

Twenty-Five Years After
Nostra Aetate

The State of Catholic-Jewish Relations

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Rabbi Wohlberg:

I am certain that we understand well that this session reflects monumental changes which have taken place in a very short time, changes which bespeak a level of understanding between the leaders of Roman Catholicism and leaders of the Jewish people which is unprecedented. The links which have been established in such a relatively short time would have been beyond anyone's capacity to fathom in past centuries or even past decades. The results may seem tenuous to some, but they are an important series of first steps which deserve wide recognition.

Our distinguished speakers are two of the principals in a great unfolding drama. They have been at the center of that drama. Much of what they have done has not been publicized. Much of what they have achieved is already having its impact nationally and internationally, an impact that will be felt for generations, perhaps for centuries to come. They have been witnesses to historic meetings and participants in historic changes. And the Jewish people are the beneficiaries of their joint efforts.

Archbishop William Henry Keeler was appointed Archbishop in the bicentennial year of the establishment of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Born in Texas and reared in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, he completed his clerical studies in Rome, where he was ordained in 1955. He served briefly in the Diocese of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, before returning to Rome for further studies leading to a doctorate in Canon Law. In 1962 he was appointed special advisor to the Second Vatican Council by Pope John XXIII. At the close of the Council he returned to the Diocese of Harrisburg. In 1979 he was appointed auxiliary bishop, and in 1983 Bishop of Harrisburg. He has been a leader in ecumenical affairs for many years, serving as chairman of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs from 1984 to 1987, and coordinating the Pope's ecumenical visit to Columbia, South Carolina in 1987. He has also been a member of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Pennsylvania Interchurch Cooperation Conference. Recently he was named Episcopal Moderator of Catholic-Jewish Relations for the United States Bishops, and Vice-President of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Rabbi Mordecai Waxman, well known to all of us, holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Chicago and Columbia University. He was ordained at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. He and his wife, Dr. Ruth Waxman, have three children, one of whom—Jonathan—is a member of the Rabbinical Assembly and is here with us today. Ruth is a professor of literature and Managing Editor of the quarterly *Judaism*. Rabbi Waxman has served Temple Israel of Great Neck, New York for the past forty-seven years. He has been a visiting professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary and at the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, and has served as Editor of *Conservative Judaism*. He is a contributor to the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, and we all know of his monumental work as editor of *Tradition and Change*. Rabbi Waxman has served as President of the Rabbinical Assembly (1974-1976) and as President of the Synagogue Council of America (1983-1985). As well as President of the World Council of Synagogues. From 1985 to 1987 he was Chairman of the International Jewish Committee for InterReligious Consultation—known as IJCIC—and therefore was right at the center of the drama as one of the nine representatives who met with Pope John Paul II on September 1, 1987, at Vatican City. Later he delivered an address to the Pope on behalf of the Jewish community in this country after meeting with the Pope in Miami on September 11, 1987.

Finally, I would add a personal note. I am fortunate to be able to say that Archbishop William Keeler has been a friend for more than twenty years. He is an extraordinarily compassionate pastor, and a wonderful administrator. Serious, personable, and sincere, he inspires his diocese, and has consistently won the respect, the friendship and the admiration of the Catholic and the Jewish communities with which he has been associated. Rabbi Waxman, a colleague of renown, has had an extraordinary career in scope and depth, and is a model for all of us. We are fortunate that these two gentlemen are our speakers today.

Archbishop Keeler:

I thank Rabbi Wohlberg for that very generous introduction. We do go back a long time, and I regard Rabbi Jeff as a teacher, a mentor of mine, as well as a friend. I have long been in admiration of the wonderful leadership that he gives to his people, and I have known him in his service to two synagogues. I'd like to express special thanks also to Rabbi Seymour Rosenbloom for his thoughtfulness in making the arrangements for our program this afternoon, and my delight at being again in the company of Rabbi Mordecai Waxman, who truly is a statesman in the area of inter-faith relations, not just for our work in the United States but, as Rabbi Wohlberg has indicated, at the world level.

This is about the sixth time we've appeared together in a program and we confounded ourselves today by reversing the order of appearance. Usually Rabbi Waxman goes first and then I bat clean-up. Actually, what happens is that we begin an interchange, and the audience also participates. I want to make one more acknowledgment before I continue, and that is my delight and sense of honor that Rabbi Wolfe Kelman is with us this afternoon. He was part of the discussion involving Cardinal Cassaroli a few years ago, in a meeting that I thought had enormous consequences for helping us out of the difficulties of the summer of 1987.

There is much we can talk about today. I'd like to begin by recalling something that Rabbi Waxman said to us in Rome in 1987. I am paraphrasing his statement, but it is something like this: "If you really wish to be our friend, you must know what pains us, what causes us pain and hurt." Then, and in many subsequent meetings, we heard what causes pain to our Jewish sisters and brothers, and in the spirit of mutuality we have tried to speak of some of the pain that we have felt as well. And as Rabbi Waxman and I have reminded one another and our audiences on many occasions, we learned also

that we speak in different ways, out of different cultures, out of different philosophical, theological, and educational backgrounds. It is not always simply a question of what we believe, but also of how we couch our thoughts and feelings. I have often said to Rabbi Waxman that his way of speech is more direct, his choice of language more robust. In any event, I speak out of a background in which I was educated in our schools and by the blessings of providence in the discussions of the Second Vatican Council. This Council produced the document *Nostra Aetate*, which governs the inner renewal of the teaching and preaching of the Roman Catholic Church in ways to try to encourage more positive attitudes towards Judaism as a living religion, to build bridges of dialogue in which we sit at the table as peers, as partners, and to help us as Catholics appreciate the Jewish context of the Christian scriptures, the Jewish roots of Jesus, his people and the infant church.

My prepared remarks treat this undertaking in some detail, but I think I might go immediately to talk about those things which cause pain, because experience tells me they are the things that probably interest you the most. From the exchanges we've had over years, but most especially because of what our discussion turned on when we met in Rome at the end of August and the beginning of September in 1987, I have been careful to tell Catholic friends that for Jews the Holocaust, with all its horrors, was uniquely genocidal. I knew this before our Rome meetings—we talked about it many times. But since then have I made a particular commitment to underscore this point, and in interpreting it to Catholics I use an analogy that might help them to understand, the analogy of sacrament. For us a sacrament is a sacred sign in which God works, and anything which would detract from that sign, show disrespect for it, is sacrilege. And so I say to Catholics, for Jewish people sensitive to the Holocaust and all its horrors, anything which might seem to lessen its meaning, its significance, is sacrilegious and will cause pain and painful reactions.

Something else came out in our discussion in Rome. We reflected on it together, both Catholic and Jewish delegations in the final communique: the demonic ideology which spawned the Holocaust was indeed anti-religious, and many Christians (as well as Jews) perished in the death camps. We know what happened in Holland, to go back a little bit in history to underscore a particular historic moment of the Holocaust. In 1942 the Catholic bishops of Holland protested the round-up of the Jews. In retaliation the Nazis then sent off to Auschwitz Catholics of Jewish blood. And they hastened the deportation of all the Jews.

Even today it is not clear how much good some precise public denunciation in other settings would have accomplished in the face of the dictatorship with total power in its hands. As you know, even in the Jewish community at that time there existed a dilemma, with some Jews deciding not to speak out publicly, but rather to work quietly and behind the scenes. Today both the Jewish and the Catholic communities need to grapple with the complexities of that tragic period, not in a judgmental way but constructively, for the sake of the future.

Perceptions of the Holocaust continue to surface as points of difference. We witness the experience that came to a head last summer and fall with respect to the convent near the Auschwitz death camp. News stories told us first of a meeting that had taken place in February of 1987. Then, Jewish leaders in Europe met with four Cardinals, including Cardinal Macharsky, the Archbishop of Krakow, to discuss their concerns regarding the presence of a Carmelite monastery adjacent to the death camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The Cardinals and the other Catholics involved in the discussion came to see the sensitivity of the issue, and they worked with the Jewish leaders towards a solution that would be positive and forward-looking. Together, they committed themselves not simply to relocate the site of the convent to characterize it in this way is to distort the understanding that was reached. Rather, they looked towards the construction, at a distance from the camp, of a center intended to foster Catholic-Jewish relations through study, discussion and prayer.

Now when we come to the mission of prayer, it is a concept, a word, not familiar to many contemporary ears. The Carmelite nuns, whose life is dedicated to prayer, to contemplation, would have an honored role. Their convent would be situated in the context of this new center.

Then came the complications. We know a part of them. For example, for a year at least the Polish government would not issue the necessary permits. This can be understood in the light of a report I heard that it was not uncommon to take seven years for the construction of a new public building in Communist Poland during recent years. The declaration that the Catholic parties signed was not a realistic promise in terms of the actual situation then prevailing in Poland. (Now times have changed because the government has changed.)

The rest is history. The violation of the cloister and the clamorous demonstrations on the convent grounds by Rabbi Weiss and his associates, the harsh physical reactions of some Polish workers on the

scene, the escalation, the demonstrations and reactions finally involving statements by church leaders in Poland and elsewhere. On September 19, Cardinal Willebrands in Rome, who was the President of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with Jews, issued a statement on behalf of the Holy See. He commended the stand of the Polish Bishops' Commission on Judaism which had been made public earlier in the month, a stand committing the Church to the new center. He reaffirmed Pope John Paul II's commendation of the proposal given a year earlier, adding this time the pledge of financial help.

Within a few days, Cardinal Glemp, following several meetings with Jewish leaders in Poland and England, announced his personal support of the project, and the matter moved from the front pages. In February of this year work was begun on the new center—as a step favored by the return of greater freedom from government control in Poland.

Toward the end of the public discussion, many voices of Jews, Catholics, and observers were raised in favor of restraint and reason in dialogue. These voices helped establish the needed atmosphere. And even as through the discussions Catholics were reminded afresh of deep Jewish sensitivity regarding the Holocaust, so I am hopeful that our Jewish partners in dialogue gained some new insight into pains that were being felt in the Catholic community, particularly in the Polish Catholic community.

Our Jewish friends learned, for example, what may strike many visitors to Yad Vashem in Israel, where the most numerous of all on the list of the Righteous Gentiles who risked their lives to help Jews escape are Catholic Poles.

They learned that the death camp at Auschwitz was built first to handle the Polish intellectual elite, including the clergy and the army officers who still survived. These selected Poles were being exterminated at Auschwitz a full year and more before the horrifying decision was taken to try to eliminate the Jews.

And perhaps our Jewish friends have learned also that within the Catholic Church there is now and has always been a great deal of variety, flexibility, difference, and disagreement. I have to explain to Catholics that the American Jewish Congress, the World Jewish Congress, and the American Jewish Committee are three separate organizations not always sharing identical viewpoints. And to Jewish friends I must say that within the Catholic church there are many different juridical entities, some of them possessing from our church law an autonomy that you might find surprising. I apply this

especially to Carmelite monasteries. One of the interesting records that I have in our own archives in Baltimore records the welcome that our first Bishop, John Carroll, two hundred years ago extended to the first community of nuns to the United States who were Carmelites. Shortly after their arrival he wrote them several times asking them to undertake a specific task of education. Each time they responded, specifically rejecting the invitation to work in that field. They had and they have a great deal of autonomy. The bishop has the role of seeing that the liturgy is celebrated properly and that certain rules are observed. But beyond that the nuns are afforded, according to our Canon Law, a great deal of autonomy in making decisions about such things as how they are going to build their house, where they build it and how they organize it inside.

Now the stage is set this Fall for a meeting at Prague between representatives of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations and the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with Jews. We shall discuss something that we have been looking forward to for several years, implications of the Shoah, in this constructive fashion: Catholic scholars and Jewish scholars will sit down and talk about those tragic days, and in the process assist the Holy See's Commission to begin to prepare its own document on the Holocaust and the study on the history of anti-Semitism.

The next point I want to talk about is the State of Israel. For a Catholic in the United States, and here I am talking about the clergy and the laity across the board, there are certain puzzling aspects about the pressure on the Holy See to establish formal diplomatic relations with the State of Israel. For Catholics the diplomatic activity of the Holy See has never been an issue of great interest. We know, and you know, that we American Catholics traditionally have been very supportive of Israel. All you have to do is look at the voting record of Catholics who serve in public office or at the polls, the surveys that are taken. But to the extent that we are familiar with our own American history, we know that there were no formal diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the United States until about six years ago. Somehow the United States managed to survive all those years. We also remember that, at an early state, Presidents of the United States like Harry Truman suggested a formal exchange of ambassadors. Groups like the American Jewish Congress joined with Protestant groups in opposing such steps, so there is a little puzzlement about just how the issue of the separation of church and state cuts here.

As I have listened to concerns expressed to me at meetings in synagogues and with B'nai B'rith groups and others, I have the perception that there is a concern regarding a possible theological meaning of the non-establishment of formal diplomatic ties. Such a concern, it was made clear in our meeting in 1987 in Rome, is based on a fundamental misconception, a point underscored by representatives of the Holy See.

Pope John Paul II, following his predecessor John Paul I, has spoken very clearly of the right of Israel to exist, and there are practical working relationships which have already been established between Israel and the Holy See. If you ask the representative of the Holy See about the Holy See's attitude with respect to the State of Israel, the answer is, "We have friendly relations, but not full diplomatic relations."

When Pope John Paul met with us at Castel Gandolfo he repeated something that he had said spontaneously to the group of the Jewish community in Warsaw he met with earlier in the year. He spoke of the State of Israel as a reality which, he sees, means a very great deal to Jews and is something rising out of the tragic past of the Holocaust. His speaking so many times publicly, including on his visit to Miami, of the right of Israel to exist is saying something very positive to both Jews and Catholics in the United States.

Why does the Holy See not have full diplomatic relations with Israel? At our meeting the representative of the Secretariat of State spoke of serious and unresolved problems in the region. For the same reasons, the Holy See does not have an exchange of ambassadors with the Kingdom of Jordan, so it is *not*, as one sometimes hears, a situation of judgments uniquely directed towards Israel. Besides the unsettled situation symbolized now very dramatically in the ongoing uprising (intifada), namely, the settling of the Palestinian question (for which the Holy See does not hold Israel solely responsible by the way; clearly there is the responsibility of the Arab States who helped create the situation and it is going to take a joint action to resolve it), there are also concerns and fears regarding the situation of Catholic minorities in Moslem countries and there is a hope for an international guarantee for the full religious rights of all the major faith groups in Jerusalem, something that is again in the picture with the current question of the Hospice of St. John in Jerusalem.

I think I might just stop here. I do want to say something in the course of the discussion about public policy debate in the United States where issues arise, for example, with respect to school aid,

human rights issues, abortion, euthanasia, and related questions. And there is the child care bill that recently went through Congress. With that I will finish my presentation with great gratitude to you for your attention.

Rabbi Waxman:

I must express my admiration for my colleagues and other people who are gathered here, that on this fourth day of meetings and incessant talk you are still here for more talk. But you have been very fortunate in having the privilege of hearing Archbishop Keeler, and it is good that he spoke first, contrary to what he describes as our usual practice. I feel he settled some of the major questions which necessarily must be in your minds, and he is able to speak with an authority which comes from deep involvement. Indeed, the fact that he is here at all, that we invited him and that he came, is more eloquent testimony than anything else to the fact that there has been a revolution in the Jewish-Catholic relations which have existed for nineteen centuries. This revolution has taken place in our lifetime, and many of the men who were responsible for it are still with us. Pope John XXIII and Cardinal Bea are gone, but Cardinal Willebrands' eloquent voice is still being heard. If Rabbi Heschel is no longer with us, we have the presence of Wolfe Kelman whose role was described yesterday by Marc Tanenbaum, who also had a very significant role in these developments. We have reason to be proud that all three of the people I have mentioned have been closely identified as members of this Rabbinical Assembly. Dr. Riegner of the World Jewish Congress, who has played a major role in this field for forty years, is still here to give testimony to the changes which have been effected.

We have undergone a revolution in Catholic-Jewish relations, perhaps too recent to be fully appreciated, perhaps not yet fully evolved, but nonetheless one of very great importance. While this revolution is only twenty-five years old, it has now reached a critical point. We must now determine whether we want Catholic-Jewish relations or whether we want Catholic-Jewish dialogue. The first has gone on for nineteen centuries. It carries the freight of meaning given to it by many centuries of persecution, of hostility, and of the teaching of contempt and of misunderstanding. The second is an attempt to break with the past and to fashion a form of address between people speaking as equals who are both strangers and afraid "in a world they never made". Dialogue as against relationships, it seems to me, is the key question. And I propose to consider the question of the nature

of dialogue not in terms of the specifics to which Archbishop Keeler adverted, but in terms of the background out of which dialogue has risen and in terms of some of the broader implications involved. That awareness and that concern have been missing in large part even in our circles, and we ought to be inherently and essentially concerned with the subject. I want to address myself, however briefly, to four headings—the factors which have promoted dialogue, the barriers to dialogue, the results of the dialogue, and the imperatives for the future.

Among the factors which have promoted dialogue is, first of all, the Holocaust. It was a major element in the rethinking of the relationships between Catholics and Jews for Pope John XXIII and Cardinal Bea, and it led to *Nostra Aetate*, the first of three major statements on the subject made by the Catholic Church. The second document was Guidelines, and the third was Notes on how to teach Judaism to Catholics. Jews have not drafted equivalent statements because, to a very considerable extent, the initiative must come from the Catholic side and the changes must necessarily be made in the Catholic doctrine rather than in the Jewish doctrine. For Catholicism, it is vital to define Catholicism's relation to Judaism from a theological point of view. For Judaism the relation to Christianity is not a major theological issue, although it is an important sociological issue. A Catholic reaction, while insufficient in Jewish opinion, was a recognition that the Catholic Church and other Christian bodies had a responsibility for the evolution of the events in Europe, and that the Holocaust demonstrated that Christian teaching of nineteen centuries had essentially failed. From the Jewish point of view the Holocaust resulted in a resolution no longer to accept passively or to tolerate the intolerable.

A second compelling factor for the development of the dialogue has been the creation of the State of Israel, which has turned Jewish history upside down and has led to a rethinking of our own destiny as Jews. It has not only convinced Jews that history may be changed but, I think, has led to a sort of recognition on the part of Christians that there is a mystique about Jewish history and Jewish resilience and Jewish creativity as a national entity of which they had not been properly aware. Gershon Scholem, referring to the enlightenment which said "to Jews as individuals everything, to the Jews as a people nothing", asserted that the reason dialogue did not develop in Germany was that it never took Jews seriously as a people. The only ones who took them seriously as a people were the anti-Semites. But now, in the changed circumstances with Israel in the background, it seems

to me that the Christian world has to reckon with Jews not only as a faith but as a people, and therefore its perception and conception of Jews has to be revised.

A compelling but little recognized factor in promoting dialogue—but one which should be of particular interest to us because we are a rabbinical and a scholarly body—has been the development of modern Jewish Biblical commentary. Jews had not been in this field at all, and it was a discipline primarily preempted by Christians. However, with the development of the universities in Israel, the development of modern Jewish Biblical scholarship, the development of archeology in Israel touching particularly upon the period of the beginning of Christianity, with the revelations of the Dead Sea Scrolls, particular importance has been given by the Christian world to Jewish perceptions, and particularly to the Talmud and the Midrash as illuminations of the development of Christianity in the early centuries. That is important because how the Bible is understood is fundamental to any dialogue.

Allow me a deviation in order to relate a story that was told to me by Yigal Yadin years ago which illustrates the importance of understanding the Bible and the importance of Biblical interpretation. Yadin said that at the end of the War of Independence in Israel, the British wanted to make up. So they resolved to send Lord Louie Montebatten, the Admiral of the Fleet, to visit Israel. Everything was properly settled in diplomatic terms except for one thing, and that was the question of military protocol. The commander of Israel's military forces at that point was General Yigal Yadin. He was listed as a Major General and therefore the British Ambassador insisted that, since Lord Louie Montebatten was Admiral of the Fleet, Yadin, merely a Major General, ought to call upon *him*. Mr. Ben Gurion, who was then Prime Minister of Israel, said that on the contrary it was proper for the guest to call upon the host. Moreover, Ben Gurion continued, "How do you know that Yigal Yadin is a Major General? Yadin bears the title of *Rav Aluf!*" He therefore suggested that the way to resolve the dispute was to look in the Bible to see what the term means. So they went to the Book of Genesis where, you will remember, the term *aluf* is used. They looked at the King James translation, which translated *aluf* as "Duke". *Rav Aluf*, of course is a Grand Duke. So Lord Louie Montebatten went to call upon General Yadin.

It is precisely this sort of Biblical interpretation that may be determinative not only of diplomacy but of theology. And really what has happened is that the Catholic world has undertaken theologically to

recognize as a fundamental, the statement of Paul which overturns perhaps two thousand years of Catholic theology, and that is the statement that God does not go back on His promises. This means, therefore, that the Covenant with the Jews endures.

These are the factors which I think have promoted the dialogue, and they are very important. But there are barriers to dialogue as well, and the barriers start first of all with the Jews.

The trouble, it seems to me, is that the Jewish community has been too little aware of the fundamental changes which have taken place, and too little concerned with them. Too little personnel has been put into dealing with inter-faith relations, too little money has been spent on it, too little propagation of the fact that we are actually living through a fundamental evolution which should have significant meaning for our children and our grandchildren. This lack of concern in the Jewish community should concern us greatly now that we are witnessing the renewal of classic anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe. The Catholic Church is a power there, and it is capable of opposing and resisting the spread of anti-Semitism and the churches are capable of playing a role there in resisting it. Archbishop Keeler tells me that the church has the problem of building its own infrastructure there, but he agrees that it may have a great role to play in relation to our fellow Jews there. (It should be noted that in September 1990 an important meeting was held in Prague between Jewish and Catholic official bodies which resulted in agreement on how to deal with anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe. One immediate result was the denunciation of anti-Semitism by the Polish Bishops in December 1990.) That is something which we ought to bear very seriously in mind. We have not been willing to pay the price of concern with the possibilities of dialogue. And I don't think that we have been willing to pay the price of comprehension of what is going on either.

On the Catholic side, barriers to the dialogue have existed too. There has not been a sufficient confrontation with the Holocaust, with its meaning, with the actions of the official Catholic bodies, some very glorious, some very, very miserable. Cardinal Etchegray, a distinguished French clergyman, said at a synod of Bishops that the Church has to apologize to the Jewish people. It has to admit its guilt. Nonetheless, Cardinal Glemp of Poland spoke in classic anti-Semitic terms. Although he later modified his statement, he nonetheless demonstrated that much of Eastern Europe has been unaffected by these changes which have taken place in the West. I am happy to say that he was repudiated by many of the major figures

in the Church, including Archbishop Keeler and many other American clergymen.

A further barrier has been the failure of sensitivity on both sides. Archbishop Keeler referred to the fact that I told the Baal Shem story, which makes the point that you have to know "what pains me in order to love me". Jews, I think, very often have failed to appreciate the sensitivities of Catholics. Archbishop Keeler has made the point in talks we have had that Jews have engaged in Pope bashing. He very justly says that the Pope has a special status in the eyes of Catholics. They may disagree with him, and that is their right as it is our right to disagree with Israel, but they have to be respectful of our sensitivities and we have to be respectful of their sensitivities in this regard.

On the other hand, I think that the Vatican never did properly appreciate (and we had this all out in 1987 and we have been having it out since then) the real fury of the Jewish community over the meeting with Waldheim, and the meeting with Arafat, and the delays over the removal of the convent from Auschwitz. I understand that they have their problems with the Carmelite nuns. They have their problems, as we have ours internally too. We tried to rectify some of the issues in dispute with a communique to which we all agreed in Rome in 1987, which was a year of major decision. Among other things, it was agreed that the Vatican Secretary of State would alert us to potential problems in advance. That has not been the case. Unfortunately, that agreement has not been fulfilled. But if Catholics can't get their act together, neither can we. We present them with innumerable groups. We had one united Jewish group, the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation, which was the spokesman for the Jewish world. As a result of organizational interests, we split up for a time and presented the Vatican with several groups all saying the same thing. We are reunited now, but I think it is necessary for the Jewish community to demand that organizational interests be subordinated for the general good.

The refusal of the Catholic Church to recognize the significance of Israel in the way we want is, I think, something which bothers most Jews. Perhaps, because we tend to think sociologically whereas the Catholics tend to think theologically, we emphasize different things. And so the questions we ask are: Did they apologize for Waldheim? Have they recognized Israel? I think Archbishop Keeler is perfectly right in asserting that fundamentally it may not matter to Israel, save as a sort of gesture in the face of the world, whether it is recognized by the Holy See or not. What matters from

the Catholic point of view is the statement in 1987 that the Catholic Church has no theological objection to the existence of a sovereign Jewish state.

But here let me say that Israel has a meaning to us which has to be understood, I think, more sensitively by non-Jews. I believe it is understood in the United States by the Catholics. Israel has been achieved at a great cost of blood and pain. It is a haven of refuge to people who have fled even as Russian Jews now feel they have to flee. It has a historical and creative meaning as a response of life to the Holocaust. Its existence validates the millennial hopes of the Jewish people and its belief that a pattern of exile and redemption exists in Jewish history. To ignore these elements which are so vital to Jewish self-understanding, because of rather obscure political motives, is to fail in a major criterion of meaningful dialogue which the Church has agreed is necessary, which is to understand the Jewish people as they understand themselves.

The statement of Cardinal O'Connor the other day that the entrance of Jews into the hospice in Jerusalem—which we deplore and which other Jews have deplored—was obscene, was an excessive sort of a statement from a man whom I regard as a friend, and who has made, I think, highly positive statements about Israel. In the presence of Arab statesmen I heard him urge that the Church ought to recognize Israel, and assert the belief that the Holocaust was a crucifixion and that Israel is a resurrection for the entire Jewish people. Linguistic excess can destroy dialogue. In *The New York Times* last Saturday, which carried Cardinal O'Connor's statement on page 2, there was the story of the exhumation of a body in a French Jewish cemetery and the planting of a Star of David with an umbrella on its chest and a spade handle in its anus. *That* was obscene. The Israel action was stupid. Our price of dialogue is the avoidance of linguistic excess.

Let me now take a few minutes to summarize some of the positive things which have been achieved over the past twenty-five years. The dialogue has resulted, it seems to me, in major advances. Three documents have been issued by the Catholics which reflect major theological revolutions. First, the recognition that the Jewish people and the Jewish religion must be seen as they see themselves. Second, that the Jewish covenant is an ongoing covenant. Third, that the Jewish spiritual tradition did not stop with the Bible but continued on and that, as a result, the Jewish spiritual tradition ought to be and must be studied in the Catholic Church. I was in Minnesota speaking at a Catholic college several years ago. A nun said to me, "Do you know

what we are reading as spiritual literature?" I said that I had no idea whatsoever. And she said, "We are reading Abraham Joshua Heschel." I asked, "Why Heschel?" She replied, "Because there is nothing spiritually comparable to Heschel in current Catholic literature." That is a reversal of traditional doctrine of enormous proportion.

Fourth, the Catholic Church has abandoned proselytization of Jews as a group. I was in Venice when Professor Federici read a seminal and fundamental paper which asserted that the Church—because of the special role of the Jews—should abandon any attempt to convert the Jewish people. The meeting was held in a Catholic retreat house. Kosher food was served for all the participants. Even the Jews had to eat Kosher! We were visited by the Cardinal of Venice, who later became Pope John Paul I, who came to see this group which was meeting together. He came with his yarmulke perched rather jauntily on his head, arrived a little late, apologized on the grounds that his gondola had been held up in traffic. The meeting had charming aspects, but fundamentally it was decisive in setting a tone and a mood about the special role of Jews.

Fifth, there has been a major change in Catholic textbooks and the way in which priests are taught.

Sixth, there was a statement in our communique from Rome in 1987 which resulted from a major confrontation and led to a major agreement—that there is no theological objection to the existence of Israel. It took some ground out from under some Jewish feelings and, from a doctrinal point of view, it took the ground out from under any Catholic who would assert that there is a theological objection to Israel.

And, last, there was an agreement that there would be a major Catholic statement directed to the entire Church condemning anti-Semitism, and an examination of the historic role of the Church in teaching it. This has been held up, partially because Jews themselves were involved in internal arguments.

The climax for many of these developments came in 1987 after a summer of confrontation in which we had a resolution very largely because of Archbishop Keeler's intervention, and in which we came to a conclusion of which the Pope spoke in Miami endorsing the principles we had arrived at in Rome. In that event, the media perceived something very interesting. The picture that was shown on the front page of newspapers all over the world was not of the Pope speaking to the Jews, but of a rabbi speaking to the Pope and the Pope listening. The media perceived that there had been a revolu-

tion. The fact that the rabbi happened to be me (and an excellent selection!) is beside the point that it was a rabbi and that this reflected a major revolution.

Despite all these developments, a great many Jews remain suspicious about the intentions and the integrity of the Church. In view of the bitter history of persecution which Jews have experienced, their attitude is understandable. And yet I suggest that we have a historic opportunity to change history, and we must go forward. The reasons are clear. In the first place, it is prudential; we need allies. Second, we and the Church alike believe in *tikkun olam*, we believe that it is possible to change and to mend our world. We have an obligation to try to change the world in which our children are going to live. If we can't do that, if we can't in this moment of revolution in Jewish history feel that we can change the world, we are failing our potentialities and the moment of great historic decision in which we live. We are living in the midst of a revolution. Let us not sleep through it.

DISCUSSION

Rabbi Eliot Marrus (Buffalo, New York): Archbishop Keeler, many of us have been very impressed by statements from the National Conference on various issues including the sanctity of life, and by the very clear statement against religious coercion of one community by another. Recognizing the legitimately intense feeling of the Catholic community on the issue of the sanctity of life, even at the fetal stage, and recognizing the sensitivity of the Jewish community affirmed by this Convention again yesterday on the subject of the right of all religious communities to define life and the sanctity of life without government interference, could you perhaps reflect on some possibility of a meeting ground where both groups could honor their traditions without a government policy that would coerce one or the other?

Archbishop Keeler: I am not sure that I could find a formula that would respond to what you suggest, rabbi, but I can tell you that earlier this year there was a political debate in the Maryland legislature. I was out of town, but the papers carried the stories. People saw in the press reports overtones of both anti-Semitism and clear anti-Catholicism, and were feeling very hurt on both sides.

Let me insert a little parenthesis here. Whenever someone says that another group is trying to impose its religious views and there is violation of church and state separation, you trigger in Catholics

the feeling, "Oh, here we go again!" Somehow we are disqualified from participating in the public policy debate because we are members of a church. When this particular question arose there were published statements attributed to Catholics that I certainly could not associate myself with. I returned calls made to me by three of my friends who are rabbis in Baltimore, and I suggested that we get together and work towards a statement in which it would be affirmed that in the context of our American, and especially our Maryland, tradition, which goes back very far, each has the right to speak out of a religious background towards the formation of public policy. We should do everything in our power to avoid using terminology that would raise specters or hints or whatever of anti-Semitism or anti-Catholicism. So we met, and we issued a statement. I also made additional statements, as requested of me, which were published in *The Jewish Times* of Baltimore and in *The Catholic Review*. I was delighted to make them because I was very concerned about the issue. I had in fact planned to make them before the request was made. I think that recognizing our right to speak out of our religious background helps to enrich America. The opposition to slavery, so much in the areas of civil rights, justice, peace and so on, have come out of people speaking out of religious conviction. In this area of human concerns we should be able to do it and not be raising the specter of one religion trying to impose its view upon others. That is not something that is going to happen. Our public policy is shaped in public debate and I don't see how any group is able, the way our society is structured, to impose its view upon others.

Rabbi Jan Kaufman (Rockville, Maryland): I am a native Baltimorean. I follow up on my colleague Rabbi Marrus's question. In view of the recent debates in the State Legislature of Maryland, I am curious as to how far the Church is prepared to go in using its political influence on the whole choice issue. And, as a follow-up on that, is the Church committed to using its resources to care for the emotional, economic and physical well-being, the general quality of life, of those children who are born to people who don't want them?

Archbishop Keeler: I am troubled by the tone of the question. This is part of our public problem today. The Catholic Church's position in the issue of defending human life is that there are three aspects to what is basically a civil rights question. The first is a commitment on our part to try to lift up educational principles for our own people. I don't think we have done a very good job. I think that we find—and I say this is something that you have to face too in looking

at a whole range of daily life issues—that it is not what we preach on Saturday or Friday night or Saturday or Sunday which is forming so many young people but what they get from their friends and from the media. That is what they tell me themselves. We have an enormous job to do in teaching the Commandments. That is our first responsibility. Our second responsibility is in terms of outreach to expectant mothers who are faced with the question of whether the life often sustained by the heart that beats beneath their own heart is going to be snuffed out. That is a way in which we can see the issue being defined, and we have committed an enormous amount of resources through our Catholic Charities to support Birth-right and other agencies and ways to try to afford help both before and after birth. I have seen this in terms of commitment of resources as something that really is significant out of all proportion to our limited resources. That is very rarely reflected in reporting in the general media. The third area is the public policy debate, to which we have committed relatively few resources compared to the total picture. And actually I see the main burden of that being carried forward by independent groups. I think we have perhaps more responsibility than we have exercised in the past in trying to present what we see as our responsibility in this area. But in terms of resources we don't have that many to commit to the area. In Maryland we have just a couple of people working as full-time staff, very little compared to other groups advancing opposing views in the area.

Rabbi Philip Silverstein (Columbia, South Carolina, formerly United States Army Chaplain): I am somewhat familiar with the question in reference to the military ordinariate of the Roman Catholic Church. In my experience of twenty years I have found that high-ranking priests within the military are generally more insensitive to the Holocaust than the rest of you. So my question is, how influential are you, or how influential is Roman Catholic education, in reference to the Holocaust with the military ordinariate of the Roman Catholic Church?

Archbishop Keeler: I think that some remarkable things have happened. Cardinal O'Connor, who was Chief Chaplain of the Navy, speaks of his own personal experience in visiting Dachau years ago. I have heard him tell that story many times. I know he brought it into a retreat for officers at the time, for chaplains. At least from that I would say something has happened. I also want to underscore something that Rabbi Waxman said. A revolution has happened, a

revolution in terms of education at every level, and that would include the educational materials and the teacher training for people who are working with our children in the Armed Services. They all reflect this positive attitude, this incorporation of materials of Vatican II. Even though the teachers may not know technically how it happened, it has happened.

I want to say something about the St. John's Hospice in Jerusalem. I told Rabbi Waxman that it was my reaction when I read Cardinal O'Connor's statement that the Cardinal is learning some of Mordy's language, that direct, robust way of speaking. There is a dimension to the St. John's Hospice issue which is not fully on the table, not fully visible here in the United States. It is like where we were with the Auschwitz Carmelite chapel before last summer. Then there was an issue of burning concern in Europe, of which we were a bit aware here, but it was not our issue. When Cardinal O'Connor wrote so strongly last week, he was trying to share with our community and with our partners in dialogue some of the enormous sense of pain within the Christian community in Jerusalem. I'd like to read from a response written this week by Dr. Eugene Fisher, a dear friend of many of us, our staff person in Washington, who has worked with Rabbi Waxman and was part of our meeting in Rome two years ago:

More recent statements such as that by the Israeli government seeking to justify the action have tended to escalate the issue even as it is being adjudicated. The question now seems to be a rhetorical tussle over how to frame the issue. The Israeli government position, and yours as well if I read you correctly, seems to be that the problem with the takeover lies only with its manner and timing, and it therefore does not raise any fundamental issues of the *status quo* of the rights of the Christian community in Jerusalem. The reasoning behind this, as the communique from the Israeli Embassy put it, is that the buildings in question are neither a church nor a holy site of any kind and are not used for religious worship. They are owned by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and in the past served as a hospital. The issue of definition is, I believe, crucial to understanding the varied reactions of the Jewish and Christian communities at the present stage of the crisis. If one accepts the above definition, then your own feeling that the Christian response has been an overreaction is quite understandable. On the other hand, it needs to be clear that Christians by and large do not accept this definition of the issue, that the problem lies solely with the manner and timing of the takeover, and not with the takeover itself. Christians in Jerusalem and in the United States perceive the issue precisely as a threat to the rights of religious minorities in Jerusalem.

Let me pause to say that last summer as we visited with Christian leaders Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican in Jerusalem and with their people, we found a number of people who felt that their rights were imperilled. This is not some new issue. This is something that has been festering for many, many years. They see it as a curtailment of traditional Christian rights not only to have free access to the holy places, but to be allowed to live unmolested alongside these sacred shrines.

Whether currently in use as a hostel or not, that building is a place where pilgrims travelling to pray at the holy sites may stay, and Christians see St. John's Hospice as very much a necessary extension of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre itself. Manifestly the Greek Orthodox Church does not want this site to be put to the use to which the settlers want to put it. Equally manifestly the settlers and those within the Israeli government who aided them know perfectly well that what they were doing would violate the will of the owner of the property, as their manner and timing reveal. If one accepts the way in which Israeli Christians must perceive the issues, then their reactions do become understandable since for them it touches on the survival of the Christian community of Israel. If even property connected with essential Christian holy places, property once used and perhaps to be used again for a strictly religious purpose, housing pilgrims as the name and the religious symbols in the building signify, can be taken over in this way with the active cooperation of the Israeli government, then what recourse will there be in the future? You may say that the local Christians in Jerusalem were incorrect in their assessment of what is at stake. You may be right. But you are unlikely to convince them or us of the correctness of your moderating assessment. The matter has already escalated beyond the point where technical discussions about whether the hospice is a religious site or not are even relevant. To Christians it is a religious site, nor can arguments however brilliant from outside the Greek Orthodox community convince Christians that it is not what the Greek Orthodox say it is. It is their right and theirs alone to determine what is or is not religious for them.

So you see, the issue for the Christians in Jerusalem and around the world is a very, very sensitive one. And I just say it is like an Auschwitz in reverse. And the takeover took place at the holiest of times near the holiest of Christian shrines, and the police response included knocking down the Greek Orthodox Patriarch and also tussling with the Latin Rite Patriarch. That word is around too. That did not help to clarify or calm feelings in the Christian community in Jerusalem or anywhere else where these reports have reached. This is an area where it is good for us that we can talk, and not just depend on news reports.

Rabbi Waxman: I am going to take two minutes to make a final statement. I do not disagree with the perception of Archbishop Keeler as to what the *Christian* perception is. I took issue, of course, with the extreme wording of Cardinal O'Connor, but I think nonetheless that it was a stupid action. I don't think it was calculated to achieve any ultimate good, and I think the motivations were highly dubious.

But that is not what I wanted to conclude with. I want to conclude with two points. One is that this entire revolution in our relationship has yet to be translated into daily life. There has been a significant attempt in the United States, but it still has a long way to go. It is almost at its beginning in Europe, particularly in Eastern Europe. And I trust that it will go forward. The teaching, the instruction of priests, the textbooks, are all areas in which it will take two generations to achieve significant effects. One of the things which has contributed is something that Archbishop Keeler did. On the heels of our confrontation—and that is what it was in 1987—over the Waldheim matter which led to the whole debate with the Pope and with the Vatican, he organized a Bishops' committee consisting of high dignitaries of the American Church to meet with the Synagogue Council of America on a periodic basis so that we might discuss matters on which we agreed and disagreed, including domestic issues in the United States. We meet approximately twice a year. The meetings have been very fruitful, very useful. It is a testimony to the Synagogue Council's role, and it is a testimony to the National Conference of Bishops, and particularly to Archbishop Keeler.

In this regard let me point out that the Pope said something when we met in Castel Gandolfo in 1987 which we ought to ponder. He said that the Exodus can be a paradigm for all humanity that God can bring good out of evil. Out of confrontations we sometimes have had very positive results.

Let me introduce my concluding point through a personal experience. Some years ago I stepped on a scale and discovered that I weighed three thousand pounds. It seemed a little excessive, so I stepped on a second scale, and discovered that I weighed thirty-seven pounds. Finally I found a third scale, which showed approximately one hundred and eighty pounds. Now, of course I was weighing myself at the Planetarium, first on Jupiter, next on the Moon, and finally here on Earth. The question for us is: In what world do we want to be weighed? All of us want to be weighed in the world of Jewish scholarship, we want to be weighed in the world of Jewish concerns. I think that we live in a time when we have to be weighed

as well in the world of *human* concerns, of *interreligious* concerns. It is a scale on which I trust that the Rabbinical Assembly will weigh itself and will prove to be weighty.