

PREFACE

As the articles included in this issue of *Immanuel* were going to press, a Jewish-Christian colloquium was held in Rome marking the twentieth anniversary of the declaration, *Nostra Aetate*. The twenty years which have passed since the publication of this document have only served to confirm its importance. In the coming months, many conferences, meetings and publications will mark this anniversary. The colloquium which took place in Rome is worthy of being singled out both because of its location and because it was the first of these events.

The list of diverse institutions which sponsored this conference in itself suffices to indicate the change of mood that has taken place over the past twenty years. The sessions took place at the Theological Faculty of the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas (Angelicum), and were sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the Friars of Atonement — Centre Pro Unione, and the Sisters of SIDIC of Rome, with the collaboration of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism. It was concluded with an audience, during the course of which Pope John Paul II delivered an important address.

Outlook and perspective. Acts of grace and hope. It is through these words that one may best realize the spirit which guided these sessions. The exchanges at the various sessions were the occasion for confirming the progress of the work which has been carried out over the last twenty years. One might summarize it in the following manner: loyalty and openness in the confirmation of our differences, discovering with greater benevolence that which we share in common, the transition from a mentality of controversy to a style of “dialogical research” (the latter being an expression coined by our friend Eugen Fischer), and last but not least a similar consent to humility before the secret of the gift of God.

In this respect, the meeting in Rome was a significant milestone on the route which we pursue together. The editors and readers of *Immanuel* cannot but rejoice at such an official confirmation of the principles which inspire their own work. One could easily reclassify the articles which compose this issue along the lines which I will outline below.

The papers presented in the first section offer Christian readers some of the fruits of Jewish exegesis concerning the early history of the people of Israel: “The Beginnings of the Israelite Monarchy” (S. Abramski) and “Analogies and Parallels in the Book of Samuel” (S. Vargon).

Objectivity, mutual loyalty, and at the same time awareness of that which one shares in common. If the article by M. Orfali concerning the ideological

confrontations between Jews and Christians in medieval Spain is a sad reminder of a bitter history, the paper by F. Dreyfus displays that which Jews and Christians have in common when they consider the mystery of Divine condescension according to their different traditions.

Dialogical research. The analysis proposed by Prof. D. Flusser of “the original meaning of *Ecce Homo*” and, within the context of an entirely different discipline, archeology, the account P. Figueras gives of his research on Jewish ossuaries and their significance for Christianity, are rather remarkable examples of the fruits that open scholarship can produce in which Jews and Christians exchange their respective conclusions. On the sociological plane, D. Rossing’s article introduces us to some of the problematics of the life of the Christian communities native to the Middle East, in which we draws an illuminating analogy to the experience of the Jewish people. The correspondence addressed by J. Lundmark to Prof. Flusser, and the reflections of B. Young on D. Hagner’s recent book, confirm the necessity of joint research enterprise more attentive to the reality of Judaism in the first two centuries.

The colloquium in Rome fostered greater awareness of another truth, that which may be called the “principle of uniqueness and exemplariness.” I would express this in the following fashion: Christians are not exempt from considering Israel, the Jewish people, Jewish existence, in their singularity, because everything that concerns Jewish destiny, as well as everything which is mentioned in the Bible as appearing in its long history, constitutes both a unique and exemplary value. The Bible is an unique book recounting the unique history of an unique people, while everything that it says about that people addresses itself as well to all men of good will as to the Church itself. This appears clearly in the great events of the history of Israel: vocation and election, desert and promised land, Galuth and Ge’ulah, Exile and Redemption, each having both an unique and an exemplary value. This is true as well for the encounter with the world, whether that of paganism or of modernity. In this respect, the encounter of Judaism with the Enlightenment, the conflict between tradition and secularization, presents both a unique and a universal model for the crisis which the great religious traditions, and the Church in particular, actually confront in a world threatened by secularization. The articles by E. Schweid concerning the Neo-Orthodox response to secularization (Part I of which appears in this issue), and that by J. Chipman paying tribute to Mordecai Kaplan, a figure on the opposite extreme of the Jewish theological spectrum, give fruit for reflection upon these analogies.

The final session of the colloquium in Rome was entitled, “The Challenges we Jointly Face.” As one can see from the articles published in this number, *Immanuel* aims to aid Jews and Christians in this mutual confrontation.

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