

- 15] *I would contrast the universalism of the Aleynu (praying that all human beings will recognize the truth that now we alone recognize) with an example of a more positive universalism in our liturgy, emphasizing those aspects of the human condition shared by all human beings. It is taken from a central prayer for the Days of Awe Unetaneh tokaf, which has been shown by scholars to be originally based on a Byzantine Christian liturgical poem, and has strong affinities with the Dies irae of the Latin Requiem mass: see Eric Werner, The Sacred Bridge: Interdependence of Liturgy and Music in Synagogue and Church During the First Millennium (1959), pp. 252–55. "This day all who enter the world pass before You like a flock of sheep ... You set a limit to the life of every creature and determine its destiny ... Man comes from the dust and ends in the dust. He spends his life earning his living, but he is fragile like a cup so easily broken, like grass that withers, like flowers that fade, like passing shadows and dissolving clouds, a fleeting breeze and dust that scatters, like a dream that fades away, But You are the king, the living God, the everlasting."*
- 16] *A useful and accessible review of Eisenmenger can be found in the first chapter of Jacob Katz, From Prejudice to Destruction (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980), pp. 13–22; Katz concedes the author's "tremendous erudition" and notes that "he does not falsify his sources", but presents a selection of Jewish texts that does not reflect the reality of Jewish attitudes and behaviour toward contemporary Christians.*
- 17] *Joshua Trachtenberg, The Devil and the Jews: The Medieval Conception of the Jew and Its Relation to Modern Antisemitism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943; republished Philadelphia: JPS and Cleveland: World Publishing Company). See my new Foreword to the 1983 JPS republication.*
- 18] *Dagobert D. Runes, The War Against the Jew (New York: Philosophical Library, 1968. We are informed in the Preface, "From pulpit to pulpit, every Sunday and holy day, in every Church of Christ, cold hate was released against the hapless Jewish families. And this teaching of hate has not ceased to this very day [in 1968. Soon the cold hate turned into fiery action, and from one end of Europe to the other the almighty Catholic Church put the Jews to the pyre and sword. No child, no woman, no invalid was spared" (p. xvi). The book is truly an embarrassment for anyone with historical knowledge and a minimal sense of accuracy and fairness.*
- 19] *Wiesenthal, p. 9. One instance would be August 25, for which the first date is '1255 – A Jew in Lincoln, England, is victim of a blood libel.' The second date is '1941 – During a night raid, several thousand Jews are taken from the ghetto of Minsk, Belorussian S.S.R, and murdered,' as well as other atrocities committed in the wake of the Germany invasion of the USSR, followed by other Holocaust-related events of 1942, 1943, and 1944 (p. 191).' No connection between the blood libel and the murder of Minsk Jews is explicitly claimed, but the very juxtaposition on the page implies the continuity.*
- 20] *Dan Cohn-Sherbok, The Crucified Jew: Twenty Centuries of Christian Anti-Semitism (London: HarperCollins, 1992 Grand Rapid, Mich., Eerdmans, 1997); see the review by Eugene Fisher in Missiology.*

REDISCOVERING: "AN IMMENSE PATRIMONY"

A CATHOLIC REFLECTION ON THE TWELVE BERLIN POINTS

*Abstract of 2008 Statement held by
Bishop Richard Sklba*

Sklba's reflections begin with three parallels between Jewish and Christian communities in the first century of the common era and our own communities today in order to help set the stage for understanding the kinds of dialogue that are needed now. First: in their passionate search for truth the dialogic debates in the first century (CE) were usually characterized by differentiation without exclusion; second: Dialogue between Jewish Christians and Jews carried moral weight and the obligation to put into practice what the dialogue had discovered; third: Dialogues in the first century were fully aware of our "unknowing" state in interreligious dialogue.

One of the most pressing issues in Christian-Jewish dialogue today is the cultivation of memory within the minds and hearts of Christians. A memory which is more than a psychological recalling or the mere story as told in history text books, it is a spiritual act to be developed by following generations, until it has become an intricate part of Christian culture.

A second pressing issue in the dialogue today is the need for both communities to continue working at a particular partnering skill essential to better communication. Pope John Paul II, while implementing the document *Nostra Aetate*, developed communication skills that reassured the religious other and averted misunderstandings. Essential was the Pope's ability to understand issues not simply from a Christian point of view but also from a Jewish one. Central to his insight in communicating with Jews was an appreciation for the many fears that are historically the foundation of Jewish concerns.

Pope Benedict XVI extended the issues of dialogue to a common commitment to search for truth as known by faith and reason. Thus the goal of interreligious dialogue is a full exchange of religious beliefs and long held tenets of faith and religious practice. In other words Pope John Paul II gave us the insight into how we communicate, Pope Benedict XVI on what we communicate.

Each community today is confronted by the current theological challenges of the interpretation of the "covenant", that is to say by the theological examination of the discontinuity of Jewish and Christian communities. Understanding the "covenant" is essential to the identity Israel's and the Church. A proper understanding of this notion unlocks a good many issues of mutual concern, including Israel's claim to the land; and the way in which Christian theories of salvation relate the Jewish community to God, and most sensitively the issue and practices of missiology and evangelization, an issue which is currently the subject of vehement debates. There are two truths facing each other. For Christians the redemption won by the death and resurrection of Christ has universal significance, whereas God's call to Israel is permanent and cannot be taken back. Precisely how these two truths are related to each other remains a subject for much further study, for the right formulae to give expression to the fullness of those truths have not been found yet. "We Christians would hold that the Messiah continues and deepens the covenant with Israel, which must still speak in its own voice."

Skiba finds laudable words for the twelve Berlin points, especially because of their appeal to the Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities to work towards an economic and political balance within their respective societies. The appeal for social justice, Skiba points out, carries a moral imperative and is meant to change its partners by making each more just in relationship to the other.

Moreover Skiba praises the Berlin document for renouncing the traditional teachings of contempt of the Jews such as supersessionism and religious anti-Judaism, as well as the encouragement to Jewish communities to consider acknowledging the work and transformation undergone by their Christian partners. Thus he pleads for joint "learning teams" where differentiation without exclusion be practiced.

Bishop Skiba concludes his reflections by describing a meeting of Pope Benedict XVI and Rabbi Jacob Neusner. This encounter of two scholars, a Jew and a Christian, greeting each other warmly, full of high esteem for the other, learning from each other's learning, and searching for God, mirrored the fulfillment of God's promise in which He brings about the redemption of all who believe in him.