kagan, Changing the Attitude of Christian Toward Jew (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), pp. 15-22, 132-135.

## CHAPTER V

A REVIEW OF POTENTIAL CURRICULAR  
MATERIALS FOR USE IN DIALOGUE

From the preceding chapters the specific requirements, both as to content and method, for an educational project in interfaith encounter have emerged. This chapter surveys and evaluates those materials currently available which might conceivably be utilized for such a dialogue project. The criteria for evaluating these materials are derived from the components of curriculum sketched in Chapter Four.

Gathering materials for this survey proved almost fruitless. A search of libraries failed to produce very much appropriate for use in adult lay dialogue.<sup>1</sup> Conversations with several noted authorities in the field confirmed that the field of lay interfaith education has been

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<sup>1</sup>Both card catalog and shelf searches were conducted of the following libraries in pursuit of materials: Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa; University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa; Drake University, Des Moines, Iowa; Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York City; Union Theological Seminary, New York City; Dubuque Theological Seminary/Aquinas Institute Joint Library, Dubuque, Iowa; Nazarene Seminary, Kansas City, Missouri; Regensburg Library of the University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois. An ERIC computer search also proved fruitless.

generally neglected, and few materials exist for such purposes.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the goals of those books and pamphlets which are surveyed in the pages ahead are not necessarily consistent with the goals of lay theological dialogue enunciated in these pages. Nevertheless, in the judgment of the author, the works which will now be reviewed could conceivably be, or indeed might have been, selected for use in a dialogue series.

Booklets from the National Conference of  
Christians and Jews

In the early 1970s the National Conference of Christians and Jews issued three pamphlets on dialogue. One is a general introduction to dialogue, explaining what dialogue is and what types of results might be expected.<sup>2</sup> The booklet reprints the "Ground Rules for Dialogue"

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<sup>1</sup>The author had telephone conversations in 1981 with Alvin Rosenfeld, Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Indiana, who is a specialist in interreligious studies, and with Leon Klenicki, a rabbi and director of the department of Jewish-Christian relations of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. Both acknowledged that the field of lay theological discussion between Jews and Christians had not been adequately addressed, and that, to their knowledge, there were no materials available.

<sup>2</sup>Dean M. Kelley and Bernhard E. Olson, The Meaning and Conduct of Dialogue (New York: The National Conference of Christians and Jews, 1970).

prepared by Robert McAfee Brown, to which reference was made in the previous chapter of this work. The second half of the booklet consists of useful practical suggestions for those interested in setting up a vehicle for interfaith encounter.

The other two pamphlets bear the titles Homework for Christians and Homework for Jews, and carry the identical subtitle, Preparing for Jewish-Christian Dialogue.<sup>1</sup> They are what their titles announce them to be--concise background materials to assist participants in understanding certain issues which might arise in the course of interfaith discussion. For example, the booklet written for the Jewish participant contains a brief chapter on the implied relationship between anti-Semitism and the New Testament, and a useful outline of some major theological differences between the two faiths. The manual for the Christians is almost completely devoted to analyzing what its author believes to be the historic bias of Christianity toward Jews and Judaism. Four of the five chapters dwell on that theme, and the fifth touches on some of the current sources of tension between the two communities.

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<sup>1</sup>Bernhard E. Olson, Homework for Christians: Preparing for Jewish-Christian Dialogue (New York: The National Conference of Christians and Jews, 1970); Arthur Gilbert, Homework for Jews: Preparing for Jewish-Christian Dialogue (New York: National Conference of Christians and Jews, 1973).

All three booklets would be appropriate background material for both facilitators and participants in the dialogue. None of the pamphlets is intended to be used as a text for dialogue, and indeed they could not function in that way. While certain essential topics identified in Chapter Four are included in the booklets, such as the historic record between the two faith groups, other equally vital subjects are not addressed. There is, for instance, no reference to the concept of "covenant," and no attempt is made to discuss such issues as "Jewish peoplehood" or Christology. Those shortcomings aside, the booklets are worthy of inclusion in any bibliography that participants might turn to as they ready themselves for the actual sessions.

Face to Face--An Introductory Book  
on Dialogue

In 1967, during the period of enthusiastic response to Vatican Council II, the Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai B'rith, a Jewish service organization, prepared a special issue of its adult education magazine on the topic of interfaith dialogue.<sup>1</sup> One indication of the profound

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<sup>1</sup>Lily Edelman, ed., Face to Face: A Primer in Dialogue (Washington, D.C.: B'nai B'rith Adult Jewish Education, 1967).

influence of Vatican Council II on the topic is that over a fourth of the reading material in the magazine issue is centered on an analysis of the Roman Catholic Council's impact on world religious bodies. The articles on those deliberations in Rome are an attempt to illustrate what were the then current estimates of the Council's work by Jewish, Protestant and Catholic writers.

Aside from that cluster of essays, the remaining sections of the 120-page book touch on two major themes: (a) an analysis of the usefulness and limitations of dialogue; and (b) an interpretation, from the perspective of Jewish authors, on specific matters which have been the subject of Christian-Jewish polemics. These include discussions of the crucifixion, a brief description of how the Jewish tradition uses the term "Chosen People," and a concise survey of the historic disagreement between the two faiths about which "covenant" was valid.

This booklet is an especially useful guide for preparing Jewish participants for dialogue. The essays are well written and designed for the non-specialist. Many of the topics identified by Jewish authorities as appropriate to dialogue are the subject of articles.

The Christian point of view, however, is almost not heard in the text. There are, as noted, two evaluations of

the Vatican Council II deliberations by Christian representatives. And one Christian scholar, Poul Borchsenius, contributes a three-page essay, the substance of which is to urge his co-religionists to study and respect Judaism. Other than those, all other articles, including that on basic Christian theology, were written by Jews. While such pieces are interesting, they do not conform to the ideal of interfaith dialogue elaborated in the previous pages.

The definitions of "faith" and "dialogue" as described in Chapter Four require a personal orientation. The readings to be provided for the participants should reflect, whenever possible, such a perspective. It is desirable to select materials which exhibit an "existential" outlook, in which the author has written out of a sense of passion and commitment. Consequently, an essay on Christian theology written by a Jew, no matter how accurate, fails to provide the necessary outlook, and detracts from the usefulness of the volume. In addition, the references to Vatican Council II, and the evaluations of the meetings, are part of the historical record, but are rather irrelevant to the current issues between the two communities. Notwithstanding these deficiencies, the booklet contains much useful material and should be included in the listing of resources materials for adults.

### Several Comparative Religion Texts

One possible resource for dialogue materials may be found in textbooks prepared for courses in comparative religion. There are, to be sure, many such books and five representative choices are surveyed in this particular section.

During the sixties, two Jewish book publishers issued texts in the field for use in Hebrew High Schools. Our Religion and Our Neighbors is a competent survey of world religions.<sup>1</sup> Almost four-fifths of the book dwells on Judaism and Christianity, complemented by brief sketches of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, and a concluding chapter comparing the central values and ideas of each religious system. Much of the material on Judaism and Christianity is of an historical nature. While there is strength in such a presentation, it is likewise true that the criticism expressed about the previous book (Face to Face) is applicable here. This is a book about "religion," about history, creed and conflict. But it is not directly a book about "faith," at least in the sense used in these pages. It would require considerable modification to use this text

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<sup>1</sup>Milton G. Miller and Sylvan D. Schwartzman, Our Religion and Our Neighbors, 2d ed., rev. (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1963).

in an appropriate way, and then for only a portion of the dialogue series if the agenda were to be adhered to.

A more likely candidate for such use is Judaism and Christianity: What We Believe.<sup>1</sup> Written by a reform rabbi, the book is a well conceived and articulate comparison of the two faiths. Written in a non-technical style, the book introduces the novice to the two religions in a most complete manner, touching on matters of theology, liturgy, ethics and eschatology. As a primer on the religious systems, it certainly fills the task. But for the purposes of dialogue, it is not as suitable. This text represents only the Jewish perspective. No matter how sensitively and intelligently presented, Christian thought cannot be conveyed authentically in the absence of contributions by Christians. The book also fails to deal in any significant way with the idea of "covenant," and devotes relatively little attention to the historical encounter between the two faith communities, and the resultant attitudes derived from those interactions.

That criticism may also be directed to the two volumes of the Religion in Human Culture series--The

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<sup>1</sup>William B. Silverman, Judaism and Christianity: What We Believe (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1968).

Christian Tradition and The Jewish Tradition.<sup>1</sup> Both are part of a six-volume set prepared for the public high schools. Complete with audio-visual and instruction materials, they are outstanding examples of recent designs in curriculum. The format is attractive; the choice of reading matter is excellent, representing the classic sources in a dignified approach.

As is fitting for their intended use, many of the readings in the volumes trace the history of the two religions through the centuries. The theological ideas are dealt with in an exclusively neutral manner, relying only on the classical expressions of the faith traditions and devoting relatively little attention (in some cases none at all) to modern interpretations of those basic faith assertions. While understandable from the point of view of publishers wishing to avoid controversy, such an omission of contemporary understandings of the faith seems to skew the understanding of the tradition toward a decidedly conservative orientation.

From the standpoint of the needs of dialogue material, the volumes do not speak to a number of issues on

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<sup>1</sup>Religion in Human Culture: The Christian Tradition and Religion in Human Culture: The Jewish Tradition (Niles, Ill.: Argus Communications, 1978).

the agenda. Discussions about anti-Semitism and its historical antecedents, or about the trial of Jesus and Jewish complicity in it, are two topics, among others, not included. There is no mention of the concept of "covenant," except when citing the ancient sources from Hebrew Scripture. This is not to detract from the volumes, which are of high quality and which could be consulted by those participants in the dialogue wishing to expand their knowledge of the subject.

The same may be said of the final book to be considered in this section, Judaism and Christianity: Perspectives and Traditions.<sup>1</sup> Prepared for use as a college text in comparative religion, the book is designed to present the central theological ideas of both faiths. The volume contains chapters on the nature of God, the messiah concept, and the eschatological vision of each faith. The writing is scholarly, objective, and well-documented from the sources, and the textbook has much to commend itself for its intended usage.

However, it would not seem fitting for the dialogue experience in a lay congregational setting. The book has

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<sup>1</sup>Luther H. Harshbarger and John A. Mourant, Judaism and Christianity: Perspectives and Traditions (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1968).

nearly 500 pages of tightly printed matter. For the adult participant, to whom this venture is directed, it is likely that such a text would be intimidating. Moreover, several topics, including references to "Jewish peoplehood," or to the modern state of Israel, receive scant attention.

Finally, and this may be said of all of the books surveyed here, the authors of these books do not include any possible materials which could be used by those serving as facilitators for dialogue. Appropriate to their design, the books are exclusively focused on the cognitive domain. Yet the methodology of dialogue, as was seen earlier, must be sensitive to the affective domain no less than to the cognitive. Any material designed for dialogue must include strategies which will enable the participants to share their feelings, and to feel secure in doing so. It should be added that the same criticism can be directed at the material examined in the remaining pages of this chapter.

#### Two Books with a Christian Orientation

Two recent, very brief books authored by Christian scholars contain excellent material which can serve as support resources for dialogue. Yet alone, or even in combination, they can only partially satisfy the requirements for dialogue curricular matter.

We Christians and Jews is the work of Paul Kirsch, a professor of religious studies.<sup>1</sup> In this popularly written study, the author addresses his fellow Christians on a number of topics which have served as sources of disharmony between Christian and Jew. Kirsch looks at the historical factors which precipitated the rift between the two faith communities. He then moves on to examine the theological similarities and differences between the two traditions on concepts like "covenant" and "messiah." Throughout the work, the author devotes a great deal of attention to the research which has been conducted on the relationship between Christian beliefs and anti-Jewish sentiments. Indeed, it appears that one of Kirsch's goals in writing his book was to explicate, in a non-technical fashion, that research, with the goal of showing his Christian co-religionists the necessity of examining their attitude towards the Jewish people, and eradicating any vestiges of hostility which they might yet retain. Because of this emphasis of the volume, it could be used effectively as a vehicle for encouraging the Christian lay person to participate in dialogue.

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Kirsch, We Christians and Jews (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).

That is true of Faith Without Prejudice, written by Eugene Fisher, who was director of Catholic-Jewish Relations of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.<sup>1</sup> Like the Kirsch volume, this sensitive and honest book could be utilized as a resource for stimulating Christians to re-think the theological stance of their faith tradition toward Judaism. Many of the topics discussed by Fisher are identical to those in the Kirsch book, with two additions. Fisher includes several suggestions for liturgical celebrations. He offers one series of prayers which could be used in Christian worship as a means of sensitizing the participants to the Jewish sources of their own Christian faith. Also included are prayers for use in an interfaith setting. He also devotes a chapter to analyzing the way in which Christian religious texts, prepared for home and church, depict the Jewish religious expression, and argues for the need for his community of believers to develop educational materials which are free of bias and respectful of the integrity of the Jewish people.

This survey by Fisher ought to be read as a preliminary text for those participating in dialogue. It offers

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<sup>1</sup>Eugene Fisher, Faith Without Prejudice (New York: Paulist Press, 1977).

the Christian reader the means for understanding in non-technical language, the way in which the Christian faith can be interpreted that is more caring and affirming of Judaism and its adherents. Jewish participants could also benefit from either of these preparatory books. By reading them, members of the Jewish community could appreciate the extent to which thoughtful Christians have struggled to alter the historic perceptions of their faith in an age of pluralism and interfaith cooperation.

Neither of these volumes could serve as resource material in Jewish-Christian dialogue. A number of important topics, especially on Christian theological topics, are omitted. Neither do the authors make any suggestions about the techniques required to facilitate the process of Jewish-Christian interaction.

Dialogue: In Search of Jewish/Christian  
Understanding

In 1974, an Anglican priest, John Shelby Spong, and a reform rabbi, Jack Daniel Spiro, engaged in a theological dialogue in their community of Richmond, Virginia. The text is a published version of those four sessions, in which the two participants questioned one another about their basic religious beliefs and the respective debts each faith owes

the other.<sup>1</sup> An introductory chapter explains how this particular dialogue came to be, and offers a synopsis of the considerable commentary within the community occasioned by the series of meetings.

The two clergymen strove to explain theological concepts in manner appropriate to their audience, which consisted of members of their two congregations. They accomplish their goal in an altogether successful way. Their presentations are concise, do not require special vocabulary and are exceptionally well-written. What is especially significant about this volume is the seemingly open manner in which the dialogue was conducted between the two men. Their presentations convey their feelings, their hurts, their hopes. They acknowledge where they take issue with each other, but also where they take exception to what the cumulative tradition of each of their faiths has taught. The dialogue is consistently conducted on a high level, and with sensitivity to each community.

In many ways, this book comes the closest to being suitable for some use in projected dialogue. This work

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<sup>1</sup>John Shelby Spong and Jack Daniel Spiro, Dialogue: In Search of Jewish Christian Understanding (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975).

serves, not as a source for curricular materials but rather as a model of what such materials can hope to accomplish. Because the book is so very brief (the printed dialogue runs only seventy pages in a paperback format), many of the topics identified for the agenda are not touched upon, or if so, only in the briefest of terms. Yet that is beside the point. This book exhibits the form which interfaith encounter ought to take. For the facilitators of dialogue, whose responsibility it is to move the dialogue along in a way consistent with the themes and forms enunciated in the previous pages, Dialogue can point out the path which the participants are to travel along in search of their own understandings of each other's faiths.

In summary, this review of literature has found that many of the sources do not meet the criteria of minimal subjects outlined in Chapter Four. Those which do address the required topic fail to provide any methodological insights. This survey therefore confirms the absence of suitable material, and justifies the development of such a curriculum, which is the focus of the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

## CHAPTER VI

## A PROPOSED CURRICULUM FOR INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

The detailed format for Jewish-Christian lay dialogue, which is the centerpiece of this chapter, reflects all that has preceded it: the rationale for the project, the subjects to be discussed and the methodology to be employed. Each of the dialogue sessions which will presently be described consists of the following items:

- (a) a statement of objectives for each of the dialogue sessions, preceded by some introductory remarks;
- (b) a brief synopsis of the readings (if any) which have been chosen to assist participants in reading those objectives;
- (c) a description of the techniques to be utilized in pursuit of those objectives; and
- (d) whatever additional items may be pertinent to a particular session.

The curriculum consists of eleven sessions. In many respects, that number of sessions seem the requisite number so as to respond adequately to the subject areas identified earlier in these pages. It is projected that the sessions would occur once weekly, given that many synagogue and church adult education activities are

conducted on that basis. It is quite customary for churches and synagogues to offer adult education programs that run concurrently with the religious school programming for the young children on Sunday mornings, and a portion of that morning might be the appropriate time to offer the dialogue series.

All of the participants will be expected to read a weekly assignment in preparation for each of the sessions (except the first, introductory meeting). These readings have been chosen from a wide range of sources, and include selections from works by Jewish and Christian historians and theologians. Each of the packets of material which has been prepared consists of fifteen to twenty-five pages of typewritten material.<sup>1</sup> There is a brief introduction to the topic for the particular session followed by two or more readings on the particular topic. Each of the excerpts is followed by two sets of questions. The first group are "review questions," designed to encourage the readers to note the salient points. A second type--"questions for reflection"--is also included. These questions are meant to encourage the readers to focus on certain issues raised by

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<sup>1</sup>Two of the packets of readings may be found in the Appendix to this work.

the readings. It will be these issues--some of them controversial, all of them devised to be thought provoking--that will be the central questions placed before the group as conversation "starters" when the dialogues themselves take place.<sup>1</sup>

It is assumed that the subject matter of the dialogue, and the readings which have been chosen, will represent a quite unusual area of concentration for the lay participants. Accordingly, it is likely that it will take the participants some time to adjust to the content and vocabulary of the readings. Informal testing of the material on a group of twenty-two persons indicated that readers were typically spending one and one-half to two hours studying the material.<sup>2</sup> With the

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<sup>1</sup>Norris Sanders, Classroom Questions--What Kinds? (New York: Harper and Row, 1966). Sanders utilizes the categories in Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives as a guide in identifying seven types of questions. Essentially, the first two categories noted by Sanders--questions for memory and for translation--are the types that appeared in the "Review Questions" section of the packets. The remaining five categories (interpretation, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation) are the types which appear in the "questions for reflection" portion of the dialogue readings.

<sup>2</sup>The curriculum outline, including the reading materials, was used for the first time in a series of

addition of the time actually spent in the dialogues themselves, therefore, it is assumed that this project will require upwards of thirty-five hours, spread over three months. Such a number of total hours accords within the boundaries noted by Allen Tough in his analysis of adult education projects.<sup>1</sup>

The role assumed by the dialogue facilitators has already been discussed above.<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the manner of this relationship, to each other as dialogue partners, as well as to the group members, will be highly significant in shaping the sessions. It is advisable that the facilitators, who are likely to be the clergy or religious educators of the respective congregations, rehearse thoroughly the material

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meetings in early 1982 between members of Plymouth Congregational Church of the United Church of Christ and Tifareth Israel Synagogue, both of Des Moines, Iowa. The evaluation of length required for reading the material comes from interviews with the twenty-two participants.

<sup>1</sup>Allen Tough, The Adult's Learning Projects (Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1971), pp. 20-21. Tough's interviews with adult learners showed that they spend anywhere from fifteen to one hundred or more total hours on a given learning project.

<sup>2</sup>See above, p. 153.

before each session. As facilitators of dialogue (rather than in their more traditional role of lecturers and preachers) the clergy members should familiarize themselves with the demanding responsibilities of helping participants comprehend the issues, while simultaneously restraining their own direct involvement in the session lest they dominate the exchanges. By reviewing the readings, selecting the opening questions, and determining what part each of them will take in the particular session, all well before the session itself, the clergy would be in a better position to fulfill their task appropriate to their position as "dialogue enablers."

Session 1  
Welcome to Interfaith Dialogue

For almost all participants, this session will represent the first opportunity to meet members of another faith community in a distinctly religious setting. The initial encounter likely is to be fraught with many different and conflicting emotions: a sense of curiosity and excitement, but also a feeling of strangeness, complicated by a hesitancy about, and maybe even apprehension of the other participants. In later sessions (especially sessions

three and four) participants will have the occasion to encounter directly the tension that was present in the historical relationship between the two communities. The first session will neither seek nor encourage direct discussion of those tensions, though it is probable that allusions to that earlier history will be made by one or more of those participating.

Session Objectives: As a result of this session,

1. Participants will become acquainted with the other members of the group with whom they will be in the dialogue.
2. Participants will each have the opportunity to personally speak to the other persons in the group, thereby establishing the precedent for all members to share in the group interaction process.

Synopsis of Readings: There will be no reading assignments for this introductory meeting.

Methodology: Three exercises will be utilized to facilitate personal self-disclosure, which is, as has been noted, an essential aspect of dialogue.

1. The participants will be divided into dyads (one from each congregation). To encourage the persons to introduce themselves, a set of sentence

completions will be provided. Examples are:

- a. My favorite room in the house is....
- b. The time I feel most alive is....
- c. If I could visit any place in the world, I would like....
- d. A book which I enjoyed reading recently was....

This exercise will take fifteen minutes.

2. Remaining in couples, the participants will then rearrange their chairs so that they are back to back, and try to surmise the following kind of information about their partner: color of eyes; favorite television program; word that characterizes his/her outlook on life. Then the partners turn to one another and verify their estimates of each other. This exercise will take ten to fifteen minutes.
3. In the final portion of the initial session, the participants assemble in a large semi-circle. Person A of each dyad gives a one minute introduction of Person B, and then Person B reciprocates. This final exercise will take from twenty-five to thirty minutes, and thus should fill the remaining

portion of the session.

Miscellany: The only materials needed for this session would be name tags. At the conclusion of the session, the readings for the next meeting would be distributed.

Session 2  
Welcome to Interfaith Dialogue

The second session introduces the participants to the general nature of the dialogue subjects. The subject of these dialogues is not "religion" in its widest understanding, which would comprise ritual, sacred literature, holy day celebration, and prayer. Rather, the focus of these dialogues is "faith," which was defined earlier in these pages as "an orientation of the personality, to oneself, to one's neighbor, to the universe" and which is shaped by the religious tradition but is not identical with it.<sup>1</sup>

The dialogue sessions will constantly encourage the participants to recognize that "faith" and "religion"

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<sup>1</sup>Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Faith and Belief (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 13. See above p.

are not synonymous terms and that the overwhelming diversity and personal aspects of faith is what should enable, and encourage, persons of different faiths to recognize and esteem the validity of the faiths of other persons.

Session Objectives: As a result of this session

1. Participants will describe the way in which the term "faith" is used in the writings of contemporary religious writers.
2. Participants will have the opportunity to speculate about the "content" or "object" of their faith, and how their faith merges with, or differs from, the specialist's definition of it.

Synopsis of Readings: There are three brief selections. A section from Paul Tillich's Dynamics of Faith introduces the readers to the concept of "faith" as "the act of being ultimately concerned," and what demands the objects of urgent concerns make upon their adherents.<sup>1</sup> The Jewish thinker Will Herberg writes about "faith" in a way similar to Tillich.<sup>2</sup> In the excerpt included, Herberg

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), pp. 1-4.

<sup>2</sup>Will Herberg, Judaism and Modern Man (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1951), pp. 93-96.

writes of the false faiths which humankind endorses, and how prone all institutions and ideas are to being converted themselves into objects of ultimate concern. The third reading is taken from the writings of Wilfred Cantwell Smith.<sup>1</sup> He elaborates on the distinction between "religion" and "faith," and in the excerpt cited makes some pertinent observations about how persons can understand one another's faith and how persons can thus live amidst the plurality of faiths.

Methodology: The session will begin with a value clarification exercise which is called "magazine collage."<sup>2</sup> A number of pictorial magazines will be provided. Participants will be given twenty minutes to cut out and assemble titles, pictures, and words from magazines that portray their answer to the following inquiries:

1. The important things in your world; and
2. Your hopes and dreams for our world.

Participants will be encouraged, upon completion of their

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<sup>1</sup>Wilfred Cantwell Smith, The Meaning and End of Religion (New York: A Mentor Book, 1962), pp. 168-173.

<sup>2</sup>Lyman Coleman, Encyclopedia of Serendipity (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Serendipity House, 1976), p. 77.

project, to share their collage with others, and to explain what they have chosen to depict. (One minute maximum.)

Following that exercise, the group will be asked leading questions by the facilitators, which will seek to elicit participants' responses to the relationship of their art project, which supposedly should portray the "object" of their faith, with the definitions offered in the readings. An example question would be: "What is the relationship of your faith, as you conceived it in your collage, to the way your church or synagogue might use the term?" Other questions posed by the facilitators would encourage the participants to speak about the relationship of faiths to one another.

Miscellany: Materials needed for this session include crayons, construction paper, tape, magazines and newspapers of all types.

### Session 3 The Crucifixion and the Rift

The rift between the Jewish and Christian communities began with a disagreement over the facts of Jesus' life. Soon after, whatever those facts were, they were

then shaped by faith to a new reality. In the process, the separation between Jews and Christians grew even more distant.

The facts over which the ancient Jews and the early Christians disagreed had to do with the Jesus of history, and how the Christian faith has paid homage to the Jesus of the Gospels. Nearly every line of every Christian creed would be an occasion for some discussion between Jew and Christian. The manner of Jesus' being, the form and character of his life, and the ultimate meaning of his death--all of these are central issues which divide the two communities.

There was once, and many Jews still believe that there is, a widespread teaching in the Christian community about the complicity of the ancient Jewish community in the death of Jesus. But more than just the historical events of the crucifixion are at issue in the Christian evaluation of the Jewish people. The Christian wonders not only about Jewish complicity in the trial of Jesus. The Christian seeks to understand what Jews can and do say about Jesus in the light of the historical record.

Session Objectives: As a result of this session

1. Participants will be able to explain the various

theories about the trial and death of Jesus.

2. Participants will be able to describe a sensitive Jewish evaluation of Jesus.
3. Participants will be enabled to discuss, from the informed perspective of the readings, the relationship of Jews and Christians, in the light of the historical record about the trial and a modern Jewish understanding of Jesus.

Synopsis of Readings: Two readings address the issue of Jewish complicity, or lack thereof, in the trial and death of Jesus. One is taken from the journal Judaism, which in 1971 published a symposium between eight Jewish and Christian scholars on the subject.<sup>1</sup> Each of the writers, using the available evidence, essentially proposes a different answer to the inquiry about the exact nature of the trial. Still another way of looking at the trial is provided in a brief excerpt from an essay by Ellis Rivkin.<sup>2</sup> Rivkin has some unique insights

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Gordis, "Introduction to a Symposium on the Trial of Jesus in the Light of History," Judaism 20 (Winter 1971):6-9.

<sup>2</sup>Ellis Rivkin, "Who Crucified Jesus?", in Jewish Heritage Reader, ed. Morris Adler (New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., 1965), pp. 163-166.

about the trial, based on a new understanding of the Greek term "Sanhedrin." He argues that it makes more sense to speak of "what" crucified Jesus than "who" crucified Jesus. The final reading in this section is by Samuel Sandmel.<sup>1</sup> The excerpt included comes from his We Jews and Jesus, in which he presents a sympathetic but restrained evaluation of Jesus as a human being, and in which he admits to admiring the personality, but to seeing no striking uniqueness about, nor any religious insights from Jesus, which his own religion (Judaism) does not provide.

Methodology: The participants will gather into a circle, and the facilitators will initiate the dialogue. The facilitators should ascertain, through straightforward questioning, that the participants have understood the major points of the readings. A typical question might be: "According to the scholars, was Jesus' mission primarily religious, social, or political and what difference do they say that makes in understanding the details of his trial?" Facilitators should also seek to penetrate to a more sophisticated level, by asking some leading

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Sandmel, We Jews and Jesus (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 107-111.

questions that would spark participation. An example question would be: "If Jews admire the gifts of Jesus, as Sandmel (and other Jews) admit, albeit in human and not divine terms, is it legitimate to expect them to pay some homage to his teachings in their religious services?"

Session 4  
Isolation and Anti-Judaism

If, from a Christian perspective, the rift between Christians and Jews may be traced back to either Jewish complicity in Jesus' death, or Jewish resistance to recognizing Jesus as the Christ, then from a Jewish perspective, there is another problem of equal significance which accounts for the separation between the two communities. That problem is the relationship between Christianity and anti-Judaism, and the harsh treatment of the Jews in medieval Christendom and into the modern period. Especially in view of modern history, Jews are puzzled and hurt by what they perceive to be a continuum from Christian anti-Judaism to modern anti-Semitism.

Session Objectives: As a result of this session

1. Participants will be able to reconstruct the arguments propounded by several noted authorities

about the relationship between Christianity and the way Jews and Judaism were treated during the last two millennia.

2. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss their estimates of these scholars' assertions, and thus air their opinion about the relevancy of the past record to the future relationship between the two communities.

Synopsis of Readings: The major reading in this fourth session is taken from the work of the Roman Catholic historian Rosemary Ruether.<sup>1</sup> Ruether argues that anti-Judaism is a necessary product of classical Christian theology. She refers to many examples of anti-Jewish sentiment in Christian writings, and urges her fellow Christian theologians to develop a new theology which will ascribe to the continuing validity of Judaism.

There are two additional writings in this section. One is by a Jewish historian Yosef Yerushalmi, who both

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<sup>1</sup>Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Anti-Judaism is the Left Hand of Christology," New Catholic World 217 (January-February 1974):12-17.

substantiates as well as disagrees with the position of Ruether.<sup>1</sup> Essentially, Yerushalmi believes that the historical record of official Christianity toward the Jews was quite complex (sometimes benign and sometimes protective, other times quite harsh and almost never indifferent) and that Ruether does not take account of the dynamic of that relationship. In the last excerpt, Eugene Borowitz illustrates how contemporary Christian writers are beginning to write theological works in a form consonant with the challenges posed by Ruether.<sup>2</sup>

Borowitz concludes that some traditional Christian thinkers still write in terms derisive of Judaism but that many distinguished thinkers are developing Christologies which demonstrate sensitivity to, and esteem for, Judaism.

Methodology: Participants will gather into a large circle, and the facilitators will initiate the dialogue by asking some volunteers to review the content of the reading. The Ruether excerpt here included, as all

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<sup>1</sup>Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, "Response to Rosemary Ruether," in Auschwitz, Beginning of a New Era? Ed. by Eva Fleischner (New York: Ktav Publishing Co. for the Cathedral of St. John the Divine and Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1977), pp. 101-103, 106-107.

<sup>2</sup>Eugene B. Borowitz, Contemporary Christologies: A Jewish Response (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), pp. 176-177, 185-186.

of her writings, is highly controversial and will likely occasion a great deal of debate. Several typical questions that might be appropriate to encourage the persons present to enter into serious exchange would be: "If the New Testament writings are as anti-Jewish as Ruether states they are, does that mean that the Christian Church will have to edit their sacred texts so as to use them in educational and worship settings?" "What changes have the Christian participants noted in their church's attitude toward the Jewish people? Have the Jewish participants noted changes that point to a better relationship for the future?"

Session 5  
Being Within a Covenanted Community

Both the Jewish and Christian faith communities look upon themselves as covenanted. The concept of covenant may be the key one in each of the cumulative traditions. The Jew speaks of "brit"--the covenant which Hebrew scripture records first entered into between God and Abraham, then renewed in successive generations with

Jacob and Moses. The term "brit" is the central, unifying component in both classical and contemporary Jewish thinking.

In a similar fashion, the Christian cumulative tradition has chosen to use the term as an important organizing concept. Once the word covenant was translated by Testamentum, it became the word for all of Christian scripture. Christians thus identify themselves as those united by their loyalty to the message of Testamentum--the Scripture of Covenant.

Session Objectives: As a result of this session

1. Participants will explain the way in which the term "covenant" functions in Jewish and Christian theology, and the implications which covenantal thought has on conceptions of the Divine and ethical obligations.
2. Participants will be able to discuss from a more informed perspective the relationship of covenants (Jewish and Christian) to each other.

Synopsis of Readings: The first reading, by Wolfgang Roth, reviews the importance of the covenantal

relationship in Hebrew scripture.<sup>1</sup> The author stresses that according to the earliest writings, Israel conceived of itself as having been freely chosen by God, and that choice conveyed special obligations upon both parties. The precise nature of those obligations is examined by James Muilenberg, who demonstrates how the ethical terminology of Hebrew scripture emerges directly from the covenantal relationship.<sup>2</sup> The third reading, by Manfred Vogel, is somewhat more philosophical than the first two.<sup>3</sup> Vogel shows how the covenant as a concept determines the nature of the Biblical God. Moreover, he illustrates the difference kinds of covenants, and suggests that Christianity and Judaism can draw closer together, or become more estranged, dependent upon how each faith tradition elects to speak of its ongoing belief in its covenant.

Methodology: Participants will be introduced to

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<sup>1</sup>Wolfgang Roth and Rosemary Radford Ruether, The Liberating Bond (New York: Friendship Press, 1978), pp. 4-8, 30-32.

<sup>2</sup>James Muilenberg, The Way of Israel (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), pp. 59-61.

<sup>3</sup>Manfred Vogel, "Covenant and the Interreligious Encounter," in Issues in the Jewish-Christian Dialogue: Jewish Perspectives on Covenant, Mission and Witness, ed. Helga Croner and Leon Klenicki (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 63-65.

the concept of "covenant" by listening to a three minute tape recording.<sup>1</sup> It is a tape of an apparently young man speaking informally about his relationship to his wife and his child, and what his divorce meant for him to those covenantal relationships. The tape conveys a sense of pain and loss which that man felt over the break in the covenant to his wife.

Participants will then be divided into two groups of equal size, with an equal number of persons from each congregation. This is done to enable each of the participants to take an even more active part in the dialogue. Picking up on the taped interview, the facilitators should encourage the congregants to engage in a discussion about what covenant means, both in personal interactions as well as in the Biblical understanding. Some examples of questions that would stimulate discussion would be: "Both Judaism and Christianity insist on the covenant between the Divine and the adherents of the faith. In what sense do you find yourself covenanted to the fellow members of your faith tradition, and then between them and the

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<sup>1</sup>The tape is from a record included in Dennis C. Benson and Marilyn J. Benson, Promises to Keep: A Workbook of Experiences for Covenant Living (New York: Friendship Press, 1978).

divine? How would you feel if you were told that your covenant was broken, that your belief in your tradition's covenant was false?"

Toward the conclusion of the session, with some ten minutes remaining, the group should reassemble, so that there can be a general discussion of the major areas covered by each of the groups. For such purposes, each group might have solicited one volunteer to serve as a recorder of the group's deliberations.

Miscellany: A tape recorder should be provided. Likewise, some note paper for the group secretaries and any other writing needs should be available.

#### Session 6 The Jewish Faith Tradition

The sixth through ninth sessions of the dialogue have been developed to allow the participants the opportunity to learn about each other's faith traditions. It is anticipated that through study and discussion about central components of each religion, the participants will have a broader understanding of their own religious heritage (especially as they see it viewed and evaluated by non-adherents of the faith) and also some new and more

sensitive insights into the religious traditions of their fellow participants from the other congregation.

The opening session of the four focuses on some central terms of the Jewish faith tradition. Though there are a multitude of different attitudes and beliefs among Jews, and though an analysis of the Jewish faith is made all the more complex because many Jews view themselves as areligious, this session will concentrate on the patterns of faith of what one scholar labels the "Judaic tradition": "...a complex of faith and social ethics, of universal significance and possibly universal relevance [resting] upon the sanction of absolute monotheism..."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the elements of the Jewish faith which are touched upon in session six (and eight) are those which religious Jews would accede to, albeit in particular ways appropriate to their ideological affiliations.

Session Objectives: As a result of this session

1. Dialogue participants will describe the central theological thrusts of the Jewish faith, summarized in the traditional formula of "God, Torah and Israel as One."

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<sup>1</sup>Raphael Loewe, "Defining Judaism: Some Ground-Clearing," Jewish Journal of Sociology 7 (December 1965): 153-175.

2. Participants will be capable of entering into discussion with each other on the implications of the central Jewish faith assertion, especially as they impinge upon different emphases in Christianity.

Synopsis of Readings: There are five brief excerpts included in this session. The first comes from the Centenary Perspective of Reform Judaism.<sup>1</sup> It was selected because it presents a modern understanding of the classical aphorism noted above, and is phrased in terms which seem open to wide interpretation while yet consistent with classical Jewish theology. The second reading, from a work by an American rabbi, explains the meanings which emerge from the Jewish belief in one God.<sup>2</sup> Another way of looking at the Jewish conception of God, in more personal terms, is the subject of a brief citation from the writings of Will Herberg.<sup>3</sup> The next reading presents an historian's perspective on Torah, illustrating why it is the

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<sup>1</sup>Eugene Borowitz, Reform Judaism Today: Book I-- Reform in the Process of Change (New York: Behrman House, 1978), pp. xxi-xxii.

<sup>2</sup>Milton Steinberg, Basic Judaism (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., 1947), pp. 42-46.

<sup>3</sup>Will Herberg, Judaism and Modern Man (Cleveland, The World Publishing Co., 1951), pp. 79-83.

underlying concept for understanding why Jews are to behave in a particular way.<sup>1</sup> The final reading, from the introduction to the multi-volume work of Salo Baron, makes some observations about the interconnectedness between the "Jewish people" and "the Jewish faith."<sup>2</sup> The theme of this last reading will be explored in greater detail in the second session of the series on the Jewish faith elements (session eight).

Methodology: The members of the group ought to be queried about the format they wish to follow in the ensuing dialogues. Having had the opportunity to meet in groups of two, ten, and twenty, the participants should have the opportunity to decide if they wish to continue assembling in a large group setting or in smaller units. Should the latter be their choice, it is advisable that some orientation be presented about the subjects to be addressed in this particular dialogue. Sufficient time (at least fifteen minutes) ought to be allowed to enable

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<sup>1</sup>Jacob Neusner, The Way of Torah: An Introduction to Judaism (Belmont, Calif.: Dickenson Publishing Company, Inc., 1970), pp. 35-36.

<sup>2</sup>Salo Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jewish People (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), pp. 3-4.

the group to reassemble and share what has been discussed in the smaller units.

Several discussion stimulating questions should be noted from the reading materials. An example might be: "In the interpretation of the concept of Torah presented here, the emphasis is on the relationship of Torah to communal, rather than individual salvation. How do the participants relate that idea to their understanding of salvation, if the term is at all relevant to their belief system."

Session 7  
The Christian Faith Tradition

There is an astounding range of diversity within Christianity--a multitude of creeds, sects and denominations. Yet despite the plethora of ways of being a Christian, there is the unifying concept of Christ. One of the uniquely American Christian denominations, the Disciples of Christ, expressed this idea forcefully when they proclaimed: "No creed but Christ."<sup>1</sup> It is the idea

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur C. Piepkorn, Profiles in Belief: Volume II--Protestant Denominations (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), p. 631.

behind that all encompassing motto which is the subject of this dialogue.

Session Objectives: As a result of this session

1. Participants will be able to reconstruct in their own language how Christianity speaks of Jesus as the Christ, and what Christianity teaches about the personal, human consequences that come from accepting Jesus.
2. Participants will be encouraged to discuss critically what they and their faith traditions mean by a personal God, and what differences they see (as a result of the readings) in the way their respective traditions conceive of a personal God.

Synopsis of Readings: The opening readings are taken from an introductory text prepared for college students intending to study the Protestant faith.<sup>1</sup> The author, George Forell, analyzes the Christian declaration of faith that Jesus was fully human and fully divine. He then elaborates on the three forms in which his faith tradition speaks of the work of Christ--as prophet, priest

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<sup>1</sup>George W. Forell, The Protestant Faith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), pp. 159-188.

and king. The second reading, taken from the United Church of Christ Statement of Faith and accompanying interpretation, presents a different perspective on the incarnation.<sup>1</sup> Instead of making definitive assertions about an idea which seems admittedly difficult to comprehend, the interpretation explores the implications of the incarnation idea for what that says about the way the Christian is to live his or her life.

Methodology: As in the previous session, so in the present one it would be appropriate to inquire from the participants about their preferences for the discussion format.<sup>2</sup> Whichever type of arrangement is decided

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<sup>1</sup>Roger Lincoln Shinn and Daniel Day Williams, We Believe--An Interpretation of the United Church Statement of Faith (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1966), pp. 9-10, 76-77.

<sup>2</sup>In the initial usage of this curriculum, between Plymouth Congregational Church and Tifereth Israel Synagogue, both of Des Moines, Iowa, the participants expressed a preference for remaining in one large group for most of the dialogue sessions. The option was presented to them several times during the series, and they chose to break into smaller units on two occasions. It is likely that each experience will vary and the facilitators should be sensitive to this issue of format.

upon, the facilitators should encourage the congregants to discuss the central concept of the session through the use of several leading questions. Examples might be the following: "Both Judaism and Christianity speak of God in personal terms. Yet Judaism does not embrace the idea of a 'personified' God? Doesn't that make the Jewish concept too remote to be meaningful? Or does the Christian idea of Jesus as the incarnation (or translation) of God make God too accessible, too frail, too human?" "Is there a difference between saying that Jesus is the 'translation' of God, and saying that the human being is created in the image of God, which is, after all, a firm teaching of both traditions?" Other questions to elicit differences of viewpoint are to be found in the packet of readings prepared for the session.

Miscellany: There are a number of excellent audio-visual tools available. One especially effective movie which portrays Jesus in a strikingly sensitive and mature fashion is The Gospel According to St. Matthew.<sup>1</sup> Facilitators should seek to arrange for a screening of the movie,

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<sup>1</sup>Film may be rented from Films, Inc., of Chicago, Illinois.

with the discussion to follow. Obviously this would require a longer time frame for the session, and pertinent details should be worked out to enable all to attend.

Session 8  
Covenant and History--  
Jewish Peoplehood, Israel and the World

One of the distinguishing facets of Jewish life is the presence within the individual Jew of a consciousness of "peoplehood." To be sure, not all modern Jews share in that sense of kinship with their fellow Jews. But a careful reading of Jewish history and its sacred and secular literature confirms that, for the vast majority of the Jews, there was a sense of being bound to a people destined to enjoy freedom and ultimate sovereignty. Throughout the two millenia of the diaspora, the people nurtured that dream. They also were never permitted to forget, the prophetic voice which called them to universal allegiance in the causes of social justice, for those passages became an integral part of Jewish worship and study. Jewish intellectual history can be read, therefore, as a continuing struggle between loyalty to the people's survival and commitment to the universal causes of common humanity.

The Christian cannot hope to understand the Jewish faith experience without studying this dimension of the Jewish tradition. That is especially so in the twentieth century, which has made the American Jew even more conscious of his or her affiliation with the Jewish people throughout the globe.<sup>1</sup>

Session Objectives: As a result of this session,

1. Participants will be able to describe the intrinsic connection between Jewishness and ethnic identity, and the corresponding bond Jews feel to their fellow Jews in the world.
2. Participants will be encouraged to discuss the dynamic tensions between Jewish particularism and universalism, and then explore with each other if those opposing tendencies have counterparts in Christian thought.

Synopsis of Readings: As the readings for session six had opened with an appropriate citation from the Centenary Perspective of Reform Judaism, so here too the readings begin with the final paragraphs from that text.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Naomi W. Cohen, American Jews and the Zionist Idea (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1975), pp. 142-150.

<sup>2</sup>Eugene Borowitz, Reform Judaism Today: Book I--Reform in the Process of Change (New York: Behrman House, 1978), pp. xxiii-xxv.

Reform Judaism, in its formative period, endorsed the universal prophetic ideal and paid correspondingly less attention to parochial concerns. But the events of the twentieth century have effected a shift in thinking within the Reform movement, which is eloquently expressed in the Perspective.

The second reading is taken from the writings of Canadian Jewish philosopher Emil Fackenheim.<sup>1</sup> He was one of the first Jewish thinkers to grapple with writing a new theology in the aftermath of World War II, the Holocaust and the founding of the State of Israel. He has contributed some entirely new concepts to Jewish theology, especially in his revolutionary utterance about "the Commanding Voice of Auschwitz." The final reading is taken from a journal article by Eugene Borowitz.<sup>2</sup> In it, he speculates on the changes which contemporary events have wrought in Jewish thought, occasioning a reformulation of

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<sup>1</sup>Emil Fackenheim, God's Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections (New York: New York University Press, 1970), pp. 84-89.

<sup>2</sup>Eugene Borowitz, "The Dialectic of Jewish Particularity," Journal of Ecumenical Studies 8 (Summer 1971):560-574.

the age-old dialectic between universalism and particularism.

Methodology: A superb movie, Let My People Go, produced for television by David Wolper, should be obtained.<sup>1</sup> Arrangements should be made to extend the discussion period so that there will be sufficient time to explore the issues raised by the readings after viewing the forty-five minute film.

Following the movie, the group should form a circle, at which time the facilitator can initiate the dialogue by asking the participants to comment on the movie in light of the readings. After a ten or fifteen minute period devoted to that subject, it would be fitting to guide the dialogue to a consideration of other issues raised in the readings. One suitable question for such purposes might be: "Why do Jews, even American Jews, believe that the existence of a sovereign Jewish state is indispensable to traditional Jewish goals?"

Miscellany: The required equipment for the viewing of the movie should be obtained, and arrangements made well ahead of time to secure the movie.

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<sup>1</sup>Available from Alden Films of Brooklyn, New York.

Session 9  
Covenant and History  
The Christian Perspective

The ninth session of the dialogue is the last of the sessions devoted to exploring the theological building blocks of the faiths. The seventh session had introduced participants to several contemporary ways in which Christian thinkers write of Jesus as the Christ. Now in this session the focus turns to the larger question--what is the relationship of those who profess Jesus as Christ to the world in which they reside? What posture toward the prevailing culture does the loyal Christian assume? There is some sense in which this issue--the church and the world--is the Christian counterpart to the question explored in the previous session--the Jewish People (particularism) and the world (universalism). When appropriate during the dialogue itself, attempts will be made to note the possible points of contact between the two.

Session Objectives: As a result of this session

1. Participants will be able to discuss critically the ways in which Christian theology has conceived of the Church-World dialectic.
2. Participants will be encouraged to exchange views

about how they conceive of the interplay between their religious institution and the surrounding culture.

Synopsis of Readings: H. Richard Niebuhr's Christ and Culture is considered the classic study of this subject. Niebuhr states the task of his essays in this way:

Given these two complex realities--Christ and culture--an infinite dialogue must develop in the Christian conscience and the Christian community. In his single-minded direction toward God, Christ leads men away from the temporality and pluralism of culture. In its concern for the conservation of the many values of the past, culture rejects the Christ who bids men rely on grace.<sup>1</sup>

Niebuhr's analysis produces five different responses to this issue. Following the exposition of those five answers, the readings for this section conclude with an excerpt from Harvey Cox's The Secular City.<sup>2</sup> In the section herein included, Cox interprets some classic Christian theological language in such a way as to argue that the church must

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<sup>1</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1975), pp. 11-13, 29-32, 39-43.

<sup>2</sup>Harvey Cox, The Secular City (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965), pp. 108-128.

adopt a rigorous posture toward contemporary society. Because Cox's book achieved considerable attention when it was published, it seemed like a particularly appropriate choice to exemplify the Christian activist ethic with which many Christians identify.

Methodology: The participants should assemble in a circle, and one of the facilitators should review the basic arguments of the Niebuhr book. Alternatively, the facilitator might request a participant to do so. There is a Jewish evaluation of the Niebuhr thesis, in which the author attempts to demonstrate how Niebuhr's categories might be applicable to Jewish thinkers.<sup>1</sup> One of the facilitators should be familiar with this material, and should make a brief presentation of it before plunging into the dialogue.

To encourage open discussion on this topic, facilitators can use any of the many questions included in the reading packet. Any contemporary references which highlight how religious institutions are currently struggling with this issue should be included in the

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<sup>1</sup>Eugene Borowitz, Contemporary Christologies: A Jewish Response (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), pp. 148-175.

dialogue. An example of a typical set of questions is:  
 "Can a religious community consistently maintain the same stance vis-a-vis society at large? In what times is the religious community more likely to be integrated into society? What are the benefits and dangers of such accommodation?"

Session 10  
Accepting Other Faiths

For the first nine meetings in this Jewish-Christian dialogue, participants have gathered together to discuss the past--whether that past was the history of their communities' interactions, or the past expressions of their faith traditions. The remaining two sessions represent a departure, for they concentrate not on the past but the future. In the tenth and eleventh meetings, the emphasis will be on exploring what it means for the Jew and the Christian (and especially the particular Jews and the particular Christians of these dialogues) to build a new relationship.

In an early effort at Christian ecumenical dialogue, published in the years immediately before Vatican II, the Catholic and Protestant representatives to the

dialogue drew up a set of guidelines that were to be operative whenever persons of their faiths met. The sixth and final condition which these theologians considered requisite for interfaith dialogue was that "each partner must recognize that all that can be done with the dialogue is to offer it up to God."<sup>1</sup> With this statement, they were suggesting that participants to dialogue should not measure the "success" of dialogue by "results." Rather, the participants should be humble enough to be satisfied with having learned about one another, and then to accept and honor the common endeavor in which they have been engaged.

Accordingly, the final two sessions do not have the goal of ascertaining if there have been any practical results. Rather, they are an attempt to bring a sense of perspective to the entire series by providing readings that will stimulate discussion about the question: How can the respective traditions be so understood that they enable Christians and Jews to recognize and honor the validity of the other faith?

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<sup>1</sup>Robert McAfee Brown and Gustave Weigel, S. J., An American Dialogue (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1960), p. 32.

Session Objectives: As a result of this session

1. Participants will be able to reconstruct the arguments of two liberal philosophers (one Christian and one Jewish) who explicate theologies which affirm the validity of other religions.
2. Participants will be encouraged to discuss the relationship of "truth" to "religion" and how a new understanding of that relationship is crucial to an acceptance of religious pluralism.

Synopsis of Readings: One Christian perspective on religious diversity is presented in an excerpt from John Macquarrie's Principles of Christian Theology.<sup>1</sup> In this section, the author explains why he rejects the view that only one religion can be true and suggests ways of validating other religions. Moreover, he urges his fellow Christians to adopt a new understanding of the "mission" of their faith consistent with religious diversity. A parallel reading by a Jewish thinker is to be found in a short essay by Abraham Joshua Heschel.<sup>2</sup> In these words,

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<sup>1</sup>John Macquarrie, Principles of Christian Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), pp. 155-158, 391-395.

<sup>2</sup>Abraham Joshua Heschel, "No Religion is an Island," Union Seminary Quarterly Review 21 (January 1966):117-134.

Heschel provides a Biblical basis for the Jewish faith to affirm the worth of other religions. He points out the dangers attendant to equating "religion" with "God," and defends the concept of many, and conflicting, religious truths.

Methodology: After the participants assemble together in a circle, facilitators should ask one or more of the participants to summarize briefly the readings. Then the congregants should be encouraged to enter into a dialogue on the issues which have been raised by the readings. Some example questions might be: "If Heschel and MacQuarrie agree, as they do, that truth wears many faces when one speaks of religions, does that imply that they, or you, accept the various cults as true? How do you judge the many sects which seem so popular? What are your criteria of evaluation?"

Session 11  
Living Our Faith in the Aftermath of Dialogue

"How will the participant have changed as a result of dialogue?" Surely this is a question which seems to warrant a response. As was noted above in the fourth chapter, there are some who argue that the concept of dialogue

is itself diminished when results are expected.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it is likely that the participants will want to reflect, at least in some ways, on how the dialogues have affected their perceptions, both of their own faith and that of their fellow participants from the other congregation.

Session Objectives: As a result of this session

1. Participants will be able to discuss the views of two theologians, one Christian and one Jewish, on how interfaith encounter altered their perceptions of their faith traditions.
2. Participants will be encouraged to speak freely about the ways in which they believe themselves to have shifted in their perceptions of each faith, and their fellow participants in the group.

Synopsis of Readings: An excerpt from the writings of a modern orthodox rabbi open the reading material for the final session.<sup>2</sup> In the reading, the author, Irving Greenberg, describes what he believes are the possible

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<sup>1</sup>See above, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>Irving Greenberg, "The New Encounter of Judaism and Christianity," Barat Review 3 (June 1968):113-125.

changes in theological perception likely to occur from interfaith dialogue. He suggests that Christians will learn from Jews to be more sensitive to history and to particularism, whereas Jews will come away from the encounter more appreciative of the concept of sacrament, and more sensitive to, and supportive of, the universalism latent in the Jewish tradition.

The second and third readings are taken from the writings of Paul van Buren, a Christian theologian.<sup>1</sup> The first selection recounts van Buren's journey to a new esteem for Judaism, resulting from his serious academic study of the faith, and his encounter with an active, vibrant Jewish community. In the last of the readings, from van Buren's recent book, Discovering the Way, the participants will have the chance to read one Christian theologian's ideas about how Christianity must learn from Judaism to adopt a different, more classical version of messianic hope.<sup>2</sup> The author also describes the form of hope appropriate to his co-religionists in the conduct of their daily lives.

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<sup>1</sup>Paul van Buren, "Probing the Jewish-Christian Reality," The Christian Century 98 (June 17, 1981):665-668.

<sup>2</sup>Paul van Buren, Discerning the Way: A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980), pp. 186-201.

Methodology: In the first part of the session, the group should assemble, at which time the group facilitators might begin by asking some volunteer to review the readings provided in the unit. A leading question might follow, such as: "Are there some changes in orientation to other faiths which you sense as we now complete this series of dialogues?" This part of the session should take approximately one-half the time period.

In the second half of the session, the facilitators should pass out a paper cup to each person.<sup>1</sup> The facilitator then explains that participants are going to bid farewell to each other, to toast one another and thank them for the experience in which they have participated. Facilitators might explain to the members of the group that this is the final event, and that in taking leave of another, each person can take something from the person-to-person and faith-to-faith encounter. Facilitators can then elaborate on the particular form of the toast s/he will make, in which the object is to toast the quality or gift which has been received from the other persons. In

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<sup>1</sup>Dov Peretz Elkins, Teaching People to Love Themselves (Rochester, N.Y.: Growth Associates, 1977), pp. 108-109.

the opening session, participants had first come to know each other in groups of two. It would be appropriate, if possible, to encourage those dyads to form one last time, and "toast" each other in the remaining minutes of the dialogue.

## A POSTSCRIPT

The program of Study Committee, in its initial meeting with the author, recommended that this work not attempt to measure the results of dialogue. The Committee reasoned that such an undertaking was exceptionally complicated and would lengthen unduly the project's completion. Furthermore it has been noted earlier in this work (Chapter Four) that experts on dialogue argue against any attempt to evaluate dialogue.

During the time that this dissertation was being completed, representatives of two Des Moines, Iowa, congregations have been using the material. It is anticipated that evaluation forms will be distributed to the participants. Attendance and interchange among the group members was exceptionally high indicating at the least that the subject and its form retained the interest of the participants.

The original materials were used between a Jewish congregation of the Conservative movement of Judaism, and a Protestant Church of the United Church of Christ. Several of the selections in the readings reflected those denominational alliances. In replicating this project, it is advisable for facilitators to search out additional material which would represent the orientations appropriate to the

affiliations of those taking part. It should be added, however, that the readings selected for the pilot program were chosen from the works of Christian and Jewish theologians of many denominations, and thus represent a wide range of positions.

## APPENDIX: READINGS FOR SESSIONS NINE AND ELEVEN

Session 9Covenant and History  
The Christian Perspective

Many years ago, a pastor pulled up his collar as he stepped out into the frigid air of a winter Boston night. Turning a corner, he saw a crowd gathering. When he drew close, he discovered that people were huddled around a stricken man who lay in pain. The minister pushed his way to the front, where he found a physician and policeman tending to the stricken man.

Learning that the newcomer was a priest, the doctor blurted out: "Father, it's too late for me to do anything. You'd better administer the last rites." The priest knew exactly what to do, even though he was just out of school and had known few instances such as this. Getting out his manual and the materials for the ritual, he knelt down to the dying man:

"My son, are you of the Catholic faith?"

"Yeah. Yeah."

"Do you know that you are a sinner against God?"

"Uhuh. Yeah..."

By now the end was near, and so the pastor raced through the liturgy, so as to get all the words in.

"Do you believe in the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?"

At this, the poor, injured and dying man took hold of his last breath as he said to the priest: "Say, what is this, Father? Here I am dying, and you want to run me all the way through the catechism?"

This story is a variation of one attributed to the late Cardinal Cushing of Boston, who used to tell it as a story about himself. In its present form, it is retold by Martin Marty in his little book The Lord's Supper to emphasize the same lesson which Cushing derived from it--that sometimes the Church forgets its reason for being, and pays too much attention to itself. But the Church always has a way of remembering what it is most about--"that it has more to do with people than with things."

"People more than things"--these words reflect the struggle of Christianity [and in its own way of Judaism too] to focus on the reason for the faith--to help and raise up the human being, to improve the lives of human-kind, spiritually and physically, intellectually and emotionally. It always seems that institutions are locked in a duel--between concern for their ideals and concern for their own selves. In session eight, readings were provided

which showed the ongoing tension within Judaism between particularism and universalism. In turning to Christianity, this tension takes a slightly different twist. In the Christian faith, the issue is one of the Church and the world. What should be the appropriate relationship of the Church and its adherents to the surrounding world? The readings show how two important contemporary Christian writers have approached this subject.

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 H. Richard Niebuhr, Christ and Culture (New York, Harper and Row, 1975)

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A Christian is ordinarily defined as "one who believes in Jesus Christ" or as "a follower of Jesus Christ." He might more adequately be described as one who counts himself as belonging to that community of men for whom Jesus Christ--his life, words, deeds, and destiny--is of supreme importance as the key to the understanding of themselves and their world, the main source of the knowledge of God and man, good and evil, the constant companion of the conscience, and the expected deliverer from evil. So great, however, is the variety of personal and communal "belief in Jesus Christ," so manifold the interpretation of his essential nature, that the question must arise whether the Christ of Christianity is indeed one Lord. For some

Christians and parts of the Christian community Jesus Christ is a great teacher and lawgiver who in what he said of God and the moral law so persuades the mind and will that there is henceforth no escape from him. Christianity is for them a new law and a new religion proclaimed by Jesus. In part it seems to be the cause which they have chosen; in part it is a cause which has chosen them, by wresting consent from their minds. For others Jesus Christ is not so much a teacher and revealer of truths and laws as in himself, in incarnation, death, resurrection, and living presence the revelation of God. Jesus Christ, by being what he was, by suffering what he did, by being defeated in crucifixion, and by returning victoriously from death, makes evident the being and nature of God, exercises the claim of God on human faith, and thus raises to a new life the men he encounters. For still others Christianity is primarily neither new teaching nor new life but a new community, the Holy Catholic Church; hence the work of Christ which occupies the center of their attention is his founding of this new society which mediates his grace through word and sacrament.

There are many other views of what it means to "believe in Jesus Christ."... Whatever roles he plays in the varieties of Christian experience, it is the same Christ who exercises these various offices. The founder of the church is the same Christ who gives the new law; the teacher of truths about God is the same Christ who is in himself

the revelation of the truth. The sacramentalist cannot escape the fact that the one who gives his body and blood is also the giver of the new commandments; the sectarian cannot avoid meeting in the ethical authority the forgiver of sins. Those who no longer know a "Christ after the flesh" still know the risen Lord as the same one whose deeds were described by those who "from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word." However great the variations among Christians in experiencing and describing the authority Jesus Christ has over them, they have this in common: that Jesus Christ is their authority, and that the one who exercises these various kinds of authority is the same Christ.

From this inadequate definition of the meaning of Christ we turn now to the task of defining, in similarly tenuous fashion, the meaning of culture. What do we mean in our use of this word when we say that the Christian church enduringly struggles with the problem of Christ and culture?...

What we have in view when we deal with Christ and culture is that total process of human activity and that total result of such activity to which now the name culture, now the name civilization, is applied in common speech. Culture is the "artificial, secondary environment" which man superimposes on the natural. It comprises language, habits, ideas, beliefs, customs, social organization, inherited artifacts, technical processes, and values. This "social

heritage," this "reality sui generis," which the New Testament writers frequently had in mind when they spoke of "the world," which is represented in many forms but to which Christians like other men are inevitably subject, is what we mean when we speak of culture....

Given these two complex realities--Christ and culture--an infinite dialogue must develop in the Christian conscience and the Christian community. In his single-minded direction toward God, Christ leads men away from the temporality and pluralism of culture. In its concern for the conservation of the many values of the past, culture rejects the Christ who bids men rely on grace. Yet the Son of God is himself child of a religious culture, and sends his disciples to tend his lambs and sheep, who cannot be guarded without cultural work. The dialogue proceeds with denials and affirmations, reconstructions, compromises, and new denials. Neither individual nor church can come to a stoppingplace in the endless search for an answer which will not provoke a new rejoinder....

Five sorts of answers are distinguished, of which three are closely related to each other as belonging to that median type in which both Christ and culture are distinguished and affirmed; yet strange family resemblances may be found along the whole scale.

Answers of the first type emphasize the opposition between Christ and culture. Whatever may be the customs of the society in which the Christian lives, and whatever the human achievements it conserves,

Christ is seen as opposed to them, so that he confronts men with the challenge of an "either-or" decision....

Recognition of a fundamental agreement between Christ and culture is typical of the answers offered by a second group. In them Jesus often appears as a great hero of human culture history; his life and teachings are regarded as the greatest human achievement; in him, it is believed, the aspirations of men toward their values are brought to a point of culmination; he confirms what is best in the past, and guides the process of civilization to its proper goal. Moreover, he is a part of culture in the sense that he himself is part of the social heritage that must be transmitted and conserved....

Three other typical answers agree with each other in seeking to maintain the great differences between the two principles and in undertaking to hold them together in some unity. They are distinguished from each other by the manner in which each attempts to combine the two authorities. One of them, our third type, understands Christ's relation to culture somewhat as the men of the second group do: he is the fulfillment of cultural aspirations and the restorer of the institutions of true society. Yet there is in him something that neither arises out of culture nor contributes directly to it. He is discontinuous as well as continuous with social life and its culture. The latter, indeed, leads men to Christ, yet only in so preliminary a fashion that a great heap is necessary if men are to

reach him or, better, true culture is not possible unless beyond all human achievement, all human search for values, all human society, Christ enters into life from above with gifts which human aspiration has not envisioned and which human effort cannot attain unless he relates men to a supernatural society and a new value-center. Christ is, indeed, a Christ of culture, but he is also a Christ above culture....

Another group of median answers constitutes our fourth type. In these the duality and inescapable authority of both Christ and culture are recognized, but the opposition between them is also accepted. To those who answer the question in this way it appears that Christians throughout life are subject to the tension that accompanies obedience to two authorities who do not agree yet must both be obeyed. They refuse to accommodate the claims of Christ to those of secular society, as, in their estimation, men in the second and third groups do. So they are like the "Christ-against-culture" believers, yet differ from them in the conviction that obedience to God requires obedience to the institutions of society and loyalty to its members as well as obedience to a Christ who sits in judgment on that society. Hence man is seen as subject to two moralities, and as a citizen of two worlds that are not only discontinuous with each other but largely opposed. In the polarity and tension of Christ and culture life must be lived precariously and sinfully in the hope of a

justification which lies beyond history. Luther may be regarded as the greatest representative of this type, yet many a Christian who is not otherwise a Lutheran finds himself compelled to solve the problem in this way.

Finally, as the fifth type in the general series and as the third of the mediating answers, there is the conversionist solution. Those who offer it understand with the members of the first and the fourth groups that human nature is fallen or perverted, and that this perversion not only appears in culture but is transmitted by it. Hence the opposition between Christ and all human institutions and customs is to be recognized. Yet the antithesis does not lead either to Christian separation from the world as with the first group, or to mere endurance in the expectation of a transhistorical salvation, as with the fourth. Christ is seen as the converter of man in his culture and society, not apart from these, for there is no nature without culture and no turning of men from self and idols to God save in society.

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Question for Review:

Niebuhr posits five ways of seeing the community of Christ in relation to the world at large. What are these?

Questions for Reflection:

In his book Contemporary Christologies--A Jewish Response, Eugene Borowitz suggests that a way of broadening Niebuhr's analysis to incorporate Jewish thought categories is to replace "Christ" by "Torah." Thus Borowitz writes that some Jewish thinkers write as if contrasting Torah and Culture, others write of Torah above culture, and so through the five typologies identified by Niebuhr.

As a focal point for dialogue then, consider the following questions as you determine your particular perspective on the question of the relationship between religion (Christ or Torah) and the world (Culture): Can a religious community consistently maintain the same stance vis-a-vis society at large? In what kinds of times would the religious community be more likely to be integrated into society? What are the benefits of such integration? What are the dangers? Both Biblical Judaism and Christianity speak of the prophetic voice. What place does the concept of the prophet--the spokesperson for God's commanding voice and values--occupy in contemporary religion?

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 Harvey Cox, The Secular City (New York, Macmillan Company, 1965)

The excerpt which follows is taken from an unusual book, unusual in the sense that it is a book on theology which was a bestseller. Though it is now better than a decade and a half since the publication of Harvey Cox's The Secular City, and many of the details and references in the book seem dated, he makes some insightful observations about what he believes to be the proper role of the Church in the world.

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The forms of church life are dependent on the function, or mission, of the church. They must be designed to facilitate locating and participating in the "mission of God." They must effectuate rather than hinder the congregation's capacity to discover and cooperate in the work of God in the world. This means that the content of the church's ministry is simply the continuation of Jesus' ministry. It cooperates and participates in the ministry of Jesus. But what is the character of Jesus' ministry? Jesus himself described it in these terms:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
 Because he has anointed me to preach good news to the  
 poor  
 He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and  
 recovering of sight to the blind,  
 To set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke  
 4:18, 19)

Jesus thought of his task as threefold. He was to announce the arrival of the new regime. He was to personify its meaning. And he was to begin distributing its benefits. Similarly the church has a threefold responsibility. Theologians call it kerygma (proclamation), diakonia (reconciliation, healing, and other forms of service), and koinonia (demonstration of the character of the new society). The church is the avant-garde of the new regime, but because the new regime breaks in at different points and in different ways, it is not possible to forecast in advance just what appearance the church will have. It is not even possible to delineate the mission of the church "in the city." Cities differ, and the visage of the church in any given urban environment will differ. There are, however, certain basic facts about urban secular life that will need to be taken into consideration by any church. Let us take the three elements of the church's task as avant-garde--kerygma, diakonia, and koinonia--and see how they work out in a typical urban setting.

The Church's Kerygmatic Function:  
Broadcasting the Seizure of Power

The word kerygma means "message." The church, like any avant-garde, has a story it is trying to get across. It is telling people what is coming, what to expect next. Employing political terminology, the church broadcasts the fact that a revolution is under way and that the pivotal battle has already taken place.

This broadcasting function of the church is crucial. It makes the church different from any other avant-garde. It has no plan for rebuilding the world. It has only the signal to flash that the One who frees slaves and summons men to maturity is still in business. It flashes this signal not in the form of general propositions but in the language of specific announcements about where the work of liberation is now proceeding and concrete invitations to join in the struggle.

Exodus and Easter remain the two foci of biblical faith, the basis on which a theology of the church must be developed. The Exodus is the event which sets forth "what God is doing in history." He is seen to be liberating people from bondage, releasing them from political, cultural, and economic captivity, providing them with the occasion to forge in the wilderness a new symbol system, a new set of values, and a new national identity. Easter means that the same activity goes on today, and that where such liberating activity occurs, the same Yahweh of Hosts is at work. Both Exodus and Easter are caught up in the inclusive symbol of the Kingdom, the realization of the liberating rule of God. In our terms, God's action today, through secularization and urbanization, puts man in an unavoidable crisis. He must take responsibility in and for the city of man or become once again a slave to dehumanizing powers.

The Church's Diakonic Function:  
Healing the Urban Fractures

Some scholars translate diakonia as "service." But service has been so cheapened that it retains little significance. Diakonia really refers to the act of healing and reconciling, binding up wounds and bridging chasms, restoring health to the organism. The Good Samaritan is the best example of diakonia. In the case of the secular city, diakonia means the responsibility of the church for effecting what Gibson Winter has called a "ministry of communication" which will bring back into reciprocity the fragmented pieces of what is essentially a functioning whole. Healing means making whole, restoring the integrity and mutuality of the parts. In order to be a healer, the church needs to know the wounds of the city firsthand. It needs also to know where and how these abrasions are being healed, so that it can nourish the healing process. For the church itself has no power to heal. It merely accepts and purveys the healing forces which God, working with man, sets loose in the city.

What are the major cleavages in the age of the secular city? Where is healing going on? We cannot deduce answers to this question from the Bible or theology. We must depend on specialists in the study of urban life. Let us first locate the fissures.

Edward C. Banfield and James Q. Wilson of the Harvard-M.I.T. Joint Center for Urban Studies, in their excellent book City Politics,

mentioned these salient cleavages in the fabric of urban life:

(1) center-city versus suburbs; (2) haves versus have-nots; (3) ethnic and racial tensions, especially white versus Negro; (4) the competition between political parties.

The Church's Koinoniatic Function:  
Making Visible the City of Man

The Greek word koinonia is usually translated "fellowship." In our discussion it will designate that aspect of the church's responsibility in the city which calls for a visible demonstration of what the church is saying in its kerygma and pointing to in its diakonia. It is "hope made visible," a kind of living picture of the character and composition of the true city of man for which the church strives. ...The church is the avant-garde of God, that group whose ties to particular political and cultural arrangements are sufficiently tenuous that it is always ready to move to the next stage in history. It lives in tents, not in temples. It is a people whose life is informed by its confident expectation that God is bringing in a new regime and that they are already allowed to taste its fruits.

Karl Barth calls the church "God's provisional demonstration of his intention for all humanity." More than simply a community of hope, the church participates in a provisional reality: It is where the shape and texture of the future age come to concrete visibility....

The relationship between the church and these signs of the

Kingdom is twofold. The church is one of the signs, and it points to and supports the other signs. It is wrong to identify the church with the Kingdom. Its whole existence is a derivative one, dependent entirely on the prior reality of the Kingdom. The church's koinoniac or demonstrating function dovetails with its kerygmatic functions. Its job is to proclaim and to show the world what the signs of the Kingdom are: harbingers of a reality that is breaking into history not from the past but from the future. They are warnings of a future for which we had best prepare, making whatever sacrifices are necessary. The avant-garde of God makes its announcement by allowing its own life to be shaped by the future Kingdom (not past tradition) and by indicating with its lips and its life where other signs of the Kingdom are appearing.

The koinoniac function of the church cannot be executed unless the church itself includes all the elements of the heterogeneous metropolis. In the secular city, a church divided along ethnic, racial, or denominational lines cannot even begin to perform its function. The character of such a church is still shaped by forces emanating from the tribal and town epochs. It is a prisoner of what the Bible calls "this passing age." Such a so-called church is not a breakthrough point into the future but a bastion of the past, and as such it is not a church at all. It is not a part of the eschatological community. With considerably less restraint than has

been exercised here, the Reformers called such groups "antichurches" and their leaders representatives of the anti-Christ. Such language is not popular today, but the point should not be missed. Jesus Christ comes to his people not primarily through ecclesiastical traditions, but through social change. He "goes before" first as a pillar of fire and then as the presence which moved from Jerusalem to Samaria to the end of the earth. He is always ahead of the church, beckoning it to get up to date, never behind it waiting to be refurbished. Canon and tradition function not as sources of revelation but as precedents by which present events can be checked out as the possible loci of God's action.

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Questions for Review:

According to Cox, what are the classic responsibilities of the Church to the world? What modern interpretations does Cox assign to the three terms which he uses?

Questions for Reflection:

Where does Cox's interpretation of the relationship between the Church and the world belong in the Niebuhrian categories? Do the Christians agree with Cox about the Church's role in the world (and do the Jewish participants see the synagogue as functioning in a similar fashion)?

Consider one specific example: Cox speaks of the Church's diakonic function, which is "the act of healing and reconciling, binding up wounds and bridging chasms, restoring health to the organism." A comparable Jewish concept may be found in the Hebrew word "Shalom." Often translated as "peace," the word comes from a Hebrew root meaning "complete" or "whole." Accordingly, in modern Hebrew, the word for "reconciliation" is "Hashlama"--from the same root as "Shalom." There is a famous statement in the Ethics of the Fathers (an early Rabbinic compilation of ethical aphorisms) which says: "Be of the disciples of Aaron, seeking Shalom and pursuing Shalom." A contemporary way of saying this would be: "Be a seeker of reconciliation."

Both Judaism and Christianity stress that their adherents should accept the task of being reconcilers. Cox would have the modern religious person be a reconciler of the "urban fractures." Is he being realistic about the power and ability of the religious institutions in this task? Do you feel that your church or synagogue should fulfill that function? Can it? What percentage of the resources (time, money, personpower) should the religious institutions devote to that function? And are the "urban

fractures" of which Cox writes still the same today as they were when he wrote?

## Readings for Session 11

## Living Our Faith in the Aftermath of Dialogue

Each of the sessions in these dialogues, it is hoped, has confirmed the theme announced in the opening set of readings. These meetings began by considering the words of Wilfred Cantwell Smith:

There is nothing in heaven or earth that can legitimately be called the Christian faith. There have been and are the faiths of individual Christians, each personal, each specific, each immediate. Besides, there have been now and then some generalized statements by theologians, intellectual systematizations of what they as persons conceived that faith ought to be, though these generalized statements have differed among themselves and no one ought has been or could be free of the humanity (particularity, fallibility, historicity) of the man or men who composed it.

In the sessions which have followed, you along with your fellow partners have looked at some of the "intellectual systematizations" of both Christianity and Judaism. Those aspects of the religious traditions contained in the readings have been included not as authoritative positions but rather as partial expressions by learned persons of what they believe their faith ought to be. Each time that you have met, the goal has been to take these "systematizations" and make them your own--by either affirming the

views contained therein, or by arguing that such views do not adequately or correctly express your conception of your faith. In these dialogues, it is hoped, Jews and Christians have learned, not only about what some authorities say the faiths means, but more significantly, what your faith means, what it is that orients your life, and defines the way you choose to believe and behave.

In this final session, the focus will be, once more, on two statements by religious writers. The readings for this unit include excerpts from the writings of an orthodox rabbi and a Christian philosopher who write about their faith in the aftermath of interfaith dialogue. Their writings articulate the way they look at their own faith after having encountered the faiths of others. These readings are included to provide you with models of what two persons, who have like you participated in dialogue, are prepared to say as a result. The final words--and the truly meaningful ones, will come from you--as you decide what it is that you can say about your faith, and that of your neighbor, after having taken part in these interfaith meetings.

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Irving Greenberg, "The New Encounter of Judaism and Christianity," Barat Review 3 (June 1968):113-125.

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The original encounter of Jews and Christians took place, of course, at the very birth of Christianity some two millennia ago....

We have, then, a most paradoxical situation in this emerging new encounter between Judaism and Christianity. On the surface, both religions are faced with serious threats to their viability and existence. They are on the defensive rather than in the moment of preparation for a vast expansion. Judaism is still bloody and deeply crippled from its recent experiences and even short of people to participate in dialogue. Christianity is under the pressure of sins of the past vis-a-vis Judaism. Yet surface appearances notwithstanding, there are many more possibilities of positive interaction and mutual enrichment in the new situation than were present or were explored in the first encounter. And the particularly vital new element in the current dialogue is the entry into it of the traditional groups and the theologians who are the "last in" to the situation. As long as the motives are defense or conversion (and on the official level, these two motives are still quite strong), the fruitfulness of the dialogue is likely to be primarily institutional and limited. And as long as in the early days, the encounter was between the indifferent or the excessively modernized with the

excessively modernised, the religious possibilities were at best ambiguous. (One is reminded of the oldtime quip that an interfaith dinner is where a Jew who does not believe in Judaism meets a Christian who does not believe in Christianity--and they find that they have much in common.) When people come together out of religious commitment and not to find the secularism that they have in common, the new possibility is fundamental religious and theological enlightenment of each other. If there is the courage and security to confront each other in all our particularity, contradiction and uniqueness, the two traditions can significantly enhance or deepen themes and strands in each other which should be augmented or developed in the present moment. The truth is that every religion has many positions along the spectrum and many possible options of response to the moment which it does not explore fully. The other tradition may indeed have explored the alternate way. Seeing it in the other's light, may make it more meaningful or more possible in my own framework. Not infrequently the new appreciation of the alternate model may lead to the repositioning of the elements in my own total religious response.

For Christians the new encounter offers the possibility of a fuller recovery of the Biblical, this-worldly thrust of religious faith. It would mean a greater stress on the claims of social justice and on sacralizing the secular ("secularizing the sacred" in

current Christian theology). This is a dimension which Christians are seeking to recover and there are many areas where the halacha and the constellation of Jewish tradition have kept and intensified the centrality of these concerns. There are many practical techniques as well which can serve as models for response to be learned. I believe that the sense of the peoplehood of the believing community is another area which has been axiomatic in Jewish tradition which will be increasingly important in Christian self-understanding. This last will be connected to the question of exile. One of the most difficult trials facing Christianity is the fact that having been a majority religion for most of its life, it is now entering into its own diaspora: the exile of Christianity in the secular world. There are many problems of living in exile. Sometimes it distorts the personality as one seeks self-protection. Sometimes the need for identity may lead to isolation or to hostility and even hatred for the world which surrounds. This is one problem. But there is an even more subtle problem in the discovery of the world. Sometimes its motive force is a desire to escape from or evade the fact of being in exile. This can lead to such a great desire to be with the world that one surrenders one's own unique insights. The Jewish experience of living in exile, of being in the world yet not totally of it, could significantly strengthen Christianity at this moment. This is necessary lest Christianity in its legitimate desire to recognise

and join in that which is good and significant in contemporary secular culture, also forget that it still has a prophetic and critical role to play even in this world. It would be all too easy for Christians to confuse their own position with the liberal or even with the radical movement. I find frequently a strong tendency in all too many liberal Christians to identify simplistically with the new left or with the third world--as if the underdog is automatically righteous. To identify totally with the world, however, is to betray the dialectic of religious living. It is to surrender the duty to unite, in one commitment, total immersion in the immanent with the complete awareness of the transcendent. It is interesting to note how a secular theologian such as Harvey Cox has tried to balance his paean to the secular city with a new stress on this need to dissociate and play a critical role within it. Jewish theologians who were fresh from Auschwitz and from a century and a half of excessive identification with the world found it difficult to fall into one sided readings of Cox's identification with the world in the first place. Only as it maintains its capacity for dialectical religious living can Christianity play its role of fullest significance for the world.

Another area of potential insight for Christianity is of particular promise for Catholics. As Catholicism moves, in its exploration of the personal, toward the pole of personal participation as

against the stress on the sacramental dimension of religion, it could gain illumination from the Jewish experience. The destruction of the Temple by force majeure as it were, turned Judaism from its sacramental and grace options to a deep exploration of religion as a way of life and toward the stress on personal participation, the internalization of religious values and toward the "priesthood of the laity." (Sometimes history is strangely beneficent in destroying something which would not have voluntarily been given up--but which once destroyed frees me to explore even more fruitful possibilities.) In Judaism's experience, Catholics can find a response to a similar experience (the modern situation is undermining the sacramental). Judaism contains a case study in all the options which arise at the moment of destruction (including the groups which deny that the destruction has taken place and urge that no adaptation be made) and possibly even a chance to see what mistakes were made that might be avoided. Of course all analogies are of limited value but there is enough similarity to offer much sound insight.

For Jews too, the new encounter offers extraordinary opportunities for religious illumination, not only in a new understanding of Christianity but in the internal development of Judaism itself. For one, it may help overcome the equivalent hostility-cancer in Jewry. To the extent that the pressure of the past has legitimated an antagonism or stereotyping of the Gentile, and to the extent that this has become an important dimension of Jewish identification and Jewish

self-definition, the death of this impulse through contact may lead to the forced option of a Judaism of voluntary choice and love. This would end the tragic distortion of the Jew's identity being partly the definition: I am against the other. (I am reminded of a layman who once bemoaned to me the statistics I had given on the drop of anti-Semitism in American life, saying: Rabbi, this is terrible. What will we do if the anti-Semites no longer persecute us? How will we remain Jews?") One can imagine the religious corruption which is likely to set in when one defines one's self in such negative terms. Similarly, in a kind of dialectical mirror to the Catholic experience, Judaism may come to revalue and recover some of its own sacramental dimensions. The development of the Rabbinic tradition has shifted the center of equilibrium of Jewish religious life away from this concern so that the role of God's grace is often relatively neglected. A more subtle balance of grace and personal responsibility can emerge from exposure to the theme of grace in the other. Perhaps the most striking Jewish repositioning may take place in the dialectic of particularism and universalism. Built in to the covenant with Abraham's seed is a particularist pole which lies in exquisite balance with the vision of God's universal love in many prophetic and rabbinic sources. In the course of the ghetto experience, the equilibrium point was inevitably pushed toward the pole of particularity and parochialism. One may hope that out of the dialogue will

come a new Christian appreciation of the particular. I am profoundly convinced that such new appreciation is a desperate necessity if the modern mass culture is not to destroy the variety and legitimacy of humanness. However, I am equally certain that the classic dialectical balance in Judaism of concern for all mankind, of seeing Judaism as something responsible for the world and which seeks to speak to the world at large must be recovered in all its range. This may be one of the gifts of dialogue and modern life to Judaism....

The great question for us is: can we create a community which is committed enough to live in an open situation? My own community (the Orthodox Jewish community) is full of predictions that the Catholic Church is not long for this world and that it will dissolve into secular culture. These predictions are ideological rationalizations, of course. They justify not trying the same renewal experiment--which is what the group is afraid to do. The reassurance to status quo is the claim that once a religious group yields its inner community sanctions and management of the information flow, it will not be able to maintain itself. This is, indeed, a real possibility which I am sure many Catholics have noted; some with anticipation, some with fear. Given the unprecedented nature of this effort, dialogue may play its most constructive role. Can we genuinely create a Judaism and a Christianity free of in-group distortions and rewards? We will never know until we try. Insofar as Judaism

has been caricatured within the Christian community, the Christian need not experience Christianity in all its depth and beauty in order to remain a Christian. If he can dismiss Judaism as legalism or tribalism or petrification, there is no serious alternative to match. Insofar as a Jew could dismiss Christianity as ascetic or other-worldly, he need not confront the question of the validity and significance of living in his own tradition in its grandeur. Whether, indeed, the religious communities are prepared to give up the easy sanctions of human distortions and develop a faith that is so open to God that it does not need the in-group payoffs is a big question mark. If religions cannot do this, then their future appears dim indeed. The culture will become more pervasive and the mass media can reach deeper and deeper into the groups with alternate images and models of living. Apparently films do affect people even more deeply than books and identify them with the other, pace Marshall McLuhan. The key to religious survival and to variety and plural cultural trends in an increasingly homogenized world depends on the creative solution of this challenge. And the only way religions can raise people in this open manner, the only way they can develop a new vocabulary and imagery that does not distort the other is by speaking constantly and by raising people constantly in the presence of the other. It may take centuries to develop the new vocabularies and images and they will only be done if the new encounter is open,

frank and loving.

To attempt this experiment will be to become involved in fundamental theological rethinking and changes within our own traditions. I do not believe that Christianity can seriously do this without a profound shift in its understanding of the relationships of the two covenants--Jewish and Christian. It will have to come to the recognition that God's promises are not lightly given and are not forfeited. Even as they were given by God's love rather than man's merit, so they are not lost by men's lack of merit--if indeed they did lack merit. This would mean a new Christian self-understanding which would base its validity on its own moral and religious life--not on the death or insufficiency of others. Nor will Judaism be exempt from self-consideration. The great searching point there will undoubtedly be the Gentile-Jewish dichotomy which characterizes the Jewish way and life and which can too easily slip from legitimate particularity to egocentricity and insensitivity to the fullness and claims of the other. These reconsiderations will not be *quid pro quos* but the fruit of the discovery and love of the other....

There are indeed men who are willing to live side by side until the end of days who do so because they are fully confident that the Messiah, when he comes, will confirm their rightness all along. Of course, it is a step forward to live together until that time. But even here, we may underrate the love and wonder of the Lord. I have

often thought of this as a kind of nice truism. Let us wait until the Messiah comes. Then we can ask him if this is his first coming or his second. Each of us could look forward to a final confirmation. A friend, Zalman Schachter, taught me that perhaps I was a bit too narrow in my trust in God with this conception. He wrote a short story in which the Messiah comes at the end of days. Jews and Christians march out to greet him and establish his reign. Finally they ask if this is his first or second coming. To which the Messiah smiles and replies: "No comment"...Perhaps we will then truly realize that it was worth it all along for the kind of life we lived along the way.

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Questions for Review:

What is the paradox which Greenberg finds in the new encounter between Judaism and Christianity? What themes does Greenberg believe each faith will come to appreciate within itself as a consequence of dialogue?

Questions for Reflection:

Greenberg says that each faith will be enhanced by contact with the other. Do you agree with the changes in orientation, in emphasis which he predicts dialogue will effect? Are there others which he has omitted which you

feel strongly about?

Echoes of two earlier readings (the Niebuhr and Cox selections from session nine) are present in Greenberg's essay as he speaks of the relationship of religion to surrounding culture. What role do you see your faith playing in the dialectic? Do the various institutional expressions of your faith seem too active or too passive in their approach to the surrounding environment?

What reaction do you have to Greenberg's assertion that there is a tendency "in all too many liberal Christians to identify simplistically with the new left or with the third world--as if the underdog is automatically righteous"?

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 Paul van Buren, "Probing the Jewish-Christian Reality,"  
The Christian Century, 98 (June 17-24, 1981):665-668.

The final readings are from the works of Paul van Buren, a Christian systematic theologian. The first piece is excerpted from an essay published in The Christian Century, which had invited Dr. van Buren to contribute an article for a series called "How My Mind has Changed." The second selection is from his book Discerning the Way, which is the product of his reflections occasioned by his change of mind.

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I took on the chairmanship of the religion department at Temple University in 1974....The first and primary job confronting me as chairman of the department was to shepherd the troops into making two appointments in Judaism to replace Jewish colleagues who had left us for other institutions. The process took us two years, and I spent a good deal of that time talking with Jewish scholars, reading about Judaism, and reading the works of and finally interviewing candidates....

I was more than fascinated. In the midst of administrative chores taking more and more of my time, I was set to thinking furiously. The Christianity I knew said that what I was coming to see so clearly simply did not exist, had not existed since Jesus Christ. What I was discovering was something of which I had heard nothing as an undergraduate, seminarian or graduate student. Yes, I knew that Barth had said some highly original and interesting things about ancient Israel and even about the continuing Jewish entity, but the latter was not real. It was but a shost of ancient Israel, kept alive in the world as only a shadow of something else.

What I was coming face to face with, however, was no shadow, no "indirect witness to Jesus Christ," but a fully historical (certainly "warts and all") living tradition, constituting a quite direct witness

to the God of Israel. If Christian theology said that this did not exist, then Christian theology, at least on this point, was simply wrong. It was wrong about Israel, the people of God, and therefore it was to that extent wrong about the God of Israel, wrong about the God and Father of Jesus Christ. I was far more than fascinated; I was back at my old discipline, wrestling with fundamental issues of systematic theology. What would Christian theology look like if it were corrected at so central a point? Would it even be recognizable as Christian theology?...

The task confronting me--indeed, confronting the whole of theology and the whole of the church, if it were ever to notice it--was therefore to understand and interpret what God had done in Jesus Christ that had resulted in the concurrent existence and history of the church and the Jewish people. Both were there, side by side. I had to understand how this had come about.

No church history I had ever been taught had so much as hinted at the real historical situation. And what was that Judaism of the post-Exilic period, which had produced not only Jesus of Nazareth but also Yohanan ben Zakkai, and which was to flower in not just patristic Christianity but also, during precisely the same centuries, in rabbinic Judaism? Clearly I had much to learn. I therefore escaped at the first decent moment, at the close of my first term as chairman, and went off to read for a year--and think.

The last third of the decade of the '70s was spent digesting, digging deeper and formulating for publication the results of the change of mind that took place during the middle third. The prolegomena, or things to be said first, of the larger (and multivolume) systematic reflection on the matter, subtitled "a theology of the Jewish-Christian reality," has already appeared (Discerning the Way [Seabury, 1980]). Rather than speculate about what lies ahead, however, I would prefer to focus now on my perceptions of my context and my work, as these have been influenced by my change of mind....

To return to the theme of this series, let me conclude with three points, the clarification of which will help define how my mind has changed in the past decade. The points are that I am now a Christian, doing systematic theology, not "Holocaust theology." First, I am a Christian, not a Jew. The more I learn about Judaism and the Jewish people, the clearer it becomes that I am not a Jew, not an "honorary Jew," not a Jew by adoption or election. I am a gentile, a gentile who seeks to serve the God of Israel because as a Christian I share in the call of that God to serve him in his church, alongside, not as part of, his people Israel. As a gentile, I am bound to that God not by Torah but by Jesus Christ. That, as I see it, is not my decision but his, or it is mine only as an obedient acknowledgment of his.

Second, I have returned to the work I left off in the beginning

of the '60s, the self-critical task of the church called systematic theology. I have now found a new lens, Judaism, through which to carry on this work....

Finally, in the light of all that has gone on in the '70s, I must say that I do not in any way conceive of myself as a Holocaust theologian or a theologian of the Holocaust. The horror of the Holocaust has surely opened the eyes of many Christians to the reality of the Jewish people. I have told the story of how my eyes were opened, which was not by way of the Holocaust. What Christians need to see, in my judgment, is not the Holocaust, but that which lives after and in spite of the Holocaust, the living reality, "warts and all," of the Israel of God, the Jewish people.

What concerns me as a Christian theologian is whether Christians will come to see that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is still loved, revered and obeyed by his original love, the people of God, the Jews. And if most of them do not love and serve God, what shall we say about most of those who have been baptized? The reality of the Jewish people, fixed in history by the reality of their election, in their faithfulness in spite of their unfaithfulness, is as solid and sure as that of the gentile church. That is what I ran into and had to see, and that is what accounts, as far as I can tell, for how my mind has changed in the past decade, and my agenda for the future.

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Paul van Buren, Discerning the Way: A Theology of the Jewish-Christian Reality (New York: The Seabury Press, 1980), pp. 186-201.

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As Israel was created a nation and a people, so its hope has ever been primarily national and social. Its hope has been in the salvation of the nation, the people. Its hope has been for the restoration, the redemption of the Jews. As George Foot Moore put this for rabbinic Judaism: "What the Jew craved for himself was to have a part in the future golden age of the nation....It was only so, not in some blissful lot for his individual self apart, that he could conceive of perfect happiness." Israel's hope was therefore historical, in the strict sense that what was hoped for was a new condition in the historical future of this actual people on this solid earth.

Israel's hope, Jewish hope, is of the sort that comes from understanding oneself as part of a people underway. Jewish hope means that redemption lies out ahead; creation is far from complete. Israel hopes as a people on the move, whose history is going somewhere, namely toward the fulfillment of all God's promises to His creation which He gave through His people Israel. To believe that Israel's history is going somewhere entails the belief that creation is going somewhere. Its story is not over; we are in the midst. With this

hope for the completion of creation, for the whole of mankind coming to serve the One God and so of Israel arriving at the stage of righteousness and peace in its own promised Land, unthreatened by war or foreign domination, Israel has been strengthened to continue to walk in God's Way, its hope never stronger than when the times seemed most hopeless.

When one reflects on the actual history of the Jewish people, of which the Holocaust was the ultimate but by no means the only horror, one can only stand in wonder before the survival of Jewish hope.... one can realize how a Jew today can find it difficult to hope for more than survival for oneself and one's children. We are in no position to say anything to the Jews about their hope; our sketch of the formal outlines of Israel's traditional hope is intended only to help us with our own conversation. As for their conversation, we must leave that to them; only we dare not, on this stage of our Way, stop praying for the peace of Jerusalem and for the speedy coming of redemption.

Against the background of the hope of Israel and traditional Judaism, we must now consider the character of our hope, first made available to us Gentiles when we were drawn by God into relationship with His son, Jesus of Nazareth, as our King and Lord (Eph. 2:12). The beginning is grounded in Jewish hope, of course, for the proclamation of Jesus as it is presented in the Apostolic Writings was of

the imminent fulfillment of that for which every faithful Jew longed. God's reign over His creation was about to break in. The sign of the dawning of the new age was Jesus himself, identified from Easter on as God's messiah. At first, it would seem, the new era was expected immediately, before his disciples could complete their preaching mission, within "this" generation, within their lifetime. A generation later, the conviction remained strong that the new age might arrive at any moment. The faithful were to begin living now in total anticipation of the new era about to begin (Rom. 13:11ff). Indeed, they already had some of the benefits of the age to come. It was as if it were already beginning.

The hope of the new community, however, was more complex than the Jewish hope and that was due to its conviction that Jesus himself was already the decisive first act of the unfolding drama of God's redemption of His creation. Jesus had come; then he had been crucified; then he had been exalted, raised, affirmed by God; soon he was to return and inaugurate the second and final stage. Time passed, however, and things did not develop as they hoped....

Jesus came preaching that the reign of God was at hand. In parable after parable, God's reign was depicted in the terms of this world, yet a world reordered. The reign of God was coming, it was breaking in. It would be a new condition of life here and now among human beings, however differently human life would appear. It would

mark the end of one age of this world, and in that sense an end of human history as we have known it. It would however be a new era of history, a new condition of God's creation. Whether he came to the conviction early or late, Jesus is presented as having believed that great suffering would mark this transition, his in any case but also undoubtedly the suffering of many. The arrival of the new age would be marked by catastrophe.

The apostles came preaching that the first great act in this drama of redemption had just taken place. The messiah had arrived, had been crucified and had been exalted, glorified, raised up by God. The second and culminating act was about to take place: Jesus would return and God would complete the transformation of creation into the renewed state for which it longs, the dead would be raised, the reign of God would begin. The present was therefore an interim, a pause in the very midst of the transformation of creation. The moment had come, the night was far gone, the day about to break. This being the case, life was to be lived now on the basis of what was taking place, i.e., in accordance with the breaking day, not the passing night. And, already, the power of daylight, the Spirit, was given to the faithful to strengthen them in this new life.

The expected daybreak, the second and completing act of the drama, however, did not arrive. After nineteen centuries it still has not arrived. What have we said in response to this delay? On

the one hand, we have kept on hoping that, indeed, the renewal of creation would still come. On the other hand, we began to shift the way in which we expressed our hope, putting more and more emphasis on the first act of the drama as ultimately decisive. Redemption really had been achieved; the end had already come with Jesus, only it could not yet be seen. The goal of our Way was so to speak already reached in its beginning....

This transformation of hope from that which is to come into a conviction that the future is already past, leaves one hoping not for a new event or change in history, but for a clearer vision of what is already the case. Insofar as this transformation has taken place, hope no longer has creation's future as its focus. We aren't hoping for the renewal of creation but, rather, that we may come to see what has already happened. It has been a consequence of this shift that most of us along the road have stopped hoping for something new to occur, that the road we walk would come to its end, that we would arrive at the destination. On the contrary, the hope has been not that the reign of God would begin on earth, as in heaven, but that we would leave the earth to go to heaven. Not a coming kingdom, but a going church, going from this vale of tears to be with Jesus in the heavenly places. Walking here on earth, then, has been conceived as preparation for resting there with him. One could say that our hope has been so to walk here that we should eventually (i.e., at

death) get there....

Throughout our long walk and our many conversations, however, there have been those who have raised the old hope, the Jewish one in its early apostolic form, that Jesus was to return, if not soon, then eventually. In all frankness, though, we must admit that this has been a minority position and in our day we tend to dismiss those who hold it as naive. When we do so, we fail to reflect upon the fact that our prevailing reformulation of hope pays the price of dismissing the significance of history. If history has really come to its end on Easter, how can any further history have any significance? If it has any at all, it does so as a training period for those destined for heaven. It loses direction and importance as the locus of God's further history with His creation, His people and His church.

Now, however, when new events in the recent history of Israel are making themselves felt, with history once more reasserting its importance in our conversation, we need to reconsider the formulation of our hope. Can we continue to ignore history? Must not history itself be the locus of that for which we hope? Must not our walking be on a way that goes somewhere? Can we not at this point learn once more to listen to the Jews and perhaps learn something from them? And will we not hear from them that redemption still lies out ahead, that we hope for the renewal or completion of God's creation, which is clearly not yet here? If we do, then we shall learn from those

recent reorienting events of Jewish history the place of our own responsibility in bringing about the object of our hope, the goal of our voyage....

That God reign, that all acknowledge Him, that His will be done on earth as well as in heaven--that is the goal. Note well, that is the goal of the Way which we walk now. This makes our walking a matter of cosmic, theological importance of the highest sort. Ours is a hope which depends for its realization on the walking which that hope may stimulate. And that is why, even as we hope, our first concern must be with our walking, with the Way itself. This is the Way which we seek to discern. From here it becomes clear that before we can think further about the Way ahead for all creation, the Way for the World, we must first reflect upon and perhaps reinterpret the Way in its two great major manifestations or understandings up to our present moment in the continuing story. This we hope to do in coming to a fresh understanding of the Way of Israel, and then of our Gentile manner of walking God's Way.

But now I have made what contribution I can to our conversation at this stage of our journey. Others will have their say while I catch my breath, and the conversation will continue. For we walk in the Way of life.

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Some Final Questions for Reflection:

Both Greenberg and van Buren speak of the future, of hope, the Messiah and redemption. In your estimation, are these terms related to one another? Which of the concepts which these writers employ figures prominently in your personal faith? Is the content of your hope akin to that of your partner in dialogue? Having met in dialogue, are there new ways of thinking, of believing, of living which you have discovered and which allow you to hope in a different way--as the authors would seem to suggest?

Both the authors also suggest that it is best not to concentrate only on the future. Better to be concerned, they say, about "the way" in which Christians and Jews walk. Any thought about the paths ahead? Where does this dialogue lead? Has it met your expectations?

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