



## Dabru Emet: A German Perspective. Results of a Research Period in the USA

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### ***Dabru Emet: A German Perspective***

#### **Results of a Research Period in the USA**

Although it has hardly been noticed so far by the general public, September 10, 2000 is an important date for Jewish-Christian dialogue. On this day, which was the eve of Yom Kippur, *Dabru Emet* was published in the New York Times, taking up a whole page. It is a document intended to introduce a new phase in Jewish-Christian dialogue. Along with the document, the names of the four authors were published along with those of 170 signatories, including some from Canada, Great Britain and Israel. At the same time, the text was published in the internet.<sup>1</sup> The Statement with the Hebrew title *Dabru Emet*, in English, "Speak Truth", was published and sponsored by the Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies in Baltimore as a "National Project of Jewish Scholars".

"*Dabru Emet* is a Jewish reaction to the positive development that has been happening - in spite of all steps backwards, which are always a reason for lament - in Christian-Jewish relations since the Shoah. The Jewish authors call upon their community to speak the truth and to relinquish their fear and distrust towards Christians. The efforts made by the churches to improve their relationship with the Jewish people and with Judaism should finally be acknowledged. The document itself practiced what it preaches to others. Like hardly any other Jewish text, it is a proof of the enormous change that has happened in the relationship between Jews and Christians."<sup>2</sup>

I was impressed by the fact that, after a great number of Christian statements from all the churches on a new relationship with Jews and Judaism, for the first time a group of Jewish scholars were pleading in favor of a new relationship with Christians and Christianity; and I was impressed by the weight of their arguments. So from October 28 to December 14, 2001, I went to the United States to do research there on the genesis of *Dabru Emet* and on how it was received in both Jewish and Christian circles. In addition, I wanted to get to know better the Christian-Jewish relations in the USA, where far more Jews live than in Israel, and I wanted to sound out possibilities for scholarly cooperation, not least because without international relations, Christian-Jewish dialogue in Germany has no future. On the background of my experiences in the discussion group "Jews and Christians" in the Central Committee of German Catholics, which I have been coordinating since 1974,<sup>3</sup> and of my long friendship and collaboration with Jewish colleagues from the United States (above all with Jakob J. Petuchowski and Michael Signer), I was interested in points the two countries have in common and in differences between them as regards Christian-Jewish relations and in possibilities for mutual enrichment.

My thanks go to Michael Signer, Professor of Jewish Thought and Culture at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, for the decisive help I needed for my research plan. He has been teaching in

the Theological Department of this Catholic university for the past ten years. He is the initiator and one of the authors of *Dabru Emet*. Ever since his time as a student, he has known Christian theology and the Catholic church very well, and he is known in the USA, Israel, Germany and Poland as a pioneer in Christian-Jewish dialogue. He let me use his files and his personal library, he obtained for me the status of a Visiting Scholar at Notre Dame, and above all, he opened the doors for me to his most important Jewish and Christian dialogue partners in Chicago, New York, Boston, Baltimore, Washington D.C. and Los Angeles. I also owe my relationship with John T. Pawlikowski to him; on the Christian side, he is the one with whom I had the most intense conversations, and I spent ten days as a guest in his religious community. He is professor of ethics at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, and for years he has been considered to be the best known Christian expert in Christian-Jewish dialogue in the country.<sup>4</sup> In addition, my dialogue partners gave me the opportunity to lecture,<sup>5</sup> invited me to speak with groups involved in dialogue,<sup>6</sup> and above all, to two important conferences: on the first day of my time in the States to the first meeting of the Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations in New York, and later to a conference of the Christian Scholars Group on Judaism and the Jewish People in Baltimore, which is working on a Christian answer to *Dabru Emet*. Thus, I was given the unique opportunity of speaking at length and in open insider discussions with outstanding experts and to find out far more than a lonely foreign scholar could have discovered in libraries and archives.

In what follows, I want first of all to present my specific project *Dabru Emet* and then to describe the general goal of my research: to examine Christian-Jewish relations in the USA as compared to European relations; in conclusion, I will name priorities for theological research on Christian-Jewish relations.

## 1. Presentation of *Dabru Emet*

The publication of *Dabru Emet* on September 10, 2000 was overshadowed by two Roman events. A week earlier, John Paul II had beatified two of his predecessors: John XXIII, a friend of the Jews and a builder of bridges between our religions, and Pius IX, who by word and deed had worked against the "Judaization of society" and demolished many bridges to the Jews. Two days later, the prefect of the Congregation for the Faith, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, published the declaration "*Dominus Iesus: Declaration on the University and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*", which had already been ratified by the Pope in June. The declaration, which claims an exclusive universality of salvation through the work of redemption of Jesus Christ and the Roman Catholic church, and which therefore denies other Christian churches the title of "church in the true sense", was also understood as a denial of Judaism as a divine path to salvation, although the Jews are not mentioned explicitly. These events were seen as a contradiction of the often attested acknowledgment through this same pope of the covenant with the people of Israel which has never been revoked; they were also seen as a contrast to the moving symbolic actions of the pope which had moved the world just a few months earlier: his public confession in St. Peter's of the Catholic church's historical guilt and his pilgrimage to Jerusalem. This chance combination shows clearly the lack of concurrence and the contradictoriness in the process of reconciliation between Jews and Christians, for which John Paul II is an unequalled pioneer.

### 1.1 How *Dabru Emet* came to be

But *Dabru Emet* is not a statement on current events. Its genesis goes back six years. The Jewish Scholars Study Group on Christianity, which was sponsored by the Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies in Baltimore, was formed in 1994. After a first discussion phase on academic presentations, there was a clarification process in view of the group's self-understanding. Only those remained in the group who, because of their religious conviction and with existential commitment, were interested in a re-definition of Jewish identity and in an opening towards

Christianity, who understood their academic profession as a vocation. Others left the group later because of a fundamental, objective disagreement concerning the project. The majority in the group did not (yet) believe in a fundamental change within the churches where Judaism was concerned. Finally, of the 30 members only the four authors of *Dabru Emet* were left; they co-opted Rabbi David Sandmel of the Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies as their moderator and coordinator. The group needed almost two years to realize the idea which had gone out from Signer: to develop the statement *Dabru Emet* and to publish a scholarly commentary: *Christianity in Jewish Terms*.<sup>7</sup>

Before the publication, the authors, who belong to different Jewish denominations, sent their statement to rabbis and scholars and invited them to sign - but it was not possible for them to modify the text. To the authors' own surprise, they received about 170 affirmative answers from representatives of all the denominations within American Judaism, including also twenty Orthodox Jews. The thirty negative responses chiefly had to do with the thesis on the Holocaust: they thought that in this passage the churches were being dismissed from their responsibility too soon and too easily. By way of internet, more people of importance from the USA, Europe and Israel responded positively to the document within a short time. Thus, the agreement is with the text as a whole, although many signatories disagreed with individual statements or phrasing. Furthermore, much of the wording shows that the text is the product of compromises, because the authors themselves were also not always of the same opinion. The inner-Jewish controversies among them were often greater than the Jewish-Christian controversies. After the publication of *Dabru Emet* and *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, the group disbanded.

### 1.2 Intention and Content

After speaking of the genesis of the document, we shall introduce its intention, character and content. "In recent years, there has been a dramatic and unprecedented shift in Jewish and Christian relations. . . . In the decades since the Holocaust, . . . Christianity has changed dramatically. . . . We believe these changes merit a thoughtful Jewish response. Speaking only for ourselves - an interdenominational group of Jewish scholars - we believe it is time for Jews to learn about the efforts of Christians to honor Judaism. We believe it is time for Jews to reflect on what Judaism may now say about Christianity. As a first step, we offer eight brief statements about how Jews and Christians may relate to one another."<sup>8</sup> This introductory passage from *Dabru Emet* catches our attention in a number of ways:

- The fundamental process of renewal in the Christian churches since the Shoah is, in the opinion of the authors and signatories, a sufficient reason for Jews to end the centuries-old suspicion towards Christianity and the fear of its threat, to trust Christianity's conversion and to open themselves to Christianity.
- The document's first addressee is Judaism, which is being invited to a new acknowledgment of Christianity. Further, churches and Christians are also asked to collaborate in a new phase of the relationship.
- The authors and co-signatories speak in their own name, not with the authority of a large religious association or of other Jewish organizations.
- *Dabru Emet* understands itself to be a "first step" in a process, not a concluding answer. This document is also a first step because until now, there was nothing like it. Only three times before had Jewish organizations commented on the Christian-Jewish relationship, as can be seen in the collection of documents, *Die Kirchen und das Judentum*.<sup>9</sup> These statements are positive critical acknowledgments of Christian declarations, but they do not state their own position as to Jewish self-understanding as regards Christianity.
- *Dabru Emet* wants to initiate controversial discussion. General agreement or rejection of the text or of individual theses does not do it justice. The eight statements do not give answers - this is how it is to be and nothing else. Rather, according to Signer, they are meant to be understood in the sense of the great scholastic tradition, as "Quaestiones

disputatae”, that is to say, as questions which are brought forward for discussion together with arguments for and against.

- The declaration emphasizes the positive elements which can open up and be the foundation for a new relationship between Jews and Christians, rather than presenting a negative balance sheet which could justify the continuation of distrust and limiting oneself to one’s own area. The text makes it clear that the burden of history may not be forgotten and that abiding differences are to be affirmed for the sake of preserving identity and for honesty in dialogue. But according to the authors, both of these may no longer stand in the way of the relationship with one another or of the common relationship with society.
- The declaration invites one to religious reflection and was not written with a political intent. Both the title *Dabru Emet* - a quotation from Zech 8:16: "Speak the truth to one another" - and the last passage in the statement: a vision of the prophet Isaiah (Isa 2:2f.) which expresses the hope that is common to Jews and Christians - are evidence of this. That is why the only possible partners in dialogue are those who acknowledge God’s abiding covenant with the Jewish people (Introduction).

The contents and order of the eight theses correspond to the document’s religious intent. The following points are named as the foundations for Judaism’s renewed relationship with Christianity: belief in the same God (Thesis 1), the common reference to the Hebrew Bible (Thesis 2), the common acknowledgment of the ethical principles of the Torah (Thesis 4), and the common task in the world for justice and peace (Thesis 8). For the authors, the theocentric foundation was decisive: the acknowledgment and adoration of the One God (Thesis 1) is the point of departure for all other theological, historical and ethical questions. "Hot potatoes" were also picked up, for example, the non-appealable differences between Jews and Christians in their understanding of God, the Bible and redemption, or the relationship of the churches to National Socialism (Thesis 5). The text says clearly what Jews expect of Christians today: above all, that they refrain from missionary activity among Jews, the acknowledgment of their religious independence (Theses 6 and 7), and respect for the claim of the Jewish people on the Land of Israel (Thesis 3). With this, some topics are mentioned which do not appear in *Nostra aetate*, but which cannot be left out of a dialogue which takes seriously the self-understanding of the Jewish partner. The Council did not say anything about Judaism’s value as an expression of God’s love. The Council did strongly condemn Antisemitism, but it said nothing about the Church’s co-responsibility for the spread of contempt and hatred, thus fostering the extermination of the Jews through the Nazis. The Council also said nothing about the State of Israel, the existence of which was not at all secure at that time.<sup>10</sup>

In conclusion, we quote again Werner Trutwin, a Catholic member of our discussion group: "Thus, a concentrated text was created which can give a solid foundation for the further development of Jewish-Christian relations. The text is also very appropriate for work in parishes or in religious education. . . . Christians should . . . receive *Dabru Emet* as an important contribution to interfaith discussion. . . . Christians can agree with the fair Jewish description of the relationship. They should courageously take hold of the hand that is stretched out and do everything to foster the common cause."<sup>11</sup>

### 1.3 Publications accompanying the document

As the publication in the New York Times (the real contemporary Bible) shows, *Dabru Emet* is directed towards the wider public. As was already mentioned, the four authors of *Dabru Emet* together with their moderator David Sandmel had thought of an extensive volume (438 pages): *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, which they edited and published in the fall of 2000. The book is a scholarly commentary on *Dabru Emet* and is directed towards the academic community, first for Jewish scholars, but then also for Christian historians and theologians. The 32 authors refrain for the most part from using technical jargon so that their contributions can also be understood by interested scholars in other fields of study. Each chapter is dedicated to a topic from *Dabru Emet*.

At the beginning of each chapter, a Jewish author discusses how Jewish tradition allows one to gain access to the Christian way of understanding, and then points out the questions which need more thorough research. A second contribution, which usually deals with a more specific aspect, then gives a supplementary point of view. A third contribution by a Christian colleague then discusses to what extent Christian theology feels correctly understood in the Jewish presentation and then goes on to complete or correct what has been said by the Jewish writers. One striking thing is that the Jewish authors work intensively with the sources of Christian faith, whereas the Christian authors refer only rarely to rabbinic texts.

The title *Christianity in Jewish Terms* correctly characterizes the leading interest in this entirely new enterprise.<sup>12</sup> For until now, Christianity was presented to Jews only in Christian-metaphysical terminology and in modern times in secular terms, and this was an obstacle to their understanding (not their agreeing!) right from the outset. Christian formulae like Incarnation, Trinity, Original Sin were, for Jews, signals from a strange world, as were the categories of German Idealism such as God as the Absolute or the confrontation of the particularistic Jewish religion with the universal Christian one. That is why the editors and authors of *Christianity in Jewish Terms* tried to look for things in their own tradition which would correspond to or be analogous to Christian expressions of belief, so as to begin a constructive conversation with Christians about their self-understanding: "We believe it is time for Jews to learn about Christianity in Jewish terms: to rediscover the basic categories of rabbinic Judaism and to hear what the basic categories of Christian belief sound like when they are taught in terms of this rabbinic Judaism. To hear Christianity in our terms is truly to understand it, perhaps for the first time."<sup>13</sup>

It arouses curiosity when we hear the editors of *Christianity in Jewish Terms* say about themselves that the work in the Jewish Scholars Group became a challenge to them to think about their own faith in a new and deeper way. Thus, they say that the first goal of their book is: "How to renew our understanding of Judaism today from out the sacred texts?"<sup>14</sup> From the deepened self-understanding, they dare to go so far as to ask: "Does Jewish tradition contain a warrant for acknowledging Christian claims to be in covenant with the God of Israel?"<sup>15</sup> A question on the side: Is this true in the same way for the relationship of both to Islam?

Another publication was already announced in the foreword to *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, the book *Irreconcilable Differences*,<sup>16</sup> a learning resource for school and catechesis. In May 2000, the three editors, who belong to the Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies in Baltimore, founded a group of university lecturers who, in months of intensive collaboration, put this volume together and published it in the summer of 2001. Most of the topics in *Dabru Emet* and *Christianity in Jewish Terms* are also discussed in this book, and they are developed in view of their importance for religious self-understanding, Christian-Jewish dialogue and personal and societal life questions. The group received important stimulus from the Christian and Jewish Educators Study Group, which is also situated in the Baltimore institute.

#### 1.4 An Invitation to Discussion

For the sake of a fruitful examination of *Dabru Emet*, some general questions could be named; the two accompanying books contribute to the discussion:

- Is the change (t'shuvah) in Christianity's teaching and practice radical enough, and in spite of some setbacks, does it deserve so much trust that the time is ripe for a Jewish answer?
- Are the eight theses, some of which have to do with doctrine and argue in a biblical-systematic way, and some of which concern religious practice and find support in historical arguments and experiences from practical life, really the decisive questions in view of a new relationship of Jews to Christianity?
- Do the irreconcilable differences between Judaism and Christianity prohibit a reconciled

- working and living together and common action in the world?
- The different addressees of *Dabru Emet*, *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, and *Irreconcilable Differences* raise the question: What absolutely must be done by scholars, by others in the family and in school, in the working world and in public life so as to fulfill their responsibility for their own religious identity and for a constructive relationship with people of other faiths? Since these are fundamental matters which don't depend on a particular situation, are such demands also valid in countries where there are no or only a few Jews (or Christians, as in Israel)?
  - In the meantime, we have experienced that Jews have things to say to Christians which are essential for their faith and which only Jews can say to them.<sup>17</sup> But is this also true the other way around, even though the relationship of the two religions is asymmetrical? Christianity is rooted in Judaism and remains so, otherwise it would lose its identity, whereas Judaism does not owe its identity to its relationship with Christianity.

## 2. How *Dabru Emet* was received

The for the initiators of *Dabru Emet* surprisingly large number of co-signatories, were a first hopeful signal. The fact that it was widely reported in the Jewish, Christian and secular press in the USA was also positive. Almost all Christian comments expressed enthusiastic agreement, whereas some Jewish statements reacted with violent protest. However, during my time in the United States more than a year after its publication, I came to see that neither in Christian nor in Jewish circles had *Dabru Emet* really "arrived" or called forth lasting attention. Other explosive current events were in the foreground of Jewish-Christian relations on both sides: the beatification of Pius IX, the declaration of the Roman Congregation for the Faith, "Dominus Iesus", and the failure of the Jewish-Catholic historians' commission for the study of the Vatican's role during World War II. As of last year, political events were added: the sharpening of the conflict in the Middle East and September 11, 2001.

### 2.1 Jewish Reception

In a lecture in Denmark on November 6, 2001, Rabbi David Rosen, a representative of modern Orthodoxy and President of the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ), gave a detailed positive appreciation of *Dabru Emet*.<sup>18</sup> He is one of the few non-Americans who signed *Dabru Emet*. In contrast to Joseph Soloveitchik, who is also a modern Orthodox rabbi and who already decades ago decidedly refused religious dialogue between Jews and Christians, David Rosen speaks in favor of a complementary witness of Jews and Christians in the world and he quotes Pope John Paul II: "Jews and Christians are called (as the children of Abraham) to be a blessing for humankind. In order to be so, we must first be a blessing to one another."

None of the associations of rabbis and synagogues in the various denominations of American Judaism and none of the big socio-politically involved organizations like the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League came out with a statement. The co-signatories as well hardly took any initiative in bringing about discussion of *Dabru Emet* in their respective areas or in developing an educational program on it. In Europe, *Dabru Emet* was published in various languages, but it was not discussed.<sup>19</sup> At the important Catholic-Jewish congress in Paris in January 2002, which was attended by top-ranking people, it was only mentioned in a side comment. In marginal conversations during the congress, people confirmed what I suspected, that *Dabru Emet* was so far not known in the French- and German-speaking countries.

In American Judaism, *Dabru Emet* repeatedly also met with violent rejection. It is above all the first thesis, that "Jews and Christians worship the same God", which encounters criticism, because the trinitarian understanding of God is seen to be irreconcilable with Jewish monotheism. But there is even greater criticism of the fifth thesis, that "Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon". This (abbreviated) phrase as well as the more differentiated explanation of the thesis are understood to

be playing down the Church's responsibility before and during the Nazi regime.<sup>20</sup>

The sharpest criticism came from Jon D. Levenson, the Albert A. List Professor of Jewish Studies at the Harvard Divinity School, in his sarcastic commentary. His contribution, entitled "How Not to Conduct Jewish-Christian Dialogue", was published in December 2001 in *Commentary*, a periodical which is known for its rejection of Christian-Jewish dialogue. The author calls *Dabru Emet* "hazards to Jewish practice and identity" and a "whistling in the dark".<sup>21</sup> He did not at all enter into the fact that *Dabru Emet* ascertains a radical change in Christianity as regards Judaism over the past decades; instead, he quotes anti-Jewish statements of the Church from earlier times. Levenson's sharpest rejection of Christian-Jewish dialogue is formulated in his discussion of the seventh thesis: "A new relationship of Jews and Christians will weaken Jewish practice." Because the "instinctive repugnance" between Jews and Christians is weakened through dialogue and is further weakened through *Dabru Emet*, because the irreconcilable contrasts between both religions are evened out, the Jewish minority would lose more and more followers through mixed marriages with non-Jews and through assimilation in the society which has been marked by Christianity. For Levenson, the consequence is withdrawal to one's own community and the rejection of dialogue on matters of belief. Levenson's contribution aroused some irritation, but in spite of or maybe because of his on-sidedness, it furthered the discussion around *Dabru Emet*.

However, behind the scenes, I could also hear some hopeful signals during my trip as regards the reception of *Dabru Emet* and *Christianity in Jewish Terms*. In Chicago and Los Angeles, I was invited by the American Jewish Committee to a meeting with rabbis and other important Jewish people where I was to introduce our discussion group's theological work and we could talk together about goals and topics for Jewish-Christian dialogue in the United States. Both times, the religious and/or theological sharing of ideas was foremost. The Jewish participants in the discussion agreed unanimously with our discussion group's maxim, "Coming together for the sake of God". I learned there that reflection on and deepening of religious tradition is becoming more and more important for the self-understanding of American Jews, for the relationship between Christians and Jews and for their common involvement in their country, whereas in the past, mainly socio-political topics such as the relationship to the Shoah and to the State of Israel were in the foreground. It was also said that the religious dimension needs to be emphasized more and deepened in the future so that the young generation can form a strong Jewish identity. For this, it was felt that *Dabru Emet* was setting a pioneering signal and that the experience of the German discussion group gave confirmation.

My meeting with Dr. Eugene Korn at the seat of the Anti-Defamation League in New York was in the same atmosphere. In November, there was the annual meeting of the Association of Rabbis and Synagogues of the liberal direction. A whole day was spent working on *Dabru Emet*. The main speaker was Michael Signer who is himself a liberal rabbi and theologian. His final thesis met with much agreement: "If we Jews take Christianity seriously, this will be shown by our studying it. Because for us Jews, learning and prayer are the central religious acts." For me, these were first signs that in future, representatives of the large Jewish organizations will also work with *Dabru Emet*.

## 2.2 Christian Reception

In contrast to the restrained echo from American Judaism, the first addressees of *Dabru Emet*, there was an enthusiastic echo from high Church authorities. Clearly, after their numerous declarations, the churches had been waiting for a Jewish response for quite a while. They saw *Dabru Emet* not only as an historic document, but as the beginning of a new phase in Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Already on November 1, 2000, the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, of which William Cardinal Keeler, the

Archbishop of Baltimore, is the president, sent a message to the authors. The bishops compared *Dabru Emet* with the Seelisberg Theses,<sup>22</sup> in which in 1947 an international group of Christians and Jews had formulated a prophetic statement for a new relationship of the churches with Judaism. In spite of initial opposition, it is believed that in the long run, these theses even had an influence on declarations of the World Council of Churches and on *Nostra aetate*. The commission is hoping for a similar effect now, as well: "*Dabru Emet* will surely and quite rightly be the first item on the agenda of many a dialogue in the years ahead. It is already on the agenda, for example of the ongoing dialogue between our Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and the National Council of Synagogues." A few months later, Cardinal Keeler did invite Michael Signer and Eugene Fisher, the secretary of the Commission, to a meeting, but only half an hour was allowed for presenting *Dabru Emet*.

On February 24, 2001, in Houston, Texas, the Interfaith Relations Commission of the National Council of Churches of Christ wrote an ecumenical answer to *Dabru Emet*. The commission recommended to all Christians that they study this text attentively and that they accept the invitation to further dialogue. They expressed the conviction that *Dabru Emet* gives a very good basis for further Jewish-Christian dialogue and that it should be put on the agenda of interfaith dialogue at all levels.

On April 25, 2001, the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, George L. Carey, spoke of *Dabru Emet* at Washington's College of Preachers as "an immensely exciting and hopeful initiative from the Jewish community" and in his lecture, he discussed the document's central statements.

In November 2001, Walter Cardinal Kasper gave a direction-setting talk on Jewish-Christian dialogue in the Israel Museum in Israel; in that talk, the only non-Roman source referred to was *Dabru Emet*, of which he quoted four entire paragraphs (the ones concerning the same God, the common authority of the Hebrew Bible and of the Torah, and collaboration for justice and peace).

I experienced the most thorough study of *Dabru Emet* and *Christianity in Jewish Terms* in November 2001 at a closed meeting of the Christian Scholars Group on Jews and Judaism in Baltimore. Since 1978, the Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies sponsors this group, which also meets on their premises. The members of this group have dared to take courageous steps towards a change in Christian theology as a result of a renewed and positive way of seeing Judaism. The most important point on the agenda of this closed meeting was the second reading of a Christian response to *Dabru Emet*, a project that should be completed soon. I was invited to participate in their ongoing work as a corresponding member. The draft allows us to hope for a positive assessment of *Dabru Emet*. Several members of the group are heads of academic centers for Christian-Jewish studies, many of them have been partners in dialogue with the authors of *Dabru Emet*, for example John Pawlikowski from Chicago,<sup>23</sup> Mary Boys from New York, and Philip Cunningham from Boston. This also explains why, at the first informal meeting of about twenty centers for Christian-Jewish studies, *Dabru Emet* was seen as a new phase in Christian-Jewish relations. This meeting in New York on October 28/29, 2001 was my first experience during my research stay. During the weeks following the meeting, I could see with many of the participants at the conference how serious they were in their acceptance.

### 2.3 Future Perspectives

Since the beginning of this year, several one-day specialist conferences on *Dabru Emet* are being prepared in other countries as well: in November 2002, a conference at the Catholic Diocesan Academy in Aachen, led by Dr. Hans Hermann Henrix, to which authors of *Dabru Emet* have been invited; also with authors of *Dabru Emet*, a conference in Munich in the spring of 2003, which is being organized in collaboration between the discussion group "Jews and Christians" and the Bavarian Academy. The beginning of June 2002, there will be a discussion between experts in Cracow; Polish, American and German professors have been invited by the vice-rector of the



Pontifical Academy in Cracow, Prof. Lukasz Kamikowski. At the same time, Dr. Ron Kronish, together with the International Council of Christians and Jews and the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati has invited to an international conference in Jerusalem on *Dabru Emet*.

After a longer period of incubation, will the seed of *Dabru Emet* germinate in the United States, Europe and Israel?

### 3. Christian-Jewish Relations in the USA - a Comparison

After looking at my special research project, *Dabru Emet*, let us now widen our perspective to look at the broader issue I wanted to study, Christian-Jewish relations in the United States. Through my trip, I came to the realization that *Dabru Emet* could only be written in the USA. In order to justify this thesis, we must examine more closely the advantages of North American Judaism and the development of Jewish-Christian dialogue there. Then, at the end of this section, we will be able to assess better the risk of *Dabru Emet* and the resistance to its reception.

#### 3.1 The Novelty of *Dabru Emet*

The observation that *Dabru Emet* has so far not found more resonance in the Jewish community, is an indication of how courageous and new the initiative is, even if there were many co-signatories.

The topic is new: a Jewish statement on Christians and Christianity. In the past, Jews saw no reason for this, and most of them still don't to this day. After the Shoah, the churches learned in an arduous process that in reflecting on its mystery, in developing its identity and its mission and in carrying out its liturgy, the Church must always remember its Jewish roots. They came to the realization that they cannot do without the abiding connection with Judaism, not only with the Old Testament. An anti-Jewish or a-Jewish church would be a contradiction per se. Jews have given Christian theologians and churches decisive help in discovering and working on the anti-Jewish roots and tendencies in Christianity. There is no corresponding need on the Jewish side. For Judaism, the relationship to Christianity is not a constitutive topic in reflecting on itself. For this reality, Zwi Werblowski coined the title "asymmetry" of the Christian-Jewish relationship. Judaism does not encounter Christianity when studying its own tradition, but rather as part of its "environment", which throughout its history was mostly experienced as hostile. That is why the elementary interest of Jews in Christianity is not in the area of religious dialogue to enrich their faith, but first and foremost in view of a peaceful existence after the Shoah. They need the certainty that a life-threatening attack coming from a Christian civilization, which they would again have to face without power and helplessly, will no longer be possible in future, because the root of the evil has been eradicated.

The intention of *Dabru Emet* is new: The authors go beyond the defensive purpose, "Never again Auschwitz!" They are seeking a new relationship with a Christianity, which has proven its will for conversion over the past decades, even though in the pluralistic reality of Christianity we cannot speak of a general conversion.<sup>24</sup> They dare to take this step although the decisions of the church leadership have certainly not reached all the congregations, not even all the theology professors and clergy. While they were working on *Dabru Emet* and already for years before that, the authors of the document had encouraging experiences in dialogue with their Christian partners, and they want to pass these on as an invitation to the Jewish community. They have learned that theological study of Christianity enriches their own faith and their understanding of faith, because the God of Israel is apparently also active in Christianity and has brought forth fruit there that can also become a gift for Jews.

The group, which has spoken out in *Dabru Emet* and *Christianity in Jewish Terms* is new. The four

authors of *Dabru Emet* describe themselves as "Speaking only for ourselves - an interdenominational group of Jewish scholars". Prof. Tikva Frymer-Kensky from Chicago is a Conservative Jew. Prof. Peter Ochs from Virginia, a pupil of the Orthodox scholar Michael Wyschogrod, does not consider himself as belonging to any denomination. Prof. David Novak from Toronto is a rabbi and part of the leadership of the Union for Traditional Judaism. Prof. Michael Signer is a rabbi and a member of the Reform Movement. David Fox Sandmel is a rabbi in the Reform Movement. As academics who are all involved in non-Jewish institutions, they can speak independently. Incidentally, the fact that they are employed by Christian universities shows to what extent the attitude of Christianity towards Judaism has changed in the United States. The Jewish Scholars Study Group on Christianity wanted to be independent of representative Jewish organizations, not bound by any official directives or subject to the compromises of an institution. But the members gave themselves obligations and constituted a formal group. Aside from the qualification for Jewish studies and a scholarly interest in research, they expected a religious, existential interest both in Judaism and in Christianity from one another. Both the individuals and the group were marked by collaboration over many years, by their common religious passion and their intensive dialogue with Christian (and for some also with Muslim) scholars. This is what gives them their particular characteristic as compared to individual Jewish scholars such as Jakob J. Petuchowski, David Flusser, Irving Greenberg or Michael S. Kogan, who have published research on the relationship of Jews to Christianity and on basic orientations for a Jewish theology of Christianity.<sup>25</sup> This also differentiates them from specialist conferences, where scholars get together for a few days to work out a theological statement.

Much of the factual argumentation and of the theses in *Dabru Emet* and *Christianity in Jewish Terms* is not entirely new; much of it was already said before by individual Jewish scholars and Jewish-Christian groups.<sup>26</sup> But so far, there was no formal Jewish group which elaborated a declaration on the relationship of Judaism to Christianity. In addition, there is the special characteristic of an interdenominational group, which made it possible for so many co-signatories from the whole spectrum of Judaism and from over and beyond the national boundaries to agree. The reason why this initiative was taken precisely in the United States, and why it was only possible there and at this point in time, is not only due to the authors, but also to the unique conditions of North American Judaism and of the Christian-Jewish relationship there.

### 3.2 The Strength, Vitality and Diversity of American Judaism

Whoever wants to get to know the Judaism of our time in its wide diversity and its self-confident vitality must live in the USA or go there. After our discussion group's trips to Israel, the USA, Poland, Hungary and France, my research time in the USA confirmed this in an impressive way. If Christians want to follow John Paul II's instruction given in 1980 in Mainz, of seeking dialogue not only with the Scriptures of the Hebrew Bible, but above all with the Judaism that is alive today,<sup>27</sup> they can do so only partially in Europe and Israel.

The annihilation of two-thirds of European Jewry brought about the end of the long "European era" of Jewish history in which Germany had an outstanding role. Since the 1840's, the three modern Jewish religious currents developed in Germany, and it is there that they reached their peak: Reform Judaism, Conservative Judaism and modern Orthodox Judaism. During the 19th and into the 20th century, Germany was the center of scholarly work on Judaism and of modern rabbinical formation. The beginnings of Christian-Jewish dialogue go back essentially to Leo Baeck, who worked above all in Berlin. German Judaism, where modern Judaism originated, was exterminated by the Shoah and no longer exists. Even if there are now again 100,000 Jews living in Germany, three quarters of them are immigrants from Russia who have been uprooted from their Jewish origins and hardly show any interest in religious life. They are the cause of tremendous problems of integration in the congregations and at present absorb almost all the energy. That is why there are only a few and ever fewer partners for Jewish-Christian dialogue in Germany.

In France, the European country with the most Jews, the Jewish part of the population is concentrated in Paris. Reform Judaism is becoming more important because of immigration from North African countries, but it is nowhere near as solid as in the USA. The interest in liberal congregations is probably due to the search for identity among French-speaking Jews who immigrated already a generation ago and who do not feel at home with the rigorous fundamentalism of Lubavich Chassidism. In Great Britain, the struggles between modern Orthodoxy and Reform Judaism cause many losses. In the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Communism cut the Jews off from international developments and forced them into the situation of a harassed and suppressed minority, because the regimes identified Judaism with Zionism and Zionism with Capitalism and therefore despised it. In these countries, the Jewish part of the population must still find its identity and its self-confidence. In Europe, the different languages make vital sharing and international meetings more difficult, so that Christian-Jewish relations are limited for the most part to the area of one's own language.

In Israel, where Judaism has reached a new height, most energies are absorbed by the integration of the many immigrants from every country and by the constant political conflict, which means that there is hardly room for new religious attempts such as in the United States. In addition, there is in Israel only a small minority of Christians, and it is getting ever smaller, and most of them speak Arabic. Nevertheless, Jerusalem is important for Christian-Jewish dialogue. For decades now, highly motivated and committed young people, coming in particular from German-speaking countries, make use of the educational and study programs (for example, "Studium in Israel"). They seek dialogue, get to know Judaism and pass on their knowledge above all in the educational system.

In spite of these structural difficulties, a strong Christian-Jewish movement has developed in Europe. Anti-Jewish incidents, which still happen, are becoming more rare and above all, in contrast to the past, they are now condemned by state and church authorities. There is still anti-Jewish prejudice, but it finds less and less resonance among the general population. However, in the most recent past, the positive attitude towards Jews is being negatively influenced by the conflict in the Middle East. In France especially, the past two years have shown a growing aggressivity on the part of Muslims towards Jews. At present, we cannot foresee what developments will take place within a European Judaism that has become stronger and grown both in diversity and vitality in one or two generations. The fact that the Jewish minority is integrated in all European countries and no longer persecuted or despised, and the other fact that every European country, in its own way, is facing the burden of its past involvement in the Shoah are hopeful signs for the future. Above all, in the present adult generation and in the young generation an attitude of openness has grown, which is marked ever more by uninhibitedness and respect towards Jewish fellow citizens and by interest in their religion and culture. Already for decades now, the many trips to Israel, above all from Germany, confirm this. American Jews who travel to Germany and other European countries also see this basic change in mentality.

Someone travelling from Europe to the USA to study Judaism and Christian-Jewish relations there, finds an entirely different reality. There, too, Jews are a minority, but since the Shoah, they have been a respected and influential group in the population, with a role in all areas of the economy, politics and culture. Almost half of the 14 million Jews live in this country, above all in New York, Los Angeles and other metropolises. "Most recent demographic studies in the USA give the idea of a compressive process: a 'core' of the population is more committed in favor of Judaism. Parts of the periphery get lost in the majority society. . . With all together 78% in 1990, the Liberal-Religious and Conservative Jews are by far the largest group in the USA. 6% consider themselves to be Orthodox. Only 41% of all Jews in the USA are members of a synagogue congregation. The others work together, at best, with philanthropic organizations."<sup>28</sup> The new self-confidence of American Jews, the main characteristics of which are their positive interest in Israel and the remembrance of the Shoah, also has an effect on religious life: a stronger reference to tradition (for example, the use of Hebrew in the liturgy). At the same time, greater integration into society brings about

tendencies towards assimilation, also in the USA.

In no other country has Judaism developed so strongly, so diversely and in such a vital way in its various contrasting currents as there: Orthodox, Conservatives, Reform and Reconstructionist Jews. For Liberal and Reform Judaism and for the more traditional branch of Conservative Judaism, the openness towards modern Western European culture is characteristic, and Christian-Jewish dialogue is part of this. Modern Orthodox Judaism was formed among those who defended the traditions that were contested by Reform Judaism, and it claims to be identical with the Jewish tradition of the millennia. It is in this movement, particularly, that we can see tensions and splits. "That is also true where relations with Christianity are concerned. While they are in favor of Jewish-Christian collaboration in the social field, the greatest modern authorities who are recognized by Orthodoxy have repeatedly spoken out against theological discussions between Jews and Christians. But individual Orthodox Jews do take part in theological conversations between Jews and Christians."<sup>29</sup> Reconstructionism is a movement of intellectuals in American Judaism; Rabbi Mordechai Kaplan began it in the 1920's, and today it is more widespread among rabbis than in congregations. The founder did not see Judaism as a fixed teaching and law; what was important to him was rather the reconstruction of Jewish life in accord with the essential elements of Judaism in all areas of its culture.<sup>30</sup>

### 3.3 The Partners in Christian-Jewish Dialogue

In contrast to the medieval disputations, through which Jews were to be converted to Christianity and Judaism disqualified as an inferior religion, we speak today of dialogue, and we mean a coming together of peers who refrain from missionary zeal and have as their goal reconciled difference. "The Church's conversion to a fraternal relationship with the Jewish people that is free of Antisemitism happens through fundamental theological and historical research, official declarations and practical collaboration. . . In Europe and America, we can speak today of a Jewish-Christian movement in all the Christian denominations which is influential in the religious and social areas. Every effort to dialogue while leaving out the Shoah is considered to be a relapse into traditional anti-Jewish thinking."<sup>31</sup> American Judaism and the Catholic Church have a particular role in this process.<sup>32</sup>

Because of its size and vitality and because of the strength of national organizations, American Judaism sees itself as the main advocate for Jewish interests in the world, it has the greatest weight in international religious, scholarly and social institutions, and for the churches, it is the most important partner in dialogue. At the national level, collaboration is the most developed in the USA. The National Council of Synagogues and the Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops meet twice a year for Jewish-Christian consultations, and they publish common statements above all on ethical and social matters.<sup>33</sup> Concerning dialogue at the institutional level, Clemens Thoma makes the critical comment: "Dialogue happens in a way that is unilaterally strong between central offices of the churches (the Vatican, the Secretariat of the World Council of Churches) and international Jewish organizations. Thus it becomes more politics of religion - which is legitimate only to a limited extent - instead of dialogue."<sup>34</sup> The religio-political interest of the Jewish organizations on the international and the American level is reflected in the agenda of negotiations, in statements and action that is effective for the media. The list of topics (which have been partially dealt with) is known: the Oberammergau Passion Play, the Carmel and cross in Auschwitz, the Vatican's recognition of the State of Israel, Antisemitic statements by church representatives, controversial beatifications and canonizations, the Church's share in responsibility for the Shoah, missionary activity among Jews, the opening of the Vatican archives. Rome is the main addressee of Jewish expectations and criticism. Reprimands of the Vatican and recognition, in particular of the Pope, take turns. The irritation, which often goes deep, even to the point of breaking off the conversation, is an indication of how unstable the relationship of trust towards the churches still is. In current crises, the question of trust is often expressed: Has the Church really done an about-face since the Shoah, or isn't the truth

that everything is still as it always was?

With this, the other partner in Jewish-Christian relations with an outstanding place in the United States has been named: the Catholic Church. The Church owes this position on the one hand to the Council declaration *Nostra aetate*, which marks an irrefutable change in the Christian-Jewish relationship, along with the work of John XXIII and John Paul II, who goes towards the Jews more than any other pope has in history. On the other hand, the Catholic church benefits from its hierarchical structure. Although Catholicism has no longer been a monolithic block for a long time now, the pope and the Vatican, as well as cardinals and bishops have far more authority than the leadership in the Protestant churches. The consequence of this is that the Catholic Church, which is the strongest Christian church in the USA, has been given the leadership role in Christian-Jewish relations. When a personality like Joseph Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago (died 1996) became actively and with ecumenical openness involved in Christian-Jewish relations, that not only marked the "landscape" of his own diocese in a decisive way, but it was seen in the entire country. But the other side gives just as much cause for reflection: when a bishop has other priorities, is a weak personality, or withdraws to official encounters (with pictures taken), a new "house" is not built or the old one soon falls into disrepair. Thus Los Angeles, the city with the largest Jewish population after New York (600.000 Jews) was seen for two decades to be a model of Christian-Jewish and interfaith relations in the USA until in 1991 a new cardinal came to the archdiocese. In the Catholic Church, the "politics" depend decisively on the person in leadership, on their spiritual and human abilities, their priorities and their fostering of pioneering initiatives. That is why it is not surprising that under the present pope, all Catholic bishops in the USA, even the most conservative, are in favor of Christian-Jewish dialogue. But under a new pope who takes another direction, it is possible that in their unquestioning fidelity to Rome many bishops would take a different path.

### 3.4 Institutes of Christian-Jewish Studies

In the United States, as in Europe, Christian-Jewish relations are developing at two levels. At the institutional level, there are statements and agreements as well as official encounters, as for example in 1986, the first visit of a pope in the Great Synagogue in Rome and in the year 2000, John Paul II's pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The setting up of memorials and the introduction of days of remembrance should also be mentioned here.

Locally, at the grass roots level, there is practical collaboration for the deepening of Christian-Jewish relations, as for example in the fight against racism and radical ideologies of the extreme Right. In no other country are dialogue and the encounter between Jews and Christians at the grass roots level fostered as intensively as in the USA. Reforms in school education in the areas of religion and history and programs for the ongoing formation of teachers should also be mentioned, as well as events during the Woche der Brüderlichkeit (Fraternity Week) and the large gatherings of the Protestant and Catholic Church Conferences (Evangelische Kirchentage and Katholikentage), which for decades have included a broad spectrum of Jewish-Christian offers.

A third, "middle" level is the area of scholarly research, in particular in the theological, philosophical and historical disciplines. Outstanding Jewish thinkers such as Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig before the Shoah and Emmanuel Levinas after the Shoah are studied by many. Among the theologians, it is above all biblical scholars who not only study Jewish literature, but also go to Israel, the USA and other countries for periods of research, and they often exchange with Jewish colleagues both professionally and in friendship. But in the German-speaking countries, this cooperation is not institutionally established. The university of Luzern is the only place where there is an Institut für jüdisch-christliche Forschung (Institute for Jewish-Christian research). In Berlin, Prof. Peter von der Osten-Sacken heads the Institut für Geschichte des Judentums (Institute for the History of Judaism), which for the past eight years has offered a "Jewish university summer school course". The discussion group "Jews and Christians", where

Jews and Catholics develop common theological statements, belongs to the Central Committee of German Catholics. The theological faculties in the universities are denominational, which means that their teaching staff includes neither professors from other Christian denominations nor Jewish scholars.

The academic landscape in the USA is very different. There, research beyond the individual denomination and religion is institutionally established. This means that both professors from other Christian denominations and Jewish scholars belong to the teaching staff of Theological Departments, as for example the authors of *Dabru Emet*. In addition, there are nationally more than twenty Centers or Institutes of Jewish-Christian Studies, most of them maintained by the Catholic Church. The oldest (and for twenty years the only) setup of this kind is the Institute of Judeo-Christian Studies that was founded in 1953 at Seton Hall University near New York. Its founder is the Jewish-born John Oesterreicher (1904-1993), who was ordained a Catholic priest in 1927 and who emigrated to the USA in 1940. Together with Augustin Cardinal Bea, he is the author of the Council declaration *Nostra aetate*. At these institutes, theological research has been going on for decades. They have an important role for the ongoing theological formation of priests, rabbis and teachers, for professional and volunteer lay collaborators in the church. They also give theological input to regional educational work and accompany it, as for example a school project in Chicago, where for years now a regular exchange between Christian and Jewish religion teachers has been happening. Another example is the Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies in Baltimore that was founded in 1987 and that is now the seat of the Christian Scholars Group on Judaism and the Jewish People, begun in 1969, and of the Jewish Scholars Group on Christianity and the Christian and Jewish Educators Study Group. As of half a year ago, a networking between these institutions has begun, and it should be completed soon. This middle level is very important for the future of Christian-Jewish dialogue. Because both the institutional dialogue and the practical collaboration at the local level depend essentially on fundamental theological research and on the solid ongoing theological formation of the clergy and teachers. Also, these institutes and centers are less at the mercy of Christian and Jewish institutions which might pressurize them.

### 3.5 Obstacles to Jewish-Christian Dialogue

The impressive network of dialogue between Jews and Christians could tempt one to believe that we today, and in particular in the USA, are really living in an era of Jewish-Christian dialogue that stands out like a glorious day after the night of earlier eras when there was no conversation. Because of this, one might think that *Dabru Emet* should be received with open arms in the Jewish community and in the Christian churches - at least after a certain incubation period.<sup>35</sup> In some Christian circles, there is emotive talk about "theological renunciation of ownership", which calls forth the reproach that, in compensation for a guilt complex, only those aspects are emphasized that Jewish and Christian faith have in common and Christian truth is relinquished. In conversations with my dialogue partners, I was informed of strong reservations and fears in particular on the Jewish side. There are good reasons why Jews refuse - and sometimes have to refuse - to enter into conversations with Christians about faith. Speaking schematically, there is a theoretical, a practical and an emotional pattern of argumentation.

The theoretical pattern of argumentation is based on a fundamental skepticism towards theology, or to be more precise: towards traditional forms of Christian theology.<sup>36</sup> In Judaism, there is often the suspicion that theology is a superfluous, un-Jewish and untrustworthy occupation. Superfluous because it is seen as a theoretical superstructure on top of Scripture and of life; further, superfluous because Jews do not have to define their self-understanding in connection with and in contrast to Christianity, which on the other side is not possible for Christians. Un-Jewish because theology is seen to be basically the teaching of dogmatic principles coming from an authoritarian teaching body which does not exist in Judaism. Untrustworthy because also modern theology in a friendly, dialogical garment is believed to be in truth nothing other than the classical controversial theology with its apologetic argumentation; or because conversations about faith with people of

other faith communities either lead to an intensification of the differences in belief and to enmity or to a softening of one's own conviction (thus the right wing of Orthodox Judaism). However, my Jewish partners in dialogue consider this wide-spread antipathy towards theological reflection to be not a result of deeper study, but on the contrary, a self-protective declaration due to a lack of serious intellectual effort; thus, the continuation of stereotype ideas about Christianity is linked to a poor knowledge of Christianity: "American Jews, proud of their knowledge of so many things, know relatively little about the actual theologies of Christianity. . . . American Jews often know relatively little about the theologies of Judaism as well!"<sup>37</sup> Over against this antipathy towards theological reflection, which acknowledges neither the high form of Jewish nor of Christian theology, the authors of *Christianity in Jewish Terms* set a reflected theology which sees faith and thought not as a contrast, but rather as a tension-filled unity. They believe that only a faith that has been thought through can have anything to say in today's pluralistic society and can become involved in the necessary critical discussion on the life issues of our time.<sup>38</sup>

The practical objections concern the danger to the Jewish community through missionary activity among Jews and through mixed marriages. They have not forgotten bad experiences with Christianity and also with modern enlightened Humanism which led to the assimilation of Jews and to the relinquishing of religion in favor of humanist ethics. In addition, there is today the fear that the strong interest of Christian theologians in the Jewish roots of their faith might lead to a "dispossession" of the Jewish sources by the Church. *Dabru Emet* also takes these considerations seriously: in the explanations given for the seventh thesis, the dangers named are cultural and religious assimilation, an adulteration of traditional forms of prayer, mixed marriages and conversion to Christianity. But the authors believe that one should not try to evade these dangers and that one need not fall victim to them. That is why their thesis is: "A new relationship between Jews and Christians will not weaken Jewish practice."

David Novak developed a catalog of criteria for dialogue in which the partners are committed to their own conviction and because of this, dare to exchange without fear with people of another religious conviction. This catalog excludes the following false forms: disputation, proselytization, syncretism, relativism and triumphalism.<sup>39</sup> The false form of disputation begins with confrontation: What the Other stands for, can only be wrong and therefore it is to be rejected. Proselytization abuses dialogue as a means for conversion and does not respect it as being valuable in itself. Syncretism takes neither Judaism nor Christianity seriously as a religion of revelation, but rather replaces both with the construct of a new religion and thus seduces one to idolatry. Relativism plays faith down and sees it as a private matter of opinion; therefore, serious witnessing to one's faith that would even be prepared to give one's life as a martyr is the greatest stupidity. "One cannot live as a Jew and as a Christian simultaneously. One could well say that the greatest temptation for a Jew is Christianity and that the greatest temptation for a Christian is Judaism. That this is so explains why Jews and Christians have so much to talk about and, also, why the stakes in the Jewish-Christian relationship are so high."<sup>40</sup> And finally, the false form of triumphalism confuses one's own conviction that one's own religion is the highest truth with the claim of possessing the whole truth already now and alone, and therefore being able to anticipate the fulfillment of history through God.

The third barrier which bars the way for Jews to an open encounter with Christians that is free of fear, is of an emotional nature: Can we trust you, and can we trust you already now? No matter how honest they are, are just a few decades of words and deeds on the part of the Church enough to give credible, reliable certainty that Christianity has really been converted from its almost 2000-year old enmity and contempt of Judaism, that it has done the hard work of t'shuvah? Robert Chazan ends his balanced survey of the varied and usually dark history between Christians and Jews with a description of the new beginning after the Shoah and with the cautious hope: Only time will show whether these positive signs of new collaboration and new mutual respect will last. "There does seem to be a real possibility that some of the negative interactions of the past . . . may give way to more positive relations between two faith communities that have sprung out of

common ground."<sup>41</sup> In *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, David R. Blumenthal contradicts this cautious hope most strongly: The 2000-year old bloody history of Jewish-Christian relations would not allow traditional Jews to identify with some Christian doctrines of faith, even if in the most recent past a different attitude has become visible among a few Christians. From this, he concludes: "Good fences make good neighbors."<sup>42</sup> When sudden disturbances damage the good climate, the collapse of trust shows how fast healed wounds break open again, how shaky the bridge is on which we're walking. Committed Catholics also often have difficulty in seeing that the path of the Church is not straight and that our behavior is often inconsistent, and yet, they continue on the path of understanding. Without doubt, the greatest obstacle that we have to overcome on the path towards one another and with one another in society is the lack of trust in the Christian partner resulting from the burden of history. In the 30 years of our process in dialogue, our group "Jews and Christians" has also not been spared such crises in trust. We have learned not to demand our partner's trust either with strong arguments or with the gentle pressure of our expectations. We have resolved to accept the lack of simultaneity without resentment and reproaches, which means that one person will dare to take the path of trust earlier and the other later or maybe not at all.<sup>43</sup>

In the face of such difficulties, the *Dabru Emet* initiative is a courageous thrust by a small Jewish elite that shows the direction, and it is understandable that it is not immediately and unreservedly accepted by the vast majority of Jewish scholars and congregations. But *Dabru Emet* and *Christianity in Jewish Terms* do deserve a process of reflection and of critical examination. For the authors have to deal with three obvious facts. Firstly, they take into account the fact that secular, pluralistic society opens up a situation in which Jews - not least because of the founding of the State of Israel - no longer represent a defenseless minority and in which religion on the one hand, has considerably lost its influence and on the other hand, is challenged by the vital questions of society.<sup>44</sup> They ask what God-given task Judaism has in the secular world and among the world religions. Secondly, they take into account the fact that the Churches have obviously changed since the Shoah, and they report on their experience that the study of the Christian faith has enriched their faith and their thinking. They encourage others to experience the same. Thirdly, they take the following into account: "Most Jews have experienced the profound social consequences of this change in Christian beliefs, but few Jews are aware of the religious sources of the change, and even fewer seek to assess its impact on Jewish life today and in the future."<sup>45</sup> That is why they are in favor of giving religious-theological questions priority on the agenda of Christian-Jewish dialogue. All this is not a repetition of what has always been known, but a departure for new theological land.

#### **4. New Tasks for Religious Dialogue and Theological Research**

The Christian-Jewish relationship develops in encounters in which strangers come closer to one another as human beings, reduce prejudice and become interested in one another. It is strengthened through mutual support and common initiatives in the areas of social work and society. It receives orientation through official documents and symbolic events at the institutional level. All this continues to be absolutely necessary. However - and this is what *Dabru Emet* picks up - without the religious dimension of dialogue, these efforts are limited, for they do not reach the root of Jewish and Christian identity.

*Christianity in Jewish Terms* goes yet a step further: A relationship of friendship between Jews and Christians, which overcomes the traditional enmity of Christians towards Jews and the fear of Jews for Christianity at the root, cannot succeed without theology, without a reflected faith. That is why already in 1971 John M. Oesterreicher called for a "Christian theology of Judaism" and a "Jewish theology of Christianity."<sup>46</sup> For the same reason, the discussion group "Jews and Christians" in 1979 emphasized: For the "common journey of Jews and Christians", only "tactical



considerations" are not enough, nor are "reasons around human tolerance and respect for freedom of religion." "The deepest reason lies rather in the fact that Jews and Christians know that they are called by the same God." "For God's sake", "for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven" are connected with one another.<sup>47</sup> Over the last decades, many church documents were written and beginnings have been made in theology for a new evaluation of Judaism, but according to Clemens Thoma in 1995, "Jewish beginnings of a new evaluation of Jesus and Christianity become apparent (only) sporadically."<sup>48</sup> Where this is concerned, *Dabru Emet* and *Christianity in Jewish Terms* have dared to take a big step forward and in doing so, they have opened up a new phase in religious dialogue and theological research. If Jews and Christians respond to this invitation, there will be three fundamental tasks which in future we will have to work on together even more than before:

- What mutual enrichment can we expect for Christian-Jewish relations from a transatlantic dialogue?
- How can the phase of controversial theology, which sees one profession of faith over against the other, be replaced by a theology which takes the historicity of faith seriously?
- What consequences must result from the teaching concerning God's covenant with Israel that was never revoked, which must be at the center of Christian theology of Judaism?

#### 4.1 Structural and Personal Dialogue

Dialogue is one of the most valuable acquisitions of modern times. In earlier times, conflicts were usually decided through the use of violence, through the victory of the stronger, or by means of negotiations, the result of which was a balance of interests. Dialogue opens up a third possibility for people and "worlds" that confront one another as strangers to work together. Its prerequisite is that the partners want to understand one another and to make themselves mutually understood, and its goal is reconciled difference.<sup>49</sup>

We have to distinguish between structural dialogue between institutions and organizations, as for example between the Church and art or between religion and society, and personal dialogue which occurs in the encounter between persons. In institutional dialogue, taking seriously the matter concerned, the partner's interests, is in the foreground. Representatives of various institutions or organizations encounter one another and are willing to learn from one another and if necessary to change the conditions of their own action. Conferences such as those taking place at various levels between representatives of Judaism and of the Churches are important for institutional dialogue. On the other hand, in personal dialogue, it is not the content of the conversation that is in the foreground, but the relationship between persons who trust one another, who want to take one another seriously, and who are prepared to risk their own point of view in conversation with the Other. In contrast to structural dialogue between representatives of systems, the partners in personal dialogue cannot be replaced by others, because the relationship of trust cannot be transferred. Nevertheless, we would have to be blind not to see that dialogical relationships in view of overcoming the limits of a system are all the more successful the more the representatives of the individual systems see and respect one another as persons. For example, we can think of famous relationships between politicians who overcame conflict such as that between De Gaulle and Adenauer, Reagan and Gorbatshev.

For the future of Christian-Jewish dialogue, the continuation of institutional dialogue between representatives of both religions is necessary, as is also the institutional dialogue with society on justice and peace.<sup>50</sup> But both directions of the institutional dialogue must be completed and supported by the personal dialogue of individual Jews and Christians (and also Muslims) with leading people involved in economics, science and politics. However, the institutional and the personal dialogue between Jews and Christians are not possible everywhere and at all times in the same way. Where this is concerned, here a few indications for future tasks which so far have hardly begun:

- *Dabru Emet* wants to introduce a new phase in Jewish-Christian dialogue. The fact that this initiative came from the USA is due to the particular situation of Judaism there, as has been shown. This is why the North American contribution to the structural dialogue between the "worlds" of Judaism and Christianity has a unique role. But because structural dialogue is fundamentally supported and fostered by the strength of personal dialogue, it is not enough if individual Christian scholars have an ongoing exchange with some of their Jewish colleagues. Dialogue must happen on a broader scale. For this, the paths of common research between North America, Europe and Israel need to be consistently developed. If North America is not included more than in the past, Christian-Jewish dialogue in Europe and Israel will remain provincial.
- Two other regions also have a unique role in the Christian-Jewish relationship: Germany and Israel. Israel, because there Judaism has risen again in its unity between the God of Israel, the people of Israel and the land of Israel, and there it is seeking its path. Germany, because the Shoah began in this country and was carried out from there. The depth to which the Shoah shook Christianity in its self-awareness and its credibility remains linked to this country and nation as historical experience and as responsibility. It is precisely here that Christianity's process of conversion must be proved. The place of guilt is also the place of grace. The Christian-Jewish relationship without the Christian partner in Germany can have no future. That is why these three countries are the focal points of Christian-Jewish dialogue: USA, Israel and Germany.
- One could argue that the contribution of theological research to Christian-Jewish dialogue is received for the most part by international biblical, historical and systematic research. Therefore, theological research in every country could continue among Christian theologians without the direct participation of Jewish partners. But experience teaches that an unprotected exchange in a climate of trust is far more fruitful and stimulating than the consultation of written sources, as the face to face encounter between persons makes more visible, and above all, it lets one sense hidden and cautious reservations better than the safe communication of written contributions. Thus, personal exchange remains of inestimable and essential importance.
- The structural dialogue between the "worlds" of Western society and religion which are drifting apart, is for the authors of *Dabru Emet* just as important as interfaith dialogue, and rightly so. For the optimism, which marked secular humanism since the Enlightenment, has thoroughly lost its mystique since the terrible experiences of the past century with its totalitarian ideologies. Therefore, the authors of *Dabru Emet* believe that it is essential to bring the religious traditions of Judaism and Christianity into society's discussion with new self-confidence for an ethical, social and political renewal of Western civilization in the areas of science and society, for the sake of the survival of humanity and the planning of society in a way that respects human dignity.<sup>51</sup> Because of its tradition, Germany is, like no other country, the most important partner for the area of social ethics. This task is of equal importance with interfaith dialogue. The challenge through the vital questions of society - justice, peace and the protection of the natural environment - cannot succeed without a deepening and further development of religious traditions. In the area of social ethics, most of the work still lies ahead.

#### 4.2 The Historicity of Revelation and of Faith

"In recent years, there has been a dramatic and unprecedented shift in Jewish and Christian relations. Throughout the nearly two millennia of Jewish exile, Christians have tended to characterize Judaism as a failed religion or, at best, a religion that prepared the way for and is completed in Christianity. The public statements of the churches have declared, furthermore, that Christian teaching and preaching can and must be reformed so that they acknowledge God's enduring covenant with the Jewish people and celebrate the contribution of Judaism to world civilization and to Christian faith itself."<sup>52</sup> This assessment of the situation is at the beginning of *Dabru Emet*. It states the fundamental aim of the document and also of *Christianity in Jewish*

Terms as "a Project to Redefine the Relationship"<sup>53</sup> between Jews and Christians. That must necessarily include a redefinition of each one's self-understanding.

A first but insufficient explanation for the need to always examine traditions critically lies in the modern understanding of scholarship. In Western cultural circles, this understanding put an end to the unhistorical way of thinking in systems. Hermeneutics and historicity are the two insights which rejected on principle the seemingly timeless speculation about "eternal truths". The reform of the Church, which the Second Vatican Council set out to do, is based on this insight, as is Reform Judaism, which on principle accepts theological progress.<sup>54</sup> Reform does not mean giving up tradition, which would be equivalent to founding a new religion, but it does mean deepening and correcting tradition as well as giving up previously unquestioningly fixed positions on seemingly unchanging doctrines of faith. In this sense, the direction-setting statement of the Council's Constitution on Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, says that the: ". . . Tradition which comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit." (No. 8) Fundamentalist trends in Judaism and Christianity - as well as in other religions - go against such developmental thinking because they see in it a denial or weakening of religious identity.

However, the acceptance of modern thinking in theology does not explain the radical change sufficiently. As a rule, what is decisive for new insights in faith and for theological reflection are drastic historical events which break open the traditional framework. The Shoah and the Second Vatican Council<sup>55</sup> and for Jews, the founding of the State of Israel were such historical turning points. Normally, people - and also faith communities - integrate new experiences within the framework of their self-understanding. Even contrasting experiences are usually built into the system without any problem. But Jewish history as well as that of Christians has had contrast experiences which brought about an expansion or a blasting of the traditional framework. Some examples of this:

- The encounter of the Council Fathers with the non-Catholic observers at the Second Vatican Council led to other Christian communities being given the title of honor of Church, and the non-Catholic Christians are no longer called heretics but rather "separated brothers and sisters."<sup>56</sup>
- After the shock of the Shoah, the Church can no longer continue to place Ecclesia over against Synagoga: on one side the Church as a triumphant queen, and on the other, the dethroned Synagogue. The Church's feeling of superiority over Judaism has been deeply shaken, and the Christian claim to be closer to the Kingdom of God has been proven wrong.<sup>57</sup>
- We can also see the same phenomenon in the history of Judaism. "Rabbinic Judaism did not experience the change under Constantine, that is to say, the change from pagan to Christian rule in the 4th century, as a turning point towards the better, but as a sharpening of the anti-Jewish behavior on the part of the new Roman people in power. Thus, in Jewish assessment, the Church unwittingly slid into the role of 'Edom' that pagan Rome had played, that is to say, into the role of the 'rule wanting evil' and the threatening 'world nation.'"<sup>58</sup>
- Because of entirely new historical experiences with Christianity and the Church, *Dabru Emet* speaks out in favor (of dropping the shameful title 'Edom' as a term for Christianity and) building a relationship of friendship between both faith communities. *Dabru Emet* gives theological reasons for this: that the Church recognizes God's unrevoked covenant with his people Israel, that it worships the God of Israel and clearly professes the authority of the Hebrew Bible and of the ethical commandments in the Torah. The Jewish scholar Irving Greenberg even attributes a revelatory quality to the drastic historical events of the most recent past: "The Holocaust and the rebirth of the State of Israel as revelatory events in Judaism are the key of a new relationship. . . After the Holocaust, the relationship of Judaism and Christianity should enable one to affirm the fullness of the faith claims of the other, to affirm the profound inner relationship between the two, and to recognize and admit

how much closer they are to each other than either has been able to say.”<sup>59</sup>

These examples show on the one hand, that historical contrast experiences call forth a new interpretation of tradition, and on the other, that a theological interpretation of historical processes in the light of one's own tradition is indispensable in order to attribute to such events a revelatory quality. Thus, the Second Vatican Council takes as its starting point that the God who reveals himself is also present and active today within and outside of the Church, and that through the "signs of the times" (Mt 16:3; Lk 12:56), God lets the Church recognize its mission in today's world: "To carry out. . . (its) task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.”<sup>60</sup> For Christian-Jewish relations, this results in the task of intensifying institutional and personal dialogue so as to be open for new experiences, to interpret these experiences in the light of each one's own tradition and to define anew one's self-understanding and the mutual relationship. In this process, new theological questions are raised to which the old answers no longer respond.

The dramatic historical events of the last decades not only lead to a new interpretation of some doctrines of belief, they also challenge us to a radical change in the act of faith, to a dramatization of faith. In the course of history, our faith communities have over and over again formulated sentences and professions of faith. Even though Judaism does not have a systematic theological doctrine, and above all it does not have a hierarchical teaching body, Jewish tradition does contain many principles of faith, as for example Philo of Alexandria's five principles of faith and the thirteen principles of faith of Maimonides.<sup>61</sup> But for Jews and for Christians, the validity of a Creed without a history has been shaken in its foundations through the Shoah. Irving Greenberg has sharpened the question: "The Holocaust confronts us with unanswerable questions. But let us agree to one principle: no statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of the burning children. . . After Auschwitz, faith means that there are times when faith is overcome. Since faith is a response to the presence in life and history, this response ebbs and flows. The difference between the skeptic and the believer is frequency of faith, and not certitude of position. The ability to live with what I call 'moment faith' is the ability to live with pluralism. . . ”<sup>62</sup>

To speak concretely: Some doctrines in our traditions can no longer be maintained in a place like Auschwitz and since the Shoah. They stick in our throats. On the grounds of an extermination camp, one cannot publicly quote a profession of faith in God as All-Mighty, All-Knowing, All-Kind in formal fidelity to belief, without being accused of blasphemy. The profession of faith would be turned into a cynical formula. Or who would dare to comfort the families of the children burned in Auschwitz with the verse from the Psalm: "I have not seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging for bread" (Ps 37:25b)! That is why Greenberg disagrees with the ideal of a rigid attitude of faith which always remains the same and which does neither God nor the victims of the Shoah justice. His demand that authentic faith must always be a "moment faith", speaking, remaining or falling silent, praising God for being saved or shouting to God, moaning, even accusing God when confronted with inhuman horror, all this demands a dramatization of faith so as to do justice to God's strangeness and God's often incomprehensible action or lack of action. That is not a weakness of faith but rather true and wrestling faith, a search for a new relationship with God in face of a radically new historical experience. The de-dramatization of faith in a speaking and praying without history or questions is, on the other hand, in truth unbelief, ideology. Of course, this demand is not to be confused with the thoughtlessness with which "modern" contemporaries put together their own individual creed out of all kinds of elements from our pluralistic world. Jacob, who struggled with God at the Jabbok (Gen 32) and therefore received the name "Israel/Fighter with God", is the opposite of an amateurish do-it-yourselfer in matters of religion.

The Shoah demands of Jews and Christians to live with open questions. The talkativeness of theologians and religious authorities who always have their answers ready, is becoming increasingly suspicious, because we are becoming aware of how infinitely limited our knowledge of

God is. Faith is again becoming an existential and theological risk. The questioning search of Christian theologians trying to push forward to the roots of their faith and thereby discovering Judaism in a new and different way, as well as examining Christian identity in a new and different way, has ceased in its apologetic rejection of Judaism. The questioning search of Jewish thinkers wanting to find a Jewish entry to Christianity coming from their own faith tradition, is at the same time an invitation to Judaism to understand the Christian faith, which does not mean accepting it for themselves. In the place of an unconnected way of living side by side, there is now a tension-filled and exciting togetherness, the goal of which cannot be the „ecumenical” unification of the two religions: "The humanly irreconcilable difference between Jews and Christians will not be settled until God redeems the entire world as promised in Scripture."<sup>63</sup> Judaism and Christianity are religions which exclude one another. Here we have one faith over against another faith, Jewish faith over against Christian faith - not knowledge over against ignorance or truth over against untruth. Does this statement express something which it is forbidden to think? Is dialogue at its end? On the contrary: The faith of the Others must bring about a salutary disquiet because it asks serious questions of one's own faith. We may not drop these questions, we have to ask them of ourselves and of our dialogue partner. But we don't necessarily need an answer to every open question; rather we can and must leave some questions, and maybe the most important ones, to God, because they are not within our competence. Some quotations may illustrate what is meant, first of all the poet Elazar Benyoëtz: "The answers of faith are not wanted; the desire for them ruins thinking. Job lived in faith and therefore he had good questions. That was his gain and has remained our capital to this day."<sup>64</sup> The following by Martin Buber has been transmitted: "Ladies and Gentlemen, we have indeed many things in common. We are all waiting for the Messiah. You believe he has already come, left again and will come again one day. I believe that he has not come yet, but that he will come sometime. Therefore, I want to make this suggestion: Let us wait together. When he comes, we can ask him: Were you here before? And I hope that I'll be standing very near to him then and can whisper in his ear: 'Don't answer!'"<sup>65</sup>

#### 4.3 The Unrevoked Covenant

In December of last year, Walter Cardinal Kasper, speaking to Jews and Christians in the USA, said that the teaching about the covenant is "the central issue of the Jewish-Christian dialogue." But that the relationship between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is "so complex that it cannot be reduced to a concise formula." He invited Jews and Christians to a common testimony; for they both share the faith that God is not an abstract, distant being, but "the God of the Covenant." He called upon Jews and Christians to „give up their claim: of exclusivity and their feeling of superiority linked to it, and he encouraged "a possible common theology of the covenant."<sup>66</sup>

Not only for theological reasons but also for historical ones, it is understandable that the Covenant has to be the central theme of Christian-Jewish dialogue, because Christian speaking about God's fidelity to the covenant with his people Israel has pulled the rug out from under Christianity's hatred of Jews. In its declaration *Nostra aetate*, the Second Vatican Council, referring to the Letter to the Romans (chapters 9-11), adheres to the abiding election of Israel, although "the Jews in large number (did not) accept the Gospel; indeed, not a few opposed its spreading." If their refusal to accept the Gospel, at the center of which is the profession of faith in Christ, is no reason for God to reject the Jews, then Christians have no right to reproach the Jews, as in the past, with their refusal to accept the Gospel, then Jews can openly, in the presence of Christians, state their reasons for saying no to Jesus Christ. Even less may Christians threaten Jews with God's judgment or even worse, take it upon themselves to carry out high-handedly God's judgment on the Jews. Hatred and the persecution of people are a glaring contradiction to the biblical message about God's goodness and to the universal commandment to love, which is in the Old and New Testament. Antisemitism is a sin against God and humanity!<sup>67</sup> God's fidelity to his covenant with the Jewish people is at the center of the Council's declaration, and since then Pope John Paul II has reaffirmed it over and over again. For a long time, this has been a common statement of all

Christian churches, and it finds wide-spread agreement among theologians. Already in the Seelisberger Theses, Jews and Christians together spoke out against the "godless opinion" that "the Jewish people is rejected, cursed and destined for continual suffering."<sup>68</sup> Why does Cardinal Kasper nevertheless consider this known and accepted teaching to be a complex question which requires further study? Has *Dabru Emet's* statement come too early when it says that the churches have committed themselves to acknowledge in teaching and preaching "God's ongoing covenant with the Jewish people" (Introduction)?

The Christian teaching about the unrevoked covenant is hardly controversial anymore, but its constant repetition covers up a problem: that its consequences are not at all clear, in fact, that usually nobody even asks about them. Talking about the unrevoked covenant has not "done away" with the question of the Christian relationship to the Jews, but it first of all challenges the Christian side to question its traditional self-understanding. Whether or not the Jewish partner can hear our talk about the unrevoked covenant as a basis for a new mutual relationship will depend decisively on the answer to those leading questions. Here some indications where that is concerned:

- The recognition of the unrevoked covenant is in contradiction to the absolute claim of "classical" Christology. We could say with the Münster theologian Tiemo Rainer Peters: "We formulated our christological Creed in such a 150% thorough and absolute way that there was no room left for Judaism. . . Christ fulfilled everything, and basically, we don't need God's people and God's covenant with Israel anymore."<sup>69</sup> From this, we cannot deduce a renunciation of the profession of faith in Christ, but it does mean that we resolutely turn away from an a-Jewish theology which manages without Judaism and is basically anti-Jewish because it leaves no room for Judaism. The document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission of May 24, 2001, "The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible", for the first time understands rabbinical tradition as a testimony of truth. May we interpret that as being a recognition by the church of God's continued revelatory action in post-biblical Judaism? Talk about the Jewish roots of Christianity, which has become routine, becomes a problem when it remains without consequences. One example of that is the 1993 Catechism of the Catholic Church. It is certainly not an anti-Jewish document, but it is an a-Jewish one, as it speaks of most themes of the Christian profession of faith without acknowledging their rootedness in Judaism.<sup>70</sup> "Only when the Church lets itself be embedded more clearly not only in the New Testament, but also in the whole history (of faith) of the people of Israel, including its expectations, and when it proclaims its own special message about the salvation of all nations that happened in Christ and that is still being carried out, not by ignoring the Jews or even going against them . . . will it be able to contribute towards realizing the biblical Shalom for Israel and the nations of the world. . . . The churches will be fully Church when, together with Christ, as God-fearers of the nations, they rightly accept and bear the title of honor of Israel."<sup>71</sup>
- For years, Christian and Jewish theologians have been working through the question: Can we agree with a religious pluralism between the two biblical religions, Judaism and Christianity, and that not only for reasons of tolerance in modern society, which prohibits wars of religion, but out of the faith conviction that God has chosen both the people of Israel and the Church as His people and that God is at work until today with his grace and his revelation both in Judaism and in Christianity? Another question is whether we have to do here with two ways of salvation, with a double covenant or with one single way of salvation and one covenant, but this question is less important.<sup>72</sup> It is far more important to acknowledge that the same God of Israel gives their own gifts to Jews and to Christians. But then Christians have to ask themselves: What do we want to hear from Jews about their experience with the covenant that we Christians are not able to tell ourselves from our experience with the covenant?
- The Pauline allegory about the olive tree (Rom 11:13-24) has a central place in Jewish-Christian dialogue. Usually it is interpreted in such a way that the olive tree means Israel,

its root is Abraham and the grafted branches are the pagans who believe in Christ. From that, the conclusion is drawn that Christianity without a living link with Judaism must lose its identity. But this interpretation, which identifies Israel with the olive tree and with the root, raises the question, which "function" Jesus Christ has for Christian identity, as being "in Christ" is fundamental to the Pauline writings. The Church's rootedness in Judaism and in Jesus Christ must be reflected on more thoroughly.<sup>73</sup>

- The acknowledgment of God's unrevoked covenant with Israel raises for Christians the question, which task Jews have for the salvation of the world and of history. Because Jewish tradition resists being narrowed down to something that is particularist, as if Judaism were only interested in its own redemption and not in the redemption of the world. Do Christians also have to be interested in the Jews' reflection on their historical task, do they even have something to say about it? Or should they - "in humble self-restriction" - confidently leave this question up to God? But can a Christian theology of Judaism really renounce giving an appreciation of Israel's role in God's plan of salvation and leave out this question because it is an inner-Jewish topic?
- For the authors of *Dabru Emet*, the Christian belief in the unrevoked covenant is to be linked with the refusal to do missionary work among Jews.<sup>74</sup> This follows from the connection between the sixth and seventh theses and the Introduction. Normally, this renunciation is grounded historically, because Christianity has lost its credibility where Jews are concerned, particularly after the Shoah (maybe even for all future times). But it is also grounded theologically, because in his covenant, God has remained near to Israel, perhaps no less near than to the Church "in Christ"? Renouncing missionary work among the Jews of course does not exclude witnessing to Jesus Christ when, in spite of all that has happened, Jews want to know from us Christians: Give an account of your hope (cf. 1 Pet 3:15). Asked in this way, Christians will have to struggle with the offensive statement in the Gospel of John: "No one comes to the Father except through me." (Jn 14:6) Thus, the theology of the covenant inevitably leads on to the God question, to the diverse experiences of God of Jews and of Christians. Clemens Thoma writes about this: "The specific question about God is the sensitive center of all Jewish-Christian lack of agreement. Whoever thoughtlessly ignores this in dialogue, is driving Jewish-Christian dialogue towards its failure. . . With all the disagreement around the God question, the greatest agreement becomes visible when Jews without believing in Christ and Christians in communion with Christ pray and work towards that day, when 'God will be one and his name will be one.' (Zech 14:9)"<sup>75</sup>

## Notes

1. [Dabru Emet](#) at the same address also the [German translation](#): *Die Kirchen und das Judentum* [Vol. 1: Dokumente von 1945-1985, edited by Rolf Rendtorff, Hans Hermann Henrix, Paderborn/München 1989]; Vol. 2: Dokumente von 1986-2000, edited by Hans Hermann Henrix, Wolfgang Kraus, Paderborn/Gütersloh 2001, pp. 974-976.
2. Werner Trutwin, *Dabru Emet - Sprich Wahrheit: Christ in der Gegenwart* 54 (2002), pp. 85f., on p. 85.
3. Cf. Hanspeter Heinz, *Um Gottes willen miteinander verbunden. Erfahrungen im christlich-jüdischen Gespräch*: Christina Kurth, Peter Schmid (Editors), *Das christlich-jüdische Gespräch. Standortbestimmungen*, Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln 2000 (*Judentum und Christentum*, Vol. 3), pp. 26-37. The list of publications by the discussion group can be found at my website: [www.kthf.uni-augsburg.de](http://www.kthf.uni-augsburg.de) (on the left: [lehrstuehle/pastoral/JudenChristen Texte.htm](#))
4. My other partners for discussion were:  
Rabbi *Charles Adrian*, Institute for Christian Jewish Studies, Baltimore  
Ms. *Lucky Altmann*, The National Conference for Community and Justice, Los Angeles  
Rabbi *Lewis Barth*, Dean, Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, Los Angeles

- Mary Boys*, SNJM, Skinner and McAlpin Professor of Practical Theology, Union Theological Seminary, New York
- Dr. *Rosann M. Catalano*, Institute for Christian and Jewish Studies, Baltimore
- Dr. *Philip A. Cunningham*, Executive Director, Center for Jewish-Christian Relationship, Boston College
- Audrey Doetzel*, NDS, Director of Christian-Jewish Relation and Encounter, New York
- Robert Ellenson*, Director of Interreligious Affairs, American Jewish Committee, Los Angeles
- Dr. *Eugene J. Fisher*, Associate Director, Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Relations, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington D.C.
- Rev. *Lawrence E. Frizzell*, Director of the Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies, Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey
- Dr. *Eugene Korn*, Director of Interfaith Affairs at the Anti-Defamation League, New York
- Rev. Dr. *Christopher M. Leighton*, Director of the Institute for Christian Jewish Studies, Baltimore
- Peter Ochs*, Bronfman Professor of Modern Judaic Studies, University of Virginia
- Rabbi *Aaron Petuchowski*, Senior Rabbi, Temple Shalom, Chicago
- Rev. *Royale Vadakin*, Pastor, Former Ecumenical Officer, Archdiocese of Los Angeles
5. Bernardin Center. Catholic-Jewish Studies Program, Chicago: "The Postmodern Church: Perspectives from the German Experience"  
Boston College: "My Thirty Years Experience of Christian-Jewish Dialogue in Germany"  
Skirball Institute of American Values, Los Angeles: "Problems of the Beatification of Edith Stein and Pius IX."
  6. American Jewish Committee in Los Angeles and Chicago, also in Chicago, Catholic Jewish Scholars Dialogue and The Chicago German-Jewish Dialogue.
  7. Christianity in Jewish Terms, edited by Tikva Frymer-Kensky, David Novak, Peter Ochs, David Fox Sandmel, Michael A. Signer, Westview Press 2000. Cf. Peter Ochs, David Sandmel, Christianity in Jewish Terms. A Project to Redefine the Relationship: CrossCurrents 50 (2000/2001) pp. 448-457 (in the following cited as Ochs/Sandmel).
  8. *Dabru Emet* (Introduction)
  9. Cf. Die Kirchen und das Judentum I, pp. 634f.; II, pp. 958-965. 965f. The table of contents of the second volume, which contains the documents of the years from 1986-2000, shows that Jewish statements within Christian-Jewish dialogue are rare. For one hundred Protestant and two hundred Catholic statements, there are only eight Jewish ones for the same period of time; in addition, there are thirteen texts that were written by Jews and Christians together.
  10. The Fundamental Agreement between the Holy See and the State of Israel was ratified on December 30, 1993. Cf. Die Kirchen und das Judentum II, pp. 80-85.
  11. Werner Trutwin, *Dabru Emet - Sprich Wahrheit: Christ in der Gegenwart* 54 (2002), pp. 85f.
  12. Cf. Ochs/Sandmel pp. 454-456.
  13. Christianity in Jewish Terms, XII.
  14. Ochs/Sandmel p. 454.
  15. Ochs/Sandmel p. 457.
  16. *Irreconcilable Differences? A Learning Resource for Jews and Christians*, edited by David F. Sandmel, Rosann M. Catalano, Christopher Leighton, Westview Press 2001.
  17. Cf. Ochs/Sandmel p. 154: "God's covenant with the Jewish people . . . informs and enriches the Christian covenant."
  18. [www.bc.edu/bc\\_org/research/cjl/articles/rosen.htm](http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/research/cjl/articles/rosen.htm).
  19. Dr. Edna Brocke, a person who has made her mark in Christian-Jewish dialogue in Germany, strongly criticized several of the theses in *Dabru Emet* at two events during the summer of 2001. Her position would probably have been more differentiated had she already known *Christianity in Jewish Terms*.
  20. For example, Rabbi James Rudin, American Jewish Committee, New York: [www.jcrelations.net](http://www.jcrelations.net).



21. The critic obviously misunderstands the character of *Dabru Emet*, which by its publication as a public statement in a daily paper wanted to arouse the attention of many and wanted to and could only formulate a minimal agreement. Scholarly debates, on the other hand, found their place in *Christianity in Jewish Terms*; Levenson's comments are thoroughly and controversially discussed. Levenson did allude to this commentary, but he did not acknowledge its contents.
22. Die Kirchen und das Judentum I, pp. 646f. The *International Council of Christians and Jews* (ICCJ) was a result of this conference.
23. Cf. John T. Pawlikowski, *Christianity in Jewish Terms. Re-Envisioning our Self-Understanding: The Living Light* 38 (2001), pp. 66-71. Two other positive critical reviews by Christian professors of *Christianity in Jewish Terms* should also be mentioned: Luke Timothy Johnson, April 20, 2001 in *Commonweal* 32; Peter Heinegg, in *CrossCurrents* 50 (2001), pp. 421-426, *ibid.* pp. 423-426.
24. We must remember above all the aggressive missionary policy of the Southern Baptists, who with 20 million members, are the second largest Christian denomination in the USA, after the Catholic Church. The 1996 statement of the *Southern Baptist Convention*, "Jewish Evangelism", called forth the dissent of the bishops of New York (Episcopal, Lutheran and Roman Catholic Churches). On the other hand, the *Alliance of Baptists* has remained with the common statement of Baptist congregations of March 5, 1995, which clearly declares its will to dialogue with the Jews. This is why, on their website, they add a comment which ends with the sentence: "Regrettably in recent years this effort at Jewish-Baptist dialogue has been reduced to a theology of conversion." [Allianceofbaptists.org/christian-jewish.htm](http://Allianceofbaptists.org/christian-jewish.htm).
25. Cf. Clemens Thoma, art. Juden, Judentum. VII. 3. Jüdisch-christlicher Dialog: Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, 3rd edition, Vol. 5, pp. 1046-1049, *ibid.* pp. 1048f.
26. Let us remember again the international Jewish-Christian group which published the "Seelisberg Theses" in 1947: Die Kirchen und das Judentum I. pp. 646f. Or we can think of the directive of the Synod of the Protestant Church in the Rhineland, "Zur Erinnerung des Verhältnisses von Juden und Christen" of January 11, 1980, in the writing of which Jews also took part: Die Kirchen und das Judentum I. pp. 593-596. Cf. also the statement of the theological commission of the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ) of March 1, 1993, "Für eine bessere Welt. Empfehlungen" (Jews and Christians in Search of a Common Religions Basis for Contributing Towards a Better World): Die Kirchen und das Judentum II, pp. 1004-1011.
27. Cf. Address of John Paul II to the Central Council of Jews in Germany and the Rabbinical Conference on November 17, 1980 in Mainz: Die Kirchen und das Judentum I, pp. 74-77; *ibid.* p. 76: "A second dimension of our dialogue - the real and central one - is the encounter between the Christian churches of today and today's people of the covenant made with Moses."
28. Uri Kaufmann, art. Juden, Judentum. VI. Gegenwart: Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, 3rd edition, Vol. 5, pp. 1040-1043, *ibid.* p. 1042.
29. Art. Orthodoxes Judentum (Petuchowski): Jakob J. Petuchowski, Clemens Thoma, *Lexikon der jüdisch-christlichen Begegnung*, Freiburg i. Br. 1989, pp. 273-276, *ibid.* pp. 275f.
30. Cf. R. Linowitz, Mordechai M. Kaplan and the Development of Reconstructionism, Edwin Mellen Press, New York, 1983.
31. Cf. Clemens Thoma, art. Juden, Judentum. VII.3 Jüdisch-christlicher Dialog: Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche, 3rd edition, Vol. 5, pp. 1046-1049, *ibid.* pp. 1047f.
32. Cf. Egal Feldman, *Catholics and Jews in Twentieth-Century America*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 2001.
33. Cf. Die Kirchen und das Judentum II, pp. 1000-1003. On September 18, 2000, the Archbishop of San Francisco, William J. Lavada, wrote in a letter to his "old friend" Michael Signer: „In my view *Dabru Emet* is a helpful counterbalance to the kind of critiques which seem to owe more to political campaigns than to theological understanding.”
34. Art. Dialog (Thoma): *Lexikon der jüdisch-christlichen Begegnung*, pp. 69-76, *ibid.* pp. 73f.
35. *Nostra aetate* needed years before it was received in Catholicism and on the world-wide

- ecumenical scene.
36. Cf. Rosann M. Catalano, David Fox Sandmel, Introduction: Irreconcilable Differences? Pp. 1-11, in particular pp. 5-7.
  37. Ochs/Sandmel, p. 454.
  38. Cf. Ochs/Sandmel, pp. 453f.; Catalano, Sandmel (footnote 42).
  39. David Novak, Introduction: What to Seek and What to Avoid in Jewish-Christian Dialog: Christianity in Jewish Terms, pp. 1-6.
  40. Ibid. p. 5.
  41. Robert Chazan, Christian-Jewish Interactions over the Ages: Christianity in Jewish Terms, pp. 7-24, *ibid.* p. 24.
  42. David R. Blumenthal, Tselem: Toward an Anthropomorphic Theology of Image: Christianity in Jewish Terms, pp. 337-347, *ibid.* p. 347.
  43. Cf. *The Discussion Group "Jews and Christians"* in the Central Committee of German Catholics, "Nach 50 Jahren - wie reden von Schuld, Leid und Versöhnung?" Erklärung 50 Jahre nach der Reichspogromnacht vom 19. Februar 1988 ("After 50 Years - How can we Talk about Guilt, Suffering, and Reconciliation?" Declaration of February 19, 1988, 50 Years after the Night of the Reichspogrom): *Die Kirchen und das Judentum II*, pp. 341-353, *ibid.* p. 343.
  44. Cf. Ochs/Sandmel pp. 449f.
  45. *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, Preface XI.
  46. John M. Oesterreicher, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Judentums durch die Kirche*, Freiburg i. Br., 1971, p. 17. Cf. Edward Kessler, The mission we can share: *The Tablet*, July 7, 2001: "The call by the Jewish scholar Claude Montefiore more than 75 years ago for a Jewish theology of Christianity still waits to be answered." Cf. also Michael S. Kogan, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Christianity: Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 32 (1995), pp. 85-106.
  47. *Discussion Group "Jews and Christians"* of the Central Committee of German Catholics, Arbeitspapier "Theologische Schwerpunkte des jüdisch-christlichen Gesprächs" of May 8, 1979 ("Important Theological Issues for Jewish-Christian Dialogue. A Working Paper"): *Die Kirchen und das Judentum I*, pp. 252-260, *ibid.* pp. 256f.
  48. Clemens Thoma, art. Juden, *Judentum*, VII, 3 Jüdisch-christlicher Dialog: *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd edition, Vol. 5, pp. 1046-1049, *ibid.* p. 1048.
  49. Cf. Dialog statt Dialogverweigerung. Wie in der Kirche miteinander umgehen? Contribution of the Commission 8 of the Central Committee of German Catholics, "Fundamental Pastoral Questions", of October 5, 1998: Annette Schavan (Ed.), *Dialog statt Dialogverweigerung. Impulse für eine zukunftsfähige Kirche*, Kevelaer, 1994, pp. 25-76, *ibid.* pp. 40f.
  50. Cf. Thesis 8 of *Dabru Emet*: "Jews and Christians must work together for justice and peace." Cf. Ochs/Sandmel pp. 450f. *Christianity in Jewish Terms* pp. 366-373 (the editors' concluding statement).
  51. Cf. Thesis 8 of *Dabru Emet*: "Jews and Christians must work together for justice and peace." Cf. Ochs/Sandmel, pp. 450f. *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, pp. 366-373 (editors' concluding statement).
  52. *Dabru Emet* (Introduction).
  53. Ochs/Sandmel, p. 448.
  54. So far, Islam has hardly entered into the modern way of thinking.
  55. As ecumenical dialogue proves, the reform through the Council has also changed the other churches, which for their part have contributed substantially to this change.
  56. Cf. the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis redintegratio* of the Second Vatican Council. *Dominus Iesus* wants to cancel this by saying that the non-Catholic churches and communities are not "churches in the proper sense."
  57. Cf. Mt 7:21: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven." Cf. also Mt 25:31-46.
  58. Art. Kirche/Kirchen (Thoma): *Lexikon der jüdisch-christlichen Begegnung*, pp. 206-211, *ibid.* pp. 206f.

59. Irving Greenberg, *Judaism, Christianity, and Partnership after the Twentieth Century: Christianity in Jewish Terms*, pp. 25-36, *ibid.* p. 33. Greenberg is an Orthodox Jew, President of the Jewish Life Network and one of the signatories of *Dabru Emet*.
60. Pastoral Constitution "*Gaudium et spes*" of the Second Vatican Council, no. 4. Cf. also no. 11, *ibid.*
61. Cf. art. Dogma (Thoma): *Lexikon der jüdisch-christlichen Begegnung*, pp. 83-88.
62. Irving Greenberg, *Judaism, Christianity and Partnership after the Twentieth Century: Christianity in Jewish Terms*, pp. 25-36, *ibid.* p. 27.
63. *Dabru Emet*, Thesis 6.
64. Elazar Benyoëtz, *Keineswegs (Der Herrlinger Drucke neue Folge 1)*, Herrlingen bei Ulm, 1998, p. 1.
65. Quoted from Elie Wiesel, *Zum Geleit: Kultur allein genügt nicht: Reinhold Boschki, Dagmar Mensink Gesellschaft, Münster 1998*, pp. 38-42, *ibid.* p. 39 (Source not certain).
66. Catholic News Service of December 5, 2001.
67. Cf. Statement of the Schweizerische Jüdisch-Römisch-Katholische Gesprächskommission (Swiss Jewish-Roman Catholic dialogue commission), "Antisemitismus: Sünde gegen Gott und die Menschlichkeit" of March 31, 1992: *Die Kirchen und das Judentum II*, pp. 1003f. *Die Seelisberger Thesen: Die Kirchen und das Judentum I*, pp. 646f. *ibid.* p. 647 (Thesis 9).
68. Cf. Wilhelm Breuning, *Elemente einer nicht-antijüdischen Christologie: Hubert Frankemölle (Ed.), Christen und Juden gemeinsam ins dritte Jahrtausend: "das Geheimnis der Erlösung heißt Erinnerung"*, Paderborn/Frankfurt a.M. 2001, pp. 183-215.
69. Cf. the discussion published by the Discussion Group "*Jews and Christians*" of the Central Committee of German Catholics, "Juden und Judentum im neuen Katechismus der Katholischen Kirche. Ein Zwischenruf" of January 22, 1996: *Die Kirchen und das Judentum II*, pp. 387-391, *ibid.* p. 389: "The Catechism of the Catholic Church obviously has difficulty in acknowledging post-biblical Judaism as an independent reality in the history of salvation alongside the Church, and in particular as the people of the covenant that was never revoked by God. That is less clear when the Catechism speaks explicitly about Judaism than it is in places that speak of the Church in such a way as if Judaism didn't exist, even though the matter discussed would require this."
70. Art. Kirche/Kirchen (Thoma): *Lexikon der jüdisch-christlichen Begegnung*, pp. 206-211, *ibid.* p. 210.
71. Cf. John T. Pawlikowski, *Ein Bund oder zwei Bünde? Zeitgenössische Perspektiven: Theologische Quartalschrift 176 (1996)*, pp. 325-340.
72. Cf. Maria Neubrand, Johannes Seidel, "Eingepropft in den edlen Ölbaum" (Röm 11,24): *Der Ölbaum ist nicht Israel: in Biblische Notizen Nr. 105 (2000)*, pp. 61-66. The authors come to the conclusion that the olive tree is Israel's Messiah.
73. Philosemitism is also a hidden variety of Antisemitism, because it is an enraptured adsorption.
74. Art. Gott (Thoma): *Lexikon der jüdisch-christlichen Begegnung*, pp. 134-138, *ibid.* pp. 136f.

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