

as an orchestra incorporating various large groups of instruments. In translation, this means trying to understand the intrinsic logic of the self-interpretation of another religion in order to identify what is common and what is different. He demands honesty in dealing with one's own tradition in the Alenu prayer which asks that every human being should recognise the one true God, a universal appeal which resembles that of the Good Friday prayer. Instead of blaming others, people had better turn to the urgent problems of mankind.

From the Catholic point of view, Bishop Sklba names three characteristics of a fruitful dialogue: distinguishing between positions without excluding any of the disputing partners, undertaking to implement the results of the dialogue, and recognising consciously that any statements are temporary in nature. In his opinion, any dialogue essentially depends on cultivating a collective memory, being able to see oneself through the eyes of the other, and striving for truth. He goes on to say that the theology of the covenant and its impact on Jews and Christians is of key importance in this context.

Regarding the prerequisites of the interreligious dialogue, the president of the ICCJ, Deborah Weissman, believes that people should be open with regard to results so that views can be exchanged without surrendering one's position. The classical texts of Jewish tradition described a culture of debate in which alternative truths were admissible. Though pluralism had its limits, we should strive not to "reproduce uniformity" but to "organise diversity", a peaceful, vibrant coexistence of different elements. Yet there were crucial items that were not negotiable; for Jews, these included the recognition of the right of the state of Israel to exist.

Many of the ideas contained in the new appeal can be summarised in one sentence: *"We do not intend to forget anything, but we do intend to build a better future together."* This clearly amalgamates remembering and turning towards the future. We will not forget that it was the Jewish-Christian culture of the occident which left its mark on our continent and which, through its strength, will shape the future of our polity.

Berlin, July 2009

Prof. Dr. Bernhard Vogel
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PREFACE

It is my honor and pleasure to introduce this document, published in conjunction with the July 2009 annual conference of the International Council of Christians and Jews. We are meeting in Berlin, as it is the 70th anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War. I believe that since the War many of the German people have provided us with a model of what Christians call *metanoia*, of transformation, that can surely serve as a beacon to other nations, as well. They have assumed responsibility for the past and are among the most outspoken opponents, for example, of Holocaust denial. Many German leaders in the recent past and present have been true friends of the Jewish people and the State of Israel, and I would like to acknowledge our gratitude for that.

It is for those reasons that there can be perhaps no more fitting venue than Berlin for the proclamation and publication of our statement, "A Time for Recommitment." This I believe is a groundbreaking statement in that to the best of my knowledge, never before has a large group of Christians and Jews worked together on such a declaration that calls for parallel action on the part of Christians and the Churches and Jews and the Jewish communities, as well as joint action of Christians and Jews together. Most of the previous statements in the history of the dialogue were either unilateral or were primarily theological documents. I do not wish to minimize their importance. Each one of them moved us along in the right direction, on our long and bumpy road towards reconciliation and cooperation. But I believe that our document is different, in that it also translates theology into practical liturgical, educational, social and other realms.

I anticipate that there will be criticism of the document. I hope that it is constructive criticism from which we can all learn. If the document engenders fruitful discussions between Christians and Jews and within each of those communities, I would say, echoing the Jewish Passover liturgy, *Dayeinu!* It will suffice!

I wish to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to a number of individuals, organizations, and institutions, without whose assistance this document could not have been produced and published. Our partners in this venture have been the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and especially Dr. Karlies Abmeier. I want to thank Dr. Eva Schulz-Jander, who serves as our liaison with the DKR. Special thanks to ICCJ First Vice-President Professor Phil Cunningham, the general editor of our document. About 35 Jewish and Christian scholars and leaders from throughout the world had input into the document, as well as members of the ICCJ Executive Board and staff. Thanks to all of the many people who contributed to the writing, editing, and translating of our document.

And last, but certainly not least, I express my thanks to God, who has sustained us, kept us alive, and enabled us to reach this time.

Dr. Deborah Weissman
President, International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ)
Jerusalem/Israel

PREFACE

Do miracles still happen in our day and age? To my mind at least, the publication and presentation of our declaration about the future of Christian-Jewish Dialogue, "*Time for Recommitment*" is one. Does it not seem like a miracle that seventy years after the beginning of World War II this declaration is to be presented in Berlin, the city where the annihilation of European Jewry was conceived and planned – and where the desks were located from which the implementation orders were sent out? Seventy years – a biblical time. It is the time that is generally connected with the Babylonian exile, but also, according to Psalm 90, the duration of a human life. This time was needed to travel the long and arduous road from the darkest period of Christian-Jewish relations to this document of mutual trust and co-operation. The joint input of both Christians and Jews from such different countries as Germany, Israel, the United Kingdom, the USA, and Poland went into the making of this document.

Seventy years after the greatest abyss ever separating the two religious and secular cultures, men and women of both traditions could meet in mutual respect as equal partners, in spite of the pain suffered and the wounds inflicted in the past, to address not only the similarities but also the differences of their religious traditions.

The road towards reconciliation was long and arid, but those who travelled it learned to listen to the religious Other and to be aware of what hurts him. Only a trustful encounter allowed the authors to address new and radical questions in the document.

Other documents prepared the way. First of all, the Ten Points of Seelisberg in 1947, the first document after the shock of the Shoah. It calls on the Christian Communities to renounce their long term theology of supercessionism. One year later, in 1948, the first Societies of Christian-Jewish Co-operation were founded in Germany to overcome the