

Rethinking the Christian-Jewish Relationship

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The great French theologian, Henri de Lubac, said it was a terrible thing to learn your catechism *against* someone else. He was thinking particularly of catechisms directed against the Protestant Reformation, but there is a more deeply hidden opponent within Christian thought: the Jew who does not accept that the Sinai covenant has been deepened and extended through Jesus. And negative judgements about the Jew form an implicit set of attitudes so deeply embedded in Christian self-understanding that it is often only with difficulty that they can be illuminated and corrected. You and I can spot religious indoctrination at 400 yards; the indoctrination we need to be aware of is the one we internalise without realising it.

The attitudes of hostility to Jews are seared into our foundational documents in the New Testament. On Good Friday, we read the Passion according to St John: have we noticed that all the way through that Gospel the opponents of Jesus who bring about his death are called, quite simply, 'the Jews'? In their rejection of Jesus, they embody the world's rejection of God and, in the terrifying passage in chapter 8 of the Gospel, they are told by Jesus that neither Abraham nor God is their father: rather, 'You are of your father the devil, and you choose your father's desires. He was a murderer from the very beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him' (8.44). The implication is that there is no truth in you, the Jew who rejects Jesus. Now what has been the cumulative effect of that Gospel, read every Good Friday, on the Christian perception of the Jewish people?

The antagonism towards Jews in the Christian psyche needs to be considered if the conditions of peace-making between us are to be created. What triggers this antagonism, this negativity, towards the Jew. I offer three reasons why the negative image of the Jew -- and it is an image, it is not the reality of Jewish life and faith -- why this negative image surfaces so strongly from the Christian psyche:

First of all, behind all resentment of the people God chose to be the instrument of his revelation is resentment against God. Anti-Judaism is, at root, anti-God. We reject the Jew because there is part of us which resents God and the claim God makes on our lives.

Secondly, Christian anti-Jewish feelings are not the same as ordinary racism. They bear upon the relation of the Christian to himself or herself. A French writer, Maurice Bellet, says: 'what the Christian hates in the Jew, without knowing it, is *that* terrible Jew whom he cannot pluck from his memory, the Crucified One. The Christian would prefer to remain pagan, be Greek, Roman, Germanic, in a Christianity reduced to the Empire and [imperial] religion.'¹ I expand this: Christ takes you into a way of life in which you cannot worship the idols of this world, their power and their culture, and you resent him because he calls you to pay the price for rejecting the idols of this world. By hating the Jew, we're rejecting Christ in the particularity of his Jewish faith and in his fidelity to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We would prefer a Saviour more to our tastes, one who does not say to us, with the full vigour of Jewish challenge: 'You shall love the Lord

¹ M. Bellet, *L'issue* (Desclée de Brouwer, 1984), 154-5

your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind'. Our resentment of Christ is expressed in our resentment of 'the Jew'. By contrast, a love for Christ enjoins on us a love for the people within whose faith and life he worships his heavenly Father.

Thirdly, Pope John Paul, in his historic visit to the Rome Synagogue, spoke of the Jewish people as 'our elder brothers'. Are we Christians caught in a pattern in which the younger brother resents the privileges of his elder brother? Are we tempted to deny the priority of the elder brother, to supplant him in the affection of our Father, to eliminate him from the family history, to blacken his reputation so that *we* will be the heirs of the promise? Do we believe, without resentment, in the salvation of our elder brother? ²

It has been religiously and humanly disastrous: there is no time to list the measures taken in European history against Jews by Christians and Christian leaders. But we have to ask whether what George Steiner calls the 'ontological crime' (the crime against being itself) of the Holocaust, the Shoah, was not the logical conclusion of the Christian refusal to allow Jews any place in the Christian account of the world. Did not the Christian *religious* negation of Judaism come to a devastating climax when modern technology nearly achieved the *physical* negation of Jews in the camps?

Once we begin to see that the Holocaust was fed by a stream of Christian negation of Jewish identity, shared by common people and Christian intellectuals alike, we should realise that peace-making in this area has to involve theological reflection of a searching and revisionist kind. When you see what ideas lead to, look again at the ideas: we don't need Liberation Theologians to tell us that bad praxis is a test of bad theory, but that it took us so long to see it in relation to Jews is a chilling indictment.

There are now two kinds of Christians: those who regard the relation to Judaism as part of Christianity's pre-history and those who regard the relation to Jews as a relation to a living people now. The Second Vatican Council's decree *Nostra Aetate* has now commended the second kind to the Church. *Nostra Aetate*, the unique statement about Judaism made at the highest level of Church authority, signals an ecclesial self-examination which bears all the marks of being irreversible.

But what of the first perspective, that in which Judaism is understood to be what precedes Christianity? This is what we have inherited, and people refer to it as the theology of supersessionism. This is the view that since because the particularity of Israel's election by God has now given way to the universality of the Church's mission, the observance of Jewish life *post et extra Christum* (after and outside) can have no role in the working out of God's purposes. Angus Paddison helpfully summarises the three forms of supersessionism:

Economic supersessionism maintains that God's purposes for Israel were from the beginning 'destined to be fulfilled and completed by Christ's coming' and so the Church has now replaced Israel's status. *Punitive* supersessionism holds that Israel has been rendered obsolete not by salvation, but by its own sin of rejecting the Gospel. *Structural* supersessionism is a form of 'Israel-forgetfulness,' a state

² M de Goedt, 'La véritable "question juive" pour les chrétiens. Une critique de la théologie de la substitution.' *Nouvelle revue théologique*, 114 (1992), 237-50

of affairs where God's covenant with Israel has been allowed to become simply indecisive and unimportant for Christian thinking.³

As Paddison points out, the third form is more subtle than the other two because in it Israel is simply ignored. The good news, however, is that all these forms of supersessionism are being superseded: it generally takes about 50 years for an idea to become settled in the Catholic Church's theology. It's forty years since the Council so we're in the last decade. One of the main agents in this process was Pope John Paul II. In his visit to the Mainz synagogue in 1980, he called the Jews, 'the people of God of the Old Covenant that has never been revoked by God'. Now if the covenant has never been revoked, then, and you have to acknowledge that what God put in place at Sinai is still in place. Later he spoke of Christianity and Judaism as traditions 'linked together at the very level of their identity' and 'founded on the design of the Lord of the covenant'. This cannot be a relationship of one following the other: it must refer, as the theologians say, to 'synchronous' relations – relations at the one and same time. The relation 'at the level of identity' is with Jews in the present age. If *Nostra Aetate* is the Latin for 'in our time', then the question is who *we* are who are being referred to: Christians are there, but also present may be siblings from whom we have become alienated, but to whom we are still bound in relations of a common vocation from God. Both Christian faith and Rabbinic Judaism are streams which emerge from Biblical Judaism and from the turbulences of that first century: we are alienated sisters born from the same womb. John Paul II's theme of the continuing significance of Jewish identity is taken up in the 1985 Vatican document *Notes on the Correct Way to present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis* when it discusses the persistence of Jewish life since Christ:

The permanence of Israel (while so many ancient peoples have disappeared without trace) is a historic fact and *a sign to be interpreted within God's design...* We must remind ourselves how the permanence of Israel is accompanied by a continuous spiritual fecundity...⁴

The simple question about where this spiritual fecundity comes from can only be answered by reference to God, and so the matrix of the Church's identity shifts. It now has to develop an understanding of its relationship to a Jewish people whose persistence in history in 'the Christian centuries' is willed and enabled by God: that surely is what the Pope means and what Catholic thought is now trying to express.

John Henry Newman's remark about Scripture beginning 'a series of developments which it does not finish' can be applied to *Nostra Aetate*: we are not yet at the end of the series of developments inaugurated by this quiet Declaration.⁵ Any negative attitude towards Jews in their regard must be avoided, since, as Pope John Paul II said in 1999, 'in order to be a blessing for the world, Jews and Christians need first to be a blessing for each other'. So how are Christians to think of Jews if we are to be a blessing to them, and if they are to be a blessing to us? Now that's an interesting approach: instead of

³ A.Paddison, 'Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis of Romans 9-11 in the Light of Jewish-Christian Understanding,' *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 28 (2006), 469-88; references to R.K.Soulen, *the God of Israel and Christian Theology* (Fortress, 1996), 415-7

⁴ *Notes on the Correct Way to present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis* (1985), 25. Emphasis added.

⁵ Newman's phrase, central to his theory of the development of doctrine, occurs in his 1843 sermon 'The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine'.

writing treatises *adversus Judaeos* as was done throughout Christian history, why not ask how we might be a blessing to them, and they to us. (I commend this to you as an approach that might also be useful in Christian ecumenical circles too.)

Can Christians recognize that God has entrusted the Jewish people with a distinctive mission *nostra aetate*, 'in our time'? We should do it with care, because throughout our history, Christians have been only too eager to tell Jews what their place is. As the Vatican Guidelines said in 1974, only the Jewish people themselves can articulate their mission "in the light of their own religious experience." In this vein, when he was still Cardinal Ratzinger, Pope Benedict wrote these important words:

'Even if Christians wish that Israel might one day recognize Christ as the Son of God and that the fissure that still divides them might thereby be closed, they ought to acknowledge the decree of God, who has obviously entrusted Israel with a distinctive mission in "the time of the Gentiles"'.⁶

Rowan Williams' remark is apposite: Christianity and Judaism are not two different, competing answers to the same question, but are simply two different answers that correspond to different questions. I am attracted by the simple formulation which John Pawlikowski offers us: Judaism is a 'kinship community' that has been constituted in response to revelation.⁷ Jews are a people, a family, descended from the Patriarchs. We Christians need to learn from Jews that the way to read the book of Genesis is to understand that the key moment in that book is not the fall of Adam: that story is simply one in a sequence of how humanity's attempts to fulfil itself are frustrated failures – the key moment is when God calls Abraham to be the father of many children. The call of Abraham, not the fall of Adam, is the key to Genesis, and I would suggest, the key to the Old Testament, because the promise to Abraham is fulfilled through his descendant Jesus through whom all human beings have become the children of the promise.

So what is the question to which Judaism is the answer? Perhaps Judaism is the answer to this question: *how does a people conduct a universal mission on behalf of God while remaining a distinct people?* There is no space here to develop the theme of the question to which the answer is 'Christianity', but it might be: *how does God make available to all what begins in Israel as call and response and which completes the dynamic of our created nature by connecting us with divine truth (Word) and love (Spirit)?*

If the Jewish people, like the beloved disciple in the Gospel of John, remains until Christ comes, then Christ's words to Peter can also be words to the Church: 'What is that to you? Follow me.' (Jn 21.22) It is for God to deepen Israel's grasp of the nature of the covenant and promises which God has made and to bring them to the fullness of redemption: we are to witness in our way. I particularly appreciate the directness of Rabbi Norman Solomon's description of what Judaism is and what it is for:

One of the most peddled distortions of Judaism is that is some sort of 'ethnic' religion. As Jews themselves, sometimes even the learned among them, are principally responsible for this notion getting about, I cannot follow my gut reaction of blaming it on anti-Semitism. But it is about as wrong-headed as can

⁶ J.Ratzinger, 'Interreligious Dialogue and Jewish-Christian Relations,' *Communio* 25 (1998), 29-41; 37.

⁷ John Pawlikowski, *First Things* 62 (April 1996), 52-4)

be. Judaism combines a world religion with a prototype people. Judaism is a missionary (though not necessarily proselytising) religion, with deep concern for the world and a profound contribution to make to resolving its present problems....⁸

So how are we to think of the relation which Christians have with Jews? I turn to two questions asked by James Dunn because they seem to me to be the central questions, finely and correctly asked. Writing about Paul's Gentile mission as a fulfilment of the promise of Abrahamic blessing to the nations (Gen 28.14), Dunn is clear that the Church does not replace the Jewish people. Dependent on God's action in Israel, the Church is an expression of the dynamic within Israel and can only be understood as, in some measure, part of Israel:

Can Christians understand themselves except as part of Israel: as enlightened by Israel, as Abraham's seed and heirs of Israel's covenant promises, not instead of Israel but as part of Israel? But the question confronting Jews is equally profound. Can Jews understand themselves as Israel without being open to the possibility that Gentile Christians are also participants in that same Israel, again not instead of Israel but as part of Israel? ⁹

Dunn's first question invites Christians to see themselves as that which, arising in Israel for the sake of the nations and permanently dependent on Jewish teaching and the divine promises made to the Jewish people, never ceases to be part of Israel. The Church, eventually becomes socially distinct from Israel, but I doubt that it can ever be religiously distinct from Israel. Whatever arises through Christ must be *part of Israel* because it belongs within the dynamic of God's dealings with Israel and because it quite simply cannot 'be' anything else. Christianity cannot but see itself as springing from Israel for the sake of the nations and from the nations for the sake of Israel.

Dunn's second question invites Jews to consider that the boundaries of Israel have been extended to include, potentially, all human beings. Significantly, neither question envisages the replacement of one community by the other. Dunn's second question invites Jews to consider that through Christ and the Church the boundaries of Israel have been extended to include, potentially, all human beings in one reconfigured Israel of God (Gal 6.16).¹⁰ Neither question envisages the replacement of one tradition by the other. Dunn's questions explores what the Pope thinks of as a relation 'at the very level of identity', namely that the Church's connection to Israel goes beyond historical roots and extends into a conjoined, single mission on behalf of God. And he would be suggesting that both Jews and Christians might understand themselves in this way.

⁸ Norman Solomon, *Judaism and World Religion* (Macmillan, 1991), 8

⁹ J.D.G. Dunn, 'Paul: Apostate or Apostle of Israel?', *ZNW* 89 (1998), 256-71; 271.

¹⁰ The important statement by Jewish scholars in 2000, *Dabru Emet*, responding to the theological recognition of Judaism by various churches, says that 'as Jewish theologians we rejoice that, through Christianity, hundreds of millions of people have entered into relationship with the God of Israel'. This generous statement is deeply controversial for many Jews because it seems to commit Jews to developing a Jewish theology of Christianity at odds with Jewish tradition. Does this dialogue distort Jewish identity? Jon Levenson thinks so: J. Levenson, 'How Not to Conduct Jewish-Christian Dialogue,' *Commentary* (December 2001), 31-7; 'Jewish-Christian Dialogue: Jon D. Levenson & Critics,' *Commentary* (April 2002), 8-21

If I am asked what Christianity is, I would say that it is ‘reconfigured Judaism’, and that correspondingly the Church is ‘reconfigured Israel’ whose boundaries have been enlarged to include potentially all human beings. Its basis, accessible to all through faith, is a practice of Torah-observance, conducted through Christian discipleship and a sacramental sharing in Christ’s passion. This reconfigured Israel is grounded in Jesus’ own vision of gathering Israel to be the restored Temple, the dwelling place of divine holiness, sanctified by his self-offering, there to be joined by the nations in worship of God (Is 2.1-2). A predominantly Gentile Church will always be tempted to turn against Israel in aggressive replacement because a church that does not feel connected to Israel, seeing in Israel a ‘kinship community’ willed by God as a distinct focus of his action, will eventually see itself as standing in the place of Israel.

I commend to you the view of Michael Wyschogrod, echoing Dunn’s position, that Gentile Christians might understand themselves as

the gathering of peoples around the people of Israel, the entry of adopted sons and daughters into the household of God. Through the Jew Jesus, when properly interpreted, the gentile enters into the covenant and becomes a member of the household, as long as he or she does not claim that his or her entrance replaces the original children.¹¹

This view, coming from a Jewish scholar, is remarkably generous in the place it accords to Christians. Both Israel according to the flesh and reconfigured Israel re-enact as rival siblings the tension between elder and younger brothers that characterises the Patriarchal narratives in Genesis; related, competitive and rival communities claiming the promises and the status of God’s beloved son, but also communities which might be designated as ‘the Israel of God’, Paul’s enigmatic phrase in Galatians 6.16. Is it then unreasonable to think that Jews and Christians are ‘the Israel of God’. You will know that the Second Vatican Council encouraged Christians to think of themselves as ‘the people of God’: now if we are the ‘people of God’, where does that leave the Jews? Do Christians not need a sense that the people of God has two constitutive parts: the people God first chose as his own and those who are members of the Body of Christ? At the present time, they cannot be assimilated one to the other, but perhaps in their difference they are living signs to the reality of God and the fulfilment God offers the world. Is there something to be addressed here?

In his visit to the Rome Synagogue in 1986, Pope John Paul made a simple, pregnant statement about this which is of great import for how Catholics are to think of the meaning of Christ’s life and death: ‘Jesus carried to its extreme consequences the love demanded by Torah’.¹² This should be related to the light of the statement in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: ‘His [Christ’s] religious life is that of a Jew obedient to the law of God’ (531), a statement which is surely inspired by Aquinas’ teaching that ‘Christ conformed his conduct in all things to the precepts of the Law’ (*S.T.*, 3a, q.40.a4).

¹¹ M.Wyschogrod, *Abraham’s Promise: Judaism and Jewish-Christian Relations* (Eerdmans, 2004), 21-2. In our liturgy, we really should stop using the Jerusalem Bible’s replacement of ‘Gentiles’ by ‘pagans’. Gentiles means ‘those of the nations’, and theologically, it means ‘those who are covenanted through Noah’ or simply ‘those imperfectly covenanted’.

¹² Pope John Paul II said things in this area for which the Church’s theology is relatively unprepared. But of course it is only right that Popes should take the Church where the Church needs to go – in the direction of dialogical theological thinking – and it is no bad thing for theologians to be pressed to catch up with theologically prophetic Pontiffs.

The *Catechism* goes on to say that Jesus ‘was to fulfil the Law by keeping it in its all-embracing detail – according to his own words, down to “the least of these commandments” . He is in fact the only one who could keep it perfectly’ (578). ‘In Jesus, the Law no longer appears engraved on tables of stone but “upon the heart” of the Servant who becomes “a covenant to the people”, because he will “faithfully bring forth justice”’ (580). In this light, Paul’s remarkable statement in Romans gains in significance: ‘Christ became a servant of the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy’ (Rom 15.8). Christ’s universal witness to divine truth is exercised within the context of his membership of Israel – he is the servant of his people – shaped and framed within the covenantal bond between God and Israel.

The Pope’s statement and the others from the *Catechism* invite Catholics to see the whole of Jesus’ life as a faithful observance of Torah, a perfect enactment of covenantal *halakah*. But the Pope’s statement that ‘Jesus carried to its extreme consequences the love demanded by Torah’ goes further than the *Catechism*: it suggests that the whole of Christ’s dedication to the Father and his self-offering in death is an enactment of Torah-fidelity. What is embedded in Israel as gift and call, covenantal love and obedience, is so intensified in his identity and life, is so internalised and lived out in all its consequences, that it is taken by the divine Son as the form of his self-giving to the Father for the sins of the world. Christ’s faithfulness to Torah, lived out in selfless dedication to God and culminating in the Cross, is the performative act that declares and renders the saving mystery of God among us. So the salvation that comes to the world through him cannot be separated from its source in covenant and Torah: Israel’s covenant and Torah inform the shape of the Messiah’s saving work. If we want a formula to focus the mind, it might be: *Christ saves by fulfilling Torah*. Have we ever taken seriously that Jesus was a Law-observant Jew? I have received many Christian teachings about Jesus in my long life as a Jesuit, but this was never highlighted anywhere at any time.

I want to recall a hidden event in the German city of Leipzig in the summer of 1913: a Jew who had become a Christian at the age of 16, Eugen Rosenstock, spent hours in intense discussion with his close friend, Franz Rosenzweig, a non-practising Jew then aged 27. Rosenzweig regarded Judaism as having lost its power to speak to anyone, and his cousin persuaded him that Christianity was the only shining, living witness to the power of God’s revelation and brought him to the threshold of the church: Rosenzweig decided he would become a Christian.

Since he wasn’t an observant Jew, it’s hard to know what then persuaded Rosenzweig to postpone his actual conversion until he had spent the Autumn High Holy Days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur as a Jew, but he wrote, ‘I could turn Christian only as a Jew - - not through the intermediate stage of paganism’. So he attended a traditional synagogue in Berlin on the Day of Atonement. He came away from the experience transfigured. He never spoke of what happened in the synagogue -- an event, presumably, that could not be expressed -- but something Jewish witnessed itself to him. He expressed his conviction clearly and cryptically: *Ich bliebe also Jude*: ‘So I remain a Jew.’

By remaining a Jew, he seems to have meant a return to ‘an archetypal Jewish identity’ which he was only just about to discover. But it was to be a Jewish identity in which there was a close affinity to Christianity: these were the two poles within the ellipsis of God’s dealings with the world. Both Judaism and Christianity were willed by God for his

purposes. Rosenzweig's personal destiny was to remain Jewish, but in the 16 years of life which remained to him -- he died aged 43 -- he constructed a remarkable account of how the two traditions belong together.

They form the 'Star of Redemption' (the title of his most important book): Judaism is the core of the star, the radiant centre of experience which does not need to draw anything from anywhere else: it simply has to be itself in faithfulness in order to do what God wants it to do. From that core come the rays which extend into the pagan, Gentile world, and Christianity is the rays flowing from the core of Jewish faith which illuminates the darkness of a world without God. The rays of the star need there to be a core of foundational experience located in the Jewish experience of God so that the light of its rays may be a mediation of what Jewish faith knows of God.

For the rays of the star to remain in touch with the core of God's revelation, there must be, for the sake of the Christian mission, a living Jewish people with its living Jewish life. Hence, for Rosenzweig, Christianity's continuing need for Judaism. The condition of there being a genuine Christian mission is that there be a living Jewish faith which refuses to be assimilated into cosmic religions and spiritualities, which maintains its distinct identity to the God of Israel. If this is o, then Christianity cannot overcome Judaism without destroying itself: it needs the core of star to be there. And so we Christians cannot regard Judaism as superseded by us without undermining our own identity. The tie with Judaism is a living part of our identity, and without it, Rosenzweig suggests, Christianity will become absorbed by the gnosticisms of the pagan world.

But God's work is unfinished, and the phantasy of omnipotence that haunts the Christian psyche must be eliminated by a recognition that, as Rosenzweig put it,

Before God, then, Jew and Christian labour at the same task. He cannot dispense with either. He has set enmity between the two for all time and withal has most intimately bound each to each... The truth, the whole truth thus belongs neither of them nor to us... And thus we both have but a part of the whole truth. But we know that it is in the nature of truth to be im-parted [*zu teil zu sein*], and at a truth in which no one had a part would be no truth...The 'whole' truth is truth only because it is God's part [*Gottes Teil*]. This both of us, they as much as we, we as much as they, are creatures precisely for the reason that we do not see the whole truth. Just for this we remain within the boundaries of mortality. Just for this -- we remain [*bleiben wir*] (F.Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans.W.W.Hallo (New York, 1970), ppp.415-6)

Only at the end will the *whole* truth of God's redemption be manifest; until then, Jews and Christians must remain in their particularity until the end, each with a distinct mission within God's providence. I think you'll agree this is an impressive argument. It is also interesting to listen to a Jewish voice speaking to Christians about our place in the scheme of things.

Why might this matter? Without that living tie to Jewish experience, you'll find Christians circle-dancing in retreat-houses, doing Enneagrams, hugging trees, wearing New Age crystals to channel the cosmic energies, swimming with dolphins, placing more value in aromatherapy than in fasting, treating spirituality as a mode of self-actualization and self-fulfilment, moving interchangeably among religions as though they're all equally valid approaches to the divine, treating the order of nature, Gaia, as the place of divine

revelation rather focusing on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the faithful and Torah-observant Jew.

Rosenzweig gives us a striking perspective on the inseparability of the two traditions in the present age. If we are to find a way beyond the Christian negation of Judaism, we need to find ways in which mutuality and difference are not threats to identity, but the conditions of identity. Linear supersessionism is being replaced by a more complex image, of an abiding Israel to which Christians are attached. This religion continues to witness to God in ways that God established and sustains and so it is a living, efficacious sign of God, linked to Christianity, as Pope John Paul said, 'at the very level of identity'. Can we Christians say that our own identity is not separable from this prototype people's continuing relationship with God? Surely this is possible.

Finally, let me be a little bit prophetic and say that Christians are heading for a difficult time. We are going to become marginal to the society that is emerging. I think in many ways we are already marginal to the culture of liberal capitalism that we have spawned. Europe is now tired of Christianity. We have said too much to Europe, and Europe doesn't want to hear any more from us, and that is a psychological condition which is very difficult to address. How do you re-evangelise a culture that has become deaf to the spiritual experience that gave it birth? By learning to witness in coherent ways and giving a priority to the category of witness.

It may be significant that Christians are learning to relate to Jews at this time in our history. I want to suggest to you that the Church in the years ahead will be taken through an experience analogous to the experience of the Jewish community through nearly 2,000 years of Christian Europe: marginal to the main currents of cultural development; called to bear witness without power; needing to address the question of how to define and maintain an identity which will allow a distinct voice to be heard; in many ways an underground culture whose central energies, although marginalised, still come to enrich everyone. What Jews have been in the Europe of the past, we Christians will be in the future. What Jews and Christians might do together is keep the space for God open in a society which, because of the demands of capitalist pressures, makes people subject to manipulation, lies and degradation of the soul.

We have to keep the way open to nothing less than the good, to nothing less than ultimate meaning, to nothing less than the full dignity of persons, to nothing less than the divine mystery that can encompass and transform brutality and malice. This is what many Jews today call *tikkun 'olam*, 'healing the world', and it is a religious vision in which Christians can share, with the distinctive energies and spiritual experiences of Christian faith. A shared witness to God's transcendence and love; to religious values which alone can promote authentically human values; and to mutual enrichment of our common vocation to serve and bear witness to God and to look for the coming of the Messiah in glory and the life of the world to come.

I suggest to you that it will be to the benefit of Christians to understand themselves as still linked, within God's providence, to this prototype people, whose faith flowed into Jesus' experience of God and into the earliest Christian communities. That tie is not simply part of our pre-history, but a part of our continuing identity as the *ecclesia* of the God of Israel, to our participation with Jews in 'the Israel of God'. It may be God's providential will that we should start talking and listening to one another again. We have shouted at each other for too long.

