

From The Martin Buber House

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International Council of Christians and Jews

2013 Aix-en-Provence Conference

‘Secularity
Opportunity or Peril for Religions?’

REPORT



In cooperation with

IECJ – Interuniversity Institute of Jewish Studies & Culture

„Secularity: Opportunity or Peril for Religions, The French Experience and Global Perspectives“

International Conference, Aix-en-Provence, June 30 – July 3, 2013

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**‘Secularity
Opportunity or Peril for Religions?’**

2013 Conference, June 30 – July 3

International Council of Christians and Jews

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Jewish Studies & Culture**

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FOREWORD

Secularity: Opportunity or Peril for Religions? The French Experience and Global Perspectives.

Aix-en-Provence 2013

During the conference we expounded this theme and examined many aspects, including secularisation and modernity. We studied very concrete topics like women's rights, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, and the reality of these in other countries. It did not take long for us, the French, to turn into fervent advocates of our system, the one we live in and understand best. We know its weaknesses, in matters of teaching about religion in schools for instance, but we believe and hope that "laïcité" will know how to deal with them and yet remain true to itself, maintaining the neutrality of the State in matters of religion. We know that we are its custodians and that the system relies on us, French citizens, to maintain fairness in its application.

Many of our English-speaking colleagues and friends feel differently about this and left the conference wondering why we were so adamant in our defence: to them "laïcité" is and remains an impediment to the individual's right to practice his or her religion freely. In the English-speaking world, there is not even a word for "laïcité", secularity being only an approximation of it. In fact no word is needed as the concept does not exist. Perhaps what replaces it best is the word "tolerance", a tolerance that does not result from one majority religion allowing for the presence of others, but rather a credence shared by all. After three days of vibrant sessions and workshops, these two approaches remained in total opposition, but we left the conference enriched by our diversity, by the warm feeling of friendship and fraternity that permeated it, and by the rich atmosphere of a successful gathering. The active participation of young academics who gave excellent presentations gives us an encouraging outlook for the future of Jewish-Christian and interfaith dialogue.

Liliane Apotheker

Chair ICCJ 2013 Aix-en-Provence Planning Committee

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

AJCF Aix-en-Provence and Marseille

in cooperation with

IECJ, Interuniversity Institute of Jewish Studies & Culture

International Conference

from June 30 – July 3, 2013 in Aix-en-Provence

*Secularity: Opportunity or Peril for Religions,
The French Experience and Global Perspectives*

PROGRAM

Sunday, June 30, 2013

- 16.00 Registration at « Hôtel Campanile »
18.00 Transfer to « La Baume »
18.30 Opening of the conference
- Address by Dr Deborah Weissman, ICCJ President
- Address by Liliane Apotheker, Chair conference committee
- Introduction to the life and work of Jules Isaac by Dr Edouard Robberechts
19.30 Opening dinner
21.00 Transfer to « Hôtel Campanile »

Monday, July 1, 2013

- 06.00-08.15 Breakfast
07.00-07.45 Jewish morning prayer
07.00-07.45 Christian morning prayer
08.30 Transfer to « La Baume » and day registration
09.00 Plenary session
moderated by Rev. Florence Taubmann
09.00 Meditative moment
Sr. Dominique de la Maisonneuve, NDS
Sr. Marie Niesz, NDS
09.15 Keynote speaker 1 - Bishop Claude Dagens: *Faith in God and democracy*
Keynote speaker 2 - Rabbi Haïm Korsia: *Secularity and religious practices*
10.30 Coffee break
11.00 Plenary discussion
11.45 Lunch
13.15 Workshops: Session A
Workshop A1 (French)
Dr. Edouard Robberechts - 'Jules Isaac : un historien laïc'.
Moderator: Dr. Danielle Delmaire

Workshop A2 (French)

Fr. Jean Gueit - 'La perception de la laïcité par l' orthodoxie'.

Moderator: Sandrine Caneri

Workshop A3 (English)

Rev. Canon Hosam Naoum - 'The Christian Presence in the Holy Land'.

Moderator: Dr. Abi Pitum

Workshop A4 (English and French)

Dr. Olivier Rota - 'Edmond Fleg and Jules Isaac:

Two different contributions to interreligious dialogue'.

Moderator: Dr. Murray Watson

Workshop A5 (English)

Dr. Peter A. Pettit - 'New Paths: Reframing Israel's narrative in North American Christian communities'. Moderator: Rev. Dr. Michael Trainor

Workshop A6 (French)

An informal meeting with Sheikh Ghassan Manasra from Nazareth

Moderator : Liliane Apotheker

15.00 Transfer to « Camp des Milles »

15.30 Visit « Camp des Milles »

17.00 Plenary session moderated by Liliane Apotheker

- Welcome and lecture by Alain Chouraqui

- Lecture by Father Patrick Desbois: 'Genocides and Modernity'

- Plenary discussion

18.30 Transfer to « La Baume »

19.00 Dinner at « La Baume »

20.30 Klezmer and Psalms by Rose Bacot

21.30 Transfer to « Hôtel Campanile »

Tuesday, July 2, 2013

06.00-08.15 Breakfast

07.00-07.45 Jewish morning prayer

07.00-07.45 Christian morning prayer

08.30 Transfer to « La Baume » and day registration

09.00 Plenary session moderated by Rev. David Gifford

09.00 Meditative moment - Liliane Apotheker

09.15 Keynote speaker: Rev. Dr. Gilles Bourquin – 'Can Modernity survive without religion?'

10.00 Response: Dr. Deborah Weissman

10.15 Plenary discussion

10.45 Coffee break

11.15 Workshops: Session B

Workshop B1 (English)

Dr. Markus Himmelbauer - 'Hungary's Depressingly Familiar Anti-Semitism'.

Moderator: Dr. Stanislaw Krajewski

Workshop B2 (English)
Sheikh Ghassan Manasra - 'A Sufi Muslim Palestinian Israeli'
Moderator: Wendy Fidler

Workshop B3 (English)
Rev. Friedhelm Pieper - 'Male Circumcision in Contradiction to Human Rights?'
Moderator: William Szekely

Workshop B4 (French)
Dr. Liliane Vana and Dr. Blandine Chelini-Pont - 'Droits des femmes'
Moderator: Nadine Iarchy-Zucker

Workshop B5 (English)
ICCI Young Leadership Council – 'A "Natural" Alternative to Secularity?'

Workshop B6 (French)
An informal meeting with Dr. Raymond Cohen from Jerusalem
Moderator: Rosine Voisin

12.30 Lunch

14.00 **Commemorating Ruth Weyl**

Addresses by

- Dr. Deborah Weissman
- Dr. Abi Pitum
- Dr. Eva Schulz-Jander

14.30 **Annual General Meeting of the Friends and Sponsors
of the Martin Buber House**

15.30 Transfer to Aix en Provence

16.00 Visits to Aix-en-Provence

18.00 Cocktail reception by the city of Aix in the "Pavillon Vendôme" Gardens

Free time and dinner in Aix-en-Provence. No transfers by bus.

Program - Wednesday, July 3, 2013

06.00-08.15 Breakfast

07.00-07.45 Jewish morning prayer

07.00-07.45 Christian morning prayer

08.30 Transfer to « La Baume » and day registration

09.00 Plenary session moderated by Prof. Jean Duhaime

09.00 Meditative moment - Young Leadership Council

09.15 Roundtable: Freedom of expression and blasphemy

- Prof. Dominique Avon, - Dr Mustafa Baig, - Prof. Liliane Vana

10.15 Plenary discussion

10.45 Coffee break

11.15 Workshops: Session C

Workshop C1 (French and English)

Dr. Edouard Robberechts and Francesca Frazer

'Religion and education in secular and religious schools'.

Moderator: Dr. Donizeti Ribeiro

Workshop C2 (French)

Rev. Florence Taubmann - 'Controverse autour de la circoncision'

Moderator: Rev. Alain Massini

Workshop C3 (English)

Dr. Raymond Cohen - 'Is Israel a secular state?'

Moderator: Rev. Dick Pruiksma

Workshop C4 (English)

Rabbi Ehud Bandel and Rev. Dr Michael Trainor

Bible study: 'Promise, Land, Hope' - Engaging Genesis 12:1-3'

Workshop C5 (English)

ICCJ Young Leadership Council - 'Faith and Identity in a secular world'

Workshop C6 (French)

An informal meeting with Rev. Canon Hosam Naoum from Jerusalem

Moderator: Fr. Jean Massonnet

12.30 Lunch

14.00 Plenary session

moderated by Rev. Dr. Hans Ucko

Presentation of the project 'Promise, Land, Hope

- Dr. Raymond Cohen, - Dr. Peter Pettit

15.30 Coffee break

16.00 Wrap up session

moderated by Liliane Apotheker

-Francesca Frazer, - Dr. Olivier Rota

- Discussion and conclusions

17.00 Transfer to « Hôtel Campanile »

18.30 Transfer to dinner

19.00 Festive dinner at « La Bastide »

22.00 Transfer to « Hôtel Campanile »

Sunday, June 30, 2013

OPENING SPEECH

By Dr Deborah Weissman

*Dr Deborah Weissman (Israel),
President of the International Council of Christians and Jews*

In a slightly-less-annoying accent, I will continue in English. This is my first conference without Ruth Weyl, of blessed memory. On a completely different note, this is also Dick Pruikma's last conference as General Secretary. I will begin with sincere thanks to the people who have made this conference possible. Please hold your applause until the end of the list: First, the chair of this conference, Liliane Apotheker; the committee, including Rosine Voisin, Edouard Robberechts and Bruno Charmet. Thanks also to our French member organization, the Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France (AJCF) and its President, Revd. Florence Taubmann; and to the ICCJ staff from Heppenheim, especially Rev. Dick Pruikma, Ute Knorr and Petra Grünewald-Stangl.

I would like to express very deep gratitude to the many sponsors of the conference, who are listed in the program booklet, and to all of you for coming.

I want to take this opportunity to greet and welcome two special guests: Rev. Detlev Knoche, of the church of Hessen and Nassau, who have been among our most generous supporters; and Monsieur Yves Chevalier, the director of *Sens*, the monthly publication of the Amitié.

I have visited Paris at least six times, but this is my first visit to France outside of that great city. Through the good graces of my friend Claude Lhuissier, I got to be in Angers and the beautiful Loire Valley.

We are here in Aix to honour the memory of Jules Isaac. Several years before Vatican II, he met with Pope John XXIII and was one of the important catalytic figures in the rapprochement between the Church and the Jewish people. Both of those remarkable gentlemen passed away in 1963, 50 years ago, not seeing the ultimate fruits of their work.

I would like to quote from my predecessor, Madame Claire Huchet Bishop. We are, so far, the only two women who have headed the ICCJ. A French Catholic author and scholar, Mme. Bishop was an ardent devotee of the work of Jules Isaac. I am indebted to our dear friend and colleague Judy Banki for the following information and insights: It was Bishop who was largely responsible for the publication of his books in the United States, and thus, indirectly, for familiarity with the expression, "the teaching of contempt" on the North American continent. She urged the American Jewish Committee to become involved, insofar as possible, in the forthcoming Vatican Council, to engage in a vigorous initiative for the repudiation "at the highest level of the Church" of that anti-Jewish and anti-Semitic tradition of teaching and preaching whereby Jews had been segregated, degraded, charged with wicked crimes, and valued only as potential converts. Ecumenical councils are few and far between, she said, and this is a historic opportunity. "Seize it."

As we say, “the rest is history;” we shall delve into it, God willing, at our 2015 conference in Rome. Let me now say just a few words about this particular conference and its challenging theme of laïcité. I want to point out that there are many different models of the relations between church & state. We are not here to critique the French model; we’re here to raise some questions and to learn from the French experience. Those of us who aren’t French are clearly outsiders to this experience. We may not always “get it.” But sometimes, outsiders can bring fresh eyes and new perspectives that can be helpful even to the insiders.

We will look at the benefit the models provide for the state, for society, for the religious communities, and for individuals. We will also consider some of the dangers and potential problems. I won’t say more about this now, because I am speaking as a respondent at the plenary session on Tuesday morning, and I wouldn’t want to be repetitious.

Let me just indicate that France is a wonderful place to raise these questions. This is the country of Voltaire, who said, “I do not agree with what you say, but I’ll defend to the death your right to say it.” It is the country of Moliere, who warned of the dangers of religious hypocrisy, in *Tartuffe*. It is also the country of Pascal, a remarkable figure of faith, and Pascal’s wager. France has led the world in defining and developing human rights, from the Enlightenment to Rene Cassin.

In the 12th century, the Jewish scholar known as the *Rashbam*, who was *Rashi’s* grandson, engaged in common study of Biblical texts with Christians at the St. Victor Abbey in Paris. In the 13th century, Provence was the home of the great rabbi, Menchem HaMeiri, who advanced the Jewish approach towards adherents of other religions, specifically Christians and Muslims, and in the 20th century, Paris was the home of the great philosopher, Emanuel Levinas, who taught us to see God in the face of the Other.

Having mentioned Rashi, I will conclude with a quotation from his classic commentary on the Torah. The verse he was commenting on we read yesterday in the Torah Portion of the Week, *Pinhas*. It is Numbers, chapter 27, verse 16. The context is Moses asking God for someone to replace him. He says in this verse, “Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation...” Rashi, adapting an earlier *Midrash*, says, “Why is it written, ‘...God of the spirits...?’ Moses said before Him, ‘Ruler of the World, it is revealed before You that, just as the faces of people are different, so, too, their opinions are different; appoint over them a leader who will tolerate each one of them according to his opinion.’”

Those of you who know Hebrew may be aware of the fact that the root for the word “to tolerate” is also “to suffer.” It is the same root as in the word for patience. When we encounter views that are different from our own, provided they are not incitement to violence, we must tolerate them, although they may be “insufferable.” May we have a productive and stimulating conference infused with a spirit of patience, tolerance and respect.

Merci.

Sunday, June 30, 2013

WELCOME TO AIX 2013

By Liliane Apotheker

Liliane Apotheker (France), Executive Board Member of ICCJ, Chair ICCJ 2013 Aix-en-Provence Planning Committee

Dear friends,

Here we are at this conference, to which we have been devoting all our attention and energy for the last two years.

It results from the work of a small team, very united, who joined another team, also united, in Heppenheim, Germany; together we have done everything so that this meeting may be a great success.

Our President Debbie Weissman has already thanked these people; allow me to join my thanks to hers. Rosine, Bruno, Florence, thank you, Dick, Ute, Petra, thank you, both Danièle and Danielle our interpreters, thank you, without forgetting, dear Debbie, all our thanks for the support you gave us throughout this preparation.

But without the involvement of all of you that are present here, having come from France and abroad, lots of individuals who with their gifts big and small have supported us, and with the generous contribution of AJCF's groups, and from the three foundations, the FMS, the Nahmias Foundation and Madame Picard, our efforts would not have succeeded in the same way.

Let me thank you all heartily.

I would like to start with a personal evocation. We Ashkenazi Jews who are familiar with Yiddish and German, know well a saying we have heard from our parents: "*Leben wie Gott in Frankreich...* Live like God in France". To people like my parents, immigrants from Eastern Europe and Germany, the question was not related to gastronomy and good wine, neither to the great beauty and diversity of the country, nor to the sweetness and lifestyle that their immigrant condition did not allow them to feel, but probably something else. If God lived in France, a sort of original Shehinah, He lived in a modern country, the country of human rights, freedom, free discussion of ideas, a country where some intellectuals were prepared to stand up for Captain Dreyfus. In the country they came from, there had been no Zola, everybody was always on the side of the accusers when it involved the Jewish question.

This very freedom was linked to secularity, which they did not understand, but saw as a space for freedom for religious minorities; to live like God in France was a way of saying that God himself was secular or, at least, liked this secularity. To these immigrants, who were often activists for human rights, despite their miserable condition in their home country, secularity was a means of reaching citizenship. It acted as a double protection against all sorts of abuses of power, against the arbitrary that reigned in their home country, including those of their own religion, forcing the state to take a position of neutrality and enabling access to freedom of conscience and religion.

Secularity, the topic chosen for our conference, will drive us during these three days. For us French people, it is our way of life, the one we understand, and in a certain way, the one we like and stand for, a bit like one stands for one's religion. Sometimes we bump into it like into a wall. The system is not perfect, it contains its intransigencies, and it is questioned by new waves of immigration, by a decline in the idea of citizenship, by society's evolution which has led to the splitting of the religious, societal and family network we are experiencing nowadays, but also by modernity, which seems to be willing to do without the traditional religions and arouse new expressions of the religious factor which recreates the feeling that secularity protects us. This cursor moves constantly.

All of us have travelled to come to Aix the goal of this trip in my opinion, means the reunion of two families: ICCJ and AJCF.

Elected two years ago to the executive committee of ICCJ, formerly member of the executive committee of AJCF, I can measure this trajectory very well.

For ICCJ, it is almost coming back home. Aix is the town where Jules Isaac lived; we will talk a lot about him during this conference. Debbie Weissman was kind enough to remind us of the eminent role of Claire Huchet Bishop in the translation of the works of Jules Isaac in the Anglo-American spheres, and the perceptiveness of the famous expression, *the teaching of contempt*. How much this work has contributed to the progress of the dialogue between Jews and Christians, how would it be possible to think without this today... Reading again the few notes Jules Isaac himself had put on paper, one can realize that the French and the French-speaking were many in Seelisberg, and that the language question was put in an acute way: French and English were both official languages for the congress; "the substitution of French by German was proposed but not accepted, but it was admitted that some speeches could be presented in German. And French was reduced to the bare bones: still we were considered very demanding not to renounce more completely" (*Sens* 7-2004, p. 360, unpublished manuscript by Jules Isaac). Nothing new under the sun... our conference will be bilingual, as a true follower of the Seelisberg conference; it will cost us all a little but we will come out from it enriched, that is certain.

I quote another striking fact found in the report from Great Rabbi Kaplan on the Seelisberg conference:

"As for them, the Jewish members of the commission declared that they will try hard to prevent anything that could be harmful to the good understanding between Christians and Jews, in the Jewish education. All Jews and Christians commit themselves to promote mutual respect for their sacred values" (*Sens* 1995-5, p. 195).

This strong and prophetic intuition constitutes the basis for point six of *The Twelve Points of Berlin*, a theological document on re-engagement in dialogue, written by ICCJ and adopted during the Berlin conference in July 2009; and I add that it constitutes for us Jews a holy duty which we cannot escape. The painful current events of vandalized places of worship and prayer in Israel attest to it.

In 1989, to commemorate the bicentenary of the French Revolution, ICCJ came to Lille, welcomed by Jean-Marie (of blessed memory) and Danielle Delmaire. Danielle is with us in Aix. In the book about the history of ICCJ, the Rev. Bill Simpson says on page 75: "As was to be expected of a conference under French auspices, all lectures were of high intellectual

standard yet addressed the practical concerns. What had become of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity?’” Here again, we follow tradition; our theme belongs to citizenship, its processing will be intellectual but will not leave out practical questions, as our programme indicates.

For ICCJ, to come to Aix is like coming back to its roots.

For AJCF, the journey is equally important. In France we like to think in terms of French exception or uniqueness, a little away from international bodies and, above all, in French... But in order to speak to the world like we always did, we must speak English. Our high participation in Aix corresponds to our awareness that the Jewish-Christian dialogue as we know it is changing, and that in our global world its trajectory may alter. It is time to take back our place, which was prominent in this international body ICCJ. It is a real journey for us; let us hope that the fruits of this conference will nourish our reflection and our work in the coming years.

Sunday, June 30, 2013

INTRODUCTION TO THE LIFE AND WORK OF JULES ISAAC

The legacy of Jules Isaac

By Dr Edouard Robberechts

Dr Edouard Robberechts (France), Senior Lecturer of Jewish Philosophy at Aix-Marseille University, former Director of the Interuniversity Institute for Jewish Studies and Culture (IECJ, 2007-2012)

I have the honour and the heavy task of opening this ICCJ symposium by evoking the memory of Jules Isaac, as we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of his passing this year. Memory in Hebrew means of course “to remember”, but also, more than this, “to revitalize”. That’s why I think to evoke today the memory of Jules Isaac in the very place he lived, means of course to remember who he was and what he did, but, more than this, to try to revitalize the will that animated him, the challenge which he felt responsible for. So I would like to dedicate the conference to the memory of Jules Isaac and the two passions that have animated the life of this great republican for whom secularity was so dear: the passion for truth, and the ethical requirement for justice.

Nothing predisposed Jules Isaac to become the man he eventually became. Indeed his life can be safely separated into two clearly distinct epochs: before 1942 and after 1942, when he was already 65 years old.

What went before? Jules Isaac was born November 18, 1877 in Rennes to a largely assimilated Lorraine Jewish family, in which patriotism had long prevailed over religious belief.

At thirteen, Jules Isaac lost both his parents just a few months apart. At twenty he began a long friendship with Charles Peguy who first revealed to him the injustice of the Dreyfus trial. Isaac became a Dreyfusard, not at all out of religious solidarity, but because of what would become the main constant in his life: the passion for truth and the requirement of justice that bears, crosses and even exceeds this passion for truth. Even after the upheaval of 1942, these two virtues would remain the standard for all his fights and hopes.

Isaac was admitted as an *agregé* in history in 1902. In addition to his teaching career, he began in 1906 a collaboration with Hachette, which published the history books of Albert Malet. Malet died on the front line in 1915. Jules Isaac himself survived 33 months in the trenches until he was badly wounded at Verdun. He would continue to write only the textbooks required for new programs. But the name of Malet remained associated with the collection, because Isaac’s name alone would have resonated as too Jewish for republican and secular textbooks! Isaac tried to draw out the consequences of World War I: he believed that the role of the historian was to write truthful books where historical criticism and the insight that accompanies it, clarifying the respective responsibilities of both sides, open the doors to an examination of conscience and a necessary reconciliation. The work around the historical truth becomes an indispensable condition for the search for a just peace. True to the tradition of the Republican Left, a member of the League of Human and Civic Rights, and of the Vigilance Committee of Antifascist Intellectuals, he committed himself simultaneously to a better understanding between Frenchmen and

Germans and to reconciliation between France and Germany. In 1936, Jules Isaac was appointed Inspector General of Public Instruction. His life seemed mapped out: performing work of scientific and historic integrity with a goal of teaching the truth to the greatest number of people, while searching for peace and justice with deep Republican roots.

But everything changed with the new world war. Aged 63 in 1940, under the discriminatory measures taken against Jews by the Vichy government, Isaac lost his position due to his Jewish heritage. "It was not acceptable," said Minister of Education and academic Abel Bonnard in the newspaper *Gringoire* on November 13, 1942, "for the history of France to be taught to French youth by an Isaac." This was obviously a shock and a challenge to everything he had until then lived for. In the words of his son, Jean-Claude Janet, "imagine what it was like for this great Frenchman, from a long line of Lorraine soldiers, all, like him, servants of their country from father to son and holders of the Legion of Honor since the creation of the Order... what it was like for the historian who contributed to the formation of countless generations of young French, both by teaching and by his manuals, for the General Inspector of Public Instruction with an unquestioned and feared authority, what a sudden shock it was, inconceivable, to be suddenly revoked, expelled from the University, deprived of his civil rights, reduced to a state of pariah by the same Petain, who in 1936, wrote to him to express his sympathy and admiration, and proposed him a "fair conversation" ...".¹ The awakening was brutal, and it meant a complete reversal, as he himself later highlights: "If only by grievous and ever worsening persecution, the Jewish question forced itself upon my mind and Jewish solidarity upon my heart and conscience. I was part of this hated, slandered, scorned Israel; facing the persecutors, I fully accepted being part of it. I also had to take on a new struggle, to deal with the unfair complaints they heaped upon us." ("Overview," in *Cahiers du Sud*, No. 376, 1964, pp. 226-227, quoted by André Kaspi, *Jules Isaac*, p.179).

So he took refuge in the free zone in Aix-en-Provence in 1941 and 1942, and began to resist using the writing of the *Oligarchs*, a pamphlet seeking to defend the trampled democracy. It was there in June 1942 that Jules Isaac would make a first dazzling discovery: he read the Gospels in Greek and discovered to his amazement that the traditional teachings of the Church had betrayed them. Yet it was this teaching which for him was the source of Christian anti-Semitism that had prepared and led to what was happening in Europe during those dark years of Nazism. One had therefore to return to the text, and even prior to the text, to the Jewish historical truth of Jesus, to change history and repair Christianity where it had failed: by condemning Israel without appeal for nearly 2000 years. In 1942 he began to write *Jesus and Israel*, which would be finished in 1946 and published in 1948.

Yet, all this almost failed. When the Nazis invaded the unoccupied zone in November 1942, Jules Isaac settled first in Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, then in Riom, near his daughter and his son-in-law. Involved in a resistance network, they were arrested, along with his wife and his youngest son Jean-Claude, by the Gestapo in Riom on October 7, 1943, and deported by the Germans to Drancy and then to Auschwitz where they were all killed, except his son who escaped from a camp in Germany. But he would only know that

¹ Jean-Claude Janet, « Jules Isaac à Aix-en-Provence : les raisons du legs », in *Cahiers de l'Association des Amis de Jules Isaac*, no. 1, 1996, p.11.

after the war. Meanwhile Isaac, who had survived by chance, was distraught and did not know what to do with himself. It was a letter from his wife in Drancy that would revive and guide him for the twenty years he still had to live. In this letter, his wife had indeed the extraordinary intuition and finesse to write: "My beloved friend, we're leaving tomorrow. It is very hard, and the greatest suffering is to know nothing of you since the dreadful day of separation. My friend, guard yourself for us, have confidence and finish your work that the world expects."

Thus he committed himself to continue the work he had begun in 1942, a concern that would never leave him until his death in 1963. Immediately after the war, he moved back to Aix-en-Provence. His life can then be summarized in three points:

First, the writing of his books: *Jesus and Israel* in 1948, *Genesis of Anti-Semitism* in 1956, and finally *The Teaching of Contempt* in 1962. All are intended to show historically the Christian responsibility for laying the groundwork that allowed Nazi anti-Semitism to flourish in Europe in the twentieth century.

Second, the eighteen proposals he brought to the conference in Seelisberg (Switzerland, July 30-August 7, 1947), and which would form the basis of the ten points of Seelisberg, aiming to transform Christian teachings about Judaism into teachings of esteem and respect. In addition, he met Pope Pius XII in 1949 - asking him to review the Good Friday prayer *pro perfidis Judaeis*. In 1960 he also met Pope John XXIII, who in parting promised him "more than hope," a promise that would be implemented only after his death with the declaration *Nostra Aetate* of Vatican II.

Finally, Jules Isaac was one of the founders of the Judeo-Christian Friendship of France in 1948, in Paris at the national level, and Aix-en-Provence, at the regional level. It is in this concept that Jules Isaac designed the most effective remedy against old anti-Semitic hatred: what has been sown by education must be eradicated by education. The essential idea is to highlight the deep Jewish roots of early Christianity, so that Judaism and Christianity can meet again on a sound and solid base.

To conclude this brief overview, I would like to draw your attention to a fundamental characteristic of this reversal and this period in time, because it has not been sufficiently noticed or considered, but seems able to bounce into the future the truth effort undertaken by Jules Isaac.

As I stressed at the beginning, his life was a struggle for truth, but not just any truth. Not a theological or religious truth, but a historical truth. History allows him to say what he says, and want to change what he wants to change. But this historical truth will necessarily have two faces for him: the basic face, essential and necessary, of historiography, which constitutes the major portion of its investment; but also another face, more discreet but not any less urgent or necessary, of history as responsibility or search for justice by and through the pursuit of truth.

Such duality is very clear from the warning he wrote in 1946 about his book *Jesus and Israel*. This book, he says, "is the cry of an outraged conscience, of a broken heart. It is to the conscience and the heart of man that it is addressing."

Thus this historical work is primarily an appeal to responsibility and the need for justice: it shouts for indignation, because it wants to raise awareness among the people it

addresses, so that things can change in a more ethical direction. And in the same breath, he adds: “However, if it is not scientific in its essence, it is by its infrastructure, its methods of information and discussion, I think I can say by its strict probity”. The purpose is clear from the outset: the search for historical truth will travel between science and conscience, between historical criticism and ethical requirement.

In this search for truth and justice, two main points will get his attention. This is primarily to bring out the truth that the Holocaust would not have been possible without the teaching of contempt distilled for almost 2000 years by the Church in the heart of and under cover of its message of love. So there is for Jules Isaac an immense responsibility for the Church in the face of this unimaginable human catastrophe unfolding in the heart of Christian Europe. Because even though Nazism was opposed to the Church, he is convinced that its virulent anti-Semitism could not have been built or have met such an echo without the Christian teaching of contempt. More importantly, he wants to show that Christianity is born of Judaism and could never have been formed without it: it was a Jewish fact before being a Christian fact, and the persecution of Jews by Christians proves thus to be one of the most horrific misunderstandings of history – which demands and requires repair: indeed does not anti-Semitism mean ultimately the self-destruction of Christianity by itself - and beyond of Western civilization?

But to do so, we must first establish this double truth, by honest and patient scientific work. Because as he says himself, “the contempt of Judaism goes with the contempt of truth” (EM 24-25). We must therefore return to history to show how Jesus was Jewish and should be seen as part of his people. And how a certain Christian bad faith used the Gospel texts to make them say what they do not: the disapproval of Israel, its condemnation, and the election in its place of the nations because of Israel’s refusal.

So he revisits the New Testament to eradicate the simplistic vagaries of the theologians, and to put it back into its complex historic Jewish context, not yet split between Jews and Christians, but where the two can still encounter each other around an event - Jesus - that is beyond either of them. It’s a matter of relearning to read what is written in the Gospels not in the theological context of the late church, but based on its Jewish historical context. This reappropriation of Jesus through history can enable a new sharing that is no longer a total loss for the Jew, and a total gain for the Christian. Going back to the truths of history permits for the first time the defusing of the bomb of Christian anti-Judaism, showing that being anti-Jew is to be anti-Jesus and hence anti-Christian, since anti-Judaism undermines the very foundations of Christian civilization.

And what Jules Isaac seeks to do through this basic work of historiography is to reveal the emergence of a second truth, or a second face of truth: one that demands justice and calls for individual responsibility, so as to repair history and direct it in a new sense, more humane and more worthy of the divine gaze. History as a responsibility in effect requires that a teaching of contempt - once established – ends, to be replaced by a teaching of esteem and respect, and that a new history emerges between Jews and Christians whereby their common roots may help them to rediscover their common challenges and common dreams of humanity. This is the challenge that drove Jules Isaac, and this is the memory that we would like to revitalize through this conference and those that follow, thus returning to the roots of what made the very Judeo-Christian notion of friendships emerge in history. Thank you.

Words of Jules Isaac

I will remind you first that this book was written from 1943 to 1946 during the darkest hours of my life. Hence its vehement, passionate nature. This is a book of pain. But it is also an action that targets a specific purpose, a positive program, the recovery of the Christian teaching about Israel.

One will say to me, one has already said to me: "But you were then victims of racist, Nazi anti-Semitism, which is now the most virulent anti-Semitism. Why should you turn toward religious, Christian anti-Semitism, who nowadays plays only but a secondary role." Why? Because I am a historian, used to treating such problems in the full extent of their duration, and not in the present, fleeting, ephemeral moment.

The historical survey showed me that the deepest root of anti-Semitism was a certain traditional Christian teaching which was perpetuated for nearly two thousand years, from generation to generation, for centuries, thousands of times. That's why I wrote 'Jesus and Israel'.

At the base of this traditional teaching, there are a number of themes that I called theological myths, because they are unfounded myths. And I think I have demonstrated in 'Jesus and Israel' how they overflow on all sides, how they distort Scripture. To go through the Gospel texts, to confront them at every step with the comments and interpretations of Christian authors, such was the fundamental principle of my book, such was its basic method.

The book is summed up in twenty-one proposals, which I tried to make as condensed, as striking as possible, and maybe I've succeeded in it, since an eminent Catholic writer - Julien Green - was able to say about these proposals: "a first reading of the twenty-one proposals that sum up this book, has something so shocking that one dares to remain silent, while Israel pushes such a cry of anguish".

The very short time that is granted to me, does obviously not allow me to read them, but I will at least cite one example, just one, but a major one in the central, capital part - the fifteenth proposal: "It is claimed that Christ would have delivered the judgment of condemnation and forfeiture of the Jewish people. And why, belying his gospel of forgiveness and love, would he have condemned his people, the only one he has wanted to address, his people, where he found with bitter enemies fervent disciples, adoring crowds? There is every reason to believe that the truly guilty, the real culprit, was a certain Pharisaism which is of all times and all peoples, of all religions and all churches".

Monday, July 1, 2013

PLENARY SESSION

Democracy and faith in God

By Bishop Claude Dagens

Bishop Claude Dagens (France), Bishop of Angoulême, member of the Académie Française, PhD in littérature

I would like to begin by outlining the scope of my reflections, which will deal with the complex relationships between religious belief and political realities, between democracy and faith in God. I will do that by means of two introductory remarks, which are as broad as possible.

A first remark: we are here as believers, both Jews and Christians. But we are also citizens, and we are here, as believers, within our own democratic societies, from the United States to the State of Israel, and including Europe. I want to insist on this principle of “within-ness” which is also part of our faith in God; it is not from outside that we seek to observe the evolution of the world, especially where that evolution is gruelling or violent. It is a type of *a priori* trust that inspires us: our religious beliefs are a part of our human and national identity, and democracy is a framework that lends itself to showing forth that identity.

But this situation demands a kind of examination of conscience on our part. We have to ask ourselves: in what ways can democracy influence our religious beliefs? And what specific contribution can we make to our democratic societies, especially when we are aware of their many weaknesses?

This will be the focus of the second part of my reflections.

To begin, I need to take a detour into the realm of history, recalling the complex relationships which have, for centuries, existed between religion and politics, between democracy and faith in God. Whether we like it or not, we are heirs: we carry within us the imprint of those relationships, which have been marked by moments of tension and opposition, but also by moments of reconciliation, with our own particular memories, especially when it seemed that totalitarian regimes had won out over democratic ones.

We need, therefore, to take into consideration that long history—a history that has sometimes been dramatic, and that has, in any case, been made up of uninterrupted and significant metamorphoses. This will be the focus of the first part of my reflections.

I—A LONG HISTORY MADE UP OF UNINTERRUPTED METAMORPHOSES

We are working here within the limits of political history and religious history, in what philosophers call the “theologico-political” realm, which means that the name of God, the Eternal One, is also part of our human history, whether we like it or not. And each one of us holds in our memories dramatic or happy moments when we know, even without having to say it, that we belong to this common history, marked by wars and revolutions, which is also the history of God’s Covenant with us.

It all begins, we could say, with the rise of “modern” democracies, from the end of the 17th century to the end of the 18th century, in England, the United States and France.

Whether this rise took place in a peaceful or a violent manner, it was inspired by the same conviction: that the time had come to think differently about the government of societies, taking action so that political power might be exercised by the people and for the people, through a sort of contract which allows people living side by side to participate in the expression of the general will, which ensures the supremacy of the common good.

I do not believe that, at its origins, this founding conviction of democracy had an anti-religious (and particularly anti-Catholic) intent, as some have later thought. Even the French Revolution, by means of its motto of “Freedom, equality, brotherhood,” was clearly making reference to the Christian Tradition. So we need to reset our perspective: democracy as such does not rely only on the ideology of the Enlightenment, and on the exaltation of Reason which would require human beings to define laws for themselves, while refusing all divine law. This ideological interpretation of history is an imperfect one, for one simple reason: that democracy is always in the process of becoming, and frequently does so by stumbling. It is not a closed system. It does not claim to be the Absolute, which is what differentiates it from the absolute monarchy by divine right.

And that is where, for France’s Catholics, the greatest difficulty lies—the difficulty that consists in distinguishing between belonging to the Church, and belonging to a political system, in keeping with Jesus’ recommendation: “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God”.

But if we are being realistic, we are also bound to acknowledge that, throughout the world, democracy takes a huge variety of forms, and its relationship to religious beliefs is bound up with that variety. On one hand, there is the French system of the separation of Church and State, wherein the State keeps its distance from religion generally—a distance which can itself lead, either to power struggles, or to real cooperation. On the other hand, there is American democracy, which does not exclude references to God or public prayers, and which sees nothing wrong with the presence of churches and religious communities in the public arena.

It is clear that the place of, and recognition of, religious beliefs in our democratic societies are linked to the history of those societies’ origins, and to the developments that have occurred since. However, after two centuries of experimentation, there are two major phenomena which can be highlighted.

- The democratic system, as such, implies and even demands a distinction between the State and society, whereas, in monarchical or totalitarian systems, the State absorbs society, or becomes its model and image.
- Precisely because of this logic—which is of a political nature, and which concerns the organization of civil life—believers cannot situate themselves, or understand themselves, only within the framework of their relationships to the State, whether those are easy or difficult. They are also expected to demonstrate that they are citizens, by accepting their presence within these democratic societies.

We must also acknowledge that this recognition of the value of democratic systems—and even of their superiority over other systems—has been encouraged by the struggle with the twentieth century’s totalitarian regimes. For those totalitarian regimes presented themselves as secular religions, inspired not by faith in God, but by the triumphant

ideologies which proclaimed the achievements of history—for Nazism, through the glorification of race, and for Communism, by the glorification of the party. And the pagan sacralisation of political power accompanied this sacralisation of history. Hitler and Stalin were revered as gods, and their divine power was a death-dealing power.

In such dramatic circumstances, faith in God was perceived as a source of life and liberation, like a force that would enable people to resist barbarity and, even with their weaknesses, democracies have been acknowledged as political systems which truly respected the freedom of conscience and religious liberty, and so we must give up on any nostalgia for those systems in which the religious orientation of the State seemed to guarantee religious beliefs.

II. THE PRESENCE OF BELIEVERS IN OUR DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES

The challenges we have been facing in these first years of the 21st century are very different. We have not had to resist totalitarian systems. But we have had to face a twofold weakening: the weakening of our “Western” democracies, and that of religious belief in our secularized societies.

First of all, it is clear that the democratic ideal is no longer triumphant, as it was in 1945, after the fall of Nazism, or in 1990, after the implosion of the Communist system. Our democracies are fragile. Why? Because they are directed from outside, either by types of political logic linked to international conflicts (especially in the Middle East), or by types of economic logic which involve only calculations of financial profitability. These democracies have a hard time directing themselves from within.

On the other hand, religious belief has itself been generally weakened, not because it has been made subject to victorious ideologies, but because it has a hard time situating itself within societies in which people say they have “left religion behind” and which, in one way or another, have done away with God.

Faced with this situation, an examination of conscience is needed. We have to simultaneously understand in what ways the democratic environment influences religious belief, and how, by starting from scratch, religious belief can once again take its place within our societies.

1. The democratic environment influences religious belief

When I speak about the “democratic environment,” I am thinking, first of all, of that valuing of the individual which our current democratic systems seem to promote so strongly. The philosopher Marcel Gauchet powerfully insists on this major metamorphosis of our societies: he goes so far as to suggest that the sovereignty of individuals and their individual rights has taken the place of the sovereignty of the people, and that our democracies tend to become market-based societies, in which the logic of interests is at play, rather than political logic.

The massive process of individualization has an influence on religious belief, for better or worse. There are frequent breakdowns of tradition, including those within families. The act of believing in God is primarily focussed on personal freedom and this is what we see, more and more often, as le *Monde magazine* talked about in a recent article: the children

of unbelieving parents who are asking to be baptized, because they have been converted to the Christian faith through the influence of their peers. The same phenomenon is also occurring in Muslim settings: where the parents' generation distanced itself from its traditions and religious practice, teenagers are converting to what seems to them something new, in their belonging to Islam.

These statements of belief on the part of a certain number of young people are also accompanied by a kind of nostalgia, not for the past, but for a sense of belonging: even if religious belief is not part of their memory, nevertheless it seems useful to them, to become part of a story. This allows them to be linked to the faith of past generations, of their ancestors. It is as if they discovered for themselves the power that faith has, to provide structure, in a cultural context which urges that traditions be forgotten, or even rejected.

This twofold phenomenon seems to be to be revealing of what characterizes our democratic societies: the unilateral exaltation of individual freedom, unrelated to any type of belonging, or any external reference-point, joined to the worship of what is transitory and immediate. And we cannot regret that, in the face of so many social phenomena of fragmentation and disintegration, religious belief, and religions, are able to re-establish those connections, both throughout time and across space.

This, of course, brings up the risk of becoming obsessed with the community. But it isn't enough to hold up this danger as a bogeyman. We also have to ask ourselves what is lacking in our society, in order that a real concern for what is held in common—the common good—might contribute to structuring society. It is our responsibility to acknowledge that faith in God cannot be reduced to merely an individual experience, but that it connects us to other believers, and confers on us a message for others, and opens us up to all of our society, which implies a universal perspective.

2. Making a place for our religious beliefs in our society

So ... here we are, called to be believers who, in a new situation, live out their responsibilities as citizens, not by withdrawing into themselves but, on the contrary, by taking an interest in what affects the existence of everyone.

How can we demonstrate our concern for others? I would offer a twofold answer to that question:

- by daring to tell others what we believe;
- by showing forth what is most distinctive about the Judeo-Christian tradition: the human awareness of their relationship to God.

Daring to tell others what we believe

Often, the media speak of us only to highlight what is most quaint, or violent, or scandalous about us. But it is pointless to blame the media. Often, they are merely reflecting our own excesses and fears. But, instead of defending ourselves, or having to justify ourselves as regards our defects, it would be preferable to explain ourselves from within ourselves, especially when opportunities present themselves for us to explain our reasons for believing.

As people say, interreligious encounters have that same purpose: we have nothing to fear from being different from others if, by expressing our differences, we are obliged to give an account of our identity.

I was very glad to be invited to write the Afterword for a recent book about the round-up of the Jews of Angoulême, which took place in October 1942, and to be involved in the inauguration of a plaque, on which were written the names of the adults and children who were the victims of that round-up. At the same spot, several months earlier, at the time of the murder at the Toulouse Jewish school, in March 2012, I stood alongside the leaders of the Jewish community—and also alongside a Muslim leader, who told me of his fears in the wake of that terrible event.

It is the dramatic events of history which enable us to realize how close we are to each other, with a common desire not to be overcome by evil, whatever its source.

In the coming months, I will be writing a hundred pages or so, to explain what Christianity is, in the context of a joint publication which is intended to make each of our three monotheistic religions better known to the others (e.g., to Jews and Muslims). I hope that this book will contribute to the education of future clergy—rabbis, priests, pastors and imams, in France and throughout the world, since it is being sponsored by UNESCO. Books cannot bridge every type of distance, but they can contribute to overcoming ignorance and fear.

This is especially the case if we commit ourselves to speaking about what seems to be most distinctive about our traditions, which contributes to our own education, to this continuous work of learning which is still before us. A book exists in order to fulfil that task ... a unique book which is much more than just a book, since it is the revelation in history of the holy Covenant of God with us, human beings, and with each one of us.

At the heart of that book, there is a mystery—that is, an inexhaustible reality: an understanding of humanity in its relationship to the living God, to the Eternal One, to the Creator of the world. I quote the author of the eighth psalm:

O LORD, our Lord, how awesome is your name through all the earth! ...
When I see your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and stars that you set in place—
what are humans that you are mindful of them,
mere mortals that you care for them? (Psalm 8:2, 4-5)

And the immensity of the world is no obstacle to the intimate bond of each person with the Creator:

LORD, you have probed me and you know me:
you know when I sit and stand;
you understand my thoughts from afar ...
You formed my inmost being;
you knit me in my mother's womb.
I praise you, so wonderfully you made me;
wonderful are your works! (Psalm 139:1-2, 13-14)

And with these songs of praise, the psalms echo cries of despair, of complaint, of indignation, as in Psalm 22, spoken by Jesus on the cross:

My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? ...
My God, I call by day, but you do not answer;
by night, but I have no relief ...
And I will live for the LORD; my descendants will serve you.
The generation to come will be told of the Lord,
that they may proclaim to a people yet unborn
the deliverance you have brought. (Psalm 22:1-3, 30-32)

At the heart of our democratic societies—whose uncertainties we share—we are tireless witnesses to God’s salvation. And what is most distinctive about our religious beliefs is that victory over evil. That is our hope!

Monday, July 1, 2013

PLENARY SESSION

Secularity and religious practices

By Rabbi Haïm Korsia

Rabbi Haïm Korsia (France), Jewish Chief Chaplain of the Armies and of the École Polytechnique

My dear friends, I want to say how moving it was to hear the two Sisters of Zion offering their comments. I think back to Chief Rabbi Kaplan's action, after the Finaly case, in pushing Zion, as an order, to get to know Judaism better—which they did, and they contributed greatly to the thinking of Vatican II. I am very happy to find myself alongside Pastor Florence Taubmann, who reminds me of my visit to Oradour (near Limoges) just before a conference I attended with her. To speak right after Bishop Dagens is an honour and a joy, because what you have just said—including that lovely expression, “nostalgia for a sense of belonging”—is very Jewish, in the sense that we still live in a diaspora of a different type, and this refers back to verse 2 of the second chapter of Jeremiah: “I remember the time of our youth...”. Your ideas about motion are also at the heart of our reflection and actions, since the name we give to our code of law is *halakha*, which means “walking”.

Finally, for our Canadian friends who are celebrating their national holiday today, allow me to recall what a Canadian teacher once pointed out to me. In France, we say to our children when they are setting out for school: “Work hard!” In Canada, they tell them: “Have fun!” So, I hope that we will all enjoy today's sharing.

The 1905 law of separation of the Churches and the State was actually intended to separate, in particular, the Catholic Church from the State, with Judaism being merely a kind of “collateral damage” from the decisions undertaken to counter the influence of Catholicism, especially regarding schools. Today, I would say that all of us—Catholics, Jews and Protestants—are experiencing the “collateral damage” of laws that were principally intended to address Islam. But in 1905, France's Jews did not feel like victims of this secular republic, especially since, with the defeat of the anti-Dreyfus camp that same year, anti-Semitism had disappeared from public discourse.

When the First World War broke out, Jews committed themselves to pay their debt to France with the shedding of their own blood—to France, which had granted them the status of citizens on September 27, 1791, and which had only just welcomed those coming from the East. This was the sacred Union that Maurice Barrès celebrated in 1917, in his *France's Various Spiritual Families* [*Les diverses familles spirituelles de la France*], and which so impressed Chief Rabbi Jacob Kaplan that he chose to serve in the trenches, rather than seeming to hide himself away by being a chaplain. If Barrès spoke of *Israel's passionate desire to be swallowed up in the French soul*, all of the religions were reconciled among themselves and reconciled with the Republic, in that brotherhood of suffering and victory.

During the period between the wars, although questions about immigrants arose, questions about religion no longer did, and were no longer debated, until the Vichy government's laws concerning Jews, and the revocation of the 1870 Crémieux decree,

which had bestowed French citizenship on Algeria's Jews. During the cabinet's discussion of those laws on October 1, 1940, it was Pétain himself who insisted that the justice system, and the teaching profession, not include any Jews.

On May 19, 1946, during the General Assembly of the Paris Consistory, its secretary-general, Edmond Dreyfus, exclaimed:

Thus it was that France, who liberated us in 1789, liberated us once more in 1944. France itself has survived as well. We remain her children, whether native-born or adopted. We have taken up once more, and we ought to take up once more, our place in her home, with that discretion which suffering and dignity call for, and continue to serve [her].

National reconciliation was the essential thing, and what was important was not to bring up truths which would divide France. The words "Jew" and "Israelite" never came up once during Pétain's trial.

Having returned to its secular status—which it had never really formally renounced—France integrated into its laws and decrees the religious freedom that the law had always contained. In 1963, the calendar of legal holidays included Jewish holidays, although a February 20, 1953 circular letter from the Ministry of Education providing the list of Jewish holidays on which (at the request of Chief Rabbi Jacob Kaplan) it was best not to schedule exams, *to the degree that that was possible*.

Permission for religiously-defined sections of cemeteries goes back to 1975; although it was not clearly spelled out, at least it was not forbidden. The Jewish Army Chaplaincy received permission from the Defense Ministry to allow Jewish recruits to receive *kosher* ration packs, and the same trend continued in hospitals and prisons. When I was the rabbi in Reims, I received permission from the Education Ministry's financial department for schools to offer the same meals to students who requested them.

Secularity—understood as the absence of religious references—began to give way to another understanding that grants religious freedom when, at the beginning of the 1990s, more and more families requested—and were granted—Jewish or Biblical given names for their children (which brings us closer to the Protestants), or more modern names, which were not on the official list. Thank you to the civil-status staff member in Lyon who, in 1963, allowed yours truly the name of Haïm, although it, too, did not appear in the Vernot directory.

Wearing a kippah, and attending school on Shabbat, have been the subject of debate in various jurisdictions, but, on December 17, 2003, the President of the Republic made it clear that *no one had to apologize for a religiously-motivated absence*.

Clearly, we have switched from a negative secularity to a positive secularity, from rejection to freedom.

For Judaism, there is no opposition between French-style secularity and our faith, and our focus is, rather, on defending France's vision of secularity, which is part of her greatness. Yes, it is France's greatness that she does not force anyone to make a choice between their faith and their citizenship.

It is France's vocation to act in such a way that everyone may live together, incarnating the verse of Psalm 133: "How good and pleasant it is to see brothers living together".

The French spirit is to promote that diversity which has always been her strength and richness; indeed, it is her very vocation, since her name in Hebrew, *Tsarfat*, means the crucible in which a goldsmith puts different precious metals, to make an alloy out of them.

Let me express a hope: that we can show that we are able, **together**, to defend a vision of a more just society. I have a sense that religions are more concerned about dialoguing with power than about dialogue among themselves, and I accept our share of the responsibility in that regard. But it is secularity that allows us to dialogue—that is, to speak to each other as equals, and not with condescension.

We ought to shift from a situation in which we (like many in today's society, unfortunately) wonder what the State can do for us, to a situation in which we can say: **what can we do for the State?** We ought to be much more involved in the building-up of a corpus of values upon which both the State and our society today can be based.

Regardless of what certain people may say, when it comes to the social, charitable, human and family realms, when it comes to closeness, to respect for liberty, equality and brotherhood, all of our religions together possess a certain expertise and, in terms of Judaism, 3500 years of experience—and that is not negligible. We have a contribution that we can make on the basis of planning focused only on the criteria of the common good. That is what Secours catholique, and Casip, OSE, CAP and many others do very successfully.

But that common good also involves respect for the religious sentiments of believers, even if their actions are not always understood by everyone.

For rationalist atheists, religious actions have to have some logical reason. If you don't eat pork, it's because, in the desert (where your society came from), that kind of meat didn't keep well. But there is a major risk in rationalizing the non-rational: when the supposed reasons crumble, the rules themselves then fall apart. And this is even truer when there is no obvious reason for an action or a ritual. If all religious actions are dictated by reason, then there is no longer such a thing as an act of faith—acts of faith which engage us even beyond our reason, since the whole idea of a person's faith is rightly located beyond human reasoning, in order to draw near to God's will. To be a believer means not being willing to bow one's head before anyone except one's Creator. My reason gives way to His. That is the very concept of *Naaseh venishma—we will do, and we will understand*—as pronounced by the Hebrews at the foot of Mount Sinai.

It is that return to ritual that is lacking in a society which is, nevertheless, seeking benchmarks to live by. It is ritual that leads us to meaning; that is the key to our faithfulness to the Law.

Let me give you an example of one of my friends who is a priest and who, during Lent, gets his parishioners to commit to not watching TV—which is the ultimate form of fasting and abstinence—but which, most of all, is a way to give them rituals to undertake.

The Talmud says that, outside the Holy Land, we ought to draw near to those who have no God, and we understand that to mean those who do not impose their God—those who are secular. The teachers of the Talmud were already dreaming of our law about French-style secularity.

French texts speak of freedom of religion, whereas European texts speak of freedom of religious practice, which is something very different.

Today, there are attacks (especially in Germany) on circumcision, and others (in France itself) on ritual slaughter. Recently, in a Paris neighbourhood, the mayor set out to enforce the ban on opening butcher-shops on Mondays, and wrote up two kosher businessmen, who stated that, for religious reasons, they closed on Saturdays, and therefore compensated for that by opening on Mondays. It was necessary to call the Office of Religions to the rescue, in order to enforce a policy dating back to 1973 allowing for exemptions, a policy which was based on common sense.

We have major difficulties in gaining access to our homes on Shabbat when the doors to the building are electric, and, most of all, we face a growing push-back regarding exams on holidays and Shabbat. There is something odd about teaching young people to be authentic and firm in terms of society's values, while at the same time forcing them to deny their own religious values. A young person who breaks his leg, for example, will be listed as "absent with an excuse," which means that, despite his grade of 0, his grade will get averaged out and he will receive credit for his school year, whereas a young person who respects his faith and who does not turn up to write the exam finds himself listed as "absent without cause" and, despite his average, will be obliged to repeat everything. The national Ministry of Education is very involved in this issue, and can resolve whatever involves them, but because of the universities' autonomy, the most they can do is to offer advice to presidents or deans.

For more than 3500 years, Judaism has professed that it is only the bearer of *its own* truth, and that other forms of religiosity are bearers of their own share of the truth, to the degree that they do not lapse into idolatry. But history has always placed each religion in a situation in which it is exploited by political power, in order to extend its sphere of influence. In France, secularity makes it possible to place all religions on the same level, thus allowing them to truly dialogue—something they would have no chance of doing if one of them had a pre-eminent position over the others.

From this perspective, France's Catholic Church has been radically transformed over the course of the last fifty years. It has followed the lead of Vatican II and has very often gone even further. This revolution stressed that other religions had their own legitimacy as well. But the Church has often had a different way of seeing the world and society, pushing other religions (at least here at home) to do the same. Although there is no longer a state religion in France, nevertheless we cannot, under the guise of equity, commit a historic injustice and deny both the place and the influence of the Church in the history of France, even today.

The goal of the 1998 encyclical *Fides et ratio* was precisely to dialogue with the world, to work for greater solidarity, and thus to bring about unity. If that initiative was essentially aimed at defining a new kind of theology, then it is plausible to seek a new way for cultures to encounter each other, which would no longer involve converting others by force, but rather convincing them that it is not necessary that religious ideas be excluded from our materialistic world. The era of conversions has been replaced by that of discussion, of dialogue and of understanding between all religions. This is an era of encounter.

This new idea of dialogue among religions, and even of interreligious activity, provides an opportunity to write a different story, made up of collaboration, of real knowledge of each other, of mutual recognition, of a concern to preserve the distinctiveness of the other, of the desire to get along with those who profess another faith, and those who do not belong to any religion, but for whom humanity is really at the centre of everything. That is our brand of secularity.

Every day, texts are debated in Parliament, or in various European settings, which govern our lives in fields as diverse and foundational as suffering, ethics, morality, the family, death ... all of them subjects which are closely related to faith. We should be able to express ourselves and allow the voice of religion to be heard in those debates, and to bring to them, if not necessarily our faith, then at least our knowledge of humanity and its aspirations.

This is not to say that human beings and religions ought to be uniform—just the opposite. They ought to struggle for unity, which is the opposite of uniformity. If the latter seeks to cast all human beings in the same mould, then unity seeks to bring together the differences, strengths and weaknesses of each, in order to move forward in a shared direction.

And yes: there are differences between people, which are fortunate. But those differences should make us curious about each other, rather than afraid of each other.

Paradoxically, the last century, with all of its dark periods ... with its long line of dramas and disasters ... with the Shoah ... that century was a turning-point, because it was also the century of dialogue, of communication, and of closeness between people.

Some people believe in God, and we all have hope in humanity. We will end up meeting each other or, perhaps, rediscovering each other and, in the end, it is God's purposes that we are accomplishing when, in a secularity that is properly lived out, humanity replaces God—not to take his place, but to assume, together with him, responsibility for Creation.

Monday, July 1, 2013

Camp des Milles

The Camp des Milles

By Dr Alain Chouraqui

Dr Alain Chouraqui (France), Director of Research at the CNRS, President and Founder of the "Camp des Milles Foundation"

Transcript by Francesca Frazer from an audio recording in English, with stylistic and grammatical alterations not reviewed by the author. We have deliberately kept the oral style. (Exact transcript available on request.)

Thank you. I'm not sure that my English will be fine English; it will be more "Frenghish", so I think everybody will understand me, both French and English-speaking people. Thank you to your organisation ICCJ for visiting us. It is an honour for us. It is completely within our purpose, which is a purpose of openness to different cultures, to different approaches of spirit and of humankind. We hope that you have understood from your visit to the museum that we have tried to base our work on the specific history, but also to open it up to general reflections about humankind and the human processes which may lead to the worst in human nature, but also which may lead people to resist. First, I would like to stress a few points that you probably have noticed during the visit and then I will try to give you some reflections on the basis of that.

My first point is that the camp itself is now the only French camp still preserved and open to the public. That's an important responsibility for us and the reason why the struggle for it was very long is important for us.

My second point is that all the history of this camp happened before the German occupation of the zone, of this part of France. So it's a FrancoFrench history basically- that means that there were never any German soldiers here; there were German people but anti-Nazis, not German soldiers. That is also one of the reasons that it took such a long time - thirty years - for us to succeed in setting up this memorial museum.

My third point is the very significant number of artists and intellectuals in this camp. Yesterday a prominent man from ZDF public German television told me, "It was a Who's Who of German and Austrian society here." Yes, it was. They weren't the only internees, but this is important because it allows us to incorporate all kinds of culture in echo, in memory of what happened here and of the creation and the artworks in this place. I mention that the establishment of the memorial museum took thirty years, not only to indicate that it was a long time, but because it means something- it means that it was very difficult for our people and especially our authorities to agree to be confronted by this very, very tragic history, this FrancoFrench tragedy. That was one of the basic reasons. The other reason was that most people didn't understand very well that such a memorial could be useful for today and for tomorrow to enable people to understand what happened and also to understand the permanent human mechanism which operated at these times and which may operate today for the worst and for the better.

My fourth point is that the memorial museum exists because it was a citizen initiative. It is a place which was founded and managed by citizens, not by the state, not by the government, not by the region, not by public bodies (although we would have liked public bodies to have been involved, but they didn't want to be). In this citizen approach, we can see, without any modesty, that it is the only historical place in the world where we present the human individual, collective and institutional processes which have led and which may lead to the worst. Most of the scientific results that we present in the reflective section of the museum existed before. Some of them we have produced ourselves with a multidisciplinary scientific team over ten years, but most of the other results existed before, but they are not and they were not presented in any historical place in the world. The only place where some of these processes are presented is not a historical place but a memorial place, the Tolerance Museum in Los Angeles.

My final point regarding this memorial museum is that it is a place of culture and cultural events. It was not easy to convince people at first that history is not the only human science concerned with this aspect. I am referring to our creation of a multidisciplinary reflective section. Usually history is considered as sufficient to present things, but it was more difficult to convince people that this place could become a living place, a cultural place, not only a memorial place, not only a historical place, not only a place for education, but also a place for culture.

There are two reasons at least for that:

The first one is the history itself of the camp- so many artists and intellectuals tried to be creative and to remain human and to keep their dignity in the face of the will to destroy them, to dehumanize them. So this is an echo to their history. That means it was a place of culture then, even within the camp.

The second reason is deeper. As a researcher I know very well the limits of reason and the limits of science, and we have come to realise that another way to better understand what happened and what may happen is to present some cultural events, which explore the field of feelings, of emotion, of art. That was very successful when we had for instance the London Symphony Orchestra here a few weeks ago, and we also have connections with the International Festival of Aix en Provence. Both the Orchestra and the Festival work with schools and we recently heard here one hundred pupils who had composed musical portraits of internees and when they played them we realised how they had been able to appropriate to themselves this history and how the camp, not at the level of reason but of sensibility, could allow them to progress in their knowledge and in their feeling through the use of art, culture and music. Many of you are convinced about that but it was not evident in the camp to do that, even if symbolically we organized and built the auditorium at the external limit of the camp- the camp began just on the other side of this wall.

Two last reflections:

The first one is to say that the basic purpose here is to try to go from a *reverential* memory to a *referential* memory, that means a memory which is a reverence to the past and the suffering of the people, to another memory which can be a point of reference for the present and the future. This is the basis for us. And it's very important in a period when many people are losing their points of reference or in a period where moral landmarks,

religious landmarks, economic and social fields are destabilized, and the points of reference are blurred. So it is very important to present, especially to the young people, a place. When they come here, some of them say first “Oh the Holocaust did exist” because they see a place. That’s a very concrete point of reference, a landmark. And secondly, we also try to feed the autonomy of other people. Some people who are confronted by the destabilization of points of reference and landmarks need concrete points of reference- this is the memorial itself. But other people build themselves their own points of reference. They want to be autonomous. They want to self-produce their own landmarks and we have tried, especially in the last section, to feed their ability to build their own landmarks. That for us is very important.

And my last reflection is to say that after working on this history, on this place, it is clear for me that it is a confirmation that the Jewish history is clearly a way to enter the common history, the people history in general. What happened here was not only against Jews but against other people and when looking at the history of the Jews here, which was the worst part of this history, it’s also a way to speak about other histories, the history of the end of democracy, the history of totalitarianism. The Holocaust itself may be considered as a paradigm. That means it was a unique historical process, unique because it was the most extreme tragedy, the most modern genocide (modern in terms of bureaucracy, science and technological tools), but at the same time it helped people to better understand humankind, not only Jews or anti-Semites, but all humankind. We have tried in the reflective section to understand the human process of submission to authority, of passivity, of group effect and so on, and all of these mechanisms are included and combined in the individual, collective and institutional processes which led to the Shoah. That is for me, for us, a very frightening point. Jewish history, the Holocaust, is a good way to understand humankind deeply and it is also a way to try to replace the competition of memories with the convergence of memories.

The convergence of memories shows that these common human mechanisms happen in all mass crimes. And these mechanisms can be understood and learnt by victims, by perpetrators and so on. When Japanese, Austrian and Swedish journalists come here, they tell us that the way this memorial confronts the past may help us to open the oyster, because its aim is not to apportion blame. Its aim is to understand how ordinary people, not necessarily bad people in the beginning, may become bad people- Japanese, Chinese and so on. And that, for us, is very important- it’s the reason why we were recently awarded recognition as a UNESCO Chair using this approach, which involves citizen education, human sciences and convergence of memories. Thanks a lot.

Monday, July 1, 2013

Camp des Milles

Genocide and Modernity

By Father Patrick Desbois

Father Patrick Desbois (France), Director of the Bishops of France National Service for Relations with Judaism, Consultant of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism, President of Yahad-In Unum

Transcript by Francesca Frazer from an audio recording in English, with stylistic and grammatical alterations not reviewed by the author. We have deliberately kept the oral style. (Exact transcript available on request.)

Merci beaucoup. First of all, we may wonder what a French Catholic priest, originally from Burgundy, which is well-known for wine and not for the Holocaust, is doing in the killing fields of Ukraine and now Belarus, Russia, Poland, Moldavia, Romania and Lithuania.

First it was a personal story. In 1942 my grandfather was deported to a small village in Ukraine. He was not Jewish. The village was named Rawa Ruska. I wanted to understand what happened to him so I went back many times during the Soviet period and nobody wanted to speak about it. I knew that in that village they shot 18,000 Jews, plus an unknown number of gypsies. And after many years the municipality gathered all the witnesses, all the farmers, all the men and the women who had been present at the killing as teenagers and we went together to the forest. I will never forget them even though now I have interviewed 3,500 people.

The first witness said that one German arrived alone with a motorcycle and a dog and he turned and turned and the whole village wondered why he had come. In fact this man was a specialist in the digging of mass graves and he came to choose the place. Now we know that they sent someone to every village. This man would go to the municipality and ask how many Jews were still alive so that he could calculate the volume of the mass grave according to the number of people who were to be killed. The mass graves were a killing machine. Some were round, because they killed people from the top. Some had stairs and two layers because they asked the Jews to go down and lay on the corpses. It was called *Sardinen Packung* (German for "sardine packing"). Another witness said that the next day two Germans arrived with a truck of Jews and they forced them to dig the mass grave eight metres deep. When the Jews became tired, the Germans told them they could get out and rest. And secretly a Ukrainian policeman went down and put explosives under the ground. Later the man told the Jews they could go on digging, and the thirty Jews exploded.

At that moment another lady came and she told me, "Father, I was asked to take the pieces of corpse and bury them, to hide them with branches so that the next Jews could not see them."

And after that, they brought trucks and trucks and trucks of Jews in one day and a half with two shooters and one pusher, and they shot 1,500 Jews, the last Jews of Rawa Ruska. Why pushers? Because they established a rule of "one bullet, one Jew", "one Jew, one bullet", and the army asked them to economise with the ammunition. When we crossed

the village later, the farmers remembered that it took three days for the mass graves to die.

That evening I was in shock. I did not think that ten or twelve years later I would come here. I was in shock because I was not ready to listen to that. And the mayor told me, "Patrick, what I revealed for one village I can do for one hundred villages."

I came back to Paris. I spoke to Cardinal Lustiger whose family were Jewish. He told me, "I know the story because my Polish Jewish family was shot in the same way in Benzin." Later I went to the World Jewish Congress in New York and they did not know that I could speak Hebrew and I heard them say to each other, "We have been looking for these mass graves since 1944 and this guy that we don't know looks for them." So we built an organization called *Yahad-In Unum* ("Yahad" means "together" in Hebrew and "In Unum" means "in one" in Latin). I remember that Lustiger said we will not say *one* because we are not one but we are *in one* and one is God. Now it's another story. It consists of 22 people, we work with universities and we go into eight countries, 15 times every year for 17 days each time, and we have found in the mass graves around 1 million/1.3 million Jews and it remains 1 million plus the gypsies. We were able to reveal the crime and understand what happened from the moment that the Germans arrived at 6 a.m. until the evening. We know that they never missed their lunch. When they arrived in the morning, they tried to find cooks and they always made a pot for lunch. We found all the details of the killings, step by step, because they were public.

And it will be my first reflection, genocide and modernity. In the Soviet Union you have no train, you have no fence, you have no place like that. It's a continent of extermination, it's a field of today. It could be a garden, it could be a farm, it could be the court in the middle of the city, it could be under the church, anywhere but nowhere.

And the first thing I want to bring to your reflection is that it was everywhere, it was in public and nobody spoke about it. It was very difficult for me to accept there was no secret. All the people came to see. I remember a small village in Belarus where they forced the Jews to dance for an hour. One old person refused to dance and they struck him with a rifle. There was a Belorussian orchestra and at the end of the dance, the Germans said to the orchestra, "Now that the dancing is finished, we'll kill the Jews." And the whole village came to watch.

I will give you an example. I found a big public school where the director had gathered all the children and said, "Tomorrow there is no school because we will kill our enemies, so you are free to go and see the shooting of the Jews and the day after it will be the topic of the class." And I found three old ladies who were children at the time and they said that they gathered in the class and went together to the killing site. She said, like a child, "It was too early, there was no Jew and no German so we all sat together under a tree and stayed there all day and the day after it was the topic of the class."

I would like you to understand that it was nowhere and it was in public. I say that because in modernity, mass killings, crimes against humanity, are also in public because of television and the media. They can be anywhere, most of the time with no camp. People are killed in Darfur with no camps, in Rwanda with very few camps, and today in Syria with no camps. We hear of it, it's public, it's anywhere and there is a total lack of reaction from the people.

For me, the first question is: how is it possible to kill so many people in public without any movement or with movement too late?

The second question is: why do we do this work at *Yahad*? Why are there 22 young people (now I am the old guy) working so hard studying Soviet and German archives, building files, translating testimonies, making mappings, participating in many symposiums. Why? I realized in Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Moldavia, Romania, unconsciously we have built democracies on top of the mass graves of others. Do you know why it is very difficult to find mass graves? It is because people cultivate tomatoes or potatoes on the mass graves. It is not a strong reason. I remember one time I was finding one and I was not sure it was that and two ladies came out of their house and said, "Father, Father don't take my garden." I understood, but under the garden were the Jews.

So my first point is that we cannot, we *must not* build a democracy, a modern state with Christian values, human values, whatever values, on the mass graves of others. Otherwise it totally undermines our values because people see that we are building a new state on top of people who have been killed before us. And in the last century, it happened in nearly every continent.

What changed in the last century since the genocide of Jews, is that the Jews worked hard with *Yad Vashem* mainly to remember not the name of the killer, but the names of the victims.

This is my second point. I give you an example. Think about the mass graves or genocide in Kampuchea. If I ask you to give me one name of a killer, the classroom will say "Pol Pot". Now I ask you to give me one name of a victim. I realize that normally in a genocide, we remember the name of the killer and not the victims. And people care enough about the killer to put them on trial- it's very important. But who cares about the victims? They're dead, it's the past. The Jews did the opposite. Do you remember when we were young and it was nearly impossible to find a book about Hitler, but you could find *Anne Frank* in any family? Even people who knew nothing about the Holocaust had the story of Anne Frank. The Jews turned the wheel. The Jews said after the genocide, it is not Hitler or Goebbels or Himmler that we should keep in memory, it is all of the Anne Franks, one by one. *Klarsfeld's* work is to find the last names, the last picture of a baby who was being deported. *Yad Vashem* is recording the name and the story of each one and you will not find the file of Hitler and Himmler, but the files of all the little girls.

And I think we must go on with this strong lesson that the Jews brought to humanity, but unfortunately for the modern mass crime or genocide we keep on remembering only the name of the killer. Give me one name of a victim in Darfur. Give me one name of a victim in Syria. But we remember Bashar al-Assad. Even in local crime, when I saw the shooting in Toulouse (of course it's not a genocide), I noticed the media referred to it as *Affaire Merah (Merah's Affair)*, his name. But the children who had been killed had no "affair". I think that we must try to understand that the Jews have not been killed for nothing. We must endorse the new way to be, to force humanity to cohabit with those who were killed and not with the killers. We follow the work of *Yad Vashem* and *Klarsfeld* and others in order to force us to cohabit with the names, the stories of the victims one by one.

I also work a lot with the government of Germany because they support our research. Germany is also the only country that recognises that it committed genocide. I travel in

many other countries. I can tell you, don't dare to say to a country that committed genocide that they did it. So I would say that two parameters, the fact that Germany recognizes the genocide and the fact that the Jews work so hard to keep the memory of each person, are opening a new page in humanity that we must keep open for the others. It's why I think today we have to teach about the Holocaust to prevent genocide.

For me, it's a part of the territory wherever I work (as I told you no camp, no train). I gave conferences in 18 schools in Hong Kong, and the schools consisted of both Europeans and Chinese. The people who brought me said, "Don't speak to the Chinese, they don't care. Speak only to the Europeans." So of course, I did exactly the opposite. And so, I asked the Chinese, "Do you know about the Nanking massacres by the Japanese?" They said, "Yes, yes the women had been raped and the men had been killed." And I said, "The Holocaust by bullets in post Soviet Union by the Germans- it was Nanking every day." I think we have a way to teach about the Holocaust and this part of the genocide with no camp, no train unfortunately is the actual model. I will never forget the remark that an old Polish intellectual made to me. He said, "Patrick, Hitler made a mistake. He made Auschwitz." And I said, "Why is it a mistake?" And he said, "Because the Jews are coming back. When there is no camp, they don't come back." It took me years to understand what he told me.

Finally I will tell you what is at the base of my conviction, because I'm still a priest. In the Bible Cain killed Abel, and the first question of God to Cain was "Where is your brother?" And I think that since I was a child, through my grandfather, through my education, I listened to that question, "Where is your Jewish brother from Ukraine, from Belarus, from Russia, where is he?" "He is under the bushes. Sometimes under the market like an animal." And the answer of Cain was a question too. He said, "Am I my brother's keeper? It's not my question. I am for the future not the past. My brother is in the past, he's dead." And you remember that God said, "Don't you hear that the blood of Abel is climbing from Earth unto heaven?" And the commentary of Rashi said that it is not the *blood* but the *bloods*, meaning all the people who will be killed after.

And I think, whatever we are doing in modernity, we cannot, we *must not* ask Abel to keep silent. Thank you.

Tuesday, July 2, 2013

MEDITATIVE MOMENT (TEMPS DE MÉDITATION)

By Liliane Apotheker

Liliane Apotheker (France), Executive Board Member of ICCJ, Chair ICCJ 2013 Aix-en-Provence Planning Committee

Méditation juive laïque

Cette méditation a longtemps cherché ses mots, sans doute voulait-elle voir converger trop d'éléments.

Elle est partie d'une question : pourquoi nous appelons –nous « Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne, » plutôt que Conseil national des Juifs et des Chrétiens, ou Confraternité juive et chrétienne.

Elle est aussi adossée à notre thème, la Laïcité, en particulier celui de ce matin : « La Modernité peut-elle survivre sans religion » et s'inspire d'un texte d'Emmanuel Lévinas, paru dans *Difficile Liberté* : « Aimer la Thora plus que Dieu ». (il s'agit d'une allocution prononcée à l'émission *Ecoute Israël*, le 29 avril 1955)

« Loving the Torah More Than God »

A la première question (pourquoi Amitié judéo-chrétienne), la réponse demeure intuitive. Elle correspond à ce que je ressens, mais ce sentiment est je le crois partagé par de nombreux juifs pas forcément croyants, mais néanmoins engagés dans le dialogue avec des Chrétiens le plus souvent croyants. Très souvent il s'agit de personnes ayant subi une blessure existentielle, devenue métaphysique . Jules Isaac était lui aussi de ceux-là.

Je ne suis pas sûre que Jules Isaac y soit pour quelque chose mais un premier projet de nos statuts y fait allusion : « l'AJC groupe tous ceux et celles qui ,appartenant ou non à une confession déterminée, veulent travailler à l'établissement de la fraternité et de la paix spirituelles. » texte écrit en 1948 repris dans SENS 1995 -5 p. 198.

Jules Isaac tellement meurtri par la Shoah, s'adresse à tous et demande autre chose que le travail théologique. Il espère l'amitié de ces interlocuteurs.

-La Fraternité constitue en France avec l'Égalité et la Liberté le fondement trinitaire de la nation

-Mais l'Amitié est un élan du cœur, pas un programme politique, elle rend une dignité à l'homme auparavant méprisé et poursuivi, montre que sa peine et ses joies sont désormais partagées.

L'ami est celui avec qui on partage par choix ce qui fait le sel de la vie.

La fraternité est donnée, l'amitié est choisie.

Aimer la Thora plus que Dieu, nous dit Emmanuel Lévinas

Loving the Torah more than God

Ce texte se réfère à un autre texte donné pour un document écrit pendant les dernières heures de résistance du Ghetto de Varsovie. Il est en fait l'œuvre de Zvi Kolitz , un jeune juif de Buenos Aires et date de 1946 : Yossel Rakover parle à Dieu. « Yossel Rakover Talks To God »

(Je vous recommande de le lire, je ne le fais pas ici afin de ne pas revenir à la brutalité inouïe de la Shoah, mais plutôt de penser à partir d'elle)

Levinas s'interroge, comme nous tous, sur la signification

de la souffrance des innocents : « Ne témoigne-t-elle pas d'un monde sans Dieu ? » la réaction la plus immédiate ne serait-elle pas de devenir athée ?

Levinas questions : What is the meaning of the suffering of innocents ? does it not prove a world without God, ... the simplest and most common reaction would be to decide for atheism.

Levinas répond : « Il y a sur la voie qui mène au Dieu unique un relais sans Dieu. Le vrai monothéisme se doit de répondre aux exigences légitimes de l'athéisme. Un Dieu d'adulte se manifeste précisément par le vide du ciel enfantin. Moment ou d'après Yossel Rakover Dieu se retire du monde et se voile la face.

On the road that leads to the one God there is a way station where there is no God . Genuine monotheism owes to itself to respond to the legitimate demands of atheism . A grown man's God shows Himself in the very emptiness of a childish heaven.

According to Yossel Rakover this is the moment when God withdraws from the world and veils his face.

« Dieu qui se voile la face n'est pas , une abstraction de théologien ni une image de poète. C'est l'heure ou l'individu juste ne trouve aucun recours extérieur, où aucune institution le protège .

The God who veils his face is neither,... a theological abstraction nor a poetic image . It is the hour when the just individual can find no external reprieve,when there is no institution to protect him.....

Mais Yossel dans sa souffrance reconnaît aussi que ce Dieu lointain, vient du dedans, intimité qui coïncide avec la fierté d'appartenir au peuple juif : « Au Peuple dont la Thora représente ce qu'il y a de plus élevé et de plus beau dans les lois et la morale »

« to the people whose Torah embodies the highest law and the most beautiful morality »

Disons plus simplement que pour nous dieu est concret par la Thora.

Lévinas poursuit en parlant d'un homme capable de répondre, capable d'aborder son Dieu en créancier et non point toujours en débiteur, et aussi un homme « capable de confiance en un Dieu absent » une attitude héroïque et il dit son attente :

« Il faut que Dieu dévoile sa face, il faut que la justice et la puissance se rejoigne, il faut des institutions justes sur cette terre.

Levinas speaks of a man capable of responding, capable of approaching God as a creditor and not always as a debtor, and also a man capable of trusting an absent God, a heroic attitude...

But God must reveal his Face, justice and power must be reconnected.

Lévinas conclut : « Mais seul l'homme qui avait reconnu le Dieu voilé peut exiger ce dévoilement »

Levinas concludes : « Only he who has recognized the veiled face of God can demand that it be unveiled »

J'ajoute à titre personnel que je reçois ses mots comme une demande d'abandon de tout triomphalisme religieux, une condition nouvelle qui doit advenir dans tous les monothéismes.

Tuesday, July 2, 2013

PLENARY SESSION

Can modernity survive without religion?

By Rev. Dr Gilles Bourquin

Dr Gilles Bourquin (Switzerland), Pastor of the Evangelical Reformed Church of the Republic and of the "Canton du Jura", Member of the editorial board of the monthly: Évangile et Liberté

Introduction

Hopefully I will not surprise you with my quick answer, in an extremely simple way and with few hesitations, to the question you asked me: "Can modernity survive without religion?" My answer is "no" and, to begin with, I will present you with some arguments which allow me to give such an answer.

However, in the second part of my speech, I will have to add to this answer an important statement: if I believe it true that modernity can neither totally eliminate the religious spirit nor totally do without the existing religions, on the other hand it alters significantly all historical religions that encounter the modern spirit. Thus we have a strong interaction between modernity and religions. Modernity, with its principle of individual freedom and the intimately linked principle of secularity, strongly limits the power of the established religions on individuals. On the other hand, the religious spirit prevents modernity from being totally accomplished, leading it, despite itself, to remain forever an unaccomplished project.

HUMAN CONDITION AND MODERN PROGRESS

Let us enter into the first part of the lecture, with the answer to your question: "Can modernity survive without religion?" Modernity is a relatively young culture in the history of humanity. It began five centuries ago if we count from the Renaissance, or three centuries if we count from the Enlightenment. Since its emergence, modernity has had a growing global influence, not truly reached until now. If it has imposed itself as a cultural reference, during colonialism, it appears today more like a sort of intercultural platform.

Therefore, here is my supposition: if a great majority of mankind's cultures have not renounced the need for religion but have rather found in them their foundation, I find it hard to believe that the culture of modernity could provide mankind with the necessary resources to negate this need for religion.

My argument relies on a postulate which I will illustrate with a few historical situations: a constellation of factors do exist, within the human condition, which cause its religious component to be abiding. We must therefore define the conditions of the human existence that make the religious question inevitable, and show that modern culture does not succeed in overcoming these conditions.

The opposite thesis, which has been the key argument of radical modernity from the 19th century onwards, consisted in claiming that modern progress was decisive enough to modify the human condition, to an extent that the modern man could do without religion,

in comparison to the civilisations who came before him, who were considered to be of inferior status, less developed and less accomplished than modern man. Therefore, the challenge lies in the balance between the notions of human condition and modern progress.

The positive thesis, developed in the 19th century by the French philosopher Auguste Comte, presents the spiritual development of mankind in three phases: The theological or religious state, purely fictive, corresponds to the primitive vision of the world, ruled by supernatural powers; then we enter an intermediary state, called metaphysical, during which the belief in supernatural beings is replaced by abstract concepts; the final state, scientific or positive, corresponds to modernity. Knowledge then leaves aside the fruitless search for primary causes and ultimate aims, to concentrate on observable and real facts, the only useful ones to the concrete life of modern society.

This ultra-optimistic mentality concerning the virtues of secularity and science has kept its credibility until the first half of the 20th century. The incredible inhumanities of both world wars have deeply damaged it. Since then, modernity has renounced presenting itself like such a massively Promethean project. It has come back to its primary statement of individual freedom.

However, my argument cannot limit itself to showing the obsolescence of the positivist thesis. There are some very precise reasons why I think that modernity, more so than other cultures, cannot survive without religion. Generally speaking, I suppose that modernity cannot entirely defeat the religious spirit for this religious spirit owns certain functions, of metaphysical order, which give answers to limitations of the human condition that modernity does not suppress. As a matter of fact, modernity does not propose an alternative to all fundamental problems which religion takes care of. I group these problems into five categories of limitations to human life: limitation of duration; reason; justice; happiness and, in the end, limitation of meaning.

The limitation of duration

Let us begin with the most trivial limitation. Although the modern man may well try, like the spirits of clans have done before him, to project himself in his descendants, he still remains individually mortal. Each individual experiences the limitations of his power: his life depends on forces independent from his will. This lack of power regarding one's own existence is, in my opinion, the archetype of every religion, the chasing from Eden in Genesis 3, and modern secularity cannot pretend to overcome this problem. The limited section of human life, between birth and death, seems like being hanged between two "infinities" which generates permanently the question of origin, meaning and destiny.

The limitation of reason

This first existential limitation meets with the limitation of human knowledge. The philosophy of Enlightenment has tried to overcome the weakness of revealed religions, founded on the authority of historical traditions, asserting the principle of universal reason which has been set up in pure religion. The reason of Enlightenment was identified with the Supreme Being. Thus, the God in Theism merged the modern spirit, the rational one, and the religious spirit, the irrational one. Modern rationality expressed clearly what religions had imagined confusedly. But this premature attempt was too absolute and did

not stand the test of time, and so human reason fell back in its imperfection.

The critical rationalism of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, which concludes and goes beyond the spirit of Enlightenment, has strongly asserted the limitation of human reason which does not succeed in vanquishing fundamental metaphysical ignorance. Reason, said Kant, can apprehend phenomena, the world as perceived by man, but it cannot apprehend noumena, the essence of the being, the world as it is seen by God. Modernity, after having tried to know God through reason, has come to recognize its incapacity to reach knowledge of absolute truth through theoretical reasoning.

The limitation of justice

Thus, the door towards religion was ajar again. Still to do: find the way to join modern thinking, conscious of the limitations of reason, with the religious spirit, which claims to touch the sacred. Kant proposed the line of ethics, which was in reality his first preoccupation. The worrying question for him was that of freedom: How is it that the human being, characterised with regard to animal through his conscience, his freedom and his ethical responsibility, remains however ruled by his selfish sensitivity, with the result that the historical world, including modernity, remains ruled by social injustices?

The limitation of human justice is our third theme. Kant comes to the conclusion, typically modern, that “be” and “having to be”, the real world and the ideal world, can never be merged. In other words, the democratic society, founded on freedom for the individual, guaranteed by the modern state, can never be identified with God’s kingdom. Modern thinking thus establishes a very clear distinction between the social order, fundamentally secular, guarantor of individual freedom, and the religious order, divine, transcendental, sacred. But in another way, modernity admitted its moral imperfection, its inability to build the perfect society, and thus the necessity for the modern individual to keep in mind, in his concrete actions, a divine ideal guaranteeing the accomplishment of his ethical enterprises. At this stage, modernity and religion were both deeply separated and intimately united. Implicitly, modernity recognized the formal necessity of religion.

The limitation of happiness

The fourth limitation, the limitation of happiness, was mostly discussed in the next century, with the birth of romanticism as opposed to the freezing rationalism of Enlightenment. In the 19th century, the industrialization of economical production caused working conditions to become deplorable, and inspired communism as a reaction to the indifference of the Christian bourgeoisie. One of the major expressions of the spirit in that time was Darwin’s theory, which described global existence as a struggle for life which permanently generates competition, selection and suffering.

Modernity, far from a self-understanding as ideal, recognized the tragedy of the cosmos. The wound of reality became part of the consciousness to such an extent that it came to deny every single religious hope. It was the time of atheism. Schopenhauer showed that man was dominated by an impulse for life, blind, far removed from reason, an impulse that Freud defined as unconsciousness, and Nietzsche as pride, the will to power. Religion was definitely rejected, but this reality gave birth to such absolute despair that it bore in itself a religious germ, illustrated by the growing interest for oriental religions.

The limitation of meaning

Nevertheless, this disabused realism did not suppress the romantic amazement towards the beauty of life. Nature evoked an image of an ideal reign, a Paradise one secretly believed to be present any place and any time. This modern version of the mystical spirit affirmed the meaning of life despite all its imperfections. Many people admitted that life in itself included a sacred value, an absolute significance, a meaning independent from any effective religion. Having reached this stage, modernity took on the tension between the absolute character of the sacred on the one hand, and the relative value of each historical religion on the other hand: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, other religions and their many ramifications, new compositions, sects, were only cultural variants of a common universal religious spirit. Culture, as a vector of meaning, also limited the meaning by enclosing it in fixed forms.

In the 20th century, following the radical disillusion caused by the discovery of the Nazi horror, a radical work on the question of meaning imposed itself. The existentialist philosophy led modern thinking to centre once again on its permanent nucleus: the question about the meaning belongs to the individual; the irreducible objective of modernity consists in guaranteeing individual freedom, protecting it against any totalitarian or millennium oriented temptation, whatever its inspiration may be, atheist, despotic or religious. At this point, secular modernity, far from destroying the religious spirit, believed itself to have a double paradoxical mission, both to guarantee its free expression and to prohibit its domination.

Intermediary synthesis: The persistence of the religious fact in modernity

At this point we can establish a first synthesis. Sometimes, we, as intellectuals, trained to deal with complex questions, can express simple conclusions: Modernity gives no final solution to the questions of death, ignorance, injustice, suffering and absurdity. Thus it cannot pretend to do without religion more than any other cultures have done. At the most, modernity can soften these problems, but cannot resolve them entirely. Modern medicine can postpone or soften death, but cannot suppress it; science can increase knowledge, but not complete it; democracy can diminish injustice, giving equal rights to individuals, but it cannot eradicate evil; modern life tends to ease daily sufferings, but we know as well that it creates new ones, more subtle, so that the question about meaning remains in the hot seat. Therefore, it would be conceited for modernity to claim that it can do without religion, just as it would be conceited for any religion to claim total self-sufficiency without modern open-mindedness.

Therefore, in modernity, religion's scope is in no way closed. These questions remain open, and if I understand clearly the spirit of modern secularity, it does not claim to have the role of solving them, nor to ban their expression, but rather to regulate their social expansion, preventing that a religious answer wins over any other possible answer. In my opinion, modern secularity must be neither judge nor gravedigger to religion, but rather its referee. When it sets itself up as a substitution religion, secularity abuses itself and exceeds its functions. The games for power, in the social area, between secular forces and religious institutions, will now be the theme of the second part of my lecture.

Effective religions and the religious function

There are many ways of defining religion. They can roughly be divided into two types. The factual definitions are based on concrete facts and consider religions as traditional human communities, characterized by the link they establish from authority between present reality and the higher levels of reality. These definitions describe thus better *religions* (in the plural) rather than *religion* in general, whereas the functional definitions try to define *religion* starting from its aim. You will notice that so far my presentation was only based on a functional definition of religion. My conception rested on the assumption that religion aims at making up for, possibly overcoming, the limitations, the shortcomings, the weaknesses of this life, by creating a relationship with higher realities or beings.

It is obvious that this definition is not entirely satisfying, because religion does not have the sole function of bridging existential gaps, but also of managing this life by setting down structured beliefs, initiating a community life and providing ethical rules. This aspect is better taken into consideration by factual definitions, which are generally more restrictive. Some totalitarian regimes or some mass sports, for example, can take on some religious functions, without being, in purely factual terms, religious communities.

Hence if we raise your initial question again, examining now the religious institutions rather than the religious function, will the answer be different? Can modernity survive without *religions* (in the plural)? In so far as historical religions take on the religious function, we have seen it is difficult to eradicate them completely, but in so far as these same religions have genuine powers, manifesting themselves as public authorities, they clash with secular authorities. Is it necessary to distinguish clearly the secular sphere from the religious one, as demanded by strict secularity, or else can we, on the contrary, admit that these two spheres inevitably overlap, and that a religious influence always remains in the secular sphere?

Monotheism and modernity: some historical perspectives towards universalization

To better grasp the historical and political issues at stake in this modern question, we need to realize that it is the outcome of a process which started at the very core of the history of religions. We cannot separate too abruptly a pre-modern period – which would be dominated by religious powers – from a modern one coinciding with world secularization and the departure from religion.

Indeed monotheism itself can be understood as the first step towards world secularization. In comparison with surrounding polytheism – pagan religions which worship nature – or with mythology which projects political conflicts into the sacred sphere, monotheism projects the divine into an absolute here-after, into the sphere of the unspeakable and untouchable, and distances itself from any idol worship.

The monotheist idea of a unique god implicitly contains the project of replacing local religions – each worshipping competing gods – with a single universal religion referring to a higher and also more abstract God of the cosmos, thus making the world less religious and consequently more secular. Local sanctuaries are supposed to relate to a more universal sanctuary, which can become celestial or inner, as in mysticism. Monotheism therefore opens, in its very posture, two fundamental historical processes which can be

found under a slightly different form at the origin of modernity: universalization and interiorization, also called spiritualization.

In the Western world, it was during the Renaissance that the word *religio* was first used in the plural. In the Middle Ages *religio* used to refer exclusively to the Christian religion; the other religions were considered as *superstitio*, that is to say false religions. In the Christianity of the Middle Ages, the unity of the western society was based on the adherence to the unique so-called universal, catholic Church (catholic means universal), which used to establish a bridge between human hierarchy and God's power. We are aware of what happened not only to Jews in this system, namely ghettos, but also to all faiths that could not be assimilated.

During the Renaissance, Nicolas de Cruse, the Catholic theologian, was the first person to use the word *religio* in the plural. The Pope put him in charge of the relationship with Islam. The effect of this mutation was considerable: growing modernity created a new concept, that of "religions" in the plural, capable of gradually including a whole series of traditional authorities originally less comparable than how we see them today. Were Islam and Judaism *religio* on the same level as Catholicism? And later, in the 19th century, were Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism considered to be *religio* without any difficulty and in the same way as Christianity? Protestantism, for example, has often strongly resisted the fact of being considered as a *religio*. Karl Barth wished to define it as the only non-*religio*, distancing it from all religious systems.

We can feel this very well: the use of a common word to refer to different constellations of the human phenomenon of belief has had a universalizing effect. In a sharper manner, we could even talk of the gradual taming of religion in the hands of modernity. Just as monotheism centralizes and purifies cults, modernity tends to neutralize tensions between traditions by placing the various monotheisms and the other religions on the same footing, that of beliefs. The secular sphere tends to become a multicultural and inter-religious medium, a common ground rather than a specific one. To be placed together on a carousel of religions is not a very pleasant situation, but it is certainly better than deregulated wars for world domination. This configuration actually matches the political structure of modern democracies, which place all the individuals on an equal footing in terms of rights, uniting the various political parties in a parliament chamber in charge of the nation's government.

Judaism and Christianity

Etymologically, the word *religio* may derive from two Latin verbs: *relegere*, to re-read, and/or *religare*, to bind/join. On the one hand *religio* joins the present to the past, laying the foundation for the authority of a tradition, and on the other hand it joins the earthly reality with the superhuman world thanks to a cult. In late Antiquity these two definitions of the word *religio* created a fierce debate. In this respect we can wonder how Judaism and Christianity can be called *religio*? Is it relevant to claim that Judaism, by promoting a Law transmitted by God as an ethical heritage for all mankind, puts more emphasis on the *relegere* dimension of *religio*? The constant reinterpretation (or re-reading) of the Torah, through the *Mishnah*, then through the *Gemara*, which together make up the Talmud, calls at each period for a new commentary aimed at adapting the legal practice with the casuistry (case-based reasoning) appropriate to its period. In Judaism, universalization

consists in grasping the Law transmitted to Israel as a blessing addressed to the entire mankind, without inferring some proselytism aiming at a conversion to Judaism.

Conversely doesn't Christianity insist more on the *religare* dimension of *religio*? There was, first informally with Jesus, then dogmatically with the part of the Christian community led by Paul the Apostle, a break-away from the interpretative tradition of the Law. Christianity, having spiritualized and interiorized the Law, has reduced it to the commandment of universal love for God and men. In a sense it is true that the mysticism of union with God has overcome the strictly ethical dimension. But this approach is not thorough, because with Paul the Apostle at least, the demands of the Law are symbolically retained to emphasize man's inability to be justified before God, and hence the necessity of grace and forgiveness which can be obtained by means of faith (*religare*) and not by means of the Law (*religere*).

Whereas Judaism has left open the interpretation of the Law, Christianity has been led to establish a final canon to its doctrine articulating closely theology, mysticism and ethics. As a consequence, practising the Law is no longer the essential part of *religio*; instead Christianity has become a proselytizing religion, with all the involved risks. The Judeo-Christian conflict became embittered with the question of Jesus' martyrdom and the accusation of deicide hurled at the Jews went against the very principle of Christian theology which says that Christ had died for the salvation of all mankind.

The links between Judaism and Christianity, the object of our gathering, exemplifies the reconciliatory effect of modernity on religious conflicts. Indeed it is only with the advent of historical-critical (higher criticism) studies of the sacred texts in the 19th century that the Judeo-Christian controversy started to abate. At the same period, the closing of ghettos opened Judaism to contact with secular society, giving birth, as with Christianity, to movements of liberal/reform Judaism favourable to modernity. Jewish and Christian scholars attempted to clear the Gospels of prejudiced interpretations inherited from the Christian era and Jesus' Jewishness became more apparent. Jules Isaac's conciliatory position is also a legacy from this modern re-reading of history.

It is interesting to note that it is indeed the advent of the secular sphere, with the separation of Church from State in the Age of Enlightenment that progressively made it possible for Judaism and Christianity to get closer. Yet when Judaism entered the secular life a new risk appeared at the same time, namely the risk of assimilation and loss of identity. As with other religions, Judaism and Christianity waver today between particularistic and isolationist tendencies and more universalist ones, trying to strike a balance between fundamentalist communitarianism and identity dissolution.

MODERNITY CHALLENGED BY POSTMODERNITY

We have stated in different ways throughout this conference that modern secularity doesn't aim at replacing authorities that offer meaningful values, but aims at making sure individual liberties are respected by placing the various religions on an equal footing and promoting their dialogue. But we have no guarantee that this attempt will achieve the expected result. The other – less optimistic version of the facts – is to think that modern secularity eventually dissolves all forms of faith into an indistinct entirely pragmatic and agnostic religiousness. The religious attitude that we call "worldly spirituality" would be

the result of this slow erosion of secularized monotheist faith into a new form of postmodern polytheism. In the daily religiousness, what is true would be replaced by what is useful and what is just by what is practical, so that this religion would wish gods to be at men's service, contrary to the monotheist ethics for which man is God's servant.

Modernity, after generating the secularization of monotheism, would lead to the return on a global scale to postmodern polytheism, in which each religion would be viewed as one particular expression of the universal religious spirit. Yet, one cannot but notice that this belief in an immanent world enchanted with a thousand gods better corresponds to oriental pantheist conceptions, which sanctify nature, than to Abrahamic monotheism which desacralizes nature by relating the divine to transcendence. We could be witnessing, at least in Europe, the end of the monotheist spirit and the return of pre-Christian religious forms of wisdom. This hypothesis would explain the growing favour encountered by Buddhism and the disaffection for churches.

It is probable that today the modern model, in which secularity acts like a prop to religious dialogue, and the postmodern model, in which there is a dissolution of the monotheist faith, explain in a complementary way the complexity of our religious situation. When I reconsider the general title of this conference, I suppose that secularity is both an opportunity and a peril for religions: it is not "or" but "and". There is both the opportunity of a fruitful dialogue and the risk of confused dissolution.

The lesson we can draw from this situation is twofold. On the one hand, we are led to observe that all religions revolve around a common given, namely the human condition. On the other hand, their neutralization is not possible because their differences are such that without considerable distortion, it is impossible to adhere intellectually to all the beliefs at the same time.

Let's start with a common field. Religious traditions brush alongside one another and some so-called transversal themes which are present in almost all religions emerge. The question of marriage, for example, affects the socio-cultural structure of the minimal reproductive cell of the human species. Consequently it can be found in almost each religion under countless variations. Another example: circumcision is of course a ritual specific to Judaism, but as it affects a human aspect, it involves an area of reality on which everyone can have an opinion. In other words as they speak differently on subjects concerning communal human life, religions are obliged to enter into dialogue with one another if they want to live together. This first point seems inescapable to me and also inseparable from the second one, which is the absence of a common core that could easily unite the various religions. It is all very well to say that all religions refer to a higher and invisible reality, but mediations towards this reality differ so much from one religion to another that the search for a common denominator seems a very elusive enterprise. It remains very difficult today to be Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, shamanist and an atheist at the same time.

What are the leads we can explore? Our roads are positioned between postmodern dissolution into agnosticism, on one side – which boils down to admitting that everything is true and false at the same time – and, on the other hand, communitarianism of the fundamentalist type, a kind which erects walls around a reassuring but enclosed truth,

with the genuine risk of generating violence against everything which is perceived as foreign, impure and dangerous.

Among the potential solutions I would call intelligent, there is the acute awareness of possible interactions, without radical exclusion of other positions or confused adhesion either. Halfway between relativism and absolutism, there is what I would tend to call combinatory dogmatic theology. As a Christian, without denying my faith, I can consider meaningful the Jewish conception of the Law as an ethical project of blessing for mankind. I can acknowledge some proximity between the Protestant faith and the Islamic faith. I can view as instructive some forms of Buddhist meditations which can help with Christian praying or act as mirrors to understand better my own faith. These transversal borrowings don't lead me either to deny my Christian faith or relativize everything, but to think that the God of the Bible has lavished his wisdom in several human cultures and granted a specific perspective to Abrahamic monotheisms.

CONCLUSION

I am now ready to conclude in the shape of a short summary of my main points: first I assumed that modernity cannot do without the religious function because it is incapable of overcoming entirely the limitations of human life, namely death, ignorance, injustice, suffering and absurdity.

Then I specified that modernity, by asserting the freedom of the citizens and the secularity of the state, imposes some legal constraints on religious traditions and thus manages to bring about deep changes in their minds by injecting a liberal mentality which challenges some aspects of traditional orthodoxies.

Finally, I have shown that established religions and religious mentalities in turn, continue into modernity and deeply transform the very notion of secularity by constantly questioning its programme without really succeeding in distancing itself from it. The different types of secularity and religions have a long future ahead of them. Thank you for listening to me.

Tuesday, July 2, 2013

PLENARY SESSION

Can modernity survive without religion?

Response by Dr Deborah Weissman

Dr Deborah Weissman (Israel), President of the International Council of Christians and Jews

It is an honour to have been asked to respond to this brilliant paper. The paper is truly an intellectual *tour de force*, showing that clarity, good organization and profundity can go together. There is much here with which I completely agree, so that I could almost just say, “D'accord, moi aussi.” Almost, but not entirely.

We certainly agree on the major point; namely, that modernity needs religion and religions. I would like to make a comparison with another very different field—sports. An individual can get along without sports—I myself am an example of this. I always say that it's good that the international sports industry doesn't depend on me, because if it did, millions of people would be out of work. But I think societies need sports, for a whole variety of reasons. Some, as with religion, are related to sources of identity, meaning, belonging, rootedness, values, stories. Individuals can survive without religion, but not society as a whole.

In a manner very similar to the one in which Prof. Bourquin developed his argument, I'm fond of quoting Rev. Dr. Bill Vendeley, head of an organization called *Religions for Peace*. I heard him some years ago suggest that we would do well to listen to the accumulated wisdom within the various religious traditions. After all, the religions of the world have been around, in some cases, for thousands of years, and, in other cases, for “only” hundreds of years, but that's a long time, too. In that time, they have all had conversations about two basic questions: 1) What does it mean to live a good life as a human being? 2) What does it mean to live in community?

Now, there are three issues I would like to raise, in terms of slightly disagreeing with Prof. Bourquin. First of all, I don't think that religions actually provide answers. In a few cases, they do, but usually, they help us refine and improve the questions and help us develop different ways of thinking about them. Secondly, even with religion, we aren't always ensured that we'll be just and ethical. I wish that were the case. Perhaps the solution lies in some kind of synthesis between religion and enlightenment. But there are religious people in several faiths, including Judaism, who are far more modern than I am, technologically, and might even consider themselves enlightened, but I deeply fear for the future of society with them around.

Finally, we disagree on the issue of religion and state in general and French *laïcité* in particular. I hinted at our opening session that as an outsider, I may have a different approach. I believe that there are different models of religion and state that work, in different contexts. Britain has an established church with freedom for members of other religions, as well as atheists and agnostics. Australia's Jewish day schools have flourished, through receiving government aid, and the Jewish community has been free to thrive. Complete separation isn't the only acceptable model, in my opinion.

I also disagree, both principally and strategically, with the French ban on the *hijab* in public. I can understand not wanting people to conceal their faces. I can't understand a ban on hair covering.

Thank you for the intellectual pleasure and challenge of preparing a response to this paper.

Tuesday, July 2, 2013

MEMORIAL SESSION FOR RUTH WEYL

By Dr Eva Schulz-Jander

Dr Eva Schulz-Jander (Germany), President of the Association of the Friends and Sponsors of the Martin Buber House

In Memory of Ruth Weyl

I consider it a real honour to have been asked to speak in the memory of Ruth, although I find it hard to express my thoughts, for it is a very emotional moment. We have just seen her in this short film and it seems as if she was in this room, but it is her spirit that is among us.

This conference feels different from all the others. It is one without Ruth. It was Ruth who introduced me to the work of ICCJ and later urged me to share her commitment to the Friends and Sponsors whose driving force and unrelenting spirit she had been since its beginnings.

Ruth was one of the last representatives of a very special group of European Jews. Born in 1924 into a Jewish family of entrepreneurs in Berlin, a family who had at one time moved from East to West, from a religious community into an urban environment but with a strong Jewish identity. Her life was a paradigm for European Jewish history. She was living history.

Raised in a liberal household, she was never afraid to raise her voice, or speak her mind. After a happy childhood came exclusion, persecution and finally expulsion. Forced to leave the comfortable existence in Berlin the family fled to then Palestine, started a new life full of hardships, but undertaken with great courage. She helped to build the new State of Israel, and eventually returned with her husband and two daughters to Europe, i.e. Great Britain. Back in Europe she became committed to interreligious dialogue reaching into continental Europe especially into Germany. In 2008, the President of the Republic, Horst Köhler, awarded her one of the highest honours the State has to offer, the Bundesverdienstkreuz to honour her for her untiring contribution to German-Jewish and Jewish-Christian understanding.

Ruth Weyl was a builder of bridges. She reached people's minds, but more importantly, she touched people's hearts. She was the soul of our organisation.

We from the Friends and Sponsors of the Martin-Buber-House owe it to her to continue her work. And we shall do so, her spirit will guide us.

Tuesday, July 2, 2013

MEMORIAL SESSION FOR RUTH WEYL

By Dr Deborah Weissman

Dr Deborah Weissman (Israel), President of the International Council of Christians and Jews

It is my sad task to convene this memorial session for our dear friend and colleague Ruth Weyl, who passed away in mid-May of this year. Let us all rise for a moment of silence in her memory.

This is my first ICCJ conference without Ruth. It is difficult not to have her input anymore at the Board meeting, not to sit near her at the Jewish service in the morning, not to enjoy her humour and her elegance and her zest for life. I especially miss her here in Aix, because she was such a wonderful bridge between the English- and French-speaking worlds. Ruth had been looking forward to this conference since we began planning it.

She was a very caring person who often called me from London just to say hello. For someone who called herself a secularist, she spent a lot of time in synagogue and for someone who usually prefaced her remarks by saying, "Well, of course, I'm not a theologian..." she had some very interesting theological insights.

Ruth was the living organizational memory of the ICCJ. For many decades, she brought her seemingly boundless energy and vitality to promoting dialogue between Jews and Christians within the CCJ and then also Jews, Christians and Muslims, within the Three Faiths Forum, locally, nationally and internationally. For her outstanding efforts, she was awarded both the Interfaith Gold Medallion and the International Sir Sigmund Sternberg Award.

Once, in a personal email to me, Ruth wrote: "I am always mindful to react gently so as not to give the impression that 'the old lady thinks she knows it all.' Well, she knew a great deal, and we will sorely miss her knowledge, her wisdom and her friendship. May her memory be blessed.

Wednesday, July 3, 2013

PLENARY SESSION

Roundtable: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND BLASPHEMY

By Prof. Jean Duhaime

Prof. Jean Duhaime (Canada), Professor at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Montreal. Research and Teaching areas: Hebrew Bible, Ancient Judaism, Dead Sea Scrolls, Jewish-Christian Dialogue

Introduction to the topic

In the introduction to the theme of the 2013 conference (p. 2), Olivier Rota invites us to consider the mutual relations between religions and the secular society. The question of freedom of expressions and blasphemy stands precisely at this intersection.

One of the best-known statements about the notion of *freedom of expression* is found in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (art. 19):

“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

Another document of the United Nations, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966, art. 19) specifies, however, that the exercise of this right may

“be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

(a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others;

(b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.”

The notion of *blasphemy* has its origin within the area of religion. Even if its definition may be different from one religion to the other, it generally refers to “defamatory mockery, insult, slander and curding a deity in word, writings or actions” (Beck 2007, 119). The concept may be extended more widely and the history of religions demonstrates that almost any form of offense against religions may be considered as blasphemy at one moment or another and may be punished by religious or civilian authorities with more or less hard sanctions, up to death penalty.

The tension between freedom of expression and blasphemy has become more vivid by the end of the 1980s for several reasons, including the more visible plurality and stronger affirmation of religions and convictions. The release of the novel by Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (1988), the publication of cartoons of the prophet of Islam in European medias and other similar incidents, accusations of blasphemy against members of religious minorities in a few countries with Muslim majorities have increased this tension and prompted a still on-going debate about the limits of freedom of expression and about the opportunity to repress by legal means what is considered as *blasphematory* or defamatory by one or a few religious groups.

Within this context, I would like to draw attention to a few recent documents. In 2010, the Council of Europe's European Commission for Democracy through Law ("the Venice Commission") released an important report in a book entitled *Blasphemy, insult and hatred: finding answers in a democratic society*. After a close scrutiny of and a reflection on the European legislation about blasphemy, the Commission recommends both clearly framed criminal sanctions against incitement to hatred, including religious hatred, and the abolition of laws against blasphemy in European States where they still exist, even if they are generally not enforced (par. 89).

The conclusions of this Commission are similar to the proposals submitted by a group of experts who gathered in several workshops organised by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The *Rabat plan of action*, adopted in October 2012, reaffirms the necessity to promote both freedom of religion and freedom of expression (par. 10), while fighting against incitement to hatred (par. 14). It strongly suggests to the States which have blasphemy laws to repeal these to adopt instead of them "comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that includes preventive and punitive actions to effectively combat incitement to hatred" (par. 19).

In his report of December 24, 2012 to the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, recommends that States

"implement the Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. [...] States should enact legislation to protect members of religious or belief minorities, with a clear understanding of the universal normative status of freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, a human right that covers individual, communitarian and infrastructural aspects as well as private and public dimensions of religion or belief" (par. 63-64).

But the Rapporteur also notices that in order to respect the freedom of religion or conviction,

"States should repeal any criminal law provisions that penalize apostasy, blasphemy and proselytism as they may prevent persons belonging to religious or belief minorities from fully enjoying their freedom of religion or belief" (par. 66).

These new developments invite us to deepen our reflection on the relation between freedom of expression cherished by contemporary democratic societies and the notion of blasphemy inherited from religious traditions; we are also invited to include other notions introduced within this discussion.

This can be done in several ways: 1) by revisiting the sources of the notion of blasphemy in sacred texts by examining their various interpretations within history; 2) by studying how the repression of blasphemy, but also religious tolerance were conceived and implemented within the course of history and are today; 3) by exploring how the introduction of the notions of incitement to religious hatred and freedom of religion has reframed the debate about blasphemy and freedom of expression.

We are also invited to explore how, in contemporary pluralistic societies, we could contribute to promote in concrete terms not only freedom of religion and expression, but also communication, dialogue, respect, and esteem between individuals and groups of different religions and convictions.

Presentation of the panellists

Three experts will lead us this morning to initiate this common task:

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Wednesday, July 3, 2013

PLENARY SESSION

Freedom and blasphemy

By Prof. Dominique Avon

Prof. Dominique Avon (France), Professor of Contemporary History, Director of the Department of History, University of Maine (Le Mans)

Crossover centred on the European world and the Arab world (1980 to 2010)

In the *Republic*, Plato envisaged casting poets away from the City (1) arguing that, like Homer, they described the gods as bad when writing about them. But “the god” is good, Plato asserted, and what is good cannot be the cause for evil; the system of the philosopher king must be controlled by the good religion: the divine guarantees wisdom, the philosopher guarantees justice. However, his master Socrates asserted: “my *daimôn* told me that...” At the end of his trial, his condemnation was founded on the principle of a possible social disorder. The accusation of *asébéia* (literally, lack of religious beliefs) forces other thinkers to fly away from Greece. For the Romans, *impietas* seemed like an outrage towards the city’s divinity. It was, among others, addressed to the Jews, then to the Christians, who suffered many waves of persecutions until Emperor Constantine (312) (2). Origen, in *Contra Celsius*, also referred to *novitas* (literally, extraordinary offence towards the meaning of tradition). But Emperor Theodosius turned Christianity into the religion of the Roman Empire and thus defined the frame of a heteronomous regime for about fifteen centuries (3). The religious authority fixed the *orthodoxia* (the right opinion) and fought *haireisis* which contested it (4). With variants, a similar structure was established in the societies under Islamic authorities at the end of the 7th century (5).

In his *Philosophical Lexicon*, Voltaire wrote: “*Blasphemy* was only used in the Greek Church to qualify an *insult* made towards God. Romans never used that expression, apparently never believing one could offend God’s honour like one can offend man’s honour” (6). The author of *Candide* put the emphasis of his criticism on intolerance in a monotheistic context (7). The European or North American lawmakers in the 19th and 20th centuries abandoned (8) the reference to *blasphemy* (9), or maintained it as a vestige indicator (10). This orientation has influenced all societies submitted to the European colonisation and beyond. The tendency reversed in the 1960’s, with an acceleration at the beginning of the 1990’s. A few states, referring to Islam, have adopted or tried to include a law against *blasphemy* (11): Iran (12), Pakistan (13), Malaysia, Indonesia (14), Bangladesh (15). The fatwa launched by Ayatollah Khomeini against Salman Rushdie (1989), the so-called “cartoons affair” (2006) and the pseudo-movie *Innocence of Muslims* (2012) represent the media foam of a deep trend which rooted the biased representation of a confrontation between the “Occident” (The West) and the rest of the world.

The problem is more complex; it lies with a crossover of values and their promoters. In *The Blasphemer’s Banquet* (16), poet Tony Harrison imagined himself sitting at a table in a restaurant in Bradford, the town of *autodafé*, together with Voltaire, Molière, Umar Khayyam and Byron... the empty seat being kept for Salman Rushdie. In the name of the “authors of the age of Enlightenment”, the “invisible man” then took the defence of the necessity of using “blasphemy as a weapon” (17) against religious

authorities who were claiming to decide for the limits of thought. Murders, like that of his Japanese translator, were linked with the publishing of *The Satanic Verses*. Other murders were perpetrated at the same period of time: the Algerian Tahar Djaout; the Egyptian Farag Fuda; the Turk Ugur Mumcu. After the inauguration of a statue to the poet Pir Sultan Abdal, who was stoned to death for blasphemy in the 16th century, a hotel in Sivas, Turkey, was burnt down: 35 people, mostly intellectuals, and 2 hotel employees died. A play commemorating this crime should come out in 2014; its author, the atheist pianist Fazil Say, has been condemned (18) for quoting verses from Umar Khayyam which were classed as “denigrating a group’s religious beliefs” (19). The judgment was annulled, but a new trial was announced (20).

1- An attack on “religion” and “morality”: Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia

In June 1981, the criminalization of “blasphemy against religions” was introduced into the Egyptian penal code (21). Anouar El-Sadat understood it as a means to avoid secession after confessional confrontations. Theoretically, it concerned all religions, but in fact the insult towards the “Muslim religion” was the only one to be punished, with penalties ranging from a fine to few years in prison. Under the authoritarian regime of Mubarak, a few personalities have been concerned by this law (22), among whom two specialists of the Qur’an (Nasr Hamid Abû Zayd and Sayyid al-Qumni) and authors (Hilmi Sâlim, Nawwâl al-Sa’adâwî and Sa’ad al-Dîn Ibrâhîm) (23). Between 2011 and 2013, the list became noticeably longer, with some forty cases registered. The most famous were the actor ‘Adil Imâm, the businessman Nagîb Sawîris (24), the satirical presenter Bâssim Yusîf (25), the writer Karam Saber (26) and the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Al-Tahrîr Ibrâhîm* ‘Issa. Ordinary citizens have also been put in prison for an anti “blasphemy” struggle, among whom Alber Saber Ayad (27) or Damiâna ‘Abîd ‘Abd al-Nûr, a teacher in a Coptic school who was accused by three pupils of having insulted Muhammad and having blasphemed the “Muslim religion” (28). On the contrary, a sheikh from Al-Azhar, who taught that it was possible to “kill” and “eat” the one that “does not pray”(29) has been the subject of no procedure, neither disciplinary nor judiciary. The intellectual body is in tension. Fellow member of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Culture Minister Alaa ‘Abdel-Aziz, has caused great concern because of his firing of key personalities in the Department of Fine Arts, from the General Book Organization and the Cairo Opera House. This policy towards what could be called “brotherisation” has aroused a wave of resignation and indignation (30).

In Lebanon, the 1949 law does not recognize “blasphemy” but jurisdiction of censoring a piece of art has been given to a ministerial and religious commission within the Ministry of Information by the bias of General Security (31). In Fall 2012, the people in charge of the NGO March launched “The Virtual Museum of Censorship” (32). With that too, they wanted to list the hundreds of pieces of art forbidden in their country. Some were banned because they had a “Jewish” character: for instance *The Great Dictator* (1940), *Ben Hur* (1959), *The Adventures of Rabbi Jacob* (1973) or *Schindler’s list* (1993). In this category, the last movie to be censored was *The Attack*, directed by Ziad Doueiri after the novel by Yasmina Khadra (33), even though the movie had received the Golden Star at the 12th film festival in Marrakech (34). Other works have been censored for insult to common decency, such as the play *Haki Niswene* by Lina Khoury and the movie *My Last Valentine* (35). Songs have also been forbidden in the name of the fight against contents regarded as satanic, such as songs from groups like Iron Maiden or

Nirvana. The criteria and process of imposing censorship remain vague, but the direct action of religious authorities or lobbies is efficient: the Catholic Information Centre forced the prohibition of the sale of the novel, *The Da Vinci Code* (36); Hezbollah had its activists in the street against the show “Bass mat watan” on LBC in 2006 and for many years no cartoonist dared to sketch a portrait of Hassan Nasrallah (37); a party of young Christians mobilized to ban the Turkish movie *Fetih 1453*, saying that it falsified the historical reality (38) and finally, the works of the Maronite monk Joseph Azzi on the Qur’an and the origins of Islam were removed from all bookshops and libraries in Lebanon (39). Journalists, academics, artists and politicians have mobilized in vain against this preventive official censorship (40).

In the authoritarian Tunisian regime of Ben Ali, it was easier to talk about the Muslim religion (41) than about the Head of State himself or his family (42). The founder of the Republic, Habib Bourguiba, had taken control of the referential religious institution, the Zitouna University, and had adopted a position against the traditional Islamic teaching: in the middle of a day during the month of Ramadan, he drank orange juice in front of television cameras to explain that the priority effort of the Tunisians should be to aim at development, to the exclusion of any other consideration; another time, he also questioned the literal reading of Qur’anic verses like the one referring to the transformation of “Moses’ stick” into a snake. By means of a *fatwa*, Sheikh Ibn Bâz accused the Tunisian President of obvious godlessness, liable to the death penalty, and the Saudi mufti obtained the support of Indian Ulemas to do so (43). The sentence was not enforced and, until 2010, the Tunisian University was one lone case in the Arab world where it was possible not to submit to standards and methods of religious circles. During a symposium entitled “Science and Religion in the University”, Afif Bouni launched a stirring plea in favour of the spirit of Voltaire and ridiculed the references to Aïsha who became for the Sunnites like “a substitute to the prophetic word [] outside the frame of inspiration” (44). Bouni wanted to demonstrate the incoherence of referring to the testimony of a woman, a minor at the time of the facts, and at the same time, having a juridical rule stating that the testimony of a woman was worth half of that of a man. The lecture hall of the Zitouna was shaken up with demonstrations of indignation and threats (45). The topic is quite sensitive. An international crisis burst out when a Kuwaiti Shiite Sheikh uttered insults against Aïsha to such an extent that the Iranian Supreme Leader enacted a *fatwa* in favour of the respect due to all members of Muhammad’s family; and this gesture was welcomed on the Sunni side by the Grand Sheikh d’Al-Azhar (46).

The Bourguiba heritage has been under discussion since Spring 2011. The main split in the political, academic and cultural circles has increased between the upholders of religious references in public space, showing clearly the attachment to the *thawâbit* (unchanging data), and the upholders of a separation preventing those who claim to adhere to the religious authority to decide as a last resort. The European media have focused on a few events: the showing of *Persepolis*, a movie in which Marjane Satrapi represented God who, in the cartoon shown in Tunis, spoke in Arabic dialect; the showing of a movie called *Secularity Inch Allah*, in which Nadia al-Fani claimed the right of eating and drinking publicly during Ramadan (47) and the “Spring of Arts” exhibition in La Marsa, which caused a great mobilization and death threats against several personalities. During the same period of time the following episodes, which were less focussed on in the media, occurred: a death threat against the academic Iqbal Gharbi, who was called an

“apostate” by Adel al-Ilmi, seller of fruit and vegetables, retrained for the fight towards promotion of good and the chasing of evil (48), supported by Ennahda to think about the place of religion in public space (reorganizing Zitouna; religious training of the police (49); a demand for legalizing polygamy (50); a murder attempt against Jalel Brik in Paris (51) and prison sentences for seven and a half years for two young Tunisians who had pasted on their Facebook page cartoons of Muhammad: one of them was put in prison, the other is the first Tunisian to obtain in France the status of political refugee since 2011 (52). Following the Egyptian example (53), the Ennahda party tried to register an Article criminalising blasphemy within the text of the Constitution; they were not able to obtain a majority inside the commission about an explicit mention, but they intend to lean on the reference to *thawâbit* and Article 136 which makes “Islam” the “state religion” (54). This last point in particular was rejected by the opposition (55).

2- Enculturation and freedom of speech: a Europe without walls

As a state, France did not act differently from its British neighbour in the “Rushdie” affair and, during Spring 1995, their involvement in the “critical dialogue” leading the European Union to put pressure on Iran in order to obtain guarantees for the novelist’s safety failed (56). In 1993, however, Jack Lang tried to promote a video-tape about the writer’s works, available in all libraries (57), and he received him in front of many intellectuals and journalists. The same year, a collective work was published in French, *For Rushdie*, prepared by a hundred Arab and Muslim writers (58): in reference to the founding principles of the Universal Declaration for Human Rights, they defended the freedom to write and invited Muslims in particular and believers in general to accept criticism, including satire, of the referential scriptures considered as “revealed”. Some were the subject of hard criticism in the mode of “self-hatred”. In this context, the concept of “Islamophobia” was developed; its ambiguity makes it mean both an attack against people (thus moving it closer to the meaning of racism or xenophobia), and a criticism against a way of believing (which can identify it with a criticism against a type of thinking or expression, even to only-academic research.) As a matter of fact, the academic circles have had and continue to have difficulties in staying away from major winds (59).

This framework allows for a better understanding of the hesitation and the perceptible divisions in the liberal democracies of the years between 1980 and 2010. The political authorities have proved anxious to defend the security and economic interests of the states, in particular in front of the emergent powers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference/Cooperation (OIC): Turkey, Iran and the petro-monarchies (60). Candidates have cultivated electorates who showed here and there the possibility of making a coherent community vote. The publishing and press circles were divided between firm principle positions on freedom of expression, the opportunity for lucrative printing and the concern for their employees’ security: therefore, in 2006, no major organ of the British press reproduced the twelve Danish cartoons of Muhammad, unlike daily and periodical papers on the European continent. The cultural circle (61), academics specialized in Islam and Muslims, were themselves divided: Annemarie Schimmel, international specialist in the Qur’anic text referred to “those mature men who cried when learning what was written in *The Satanic Verses*”, before retracting, to denounce “unconditionally the *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie” (62). As for the religious authorities, they unanimously appealed to the “respect” for “religions” and “beliefs”, differing from one another only in their ways to distance themselves from the appeals for violence (63).

In 1989, the Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovitz put in the balance the novel and the universal appeal to murder: “Both Mr Rushdie and the Ayatollah have abused freedom of speech: the one by provocatively offending the genuine faith of many millions of devout believers, and the other by a public call to murder” (64). Two years later, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rev. George Carey, asserted that *The Satanic Verses* contained “an outrageous slur on the Prophet (Mohammed) and so was damaging to the reputation of the faith” (65). Only a minority distanced itself by explaining that “God” was far too high to be touched by a few strokes of the pen. The reactions were similar in 2006 (66), at least until the consequences of the Ratisbonne speech pronounced by Benedict XVI that same year (67).

Without even taking into account those who have never either read or seen the offending texts or pictures, it’s important to give an idea of the amount of disagreements about the way of viewing the past. The parts thought the most questionable in Rushdie’s novel were inspired by tales from an internally contested Muslim tradition (68). For his accusers, the problem was not so much the episode in itself as the attack against a sacred domain. In order to illustrate the development of the prohibition over that area, we may compare two controversies in the first half of the 20th century. In 1913, the Egyptian Mansûr Fahmi defended his thesis *Women in Islam*. In it, one can read the following extract among others: “Although he was the lawyer who had to submit to what he wanted to apply to others, Muhammad had his own foibles and granted himself some privileges [...]. He who had to be a man like all others didn’t renounce those privileges of the prophets, which helped him to justify his human acts: for instance, he said he had eaten celestial food that the archangel Gabriel had presented him and then had later felt an exaggerated lust and love towards women. (69)” Fahmy was severely criticized by his co-religionists but that didn’t prevent him from becoming the Dean of the Faculty of Arts at Cairo University, Director of the National Library and Secretary of the Arabic Language Academy (70). Ten years later the young writer Taha Husayn, who had been taught in Egypt at the Al-Azar University and at Cairo University, then in France at Montpellier University and at the Sorbonne, published *Fî al-shi’r al-Jâhili* (1926). In that essay, he deconstructed the creative structure of pre-Islamic poetry through the work of the copyists and using the same method, he explained that it was possible to question the historical existence of Abraham/Ibrahim (71). This work created a scandal (72); its author had to flee to France for a year but later he became the Minister of Public Instruction as well as the most famous Egyptian novelist (73).

The speech of Taha Husayn for “The Future of Culture in Egypt” was however the target of strong attacks from Hassan al-Bannâ, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, who called it a falsification of history and a social misconduct involving “a prejudice against Arabic language and Islam (74).” In these lines, we may find the source of one of the main arguments of the opponents to authors considered as conscious or unconscious agents of the West. Coming from the heart of Islam, most of them are indeed polyglots and an important number of them have studied in Europe or Northern America. They have adopted methods born in the north of Europe in the field of human and social sciences. But their referents are not merely (75) or not at all (76) Greek philosophers from Antiquity or Europeans from the so-called Enlightenment period. Among the famous people from the past who come first in their pantheon, we find Abu al-‘Alâ’ al-Ma’arri (973-1027) and Umar Khayyam (v.1048-1131). The first one, who poet Taha Husayn

admired and shared the blindness of, was a sceptical mind who said that Muslims, Christians, Jews and Manicheans were all wrong. He also wrote: "It's a true fact that the language of man never tells anything of his religious beliefs because the world is naturally prone to lies and hypocrisy (77)." The second, an Epicurian Persian poet, is mainly known for having mocked in his verses a muezzin/imam calling for prayer and expressed his doubts thus: "Everybody knows that I've never mumbled any prayer. Everybody knows as well that I've never tried to hide my faults. I don't know whether there is a Justice and divine Mercy. However I am confident because I have always been true (78)."

3- About the relativity of "blasphemy" and the difficulty of defining "religion"

In 2006, after six weeks of demonstrations which produced dozens of casualties, mostly in Muslim societies, the Turk Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Secretary of OIC, wished to have the United Nations adopt a legislation forbidding all attacks on religion (79). The main debate took place in the context of the difficult birth of the Council of Human Rights, aimed at replacing the eponymous Geneva Commission. Pakistan's ambassador to the U.N., Munir Akram, tabled an amendment stating that "the slandering of religions and their prophets was not compatible with the right to free expression" (80). The taking into account of OIC demands was presented as "a red line in the negotiation aiming at founding the new council." However, after studying the text, European and Northern American states thought that such a proposal was not acceptable (81). According to them, that amendment brought about 3 main difficulties:

1. What is a "religion"?
2. What can be done when believers of one religion think that their creed is being attacked by those of another religion?
3. What are the universal criteria allowing a limit to freedom of expression in a world where immediate circulation is possible?

The intellectual Gamâl al'Bannâ defended the freedom of conscience up to the possibility not to believe but he limited it by taking up an inherited idea to set apart "heavenly religions" from those he considered as mere human developments: "In America any charlatan or madman will find followers by basing his message on murder or suicide. Multiplicity leads to an infinite splitting up in lay society whereas the number of religions in spite of their divisions is limited: in the whole world there are no more than five religions. (82)" This is evident in a minor way in the polemic between Salman Rushdie and John Le Carré as seen in November 1997 in *The Guardian*. The author of *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* famous for his spy novels, stood up against an accusation by Rushdie of having: "pompously, joined forces with his assailants" (83). He opposed the relativity of "free speech" according to time and place and forbade the possibility of having a "less arrogant, less colonialist [...] note" by asking for a distinction between religions: "I never joined his assailants. Nor did I take the easy path of proclaiming Rushdie to be a shining innocent. My position was that there is no law in life or nature that says that great religions may be insulted with impunity. (84)" Both writers have buried the hatchet 15 years later but the meaning of the word "great" for "religions" is still unresolved. The specialists of religion in the human and social sciences are facing this problem, just like the lawyers: where does religion begin and end?

That question is not merely theoretical. For instance, the very existence of Ahmadi people is equated with blasphemy for the Muslims who deny their right to claim they are part of the Islamic world and who persecute them (85). The question of heresy which no longer mobilises the Jews (rabbinic vs Karaites) any more or a fringe of Christians (Catholics vs Protestants (87)) either, regularly comes up in the Muslim world. Sheikh Youssef al-Qaradhâwî, President of the World Union of Ulemas, of the European Council of Fatwa, first preacher on the Tahrir Square after the downfall of Mubarak, and a scholar welcomed with honours by the Ennahda party in Tunisia (88) is well-known among specialists for a *fatwa* against renegades and for homophobic and anti-Semitic remarks, for criticizing the law against conspicuous religious symbols in French schools and for condemning the caricatures of Muhammad. In May 2013, he preached about the Ibn Taymiyya's *fatwa* calling the Alaouites "miscreants worse than Jews and Christians" and so justifying the calling up of Muslims against them (89) around the world. The religious side of conflicts in the Arabic world has not stopped growing since the beginning of the millennium. It shows in hard as well as in soft power. The same Sheikh Qaradhâwî is a technical consultant in a film on the life of Muhammad which has been a project since the year 2009 (90). This project was reactivated after the crisis of Autumn 2012 brought about by the showing of *Innocence of Muslims* as well as by the announcement of the making of a biopic by Shiite Iranians.

The contradictory notions of what is sacred and of what can threaten it vary among denominations just as between themselves. In the article quoted in my introduction, Voltaire wrote about this: "Among ourselves, it is sad to see that what is thought to be a blasphemy in Rome, in Notre Dame de la Salette, in the enclosure of the canons of San-Gennaro, is an act of faith in London, Berlin, Copenhagen, Bern, Bâle, Hamburg. It is even sadder that in the same country, the same town, the same street, people should call each other a blasphemer. What am I saying? Among the ten thousand Jews who are in Rome, there isn't one who doesn't consider the Pope as the chief blasphemer; and in the reverse, the one hundred thousand Christians who live in Rome instead of the two millions Jovians who filled it in Trajan's time firmly believe that the Jews gather on Saturdays in the synagogue in order to blaspheme (91)." Israel, which never chose between religious and liberal references, is facing that issue. In January 2012, at the time of the forty-seventh anniversary of the establishment of Fatah, Mohamed Hussein, the Mufti of Jerusalem, invited people to get the Jews hiding behind the trees. That speech upset people so much that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had an inquest opened. It was cut short as the Mufti explained that he had only been quoting a "saying" believed to be from Muhammad about the ultimate fight between Jews and Muslims and he said that he could not be condemned for it.

In a democratic system, the infrastructure of society and the weight of the lobbies are part of the shaping of the borders between what is allowed and what is prohibited. Just after the election of Tony Blair, even though the threat of an attack was still hanging over Salman Rushdie, Minister Jack Straw contemplated extending the law on blasphemy to religions other than Anglicanism, something which the Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie had already asked in 1989 (92): several votes, all of them negative by a short majority, took place in the House of Commons, the last one taking place right at the time of the Caricatures affair. In Ireland the condemnation of blasphemy was legalized for every religion in 2009 (93). In France, it's in the name of an inheritance

that the law of 1905 did not get extended to Alsace and Moselle as this had brought about a strong Catholic and Jewish response in the years 1924-25. Eighty years later, two representatives suggested restricting the law on the freedom of the press in order to overcome the vacuum in the law about blasphemy in the secular republic (94). No one followed suit but in the name of respect for religions, Moroccan artist Mounir Fatmi had to take away two of his works, the first one about Qur'anic verses and the second presenting the face of Salman Rushdie, even though he had left Morocco in order to enjoy more freedom: "The countries which censor must question themselves. As for myself I wonder a lot about many questions especially about France. [...] Once it's censored, the work is no longer mine. [...] It's as if I was cutting my tongue (95)."

Exploring the question of blasphemy and freedom over a quarter of century allows three different perspectives:

1- The people in favour of some restraint in criticizing religions or else of a forbidding of blasphemy were quite numerous in Europe: intellectuals, researchers or religious people defending a cultural freedom and denouncing the various kinds of aggression (through words or pictures) which bore the print of a neo-colonialism which undermined Arab-Muslim identity or else that of an atheism undermining religious values. On the contrary, the supporters of a universal dimension of freedom have been active while putting aside all religious arguments in spite of the fact that their own freedom or their security were at stake in Arabic states which follow Islam. This is consistent with the conclusions of a collective study of the so-called "caricatures" affair which had previously shown that no dividing line of civilisation between the East and the West existed in spite of the attempts aiming at strengthening that partly true, albeit too rigid, representation (96).

2- The ban placed on religious places regarded as sacred (97) comes from officials operating at full strength. In 2012, al-Azhar published a text defending freedom of speech, research and creation while setting limits to them (98). Historical and philological research is not available today in most Arabic states as regards Arabic language (99), Qur'anic texts, the prophet of Islam, his family, his "Companions" and his "Successors". The *'ulum al-din* ("religious sciences") are taught in specific colleges with no meaningful links with human and social sciences or literary studies. This fact has consequences over the knowledge transmitted in primary and secondary education and can partly explain the reactions of denial that we believe to be coming from cultural differences or from unchanging power struggles.

3- The principles established in Europe by Erasmus, Spinoza, Hobbes, Bayle, Locke, Rousseau or Kant have never ceased to be questioned up to now. Benjamin Constant distinguished two types of freedom: the number of "open doors" and the "responsibility", his main worry being to avoid substituting a kind of lay intolerance for the religious intolerance which was being fought in the name of the State (100). Among the famous people who have enlarged the study of that question and thus felt the weight of the forbidden freedom of speech, we find Vaclav Havel (101) who publicly supported Salman Rushdie. In front of OIC, after hesitating for a while, European Heads of States have

developed guidelines reminiscent of the 18th and 19th articles of the UDHR, which denounce “the calling for hatred”, ignore all reference to “blasphemy” or to “attacks on religions”, in order to defend all together freedom of speech and respect of *believers* but not respect of *beliefs* as such (102).

Notes

1- PLATO, *The Republic*, Paris, Garnier-Flammarion, 1966, III, read pp. 144-164.

2- To get a recent view of that event, according to one of the most senior officials of the Catholic Church, read Angelo SCOLA, *Non dimentchiamoci di Dio. Libertà di fedi, di culture e politica*, Milan, Rizzoli, 2013, pp. 21-32.

3- Marcel GAUCHET, *Religion in Democracy. The way to secularity*, Paris, Gallimard “Folio-Essais”, 1998, pp. 23-26.

4- Jean-Robert ARMOGATHE, Pascal MONTAUBIN, Michel-Yves PERRIN (dir.), *A General History of Christianity, T.1 From the origins to the XVth century*, Paris, P.U.F, “Quadrige”, 2010, pp. 184-192.

5- Yadh BEN ACHOUR, *Politics, religion and law in the Arab world*, Tunis, Cérés Productions / Cerp, “Enjeux”, 1992, pp. 60-68. We may note moreover the fact that Sura 26 *Al-Shu’arâ’* (“The Poets”) gave rise to many interpretations.

6- VOLTAIRE, “Blasphemy”, *Dictionnaire philosophique*, Paris, Imprimerie Nationale, 1994.

7- VOLTAIRE, *Fanaticism or Prophet Muhammad*, Paris, Arabian Nights, 2006. The ideological framework is set up as early as the first scene in the first act (p.9 ff).

8- The case of Spain is significant because it carries an ambiguity: Article 524 from the penal code makes provision for a fine for anyone who is found guilty of “profanation” or offense to “religious feelings”, Article 525 contains the phrase “feelings of the members from a religious group” and it aims as well at “those who make fun of people with no religion or conviction”. Several affairs (1981, 1988, 1993, 2004) took place during the period studied here but -as far as we know- the only one which brought about an effective sanction was that of 1981.

9- The word “blasphemy” has meanings which may vary according to the time, the place and the language, and narrowly depends on the existence of a jurisdiction which may call it so, cf. Alain CABANTOUS, *Histoire du blasphème en Occident*, Paris, Albin Michel, “Evolution of Humanity”, 1998, p. 14. Read also, Albrecht BURKHARDT, “The Sacred and its Reverses in Modern Europe”, *Modern and Contemporary History Review*, 2005/2, no. 52-2, pp. 196-205.

10- The case of England and the different one of Ireland will be commented upon later. In his well-documented article, Guy Haarscher talks about survivals of a time when the State and the Church had “incestuous” relationships (Guy HAARSCHER, “Freedom of speech, blasphemy and racism: an attempt at philosophical compared analysis”, working papers of Perelman Centre for the Philosophy of Law, Université Libre de Bruxelles, <http://www.philodroit.be>, no. 2007/1, p.51). It shows, the same conclusion we’ll get at, that transforming the “blasphemy” category into that of “the language of human rights” brings about a possible defence of “people’s rights” but not that of rights allowed to “beliefs”.

11- *izdira'* ("blasphemy") comes from the verbal root *zara'* which means to "reproach someone", "run him down", "slander him in order to bring discredit upon him" and (according to a possibly later meaning) "accuse someone of a bad action and make someone suspect in the eyes of others". There is only one Qur'anic example (*Hûd* surate, XI, 31 "[...] and I don't tell the people your eyes despise either that God will not favour them [...]"). The other word used without Qur'anic occurrence is that of *tajdif*, the root of which is the same as that of the Hebrew word.

12- Blasphemy is punished according to Article 167 of the 1979 Constitution. When someone is accused of *mofsede felarz*, this may include blasphemy. Blasphemy can also be punished according to the same articles by saying that the accused has "insulted Islam". But blasphemy may also be punished through the Islamic law code, for instance with Article 513, or else it may be linked to the crime of "false accusation". In that case, blasphemy is a sub-category of slandering.

13- Between 1851 and 1947, seven cases of incidents linked to the matter of blasphemy were found attached to Articles 295, 296 and 298 of the 1860 law code, increased by IPC295A in 1927. These articles were modified under the dictatorship of General Zia ul-Haq (1977-1988): eighty cases were registered during that time, then nearly 250 cases between 1987 and 2012 (Mohammad Nafees, "Blasphemy Laws in Pakistan. A Historical Overview", Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), Islamabad, 2012, p.79 .

14- Melissa CROUCH, "The Indonesian Blasphemy Case: Affirming the Legality of the Blasphemy Law", *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion*, 28/07: 2012, pp. 1-5. A law on blasphemy was adopted in 1965, but it's since 1998 that its application concerned a significant number of cases -over 120- without counting all the ones which were not part of a criminal procedure.

15- Cf. the appeal launched by the Hefajat-e-Islam group, at the beginning of May 2013, and the way it was repressed by the police ("Bangladesh: Islamist demonstration for a law about blasphemy", www.lemonde.fr, 05 /05/2013).

16- Tony HARRISON, *The Blasphemer's Banquet*, 1989. A poem-film produced by the BBC (cf. <http://explore.bfi.org.uk/4ce2b79d736e4>).

17- Salman RUSHDIE, *Joseph Anton. Une autobiographie*, Paris, Plon, "Feux Croisés", 2012, p. 209.

18- "Turkish pianist Fazil Say condemned for blasphemy towards Islam", www.france24.com, 15/04/2013.

19- It is Article 216 of the Turkish law code adopted in 2004, two years after the first electoral victory of the AKP (Priscille LAFITTE , "Turkish pianist Fazil Say is judged for blasphemy", www.france24.com, 18/10/2012).

20- Priscille LAFITTE, "A Turkish law court invalidates the condemnation for blasphemy of Turkish pianist Fazil Say", www.france24.com, 26/04/2013 .

21- Article 98 of the Egyptian law code aims at any person having "used religion in order to promote or defend extremist ideologies, expressing him/herself by speech, writings or any other ways, to bring about riots, to insult or slander revealed religions or attacking national unity or social harmony". For a general introduction, read Sami A. ADEEB ABU-

SAHLIEH, *Introduction to Muslim Law, Foundations, Sources and Principles*, Muslim and Arabic Law Center, 2012 (2nd edition), p.470 .

22- This article has also been used as prosecution in a trial against fifty homosexuals in Summer 2002.

23- From 1996 was added to this, the lawful recognition of the request in *hisba* which aims at “order the good and fight the evil” (cf. Nathalie Bernard-Maugiron, “National law and reference to Sharia in Egypt”, in Baudouin Dupret (dir.), *Sharia today. Uses of the reference to Islamic law*, Paris, La Découverte, “Recherches”, 2012, p.101.

24- The most often quoted other people are: Bîshûwî Kamil, Bisma Rab’ia, Yussif Zaydân, Nabil Rizq et Minâ Nâdi, Nifîn Nâdi Jâd, ‘Amr salim, Ibrâhîm ‘Issa, Lamis al-Hadîdî, Minâ Al-Brins, Damiânâ‘Abid‘Abd-al-Nûr.

25- “A TV star being got at by justice for “insulting Islam“, www.france24.com, 30/03/2013.

26- “Egyptian author sentenced to five years for insulting religion“, www.aswatmasriyya.com, 13/06/2013.

27- Christophe AYAD, “In Egypt, uncertain future for Alber Saber Ayad, a young Copt accused of blasphemy“ www.lemonde.fr, 21/12/2012.

28- “*Irhâb*. Idzira‘al‘Adiyyân“, *Al-Akhabâr*, 12/06/2013.

29- It is about Sheikh Ahmad Mahmûd Karîma, a *sharia* teacher at the al‘Azhar University: “Kitâb yadrusu-hu tulâb al-Azhar: ‘uqûba târaka al-salât... qatlu-hu thuma aqluhu dûna taha“, *Al-Sabâh*, 15/01/2013.

30- AFP, “Egyptian artistic circles denounce a rampant Islamisation“, *L’Orient-Le jour*, 01/06/2013. Abdeljalil CHERNOUBI, “Egyptian artists head into the wind against culture Islamisation.“ www.france24.com, 12/06/2013. Emad Al-Mahdi “Culture and Egyptian Revolution“, *Al-Ahram hebdo*, 12/06/2012 .

31- An extract from the 1949 law: “every breach of the accepted standards of good behaviour, of national safety, civil peace, the image of a friendly State...”

32- Massoud Rania, “A virtual museum for Lebanese censorship“, *L’Orient-Le Jour*, 05/09/2012.

33- Yasmina KHADRA, *The Murder attempt*, Paris, Julliard, 2005, p.268 (Booksellers Prize, 2006). In 2013, Yasmina Khadra had to cancel his participation in a book fair in Tunis and to his signing at La Marsa because of the cancelling of the film *What the day owes the night* in Tunisian cinemas. (<http://www.tuniscopie.com/index.php/article:18029/cultu/art/yasminakhadra-083710#.Ub9KS nKF4A>).

34- OLI/AFP, “The murder attempt by Ziad Doueiri gets the Golden star of Marrakech Festival“, *L’Orient-le jour*. 09/12/2012. OLI/AFP, “After Beyrouth, the Arabic league wants to forbid ‘The murder attempt’ by Ziad Doueiri“, *L’Orient-le Jour*, 10/05/2013.

35- Rita SASSINE, “The film ‘My last Valentine in Beirut’ withdrawn from two cinemas“, *L’Orient-Le Jour*, 30/11/2012.

36- “The sale of the novel ‘The Da Vinci Code’ is prohibited in Lebanon“. 16/09/2004, www.le-liban.com.

- 37- An account from the caricaturist Stavro, who drew the cover for our book: *Caricature at risk from religious and political authorities*, Rennes, PUR, 2010.
- 38- Rita SASSINE, "In Lebanon Christian magazines call for a Turkish film to be censored". *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 09/10/2012.
- 39- Joseph AZZI, *The Priest and the Prophet*. To the sources of Qur'an, Maisonneuve & Larose, 2001, p.303. This book, edited for the first time in Arabic in 1979 was re-edited 14 times until 2001.
- 40- Sandra NOUJEIM, "'Mamnou3', lebanese web-dynamite against every form of censorship" and "Debate by March on censorship: people fighting for freedom confound the censor", *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 01/07/2012 and 02/08/2012. Read also: www.mamnou3.com and www.skeyesmedia.org.
- 41- There are limits however. It was in Paris and with his own money that Tunisian Mondher SFAR published *The Qur'an, the Bible and the Ancient East*, 1998, p.447. There, the author questions the traditional reading of the "nightly journey" (p. 239 ff.) and turns Allah into a "poliad divinity" from Mecca to whom it's forbidden to link only with "unauthorised deities" (p.109).
- 42- Nicolas Beau and Catherine GRACIET, *The Regent of Carthage. Hold up on Tunisia*, Paris, La Découverte, "Cahiers Libres", 2009, p.180 .
- 43- Hamadi REDISSI, *The Nadj Pact or the way sectarian Islam became Islam*, Paris, Seuil, "La couleur des idées", 2007, pp. 217-232. Habib Bourguiba also took away the veil of a woman in public.
- 44- Jacqueline CHABBI, *The Lord of the Tribes*, Paris, Noësis, 1997, p.349.
- 45- 'Affif AL-BUNI (Tunis University) "Lil-'ulûm manâhî wa natâhîj tudiras wa tudarras wa lil-adiyyân 'aqâ'id wa ahkâm wa tuqûs tuhfazu wa tulqun", French-Arabic bilingual symposium (non-published acts) "Teaching Religious Sciences in the Universities", Zitouna University, 23-25 February 2010, ISESCO/IRMC.
- 46- "Risâla shayk al-Azhar hawla fatwa al-Khâmina'i ", *Al-Nahâr*, 02/10/2010. In 2008, the U.S house Random House refused to publish Sherry JONES's novel, *The Jewel of Medina*, for fear of some reactions (*Liberation*, 18th August 2008). In March 2013, Egyptian actress Ragdha was prosecuted because of a so-called insulting poem: "balâgh lil-nâ'ib al-âm yatamu al-fanâna' zaghda'bi-izdirz' al-islâm wa ihâna al-sayidat' A'isha", www.newelfagr.org, 30/03/2013.
- 47- The original title of the film was *Neither Allah, nor master*; it had to be changed. Several demonstrations took place when those films were shown and during the first trial of Nabil Keroui, the head of Nessma TV ("Tunisia - Those Salafists who attack intellectuals" (along with the video of the attack online), 24/01/2012, <http://www.slateafrique.com/81563/tunisie-agression-journalistes-proces-salafiste>).
- 48- "Adel al-'ilmi,mu'assas'jama'iyya al-wassatiyya lil-tawa 'iyya wa al-islah', haza ra'î fi lqbâl al-Gharbî wa fikri-ha", <http://www.assabah.com.tn/article-65020.html>. "Ikbal Gharbi: 'What's wrong with me is my vision of a progressive equilateral Islam' ", words taken down by Samia Dami, <http://www.lapresse.tn/24122011/42520/montort-c'est-ma>

[vision-dun-islam-progressiste-etegalitaire.html](#), 24/12/2011. To understand the context, Dominique AVON and Youssef ASCHI, “Ennahda 2012. First year of the shared power in Tunisia”, [www.religion.info](#), “Etudes et analyses”, no. 26, May 2012.

49- AFP dispatch, “Al-dâkhiliyya al-tûnisiyya tudarrij mâdda <al-tathqif al-dîni> dimna muqararât al-ta’lim fi madâris al-Amin”, [www.france24.com](#), 19.01.2013.

50- A.B.A, “Adel Almi to the Constituent Assembly in order to support the virtues of polygamy”, 04.10.2012, <http://directinfo.webmanagercenter.com/2012/10/04/tunisie-societe-constitution-religion-adel-almi-a-la-constituante-pour-defendre-les-vertus-de-le-polygamie/>.

51- Dominique AVON et Youssef ASCHI, “Tunisia: which results two years after the revolution?”, [www.raison-publique.fr/article594.html](#), 18/02/2013.

52- “A Tunisian condemned for Muhammad caricatures gets asylum in France”, [www.lemonde.fr](#), 12/06/2013. Ghazi Beji flew to Greece before the trial, he arrived in France in June 2013. Jabbeur Mejri, whose sentence was confirmed on appeal, asked for a presidential pardon.

53- In the Egyptian Constitution adopted by referendum in December 2012, freedom of speech is guaranteed but “the State protects morals, good standards of behaviour and public order” (Article 11), “insults against individuals” (art.31) as well as “against prophets” (art.44) are forbidden and *shari’a* must be respected (art.81). The whole of the text has been published in the daily *Al-Ahrâm*, 01/12/2012.

54- “Masterful comments on the project of the Tunisian constitution by Professor Yadh Ben Achour”, [www.tunisiefocus.com](#), 25/04/2013. A translation of the Arabic daily *Al-Maghrib*, 26/03/2013.

55- Nadia CHAABANE, “Draft 3 of the constitution after going through the 404 committee”, [www.businessnews.com](#), 07/05/2012.

56- Xavier de VILLEPIN, “A common foreign policy for the European Union”, information report no. 394 (1995-1996) from 30/05/1996, online on the Senate site: [www.senat.fr](#).

57- “Rushdie, the forbidden one: guest Jack Lang (ministry of culture and education)”, an extract from the TV news *Soir 3*, 11/02/1993, online on the site [www.ina.fr](#).

58- *For Rushdie. One hundred Arabic and Muslim intellectuals for freedom of expression* Paris, La Découverte/Carrefour des littératures/Colibri, 1993, p.306. Among the best-known contributors: Adonis, Arkoum, Belamri, Benslama, Ben Chamsi, Djébar, Ghassim, Habibi, Harbi, Hatmal, Sonallah Ibrahim, Salim Jay, Khoury, Meddeb, Naïr.

59- Philippe BÜTTGEN, Alain de LIBERA, Marwan RASHED, Irene ROSIER-CATACH (dir.), *The Greeks, the Arabs and Us. Enquiry on learned Islamophobia*, Paris, Fayard 2009.

60- Blandine CHELINI-PONT, “The mobilization of the organizing of the World Islamic Conference against the slandering of Islam (1999-2009) and its consequences in Europe”, in Nassim AMROUCHE (dir.), *Censorships: violences of meaning*, Publishings of the Université de Provence, 2011, pp.41-59.

61- As an example, Richard WEBSTER’s essay, (acclaimed by John Le Carré and Rowan Williams among others) which sees in the Rushdie affair, the fight of two kinds of

fundamentalism: *A Brief History of Blasphemy. Liberalism, Censorship and "The Satanic Verses"*, The Orwell Press, 1990, p.152.

62- Gabi KRATOCHWIL, "Annemarie Schimmel, much debated lauréate of the German editors and booksellers' Prize for Peace", *REMMM*, no.83-84, 1997, p.207.

63- *The Osservatore Romano* expressed "its solidarity towards those who felt hurt in their dignity of believers" considering that the novel is not " a properly speaking blasphemy, [but], constitutes a gratuitous twisting", however "the sacred character of religious conscience cannot overcome the sacred character of anyone's life" (quoted in Theodoros Koutroubas, *Political and diplomatic action of the Holy See in the Middle East from 1978 to 1992*, PhD in Political sciences, UCL, Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2005, note 1013, p. 357.

64- Letter addressed to *The Times*, reproduced in Jeffrey M. COHEN, *Dear Chief Rabbi. From the Correspondence of Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jacobovits on Matters of Jewish Law, Ethics and Contemporary Issues 1980-1990*, Library of Congress Cataloguing-in-publication data, 1995, p.42. The Chief Rabbi of Great Britain explained that he was not in favour of an extension of the law against blasphemy, but that Penguin Publishing Firm should not have published that book.

65- "Carey: Rushdie book 'outrageous'", *The Gainesville Sun*, 28/12/1991.

66- Michel KUBLER, Dieu au-delà de nos caricatures, *La Croix*, 02/02/2006.

67- "Benoît XVI underlines the vital necessity of the dialogue between Islam and Christianity", www.lemonde.fr, 27/09/2006. The reaction of a Muslim official at the Ratisbonne conference was studied by Maurice Boormans in *Having a dialogue with Muslims. A lost cause or a cause to win?*, Paris, Téqui, "Disputed questions", 2011, pp. 229-268.

68- The reference to the so-called "Satanic" verses, linked to the 19 to 23 verses from the sura LIII *al- Najm* ["The Star"], is explicit in the tale of the life of Muhammad as proposed by Tabarî. But some ulemas consider that the "fact" does not come under a strong chain of transmission. For an analysis made in the first years of the dispute, cf. Mohammed Chehhar "The 'Satanic verses'. A fable, a link between the East and the West", *Social sciences of eastern France Review*, 1994, pp. 51-56.

69- Mansour FAHMY, *The Status of Women in Islam*, Paris, Allia, 2002, p.28. A thesis first published in 1913 at the Felix Alcan bookshop, under the title: *The status of women in the tradition and evolution of Islamism*.

70- "The death of Mansour Fahmi", *MIDE*, no.5, 1958, pp. 453-455.

71- Letter from Massignon to Anawati, July 13th 1952, Archives IDEO, "Massignon-Anawati correspondance".

72- Luc-Willy DEHEUVELS, "Tâhâ Husayn and the days book: autobiographic process and narrative structure", *REMMM*, April 2002, no.95-98, pp. 269-296 and, in the same number dedicated to the "Intellectual debates in the Middle-East between the two world wars", (under the direction of Catherine Mayeur-Jaouen and Anne-Laure Dupont), Luc Barbulesco, "The Hellenic itinerary of Tâhâ Husayn", pp. 297-305.

73- Dominique AVON and Amin ELIAS, "National identity as overcoming sectarianism: Egypt according to Tâhâ Husayn", in Dominique AVON and Jutta LANGENBACHER-LIEBGOTT, *Identity factors, Factoren der Identität*, Berne, Peter Lang, "Citizen dynamics in Europe", 2002, pp. 263-283.

74- Hassan AL-BANNA, "Misr'arabiyya... fa al-yattaqi Allâh al-mufarriqûn lial-kalima", quoted on ikhwanwiki.com, consultation on 29/10/2010.

75- Tâhâ HUSAYN, *Qâdat al-fikr*, Cairo, Idârat al-Hilâl fi Misr, 1925, p. 22.

76- It's the case of the Iraqi 'Abd al Wahhâb al-Bayyâtî cf. Heidi TAELE and Katia ZHAKARIA, *Discovering Arabic literature from VIth century to nowadays*, Paris, Flammarion, "Champs", 2005, pp. 261-263.

77- Abû-l-Alâ 'AL-MA'ARRI, *The Epistle of Forgiveness* (translation, introduction and footnotes by Vincent-Mansour Monteil, foreword by Etiemble), Paris, Gallimard, "Knowledge of the East", 1984, p.103. Read as well: Dominique Urvoy, *Free Thinkers in classical islam*, Paris, Flammarion, "Champs", 1996, pp. 163-176. A statue of the poet was beheaded by members of Jahbat-al-Nosra, in the north of Syria in February 2013.

78- Umar KHAYAM, *Robaiyat* (translated from Persian by Franz Toussaint, 1924), a poem put online on the site www.marocagreg.com, 22/05/2012. NB. The authenticity of the verses attributed to Umar Khayam may be questioned. The debates are marked by the ideological intentions of the different protagonists. Other people such as Ibn Rawandi (10th century) have remained famous.

79- Mouna NAÏM and Françoise CHIPAUX, "From Gaza to Islamabad, day of prayers, day of wrath", *Le Monde*, 5-6 February 2006.

80- Since 1999, The Islamic Conference Organisation, (which has since become the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation) introduced in New York and Geneva the concept of "defamation of religions" which it equates with a kind of racism. Since 2005, African support of this OIC to the council of human rights have begun faltering. The joining of the U.S.A. in 2009 brought about two years later Resolution 1613 (supported by the European Union) and at the same time Resolution 1618 (which ignores the "defamation of religions" but denounces the calls for "hatred"). This diplomatic tension is renewed every year at voting times in Geneva and New York.

81- Philippe BOLOPION, "57 Muslim countries want the UNO to adopt a text condemning 'the defamation of prophets'", *Le Monde*, 18/02/2006.

82- Gamâl AL-BANNA, *Al-Islâm, wa al-huriyya wa al-'almaniyya*, a text translated and presented by Dominique Avon and Amin Elias (in collaboration with Abdellatif Idrissi), *Islam, freedom, secularity*, Paris, L'Harmattan, "Understanding the Middle-East", 2013, p. 43 and p. 89.

83- Salman RUSHDIE, "Write and wrong", *The Guardian*, 18/11/1997.

84- John LE CARRÉ, "Shame on you, Mr Rushdie", *The Guardian*, 19/11/1997.

85- "Ahmedi community member killed in targeted attack", *The Express Tribune* (with *The International Herald Tribune*), 12/06/2013, www.tribune.com.pk.

- 86- Frédéric ABECASSIS and Jean-François FAU, "The Karaites. A Cairo community at the time of the nation-state", *Egypt, Arab World*, 1992, no. 11, pp. 47-58.
- 87- Arlette JOUANNA, *The Saint Barthelemy. The mysteries of a state crime (August 24th 1572)*, Paris, Gallimard, "The days that made France", 2007, p.411.
- 88- Dominique AVON and Youssef ASHI, "Who is Sheikh Qardawi, banned from entering France? ", www.lexpress.fr, 05/07/2012.
- 89- "Al-Qaradhâwi: 'Al-Nusayriyya'akfar min al-Yahûd wa al-Nasârâ", *Al-Shûruq online*, 31/05/2013.
- 90- OLI/AFP, "Budget of a billion dollars for a film about the life of Prophet Muhammad", *L'Orient-Le Jour*, 2012.
- 91- VOLTAIRE, "Blasphemy", *Philosophical Dictionary*, cf. supra.
- 92- Nick COHEN, *You can't read this book. Censorship in an age of freedom*, e-book, 2013.
- 93- Defamation Act 2009: "Publishing or uttering matter that is grossly abusive or insulting in relation to matters sacred by any religion, thereby intentionally causing outrage among a substantial number of adherents of the religion, with some defences permitted."
- 94- Claude CHARTIER, "The antiblasphemy clan", *L'Express*, 06/04/2006.
- 95- Charlotte OBERTI, "Mounir Fatmi or the art of being censored", www.france24.com, 16/10/2012.
- 96- Sipco VELLENGA, "Criticism of Islam. Responses of Dutch Religious and Humanist Organizations analyzed ", an intervention at the symposium "Dispositive muslimischer Identitätswürfe und gesellschaftlicher Transformationsprozesse Westeuropas", under the direction of Sabine Schmitz, Paderborn University, 25-26 April 2013.
- 97- Hamadi REDISSI, *Modern Islam tragedy*, Paris, Seuil, 2011, pp. 53-63.
- 98- Those were confirmed at the time of several interviews of personalities from the academic world, including George Steiner (Le Mans, November 2010), who had contacts with the institution before and after the text was published.
- 99- There is not an etymological dictionary of Arabic as yet. The only existing work in that domain was carried out in Germany: Jörg Kraemer, Helmut Gätje (1927-86), then Anton Spitaler (1910-2003), Manfred Ullmann (1931-) and al. (hrsg.), *Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache*, auf Grund der Sammlungen von August Fischer, Theodor Nöldeke, Hermann Reckendorf, I-IV(*kâf* and *lâm* letters), Wiesbaden, O.Harrassowitz, 1957-2006.
- 100- Isaiah BERLIN (talks with Ramin JAHANBEGLOO), *In all liberties*, Paris, Le Félin, 2006 (1990), pp. 61-65. Paul BASTID, *Benjamin Constant and his doctrine, T. II*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1996, pp. 754-769.
- 101- Vaclav HAVEL, *Political Essays*, Paris, Calmann-Levy, "Points", 1990, p. 59.
- 102- "Religious freedom, cult freedom, blasphemy apostasy", a lecture by David BEHAR, member of CAPS (Centre for analysis, forecast and strategy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs), "Citizenship and Pluralism in the Mediterranean: religious freedom or freedom of cult?", a symposium at the Collège des Bernardins, 08/04/2013.

Wednesday, July 3, 2013

PLENARY SESSION

Blasphemy and its punishment according to Islam

By Dr Mustafa Baig²

Dr Mustafa Baig (UK), currently Research Fellow at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter

The issue of blasphemy as it is a subject of diverse opinion and great debate across the Muslim world today. The Qur'an actually does not mention blasphemy, in the way that we exactly understand the word today. But there are Qur'anic verses which talk about insulting God and his Messengers such as: "Indeed, those who hurt (or abuse, say evil things about) Allah and His Messenger - Allah has cursed them in this world and the Hereafter and prepared for them a degrading punishment." (Sura 33, verse 57)

This may indicate that the sin of saying offensive statements about God and His Messenger fall into the category of "rights of God" – Islamic law distinguishes between transgressions against the right of God and against the rights of man, the latter punishable by law and the former to be left to God's punishment or grace (although there can be a combination of both).

Mocking the prophet is not only forbidden but cursing or mocking any prophet makes one an unbeliever in Islam. In fact, the Qur'an prohibits the mocking of idols and false deities of pagans. So those who insult other religions therefore only disrespect the teachings of their own religion.

Some Sunni jurists said that abusing and swearing at the first two caliphs of Islam, Abu Bakr and Umar, makes one an apostate –this aimed at some extreme Shia– but the theologians say that it does not take one out the fold of Islam.

No punishment has been prescribed for insulting God and the Messengers in the Qu'ran. This has led some Muslims in modern times to say that the application of blasphemy laws in Muslim lands is a result of corrupting western influence, where blasphemy has been punished. Now the irony here is that it's the West that is sometimes the most critical of blasphemy laws in Muslim countries but here Western influence has not led to a liberalising of attitudes but actually a stringency of the law, and limiting of "free speech" – using free speech sarcastically here. This, however, is actually not the case because Islamic law has in its history prescribed punishments for insulting the religion.

We can also find a word that has resemblance to blasphemy – *tajdeef* – form 2 from the root *ja-da-fa*. It's not used in the Qur'an and some modern writers (you could say liberal) say it is an invention of modern Arabic to use a word that means blasphemy. It has, however, been used in early Islamic literature and the *hadith* (Prophetic statements) to mean deny, disacknowledge, be ungrateful in general and of God's bounties and blessings in particular. The Prophet Muhammad says in one tradition that *tajdeef* is the worst of all sins. According to the 17th century Arabist, Jacob Golius (teacher of Descartes), blasphemy is meant here, corresponding with the Hebrew root *ga-da-fa*, also in the 2nd form; but this may have come into Hebrew from Arabic, so does it not get us anywhere really.

2 Summary of the author's presentation, slightly edited by Jean Duhaime.

Because the Qur'an does not specify a punishment, Muslim scholars have differed as to what punishment applies. The Hanafi School, the largest of the four legal schools in Islam and the law which has been implemented in almost every Islamic empire in history, equate blasphemy with apostasy. If a Muslim insults God or His Messenger, he becomes a non-Muslim, and apostasy is potentially punishable by death (if it is a male and there are some other issues and conditions here).

Apostasy does not however come under the category of *hadd* punishments; for the Hanafis, *hadd* (pl. *hudood*) are those acts or "rights of God" where God specifies the limits of lawful behaviour; they have fixed punishments if crossed (although in alcohol consumption there is some difference).

Because the blasphemer is taken outside the fold of Islam due to his act of blasphemy, a non-Muslim cannot be given the same punishment of blasphemy because he is already not a Muslim so blasphemy against Islam does not change his state from believer to non-believer. The jurists state that blasphemy committed by a non-Muslim will not violate his protective status (*dhimma*) where it is the responsibility of a Muslim government to protect the life and property of non-Muslim subjects – so he cannot be killed. This is according to the Hanafis at least. Some sort of discretionary punishment (*ta'zeer*) will be applied by a Muslim ruler to a non-Muslim for breaking Islamic law. Many jurists state that repentance is not sufficient because blasphemy is a sin as well as a crime, and the crime must be punished.

Do note that the other schools class apostasy as a *hadd* punishment, but they make a distinction between apostasy and blasphemy, at least in terms of how the sin is conceptualised.

So this first important principle to take from my discussion is that the punishment of blasphemy cannot be applied to non-Muslims (according to the largest school and can be adopted by the others). You can apply this to cases where in Europe or in the Muslim world, Muslims have been very angry about non-Muslims insulting the Prophet for example.

Also, there needs to be an Islamic authority that has the power of execution (*nifaaaz*). That is not present in non-Muslim lands; so there is no question of Islamic blasphemy laws being applied here in the West. So that's the second point.

This leads on to the point that there is consensus among the four schools of Islamic jurisprudence that Muslims are not allowed to violate the laws of the land that they live, and the contract (*ahd*) they have when they enter non-Muslim countries in a peaceful state (*musta'min*) demands that they follow the laws of the land they live in. So there is no question of applying Islamic laws of blasphemy to anyone in non-Muslim lands, let alone to non-Muslims.

These principles assist Muslims to manage their religious beliefs and the dictates of their law in a non-Muslim secular society.

Wednesday, July 3, 2013

PLENARY SESSION

Blasphemy and secularism – A Jewish view

By Prof. Liliane Vana

Prof. Liliane Vana (France), University of Paris I – Sorbonne, Dr in Religious Sciences, specialist in Judaic Law, research and teaching, advocacy in favor of Jewish women according to Talmudic Law

Summary³

The attitude of Judaism towards blasphemy is rooted in the Bible and Rabbinic literature. It has changed over the centuries. The question touches upon several domains of the Jewish religious system. One way to discuss it is to concentrate on the “desecration of the Name” a concept close to that of blasphemy.

Where should the frontier between blasphemy and critique, blasphemy and freedom of speech be traced? How can one take into account religious sensitivity in this area? Should law play a role in this kind of conflict? Another aspect of the problem is the following question: if secularism protects the citizens and their freedom of speech, does it also protect them in their freedom of religious expression?

For Jews, “The law of the country is the law” (*Dina de malkhuta dina*). The law of the country should be applied, except for very rare exceptions. According to the Jewish interpretation of the Bible, there is also a kind of concise Torah for the whole humanity, including Israel: the laws given to Noah or “Noahide laws”. The Talmud lists seven of them, among which is one on blasphemy. The prohibition of blasphemy, therefore, applies to all humanity, since it is part of the first covenant between God and Noah (Gen. 9).

In Hebrew, a blasphemy is usually called euphemistically a “blessing” of the Name (*birkhat ha-Shem*), and sometimes a “curse” of the Name (*hilloul ha-Shem*). But biblical and rabbinic vocabulary also has several other ways to express “curse, contempt, lack of reverence, etc.” in relation to the divine name.

The Torah prohibits injury towards God, but also towards one’s parents, political leaders, courts, etc. One finds for example, in Exod. 22:27: “You shall not revile God, nor put a curse upon a chieftain among your people”. The rabbinic law has derived from this verse several prohibitions of injury: against God, but also against a judge, a political leader – which amounts to attacking the dignity of a representative of the “State”. It is also forbidden to desecrate the divine name by an immoral behavior.

This means that, for rabbinic law, showing respect to the judicial and political authority is a necessary condition to insure that a society operates properly. Its powers are a guarantee for social boundaries, social order, and social peace. This is also why Jews pray for the countries where they live and for their leadership.

The question of blasphemy, then, is not only a religious, but also a civic one. In our democracies, the judicial system is not indifferent to this notion, since defamation and

3 Oral presentation summarized by Jean Duhaime

contempt can be identified as offences which are to be repressed. A recent decree from the Custodian of the Seals (*le Gardien des Sceaux*) punishes the manifestation of contempt against the French flag, which is a blasphemy against a symbol of the Republic.

The question of blasphemy is often put in relation to freedom of conscience and freedom to criticize. Today in our European secular societies where there are no longer dominant religions, laws against blasphemy have almost disappeared. But they still exist around the world. Recently, the Holy See's Observer at the UN in Geneva severely criticized the Pakistani law on blasphemy, which he considers unacceptable from the point of view of international law⁴.

The real problem is not blasphemy as such, but the way one looks at it. Today, it is the individual, the citizen or the believer, that one attempts to protect, rather than the belief. Beliefs are lost within the "forest" of the rights of the individual. The individualization of the society harms the interests of social groups. Therefore, it becomes urgent to think about the relationship between the rights of the individual and the rights of social groups, the rights and values, religious or not, of the society.

Nowadays blasphemy is a scandal only for believers, and not for all of them among the same religion. It is therefore imperative to develop common norms to protect not only the believers, but also the belief itself. Recently a Belgian bishop suggested that prayer is the only way to react to blasphemy. But does this not amount to following the questionable social trend according to which everything can be tolerated for the sake of freedom of speech?

⁴ Reported by the Apic agency, Sept. 9. 2012 [<http://www.cath.ch/detail/mgr-tomasi-condamne-la-loi-pakistanaise-sur-le-blasphème>].

Wednesday, July 3, 2013

PLENARY SESSION:

“Promise, Land and Hope”: The Holiness of the Land of Israel in Jewish Thought

By Dr Raymond Cohen

Dr Raymond Cohen (Israel), Emeritus Professor, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Introduction

In the following paper I want to discuss the diverse views in Jewish thought about the concept around which modern Zionism arguably pivots—the holiness of the Land of Israel. It may be the hardest idea for an outside observer to swallow. But understanding its significance is essential to explaining the uncanny power of the Zionist movement to mobilize the Jewish people. I argue that holiness of the Land is at the heart of the Israeli consensus. It is the common theme uniting the Zionist triptych of Biblical promise, eternal homeland, and future hope.

For friends of Israel the main elements of the Zionist narrative are reasonably clear and comprehensible: the Jewish people’s right to its own nation-state; the urgent need for a secure shelter and haven from persecution in the light of the tragic events of the twentieth century; the traditional longing for a return to the land evoked in the Hebrew Bible and liturgy; the hope for an “ingathering of the exiles” and the fervent wish to revive the Hebrew language and culture on the soil where Hebrew civilization flourished.

One feature of the Zionist narrative that tends to arouse less comprehension is the belief in the holiness of the Land of Israel or, indeed, what holiness means in this context. Yet it is the thread running through the entire Zionist enterprise since the 19th century.

If “holy” means special to God, or touched by divinity, then one can grasp why certain places, people, or objects might be revered as holy. *In the Christian tradition* the term “Holy Land” refers to the land containing the holy places revered by Christianity because of their association with the life of Jesus Christ. But the assertion that a geographical area of thousands of square kilometres is holy in its very essence may be harder to understand. What quality of sanctity might infuse a landscape containing, besides places referred to in the Holy Bible, the commonplace sites of everyday life and work?

I suggest that *in the Jewish tradition* “holiness” with reference to the Land of Israel has a threefold meaning: 1. That the Land was promised by God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and their descendants who remain loyal to the Biblical covenant; 2. That it is an eternal heritage, something hallowed by memories that are passed down from one generation to the next; 3. In consequence, that it was and is the setting for the fulfilment of the ordained purpose of a people that believes itself special.

Note that all these variants of holiness have both spiritual-religious and practical-political dimensions. There is no contradiction between the two dimensions, though they can be given different emphases and interpretations at different times by different streams of Judaism. Inherent in the Jewish tradition is a seamless continuity of religion and politics, belief and practice, body and spirit.

Zionist theology and the holiness of the land

Shortly after the Six Day War of 1967 a cross-party movement of prominent Israeli thinkers and personalities emerged calling for settlement of the entire Land of Israel. In English it was known as the Movement for a Greater Israel. It had a tremendous psychological impact and in a short time young idealists set out to implement the ethic of settlement in the midst of a pre-existing population of Palestinian Arabs. Today, almost fifty years later, hundreds of thousands of Jews inhabit the territories beyond the borders of June 4, 1967.

Responsibility for this controversial program is commonly laid at the door of two small but highly motivated groups. The first consists of the Revisionist followers of Ze'ev Vladimir Jabotinski who make up the ideological core of *Herut*, later the Likud party of Menachem Begin and his successors. The second—Gush Emunim—consists of the disciples of Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, the son of the prophetic Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Hakohen Kook.

Put in this oversimplified way, the most significant ideological development in the Zionist movement since the foundation of the State of Israel is presented as the work of a fringe minority. But to make sense of the settlement phenomenon one must look beyond Herut and Gush Emunim to the silent majority of sympathizers. In fact, the concept of *kedushat ha'arets*, the sanctity of the Land of Israel which inspires these movements, has deep roots in the Jewish tradition. Nor has its impact been limited to a minority. Rather, it has been one of the central influences on Zionist thinking and policy, left and right, religious and secular, Ashkenazi and Sephardi, from the 19th century to the present day.

Jewish thinking about the Land of Israel can be traced back to the great Sephardic scholars and mystics of the medieval period. The great Nachmanides (1194-1270) interpreted Numbers xxxiii:53 as a direct biblical command to conquer and settle the Land: "And you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have assigned the land to you to possess." The terrestrial land below was holy, because in a mystical sense it was connected to and identical with the heavenly land above. Rabbi Ezra of Gerona (1160-1238) did not believe that there was an enduring duty to settle the Land but was convinced that the Land had the power to redeem Israel from the sufferings of Exile. Moreover, he saw the Land of Israel as the *Axis Mundi*, the centre of the cosmos, and therefore directly linked to the Almighty. Ibn Ezra (1092-1167) argued that the Land was holy in a very literal way because it was able to receive and absorb emanations of sanctity transmitted from higher spheres. While other lands were controlled by the stars, only the Land of Israel was controlled by God. As long as the Jews were in Exile they had no access to God. *Aliyah*, ascension to the Land, therefore became a supreme obligation. Not all the sages, though, assigned sanctity to the physical land. Abulafia (1240-c. 1291) saw the Land in symbolic, immaterial terms as an internal state of spirituality.⁵

The emergence of the Zionist movement in the last quarter of the 19th century confronted the rabbinical establishment with the threat of internal division and heresy. Zionist activists no longer saw themselves bound by the *mitzvot* and *halacha*, the injunctions of Torah. Their aim was to escape the insular world—mental and physical—of the *shtetl*, the

⁵ Jonathan Garb, "Models of Sacred Space in Jewish Mysticism and their Impact in the Twentieth Century," in Aviezer Ravitsky (ed.), *The Land of Israel in 20th Century Jewish Thought* (Hebrew). Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 2004, pp. 5-8.

East European Jewish small town. Their inspiration was not the rabbis but modern thinkers like Mazzini, Darwin and Nietzsche. As far as the ultra-Orthodox were concerned, these Zionists were the latest affliction in the chronicle of eroding faith and identity that had plagued the Jewish people since Napoleon pulled down the ghetto walls.

It was within this unpromising context that Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook (1865-1935), the first chief rabbi of Palestine and prophet of modern religious Zionism, developed his mystical theology of the Land of Israel. "The Land of Israel", he wrote, "thanks to its inherent qualities, is the essential element bound up with the Jewish people's being."⁶ The sanctity of the Land, which could not be grasped by rational thought, was part of an economy of salvation in which Exile and purification paved the way for the messianic ingathering and return. Judaism in exile was a mere anticipation of the future redemption heralded by the return to the Land of Israel. Exile sucked the nourishment from the Land but also purged its uncleanness and prepared the way for the return. Only in the Land could the mitzvoth, the ordinances of Torah, acquire their full, unadulterated meaning and the people achieve redemption. If Outside-Israel is characterized by profanity and impurity, and therefore alienation from the divine light, the Land of Israel, thanks to its closeness to divine truth and the Holy Spirit, is suffused with divine light.⁷

Writing during and after World War I amidst the break-up of empire, revolution, and the progress of the Zionist enterprise, Rabbi Kook was convinced of the practical relevance of his theology in the here-and-now. He saw the Zionist pioneers who built the *kibbutzim* and *moshavim*, the collective farms and villages, as engaged in sacred work in the cause of redemption, even if they did not always know it. Still, a most pressing need was to reconcile two seemingly incompatible dimensions of Jewish life in the Land of Israel. On the one hand there were the mitzvoth, whose observance in the Land constituted the very fabric of redemption. On the other hand there were the practical problems that arose when it came to building a country. The trouble was that important mitzvoth connected to working the Land—and which did not apply outside the Land—seemed to be incompatible with modern life. For instance, according to Jewish law land in Israel could not be cultivated in the seventh year. But how could a society survive which left its fields fallow for an entire year?

Rabbi Kook was able to provide halachic-legal solutions to many of these questions. His theology and legal decisions inspired not only his immediate followers, students of his rabbinical academy (*Mercaz Harav*) but also future generations. He deeply influenced the religious Zionist youth movement *Bnai Akiva* which came into its own after the 1967 war. Taken up by his son Zvi Yehuda Kook his ideas acquired a new, activist dimension at this time. Overall, Rabbi Kook the elder's thought, both mystical and halachic, was not universally accepted by observant Jews but at the very least they served as a bridge between secular Zionism and ultra-orthodoxy. This is exemplified by the cases of two important orthodox movements.

The *Chabad* chasidic movement rebuilt after World War II by its charismatic leader the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, became a strong supporter of the State of Israel and its role in the unfolding of the divine purpose. The holiness of the Land and the rights to it of the Jewish people were axiomatic. The Rebbe argued that the

6 Avraham Yitzhak Hakohen Kook, *Lights* (Hebrew). Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 2004-5, p. 9.

7 *Ibid*, pp. 9-13.

return to the Land naturally derived from its original ownership. "Its sanctity did not expire with the Exile but remains to the present day because the ownership of the Land of Israel by the people of Israel is eternal and cannot be conceded until all is revealed with the coming of the just messiah."⁸

Agudat Yisrael, the centrist ultra-Orthodox movement founded in Europe in 1912 started out as deeply critical of Zionism but closed ranks with the Zionist movement in face of the crisis of the 1930s. It did this at a conference convened "for the sake of the holiness of the Land" held in Petach Tikva in 1934. After the Shoah the Aguda called on all Jews to settle in the Land of Israel. An offshoot workers movement, *Poalei Agudat Yisrael*, set up in 1922, established its own agricultural communities. Neither Chabad nor the Aguda endorse Kook's system of thought but today they not only avow the holiness of the Land but are strongly committed to Israel's presence in the occupied territories and have large communities living there. They are strongly attached to Rachel's Tomb between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron.

To one stream of ultra-Orthodoxy, however, Rabbi Kook's theology was and remains anathema: that led by Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum (1887-1979), the dynastic head of the Satmar Chasidic movement. Teitelbaum was an explicit anti-Zionist and avowed foe of *Agudat Yisrael*. His own theology is almost the mirror image of that of Rabbi Kook. Rejecting any injunction to settle the Land he saw aliyah, immigration to the Land of Israel, as a positive offence against God's will. Rabbi Kook's argument that the mitzvot acquired their full significance in the Land was baseless. Moreover, in an unredeemed world the performance of mitzvot special to the Land was positively sacrilegious. By talking of the holiness of the Land the Zionists merely dressed up their corrosive ideas in spurious garb in order to ensnare God-fearing Jews. Exile was a deep reality reflecting cosmic chaos that was not amenable to human manipulation, quite the contrary. The world was in a state of total darkness seen in the disarray of orthodoxy and the terrible events of modern history, culminating in the Shoah. Any wilful attempt to amend this desolation resulted in the withdrawal of the divine presence from the world and a state of abandonment. The Zionists were no better than collaborators with the forces of Evil bent on delaying the Redemption. To Kook's *atchalta degeula*, the beginning of redemption, Teitelbaum opposed *ikva degeula*, the postponement of redemption.⁹

Zionist ideology and the Secularization of the Sacred

Zionist ideology has two main streams (fed by numerous tributaries) Revisionist-Likud and Socialist-Labor. For both movements, each in its own way, the Land has center stage. For the revisionist followers of Vladimir Jabotinski and Menachem Begin, however, the Land's mystical holiness is made explicit.

In an insightful analysis Arye Naor, cabinet secretary to the first government of Menachem Begin, 1977-1982, argues that for the Revisionist movement the Land had the symbolic resonances of the heavenly Land of Israel, *Yisrael shel ma'ala*.¹⁰ Religious concepts had undergone a process of secularization, *the secularization of the sacred*, but retained the

8 Menachem Mendel Schneerson, *Collected Talks*, part 16 (Hebrew). Brooklyn, NY: Otsar Hachasidim, 1977-78, p. 100.

9 David Zorotzkin, "Building the Earthly and Destroying the Heavenly: The Satmar Rabbi and the Radical Orthodox School of Thought," (Hebrew). In Ravitzki, op. cit., pp. 159-61.

10 Arye Naor, "On Eretz Israel in Revisionist Zionism: Between Political Theology and Instrumentality", (Hebrew). In Ravitski, op. cit., pp. 422-95.

spiritual resonance of their source, even when their exponents were non-religious. So Revisionism had a *political theology* as much as an ideology. Even the atheistic worldview of its founder Jabotinski was tinged with the sacred. He explicitly spoke of “the holy Jordan” and of the Beitar youth movement “consecrated by suffering”. In his view, Russian pogroms resulted from the estrangement of the Jewish people from their Land. So repossession of the Land was vital as an end to alienation. For the children of Israel Land preceded identity: “Eretz Israel gives the people its name and not the reverse.”¹¹

Uri Zvi Greenberg (1896-1981), the poet of the Revisionist movement, saw no barrier between the sacred and the profane. His poetry is deeply religious and intensely political. The son of a rabbi, he writes of his relationship with God alluding to liturgy and tradition while expressing a profound attachment to the Land.

On the other hand, Revisionist ideology is concerned not with God but with history, nationalism, and the land. By drawing on originally religious values it strengthens its political claims and mobilizes its political constituency. Political myth elevates ideology beyond the reach of rational discourse. For revisionists the Land has precedence over the state, because “the Land is holy whereas the state is not holy.” In this way political values are sanctified within a secular framework. This not only legitimizes them but also means that they cannot be conceded. In political-electoral terms the use of religious symbolism and vocabulary is of great utility.¹²

The leading ideologue of Revisionism after the death of Jabotinski in 1940 was Yisrael Eldad (1910-1996).¹³ He argues that Zionism was always a messianic movement and was seen as such by Theodor Herzl. Moreover, its goals were messianic, namely, to free the Jewish people, free the homeland, and gather in the exiles. (It is no coincidence that Menachem Begin chose the name *Herut*, freedom, for the political party he set up in 1948, echoing the theme of the Passover haggadah “from slavery to freedom.”) Eldad accepts that Zionism is a secular movement in the sense that its followers are mostly non-observant Jews. But for him secular is not the absence of religion, where he defines Judaism as national culture rather than set belief. Within his political theology the Land acquires supreme value as the place where the Jewish people lives and shapes its culture. He sees Zionism as the continuation of religion and in its emphasis on doing—building, settling, working the soil, absorbing immigrants—an embodiment of the tradition of worship through action found in the performance of the mitzvot.¹⁴

In contrast to Revisionist Zionism, Labor Zionism, the mainstream movement until it was discredited by the disaster of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, carefully avoided the vocabulary of spirituality and holiness. It always found distasteful Jabotinski and his followers’ talk of a mystical bond to the Land. Labor Zionism created a broad, inclusive ideology which avowedly drew on universalistic socialist and liberal values rather than traditional religious themes. Speaking a familiar language of international community and appealing to pragmatic considerations, leaders such as Golda Meir, Yigal Alon, and Shimon Peres were welcomed as kindred spirits to the ranks of the Socialist International.

11 Ibid, pp. 448-49.

12 Ibid.

13 The following remarks are derived from Yisrael Eldad, “There can be no retreat from the Land of Israel because there is no retreat from Zionism because there is no retreat from Judaism,” (Hebrew). In *Zionism: A Contemporary Debate, Research and Ideological Approaches*.” Sdeh Boker: The Center for the Legacy of Ben-Gurion, 1996, pp. 437-74.

14 Ibid, pp. 443-45.

Labor leaders simply could not indulge in what they saw as unhelpful, exclusivist rhetoric. After all, they had borne responsibility for the day-to-day handling of the practical affairs of the *Yishuv*—diplomatic, political, and economic—from the beginning of Zionist settlement. They understood that to work with the Mandate authorities, mobilize international support, establish and consolidate a state, required the familiar, inclusive language of statesmanship and responsibility.

Even so, under the surface can be found the same mystical attachment to the Land of Israel found in other streams of Zionism. The historical frame on which Labor Zionism hung its ideology is the familiar biblical-prophetic trajectory—Exile, Ascent to the Land, and Redemption. Aaron David Gordon (1856-1922) was the Tolstoy-like prophet of Labor Zionism. His Zionism, no less than that of Revisionist theorists, is a secularization of the sacred. He studiously avoids religious language about the Land of Israel but maintains that the Land is the one and only place where the Jews can set down their roots and develop their national life. Exile, he argues, brought about an alienation and moral impoverishment that could only be redeemed by physical labor. In redeeming the Land, the Jews redeemed themselves. Gordon has no time for the concept of a Chosen People yet still insists that the Jews are different and special. Moreover, the rejuvenation of the Jewish people by returning to the soil would have universal significance for the rebuilding of mankind.¹⁵

Other ideologues of the Labor movement such as Yitzhak Tabenkin (1888-1971) also cloaked religious concepts in socialist, secular garb. A founder and spiritual mentor of Kibbutz Ein Harod, Tabenkin was an avid proponent of the Greater Land of Israel throughout his career, opposing all proposals of partition or withdrawal from the 1930s onwards. After the Six Day War he wrote: “The goal of our entire project was then, and remains: A Greater Israel within its natural and ancient borders; from the Mediterranean to the desert and from Lebanon to the Dead Sea—as the reborn homeland of the entire Jewish people. This is the original Zionist idea.” This absolute right to the Land of Israel, in which he included the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip, was consecrated by the sacrifice of its soldiers and rooted in the Bible.¹⁶

The epitome in his generation of the fervent Zionist and avowed non-believer, Moshe Dayan (1915-1981), a child of kibbutz Degania, returned in his final years to a mystical belief in the Bible. In his book *Living with the Bible* Dayan writes of his own adventurous life as a native-born Sabra, against the backdrop of the Land of Israel, its landscapes, biblical associations, and battles. He knits into one seamless web the story of the Jewish people in ancient times and at the present day. Over everything looms the Bible as the ultimate justification for the rebirth of the nation of Israel speaking Hebrew in its indivisible historical homeland.¹⁷ It was therefore not on momentary impulse that when Menachem Begin formed his Likud government in 1977 Moshe Dayan accepted the post of Foreign Minister...

15 Yehoyada Amir, “Land, Nature, and the Individual: Taking Root in the Landscape of Eretz Israel according to the Thought of A.D. Gordon,” (Hebrew). In Ravitzki, op. cit., pp. 315-345.

16 Idith Zertal, “Israel’s Holocaust and the Politics of Nationhood”, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005, pp. 188-189.

17 Moshe Dayan, *Living with the Bible*, New York: William Marrow, 1978.

Conclusion

So the wheel turned full circle and the those who had ostensibly rejected conventional Judaism for socialism and secularism could no longer disguise the true source of their attachment to the Land—a more or less mystical sense of the biblical promise and covenant.

The assertion that a land is holy may arouse disquiet if it is the basis of an exclusivist and uncompromising political agenda. Inflexible nationalism is no longer acceptable. The right of the Jewish people to a national home in part of Palestine is one thing. The denial on grounds of sacred principle of the equivalent political claims of Palestinian Arabs to a state in the rest of Palestine is quite another.

But does the belief, implicit or explicit, in the holiness of the Land rule out a two-state solution? In the past Israeli leaders accepted pragmatic arrangements when they had no other choice. In 1947 they reluctantly agreed to United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 calling for the partition of Palestine into two states because they understood that this was the inescapable condition for achieving statehood and providing a haven for the survivors of the Shoah. From 1949-1967 Israel complied with the reality of partition without forgetting the holiness of the Land. After 1967 Yitzhak Rabin and Moshe Dayan, Zionists in the Tabenkin tradition, opted for compromise. Of course, a 1947 community of 600,00 is very different from a 2013 state of eight million.

In the final analysis, whether or not an Israeli government in the future will consent to a redivision of the Land depends on alternatives, compulsions, and necessities. One thing is for sure. As time passes the problem is not getting any easier.

Wednesday, July 3, 2013

PLENARY

“Promise, Land, and Hope”: An American Perspective on the Theological Project

By Dr Peter A. Pettit

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Recently I had two conversations that will serve well to introduce the challenges we face when we approach the issues that swirl around the Jewish and Palestinian peoples and the land – which both peoples see as home and which Judaism, Islam, and Christianity all regard as holy.

One conversation took place with a colleague who has worked with us in the New Paths program of the Shalom Hartman Institute. The program is designed to build a new foundation on which American Christians can engage Israel. We released the first study course three weeks ago and this conversation took place the next day. We were trying to identify the most effective way to convey quickly to an audience that the approach we are taking is new and different. My colleague made a suggestion that was meant to do just that – to pull them away from the immediate conflict model and suggest another. She said: “Ask the audience, just for a moment, to imagine that the UN Partition Plan had been accepted in 1947; that there had been no war and two independent, economically interlinked states had developed side by side as a Jewish homeland and an Arab homeland; that there was no 1967 war and no occupation....” She never got to finish. We gaped at her. Are you kidding? Ask a group of American Christians to imagine *that*?

The other conversation took place similarly in regard to the New Paths program, and also about how to introduce it. The colleagues with whom I was speaking are planning to teach the study course in the fall, and we were discussing how to advertise it and attract participants. They suggested advertising that it is for people who have never been to the Holy Land and do not have any fixed convictions about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After all, they said, when a discussion involves people who have travelled there and people who have not, it’s always the eyewitness account that gets played as the trump card: “Well, if you would ever go there and see, you would know exactly what I am talking about and why I am right.” It doesn’t even matter whose cause the speaker is defending or promoting – the line works equally well on any side of the discussion. And it works to stop it cold.

In the first conversation – “imagine there were no conflict” – my colleague recognized that there is no realistic perspective from which one can start the conversation about the Promised Land and its current inhabitants without getting trapped in a box, labelled as a partisan in one camp or another, and embraced or dismissed on that label alone. Of course, we also knew immediately that her suggestion begged the question, since imagining there is no conflict will always work to the advantage of only one party in the conflict.

In the second conversation, the challenge is more clearly addressed when thinking about whom to invite into a discussion: how do people with radically different

perspectives and experience in dealing with a situation find the ground on which they can engage one another? But the suggestion there – to advertise it only to those with limited experience – also begs the question, as it would simply send the two groups to their separate rooms.

Thus the question remains, and the challenge, which we all know too well from our own experience. My two conversations could be multiplied dozens of times over in this room, as so many of us have found ourselves stymied in a conversation by a radical disjunction of experience, religious commitments, ethical imperatives, and even facts. Recently the ICCJ Executive Board responded to this challenge with its statement, “As long as you believe in a living God, you must have hope,” and previously it has addressed the tendency toward acrimony and polarization with its 2010 statement, “Let Us Have Mercy Upon Words” (both available at <http://www.iccrelations.net>). Both statements affirm the importance of dialogue as a path to clearer communication and understanding. The more recent one helpfully reminds us that dialogue is not about “conversion.” In the context of Israel and Palestine, “conversion” can mean converting the other to a policy position or moral posture, usually more so than it means religious conversion. But the implicit aggression of the conversionary approach is just as present and is felt just as strongly. By contrast, dialogue always involves “an openness to changing our own hearts because of what we have learned from the hearts of our conversation partners” (“As long as you believe,” §7).

It is in the interest of empowering dialogue and this kind of learning in this highly conflicted setting that the ICCJ Research Council has taken up its project of “Promise, Land, and Hope.” The three-part title of the project is more than a rhetorical flourish, and certainly not a poorly-disguised Trinitarian reference. Rather, it lifts up the three key elements that seem to stand at the heart of the conflict between the Jewish and the Palestinian peoples over the land they both call home. For Jews and Christians, it is a *promised* land, or at least has been understood as such and is represented as such in scripture; what one makes of that is a key issue. It focuses on *land* because both the Jewish and the Palestinian people have national aspirations that require a physical space in which to be realized; the key issue arises from the fact that both know essentially the same land as their homeland. Finally, we deal with *hope* because it is both integral to the aspirations of the two peoples and also a strong factor in the theologies of many Christians who care deeply about Israel. That Christian hope may be (1) for the fulfilment of biblical prophecy in an apocalyptic drama, or (2) for the achievement of the justice and peace by which Israel’s prophets framed the messianic age, or (3) for a workable coexistence that leaves ultimate outcomes to God but assures the well-being of God’s children day by day. In any case, it is a key issue to examine the place of hope in the theological engagement of Christians in the conflict. No less do hopes of various shapes figure in the engagements of Muslims who are not Palestinian but see the outcome of this conflict as crucial to their worldview.

Promise, Land, and Hope – all three are keys in the postures we adopt and the arguments we make. Understanding how they figure in our encounters with one another will help us to gain the insights of dialogue that will deepen our mutual engagement and strengthen our common quest for an end to the conflict. That introduces you in the broadest strokes to the project underway, and I will say more about its particulars before I finish. But first I

want to do two other things. I want to discuss some of the approaches to the issues as we encounter them in the American context, and I want to consider how the fairly distinctive American relationship of church and society influences this conversation.

American Theologies

It would be presumptuous of me – perhaps of anyone – to attempt to present comprehensively the picture of American religious groups on any particular issue, and especially on this issue. My comments, then, do not pretend to achieve that standard, for which a substantial book or two would be necessary. My comments will, I hope, represent fairly some of the main lines along which American religious groups array themselves in regard to Israel and the competing nationalisms of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples.

My presentation is intended to draw a profile of the different *kinds* of issues that animate American religious groups around the topic of Israel. That people will differ in their pragmatic assessment of any political circumstance or religious issue is axiomatic. Where the grounds of the dispute are shared and mutually recognized, the debate can proceed. In the case of Israel in the American religious community, it is the very grounds that are in dispute, and that is what it will be helpful to explore.

The mainline Protestant churches, which have traditionally represented the religious backbone of American society, are famously in decline. Their numbers shrink year by year and their influence on public debate has been sharply curtailed in recent years. Yet they are not absent from the public square on the matter of Israel. But their voice is divided. On the one hand, many in these churches are still working out the kind of Christian realism that Reinhold Niebuhr imbued in several generations of prominent American clergy. Reading the Bible critically, they derive from its human record of divine action a sense of purpose and a template for human life and society. Those then guide their engagement in all manner of social issues. The dignity of the individual, a broad and inclusive sense of justice, and a disposition toward non-violence except in defence of the innocent are key elements in that template. In practical terms, it has engendered a generally positive attitude toward Israel, coupled with a desire to bring the conflict to a conclusion that is mutually respectful of both Jews and Palestinians.

On the other hand, the mainline Protestants in the past three or four decades have come increasingly under the sway of liberation theology, first in the founding voices of Latin American Roman Catholics and subsequently in the voices of women, Blacks, Latinos, gays, and various Third-World communities, including the Palestinians of Sabeel (the Palestinian Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center) and the Diyar Consortium led by Lutheran pastor Mitri Raheb in Bethlehem. The U.S. staff leaders in global mission and policy advocacy most often come from this background, so that the public voice of the churches and the management of the direct denominational ministries in Israel and Palestine are strongly shaped by liberationist perspectives. This stance reads the founding of Israel as a colonialist enterprise of the Western powers and advocates primarily for justice for the displaced and oppressed indigenous Palestinian people.

The division within the mainline denominations is drawn still deeper by the diverse experiences of the church in relation to Arabs and Jews. Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Lutherans, particularly, carry a heritage of educational, health care, and development

work in the Arab Middle East since the 19th century. At the same time, these Protestant denominations have been at the forefront of dialogue programs with the Jewish community in America for generations. Often the church leaders in these respective arenas – the dialogical and the missionary – have limited experience with and awareness of the others’ work, so that it has been easy for the churches to send contradictory messages about the churches’ commitments.

Among the evangelical Protestants, a third foundation for engaging Israel is at work. This is a theological worldview that sets biblical categories and realities at the core. While theologian Gerald McDermott can rightly argue that evangelicals are not the biblical literalists that fundamentalists were, he also goes on in his essay on “Evangelicals and Israel” to demonstrate that the promised land and the Jewish people remain theologically significant for evangelicals because they figure centrally in the Bible’s salvation history. Evangelicals, says McDermott,

take seriously God’s promises in Genesis...to give a land to Abraham’s descendants. They cite Isaiah’s vision for the renewal of Zion, especially in Isaiah 4:2-6, and for the perpetuation of a remnant. They believe that the promise of a kingdom for the new David in Isaiah 9:7 suggests a restored land, and note both Jeremiah’s promise that the Jews would return to the land in chapter 32 and receive a new covenant (chapter 33), and Ezekiel’s recurring theme of the ingathering of all the scattered Israelites in the land. Furthermore, evangelical scholars are impressed by the importance of land in Torah...

(“Evangelicals and Israel,” in *Uneasy Allies?: Evangelical and Jewish Relations*, Alan Mittleman, Byron Johnson, and Nancy Isserman, eds. [New York; Toronto; Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books 2007] pp. 142- 143)

McDermott cites Elmer Martens when he notes that “the land is the fourth most frequent noun or substantive in the Old Testament...more dominant statistically than the idea of covenant” (*ibid.*, p. 143).

He goes on to say that the same attentiveness to scripture leads many evangelicals also to apply to modern Israel the same standards of justice and compassion that attached to biblical Israel’s tenure in the land. Both in affirming the gift of land and in calling Israel to account for the morality of its life in the land, it is a straightforward, if not quite literal, reading of the biblical witness that informs and motivates the evangelical community.

The Roman Catholic community in America cannot be considered apart from its larger, global context, of course, but ICCJ Vice-President Phil Cunningham has recently offered a state-of-the-question analysis of Catholic land theology as part of the American Catholic-Jewish conversation (“A Catholic Theology of the Land?: The State of the Question,” presented orally at the BCEIA-NCS consultation, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, May 7, 2013; manuscript copy – see a revised version forthcoming in *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations*).

In his analysis, the Catholic Church is poised between two implications of its landmark Vatican II declaration, *Nostra Aetate*. We are all familiar with the powerful affirmations of *Nostra Aetate* that the Jewish people remains beloved of God and is not to “be presented as repudiated or cursed by God.” In the history of Christian teaching, that presentation included the image of the Wandering Jew, banished by God from the homeland and

precluded from returning to it. So the church has removed the onus of Jewish exile from its theological vocabulary. Yet the same chapter of *Nostra Aetate*, in deploring the “hatred, persecutions, and displays of anti-Semitism directed against the Jews,” is careful to say that the church is motivated “by no political considerations.” This implies that the cause of the Jews in founding the State of Israel stands apart from the church’s theological considerations.

Cunningham notes that this is more explicitly underscored in the 1985 “Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism,” which asserts that “the existence of the State of Israel and its political options should be envisaged not in a perspective which is in itself religious, but in their reference to the common principles of international law.” Yet the 1974 “Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Document, *Nostra Aetate*, §4” says that it is of utmost importance for Catholics to learn to understand “by what essential traits Jews define themselves.” This all leads Cunningham to point to the unresolved methodological tension of “respecting the religious centrality of the Land of Israel for Jews while considering the modern State of Israel only in terms of distinct non-religious international legal norms.” He also points out that Vatican documents close the paths both to a simple, literalist assertion of Jewish land claims and to a supersessionist posture that abrogates God’s promise of land. The task that awaits Catholics, he says, is how to articulate positively a centrist hermeneutic.

In the [American Jewish community](#), a divide has developed largely along generational lines. For those who recall the 1967 and 1973 wars and the existential threat that they posed to Israel, the bond between Israel and the Diaspora is unquestionable. Whether as a threatened homeland or as the haven for Jews who still face threats elsewhere in the world, Israel is a focal point of support and defence in the face of crisis. For a younger generation that has only known Israel in Lebanon and facing down two Intifadas, building settlements and isolating Gaza, managing an occupation that has stretched on for nearly half a century, the relationship is much more complicated. This is the generation that has invented *JStreet*, the pro-Israel, pro-peace lobby that wants a more flexible embrace of Israel than the America-Israel Political Action Committee, or AIPAC, is able to offer. This is the generation who in all their philanthropy and commitments want to be aware of and involved with the operating systems that deliver the help they provide. This is the generation to which the Hartman Institute’s *iEngage* project is directed, striving to lay a new foundation for Israel-Diaspora relations that emphasizes not unending crisis but shared values, not merely supporting Israel but Engaging Israel. As in the Roman Catholic Church, though, the task of articulating the positive hermeneutics of that new foundation is a work in progress.

Finally, I offer as a spokesperson for another American religious group an even younger contributor, the 15-year-old [Akash Mehta](#) whose essay on the ethics of interfaith was recently re-published on the *Huffington Post*. Mehta, I would suggest, represents a wide swath of American religious thought, particularly evident among the young people whom I teach. He summed up religion quite succinctly: “A religion is a system of ethics, reinforced and justified by a set of beliefs” (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kidspirit/the-ethics-of-the-interfaith-movement_b_3441569.html; retrieved 21 June 2013).

Much to his credit, young Mr. Mehta acknowledged that the ethical quest has yielded many paths and that even those who profess no religion often have an ethical system that guides them. For our purposes, though, it is not the ethics of the atheist that are of note,

but rather the priority of ethics over myth, ritual, doctrine, and all else. “A religion is a system of ethics, reinforced and justified by a set of beliefs.” In regard to Israel, one must surmise that, according to this view, any religious claims have to be deconstructed into ethical claims and then evaluated as such. Often in working with my students as well as with the broader sweep of American society, whether religious or not, this is the approach that I hear. There is an inchoate and largely unarticulated ethical sensibility that may be the reduction of whatever religious formation has taken place, or may have been formed quite unsystematically from a congeries of sources and influences. Whatever its sources, that ethical core in turn defines and critiques religious life and belief.

With these several brief profiles I would sketch a range of views that can be found readily in American society, and certainly there are plenty of overlaps that lead to difficult encounters within individual groups as well as between them. Scriptural hermeneutics, readings of history, political assessments and the eschewing of politics, doctrinal guidelines and ethical deconstruction, loyalty and critique and identification and prophetic urgency and solidarity and more give texture to our encounters, but just as often they are also obscured by the white-hot emotions that attach to this issue. Where can one begin?

American Church and State

The question of where to begin is compounded in America by our understanding of the place of religion in society, a question that bears particular interest in the context of this conference on *laïcité*. This is hardly a settled question for us as Americans, as many of you will already be aware. We have already encountered in our workshops and in individual conversations the significant differences that distinguish the *laïcité* of French culture from the separation of church and state in America as well as other forms of secularism. We have no state religion and religious doctrine plays no formal role in American political discourse. But religion does come into play in our political process.

That is so with regard to Christian attitudes toward Israel not primarily because of the religious character of Israel as a Jewish state – and being a Jewish state involves much more than religion but it does include religion. Rather, it is because of the long-standing American respect for the influence of religion on the individual conscience. Churches for Middle East Peace and JStreet and AIPAC and Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding and Christians for Fair Witness on the Middle East and the advocacy offices of the mainline churches and of the Roman Catholic Church all seek to exert influence in the religiously neutral public square. Each works from its own theological foundations and brings its convictions into the political arena to seek out allies and coalitions that can advance its religiously-shaped values. Members of churches and synagogues are urged to vote and to communicate with their Congressional representatives and Senators to urge action on their faith-shaped priorities. There is no religion in our government, but we are still a strongly religious society.

So the doctrinal and biblical and theological and pastoral dimensions of Israel and the Palestinians are very much implicated in the public policy process. And each of the religious communities that would have a voice must also take account of the policy realities already in place – that America is by statute committed to sustaining Israel’s strategic military advantage in the region, that America recognizes Israel as a key ally and maintains a special relationship with Israel, that America has for many years stood in the United Nations Security Council as a staunch defender of Israel and its interests.

Caitlin Carenen, in her book, *The Fervent Embrace* (NY & London: New York University Press 2012), has recently documented the impact of both evangelical and mainline communities on American policy in regard to Israel and the Palestinians. Her study clearly demonstrates that the interests of both the Jewish and the Palestinian communities have been both buttressed and challenged by religious argument at different times. There is no simple equation we could write by which a religious argument equates to a particular position on any of the key issues. In the American context, at least, I can affirm that it will be a significant contribution to find a way to engage in constructive dialogue and debate on promise, land, and hope as people approach them from their respective religious backgrounds. And from the recent experience of the ICCJ in its dialogue with Palestinian Christian theologians involved in the Kairos Palestine process, it appears that a similar benefit can be realized from strengthening the foundation for dialogue outside the American context, as well.

Promise, Land, and Hope – The Project

Very briefly, then, the Promise, Land, and Hope project is a collaborative endeavour of the ICCJ Research Council with three American and two European academic centres (see the appended “Project Description”). A preliminary meeting in Philadelphia led to the first full meeting of the research team at the University of Leuven in 2012, where the meta-question, or core task, of the project was developed. It seeks to move beyond assessing or describing the various approaches that different religious thinkers and groups take, and certainly does not hope to synthesize a single approach that might serve in all settings. Rather, in the interest of empowering dialogue and affirming diversity, the question is: *What understandings might [we] develop that could serve as resources for constructive dialogue about Israeli-Palestinian issues?*

The appended “Preliminary Concept Map” sets this as the guiding question at the centre of the project, with four interrelated fields of inquiry to be explored over the life of the project, which we anticipate is likely to be five years. Specific land traditions of various communities, theologies that are informed by the experience of Christian-Jewish dialogue, hermeneutics as an inherent methodological component of any theology, and the particular dynamics of the Israeli-Palestinian encounter will all be explored for their contribution to the project. The exact form of the tools to be developed will emerge as the project moves forward, and the next step will be a three-day meeting in Chicago in August, where our primary focus will be deepening our understanding of the land traditions of several communities, particularly in relation to biblical texts.

The project’s goal is to provide tools that will empower dialogue and exchange, with the expectation that greater clarity and understanding will enable people to move forward toward the broad common goal of supporting the Jewish and Palestinian peoples in achieving their respective aspirations, including justice and peace. Our desire is to make it possible for many more people to engage in the kinds of dialogue and encounter that have proven so fruitful in Jewish-Christian relations over a whole range of difficult topics that may even have seemed impossible at one time. As we have in the past found the strength and the trust and the tools to address the person of Jesus, the charge of *deicide*, *l’enseignement du mépris* (the teaching of contempt), the legacy of oppression, and more, we believe we can also find what we need to be able to address together our deepest hopes and fears that attach to the promised land.



Promise, Land, and Hope: Jews and Christians Seeking Understanding to Enable Constructive Dialogue about Israeli-Palestinian Issues

With additional support from:

Cardinal Joseph Bernardin Center, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, USA • Institute for Jewish-Catholic Relations, Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia, USA • Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, USA • Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Leuven, Belgium • Lund University, Lund, Sweden

Project Description

Partially in response to increased polarization in Christian-Jewish dialogues around the world caused by the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the PROMISE, LAND, AND HOPE project will shed light on one of the conflict's specifically religious dimensions: how different disputants draw upon scriptural or other authoritative religious texts to advance their arguments. By becoming aware of how different voices adduce texts, it becomes possible to get beyond their contradictory conclusions to understand why people argue as they do. This kind of awareness enables dialogues to move from endless arguments over policies or actions to constructive engagement with diversity.

Over a period of roughly five years, the research project intends to explore a variety of Jewish and Christian methods of textual interpretation, focusing primarily on two topics that roil contemporary discussions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: perspectives on land and their relationship to understandings of eschatology.

After a preliminary meeting in Philadelphia in 2011 sponsored by Saint Joseph's University, the full team assembled at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in August of 2012 to define the guiding meta-question and to at least provisionally establish the research agenda to pursue that question.

Following presentations by Raymond Cohen, Cornelis de Vos, and Reimund Beiringer, the team identified four clusters of topics that had surfaced. These were: (1) Land traditions expressed religiously, textually, and culturally; (2) Hermeneutics/methods by which texts are interpreted; (3) Theologies informed by the Christian-Jewish rapprochement of the past decades; and (4) Specific features of the Israeli-Palestinian encounter. The team understood that these all interacted with one another and also related to such processes as identity formation, ethical considerations, the pursuit of certain values or goals (e.g., reconciliation or peacemaking), and the development of communications strategies.

The conversation articulated the project's *meta-question* as: "What understandings might the project develop that could serve as resources for constructive dialogue about Israeli-Palestinian issues?"

In four subgroups, the team pinpointed key questions that needed to be studied in each of the four topical clusters. A "Concept Map" was sketched to summarize all these considerations and to chart our future work, which was later refined by the Steering Committee and then the Project Team.

The Steering Committee has scheduled the next consultation to be hosted by Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, 13-15 August 2013. Presenters will discuss: difficult Hebrew Bible texts (Cor de Vos), hermeneutics and the NT on land/earth (various members), Christian Zionism (Gerard McDermott), and Liberation and Post-colonial theologies (Jean-Pierre Ruiz).

LAND TRADITIONS (Religious, Textual, Cultural)
 R Langer, M McGarry, J Sievers, M Trainor, C de Vos,

- What are the issues, texts, spiritualities that are influential in shaping today's concerns?
- What Hebrew Bible texts are difficult for or often cited by Palestinians or Israeli Jews and why?
- What is the ongoing significance for Jews of themes of Zion and longing for Zion? How does this intersect with Zionism as understood among Jews today?
- What traditions underlie Christian Zionism and how do various communities receive them today?
- How does the NT use language of land/earth? How does it reread Hebrew Bible language?
- What is the role of Christian pilgrimage for a theology of the land?
- What features of ecology or of ethnic identity may help shape Christian theologies of land/earth?

THEOLOGIES INFORMED BY CHRISTIAN-JEWISH DIALOGUE
 M Boys, P Cunningham, A Gregerman, HH Hentix, J Svartvik

Some perspectival approaches:

- Post-colonial and liberationist theologies
- Palestinian contextual theologies
- Why choose certain texts? - grounded in community and internal and external relationships

Theological issues and religious identity:

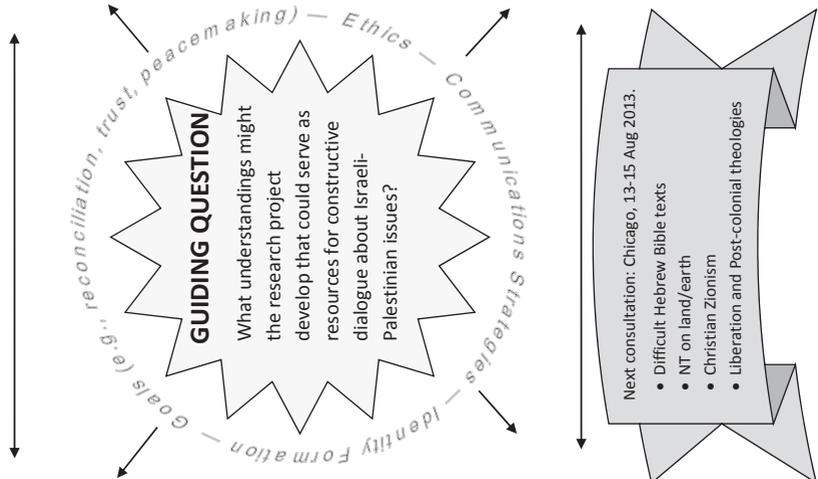
- Universalism / particularism
- Power / powerlessness
- Binary thinking
- Have changing Christian views of Judaism really addressed land theology as yet?

HERMENEUTICS (How texts are interpreted)
 A Gordon, P Pettit, D Pollefeyt

- What makes a text normative, sacred, and canonical? Is it intrinsic to the text or extrinsic in its readers?
- Reading texts together: with advanced preparation or not?
- How are texts used and "abused," and according to what criteria?
- Can we develop tools to make people in dialogue aware of hermeneutics they use? What provokes people to change their hermeneutical perspective?

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN ENCOUNTER
 R Cohen, J Pawlikowski, D Weissman

- Why do some hold so strong a commitment to "state" and not just land?
- Is there a religious dimension to statehood?
- How can trust be established between Israelis and Palestinians, and also among those elsewhere, when trying to discuss volatile issues?
- What educational programs are needed among all groups—Israelis, Palestinians, Christians, Muslims, Jews, leaders (including tour guides, holy site staffs) and the grassroots:
 - o To show the necessity of presence of others?
 - o To see selves as instruments of reconciliation, peace?
 - o To care about others' opinions?
 - o To see benefits of two states?



Next consultation: Chicago, 13-15 Aug 2013.

- Difficult Hebrew Bible texts
- NT on land/earth
- Christian Zionism
- Liberation and Post-colonial theologies

Wednesday, July 3, 2013

CONCLUSIONS

By Dr Olivier Rota

Dr Olivier Rota (France), member of the “Institut d’Études du Fait Religieux” (IEFR), member of the executive board of Amitié judéo-chrétienne de France

First of all, I would like to thank Liliane Apotheker, Rosine Voisin and Bruno Charmet for the daunting task that they took on over the past year. The organization of an international event is not an easy task, and the success of this event is due to them.

The choice of presenters has been crucial for this 2013 conference. The issue of secularity and religion has been addressed from a number of perspectives—certainly from the Jewish and Christian points of view, but also from the point of view of various disciplines (history, law, and especially philosophy). I have been given the unenviable task of connecting, and making sense of, the presentations that overlapped in terms of timing (as it always the case at conferences!), inasmuch as they also “spoke to each other” within each one of us.

I would like to sincerely thank Liliane for the kindness she showed me, when she entrusted to me the task of sharing with you how these lectures have “spoken to each other” within me, that is to say, how their contents resonated with my own learnings and sensitivities, with my own intellectual and spiritual leanings, as well as with my position as a Catholic, a university professor, and a French citizen. Of those three terms, it is probably the last of them which is most decisive for the conclusions I will present, since Francesca Frazer, by a mutual decision, has agreed to bring an “outsider’s” perspective to what we have gained from these debates and these days.

What can we draw from these three and a half days that have brought us together around the issue of secularity? Certainly (and this was predictable), there were very different definitions, understandings and practices as regards secularism and the questions it raises, depending on each of the speakers.

- 1) History has taught us that Judaism and Christianity have reacted differently to the establishing of a secular juridical framework in France.

As is regularly underscored in Jewish intellectual circles, Biblical and Talmudic Judaism developed a secular framework that distinguishes between the Prophet, the Sanhedrin and the King. This fact, together with the traditional affirmation that “the law of the kingdom is the law” (*Dina Demalkhouta Dina*), is what allowed Chief Rabbi Haim Korsia to state, at the outset, that French Judaism has no problem with the framework of secularism—that is, a framework that distinguishes and separates Church and State. The historical experience is, however, different for Catholicism, which experienced the 1905 law of separation as an attack on the rights of God. But, at least for the majority of Catholics, that isn’t where we are at today.

- 2) Let us leave the historical discussions there for the moment. The goal of our dialogue forum was not to set the hardliners straight among themselves. Furthermore, it seems to me that the Jewish and Christian participants in the

dialogue easily take for granted the framework of secularism, and are evolving within that framework without too much friction. The framework of secularism (understood as the separation of Church and State), in fact, greatly fosters interreligious dialogue, inasmuch as, by definition, it eliminates issues of power. When she opened this conference, Liliane Apotheker rightly reminded us that secularism has “protective” qualities, in the sense that it protects each group from abuses of power and religion, when the two overlap and blend. This “protective” quality of secularity also seems to best express the intention of modernity, which is understood as a principle for promoting uniformity.

- 3) I would like to pause for a few moments to discuss Gilles Bourquin’s lecture. I will not repeat his argumentation, which was both balanced and provocative. What I will take away from it is his set of definitions, which were very unsettling for a French citizen who is used to different ways of understanding and defining modernity and secularity. I particularly want to note that Gilles Bourquin attributes to modernity (understood as a principle for promoting uniformity) qualities that are usually associated with the French model of secularity: creating a place of neutrality between the monotheistic religions, by placing each of them on an equal footing. This definition of modernity allows Gilles Bourquin to understand secularism as a principle for promoting universalism, which is written into each of the Abrahamic religions.

The historian in me immediately appreciated the potential of the definitions adopted by Dr Bourquin (which are, it seems to me, far removed from the definitions circulating in France, which can seem fixed by virtue of the very fact that we are seeking to define secularity before we have done as much for modernity ... But I will leave that utterly epistemological question unanswered for now; a conclusion like this is the place to report it, but not to discuss it).

From my perspective as a historian working on the issue of Jewish-Christian relations, I would say this: the approach offered by Gilles Bourquin allows us to reflect anew on the history of interreligious dialogue. It offers an initial starting-point which allows us to understand how the monotheistic religions found themselves in discussion with each other, by adopting a particular framework. This approach also allows us to explain why there could be such a resistance to dialogue on the part of Jews and Christians. For those in the Jewish community who turned down the invitation to dialogue very often declare that Judaism is not a religion, and so they refuse to fit Judaism into that particular framework, which Christianity seems predisposed to. By doing so, however, they are also adhering to a very rigid understanding of the tradition they have inherited, and they deny it the flexibility which it has always demonstrated throughout history. On the other hand, Christians who refuse to enter into the dialogue, and who retreat into triumphalism, continue an understanding of Church which confuses Christianity with Christendom, and they limit their understanding of the tradition to a deposit whose letter (rather than whose spirit) must be perpetuated. For these Jews and Christians, frozen and closed to dialogue, it is precisely modernity—as an invitation to spiritualize their religious experience, to use Gilles Bourquin’s approach—which is the problem.

- 4) This approach seems to me to be compatible with the presentations of Bishop Dagens and Chief Rabbi Haim Korsia.

Bishop Dagens' presentation attempted to posit a relationship between faith in God, and democracy. If we follow Dr. Bourquin's approach, we cannot fail to grasp that it is only the principle of spiritualization which has allowed Christians to find their place within democratic societies.¹⁸ When there is a separation between the social and religious orders, between civil society and the State, then democracy can take root. Emphasizing the individual at the expense of the community leads, once again, to freedom of conscience and religious freedom—at least as long as democracy doesn't become twisted by totalitarian purposes, which sacralize the national community at the expense of the individual.

Of course, a democratic framework entails its own crop of temptations and failings. Among these, what Bishop Dagens has called “a nostalgia for belonging” immediately comes into conflict with French-style secularity (understood as the fight against all forms of clerical control). Motivated by the breakdown in the makeup of society, this “nostalgia for belonging” gets translated into the formation of communities which can become “clerically-centred,” and which can entrap believers rather than freeing them. These communities can also become bearers of community values which are opposed to the common good.

The public good can, however, coincide with religious ideals. Chief Rabbi Korsia has several times underscored the essential mission of religions, which are meant to guide people on the path of peace. The Jewish experience—which comes through in the Chief Rabbi's comments—is a constant reminder not to confuse unity with uniformity. Here, too, there is a “conversation” which is taking place between the Chief Rabbi's speech and that of Gilles Bourquin; did not Bourquin define modernity as a principle for promoting uniformity? The Jewish experience only accepts modernity's goals insofar as they include a concern for *shalom*—for peace and wholeness. Peace overlaps with the common good, and the path toward wholeness can be understood as a process of peace-making (and friendship!) between individuals who are both different and differentiated.

- 5) As I see it, these different presentations rival each other in making a democratic and secular space into an ecosystem that promotes dialogue between religions. So ... is secularity an opportunity or a challenge for religions? The speakers have responded to that question in different ways, depending on how they define “secularity”. A consensus emerges, however, in their appreciation of secularity as a place of opportunity which, on one hand, allows religions to uphold what is essential in their initiatives and which, on the other hand, allows religious believers to define what is essential in their tradition. This is a space in which each person is free to live out their identity, and to define their belonging as they see fit (and we can see just how numerous those identities and ways of belonging are, by listening to the reactions of the audience at this conference!). To take it a step further: secularity comes across as a space in which one can freely seek out meaning ... a space in which one can freely question oneself, which can also (with the help of our organizations dedicated to interreligious dialogue) become a space for dialogue between individuals who are part of traditions that are different and differentiated. It is a space which lends itself to the search for truth and justice:¹⁹ a search marked out for us by the intersection of the work and the personality of Jules Isaac, whose presence has hovered over this conference.

¹⁸ This spiritualization can also be understood as a “destructuralisation ethics” (Peter Pettit's paper). The temptation is strong in modernity to reduce religion to a single system of ethical reference.

¹⁹ I refer here to the communication of Edouard Robberechts.

Wednesday, July 3, 2013

CONCLUSIONS

By Francesca Frazer

Francesca Frazer (UK), IAF and YLC Project Coordinator for the ICCJ, English language editor for jcrelations.net and PhD researcher at the Centre for Jewish Studies, University of Manchester

I'm going to offer a slightly different perspective to Olivier, that of the "outsider". I won't discuss each session that we had because you've heard a summary of these already, but I will try to draw some of the threads together.

As someone who lives in England, who studies in a department of Religions and Theology and who teaches religion both at University and in secondary schools, *laïcité* was not a concept I was very familiar with and I think it *is* very difficult for "outsiders" such as myself to understand.

I first became aware of the term when the issue of veiling was in the media, with regard to the ban on "conspicuous" religious symbols in French schools and full-face veils in public spaces, and of course it has been in the news again recently regarding the Baby-Loup nursery case. In 2008 a Muslim employee of a privately-run nursery was dismissed for refusing to remove her veil. On 19 March 2013 the Court of Cassation ruled that she had been unlawfully dismissed but this seemed to be a contentious issue for some and the debate began again.²⁰

Some consider the wearing of the veil as a symbolic representation of affiliation to Islam and the Muslim community, rather than the French community, and suggest that this undermines the unity and secularism of the French Republic.

As we know, "conspicuous" signs of religious affiliation, including the Islamic headscarf (hijab), Jewish skull cap (kippah) and large Christian crosses, have been banned in public primary and secondary schools in France since September 2004,²¹ although they are still allowed in universities, and the ban on full-face veils (including the burka and niqab) in public places in France took effect in April 2011.²²

The BBC reported that on RTL radio, Eric Zemmour spoke about 1970s France as a time when French Jews "took off their skullcaps as soon as they stepped into the street", so that nobody would be made to "feel awkward by an ostentatious expression of faith". He

20 The Court of Cassation (Social Chamber) ruled that the principle of *laïcité* is not applicable to private sector employees and therefore this counted as religious discrimination. For the details of the case and the ruling see: <http://www.religare-database.eu/component/content/article/555-4-4-4-10-35associationbaby-loup19march2013>

21 The ban was voted through on 10 February 2004 in the National Assembly by a large majority. See Article L141-5-1 of the Education Code which states, "Dans les écoles, les collèges et les lycées publics, le port de signes ou tenues par lesquels les élèves manifestent ostensiblement une appartenance religieuse est interdit (In primary and secondary public education, the wearing of conspicuous signs of religious affiliation is forbidden.) For the full text see: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCodeArticle.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006071191&idArticle=LEGIARTI000006524456&dateTexte=20110410>

22 Law No. 2010-1192 of 11 October 2010 "interdisant la dissimulation du visage dans l'espace public" (prohibiting the concealment of the face in the public sphere). For the full text see: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichLoiPubliee.do?idDocument=JORFDOLE000022234691&type=general>

said that this “French way of living together” was disrupted by the arrival of “the community-based Anglo-Saxon model”... On France Inter radio, Thomas Legrand said the problem did not lie with religious symbols as such but specifically with the Islamic headscarf and “what it says about the place of women in certain neighbourhoods”. Banning this piece of clothing from the “feminist” Baby Loup nursery northwest of Paris did not target a religion but “the expression of a sexist practice of religion”, he said. According to Mr Legrand, this line of argument “has nothing to do with supposed Islamophobia”. It is part of a “universal and quite simple fight for individual freedom, and in this particular case for sex equality.” As George Lentze comments, “All sides in this debate say they are committed to a secular state, but under the banner of secularism they pursue a diverse range of social and political agendas.”²³

I was, and still am, firmly opposed to the banning of the headscarf, but before this conference that was my main knowledge of *laïcité* – that was my only knowledge, the part that the media portrayed.

We always have the danger of thinking our way is the only way or indeed the best way, so as an outsider I had seen the French system of *laïcité* as negative, as something that infringed on people’s rights to show their identity. My view has changed. This conference has been vital in explaining what the French people understand secularity to be and why, as Liliane Apotheker said at the opening of the conference, they stand behind it as religious people do for religion. Upon hearing the keynotes and speaking with French participants, I feel I have now developed a much more rounded view of *laïcité* – I understand the origins of the concept and what opportunities it can bring.

Laïcité, or French secularism, has a long history but the current model is based on the French law of 9 December 1905 on the separation of Church and State.²⁴ Its origins can be traced back to the French Revolution and the conflict between revolutionaries and the Catholic Church, which exercised great political control at that time. With the implementation of the 1905 law, the State no longer funded religious schools and public institutions were no longer under the influence of the Catholic Church. During the twentieth century, this evolved to mean the separation of State and *all* religions.

As we have seen from the keynotes, proponents assert that this secularism is based on *respect* for freedom of thought and religion- in fact Article 1 of the law guarantees freedom of worship, provided that it does not interfere with public order. So, this separation of Church and State, preventing the State from supporting or enforcing any religion, is considered by proponents to be a prerequisite for such freedom of thought, and can in fact provide a framework for tolerance.²⁵

Laïcité relies on a clear division between a citizen’s private life, where religion dwells, and the public sphere, where proponents suggest citizens should appear as equals. It does *not* necessarily imply any hostility of the government with respect to religion. It is best

23 Georg Lentze, “Islamic headscarf debate rekindled in France” (BBC Monitoring, 2 April 2013).

24 For the full text of the 1905 law see: <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/histoire/eglise-etat/sommaire.asp>

25 It should be noted that these ideas of freedom of thought and worship existed before the 1905 law. “Freedom of thought” can be traced back to the 1789 declaration “*La Déclaration des droits de l’Homme et du citoyen*” (Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen) and “freedom of worship” to the French Constitution of 1791. Therefore, one should not argue that *laïcité* is the only way to achieve these ideals.

described as a belief that government and political issues should be kept separate from religious organizations and religious issues.²⁶

Proponents would argue that is actually a way in which religions can thrive and minorities are not oppressed. It seems at first paradoxical to say religion thrives best under secularism but in France, in general, it seems to be working. That is not to say that it works perfectly, or indeed that it would work everywhere, but is easy for outsiders to dismiss something in its entirety because they don't understand it.

Personally, I have my own disagreements with the French system- I believe that learning about the major world religions should be made a compulsory subject in all schools, and I also disagree wholeheartedly with the way that some schools in England are currently choosing only to teach their own religion. We need to find a middle ground, because ignorance of other religions can breed fear and contempt.

I found especially interesting Dr Giles Bourquin's keynote lecture on whether modernity can survive without religion. He asserted, "In modernity religion's scope is in no way closed. These questions remain open and if I understand clearly the spirit of modern secularity, it does not pretend having the role of solving them, nor to ban their expression, but rather to regulate their social expansion, preventing that a religious answer wins over any other possible answer." Again, we need to strike a balance.

The workshops were a great space to find out about how this issue is impacting on other countries. I attended workshops on "The Christian presence in the Holy Land" and "Anti-Semitism in Hungary", and I heard from other participants about the workshop on circumcision and the question of whether Israel is a secular state, and the interesting debates and indeed arguments, which ensued in both. I gave my own workshop on "Religion and Education in Secular and Religious Schools" with Dr Edouard Robberechts and it was fascinating to compare the problems we face in England (where religious education is compulsory in all schools and 35% of state schools are religious schools) with the completely different situation in France and to hear his thoughts on the lack of religious education in secular schools creating a kind of symbolic vacuum. The workshops always feel much too short but I think that's a good sign and we were able to debate the topics further over coffee breaks and lunch.

We are discussing difficult issues and inevitably we end up with more questions than we will ever have answers. It is vital that we have somewhere like this, a conference like this, where we can ask the difficult questions and learn from others whose experiences are different to our own. Since I came to my first ICCJ conference in Krakow, I have learnt more about other cultures, other religions and people in general than I could ever have learned in the classroom. None of us is perfect (except Debbie our President!), and we have so much to learn from one another and to take back to our communities and I'm grateful to the ICCJ for bringing us all together.

²⁶ In fact, it was suggested that Nicolas Sarkozy had violated the principles of *laïcité* by working with the Muslim organization UOIF in 2002. However, he replied "What does the law say? The Republic guarantees organised religious practices without favouring any single one. I devote equal energy to allow all our compatriots to live their faith." John Bowen, *Why the French don't like headscarves: Islam, the State and public space* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 100-101. Sarkozy was later criticized heavily for seemingly going back on his word and supporting the ban on the burka and niqab, although he would argue that these two attitudes were not incompatible.



Message of Rev. François Clavairoly,
elected President of the *Fédération protestante de France*.

Paris, July 20, 2013

Dear Delegates, dear Friends,

Upon your coming together to meet at an international conference in Aix en Provence, I wish to send you this message in order to joyfully and thankfully acclaim the progress made thanks to the numerous activities and faithful engagements of the ICCJ throughout the world.

As you doubtless know, for a long time the *Fédération protestante de France* has consistently accorded particular importance to dialogue and encounters with Judaism. Whether it be at the dark epoch of suffering that led up to the Second World War or of moments of intense emotion such as upon the creation of the State of Israel, be it in humble, patiently-maintained encounters or in promising junctures, it was intent on furthering solidarity and fraternity with Judaism.

Protestants, encouraged in particular by all that is accomplished within, the various groups of *Amitié judéo-chrétienne* (Judeo-Christian Friendship) during symposiums and assemblies, do not fail to take their rightful place in this ongoing task of edification of a “community of friendship” among Jews and Christians.

You are now to honour one of the founders of this community of friendship in the exceptional person of Jules Isaac. Just after the war, along with Pastor Jacques Martin and Fadiev Lovski, for the Protestants, as with so many other Christians, he created what I call a major “event of conscience” within French society.

This event is that of shared awareness that the Other is to be recognized, before God and before men in his/her radical identity. Awareness that the Other, as self-defined, should be understood and regarded with esteem, not in scorn, brings into play another vision, another attitude, thus opening up a future in humanity through true dialogue.

The demanding quest and the seriousness of Judeo-Christian dialogue, as we all are convinced, are the signs that we share not only a past and a memory, but also a present and a hopefulness whose horizon is not without the mark of reconciliation.

Today, however, in our societies pervaded by violence and ferocious hatreds that are a challenge for even the most tenacious among us, we need to regain the path to confidence and dialogue among citizens. In France – where the principle of secularity (*laïcité*) creates this possible area for a “living together” that involves all citizens, believers or non-believers and whatever their origin – there is considerable distance yet to cover, but by no

means should we become discouraged. I hence invite you to comprehend what is being lived out in this country, and particularly that curious reality which is French secularity, and to discover therein a possible track that leads toward fraternity.

May each of you, by his/her presence and commitment, contribute to furthering this fraternity and this friendship within this “journey into recognition”, to paraphrase the handsome expression by Paul Ricoeur, an increasingly authentic journey which turns each of us into a witness of a sole promise.

“May the Everlasting bless and protect you, may He shine the light of his face upon you and grant you His grace, may the Everlasting bestow upon you peace.” (Nb 6, 24-26)

Address to the ICCJ Conference, on behalf of Cardinal André Vingt-Trois by Bishop Jérôme Beau

At the conclusion of these three days of meetings, organized by the International Council of Christians and Jews, I am pleased to greet you on behalf of Cardinal André Vingt-Trois, the President of the French Bishops’ Conference, and to share his message with you.

Your gathering has been influenced by the figure of Jules Isaac, in this year which marks the fiftieth anniversary of his death. How could one not recall his book *Jésus et Israël*, and the Ten Points of the Seelisberg Conference? He was aware that everything begins with our daily work, rather than with great speeches. Fifty years later, I rejoice, together with the Amitié judéo-chrétienne, at the path we have travelled—and the path that is being sketched out for the years ahead.

The path we have travelled has, in the Catholic Church, been based on the declaration *Nostra Aetate*, which marked out an irrevocable path for the Catholic community in terms of its relationships with the Jewish community.

Over the course of many years, this path has been marked by (among other things) the journey of John Paul II to Israel and his prayer at the Western Wall, and then by the journey of Benedict XVI, which demonstrated that John Paul II’s action had not been merely the initiative of a single person, but was an expression of the friendship of the whole Church. He therefore repeated his predecessor’s actions. Today, history, and Pope Francis’s initiatives, clearly show the depth of the furrow the Church has ploughed, and the sincerity of our friendship.

Such a path of mutual esteem must now become enfolded in the reality and the ordinary life of our Church.

While the theology of substitution no longer has (and must not have, in any case) a place in the teaching and life of the Church, nevertheless we must always be attentive. Each catechetical programme is reviewed, in order to avoid any traces of that theology of substitution.

We still need to do more work in Biblical exegesis, in order to better interpret the words spoken by Jesus the Jew to his contemporaries. [An appreciation of] the Jewish exegesis of the Scriptures is still a work in progress in the Catholic Church.

This friendship has also been built up over the last ten years by the annual meetings in New York of the cardinals and bishops of various countries, visits during which we have been meeting with the leadership of Yeshiva University and other leaders of the Jewish community.

Over these three days, you have reflected on the topic of secularity. We must remind ourselves that, in a secular state, and in a society which is not secular, it is the duty of every citizen to fight against all anti-Semitism—and that is what we will always do. We must underscore as well the importance of the French initiative, undertaken by the six great religions who are present in France, to gather together, without any civil authority, to reflect together, and to work toward brotherhood and peace among all people, and also (to examine) major issues in society. This sign of brotherhood among religions is a great source of hope.

It now falls to me to warmly thank each of you for the friendship you showed in inviting us to this meeting, and I want to reassure you of my friendship and that of the whole Church for all of you, and especially for our brothers and sisters of the Jewish community, our elder brothers and sisters in faith.

Bishop Jérôme Beau
Auxiliary Bishop of Paris
On behalf of Cardinal André Vingt-Trois
July 3, 2013
Aix-en-Provence, ICCJ Conference

Wednesday, July 3, 2013

Gold medallion for Dick Pruiksm

ICCJ's outgoing General Secretary awarded

Outgoing ICCJ General Secretary Rev Dick Pruiksm was awarded the ICCJ gold medallion "Peace through Dialogue", initiated by ICCJ's Patron Sir Sigmund Sternberg. The awarding ceremony took place during the festive dinner concluding ICCJ's 2013 Aix en Provence conference.

Rev. Pruiksm has been awarded "in recognition of his dedicated initiative and drive in ensuring the continuing leadership of the ICCJ in light of the changing challenges of the 21st century." Dick Pruiksm became ICCJ's General Secretary in September 2006 after having been member of ICCJ's Executive Board and President of OJEC, the Dutch CCJ, already for many years. An ICCJ search committee will conduct job interviews with applicants for Pruiksm's job after the summer break. A decision about a successor is expected to be taken end of September. Rev. Pruiksm will be in office until the end of this year. He has been invited by the ICCJ Executive Board to serve the organisation as a consultant in the years to come.

Appendix 1

Conference outline

The ICCJ is an organization with an international perspective. We know, however, that the universal is made up of particularities and that the international reflects different national circumstances. In 2011, we explored the effects of ideologies on religions in the 20th century, through a Polish prism; in 2012, we looked at multiculturalism and social responsibility, though the situation in the UK.

In 2013 we will be in Aix-en Provence, which was the home of Jules Isaac (1877-1963), a French Jewish historian who coined the phrase “the teaching of contempt” to characterize the traditional attitude of the Church to the Jewish people and Judaism. He pioneered in the area of Christian-Jewish dialogue, which ultimately led to a refutation of this dangerous doctrine by many official Christian bodies. Isaac’s spirit will inform the conference, part of which (the annual meeting of the International Abrahamic Forum) will be devoted to confronting, honestly and unabashedly, “the teaching of contempt” towards the Other in the three Abrahamic faiths.

The main conference theme, however, will reflect its contemporary French setting and will be an exploration of the concept of *laïcité*.

What is *laïcité*? [French secularism]

The principle of *laïcité* has a long story. It means a particular regime in which State and religions are separated. In a certain sense, *laïcité* is the offspring of both the XVIIIth century philosophy and French Revolution. Indeed,

The fact that people as a whole (laos in Greek) came to be or became again the unique referent of Law modified not only the regulatory guidance of laws but also their scope and registry. The sovereign people decides its own laws and therefore cannot expand their normative power beyond what is necessary [...] or make any discriminative stipulations that could break its own unity. As the religious domain is the concern of some and not of all, it needs to have a status of a private right.

In fact, secularism finds its origin and its meaning in the proclamation that only the individuals and not the communities can have rights. For this reason, secularism particularly condemns the groups that want to dominate the individual and limit his critical mind: it stands in opposition of all clericalism (Charles Coutel). It celebrates the free exercise of human reason and its capacity to pass judgment on all things in an autonomous way, and this against all attempts of community constructions.

The history of secularism in France starts in 1905 with the law of separation between the Churches and the State. This law establishes the legal framework of our lives.

According to Article 1 of the law of separation between the Churches and the State, “the Republic ensures the freedom of conscience. It guarantees the free exercise of religions [...] in the public interest”. According to Article 2 of the same law, “the Republic does not acknowledge, remunerate or grant funds to any religious cult”.

These two articles therefore break with the past. Against all Christian (particularly Catholic) claims of introducing the truths revealed in the Gospel in the social life, the secularism regime imposes a difference between the public and the private affairs.

This new relation between the State and the religions was not without consequence on the religions themselves. Forced to redefine themselves, the religions found new ways to be present in the public sphere. Seen as equal by the public authorities, these religions acknowledged each other as partners.

Our conference will explore the relevance of a concept that developed in opposition to the integration of the state and Roman Catholicism, to a multi-cultural and multi-religious reality that includes non-Catholic Christian minorities, Jews and Muslims. The latter are especially visible in the public arena and so the challenge they pose to the separation is especially notable.

We will be particularly interested to find out how *laïcité* has affected inter-religious dialogue in France. In general, we will consider the relationship of religions to secular society and vice versa.

Olivier Rota

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

Aix-en-Provence Conference

Workshops

E = Workshop in English

F = Workshop in French

F/E = Workshop in English and French

Workshop Session A

A1 (F) Dr Edouard Robberechts

Jules Isaac : un historien laïc bouleversé par une exigence éthique

Rien ne prédisposait Jules Isaac à devenir l'homme qu'il a fini par devenir. Né dans une famille de juifs alsaciens largement assimilés, il devient un historien laïc engagé dans les grands défis républicains de l'époque. Ce n'est que confronté aux persécutions de la guerre qu'il va opérer un retournement qu'on peut qualifier d'éthique : il va découvrir les racines de la Shoah dans l'antijudaïsme chrétien et va tenter dès lors de pallier à cet enseignement du mépris criminel par une réécriture de l'histoire, et en participant à l'émergence de l'Amitié judéo-chrétienne de France.

A2 (F) Père Jean Gueit

L'orthodoxie chrétienne en France

La perception de la laïcité par l'orthodoxie en général et plus particulièrement en France.

A3 (E) The Very Reverend Hosam Naoum

The Christian Presence in the Holy Land: A voice for peace and Reconciliation

For many centuries, Jews, Christians and Muslims, have lived in the Holy Land, and still share a long history of coexistence, despite the many challenges and difficulties that faced our communities and continue to threaten the socio-religious fabric of our societies. The Christian Church in the Holy Land in particular and the East in general is authentic to the place where it started. Christians in the Holy Land believe that they have an important role to play for the wellbeing of all the peoples of the Holy Land, especially in seeking peace and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians.

The local Christian communities in the Holy Land believe that together with partners from Jewish and Muslim communities can make a difference in the Holy Land for the future generations. Our faith in the one God and our common humanity, which is created in the image and likeness of God calls us to strive for Justice and reconciliation among all nations and seek the dignity of every human person.

Come and hear the message of hope from Jerusalem, the city of hope, and join people of goodwill to work for the peace of Jerusalem.

A4 (F/E) Dr Olivier Rota

Edmond Fleg et Jules Isaac : deux contributions différentes au dialogue inter-religieux

Jules Isaac et Edmond Fleg sont les deux fondateurs de l'Amitié Judéo-chrétienne de France. Décédés l'un et l'autre en 1963, ils ont laissé derrière eux deux héritages différents qui constituent aujourd'hui les deux axes directeurs de l'AJC. Jules Isaac fut le pourfendeur de l'antisémitisme chrétien. Historien de métier, il a appliqué une méthode d'analyse originale à la tradition antijuive de l'Église, afin de muer l'« enseignement du mépris » en « enseignement de l'estime ». De son côté, Edmond Fleg a initié une véritable posture de dialogue interreligieux entre judaïsme et christianisme. Chacun à leur manière, les deux « patriarches » de l'AJC ont contribué à déterminer les éléments fondamentaux du dialogue inter-religieux tel que nous les concevons.

Edmond Fleg and Jules Isaac: two different contributions to inter-religious dialogue

Jules Isaac and Edmond Fleg are the two founders of the French Amitié Judéo-chrétienne. Both of them died in 1963. The two legacies they left behind constitute today the two mains axes of the AJC. Jules Isaac was the slayer of Christian Anti-Semitism. Being a professional historian, he applied a new method of analysis to the anti-Jewish tradition of the Church, and helped her to move from a “teaching of contempt” to a “teaching of esteem”. For his part, Edmond Fleg initiated a true posture of inter-religious dialogue between Judaism and Christianity. The two “Patriarchs” of the AJC contributed to identify the basic elements of inter-religious dialogue as we conceive it nowadays.

A5 (E) Rev. Dr. Peter A.Pettit:

New Paths – Reframing Israel's Narrative in North American Christian Communities

In North America, two crisis narratives dominate Christian efforts to understand Israel: social-justice liberals portray it as the villain in the crisis of Palestinian suffering, while Christian Zionists portray it as the vanguard of faithfulness in the crisis of global religious struggle and the focal point of God's intervention in the world's eschatological crisis. The New Paths: Christians Engaging Israel project reframes the Israel narrative from crisis to covenant, offering theological resources for dealing with Israel in more respectful and constructive terms. Dr. Pettit, a co-director of the project, will outline the program and its foundational perspectives. The workshop will also consider the role of theological approaches in addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which many understand to be primarily a secular dispute over the aspirations of two national movements.

A6. Échange informel avec Sheikh Ghassan Manasra

Au cours de ce colloque ICCJ, nous proposons à nos participants francophones un nouveau type d'atelier : la rencontre, en vue d'un échange informel, de personnalités qui vivent en Israël et qui jouent un rôle important dans notre travail inter-religieux. Lors de ce premier “échange informel”, Sheikh Ghassan Manasra, arabe israélien, musulman souffi vivant à Nazareth, sera notre invité. La traduction sera assurée.

Workshop Session B

B1 (E) Dr. Markus Himmelbauer:

Hungary's Depressingly Familiar Anti-Semitism

While a number of far-right parties in Europe run on xenophobic platforms, Jobbik in Hungary is the only parliamentary party of a European Union member state that

campaigns with openly anti-Semitic materials. Its elected officials have made anti-Semitic remarks in Parliament, including a blood libel. The party's presidential candidate, Krisztina Morvai, has referred to Israeli Jews as "lice-infested, dirty murderers".

Jobbik's rise in popularity over the last few years — with 17 percent of the population voting for Jobbik in 2010, up from 2 percent in 2006 — parallels a rise in anti-Semitic attitudes among the general population.

An ADL opinion poll found that 63 percent of Hungarians agreed with three out of four anti-Semitic statements about Jews and money, Jewish disloyalty to the state, and Jews and the Holocaust. Of the 10 European countries ADL polled for anti-Semitic sentiments, Hungary was by far the worst. By comparison, on the same scale measuring the prevalence of anti-Semitic attitudes, the Netherlands scored just 10 percent and France, 24 percent. (Michael A. Salberg ADL, NYT, April 25, 2012)

B2 (E) Sheikh Ghassan Manasra:

A Sufi Muslim Palestinian Israeli

B3 (E) Revd. Friedhelm Pieper:

Male Circumcision in Contradiction to Human Rights?

The background of an irritating debate in Germany

The workshop will provide some information about a 2012 Court Ruling in Cologne defining circumcision to contradict German Law. The ruling was followed by an intense public debate about religious freedom and Human Rights which in the end led to a clear decision by the German parliament to enable male circumcision. On the other hand the public discussion demonstrated disturbing expressions of anti-Semitism. The workshop also invites the participant to contribute experiences of discussing circumcision in their home countries.

B4 (F) Dr Liliane Vana et Blandine Chelini-Pont

Droits des Femmes

La question du voile islamique en France comme enjeu symbolique de la laïcité est à ce point emblématique qu'elle cache d'autres problématiques touchant les droits des femmes, mal cernées et mal connues; il s'agit des conflits autour du mariage et du divorce, dans par le double jeu du droit civil français, marqué par le principe constitutionnel de laïcité, et des droits religieux quand les couples se sont mariés religieusement. Les droits religieux ont-ils quelque influence dans le droit civil français ? Jusqu'où va, en droit international privé, la reconnaissance du statut marital des personnes étrangères, mariées selon des règles musulmanes? L'obligation française du mariage civil avant le mariage religieux est-elle respectée ? Le droit civil du mariage protège-t-il les femmes religieusement mariées des discriminations inscrites dans les droits religieux ? Par des exemples concrets de la vie quotidienne et de litiges jugés dans les tribunaux, les intervenantes tenteront de faire un état des lieux de la condition des femmes soumises aux traditions religieuses - juives et musulmanes - dans un pays qui normalement assure leur liberté de conscience, d'action, de consentement et de décision quant à l'exercice de leur sexualité et de leur fécondité.

B5 (E) Young Leadership Council/Rebecca Brückner:

A "Natural" Alternative to Secularity?

Laïcité has been offered as a philosophical ideal that could serve as a secular common denominator for belief within a society. Could "Natural religion" provide the same kind of

common denominator, while at the same time be rooted in a faith system? By offering “natural religion” as an alternative to secular laïcité for such a denominator, can interfaith dialogue begin to invite unique voices - from mysticism, negative theology, and other streams of spirituality - into the conversation? Would natural religion provide a way into interfaith dialogue for those who opt out of the major world religions? Is the assumption of a natural religion acceptable or even desirable to dominant faith traditions? We will explore these questions and others in dialogue with young representatives of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

B6. Échange informel avec Dr. Raymond Cohen

Au cours de ce colloque ICCJ, nous proposons à nos participants francophones un nouveau type d'atelier : la rencontre, en vue d'un échange informel, de personnalités qui vivent en Israël et qui jouent un rôle important dans notre travail inter-religieux. Lors de ce deuxième “échange informel”, Raymond Cohen, professeur émérite de l'Université Hébraïque de Jérusalem sera notre invité autour du sujet “Israël est-il un pays laïque ?”. La traduction sera assurée.

Workshop Session C

C1 (F/E) – Dr Edouard Robberechts and Francesca Frazer:

Religion and education in secular and religious schools.

It seems to us that the teaching of religion at school is confronted by a two-fold risk: in religious schools, that of teaching only one religion in a way that would tend to deny or disparage any respectful approach of other religions - or even the possibility of not having a religious belief at all; in secular schools, that of ignoring religion in general, creating ipso facto a symbolic vacuum in which any form of religiosity - and often the worst! - could intrude, since the symbolic field was held in complete disuse.

What solution is there to this two-fold risk? We intend to lead a debate, discussing the following questions: what tools can we develop to teach students a positive and critical approach to religious phenomena in its plurality, and how can we implement this in both religious and secular education?

Religion et éducation dans les écoles laïques et confessionnelles.

Il nous semble que l'enseignement de la religion dans les écoles est soumis à un double risque : dans les écoles confessionnelles, celui de n'enseigner qu'une seule religion de telle manière à ce qu'elle en vienne à nier ou à vilipender toute approche respectueuse des autres religions - ou même la possibilité de ne pas en avoir une ; dans les écoles laïques, celui de faire l'impasse sur le fait religieux en général, créant ipso facto un vide symbolique dans lequel n'importe quelle forme de religiosité – et souvent les pires ! - peut s'immiscer, puisque le champ symbolique a été maintenu en totale déshérence.

La réponse à ce double risque nous semble devoir aller dans ce sens – et c'est le débat que nous nous proposons d'animer : quels instruments pouvons-nous mettre sur pied pour enseigner aux élèves une approche positive et critique du phénomène religieux dans sa pluralité, et cela aussi bien dans l'enseignement confessionnel que dans l'enseignement laïc ?

C2 (F) Pasteur Florence Taubmann :
Controverse autour de la circoncision

L'atelier consistera à décrypter ensemble un article (qui sera traduit en anglais) écrit par un pasteur protestant français contre la pratique de la circoncision. Son argumentation, fondée sur le droit de l'enfant, la primauté du sens spirituel sur le signe charnel, et une critique de pratiques jugées plus identitaires que religieuses, appelle des réponses qui sont loin d'être simples. Car il faut en retour démystifier les mirages d'un universalisme éthique et raisonnable qui reste souvent très abstrait, et en même temps expliquer comment les pratiques singulières de chaque religion - tant qu'elles ne versent pas dans la violence et la cruauté, symbolisent une manière d'habiter le monde et d'y participer pleinement.

C3 – (E) Prof. Raymond Cohen:
Is Israel a secular state?

The workshop will explore the question of whether the cultural-ideological premises underpinning laïcité in Western societies, France and the United States uppermost, can be applied to Israel and whether the ideas and distinctions that laïcité assumes can be grafted onto the Jewish tradition. Key concepts to be considered from the Israeli perspective include state, people, religion, citizen, individual freedom, human rights, religious liberty, and constitution. While many Israelis of all religions would share Western suppositions about the meaning of these ideas, others would not. Indeed one can detect a division within Israeli society between those who follow post-Enlightenment assumptions on the religious-secular distinction and the exclusion of the public space from the intrusion of personal belief and those who are more attuned to traditional Middle Eastern principles which deny this possibility. Whether Israel should move in a Western direction involves a profound debate and vigorous political struggle that has been underway since the foundation of the State of Israel.

C4 (E) Rabbi Ehud Bandel and Dr Michael Trainor
"Promise, Land, Hope" - Engaging Genesis 12:1-3

The Jewish connection and claim to the Land of Israel dates back to Avraham. The promise of the land to him and his descendants was re-iterated by God through history. Each of the forefathers – Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov – was assured that the land would belong to their descendants. However, the promise of the land as well as God's covenant with Avraham is portrayed in a universal vision of becoming a blessing to "all the families of the earth."

This text study workshop will focus on Bereishit (Genesis) 12:1-3 and offer a Jewish and Christian engagement of the text.

One perspective will reflect on the text as an instruction to Avraham to go to the Land of Israel as a fulfillment of his spiritual destiny to bring ethical monotheism to the world.

A second approach will focus on the theological motif of eretz of the text, rather than on its geo-political implications. It will explore the meaning of 'land', 'earth' as a theological expression and its theological-ecological implications for subsequent readers of this text.

C5 (E) Brad Seligmann and Marty Rotenberg (YLC)

Faith and Identity in a Secular World: Models for Abrahamic Dialogue with College-Aged Youth

This workshop will use the Four Forms of Dialogue (as outlined by the Catholic Church) to examine different areas young adults are becoming involved in interfaith dialogue. Examples include community service, scriptural reasoning, and social activities, among others. Particular attention will be given to cases involving Jewish, Christian, and Muslim youth including MuJew at the University of Michigan, Tzedaka-Sadaqah at the University of Toronto, and the ICCJ-YLC. It will explore the mission and objectives of each organization, and include examples of successful events they have held. There will also be discussion of how each organization approaches the work and shapes the conversation within their respective communities and how they cooperate with the secular societies or public universities within which they function.

C6. Échange informel avec le Révérend Canon Hosam Naoum

Au cours de ce colloque ICCJ, nous proposons à nos participants francophones un nouveau type d'atelier : la rencontre, en vue d'un échange informel, de personnalités qui vivent en Israël et qui jouent un rôle important dans notre travail inter-religieux. Lors de ce troisième "échange informel", le Révérend Canon Hosam Naoum, de l'Église Anglicane de Jérusalem sera notre invité autour du sujet "La présence chrétienne en Terre Sainte : une voix pour la paix et la réconciliation". La traduction sera assurée.

Appendix 3

The 2013 Aix-en-Provence Planning committee

(in alphabetical order)

Liliane Apotheker

France, Chair of the Committee, Executive Board Member of ICCJ.

Bruno Charmet

France, Director of the Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France

Dick Pruikma

Netherlands, ICCJ General Secretary

Edouard Robberechts

France, Interuniversity Institute of Jewish Studies & Culture

Florence Taubmann

France, President of the Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France

Rosine Voisin

France, Board member of the Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne de France

Deborah Weissman

Israel, ICCJ President

Appendix 4

ICCJ Executive Board

Dr Deborah Weissman, Israel

President

Rabbi Ehud Bandel, Israel

1st Vice President

Dr Philip Cunningham, USA

2nd Vice President

Dr Abi Pitum, Germany

Treasurer

Liliane Apotheker, France

Member

Rev. David Gifford, UK

Member

Rev. Dr Michael Trainor, Australia

Member

Appendix 5

ICCJ Conference staff

Rev. Dick Pruikma

ICCJ General Secretary

Ms Ute Knorr

ICCJ Secretary

Ms Petra Grünwald-Stangl

ICCJ Staff member

Dr Karine Michel

Coordinator

Ms Danièle Martin

Translation

Ms Danielle Vergniol

Translation

Impressions of the Conference / Impressions de la Conférence

Sunday/ Dimanche



Opening Session / Ouverture



Dr Edouard Robberechts

Monday / Lundi



Camp des Milles



*Plenary Session with / Séance Plénière
avec Fr. P. Desbois, L. Apotheker, Dr A. Chouraqui*

Monday evening / Lundi soir



with / avec Rose Bacot

Tuesday / Mardi

Tuesday workshops / Ateliers mardi



*Sheikh G. Manasra:
'A Sufi Muslim Palestinian Israeli'*



*N. Iarchy-Zucker, Dr L. Vana,
Dr B. Chelini-Pont : 'Droits des femmes'*

Tuesday evening / Mardi soir



Jardin Vendôme

Wednesday evening / Mercredi soir



La Bastide

Wednesday evening / Mercredi soir



Rev. Dick Pruiksmas

Thursday / Jeudi



*Annual General Meeting / Réunion
générale annuelle*

Photos : AJCF (Rosine Voisin) / ICCJ