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CENTER FOR CHRISTIAN-JEWISH LEARNING



AT BOSTON COLLEGE

This Annual Report is dedicated to the memory of Sam Gerson '63 for his vision and support of friendship between Jews and Christians. Recognizing early on the importance of the work of the Center he energetically endorsed an endowment to advance that work and inspired others to join this enterprise.

CENTER'S CHRISTIAN SCHOLARS GROUP SAYS REVISING CHRISTIAN TEACHING ABOUT JEWS IS

A Sacred Obligation

At a press conference held at Boston College on September 5, 2002, the Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations released a statement entitled, *A Sacred Obligation: Rethinking Christian Faith in Relation to Judaism and the Jewish People*. Prepared partially in response to *Dabru Emet*, a statement issued in 2000 by Jewish scholars, the CSG document invited Christians to reflect on ten specific points about Jews and Judaism.

The CSG meets semi-annually under the auspices of the Center. Originally convened in 1969, it is presently composed of about

twenty Christian scholars who study a wide range of topics pertinent to Jewish-Christian relations. Its members have written some of the most important American works on the subject over the past thirty years.

A Sacred Obligation is being widely discussed both in the United States and internationally. It has to date been translated into six other languages and has been featured in a symposium in *Midstream* magazine. The CSG is currently preparing a book to expand upon the ten points in the document.

For the full text of "A Sacred Obligation", turn to page 8.

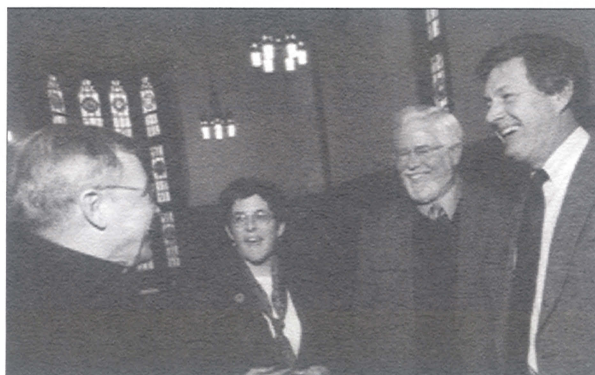
Vatican Leader Gives Major Address at Boston College

CALLS CENTERS FOR CHRISTIAN-JEWISH RELATIONS A GIFT TO THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

On November 5-6, 2002, Cardinal Walter Kasper, president of the Pontifical Biblical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, visited Boston College as the guest of the Center. Cardinal Kasper is the Catholic Church's chief spokesman on Catholic-Jewish

Relations, second only to the pope.

His Eminence first met with members of the Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations and then with about fifty theology department faculty and students. President Jehuda Reinharz of Brandeis University then graciously hosted a luncheon in Cardinal Kasper's honor that included one hundred leaders of the Christian and Jewish communities in northern New England. Cardinal



Cardinal Kasper (left) shares a light moment with Center directors Ruth Langer and Philip Cunningham and theology department chair Stephen Pope.

continued on page 4



Interreligious Learning at Boston College

Many courses sponsored by the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning engage their students in Interreligious Learning, a format developed by Dr. Mary C. Boys, SNJM of Union Theological Seminary in New York and Dr. Sara S. Lee of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles. Interreligious Learning moves beyond simply learning about the other to an active engagement with Judaism or Christianity as lived by informed and committed Jews and Christians.

"COMMON EDUCATIONAL
PROGRAMS ON OUR
HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS
RELATIONS . . . WILL TRULY
PROMOTE MUTUAL RESPECT."

- JOHN PAUL II, SEPT. 11, 1987

Jews and Christians: Understanding the Other (*team-taught by Philip A. Cunningham and Ruth Langer, Fall 2002*) builds a foundation for genuine dialogue between Jews and Christians by posing fundamental theological questions in a comparative context. It addresses the different Jewish and Christian understandings of questions like the human experience of God, the purpose of human existence, the nature of religious community, and the ways that communities respond to challenges, both contemporary and ancient.

Engaging the Rabbinic Mind: An Introduction to Midrash and Talmud (*taught by Ruth Langer, Spring 2003*) uses texts (in translation) about Passover to introduce students to key formative texts of rabbinic Judaism. Through careful reading of the liturgy of the Passover Haggadah, selected midrashic exegeses of Exodus 12-13, and the discussions of the Seder in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Talmud, students explore the workings of the rabbinic mind. Through reading of selected Christian patristic texts on the Exodus and Easter, the course investigates both cross-influences and the development of Jewish and Christian identities over against each other in late antiquity.

Four Biblical Books in Jewish and Christian Perspectives (*team-taught by Philip A. Cunningham and Ruth Langer, Fall 2003*) explores the ways that Jews and Christians, throughout their history, have understood selected passages from four of their shared Scriptural texts: Genesis, Deuteronomy, Isaiah and Psalms. By comparing contemporaneous Jewish and Christian interpretations, traditional and contemporary, students will come to understand the diverse ways that both traditions have understood these texts and the impacts of these interpretations on their self-understanding and their understanding of each other. Classroom discussions will themselves be exercises in interfaith dialogue.

The New Testament in Its Jewish Context (*team-taught by Philip A. Cunningham and Ruth Langer, Spring 2004*) reads New Testament books as sacred literature composed at a time when the Church was a Jewish eschatological movement. As such, it had to grapple with its relationship to other Jewish groups, with its understanding of the authority of the Torah, and with the conditions for admitting Gentiles into its ranks. This course examines the consequences of these dynamics for the New Testament itself and for subsequent and contemporary Christian-Jewish relations.

Religious Quest: Judaism and Christianity (*taught by Ruth Langer 2002-3, 2003-4; Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski 2003-4*) is a two-semester course that fulfills both the undergraduate Theology and Cultural Diversity core requirements. This course introduces the study of Judaism and Christianity by comparing their answers to common human religious questions, while introducing the students to central religious thinkers and texts from the Bible to modernity.

A Personal Tribute to Sam Gerson

by Kenneth Levine

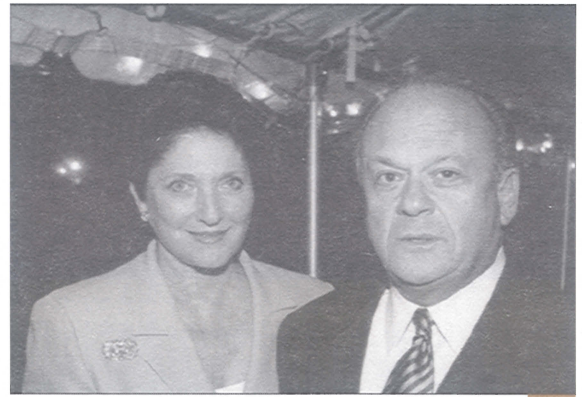
I am happy for the opportunity to express my gratitude to Sam Gerson, whose friendship during the course of 2001 ultimately led me to seek a graduate degree from Boston College and its Center for Christian-Jewish Learning. My relationship with Sam began with a business opportunity, but both of us soon came to understand that my heart was someplace else. I found myself effortlessly revealing to Sam things about myself that very few people know. He seemed to care genuinely about what was motivating me.

We spoke of religion and faith. I recalled how my faith had ebbed and flowed over the years due to various life events, but that I was now looking to put some real work into attempting to understand my Jewish heritage. It seemed clear to me that this was also a man who cared deeply about his faith. I did not, however, know how to pursue this intense interest of mine. I went from a business career where I knew with at least some certainty what each day would be to fumbling through establishing new contacts in a strange field. Fortunately, Sam would be my guide.

Right around this time two global events occurred within a week or so of each other which had a profound impact on me. The first was the United Nations Conference on Racism held in Durban South Africa. As a Jew, I reacted with anger, shock and horror when the conference developed into a virulent anti-Semitic attack complete with professionally created brochures declaring that "Zionism is Racism." That old canard that I thought had been put to rest had returned.

The other international event was 9/11. While the sheer magnitude of the tragedy was shocking, its obvious connections with interreligious relations among Judaism, the Christian West, and the Islamic world further stimulated my thinking about my Jewish faith. My desire to explore my faith was now enhanced by an intense desire to learn more about Christianity and its interactions with Judaism. How could two religions that share so much have had such a difficult past?

Again, Sam was there. He had lost some friends on 9/11. We continued our talks and I expressed my wish that in addition to exploring my religion, I wanted to do so in a context of addressing antisemitism. Sam began to talk about this fantastic new center at Boston College that was founded to improve Christian-Jewish relations. He spoke admiringly and fondly about John Corcoran and his gift that started the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning. He was very proud that his alma mater Boston College was home to such a venture. I realized



Geri and Sam Gerson

Sam was not just a great businessman, but that he really cared about the community.

I wanted to learn more about this Center, especially when Sam explained how important it would be for Jewish people to do their share in supporting its initiatives. He introduced me to Dr. Philip Cunningham, who explained its mission. It became quite clear that for someone who cared about religion, who cared about inter-religious relations, and who cared about antisemitism, Boston College would be on the leading edge of all three issues.

Sam had easily walked me down a path where my life would have tremendous added meaning. At a time when I needed help, Sam provided encouragement that I could venture outside my "business" comfort zone and pursue a new opportunity. It can be difficult and a bit scary getting started in something unfamiliar, but he made the introductions, offered advice and provided me with the opportunity to know both Phil Cunningham and Dr. Ruth Langer. As a result I became a financial supporter of the Center. I also began taking classes offered by the Center and have since been accepted as a full time graduate student in theology. I have been transformed by Sam's pride in the College, his understanding of the importance of the Center, his appreciation for people like John Corcoran and Robert and Myra Kraft (who last year endowed a permanent chair at the Center), and his respect for Phil and Ruth. I have come to share Sam's hope that other members of the Jewish community will learn of the impressive work of the Center. I also hope someday that I can guide someone who seeks to deepen his or her Jewish identity and also benefit from the blessed age of interfaith dialogue in which we now live.

Kenneth Levine is a patron of the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning and is pursuing graduate theological studies at Boston College. He is also deeply involved in the work of the American Jewish Committee.

Kasper Continued

Kasper also viewed an exhibit of self-portraits of German artists from the decades before the Shoah at BC's McMullen Museum of Art. Following a dinner with patrons of the Center and leaders of the Boston College and Archdiocesan communities, he delivered a major public address, "The Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews: A Crucial Endeavor of the Catholic Church." The Zamir Chorale of Boston then presented a mini-concert in Cardinal Kasper's honor. The cardinal's personal "Boston Marathon" concluded with a private commemoration of Kristallnacht with seminarians at St. John's Seminary and College.

At several points during the visit, Cardinal Kasper expressed his appreciation for the existence in the United States of university centers focused on Jewish-Christian relations, particularly because such



In conversation with the Theology department, Cardinal Kasper describes the intrinsic relationship between Christianity and Judaism.

Cardinal Kasper has delivered a number of important papers on Catholic-Jewish relations, many of which can be found on the Center's website.

endeavors are rarely found in other parts of the world. He described the scholarly endeavors of centers such as Boston College's as important to the universal church. He pointed to the work of the Christian Scholars Group (see p. 1) as an example of the contributions that researchers can make. The cardinal also noted the formation of the Council of Centers (CCJR – see p. 11) in the United States, and has since begun to organize a similar council in Europe.

Cardinal Kasper's visit received considerable media attention, coming as it did amid the ongoing national discussion about the document *Reflections on Covenant and Mission*. The Cardinal saw the document as an important challenge and an invitation to pursue still unresolved Christian theological questions. (For more details see p 10). Among the important points made in Cardinal Kasper's address were:

- There cannot be peace in the world without peace between the world religions. Such peace cannot come without dialogue. Dialogue requires respect for the otherness of the other.
- The history of developing a new relationship between Catholics and Jews has not been easy. It is only at the beginning of its beginning.
- Overcoming antisemitism is a constant task that must be renewed in each generation.
- Reflection and research on the Shoah must continue.
- Christians must always give witness to their hope in Christ. However, the witness of Christians to Gentiles is qualitatively different from that to Jews who live in an unbroken covenant with God. Thus, there is no organized Catholic missionary activity towards Jews as there is for all other non-Christian religions.
- The distinctive witness of Christians to Jews must grapple with the unresolved theological question of how to relate the universality of Christ's redemption to Israel's eternal covenant.

Cardinal Kasper concluded with suggestions for three topics for future dialogue between Jews and Christians. These were (1) how remembrance is central to both traditions; (2) messianic awareness and eschatological hope; and (3) how in dialogue with the other we discover ourselves. The Cardinal urged that Christians and Jews stand shoulder to shoulder in their common hope for peace in justice.

Page 10 - Should Christians Target Jews in Conversionary Campaigns?

Center's Dialogue Video Nears Completion

The Center is putting the finishing touches on a six-part educational video series being produced for the National Council of Synagogues and the Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. The series' title, *Walking God's Paths*, is inspired by Isaiah 2:3, "Come, let us go up to the House of the Lord ... that He may instruct us in His ways, and that we may walk in His paths."

Intended for use by local church and synagogue congregations, the series consists of 12 to 15-minute discussion-starting videotapes and a detailed User's Guide containing dialogue questions and resources. Participants will experience each tradition's understanding of how it walks God's path and how the two faith communities could relate to one another in positive ways. The topics for the six sessions are:

1. A New Future: Building Shalom between Catholics and Jews

Introduces participants to the dynamics of interfaith dialogue and the different perspectives Catholics and Jews bring to the conversation.

2. Shared Origins, Diverse Roads

Explores the Late Second Temple period that gave birth to one faith community centered on Jesus Christ and another rooted in rabbinic interpretations of the Torah.

3. Common Texts, Different Scriptures

Examines how the Bible both unites and divides Jews and Christians.

4. Season of Freedom, Season of Rebirth

Investigates how the related feasts of Passover and Easter ritually re-enact the defining foundational events of each religious tradition.

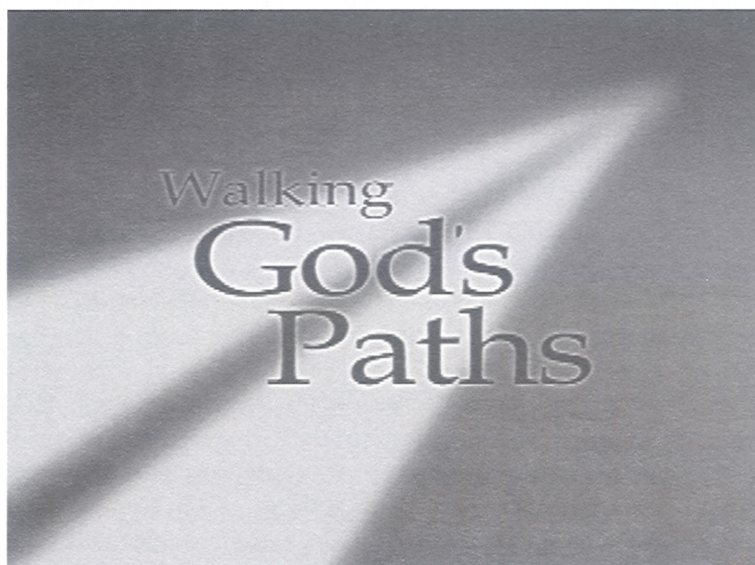
5. Metaphors for a Unique Relationship

Presents different ways of picturing the relationship between Judaism and Christianity.

6. Mending Relationships, Mending the World

Considers the significance for the rest of humanity of Jewish and Christian reconciliation.

The series is expected to be on sale early in 2004. Watch the Center's website in the fall for streaming media previews of the different episodes.



The production team for *Walking God's Paths* is John Michalczyk, BC Professor of Fine Arts; Center director Philip Cunningham; and Gilbert Rosenthal, director of the National Council of Synagogues. In addition, the series features such scholars as Mary C. Boys, Reuven Kimelman, Sara Lee, Daniel Lehmann, Amy-Jill Levine, John Pawlikowski, David Sandmel, and George Smiga.

Center Lectures 2002-2003

Dr. Daniel J. Lasker *Competing Claims for Truth: Medieval Judaism and Christianity in Conflict*

Dr. Daniel Lasker, Norbert Blechner Professor of Jewish Values at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Israel, delivered a lecture at Boston College in February titled "Competing Claims for Truth: Medieval Judaism and Christianity in Conflict." The lecture was co-sponsored with the Boston College Institute for Medieval Philosophy and Theology.

Dr. Lasker addressed the range of argumentation employed by Jewish and Christian polemicists in the Middle Ages. Lasker noted that despite the polemicists' efforts, ultimately they were unable to come up with consistent and convincing criteria.

Dr. Edward Breuer *The Challenge of the Christian Enlightenment for German Jews:*

Particularism in an Age of Universals

Dr. Edward Breuer, Norbert Associate Professor of Jewish Studies in the Department of Theology at Loyola University Chicago, delivered a lecture at Boston College at the end of February titled "The Challenge of the Christian Enlightenment for German Jews: Particularism in an Age of Universals."

Dr. Breuer described the Christian Enlightenment as a universal movement by way of rational and critical thinking, education and exposure to other cultures; elements also characterizing the Jewish/German Enlightenment agenda.

Spring 2003 Speakers Series

CHRISTIANS AND JEWS: SHARED HISTORY, SHARING THE FUTURE

The Center for Christian-Jewish Learning and the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston (JCRC) jointly held a spring speakers series titled "Christians and Jews: Shared History, Sharing the Future." This series of three panel discussions addressed the relations between Jews and Christians during times of controversy, questions and concerns about recognizing each other's religious legitimacy, and the collaborative efforts made by Christians and Jews to better the world.

Speaking to Each Other in Times of Controversy

The first panel discussed its experiences of conflict in interreligious dialogue when grappling with such issues as the Middle East conflict, the Holocaust, and sexual abuse scandals. The panel was made up of Dr. Rosann Catalano, Institute for Christian & Jewish Studies in Baltimore; Rev. Sam Lloyd, Trinity Church of Boston; and Barry Shrage, President of Combined Jewish Philanthropies.

Recognizing Each Other's Religious Legitimacy

The second panel addressed the presumption that for one tradition to be legitimate, the other had to be invalid. The evening highlighted recent and unprecedented strides in promoting interfaith amity as well as concerns about maintaining each tradition's distinctive identity. The panel included Rabbi Eugene Korn, Interfaith Affairs, Anti-Defamation League and respondents: Dr. Philip A. Cunningham, Center for Christian-Jewish Learning and Rev. John Stendahl, Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Jewish Relations, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Christians and Jews: Working Together for a Better World

As people of faith, the third panel addressed the responsibilities of Christians and Jews to the wider Boston and New England community. The panel consisted of Rabbi Gilbert S. Rosenthal, National Council of Synagogues; Pastor Laurel E. Scott, Old West Church; and Dr. David Hollenbach, S.J., Margaret O'Brien Flatley Professor, Boston College.

The spring speakers series concluded with a response and summery by Nancy K. Kaufman, Executive Director at the JCRC. The series was supported by grants from the Berenson Family through Combined Jewish Philanthropies and by the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning.

Center Welcomes Rescued Torah

On Friday, Oct. 11, 2002, thanks to the generosity of Yale Richmond, a 1943 alumnus, a Torah, a scroll containing the Hebrew text of the Pentateuch, found a new home at Boston College. A Catholic priest had rescued this scroll from a burning Polish synagogue in 1939 and in 1960 gave it to Richmond who was then serving as cultural attaché at the American embassy in Poland. The anonymous priest wanted to return the scroll, written in Cracow in 1919, to Jewish ownership.

After treasuring this gift throughout his distinguished career in the Foreign Service, Richmond, now retired, searched for an appropriate new home for it. While browsing Boston College's Website, Richmond discovered its Center for Christian-Jewish Learning. It seemed appropriate to donate the Torah, saved by a Catholic, to the Catholic university that had enabled him, one of four Jews in his class, to undertake his career in the Foreign Service. Rabbi Ruth Langer, Associate Director of the Center, together with the Boston College administration, readily accepted Mr. Richmond's offer, on the condition that the Jewish students of Boston College, its Hillel, be given active use of the scroll.

Although there have been Jews among the Boston College students throughout most of the history of the university, until recently, these

students did not even have a worship space available on campus. In 2000, the university opened its Multi-Faith Worship Space, a non-denominational chapel available to all non-Catholic groups. Now, with the Torah scroll housed there in its specially constructed

ark, Jewish students have, for the first time, a fully functional religious home on this Catholic campus.

The festive ceremony that welcomed the Torah made note of the momentous nature of the occasion. The Torah was greeted like a bride by Klezmer music and dancing, carried under a wedding canopy – a *chupah*. Richmond then presented the scroll, recounting its story as part of the history of Jews in Catholic Poland. Vice President for University Mission and Ministry, Rev. Joseph A. Appleyard, S.J. and Brian Lerman '03, President of Hillel, then accepted the Torah. Two students also read selections from the scroll.

Langer, speaking on behalf of the Center, reflected on the symbolic importance of the Torah, including the significance of this particular scroll. She indicated that this scroll, especially as it embodies the Catholic priest's willingness to risk his life to save it

from the Nazis, is a symbol of the work of repair of relations between Christians and Jews to which the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning is dedicated.



Yale Richmond presents Torah Scroll.

**“...A SYMBOL OF THE WORK OF
REPAIR OF RELATIONS BETWEEN
CHRISTIANS AND JEWS...”**

“THIS BEAUTIFUL MULTI-FAITH CHAPEL WHERE WE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER TODAY WILL HOUSE OUR STORY. THE SCROLLS NEEDED TO PRACTICE OUR FAITH WILL BE A PART OF OUR COMMUNITY, NOT JUST TO LOOK AT, BUT TO USE, AND TO ENHANCE OUR SPIRITUAL HOME. TODAH RABAH, THANK YOU VERY MUCH!”

-FROM BC HILLEL'S FORMAL ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY BRIAN LERMAN, PRESIDENT

A SACRED OBLIGATION

RETHINKING CHRISTIAN FAITH IN RELATION TO JUDAISM AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Since its inception in 1969, the Christian Scholars Group has been seeking to develop more adequate Christian theologies of the church's relationship to Judaism and the Jewish people. Pursuing this work for over three decades under varied sponsorship, members of our association of Protestant and Roman Catholic biblical scholars, historians, and theologians have published many volumes on Christian-Jewish relations.

Our work has a historical context. For most of the past two thousand years, Christians have erroneously portrayed Jews as unfaithful, holding them collectively responsible for the death of Jesus and therefore accursed by God. In agreement with many official Christian declarations, we reject this accusation as historically false and theologically invalid. It suggests that God can be unfaithful to the eternal covenant with the Jewish people. We acknowledge with shame the suffering this distorted portrayal has brought upon the Jewish people. We repent of this teaching of contempt. Our repentance requires us to build a new teaching of respect. This task is important at any time, but the deadly crisis in the Middle East and the frightening resurgence of antisemitism worldwide give it particular urgency.

We believe that revising Christian teaching about Judaism and the Jewish people is a central and indispensable obligation of theology in our time. It is essential that Christianity both understand and represent Judaism accurately, not only as a matter of justice for the Jewish people, but also for the integrity of Christian faith, which we cannot proclaim without reference to Judaism. Moreover, since there is a unique bond between Christianity and Judaism, revitalizing our appreciation of Jewish religious life will deepen our Christian faith. We base these convictions on ongoing scholarly research and the official statements of many Christian denominations over the past fifty years.

We are grateful for the willingness of many Jews to engage in dialogue and study with us. We welcomed it when, on September 10, 2000, Jewish scholars sponsored by the Institute of Christian and Jewish Studies in Baltimore issued a historic declaration, *Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity*. This document, affirmed by notable rabbis and Jewish scholars, called on Jews to re-examine their understanding of Christianity.

Encouraged by the work of both Jewish and Christian colleagues, we offer the following ten statements for the consideration of our fellow Christians. We urge all Christians to reflect on their faith in light of these statements. For us, this is a sacred obligation.

1. God's covenant with the Jewish people endures forever.

For centuries Christians claimed that their covenant with God replaced or superseded the Jewish covenant. We renounce this claim. We believe that God does not revoke divine promises. We affirm that God is in covenant with both Jews and Christians. Tragically, the entrenched theology of supersessionism continues to influence Christian faith, worship, and practice, even though it has been repudiated by many Christian denominations and many Christians no longer accept it. Our recognition of the abiding validity of Judaism has implications for all aspects of Christian life.

2. Jesus of Nazareth lived and died as a faithful Jew.

Christians worship the God of Israel in and through Jesus Christ. Supersessionism, however, prompted Christians over the centuries to speak of Jesus as an opponent of Judaism. This is historically incorrect. Jewish worship, ethics, and practice shaped Jesus's life and teachings. The scriptures of his people inspired and nurtured him. Christian preaching and teaching today must describe Jesus's earthly life as engaged in the ongoing Jewish quest to live out God's covenant in everyday life.

3. Ancient rivalries must not define Christian-Jewish relations today.

Although today we know Christianity and Judaism as separate religions, what became the church was a movement within the Jewish community for many decades after the ministry and resurrection of Jesus. The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by Roman armies in the year 70 of the first century caused a crisis among the Jewish people. Various groups, including Christianity and early rabbinic Judaism, competed for leadership in the Jewish community by claiming that they were the true heirs of biblical Israel. The gospels reflect this rivalry in which the disputants exchanged various accusations. Christian charges of hypocrisy and legalism misrepresent Judaism and constitute an unworthy foundation for Christian self-understanding.

4. Judaism is a living faith, enriched by many centuries of development.

Many Christians mistakenly equate Judaism with biblical Israel. However, Judaism, like Christianity, developed new modes of belief and practice in the centuries after the destruction of the Temple. The rabbinic tradition gave new emphasis and understanding to existing practices, such as communal prayer, study of Torah, and deeds of loving-kindness. Thus Jews could live out the covenant in a world without the Temple. Over time they developed an extensive body of interpretive literature that continues to enrich Jewish life, faith, and self-understanding. Christians cannot fully understand Judaism apart from its post-biblical development, which can also enrich and enhance Christian faith.

5. The Bible both connects and separates Jews and Christians.

Some Jews and Christians today, in the process of studying the Bible together, are discovering new ways of reading that provide a deeper appreciation of both traditions. While the two communities draw from the same biblical texts of ancient Israel, they have developed different traditions of interpretation. Christians view these texts through the lens of the New Testament, while Jews understand these scriptures through the traditions of rabbinic commentary.

Referring to the first part of the Christian Bible as the “Old Testament” can wrongly suggest that these texts are obsolete. Alternative expressions – “Hebrew Bible,” “First Testament,” or “Shared Testament” - although also problematic, may better express the church’s renewed appreciation of the ongoing power of these scriptures for both Jews and Christians.

6. Affirming God’s enduring covenant with the Jewish people has consequences for Christian understandings of salvation.

Christians meet God’s saving power in the person of Jesus Christ and believe that this power is available to all people in him. Christians have therefore taught for centuries that salvation is available only through Jesus Christ. With their recent realization that God’s covenant with the Jewish people is eternal, Christians can now recognize in the Jewish tradition the redemptive power of God at work. If Jews, who do not share our faith in Christ, are in a saving covenant with God, then Christians need new ways of understanding the universal significance of Christ.

7. Christians should not target Jews for conversion.

In view of our conviction that Jews are in an eternal covenant with God, we renounce missionary efforts directed at converting Jews. At the same time, we welcome opportunities for Jews and Christians to bear witness to their respective experiences of God’s saving ways. Neither can properly claim to possess knowledge of God entirely or exclusively.

8. Christian worship that teaches contempt for Judaism dishonors God.

The New Testament contains passages that have frequently generated negative attitudes toward Jews and Judaism. The use of these texts in the context of worship increases the likelihood of hostility toward Jews. Christian anti-Jewish theology has also shaped worship in ways that denigrate Judaism and foster contempt for Jews. We urge church leaders to examine scripture readings, prayers, the structure of the lectionaries, preaching and hymns to remove distorted images of Judaism. A reformed Christian liturgical life would express a new relationship with Jews and thus honor God.

9. We affirm the importance of the land of Israel for the life of the Jewish people.

The land of Israel has always been of central significance to the Jewish people. However, Christian theology charged that the Jews had condemned themselves to homelessness by rejecting God’s Messiah. Such supersessionism precluded any possibility for Christian understanding of Jewish attachment to the land of Israel. Christian theologians can no longer avoid this crucial issue, especially in light of the complex and persistent conflict over the land. Recognizing that both Israelis and Palestinians have the right to live in peace and security in a homeland of their own, we call for efforts that contribute to a just peace among all the peoples in the region.

10. Christians should work with Jews for the healing of the world.

For almost a century, Jews and Christians in the United States have worked together on important social issues, such as the rights of workers and civil rights. As violence and terrorism intensify in our time, we must strengthen our common efforts in the work of justice and peace to which both the prophets of Israel and Jesus summon us. These common efforts by Jews and Christians offer a vision of human solidarity and provide models of collaboration with people of other faith traditions.

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U.S. Catholic Church Tackles a Key Issue in Christian-Jewish Relations

Should Christians Target Jews in Conversionary Campaigns?

On August 12, 2003, the national consultation of the Catholic Church and the Conservative and Reform Jewish movements made public a document from its dialogue entitled, *Reflections on Covenant and Mission*. Cardinal William Keeler of Baltimore, the U.S. bishops' moderator for Catholic-Jewish relations, observed that the document represents the state of thought among the participants in the national dialogue. While not a formal position of the entire conference of Catholic bishops, Cardinal Keeler called the *Reflections*, "a significant step forward."

The text originated at the March 2002 meeting of delegates of the Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (BCEIA), headed by Cardinal Keeler, and the National Council of Synagogues, directed by Rabbi Gilbert Rosenthal. While this consultation has issued several joint documents before, on such subjects as children and the environment and moral education, this was its first public statement with distinct Jewish and Catholic sections. The Catholic portion has generated considerable debate since its release.

Members of the bishops' advisory committee on Catholic-Jewish relations prepared the Catholic text. Some of these advisors are also delegates to the BCEIA/NCS Consultation, including Center executive director Philip A. Cunningham. Their writing went through nine drafts before the March 2002 meeting and was reviewed by staff members of the BCEIA and the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Doctrine.

The full text of the statement can be found on the Center's website. In brief, the Catholic reflections describe the growing respect for the Jewish tradition that has unfolded since the Second Vatican Council. They note that the magisterium of the Catholic Church now officially teaches that Jews live in a saving covenant of eternal love with God. Furthermore, Jews have a divinely-given mission to witness to God's faithful love until the end of time – a mission that only Jews themselves can describe. Therefore, the Catholic reflections conclude, "campaigns that target Jews for conversion to Christianity are no longer theologically acceptable in the Catholic Church."

This determination contradicted the activities of several groups, most notably the Southern Baptist Convention and the "Jews for Jesus," both of which

quickly issued condemnations of the *Reflections*. Jim Sibley, the coordinator of Jewish ministries for the Southern Baptist Convention, opined that "there can be no more extreme form of anti-Semitism" than to stop seeking to save Jews through conversion.

Criticisms were also raised from within the Catholic community. Some reactions were extreme, including one commentator who wondered if the end of the world might be at hand. However, most Catholic objections were based on understanding the term "evangelization" as synonymous with seeking conversion. The *Reflections*, following Vatican usage, understood "evangelization" more broadly as including Christian presence and witness; commitment to social development and human liberation; liturgical life, prayer and contemplation; interreligious dialogue; proclamation (invitation to baptism) and catechesis. The misunderstanding was compounded by media reports that inaccurately headlined, "Catholics reject evangelization of Jews." In fact, the *Reflections* declared, "The Catholic Church must always evangelize and will always witness to its faith in the presence of God's kingdom in Jesus Christ to Jews and to all other people." For the *Reflections*, interreligious dialogue with Jews – which by definition is devoid of conversionary intent – is one aspect of evangelization.

The most prominent Catholic critic of the *Reflections* to date is systematic theologian Avery Dulles, S.J., who in 2001 was honored by the pope with the title of cardinal. In an essay appearing in the Catholic periodical *America* [10/14/02 – available on the Center's website], he disagreed with a broad usage of evangelization and cited the Letter to the Hebrews as "the most formal [New Testament] statement on the status of the Sinai covenant under Christianity." According to Hebrews, the Sinai covenant is "obsolete" and "ready to vanish away," he said. In the same issue of *America* appeared a rebuttal from Mary C. Boys, Philip A. Cunningham, and John T. Pawlikowski. They argued that Dulles was really criticizing how the Vatican, not the *Reflections*, understood "evangelization" and that his citation of Hebrews was not consistent with Catholic teaching on the interpretation of the Bible.

This debate over the *Reflections* was the backdrop for the November visit of Cardinal Walter Kasper to the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston

College (see related story - page 1). Second only to the pope in terms of Catholic teaching on relations with Jews, there was considerable interest in what he might have to say.

Cardinal Kasper was well aware of this context, and noted in his public address at Boston College that "it is quite unusual and, indeed, until our present era unknown for Catholics to stand together with Jews, and conversely for Catholics to speak against Catholics, and Baptists against Catholics and Jews as well. In my attempt to reflect upon the issues involved, I run the risk of getting caught between fire from all sides."

Cardinal Kasper welcomed the *Reflections* as an "invitation and a challenge for further discussion." He felt that the issue of Christian mission was "unresolved" because the question of how to relate Jesus as universal savior to Jews remains open. He added that, "This does not mean that Jews in order to be saved have to become Christians; if they follow their own conscience and believe in God's promises as they understand them in their religious tradition

they are in line with God's plan, which for [Christians] comes to its historical completion in Jesus Christ." It is this Catholic "affirmation that has concrete and tangible consequences such as the fact that there is no organized Catholic missionary activity towards Jews as is the case for all other non-Christian religions." Cardinal Kasper was thus in agreement with the conclusion of the *Reflections*, but cautioned that the document raised "only one half of the problem." As he saw it, the unresolved questions must "be developed and amplified" through further research.

The conversations around the Catholic portion of the *Reflections on Covenant and Mission* show that matters touching on the central nervous system of Christian faith and identity are now being studied in the Catholic community. The Center for Christian-Jewish Learning has been very much involved in these developments and is committed to contributing further through scholarship and dialogue in the years ahead.

B.C. Center Becomes Headquarters of National Council of Centers

The Center for Christian-Jewish Learning is the current headquarters of the Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations. The CCJR is an association of centers and institutes devoted to enhancing mutual understanding between Jews and Christians. Most of these Twenty-four centers or institutes are located in the United States, but there are also affiliate members from other countries. Representatives from major Christian and Jewish agencies and religious bodies in the United States are also members. The CCJR is also one of two U.S.A. members in the International Council of Christians and Jews. More information can be found among the "Partner Organizations" on the Center's website.

The CCJR held its first annual meeting on October 27-28, 2002 at the Center for Continuing Formation at St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore. The featured program was a discussion between Profs. David Berger and Michael Signer on the meaning of *Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity*. Prof. Berger, a respected Orthodox scholar explained his reservations with the document, while Prof. Signer, a Reform leader in the interfaith dialogue, examined a number of affirmations and criticisms of it. The texts of their fascinating exchange can be found on the "articles" page on the Center's website.

The CCJR's second annual meeting will be hosted at Stonehill College in Easton, MA. A public panel discussion will occur on Sunday, October 26, 2003 at 7:30 p.m. on the topic, "If Jews are Saved by Their Eternal Covenant, How are Christians to Understand Jesus as Universal Savior?" Profs. R. Kendall Soulen of Wesley Theological Seminary and Peter Phan of Georgetown University will elaborate on point #6 of *A Sacred Obligation* (see related story - page 1). Rabbi David Rosen, the American Jewish Committee's director for Interreligious Affairs, will offer some observations from a Jewish perspective. All are invited.



The First Annual CCJR Meeting concluded with this photo of many of the participants.

Dramatizing the Death of Jesus

Issues that Have Surfaced in Media Reports about the Upcoming Film, *The Passion*

Mary C. Boys

UNION THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY

Philip A. Cunningham

CENTER FOR CHRISTIAN-JEWISH
LEARNING, BOSTON COLLEGE

Lawrence E. Frizzell

INSTITUTE OF JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN
STUDIES, SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

John T. Pawlikowski

CATHOLIC-JEWISH STUDIES,
JOSEPH CARDINAL BERNADIN CENTER,
CATHOLIC THEOLOGICAL UNION

In the fall of 2002, filming was completed in Rome on a movie presentation of the death of Jesus directed by Mel Gibson and entitled *The Passion*. Some media interviews of Gibson stated that his Catholic faith had inspired him to undertake the project, and reported that a Latin Mass was celebrated daily on the set, with some describing healings that had occurred during shooting. Other news stories portrayed Gibson's father as a holocaust-denier who espoused a self-described "traditionalist" form of Catholicism. Still other articles wondered if the film would provoke antisemitism. The film is to be released in late winter, 2004.

In April 2003, seven Jewish and Catholic scholars were invited by Dr. Eugene Fisher, associate director of Catholic-Jewish relations for the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Rabbi Eugene Korn, interfaith director for the Anti-Defamation League, to review a shooting script of *The Passion*. The exact origins of this script are unknown. Representatives of Gibson's Icon Productions were aware that this group would assess the script and indicated that they would receive its confidential findings. In May, Icon Productions alleged that the script had been stolen and requested the return of all copies. No substantive response to the confidential report of the scholars was made. Since then a number of inaccurate news stories about this matter have appeared.

On June 16, 2003, the four Catholic professors who participated in the review released a statement that can be found in full on the Center's website. The statement included the following questions that any producer of a dramatic rendering of the death of Jesus must consider:

1. How are any ideas from outside the New Testament employed in any script treatment of Christ's passion?

A self-described, unofficial Italian website on "The Passion" by Mel Gibson at <http://www.sassiweb.it/thepassion/> states that the film is "based upon the diaries of St. Anne Catherine Emmerich (1774-1824) as collected in the book, 'The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.'" We have no way of knowing whether this statement is accurate either today or when the film is released, however this reference does raise the question about extra-biblical sources used in constructing passion play scripts. The book mentioned on this website contains numerous episodes not attested in the New Testament, which if included in any dramatic presentation of the death of Jesus today would directly violate Catholic teaching.

The Emmerich work contains such extra-biblical elements as:

- Jesus' cross being constructed at the orders of the high priest in the courtyard of the Temple.
- Servants of the high priest bribing fellow Jews to demand Jesus' death and even paying some of his crucifiers.
- Violence far beyond what the gospels present during Jesus' hearing before Caiaphas and Annas.
- Pontius Pilate criticizing the high priests for physically abusing Jesus and suggesting that they are thirsting for both his body and blood (cf. John 6:53).
- Scenes of the brutalizing of Jesus not present in the gospels, such as Jewish figures dragging him around with a bag over his head so that it violently impacts against stone.
- Pilate stating that he fears the high priest is planning a revolt against Rome.

Numerous other scenes not present in the New Testament could be cited from the Emmerich book, but those noted here all have the effect of increasing the guilt of Jewish characters for Jesus' sufferings. It would not be an exegetical theory to criticize any dramatic presentation of the death of Jesus that incorporated such non-biblical features.

2. How is the New Testament employed in any script treatment of Christ's passion?

Anyone who composes a script for a dramatic presentation of the death of Jesus must draw upon four distinct passion narratives in the four gospels in the New Testament. One cannot assume that by simply conforming to the New Testament that antisemitism will not be promoted. After all, for centuries sermons and passion plays

based on the New Testament have incited Christian animosity and violence toward Jews. This history prompted Pope John Paul II to pray publicly for God's forgiveness for such Christian wrongdoing.

Since Catholic teaching makes clear that the gospels are not simply historical transcripts, these kinds of questions must be considered when devising a dramatic script:

- How will the proposed script select from the major differences among the four passion narratives? Will it take unique elements that in each gospel minimize Roman responsibility and combine them into one cumulative denunciation of Jewish characters?

Example: Will the proposed script take Pilate washing his hands of the Jesus question (found only in Matthew) and combine it with Pilate having Jesus whipped to try to release him (found only in John) and combine that with Herod Antipas being unwilling to condemn Jesus (found only in Luke)?

- Will the proposed script enlarge upon gospel episodes in order to intensify the drama?

Example: Will those Jewish individuals who demand Jesus' crucifixion, whose numbers none of the gospels specify, be portrayed as a few dozen people led by the Temple leaders, or as a Cecil B. DeMille-like cast of thousands? Will incidents in the gospel describing Jesus as struck by Jewish individuals be turned into Jesus being beaten nearly to death by them?

- Will the proposed script be informed by the best historic knowledge currently available?

Example: Will the undisputed historic fact that Caiaphas the high priest relied on Pilate's good will to retain his position as leader of the Temple be made clear in the proposed script? Or will the high priest be depicted as intimidating or bullying a weak and spineless Pilate, contrary to historical evidence that Pilate was not slow to use violence to maintain Roman order? Will the script make clear that imperial Rome ruled Jewish lands, and that Rome brutally crucified many persons during its rule?

These and other such questions must be asked to assess whether any dramatic presentation of the death of Jesus conforms to official Catholic teaching. They are all based upon numerous official documents, most specifically, the U.S. Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, *Criteria for the Evaluation of Dramatizations of the Passion* (1988). These documents are not private or personal exegetical theories, but official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. In this era, when ancient Christian antisemitic motifs are being recirculated widely because of international conflicts, any Christian producer of a dramatic presentation of the death of Jesus has a considerable moral responsibility.

Developing Jewish Theologies of Religious Others

The immense strides taken by Christians to develop new understandings of Jews and Judaism summon Jews to develop the resources for an adequate and authentic response. Today's reality (and Jewish precedent) suggests that this response should be formulated with regard to all world religions.

Over the past year, Ruth Langer has been working with Dr. Alon Goshen-Gottstein of the Elijah Academy (Jerusalem) to develop a proposal for a major project on "Jewish Theologies of Religious Others." This spring, they convened two consultations of Jewish scholars, one in Jerusalem in May and one at Boston College in June, to refine the project further.

The project will eventually consist of three stages: scholarly exploration of existing precedents; theological formulation of understandings for today; and education of the broader community. The production of appropriate resources will accompany all stages, ranging from published collections of scholarly articles; to posting of bibliographies and annotated anthologies of primary texts on the Center's website; to the dissemination of educational resources.

The project will commence with a conference next summer addressing theories of "otherness" and applying them to the specific issues of Jewish identity formation.



Participants in the June 12 Boston College scholars' consultation included (front row): Eugene Korn, Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, and Shira Lander (back row): David Gordis, Mark Gottlieb, Edith Wyschogrod, Michael Wyschogrod, Marc Shapiro, David Berger, Barry Levy, and Alon Goshen-Gottstein

Center Personnel

Philip A. Cunningham, Executive Director



In 2003, Philip A. Cunningham published a new book, *Sharing the Scriptures* and has a number of articles in print or published: "Actualizing Matthean Christology in a Post-Supersessionist Church," "Reflections from a Roman Catholic on a Reform Theology of Christianity," and "Theology's 'Sacred Obligation': A Reply to Cardinal Dulles on Evangelization." He also explored the topic of "Judaism as 'Sacrament of Otherness'" for the annual meeting of the International Council of Christians and Jews in Utrecht, and consulted in Rome on a possible collaboration on a periodical on Christian-Jewish Relations.

In addition, this year Dr. Cunningham was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations and was an invited writer for a revision of *Within Context: Jews and Judaism in Catholic Teaching Materials*, co-sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League and the Bishops' Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, USCCB. He continued service as a member of the Advisory committee on Catholic-Jewish Relations for the U.S. Bishops. He also co-convened the Continuing Seminar on Biblical Issues in Jewish-Christian Relations of the Catholic Biblical Association of America.

Dr. Cunningham has been a featured speaker this year for several academic institutions, interfaith organizations, and church and synagogue groups, including:

- "Developing New Reflexes: Implementing Our New Paradigm of Jews and Judaism," Archdiocese of Boston Pastoral Institute.
- "The Trinity and Christian Jewish Relations," Regis College
- "Telling the Christian Story in a Post-Supersessionist Church," St. Vincent Seminary, Florida
- "Changing Our Hearts: The Renewal in Catholic-Jewish Relations and Parish Life," St. Mary Seminary, Cleveland
- "Catholic Biblical Perspectives on Judaism and the Jewish People," 17th Annual Jewish-Catholic Colloquium keynote address, Diocese of Cleveland and the Cleveland Anti-Defamation League
- "The Catholic Church and the Jews: A Conversion from Contempt to Fellowship," Brandeis University
- "A Legacy of Ambivalence: Jewish-Catholic Relations in Retrospect," Hebrew College

Center Hosts World-class Website

The Center for Christian-Jewish Learning maintains a major website to foster Jewish and Christian relations. It has rapidly become one of the largest online resources for Christian-Jewish relations in the world. The website at <http://www.bc.edu/cjlearning> offers a library of documents, theological articles, current news, book reviews, related links, and educational and dialogical resources and aids.

The website updates its visitors on news stories and announcements about international, national, and local developments in Christian-Jewish relations as well as local events open to the general public. Details and proceedings of past and planned Center conferences are also available. The "Partner Organizations" page provides links to webpages of several endeavors in which the Center collaborates.

The website also offers a growing collection of important articles on such topics as the Christian-

Jewish dialogue, Christian and Jewish theological issues, debates on specific documents, history, and the Middle-east. A selection of texts, handouts, and other materials on the Jewish and Christian relationship for teachers, preachers, and interfaith leaders provides valuable educational resources.

Join Our Listserve!

To be notified of news on Christian-Jewish relations, Center activities and additions to our expanding website, join our e-mail list serve today. Go to our home page at <http://www.bc.edu/cjlearning> and click on "Join our listserve."



Ruth Langer, Associate Director

In 2002, after being involved with the Center since its inception, Rabbi Ruth Langer was formally appointed its associate director. In this capacity, continues to she bring her expertise in Jewish studies to the work of the Center, including teaching courses, lecturing, and planning events.

Dr. Langer's current publications include an article in *Theological Studies* that explored Jewish theologies of the religious other in response to contemporary Christian theological discussions. She also contributed a series of entries on liturgical topics for the forthcoming *Cambridge Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations*. More historically-oriented articles concerning interactions between Jews and Christians that are in press or published include "The 'Amidah' as Formative Rabbinic Prayer" (which originated as a plenary address to an international conference in Bonn in October 2001), and "Early Rabbinic Liturgy in its Palestinian Milieu: Did Non-Rabbis Know the 'Amidah?" Another current topic of research is the changing text and meaning of the *birkat haminim* (the Jewish malediction of heretics) in Christian Europe, particularly with the imposition of Church censorship. Her article comparing the presentation of non-Jews in various contemporary Jewish liturgies, developed initially for a Center-sponsored conference, will also appear in the fall.

Dr. Langer has also recently lectured for various community groups and participated in national and international conferences, including:

- "The Religious Other in Jewish Liturgy," Leo Baeck College, London.
- "American Jews and Interfaith Relations" for the Gralla Fellows Program for Religion Journalists, Brandeis University.
- "Religious Oppression and Social Integration: The Permutations of the Jewish *Birkat Haminim* (Malediction of the Sectarrians) in Christian Europe." Faculty International Forum, Boston College.
- Sermon for Women's Simhat Torah Celebration, Congregation Shaarei Tefillah, on the meaning of access to the Torah.
- "The Law of the Lord is Perfect" – and issues of war – Our Lady of Sorrows, Sharon.
- "Languages of Jewish Prayer: Speaking to God with Human Words?" and "Speaking to God with Divine Words?: The Bible as a Source of Prayer," Rabbinic Institute, Hebrew College.
- "Current Issues in Catholic-Jewish Relations: A Jewish Perspective," Guild of the Holy Spirit, Newton.
- "The Celebration of Torah in Ashkenaz (Central and Eastern Europe)."
- "Talmud Colloquium," Bar-Ilan University, Israel.

Teresa Korphage, Administrative Assistant

In January 2003 Teresa Korphage became the Center's Administrative Assistant. She is responsible for monitoring budgets, maintaining the Center's website, coordinating publicity, handling conference logistics, and other administrative duties. Before moving to Boston she had worked for two years at a Conservative synagogue in Kansas City, Missouri as its Special Events Planner, Publicity Coordinator and WebMaster. Teresa is currently pursuing her Master of Arts in Systematic Theology at Boston College, with a special concern for Christian-Jewish relations.



Upcoming Events (details as available)

Wednesday October 22	Boston College premiere of <i>Walking God's Paths</i> , Heights Room.
Sunday October 26 7:30 PM Stonehill College	Public panel, "If Jews are Saved by Their Eternal Covenant, How are Christians to Understand Jesus as Universal Savior?"
Thursday October 30	Public lecture by Alan Berger, "Educating for Altruism."
Sunday November 23	Sunday Symposium: "Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik on Interreligious Dialogue - 40 Years Later."

ABOUT THE CENTER

The Center for Christian-Jewish Learning is devoted to the multifaceted development and implementation of new relationships between Christians and Jews that are based, not merely on toleration, but on full respect and mutual enrichment. This defining purpose flows from the mission of Boston College and responds to the vision expressed in Roman Catholic documents ever since the Second Vatican Council.

The building of new, positive relationships between Jews and Christians requires sustained collaborative theological research. Therefore, under the Center's auspices, scholars and thinkers representing diverse Jewish and Christian perspectives engage in intense and ongoing study of all aspects of our related yet distinct traditions of faith.

Educationally, we are committed to the goal that "Jews and Judaism should not occupy an occasional and marginal place in [Christian religious education]: their presence there is essential and should be organically

integrated" (Notes, 2). We are convinced that Jews and Christians enrich and deepen their respective religious identities by joint educational endeavors. The Center is this dedicated to conducting educational research and to offering programs, both in the university and the wider community, in which Christians and Jews explore their traditions together.

When the Center team is fully established, the executive director, the Judaica scholar, and professors holding one visiting and two permanent chairs in Christian-Jewish relations will pursue these tasks. In short, the Center applies the scholarly resources of a Catholic university to the task of encouraging mutual knowledge between Christians and Jews at every level (Notes, 27).

[Notes = Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Teaching in the Roman Catholic Church, 1985.]



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