



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

INFORMATION SHEET

The "Teaching of Contempt"

French historian Jules Isaac coined the phrase "teaching of contempt." Its religious aspects appeared in the second through fourth centuries when Jews and Christians were both subjects of the Empire of Rome. In response to various Roman charges, Christian leaders claimed that Jews were no longer God's Chosen People. The blessings of covenant with God had been transferred to Christians because of the crucifixion of Jesus. The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple by Roman armies in the year 70 and the loss of a Jewish homeland, it was argued, demonstrated divine disfavor with Jews. These ideas prevailed in Christian Europe until the second half of the twentieth century.

Catholic Teaching on Jews and Judaism after *Nostra Aetate*

Nostra Aetate inspired a series of official reappraisals of Christian teachings about Jews and Judaism across a spectrum of denominations. In the Catholic community, Vatican commissions, national conferences of Catholic bishops, and Pope John Paul II have issued numerous statements concerning Christian-Jewish relations. These have included such ideas as:

1. God's covenant of love with the Jewish people is eternal.
2. Christians must learn to understand how Jews define their own religious experiences and traditions.
3. Christians should strive to understand the significance of the Land of Israel for Jewish life.
4. Christianity and Judaism are intrinsically linked. In the words of John Paul II, Jews are "elder brothers" of Christians.
5. The Jewish people have a divinely given vocation in the world that goes beyond serving as the root of Christianity.
6. Christians can learn from the Jewish experience of God.
7. Antisemitism is a sin against God and humanity.
8. Jews and Christians both have a duty to prepare the world for God's kingdom of justice and peace.

Dabru Emet

Although the authors and signatories of *Dabru Emet* could speak only for themselves and not for the worldwide Jewish community, their statement is seen by many as an important moment in the modern Christian-Jewish dialogue.

Dabru Emet made the following eight claims:

1. Jews and Christians worship the same God.
2. Jews and Christians seek authority from the same book, the Bible (what Jews call "Tanakh" and Christians call the "Old Testament").
3. Christians can respect the claim of the Jewish people upon the land of Israel.
4. Jews and Christians accept the moral principles of Torah.
5. Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon.
6. The humanly irreconcilable difference between Jews and Christians will not be settled until God redeems the world.
7. A new relationship between Jews and Christians will not weaken Jewish practice.
8. Jews and Christians must work together for justice and peace.

Western Wall Prayer

John Paul II's prayer at the Western Wall repeated a plea for God's forgiveness that had been uttered two weeks earlier at the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome. As part of the observance of Jubilee 2000, Catholic leaders had expressed contrition for the sins of Christians during the previous millennium, including those against Jews.