

# CENTRO PRO UNIONE

A publication about the activities of the Centro Pro Unione

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A Ministry of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement



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## Centro Pro Unione Bulletin

A semi-annual publication about the activities of the Centro Pro Unione

The Centro Pro Unione in Rome, founded and directed by the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement, - [www.atonementfriars.org](http://www.atonementfriars.org) - is an ecumenical research and action center.

Its purpose is to give space for dialogue, to be a place for study, research and formation in ecumenism: theological, pastoral, social and spiritual.

The Bulletin has been published since 1968 and is released in Spring and Fall.

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## Letter from the Director

This issue of the *Bulletin – Centro Pro Unione* opens with a very important conference given by Rabbi Jack Bemporad on “The Philosophy of the Midrash”. The subject as Rabbi Bemporad has indicated is very complex that may be explained as “primarily an attempt to explain, to interpret, to get at the very heart of biblical teachings and religious teachings in Judaism”. After an engaging presentation of the philosophy, our author ends with this observation: “Rational inquiry and ethical action and continuing questioning, as represented in the Midrash, will lead us to seeking and finding God, holiness, purpose and meaning. But if one persists in this endeavor, one discovers oneself.”



The next three articles are the product of “MAD for ecumenism” - a project of the Centro Pro Unione created and coordinated by Teresa Francesca Rossi, Associate Director, that establishes a desk for Mutual Accountability revolving around study, charitable activity, and worship. It invites all Christian confessions willing to journey together in mutual understanding, respect, trust, and accountability. The first Module focused on preaching with a particular attention to Catholic-Pentecostal relations. The theme of the second Module, now in progress, is “[...] by baptism [...] we walk in newness of life” (Rm 6:4). Its focus is on the moral life and liturgy flowing out on Baptism. It is a joint venture among Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists and Waldensians.

Rev. Tim Macquiban, Pastor of Ponte Sant’Angelo Methodist Church introduced the theme with his lecture: “‘God’s Sovereign grace, immense and unconfined’. Our Common Baptism and Call to Holiness”. Our author concludes his lecture by making reference to Pope Francis’ Letter to Young People : “for holiness is ‘the most attractive face of the Church’. And that is because all of us who are baptized Christians share in this common baptism which unites us in the universal call to holiness”.

The continuation of the theme was offered by two Lutherans, a ‘husband and wife team of theologians and liturgists. Prof. Gordon Lathrop and Prof. Gail Ramshaw. The first introduces us to the very meaning of the reading of the Gospels as a call to Christian unity. Our assemblies will continually be invited to the critique and reforming of our ritual and religion, to become again and again the biblically rooted, biblically imaged “assembly of God.” The second presentation dealt with the gift of common ecumenical Lectionaries. The development of a lectionary in Protestantism is something new and a welcomed gift of the Spirit. Knowing that all Christians in a geographic area will hear and preach on the same readings on any given Sunday unites us in the Word proclaimed, celebrated and lived.

This issue opens with a lecture of Rabbi Bemporad and closes with one: on St John Paul II’s outreach to the Jewish Community. This touching and personal lecture illustrates how much the Pope knew his Jewish brothers and sisters through encounters with them and sharing in their suffering. The Pope’s outreach was always in the direction of reconciliation and the healing of memories.

This issue concludes with a brief text of our Secretary, Dr. Davide Bracale on the occasion of the presentation of his latest research into the presbyters of the Patrizi family and their service to the Roman Curia from the XVIII to XX centuries.

Our program for the coming year includes such topics as Sinodalità, *una cum capite suo*, the “Holy Spirit” in Medieval Jewish Philosophy and Spirituality, the ecumenism of Pope Francis, St. Pius X’s contribution to the modern church, and an ecumenical reading of *Laudato Si’*.

We invite our readers to always check our web site for dates and events as well as the up-dating of our data base on the international theological dialogues and of course our two libraries: pro and dialogo.

January 18-25 is the annual celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (in the Northern hemisphere) and the week between Ascension and Pentecost (in the Southern hemisphere). Encourage your parishes and organizations to engage in this intense prayer of Jesus for the unity of all Christians.

Lastly our annual Summer course *Introduction to the Ecumenical and Interreligious Movements* (June 22- July 10, 2020) is now available for registration on our web site.

This *Bulletin* is indexed in the *ATLA Religion Database*, published by the American Theological Library Association, 250 S. Wacker Drive, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor, Chicago, IL 60606 ([www.atla.com](http://www.atla.com)).

James F. Puglisi, SA  
Director Centro Pro Unione

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE MIDRASH

Rabbi Jack Bemporad - Director, The Center for Interreligious Understanding  
Teaneck, New Jersey, USA5

Conference given at the Centro Pro Unione, Thursday, 3 May 2018



The topic “The Philosophy of the Midrash,” which I will speak about this evening, was not my first choice. The Midrash is such a vast, such a difficult topic. There are literally hundreds of books that can be described as Midrashic. A large section of the Talmud consists of *Aggadah*, or Midrash. The rabbinic Bible, which is the Bible as presented in its rabbinic format, has dozens of commentaries and even commentaries on commentaries. There’s no way of exhausting it, so for anyone to say that this is THE philosophy of the Midrash, or this is the teaching of the Midrash, seems to me to be something difficult to support.

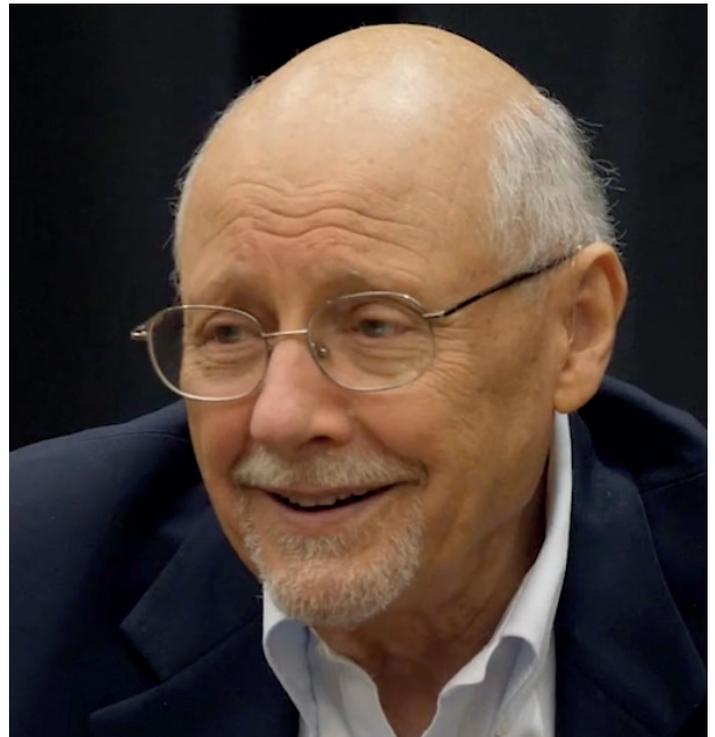
The word Midrash comes from the Hebrew root DaRaSH, meaning to seek, read repeatedly, study, search out a meaning in its Biblical use.<sup>1</sup> In late Biblical usage, Midrash is used to mean<sup>2</sup> “Imaginative exposition, didactic story. These meanings were taken over and expanded in later Rabbinic and other Jewish and non-Jewish writings.

However, there are passages in the Midrash itself that can give us a clue as to its essential meaning. One of the most important things it says about itself is that “If you want to know who it was that spoke and the world came into being, study Midrash,” (Sifre 85a); that is, if you want to know something about God, creation, revelation, and the fundamental religious truths, study Midrash.

Midrash, or Aggadah, is usually contrasted with Halacha. Halacha, (Jewish Law) is concerned primarily with legal material. Its Biblical meaning is manifold but it’s essential definition is to walk, or go forward. Now what is the difference between Midrash and *halacha*? Midrash is primarily an attempt to explain, to interpret, to get at the very heart of biblical teachings and religious teachings in Judaism. Halacha is different. And it’s legal in that it gives you the sense of the right way to walk (act). But there’s no real agreement in *halacha* either. In fact, it took the late Middle Ages before there was any clarity as to how to put the legal material together and the one who did that better than anyone else was Maimonides in his monumental 14-volume work of Jewish law called the *Mishnah Torah*. It took the genius of Maimonides to get a unified, systematic, organized presentation of the totality of Jewish law.

1 See FRANCIS BROWN, *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon to the Old Testament*, p. 205. Hereafter cited BDB.

2 According to BDB, *ibid*.



▶ Rabbi Jack Bemporad

So, returning to Midrash, the first thing is, if you want to know who God is, you want to know the one who spoke and the world came to be, that is religious truth study Midrash.

Another wonderful passage in the Midrash presents a clue about itself; it states, “In the days when people had a lot of change in their pockets, people would study Talmud (*Halacha*, or Jewish Law). Life was easy, people were well off, so one wanted to get at something really demanding, interesting, and difficult. But when adversities came, persecutions, suffering, and things of that nature, then the Talmud wasn’t that appealing. They wanted something that fed the soul, not only the intellect. It was something that had to appeal to the heart. And so what the Midrash does is give you the opportunity to read biblical and Jewish texts in a way that enables you to begin to ask fundamental questions about life and its meaning, the nature of God and the soul. (Pesikta 101b,)

Now while some of it is very far-fetched and some highly speculative, some of it, on the other hand, while

relatively simple, nevertheless still has a significant point to make. For example, when it says in the 22nd chapter of Genesis verse 1:

“And it was after these things that God tested Abraham.” And he said to him ...  
“Take your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac and offer him up as a burnt offering.”

It's interesting that the Midrash to this passage immediately asks “after what things?” And there's a discussion as to what were the conditions that preceded this particular test. The Midrashic discussion, so different from the straight forward Biblical passage, is truly touching. When the texts says, “Take your son...” Abraham responds, “I have two sons.” And then God says, “ your only son.” And Abraham answers “Yes, but each is the only son of his mother.” Whom you love. “I love both of them.” And then God says, “Isaac.” And when he hears Isaac, Abraham loses his breath. And then the statement “The one you love takes a profound and significant meaning,” (Midrash Rabbah to Gen 22 and all standard Jewish commentaries).

Now this gives one a sense of the Midrash. It's not legally what one should do or shouldn't do, which is essentially what halacha tries to teach us, but to get at the very heart, the very soul, at the very feeling, the essential meaning of the text.

Let me give you another example. There are a number of *midrashim* having to deal with Moses, of course, because Moses is so all-pervasive, in the books from Exodus to Deuteronomy, and then throughout the Bible. Here again there is extensive discussion. The Midrash asks why is it that when Moses is told that he is to empower Joshua to lead the children of Israel into the promised land, The Midrash asks, shouldn't Moses not only take them out but bring them in too.” Shouldn't Moses have brought them in? What was the whole point of the commission at the burning bush, forcing him as the unique one to take the children of Israel out of Egypt? Why at the end the best he can do is look from afar at the Promised Land and not enter it?

The Midrash itself asks this question and gives a very moving and religiously significant answer. It's a long conversation but in summary, Moses says to God, “It's not right, it's really not right for me to see this land and not taste it, not have a sense of it, not to be a part of it. It's not fair.” And God says the following: “You know, I could have you go and you could go into the Promised Land. But then the children of Israel will remain children. You want them to remain dependent children? Do you want to be the one who is always in charge, always making decisions, always giving orders? Don't you really think that they should grow



▶ Diverse make-up of the audience: scholars, theologians, academics, students

up?” And when Moses hears that, he's reconciled. (Midrash Rabbah to Deuteronomy Chapter 11 has a variety of interpretations of Moses's death, all extremely interesting and touching.)

Let me give you another example, this one a story of biblical irony. Balaam, the great seer, is hired curse the Israelites. He is on his donkey, but the donkey sees an angel with a sword blocking the path, so instead of walking straight, he turns to one side and then to the other, and then sits down. And Balaam, not seeing the angel, beats his donkey, exclaiming if he had a sword he would kill him. But then Balaam's eyes are opened and he sees the angel on the path. So the Midrash asks the following: Why is it that a donkey can see what a supposedly great seer, (who with a word could curse a people but needs a sword to kill a donkey) cannot see? And then, of course, they ask how a donkey could speak? And I would add, “It's harder for God to change a human being from his evil ways than it is to get a donkey to speak.” So here, an example of irony in the Bible, is expanded in the Midrash. (see Midrash Rabbah to Numbers chapter 22 ff)

The Midrash is the investigation and the discovery of the essential meanings of Scripture and therefore has numerous levels of significance. Let me try to indicate to you what that means. There are different ways of getting at the numerous levels of meaning. One of them is through the acronym *pardes*. *Pardes* in Hebrew means a garden. Each of these letters stand for something. *Peh* stands for *pshat*, which means the literal interpretation, *Remes* means a hint, for someone who knows how to take a hint, *Drash* is an elaborate explanation, commentary, discussion--could even be a sermon or a talk or a statement--and then the last letter *samach*, which is *sod*--a secret, there's a secret there. And according to the rabbinic interpretation, according to the Midrash, every single text can be seen on

any one of these four letters—either literal, or a hint, or an elaborate explanation, or a secret. The task is to decipher it.

A good hint would be the following: My brilliant teacher Prof. Atlas once asked me Where is Moses in the Torah? Where is Moses in the Pentateuch? If I were to ask you, wouldn't you answer except for the book of Genesis, where is Moses not in the Pentateuch? But then, that's a hint. Where is Moses not in the Pentateuch? Think about it. Where is Moses in the literary Prophets. He's not in Amos. He's not in Hosea. Yes, he is in Michah, but how does Moses appear in Michah? It says Moses, Aaron and Miriam. What about Moses giving the Torah, the revelation. Yes, you have him in Jeremiah, where it says that Moses and Samuel would pray for the city, but all they could do was save themselves. Hello, that's a hint. You have to begin now to ask yourself, why is that the case? Why is it that the only literary prophet that refers to Moses as basically having any relationship with the Law is Malachi, which is really late. ...

it didn't use the language of human beings, no individual would have any sense as to what it is saying. But this language, each successive generation has to wrestle with it, it has to develop the kind of language that each generation is able to deal with. And if it didn't develop a language, then it actually wouldn't be able to interpret it properly. The Rabbis were fully aware of the changes in the generations, in the environment and especially in the different contexts and levels of knowledge.

For example the affirmation of God as creator even given the great insight of Second Isaiah in Chapter 40:12-31 proclaiming the transcendence of God was still seen in the context of the cosmology of the ancient world. Imagine what creator would mean in our contemporary context with billions perhaps trillions of heavenly bodies.

The problem is, if we talk about a philosophy, which is my topic, the philosophy of the Midrash; when we talk about philosophy we're talking about system, we're talking about integration and about how things are connected. It is the search for the true and the real.

But everything we've talked about so far has not given you any indication that there is any connection. Yes, there are many comments; statements on different subject matters. But what is its unity? I think what brings about this unity is that they deal with the most fundamental issues of both Jewish and human existence. It's an attempt to deal with the most basic, fundamental problems of human existence. It is the unity of concern of ultimate meaning and not the unity of system. But even then what we find is that the Midrash is often disconcerting since it continually cites differing opinions. And this becomes the problem when it comes to trying to understand the Midrash philosophically. Let me now quote some controversies citing different opinions

In Pirke Avot 5:17 it speaks of controversies for the sake of heaven, that is for a divine cause, and controversies not for the sake of heaven. Now, what are controversies for the sake of heaven? The answer is that controversies for the sake of heaven are the controversies between Hillel and Shammai. And what are the controversies not for the sake of heaven? Those are the controversies of Korah and his assembly. Now what makes a controversy for the sake of heaven? It is a controversy that is striving to seek the truth. And what is a controversy not for the sake of heaven? Korah and his assembly because all they want to do is get power and self-glorification. That's the difference. So there are controversies. But genuine controversies concerns what makes something true?



▶ Students delighted to meet Rabbi Jack

I'll give you another hint. You have for example it says in the fifth chapter of Amos, "I hate, I despise your festivals and loathe your solemn assemblies, but let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" And then it says, "Did you offer up sacrifices unto me, children of Israel?" And the implication is, of course not. But that's not true, if you look at Exodus. In Jeremiah, in the seventh chapter in the 21st verse, it specifically says, "I didn't command you to offer sacrifice." So what do you do with that? These are contradictions the Midrash has to confront. How do you deal with these?

A fundamental principle that is basic to all rabbinic interpretation of what is stated in the Torah, the Bible, is that the text speaks in the language of man—because if

Let me give you yet another controversy. In tractate Erubim 13b it says that the words of the school of Hillel and the words of the school of Shammai are both words of the living God. But how can they both be the words of the living God when they are constantly contradicting each other? The rabbis themselves are somewhat embarrassed by that. And they don't quite know what to do. As it turns out, the rabbis favor the words of Hillel according to Jewish teaching, because the Hillelites always offered the words and the position the Shammai first before offering their own.

The reality is this - it is very difficult to speak about a philosophy of something that is constantly espousing differences of opinion, not to mention opposing ones - a philosophy that requires that all of these differences be understood. Not surprisingly, even the halacha, the law, gives differing as well as opposing opinions. This is because the Mishnah clearly affirms that we should give minority viewpoints, since there is always the possibility that the majority opinion may change over time.



▶ From left: Profs. Teresa Francesca, Teodora and Margherita Rossi meet Rabbi Jack after his lecture

Let me just give you some further examples of the Midrash: When it comes to the issue of *imitatio dei*, the imitation of God, there are some very original statements about it. It says "I the Lord your God am Holy." According to Leon Roth, this means, "I am holy, meaning, if you make yourself holy, I will consider it as if you have declared me holy. But if you do not make yourselves Holy then I shall consider it as if you have failed to declare me holy. There is no question that God's holiness inheres in God irrespective of whether or not individuals declare God to be holy. Nevertheless there is a sense in which God's holiness is dependent to the extent to which we try to manifest the holiness of God in our lives." So here what you have is something very interesting about holiness.

A very beautiful Midrash on the concept of holiness in Leviticus 19, is by Leon Roth, a philosopher, "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy." He says, interestingly, that whenever we are talking about holiness, we are not talking about anything positive but something negative. And here's how Roth explains that:

In Leviticus 19 it says, "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest [gleanings must be left for the poor].

Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien.

Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another.

Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God.

Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him.

Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight.

Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God.

Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.

Do not go about spreading slander among your people.

Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life.

Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt.

Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself.

In other words, what Roth is saying is that every time we try to designate something as being holy, we're really trying to eliminate things that make us unholy. Well, then what makes something holy? It's left right there. In other words, you're going to have to create your own Midrash, and with the Midrash you create, perhaps you can then try to have a sense of what it is that's holy in one's own life.<sup>3</sup>

3 The entire essay by LEON ROTH, entitled "Imitatio Dei and the Idea of Holiness," in *Is there a Jewish Philosophy?* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Philosophy, 1999) 15-29. His very important book is worth reading.

And what you have in the Midrash here is the complete moralization of the idea of power. In Deuteronomy 3:24, “Oh Lord, God, Thou hast begun to show Thy servant Thy greatness and Thy mighty hand.”

And the Sifrei says, “ ‘Thy greatness,’ this means thy goodness, as in verse 14, “And now I pray thee let the power of the Lord be great.”

‘Thy hand’ this means the hand which is stretched out in mercy and pardon to all who come into the world.

‘Thy might,’ this refers to the might that Thou showest when Thou dost in mercy repress the attribute of justice, as it is written, “Who is a God like unto Thee, forgiving sin and passing over transgression.”<sup>4</sup>

Now the Sifrei, which is a commentary on Numbers and Deuteronomy, says this is the universal meaning of the word *rightness* when applied to God in the Midrash. It always refers to goodness; it always refers to moral attributes. (ibid) And lo and behold, is it any surprise that when Moses asks God, “Show me Your glory, God says that you cannot see my face and live, but I will show you My attributes;” every single one of those attributes are moral: compassion, graciousness, patience, full of steadfast love and truth.

My own understanding of this is that the ethical must have a dimension of the Holy, while nothing can be Holy if it is not ethical. In Jewish thinking they are so intertwined that one is deficient without the other. It is this interconnectedness between the ethical and the Holy that permeates Midrashic texts and gives them a certain coherence. This concern for the ethical is also expressed in *Halacha*, that is in legal texts which often are so completely intertwined with the moral aspect that it’s impossible to separate the two.

And here I’ll quote from a legal text, not a midrashic one. The Mishna, which is primarily a legal code states: “In a capital case these are the ways in which witnesses are given notification as to how they are to testify ‘You are not to speak from guesswork or from gossip or from reliance on a third party, however trustworthy in your eye. You must understand that a case involving the death penalty is not like those involving only money. In money cases a false witness can atone for the damage he has caused by a money payment. In capital cases there rests on his head the blood of the condemned man and the blood of the descendants which have yet to be born to the end of days.’”

Now here is the interesting thing: That is strictly a *halachic* statement. But then, here is how it continues in a Midrashic manner: “It is for this that man was created. It is for this that a single man was created in the world to teach that if anyone has caused a single soul to perish, scripture imputes in him as if he had caused the entire world to perish. And if any man saves the life of a single

soul, scripture imputes in him as though he had saved the lives of the whole world. Again, a single man was created for the sake of peace among mankind that none should say to his fellow, ‘My father was greater than thy father.’ Also, that the heretic [the Gnostics] should not say there are many ruling powers in heaven. Again, a single man was created to proclaim the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be he.” And here’s the final point: “For when a king stamps many coin, they are all alike. But when the King of Kings, blessed be he, creates men, they are all created in the divine image and each one is separate; no one is like anyone else.” (The Mishna, Sanhedrin 4:5)

This then is a definite joining of *halachic* statements with *aggadic*, or Midrashic statements. So it is very hard to extract the *halachic* part, which gives guidance to judges as to what they should do, from the Midrashic, or to try to separate the legal from the moral.

Similarly, it is a halachic statement that you should love your fellow human being, or neighbor, because he is equal to you. I know that the translations usually are “love your neighbor as yourself;” but that is not an accurate translation of the Hebrew, since “kamocho” means equal to you.<sup>5</sup>

Now, loving your neighbor is a *halachic* statement, that is, a legal statement. But every time you try to analyze it, you end up in Midrash. If I say I should love my fellow human being, and I use the Septuagint translation, “as yourself;” and not the Hebrew one, then I could rationalize: well, I behave like a man, I behave like a person who has dignity. But if there is someone who isn’t like me and doesn’t behave like a man, someone who doesn’t have dignity, why should I treat him as I treat myself? He is not behaving as I behave, so why should I treat him as myself. Thus, there seems to be some limitation to saying ‘love thy neighbor as yourself.’ Again, because I ‘put on airs,’ and giving myself airs, therefore I can say, “I’m better than you.” At the same time, how can you love your neighbor in the way you love yourself? It doesn’t make any sense. So, I can’t say that I love you to the same degree that I love myself, in the sense that I love you in a way that is equal to the love for myself. Love has to have a kind of differentiation, more or less. How then, is this resolved? It is resolved by saying what Akiba said [this is one of the great passages in the whole of rabbinic literature] that the single greatest commandment is that you should love your fellow human being because he is equal to you.

Of course, Ben Azzai, expands on and establishes the basis for Akiba’s statement. As it is, he says, it is not enough. You have to say that the greatest commandment is “this is the generation of man in the day that God created man ‘because he created man in the Divine image.’” If you

5 See the penetrating discussion of this verse on pages 276-278 in EDWARD ULLENDORFF’S essay, “Thought Categories in the Hebrew Bible” published in RAPHAEL LOEWE, ed., *Rationalism, Judaism, Universalism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

4 quoted from L. ROTH, *Ibid.*, 140.

don't have the added sense that human beings are made in the Divine image, and thus have the intrinsic dignity that makes them equal, you can't say that you should love your neighbor because he is equal to you. It's not that I happen to love them more or less, or that I consider them to have the same status that I have but it is because they all are part of humanity. So, what you have here is a very profound discussion in the *aggadah*, or *Midrash* and the *halacha* on the question of love of neighbor and the foundation for the ideal of humanity.

There are two things I'd like to discuss with you now. The first has to do with both the good and evil inclination. I consider the concepts of the *yetzer hara* and the *yetzer tov* to be some of the most important doctrines in the Midrash. What is the *yetzer hara* and what is the *yetzer tov*? The *yetzer hara* is the formative power for more, for excess, for ambition. And what is the *yetzer tov*? The *yetzer tov* is the innate power for integration, for unity, for connectedness and goodness. Now, the formative power for excess is not something that should simply be discarded as totally destructive because, according to one rabbi, without ambition no one would do anything. The answer is that if one didn't have the formative power for excess and for achievement, one wouldn't build a house, marry, rear a child, or engage in business because, after all, it comes from competitiveness. And without that, you don't have any achievement. But if all you have is competitiveness, you cannot achieve anything, nor would you have any relationships.

Hillel puts it in a different way. "If I'm not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?" Thus, "if I am not for myself, who will be for me?" means, basically, that if I don't stand up for myself, who will stand up for me? Who is going to do it for me? A mother would try to protect a child, but even a mother, after a while, says, "You've got to stand on your own two feet." But then Hillel says something more profound. He says you have to be for yourself so that you can be depended upon by others. Why do you have to perfect yourself? You have to be able to perfect yourself so you have enough capacity to be able to 'do.' So, you have to stand for yourself so you can achieve your full realization. But if that's all, if I'm only for myself and I exclude others, then what am I? He finally says, "And if not now, when?" When - the element of time. And I consider the element of time to be critical, and so does Hillel, because, in reality, in another statement, he says, "When I have time I will study." But you may not have time, so study every day.

These are all Midrashic statements. And they are wise statements. But second, in the elaboration of evil inclination, the rabbis, I think, become very profound. Rabbi Akiba said of this formative power for evil, at first it's like a spider's thread, and at last it's like a rope of a ship that enslaves you. Rabbi Isaac said that at first it is a wayfarer, and then a lodger, and at last it becomes the master of the house. Rabbi Ami said of the evil inclination,

that it does not walk at the side but in the middle of the street, and when it sees a man who winks with his eyes and dresses his hair elegantly, and lifts up his heel, it says, "This man is mine." In other words, it's that element of ourselves that wants to indulge that part of ourselves that is self-centered, that is egotistical, that gives one a false sense of self, that makes us feel good at the expense of someone else. From a Jewish midrashic and halachic point of view, there are few things that are worse than striving to feel good at the expense of somebody else. (These and other statements on the good and evil inclination can be found in Montefiore and Loewe *A Rabbinic Anthology*,<sup>6</sup> as well in the footnote.<sup>7</sup>)

I would like to deal with those Midrashic passages that deal with the suffering of human beings in general and the people of Israel in particular, especially the suffering of the pure, the just, and the righteous. Rabbi Alba ben Yudan said, "Whatever God has declared as unfit in the case of an animal, he has declared desirable in the case of a man. In animals he has declared unfit the blind, or broken or maimed, or having a wen, But in man he has declared the broken and the contrite heart to be desirable."

R. Alexandri said, "If an ordinary man makes use of a broken vessel, it is a disgrace for him. But the vessels used by God are precisely broken ones, as it is said, 'the Lord is nigh unto the broken-hearted.' "And, "Who healeth the broken in heart. I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit." Further, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart O God thou wilt not despise."

And the Midrash deals, perhaps best, with the paradox as to why the righteous suffer while the evil seem to thrive. Rabbi Yochanan says, "A potter does not cast defective vessels because he cannot give them a single blow without breaking them. Similarly, God does not test the wicked but only the righteous. Thus the Lord tries the righteous." Rabbi Josef ben Hanina says, "When a flax worker knows that his flax is of good quality, the more he pounds it the more it improves and the more it glistens. But if it is of inferior quality he cannot beat it at all without its splitting."

Rabbi Eleazer says, "When a man possesses two cattle, one strong and the other feeble, upon which does he put the yoke? Surely, upon the strong." Similarly, the Lord tests the righteous, none but the righteous. Hence, the Lord tries the righteous."

6 NY: Schocken Books, 1974.

7 The following rabbinic statements until the paragraph starting with "And so Slonimsky..." quoted and adapted from HENRY SLONIMSKY, *Essays. The Philosophy Implicit in the Midrash* (NY/Chicago: Hebrew Union College Press/Cincinnati Quadrangle Books, 1967) 36.

And so Slonimsky, my great teacher, and one of the supreme masters of the Midrash, summarized all this with these words: “The sentiment gradually established itself that it is the mark of the grandeur of human beings to be asked to bear more than their share of the burden. And by the same token, the supreme degradation of the low and the base is to be thought not worthy of being ennobled to bearing the sins and sorrows of others.”<sup>8</sup>

In spite of these explanations, and statements by great rabbis, you can say, “Well, what kind of a world is this? To make things even more paradoxical, the rabbis teach us that it’s not just that human beings suffer, but when human beings suffer, God suffers. It is even said that God is in exile. And the reason He is in exile is because of those who are also in exile.

Perhaps the best way of putting it is to ask, “but what about justice?” And the answer the Midrash gives is profound. R. Levi said, “If it is the world thou seekest, there can be no justice. And if it is justice thou seekest, there can be no world. Why does one grasp the rope by both ends seeking both the world and justice? Let one of them go, for if thou dost not relent a little the world cannot endure.”<sup>9</sup>

8 SLONIMSKY *Essays, op. cit.*, 38.

9 SLONIMSKY *Essays, op. cit.*, 76.

From the preceding one can glean that the Midrash is a continuous ethical inquiry and investigation to get to the heart and human quality of Jewish law and practice, using reason as an essential element. This use of reason makes the inquiry philosophical, since philosophy can be described as the self-conscious uses of reason, and religion as the self-conscious uses of faith.

How important the ethical and the rational are in Judaism was profoundly expressed by Hermann Cohen in his *Religion of Reason: Out of the Sources of Judaism*.<sup>10</sup>

“A very noteworthy document of this share of religion in knowledge is found in the Talmud, and indeed with an unsurpassed application: ‘In that hour, in which man is led to judgement, it is said to him: did you execute your business (livelihood) in good faith? Did you appoint times for the study of the Torah?...Did you pursue your studies with wisdom (method)? Did you make inferences on the basis of one sentence to another?’ (Sabbath 31a) Rashi gives an explanation of the last question: ‘The inference of one sentence on the basis of another, that is knowledge.’ According to this passage one has to consider how much the Talmud must have esteemed methodical knowledge if it made it into a question that the highest judge puts to a man’s soul. It is not enough that times were appointed for the study of the Torah, so that the study should be pursued regularly; it was also necessary to show that the study had been performed in a methodical way and with logical method. The method, however, consists in the deduction of one sentence from another, which is set down as its foundation.”

Rational inquiry and ethical action and continuing questioning, as represented in the Midrash, will lead us to seeking and finding God, holiness, purpose and meaning. But if one persists in this endeavor, one discovers oneself.

10 Translated by Simon Kaplan (NY: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1972) 91.



▶ Gathering of students and Sisters listen attentively to the lecture

## “GOD’S SOVEREIGN GRACE, IMMENSE AND UNCONFINED” OUR COMMON BAPTISM AND CALL TO HOLINESS

Rev. Dr. Tim Macquiban - Pastor, Ponte Sant’Angelo Methodist Church  
Director of MEOR (Methodist Ecumenical Office – Rome) and Co-chair of the Methodist-Baptist International Dialogue

Conference given at the Centro Pro Unione, Wednesday, 15 May 2019



### INTRODUCTION

The preacher and pastor, which I am most weeks of the year rather than an academic, ascends the pulpit (as I do at Ponte Sant’Angelo Methodist Church where I am its minister) and announces a text for the sermon. This usually comes from the scriptures shared earlier, and mostly from the gospels.

But today I take as my text a quotation from Charles Wesley, the co-founder with his brother John of the Methodist movement, in the 18th century in Britain. It comes from one of the many hymns that he wrote which have become a common treasury of hymnody for the English speaking Christian Church. It is in a verse of his hymn ‘*For all, for all, my Saviour died*’, where he was stoutly defending the Arminian doctrine of the universality of grace against the particularism of Calvinism:

*Thy sovereign grace to all extends,  
Immense and unconfined;  
From age to age it never ends;  
It reaches all mankind.*

Now that may seem to be an odd choice for a series here at the Centro on **MAD for Ecumenism** exploring the commonality of our Christian faith in the search for unity. But I can do so in the confidence that though we may differ on some of the doctrines and practices of our Christian traditions, we can be assured, as the Wesleys were, that even in an age of fierce doctrinal controversies, with Calvinists and Catholics alike, even the Wesleys could reach out with the hand of ecumenical friendship, or what John Wesley called a “Catholic Spirit”, to others, especially those who recognized the centrality of their oneness in Christ through their common baptism and through their common call to holiness. And that is what I want to explore, from the context of my ecumenical work here in Rome and in the wider world communions with whom I have been privileged to work in my role as Chair of the Ecumenical Relationships Committee of the World Methodist Council.



▶ Rev. Dr. Tim Macquiban, pastor of Ponte Sant’Angelo Methodist Church

The **Catholic Spirit** which gave John Wesley the title for one of his sermons was a ‘pure universal love’ which reached out to all God’s children - yes, even our enemies (you remember that John Wesley said that the Methodists were friends of all and enemies of none), following the commandments of Jesus to love one another. Wesley curiously uses a text from the Old Testament in a way which we do not need to worry about now to demonstrate that (just as Jehu did with Jonadab)

- We need to enlist the support of other Christians in our witness to God
- We ought to extend the hand of fellowship to all who love the Lord whatever our differences

Sadly, we have to recognize the terrible ways in which Christians over the centuries have hurled scorn and abuse and killed each other in the name of a purified religion which bears our particular interpretations, and worships in our peculiar ways. John Wesley in the eighteenth century offered an olive branch to Catholics in an age when political and social attitudes expected limited toleration to replace the outright persecution which still prevailed elsewhere. His sermon on the **Catholic Spirit** did encourage Christians to join hands with fellow Christians so that the Love of God they shared could overcome

whatever the differences of doctrine and practice which divide. Charles Wesley's hymn *Christ from whom all blessings flow* holds out a vision of a Church where such differences were challenged.

*Love, like death, has all destroyed,*

*Rendered all distinctions void;*

*Names, and sects, and parties fall:*

*Thou O Christ art all in all.*

I have explored this more fully in a chapter of a book dedicated to a dear friend who inspired my early studies in the Wesleys and their theology and spirituality, Professor Norman Young of Melbourne Australia. It's an essay entitled "'Names, and Sects, and Parties fall ...' The Wesley's Practice of Intra-Faith Love".<sup>1</sup>

## BAPTISM

So how can we claim that we are one, even when issues of doctrine and practice still divide us, as it did those Christians many centuries ago? Well, significant progress has been made in our conversations with each other, in the international dialogues which have blossomed and grown in the past 50 years since the Second Vatican Council. Cardinal Kasper in his scholarly and readable treatment of basic aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue *Harvesting the Fruits* [Continuum, 2009] has catalogued the ecumenical consensus, listing convergences and divergences, between the different communions. And while these may differ considerably in the section on sacraments of baptism and eucharist, there is generally a common understanding of baptism shared between us. Even though it was not a doctrinal issue between most mainstream Protestant reformation churches and the Catholic Church, because of the historic separation of our churches since the Reformation, each other's baptisms were not always recognized in practice, causing some distress when re-baptism was deemed necessary on conversion from one tradition to another. Now however, we have a shared understanding about baptism, as a sacrament and liturgical rite, instituted by Our Lord himself, and a practice of the churches from apostolic times arising out of the Great Commission. We agree on the major points

- That baptism is with water and in the Trinitarian formula
- That baptism incorporates us in Christ and through which we receive in the power of the Spirit the gift of the new life in Christ.

Once the difficult doctrinal area of Justification was worked on and a Joint Declaration agreed, first between Lutherans and Catholics twenty years ago, and

then the Methodists subscribing to its agreed positions in 2006, and more recently by the Anglican and Reformed Communion, then the bedrock for further work together was laid. The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) agreed two major points:

- That by the action of the Holy Spirit in baptism the sinner is granted the gift of salvation (para.25)
- That in baptism "the Holy Spirit unites one with Christ, justifies and truly renews the person being baptised" (para.28)

In agreeing these things, the parties acknowledged that they were being lead into communion with the Triune God to be enabled to share God's blessings and join with other believers in closer communion not only with God but with each other.

Methodists and Catholics, in their dialogue reports to the Singapore Conference of 1991, Rio de Janeiro 1996, and Seoul in 2006, recognized that they already through such common baptism enjoyed a measure of ecclesial communion. And that in itself was a spur to further discussions about sharing in the (for Methodists) other sacrament of the eucharist, "in our mutual participation in the Meal to which the one Lord invites us and all his followers" (Rio, 10). That Baptism was a gift of God, that it was an unrepeatable act, and that it was to be the occasion in public worship to recognize individuals who were surrounded by Christians confessing the faith received, were the key points of reports presented in Singapore and Rio.

At Seoul 2006, when the Methodists also adopted the JDDJ, the following statement was agreed: "Catholics and Methodists give full recognition to each other's celebration of the sacrament of baptism. Our common baptism in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is our sacramental bond of unity, the visible foundation of the deep communion which already exists between us and which impels us to ever deeper unity with



▶ Side view of lecturer and attendants during the conference

<sup>1</sup> SEAN WINTER, ed., *Immense, Unfathomed, Unconfined: The Grace of God in Creation, Church and Community*, (Melbourne: Uniting Academic Press, 2013).

each other and participation in the life and mission of Christ himself.”<sup>2</sup>

This of course does not mean that this area of discussion is not still contentious in some dialogues. I co-chaired the International Dialogue between the Baptist World Alliance and the World Methodist Council which presented its report *Faith Working Through Love* to the Council meeting in Seoul of 2018. My paper on “Sacrament and Sign within the Ecumenical and Liturgical Understandings in Methodism” presented to the Singapore meeting of the Dialogue.<sup>3</sup>

Methodists and Baptists both claim to be part of the rich diversity of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. They have no difficulty over accepting each other’s ministries. They both hold the essentials of the apostolic faith, though Baptists are less creedal by nature. There are tensions over differing practices with regard to infant and believers’ baptism, as well as some differing nuances over the ways in which justification and the authority of Scripture are understood but nothing that prevents a common mission. In some cases, such as in Italy and Sweden, this practically happens on a very close basis.

The final report made two recommendations as a result of our discussions together:

1. We have found the BEM (*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*<sup>4</sup>) emphasis on Christian initiation as a process to be helpful in pointing a way beyond the long-standing impasse on baptism in our two traditions [BEM B17]. We have also found

2 Seoul §78 quoted in the section on “Baptism” in *Synthesis: Together in Holiness: 40 Years of Methodist and Roman Catholic Dialogue* (London: World Methodist Council, 2010) 22.

3 *American Baptist Quarterly*, 37 (2018) 160-174.

4 Faith and Order Paper 111 (Geneva: WCC, 1982).



▶ Fr. James Puglisi, SA and the lecturer, Pastor Macquiban

instructive the WCC report *One Baptism*<sup>5</sup> that examines what it means to see baptism as a process, not the single moment of the water rite. Previous Baptist bilateral dialogues with the Anglican World Communion and the Roman Catholic Church have also found this helpful; our present dialogues has provided a unique opportunity for Baptists and Methodists to discuss this together. We have come to appreciate the way this expanded account allows for a wider range of baptismal practices within a common process of Christian initiation. We recommend that Baptists and Methodists consider whether the idea of two patterns in the common process of Christian initiation is helpful in overcoming our differences (par. 74 of the report).

2. We have come to appreciate the “two patterns” idea about Christian initiation, which has emerged from serious theological reflection on the subjects that still divide us. We also celebrate the united/united churches that have sought to implement this understanding in their common life (e.g., the Church of North India). We recommend that Methodists and Baptists reflect on what has been proposed and achieved in this connection at regional and national levels, and the extent to which this might be adapted globally and into other regional and national contexts.

## HOLINESS

Cardinal Kasper’s book fell short of treatment of the last MERCIC (Methodist Roman Catholic International Commission) which took as its theme *The Call to Holiness: From Glory to Glory*.<sup>6</sup> It proved to be not only groundbreaking in its approach, with far more biblical material, testimonies and worship resources included. It also provided a firm basis for other ecumenical dialogues and, dare I say, chimed with Pope Francis’ much anticipated Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exultate* [Vatican, March 2018], building on the earlier work of *Lumen Gentium*. I quote:

15. Let the grace of your baptism bear fruit in a path of holiness. Let everything be open to God; turn to him in every situation. Do not be dismayed, for the power of the Holy Spirit enables you to do this, and holiness, in the end, is the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life (cf. Gal 5:22-23). When you feel the temptation to dwell on your own weakness, raise your eyes to Christ crucified and say: “Lord, I am a poor sinner, but you can work the miracle of making me a little bit better”. In the Church, holy

5 *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition*, Faith and Order Paper 210 (Geneva: WCC, 2011).

6 Houston Report 2016, in *Information Service* 150 (2017/II) 22-63.

yet made up of sinners, you will find everything you need to grow towards holiness. The Lord has bestowed on the Church the gifts of scripture, the sacraments, holy places, living communities, the witness of the saints and a multifaceted beauty that proceeds from God's love, "like a bride bedecked with jewels" (Is 61:10).

What begins in baptism leads through the redemption of sinners justified by God's grace to a life of holiness, or the process of what Wesley called growth in Christian Perfection, ie. the process of sanctification. 25 years ago, in another pioneering example of ecumenical dialogue, I was involved in a week long consultation on the theme *Sanctification in the Benedictine and Wesleyan traditions*, held not far away in the Alban Hills at Mondo Migliore. Abbot Michael Kelly and other Australians were there as were British and American scholars headed by Professor Geoffrey Wainwright, a distinguished lecturer at the Centro on a number of occasions.

It was these and other conversations that fed into the discussions resulting in the Call to Holiness MERCIC report. In the chapter on "God's Holy People: the Saints Below" there is a section entitled "The Household of Grace: Holy Living and the Sacraments" [paras. 105-115]. The key paragraph [106] asserts that for both Catholics and Methodists the sacrament of Baptism is "a vocation - a continuous call into a life of pilgrimage towards the Kingdom". For those baptised, "being baptised is a living, continuous reality. As a lifelong sacramental gracing of the Christian's journey. Baptism is that participation in Christ that enables our hearts to burn with the Spirit as we hear God's word, and brings us to communion with Christ in the breaking of bread, consecrating us for the holy work of God's mission".

The importance then is for the Church to nurture the fruits of baptism through God's Spirit at work in the individual and in the Church, through catechesis and good Christian Education programmes, enabling growth in holiness, in learning and caring within the church and in its outreach into the world. The sacrament of baptism then is to be understood in pneumatological and missiological terms, not as a dry, never-to-be-repeated but so-often-forgotten rite of passage, but as a transformative rite to be remembered and re-envisioned through lively amnesia, in the repetition of the creeds and the renewal of baptismal vows at significant times in the church's year.

Of course for both Catholics and Methodists both Baptism and Eucharist, along with Confirmation, constitute the sacraments of initiation, in a continual process of growth in holiness nurtured by the living Word and the Bread and Wine as the Body and Blood of Christ, into whose life we have been incorporated. Such participation in these sacraments and rites, while they do not of themselves constitute holy living, "nevertheless [such events] are particular and effective moments in

the reception of grace, strengthening a pilgrim people traversing a difficult terrain."<sup>7</sup>

Such an approach leads us to realise our baptismal vocation in a call to what John Wesley proclaimed to be a social holiness and not a purely and selfishly personal holiness. This is shown in what he called works of mercy, in addition to the inner resources offered to believers and disciples in the works of piety. Holy living is to be expressed socially in the pursuit of justice and peace and working for the integrity of creation, of what Pope Francis in *Laudato Si* calls "our common home". And, as he has made abundantly clear, that is why the new evangelisation to which we are all called as baptised Christians is an ecumenical task and not solely the prerogative of one particular tradition. Pope Francis, in the ecumenical journey from Lund to Geneva at either side of the Year of the Reformation, reminded us again and again, that we are called to "walk together, pray together and work together". Spiritual ecumenism has to be accompanied by an ecumenism of social action, made manifest in our working together for migrants and refugees [in the work of Mediterranean Hope] and those who are the victims of unjust exploitation of the natural resources of the earth and the seas [Mining for the Common Good] and many others programmes now realised and executed ecumenically.

## CONCLUSION

I have been privileged to have been a Fraternal Delegate to the last two Synods of Bishops on behalf of the World Methodist Council. At the last, on *Young People, the faith and vocational discernment*, [October 2018] it was encouraging that those young lay participants made a particular emphasis on the need to engage ecumenically [para.157]. It says that they intuitively know that Christ already unites us, even if certain differences remain. For we share this common baptism. In the section on Vocation and vocations, there is the paragraph [84] starting thus: "It is not possible to understand the significance of the baptismal vocation unless we remember that for everyone, it is a call to holiness". This invitation to share in the Church's mission is to help us to find communion with God and with each other in our ecclesial journey towards universal holiness. The Letter to the Young People ends by reminding us that we are all called to be saints: "All the different vocations come together in the one universal call to holiness"[para.166], for holiness is "the most attractive face of the Church".<sup>8</sup> And that is because all of us who are baptised Christians share in this common baptism which unites us in the universal call to holiness.

<sup>7</sup> *The Call to Holiness* §115.

<sup>8</sup> Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation, *Gaudete et Exultate* 9 (March 19, 2018).

READING THE GOSPELS TOWARD THE UNITY OF THE CHURCHES<sup>1</sup>

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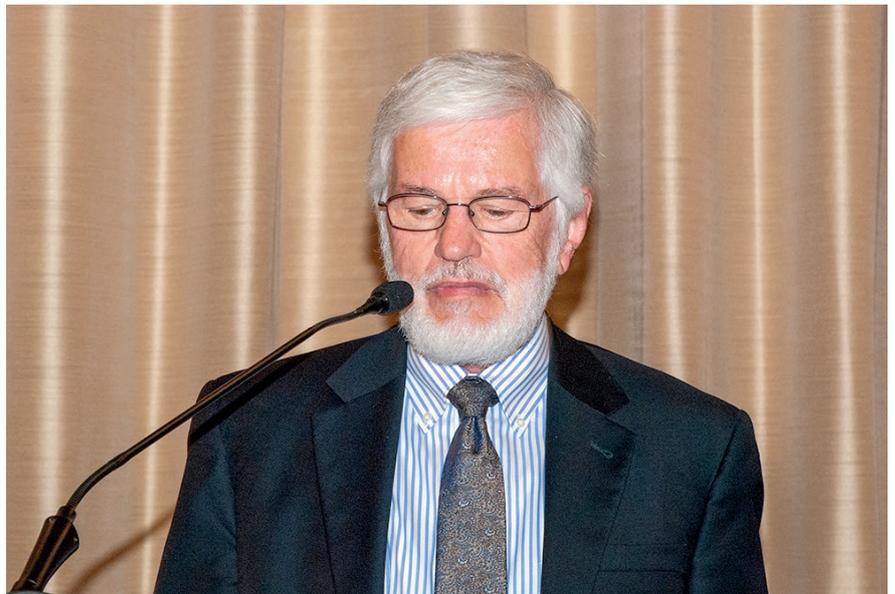
Conference given at the Centro Pro Unione, Thursday, 10 October 2019



Not uncommonly, when the Gospels are thought about in relationship to Christian unity, certain particular texts come to mind – the prayer of Jesus in John 17, preeminently. While not ignoring that use, I want here to think more generally about the Gospels, considering in the first place what they *are*, and thus how that genre itself may form reading toward Christian unity.

So what are these books? Mark calls itself “the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Mark 1:1), the ἀρχή, the ground or principle, of a good news that was presumably to be celebrated by the readers and hearers of the book. Since we now know that in the first century the word “gospel,” especially in the plural, εὐαγγέλια, was used for those announcements about the emperor that were to be observed and ritually celebrated in imperial towns and temples with games and sacrifices, speeches and appointments,<sup>2</sup> we can begin to see something of the word’s communal purpose also in Christian use. Paul fills his letters with the word, now in the singular, a unique Pauline usage then taken up by the Gospels.<sup>3</sup> Used of the message about Jesus Christ, about his life, death, resurrection, and continuing presence, the word “gospel”—also among Christians—called for a *communal observance*. “Gospel” occasions celebration.

Matthew, then, seems to call itself, similarly, “this gospel of the kingdom” (Matt 24:14; cf. 26:13), evoking something of the same language use. The author of Luke certainly does want us to know that he or she has diligently sorted such sources and accounts as were available, doing so for a seemingly ideal single reader called “Theophilus,”



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but this book, too, is finally seeking to serve what Luke calls “the word” (Luke 1:2) as that word is heard and encountered in community. And the author of John finally sums up what all of the authors seem to think these books were for by saying that this fourth book was written so that a plural you “may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31). The Gospels have communities, communal observance, and community-identifying faith in mind. Reading the books in church belongs to their original—and continuing—purpose. Indeed, the communal reading of the letters of Paul and then of the Gospels belongs to the earliest beginnings of scripture reading in the Christian assembly, forming a regular part of most Christian Sunday assemblies by at least the mid- to late second century.

But can we say more about these assemblies or churches?

Some recent New Testament scholarship has sought to ascertain what might be said historically about those communities that would have read the Pauline Letters and the Gospels originally. In various ways, a

1 Parts of this paper are newly adapted from chapter 3 of my *Saving Images: The Presence of the Bible in Christian Liturgy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017).

2 G. H. R. HORSLEY, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* (North Ryde, Australia: The Ancient History Documentary Research Centre, Macquarrie University Press, 1983), 3:13.

3 See GRAHAM N. STANTON, *Jesus and Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 25-33.

number of scholars<sup>4</sup> have all argued that the social life of Hellenistic cities and towns of the time of Christian origins—and well into the early centuries of Christian existence—was marked by diverse interest groups, supper clubs, *collegia*, associations. All of these groups were in some sense religious in character, most of them meeting in houses or tenements, what we might call “flats,” only rarely in purpose-built structures of their own. One minority example of such meetings would have been the Christian gatherings we call “churches.” The various Hellenistic associations, nearly ubiquitous in the ancient Mediterranean world, were neighborhood groups, professional or trade groups, cult groups, ethnic groups, and extended family groups.<sup>5</sup> They were called by a variety of names: associations, societies, festal gatherings, guilds, initiates, synagogues.<sup>6</sup> Such household-based associations provided a primary way that the human interaction of the time took place, a primary source of communal identity in a situation of massive and sometimes traumatic social change. They were one way in which people of the time were religious, one way in which they sought to participate in the benefits of the various gods, as well as one significant basis for social organization in Hellenistic cities. But then here is the point: the assemblies that Paul called ἐκκλησίαι, the communities that we have thought about as the “house churches,” were not as unique as we have sometimes imagined, at least not in the general outline of their social purposes, their mutual support, their benefactions, and their common meals. Such assemblies were not a specifically Christian invention. In gathering as associations or clubs, in regarding each other as a kind of family, in meeting in households, in sharing meals, even in caring for each other in need, Christians were making use of a widespread pattern in Greco-Roman society, a pattern that was regularly paired with an ideology of mutual support.

It is then not surprising that Tertullian, writing in his *Apology* at the end of the second century, easily

compares the Christian “faction” with other contemporary associations,<sup>7</sup> although he does so with significant critique of those other groups. “We are a society,” he writes, “with a common religious profession, a unity of discipline, and a shared bond of hope. We meet together in assembly and congregation.”<sup>8</sup> In then describing the expected common meals of Christian associations, Tertullian sets them side by side with those of other Hellenistic groups, though he does so in a way intended to reflect negatively on the non-Christian feasts. Indeed, it is in this context—this comparison of Christian assembly practice with the practice of other meal-keeping groups—that Tertullian most clearly describes what Christians do—or what he hopes they do—when they gather.<sup>9</sup> In the gathering, according to Tertullian, Christians pray (*Apology* 39.2)—for the political leaders and for peace, among other things—they read and teach the scriptures (39.3-4), they take a collection for the poor (39.5-6),<sup>10</sup> they hold a common meal (39.14-16), they conclude the meal with a *symposion* of singing and praying (39.18), and they leave to conduct an ordered life (39.19). They have unity in this discipline.

It is fascinating to note that this very passage in Tertullian also gives one of the clearest summaries of his understanding of the reasons that Christian assemblies read from the scriptures.

We meet to read the books of God—if anything in the nature of the times bids us look to the future or open our eyes to the facts. In any case, with those holy words we feed our faith, we lift up our hope, we confirm our confidence; and no less we reinforce our teaching by the inculcation of God’s precepts. There is, besides, exhortation in our gatherings, rebuke, divine censure. (*Apology* 39.3)

For Tertullian, thus, scripture reading, besides feeding the faith and interpreting the times, is one of the sources of continually reforming the community to be something other than the widespread *collegia* that it so much resembles.

4 Notably, in North America, John Kloppenborg, Richard Ascough, and Philip Harland. See PHILIP A. HARLAND, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003). See also the sources collected in JOHN S. KLOPPENBORG and RICHARD ASCOUGH, *Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentary*, vol. 1, *Attica, Central Greece, Macedonia, Thrace* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), and PHILIP A. HARLAND, *Greco-Roman Associations: Texts, Translations, and Commentary*, vol. 2, *North Coast of the Black Sea, Asia Minor* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014). See further in the work of Wayne Meeks, Robert Wilken, Luke Timothy Johnson, Dennis Smith, Hal Taussig, and Matthias Klinghardt.

5 KLOPPENBORG and ASCOUGH, *Attica, Central Greece, Macedonia, Thrace*, 3.

6 For the Greek for many of these designations, see PHILIP A. HARLAND, *Dynamics of Identity in the World of the Early Christians* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 27.

7 Christ-groups could fit rather comfortably within the spectrum of ancient associations, as indeed patristic writers such as Tertullian recognized.” KLOPPENBORG and ASCOUGH, *Attica, Central Greece, Macedonia, Thrace*, vi.

8 *Corpus sumus de conscientia religionis et disciplinae unitate et spei foedere. [2] Coimus in coetum et congregationem.* Tertullian, *Apology* 39.1-2; See T. R. GLOVER, ed., *Tertullian: Apology and De Spectaculis*, Loeb Classical Library 250 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 174.

9 See J. PATOUT BURNS JR. and ROBIN M. JENSEN, *Christianity in Roman Africa* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 234-35.

10 Tertullian mentions feeding the poor and burying the impoverished dead, as well as supporting orphaned children, aged slaves, shipwrecked mariners, and prisoners.

Our assemblies also—and centrally—read from the Gospels. Can the relationship of the Gospels to the Christian versions of the Hellenistic associations help us see something about the purpose of reading from these books in current liturgical assemblies? My proposal is that, just like the letters of Paul, the Gospels were interested in the central content and the ongoing reform of those ancient meetings. Like Paul in his letters before them, also the Gospels were written to encourage assemblies of Christians—assemblies very like other neighboring Hellenistic *collegia* and associations—to sort, accept, reject, reinterpret elements of their own religious culture, to re-understand their meeting's purpose and refresh its practice, to continually find that purpose and practice realigned more closely with the identity of Jesus Christ, an identity present in and set out by the Gospels, and so to find themselves in communion with the other assemblies in Christ. *This purpose of the four Gospels can be seen, in each case, in the unique structure of each book and the way that structure was filled out with verbal images.*

If one takes seriously the suggestion of the British anthropologist Mary Douglas, in her 2004 Terry Lectures at Yale,<sup>11</sup> that the Gospel of Mark is, like many other ancient books of communal importance, a *ring*

to see the weight placed on the center of the ring.<sup>12</sup> In Mark, that center is found in the last scene that takes place in Galilee (9:30-50), the narrative of the central one of Jesus's three passion predictions (another indication of this text being at the center!) together with the story of the gathering of the disciples in a house, where Jesus says the leadership is to serve and that to welcome a child is to welcome him and so welcome God. Note: just as the end of the book proclaims, the risen Jesus is seen in Galilee. He is seen in the account of his death, in the related assembly service of the leaders, and in the assembly's welcome to the littlest and least. The important center of the Gospel according to Mark is an *assembly*. And that assembly is called to encounter the crucified and risen one through the account of his death, through the mutual service of the participants, through the refusal of competition with other followers of Jesus, and through hospitality to the littlest ones. The Gospel envisions meetings in a *house*—in fact, such meetings play a very important role in the whole book, the "house" recurring again and again—and thereby the Gospel envisions an ongoing reform of those house meetings. This is not a historical report from the time of Jesus but a weighty proposal to the time of the reading of the book, the time of the assemblies. That this Jesus seen in the assembly is, at the same time, the mysterious presence of God—"whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me" (9:37)—is an idea articulated throughout the Gospel book in images, like a secret disclosed in the house or a lamp shining in the assembly (cf. 4:11, 21-22).

The structure of the Gospel according to Matthew is quite different, even though it is clear that Matthew made use of Mark and reproduced almost all of the earlier book. But the five discourses of Matthew, around which the book seems to be organized and which seem intended to reflect a rebirth of the images of Moses teaching and of the resultant "five books of Moses," can also be read as addressed to Christian assemblies, Christian associations, Christian house churches. So: the first discourse (called "the Sermon on the Mount") urges that the house be built on the rock of Jesus's teaching (Matt 7:24-27); the second (the "mission instructions") calls on the house to receive the traveling missionaries who come in the name of the "master of the house" (10:12-14, 25); the third (the Matthean collection of parables) makes clear that preaching in the house will reveal Jesus himself as the meaning and meaning-giver of the parables (13:36); the fourth (the "instructions to the church") directly addresses the assembly—called the *ἐκκλησία* here—and promises the presence of the crucified risen one in the midst of assembly and its actions of mutual reconciliation and forgiveness—



► Friars and candidates of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement in Italy

*composition*, then several results occur. One finds a purpose for the otherwise puzzling, even frustrating conclusion of the book, that is, one is driven back to the beginning and center of the book in order to "see Jesus" in Galilee, as the young man in the tomb directs (Mark 16:7). But chiefly, as with all ring compositions, one comes

11 In her Terry Lectures at Yale, published as MARY DOUGLAS, *Thinking in Circles: An Essay on Ring Composition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

12 See *ibid.*, 37 and 58.

“where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (18:15-20); and the fifth (the eschatological discourse) actually images the assembly as a household holding meals, with the leaders as stewards of the food in the name of the master of the house, stewards who need to avoid imperious or gluttonous behavior (24:45-51), the very behavior Paul had warned against in 1 Corinthians 11. Also the Gospel according to Matthew can be read as images for the ongoing reform of the Christian meetings, meetings to which the risen Christ at the end of the book promises—as he does in the instructions to the church of the fourth discourse—“I am with you always, to the end of the age” (28:20). Baptism and the instruction and the name that go with and transform baptism are to anchor such meetings throughout the world.

It is clear that the author of Luke knew the Gospel according to Mark. I join other scholars in thinking it is likely that he or she knew the book called Matthew as well; that Matthew too was among the “orderly accounts” of those “many” the author of Luke drew on in constructing yet another for “Theophilus” (Luke 1:1-4).<sup>13</sup> But this book follows neither the circular pattern of Mark nor the discourse structure of Matthew. Rather, many scholars have noted that one important and unique organizing characteristic of Luke is its “travel narrative,” running from 9:51 to 19:58. The fascinating thing about this long passage, for our purposes, is that it focuses, again and again, in narrative and in parable, on the welcome of the traveler to a shared meal. The repeated meals in the houses seem intended to image the meal communities that we know the late first-century churches to have been. At the heart of this narrative of travel and welcome and food, the author places the very charge to the leaders of the community to serve as stewards of shared food that we have already seen in Matthew (Luke 12:42-48; cf. Matt 24:45-51). Only now, amazingly, this charge is preceded by an image of the master of the house returning and himself serving the assembly (Luke 12:35-38). These passages, of course, belong in their import not to the time of the historical Jesus but to the time of the church. The image of the serving Lord is a down payment on the Lukan account of the Last Supper, in its passion story, where the one who is going to be killed makes his body and blood into a meal for the church, saying also, “I am among you as one who serves” (22:27). And it is a down payment on the unique Lukan resurrection story of the disciples going

to Emmaus, where the stranger is welcomed to table, becomes the serving host, and is recognized in the meal. This ending of the Gospel according to Luke makes clear where the whole book has been going. The discourse and meal of the risen one, surrounded by the welcome to the stranger and the return to Jerusalem to tell of the resurrection, echoes Luke’s purpose: that the meetings of the churches be places where the stranger is welcomed, where the scriptures are interpreted of the death and resurrection of Jesus, where the common meals become the meal of encounter with him, burning with the meaning of the scriptures, and where the assembly itself is thereby set in mission.

These books were all most likely written, one after another, in the years from about 70 CE to about 95 CE, four to seven decades after Jesus was killed and more or less one or two decades after the death of Paul. After that, probably sometime in the first two decades of the second century, came the Gospel according to John. I argue that the author of this book knew all three of the earlier Gospel books. But once again the structure of the book is unique. Organized as “signs” and “discourses,” in alternation and in mutual interpretation—verbal images and extended concepts in association with these images—an initial Book of Signs (John 1:19-12:50) leads to the great Book of Glory (13:1-20:31), in which the great “Farewell Discourse” is paired with the great sign of Jesus’s death and resurrection, the two again functioning in mutual interpretation.<sup>14</sup>

For our purposes, however, the most important thing to note in the Gospel according to John, very much unlike any of the other three books, is that *no private gathering of the disciples with Jesus*—in a house, say, or at a shared meal—takes place in the first eleven chapters of the book at all. None. But then the Book of Signs ends with the little assembly of the meal at Bethany (12:1-8), the Book of Glory begins with the gathering for the foot washing meal and the long Farewell Discourse (13-17), and the whole book ends (if, as I think, we may take 20:31 as the original ending) with the two meetings in the house on Sunday and the following Sunday, meetings in which the church encounters the risen one (20:19-31). It is as if the entire book has been going toward these assembly accounts and the accounts themselves mean to image what the ongoing Christian meetings, now especially associated with Sunday, are for: remembering the poor whom we always have with us, signs of the body of the crucified; mutual service like the foot washing (“I have set you an example,” 13:15); hearing, seeing, and believing, in the power of the Spirit, the one who comes again to us, the one whom we otherwise no longer see; receiving the meaning of all the sign-images; sharing the peace and being sent with words of forgiveness; and using the Gospel book itself for

13 On the lack of any necessity for there having been a “Q,” a written source for the sayings of Jesus that the authors of both Matthew and Luke would have known, while they supposedly did not know each other’s work, see FRANCIS WATSON, *Gospel Writing: A Canonical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 118-19, 157. See also already, AUSTIN FARRER, “On Dispensing with Q,” in *Studies in the Gospels*, ed. D. E. Nineham (Oxford: Blackwell, 1955), 55-89; and MARK GOODACRE, “The Farrer Hypothesis,” in *The Synoptic Problem: Four Views*, ed. Stanley E. Potter and Bryan R. Dyer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 47-66.

14 For the classic presentation of this structure, see C. H. DODD, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

all of these purposes. Also the Gospel according to John is written for assemblies. Indeed, it is as if the author of this Gospel clearly saw the purpose of the three earlier books and then even heightened that purpose by the very structure of this fourth book.

in *the gift of unity* in the presence of the crucified risen one in the assembly—seeing him in Galilee (Mark); hearing him in the discourses to the churches (Matthew); encountering him in scripture opened and bread broken (Luke); and understanding him as the meaning of the signs, himself already washing our feet (John).



▶ The guests of the Centro gathering together for an assembly photograph including lecturers

Approaching the Gospels in this way, we will find ourselves agreeing with an old Catholic assertion: the Gospels are books of the church, created in the course of the life of the churches and read most appropriately in those assemblies of the church. But we will also find ourselves agreeing with an old Protestant assertion: the Gospels are books of reform. From the beginning they were addressed to those assemblies with evangelical purpose and communal correction in mind. Reform is not new in the church, but has been needed from the beginning. Thus we may regard the Gospels as Catholic and Protestant, ecclesial and evangelical. Both.

Then note that unity is always part of that continuing reform: the central house-assembly of Mark 9 is used to caution the churches against competition with other followers of Jesus (“whoever is not against us is for us;” 9:39) and to call the assembly leaders to service that enables unity. The discourses of Matthew urge ecclesial reconciliation (18:15-19) and the unifying table-service of local leaders (24:45-47). The Emmaus story of Luke has the disciples run back to the city to tell the others of the resurrection—to unite the church in this good news (24:33-35). And the great Farewell Discourse of John, the discourse that brings to expression in words the meaning of the Great Sign of the death and resurrection of Jesus, includes Jesus’ prayer for unity (17:11,20-21), just as the assembly of that discourse begins with the invitation to mutual foot-washing (13:14-15). At the heart of each Gospel, in differing but similar ways, there is *a reforming appeal for unity*. And, in each case, that appeal is grounded

The Gospels are still read in assembly. And their reforming purposes, their images, their appeals for the conversion of the imagination, still matter to us. To tell the truth, we too belong to associations, “churches,” that often have other primary organizing and identity-giving centers than Christ or the gospel. Our churches are also part of the local social structure, marked by the current patterns and diversities of religion, the common understandings of God. In North American culture, our churches are voluntary associations in some competition with other voluntary associations, neighborhood and ethnic and benevolent organizations that people join for a variety of mixed reasons, often only partly religious. In Europe and Latin America, congregations are often local representations of massive historical institutions with long associations with the state, state churches and folk churches, also of mixed purpose. Elsewhere, the churches may be societies in memorial to the practice of the first missionaries in the land or new expressions of local religious sensibility or both. But for all of us, if we listen to the Gospels, we too will inevitably be involved in sorting, accepting, reinterpreting, and rejecting elements of our own cultures.<sup>15</sup> Also our assemblies will continually be invited to the critique and reforming of our ritual and religion, to become again and again the biblically rooted, biblically imaged “assembly of God.”<sup>16</sup>

Reading the Gospels toward the unity of the churches: that unity is first of all a gift, present in the very mystery of the crucified and risen One who is signed by the four Gospel books read in our midst. But then that unity is the task of continual reform, working again and again to make our churches correspond together to the gift.

15 For this continuing task, see the Nairobi Statement of the Worship and Culture Study of the Lutheran World Federation and the ecumenical essays interacting with it in GLÁUCIA VASCONCELOS WILKEY, ed., *Worship and Culture: Foreign Country or Homeland* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014).

16 See GORDON LATHROP, “The Gift and Challenge of Liturgical Ecclesiology,” *Ecclesiological & alia: Studia in honorem Sven-Erik Brodd*, ed. Erik Berggren and Maria Eckerdal (Skefteå: Artos, 2015), 337-347.

## THE ECUMENICAL GIFT OF THE THREE-YEAR LECTIONARIES

Dr. Prof. Gail Ramshaw - Professor emeritus of Religions, LaSalle University, Philadelphia  
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Conference given at the Centro Pro Unione, Thursday, 10 October 2019



▶ Dr. Prof. Gail Ramshaw, professor emeritus at LaSalle University

Greetings to you all. I am honored to be here among you, exploring with you the Bible in the liturgy as a source for Christian unity, and together delighting in being MAD for Ecumenism.

Often when Christians consider ecumenism, they look to the future: ah, when in the distant future, when more and more of the people of God are shaped by the ecumenical reality of Christianity, and when theologians have finally completed their exhaustive – and exhausting! – conversations about doctrine and practice, then we will see more clearly God’s gift of unity. But I recently completed a substantial analysis of the two worldwide three-year lectionaries<sup>1</sup> – the Roman lectionary and the Revised Common Lectionary – and it is my conviction that, whether worshipers realize it or not, this Christian unity is already here among many of the world’s baptized at the Sunday liturgy. The principles that undergird the three-year lectionaries are already now shared by countless worshiping assemblies around the globe, shaping both Roman Catholic and many Protestant assemblies. The ecumenical future is already here on Sunday morning.

We can begin by thinking about the ecumenical spirit, manifest during and cultivated by the Second

Vatican Council, that led to the creation of the three-year Roman lectionary. This lectionary was first released in 1969, with the amended version from 1998 currently canonically required for Roman Catholic use in the United States.

In designing this brilliant three-year lectionary, the Roman Catholic committee was assisted by borrowing ideas and practices that were largely identified with Protestant churches. The design committee joined with Protestants in affirming that the proclamation of the Word is one of the two legs upon which the Christian liturgy stands. The committee of Roman Catholic biblical scholars who were assigned to this momentous task had spent previous decades benefiting from the library of nineteenth and twentieth century biblical studies, much of which had been produced by Protestants. These wide-ranging biblical studies had urged upon the committee a fuller use of the entire Scriptures than had been found in the one-year medieval lectionary, in such a way that the church’s faith and practice reflect nourishment from “the richer fare” of the whole Bible. It was as if the Roman Catholic committee heard Protestants yelling, “Read the Bible! Read the whole Bible!” As well, Roman Catholics observed the benefit of the biblical readings being proclaimed in the vernacular, as was common in Protestant churches.

We can now consider the ecumenical spirit that led many Protestant churches to emulate the Roman lectionary. Several denominational adaptations of this lectionary led to the interchurch preparation in 1983 of the Common Lectionary and in 1992 of the Revised Common Lectionary, which has now been adopted by many Christian denominations, some small, some worldwide. Although some Protestant churches remain loyal to their medieval pattern of proclamation, in the United States the Revised Common Lectionary is the chosen lectionary for Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and many smaller denominations, indeed even some Baptists. A list of worldwide Protestants relying on the Revised Common Lectionary is stunning.

The three-year lectionary led many Protestant churches to adopt practices that had been identified with Roman Catholicism, which previously many Protestants

<sup>1</sup> GAIL RAMSHAW, *Word of God, Word of Life: Understanding the Three-Year Lectionaries* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2019).



▶ Gail Ramshaw and Gordon Lathrop greeted by Fr. James Puglisi, SA and Teresa Francesca Rossi

had resisted solely for that reason. In adapting the Roman eucharistic lectionary for their own use, many Protestant churches joined with Roman Catholics in affirming that the celebration of the eucharist on every Sunday and festival of the year is the other of the two legs upon which the liturgy stands. It was as if the Protestants heard the Catholics shout, "The eucharist! The eucharist!" The three-year lectionary brought into Protestant practice a fuller liturgical year and the historic liturgical seasons that while maintained by Roman Catholicism had been truncated by their particular denominational history. Protestant preachers were urged to honor ecclesiastical wisdom – a new idea to some! – by preaching on the appointed readings, rather than on their own choice of sermon topics. The fuller use of the entire Scriptures called also Protestants to attend to the word beyond a narrower pattern of individual self-selection. Many churches copied the Roman Catholic practice of training lectors and placing the biblical texts in the hands of the worshipping laity in the hopes of encouraging focus on the scriptures.

Thus we see that the three-year lectionaries led Roman Catholics to adopt some Protestant patterns and Protestants to adopt some Catholic patterns. While I was a graduate student in Madison, Wisconsin, in the late 1970s, the Lutheran student church was under construction, and the Roman Catholic church, which was next door, offered the Lutherans the 10 a.m. slot on Sunday morning for its own use. It came to be common for members of each communion to discover, but only after the service of readings was completed, that they had mistakenly gathered with the other set of believers. For both Roman Catholics and Lutherans had assembled around the word in nearly identical ways for closely similar texts. A church historian can look at the combination of

the Roman Catholic promulgation of its three-year lectionary and the many Protestant churches around the world that either urge or recommend the Revised Common Lectionary as an ecumenical phenomenon of which many believers of both branches of the Western church were and remain unaware.

We now can consider the effect of our sharing most of the same readings at each Sunday's eucharist. I will do this by describing briefly the ten foundational principles that undergird these three-year lectionaries, and we can consider how such a shared approach to the proclamation of God's word is in our time a worldwide formation by and into the ecumenical church.

The first principle undergirding the three-year lectionaries is that Sunday, the primary day on which the faithful assemble, is the weekly celebration of Christ's resurrection. For Christian at worship, all biblical selections hinge on the resurrection. The history of Christian worship evidences many times and places that this focus on Christ's resurrection was far from the main emphasis for weekly worship, when instead a societal interest, a denominational memory, or a parish tradition governed the event. Although there are always competing interests to challenge the primary focus on Easter as the reason for our assembling, the worldwide three-year lectionaries continue to call the baptized back to the empty tomb and to its meaning in the lives of worshipers, thus giving less attention to smaller denominational concerns.

The second principle of the three-year lectionaries is that all four gospels are proclaimed. The Gospel according to John, always the center, is appointed for major festivals and for various other times of the three years. Around John dance the synoptic gospels. This principle stands in radical contrast to other lectionary patterns that prefer one or two gospels at the expense of the others. In attending to all four gospels, the three-year lectionaries honor the advice of the second-century Irenaeus: the church needs to hear all four gospels because they are different, because they manifest complementary pictures of Christ, because the use of four models unity within diversity. One result of the lectionaries' even-handed treatment of all four gospels is that the world's current attraction to literalism is thwarted: for example, hearing two differing passion narratives in Holy Week each year exemplifies the refusal to receive the scriptures as merely factual narratives about the past. In a time when religious literalism poses a dangerous threat to societal harmony, the countless users of the three-year lectionaries testify

to a religious way other than literalism, and this is a gift not only to the churches, but to non-churched populations as well.

The third principle is the appropriate assignment of a reading from the Hebrew Scriptures that in some way complements the gospel reading. By means of these selections Christians unite to condemn anti-Semitism and to honor the church's Jewish heritage. The lectionaries' proposal of such a way forward between Christians and Jews seeks to repair previous church practice and offers to the wider society a path of reconciliation that is sorely needed.

The fourth principle urges the communal singing of the psalms. By this principle, the churches keep alive the power of metaphor in religious speech and encourage all the assembly to join in proclaiming the word. It is heartening to imagine Christians all around the globe singing their praises and petitions at worship, even in those societies, such as the United States, where people seldom sing together. We heed Augustine: singing is praying twice.

The fifth principle assigns a reading each week from the first-century epistles and essays. The existence of these writings indicates that beginning already in the first century, the church knew that its message of the resurrection of Christ had to address the contemporary community. The gospel is not merely some ancient poem that its adherents can enjoy. Rather, the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ always speak to this world, this social need, this assembly of the faithful. The intention is that at least the second readings will inspire the world's users of the three-year lectionaries to find the Spirit's way forward in a world that may ignore or reject or – newly again in our time – violently assault the word of the resurrection. The users of the three-year lectionary will say as one: yes, Easter matters this week in this place. And perhaps each assembly will come to consider in company with its neighboring parish how to be Christian this week.

It seems that many places around the world are adopting the consumerist patterns of turning the weeks before Christmas into shopping sprees and celebratory parties, after which Christmas itself is a day to collapse into exhaustion. According to the sixth principle of the three-year lectionaries, Advent precedes any such Solstice festivities with its incessant prayers for the end of war, for justice for all, for food for the hungry, for healing of societies and persons and the earth itself. The three-year lectionaries urge that a worthy celebration of the incarnation follow upon a serious keeping of an intentional Advent. Perhaps the biblical readings of the lectionaries' three years, shared by Christians across denominations, social classes, and nations, can assist believers in withstanding the pressure to turn the whole of December into the self-gratification of family, friends, and fun.

The seventh principle undergirding the three-year lectionaries is the establishment of a renewed Lent: not merely the revival of medieval confession of personal sin, but also the forty-day return to the joyful challenge of baptismal identity. In many places around the globe, children of Christian families are no longer being routinely baptized. Akin to the Christians of the third century, we find ourselves once again in a time of martyrdoms and resurgent paganism, the churches surviving without the supports of government or historically Christian ethnic communities. And so the churches are rediscovering their identity with one another in baptism, and by means of the three-year lectionaries, Lent as the exploration of that identity.

There have been a plethora of rituals with which the churches of the world have kept Holy Week and Easter. The eighth principle undergirding the three-year lectionaries proposes a twenty-first century appropriation of the Western historic practices for Holy Week, the Triduum, and Easter. That the readings approved by the various denominations for these days are identical has meant that increasingly, in those places with tiny Protestant churches, an ecumenical Vigil of Easter is held in one location. It is coming to be that the faithful realize this commonality in faith and practice. That the bishop of Rome washes the feet of a Muslim woman has ecumenical resonance on Holy Thursday's proclamation of John 13 throughout the globe.

The ninth principle is somewhat hidden, seen mostly if one considers what might be the case were it omitted. Looking at Thomas Jefferson's editing of the gospels shows that one can say lots about Jesus and nothing about the Trinity. Not so the three-year lectionaries, which in their biblical selections, festivals, and seasons proclaim God as triune. Each Sunday's three readings point to the complexity of the scriptural testimony to one God. The progression of the liturgical year celebrates the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. In one clever introduction to current Christian denominations, the author designates for each church its "Trinity-affinity."<sup>2</sup> Is this community into the Father, the Son, or the Spirit? Using the three-year lectionaries, we are all held together in the embrace of the Triune God, learning from one another to celebrate the fullness of the Trinity.

According to the tenth principle, unity is celebrated over individuality. A common lectionary is preferred over local choice. Steadfast participation, rather than personal inclination, is encouraged. The three years are laid out before us, and then three more years. Christian publishing houses are providing mountains of resources to assist each assembly to make the unity of the church into their own expression. It is a worthy goal.

So let us look ahead to next Sunday. The gospel reading is Luke 17:11-19, a story about Jesus as important

2 CARMEN RENEE BERRY, *The Unauthorized Guide to Choosing a Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2003), 56-50 and *passim*.

in the twenty-first century as when Luke wrote it in the 90s, and perhaps more politically pertinent than ever before. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, where we know he will be executed. Yet we have assembled on Sunday, the day when the baptized acclaim that he is risen from death in Jerusalem to reign as God over the cosmos. The reading invites us to join with those who have leprosy to beg God for mercy: this story by Luke is about us, for each of us suffers from one leprosy or another, some ailment or situation that separates us from our fellows. And hearing this word and joining in the sacrament, we together receive God's mercy. The narrative speaks out in protest against the tribalism we know so well; may this week all the hearers of the three-year lectionary recognize God's love for the Samaritan, the outsider, the foreigner. And in societies so marked by cynicism and personal grievances, may this week all the hearers of the three-year lectionary join together to give God praise for divine healing. In the words of the second reading, since we have died with Christ, we will also live with him: what if all the hearers of the three-year lectionaries would meditate upon and discuss with one another how this week to live with Christ?

In studying both the Roman Lectionary and the Revised Common Lectionary, I of course noted the Sundays and festivals on which the readings differ. Often the primary difference is the length of the readings, Protestants preferring longer – sometimes much longer! – citations. But with my book, I was not interested in accentuating differences. I paid heed to the First Ecumenical Imperative recently proposed by Roman Catholics and Lutherans which states that churches are to “always begin from the perspective of unity, and not from the point of view of division, in order to strengthen what is held in common, even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced.”<sup>3</sup> We exult in commonality whenever we can.

<sup>3</sup> *From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2013), par. 239, #87.

But one difference I will share with you, because I smile each time I recall it. On the second Sunday of Easter in Year C, the Roman Catholics include in the Acts 5 reading verses 14-15, in which the sick hope for even Peter's shadow to fall upon them, while the Protestants replace those verses with 29-32, when the apostles' preaching is cited and lauded. Use of a largely identical lectionary will not make our churches identical in piety and practice, and I am not sorry for this diversity. Indeed, where church leaders attempt to demand uniformity, at least Protestant Christians display considerable ingenuity in bending such orders to fit their situation, and historians are longer naively assuming that over the centuries, an ecclesiastical mandate concerning liturgical practice was actually obeyed. In our time, some of us will continue to honor the person of Peter, and others the preaching of the apostles. But these two lectionaries, walking hand in hand Sunday after Sunday, will I trust make it easier for us all, Roman Catholics and Protestants, to walk hand in hand with each other into the unknown future.

Thank you for your attention. Now, I hope there are some questions about the three-year lectionaries?



▶ Students from many geographical locations

## SAINT JOHN PAUL II'S OUTREACH TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY

Rabbi Jack Bemporad - Director, The Center for Interreligious Understanding  
Teaneck, New Jersey, USA

Conference given at the Centro Pro Unione, Thursday, 16 May 2019



▶ Rabbi Jack Bemporad makes a point to the audience

There is very little question that Saint Pope John Paul II was not just a great man for our time, but that he was a great man for all time. He was a man who had an enormous impact on the world; a man who was loved and revered by so many, not just by the Catholic faithful or the Polish people, a people who have every right to be proud of their greatest citizen, but also and not least of all, loved and revered by the Jewish people.

He was loved and revered by the Jewish people because they felt he understood their suffering. They felt that he **knew** them. He knew them from within. Many people think that what people most want is to be praised, admired, recognized, or respected. That is only partially true. In reality, what people want is to be known, they want other persons to understand them, to know what concerns them, what ails them; who they truly are; what their hopes, dreams, and tribulations are and have been. Of course people want to be respected and appreciated, but most of all they want to be known and Pope John Paul II was the person who fulfilled this Jewish desire. He understood the soul of the Jewish people and from early in his life we have ample testimony of this.

One such story about Lolek (that was his nick name) was told to a journalist by Regina Reisenfeld, the former Ginka Beer, from her home in Israel: she had been Lolek's childhood friend.

"I knew I was very popular with Polish boys and girls, but there was anti-Semitism too. There was only one family who never showed any racial hostility toward us, and that was Lolek and his dad. . . I went to say goodbye to Lolek and his father. I spoke to him frankly and said that very few Poles were like him. He was very upset. But Lolek was even more upset than his father. He did not say a word, but his face went very red. I said farewell to him as kindly as I could, but he was so moved that he could not find a single word in reply. So I just shook the father's hand and left."<sup>1</sup>

Ginka saw Karol again fifty years after she left Wadowice. She was in a group of former and present Wadowice residents attending the Wednesday General Audience at St. Peter's Square, and the pope recognized her when some of her friends shouted her name. Ginka asked him if he really remembered her, and, as she recounts it, John Paul II replied, "Of course I do. You are Regina. We lived in the same house. How is your sister, Helen?" He inquired about others in her family, and when she told him that her mother had died in Oświęcim and her father was killed in the Soviet Union, "He just looked at me, and there was deep compassion in his eyes.... He took both my hands and for almost two minutes he blessed me and prayed before me, just holding my hands in his hands. There were thousands of people in the Square, but for just a few seconds there were just the two of us."

Since he lived among Jews and was friendly with many, Pope John Paul II himself has related stories of his close relationships with his Jewish friends and neighbors, including Jerzy Kluger who remained his friend throughout his life:

"...from the very first years of my life in my hometown, I remember, above all, the Wadowice elementary school, where at least a fourth of the pupils in my class were Jewish. I should mention my friendship at school with one of them, Jerzy Kluger-a friendship that has lasted from my

<sup>1</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *The Biography* (NY: Tad Szulc Pocket Books, 1995) 67-69.



▶ An young student participating in the discussion

school days to the present. I can vividly remember the Jews who gathered every Saturday at the synagogue behind our school.”

“A few years ago Jerzy came to me to say that the place where the synagogue had stood should be honored with a special commemorative plaque. I must admit that in that moment we both felt a deep emotion. We saw faces of people we knew and cared for, and we recalled those Saturdays of our childhood and adolescence when the Jewish community of Wadowice gathered for prayer.”<sup>2</sup>

Based on all the evidence, I am convinced that he felt a close connection and empathy with the Jewish people and their profound suffering. He understood Jewish suffering as a Pole who recognized that while over 3 million non-Jewish Poles were killed at the hands of the Soviets and the Nazis, three million Polish Jews were also killed, a staggering number coming as it was from a much smaller population.

This common suffering of Poles and Jews gave him a special sense of the Holocaust and the suffering it caused, especially since he profoundly understood the undeniable history and the connection the Polish Jews had to Poland. As the Polish Bishops’ Letter on the Jews, of January 20th, 1991 states:

“There is still one other nation, one particular people: the people of the Patriarchs, of Moses, and the Prophets, the inheritors of the faith of Abraham . . . This people lived side by side with us for generations, on the same land, which became, as it were, a new fatherland of their diaspora.

“This people underwent the terrible death of millions of their sons and daughters. At first they were stigmatized in a particular way. Later, they

were pushed into the ghetto in separate neighborhoods. Then they were taken to the gas chambers, they underwent death -- only because they were children of this people.

“Murderers did this on our land -- perhaps in order to dishonor it. One cannot dishonor a land by the death of innocent victims. Through such death a land becomes a sacred relic.”<sup>3</sup>

When speaking to the Jewish community upon his return to Warsaw, the Pope underscored this concept when he poignantly said:

“Be sure dear brothers that the Poles, this Polish Church, is in a spirit of profound solidarity with you when she looks closely at the terrible reality of the extermination - the unconditional extermination - of your nation, an extermination carried out with premeditation...it was you who suffered this terrible sacrifice of extermination...Above all because of this terrible experience, through which you have become a loud warning voice for all humanity, for all nations, all the powers of this world, all systems and every person. *More than anyone else, it is precisely you who have become this saving warning. I think that in this sense you continue your particular vocation, showing yourselves to be still the heirs of that election to which God is faithful. This is your mission in the contemporary world before the peoples, the nations, all of humanity, the Church. And in this Church all peoples and nations feel united to you in this mission. Certainly they give great prominence to your nation and its suffering, its Holocaust, when they wish to speak a warning to individuals and to nations; in your name, the pope, too lifts up his voice in this warning. The Polish pope has a particular relationship with all this, because, along with you, he has in a certain sense lived all this here, in this land.*”<sup>4</sup>

The suffering of the Jewish people during the Holocaust, the Pope believes, must become a warning cry to all humanity so that such devastation will never happen again. He sees the suffering of the Jews within the context of the suffering servant passages of second Isaiah and the mission of Israel. Pope John Paul also connected this document to the examination of conscience and call to repentance, which the Pope stressed in his in preparation for the beginning of the Third Millennium.

3 A Polish Pastoral Letter on the Jews quoted the Pope about the common history of the Jews and Poles, <https://nyti.ms/351Keuj> (Retrieved: November 14, 2019)

4 JOHN PAUL II, *Spiritual Pilgrimages*, (NY: Crossroads, 1995) 98-99.

This preparation:

“...is based on the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God and neighbor. Therefore she (the Church) encourages her sons and daughters to purify their hearts through repentance of past errors and infidelities. She calls them to place themselves humbly before the Lord and examine themselves on the responsibility which they too have for the evils of our time.”<sup>5</sup>

The Pope demonstrated his affection to the Jewish people by seeking out Jewish communities in the countries he visited to express greetings and support. And one cannot read his remarks during his historic visit to the Synagogue of Rome in April of 1986 without experiencing his deep-seated humility, but even more, a genuine collegiality where he stated for all the world to witness the profound, I would say miraculous changes in Catholic attitudes towards Jews and Judaism, codified in Vatican II's declaration *Nostra Aetate*.

He made clear that all attempts to use Christian teachings as an expression of contempt had to be rejected, and that a new standing and position had been established for the Jewish people and its religion; Judaism's legitimate status was recognized after long being denied, a historic turning point. These changes actually satisfied philosopher Hermann Cohen's requirements for Jewish legitimacy:

“Neither the Enlightenment nor modern legislation has succeeded in removing from the Jews the burden placed upon them by the prejudice that they represent nothing but a foreign race. This prejudice can and will disappear only when the inherent worth of their religion is fully recognized.”<sup>6</sup>

Pope John Paul was also profoundly influenced by the renowned Polish poet, Adam Mickiewicz, who was a great friend of the Jews, and referred to them as “elder brothers,” the very words used by the Pope.<sup>7</sup>

And wherever he traveled throughout the world (to over 100 countries) he reiterated to Jewish communities the profound teachings of *Nostra Aetate*, giving it the highest level of authority, equivalent to a dogmatic statement in the Church. In a statement to

5 JOHN PAUL II, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* On the Coming of the Third Millennium (Città del Vaticano : Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994).

6 *Angelicum* 94, 2017, 28.

7 See REUBEN AINSZTEIN A MICKIEWICZ, “The Prophet of National Freedom,” *Jewish Quarterly* 3 (2), 1955.

the Jewish representatives of the Jewish Community of Venezuela, the Pope stated,

“I wish to confirm with utmost conviction (con toda mi profunda convicción) that the teaching of the Church proclaimed during the Second Vatican Council in the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* ... remains always for us, for the Catholic Church for the Episcopate... and for the Pope, a teaching which must be followed – a teaching which it is necessary to accept not merely as something fitting, but much more as an expression of the faith as an inspiration of the Holy Spirit, as a word of the divine wisdom.”<sup>8</sup>

No one could have predicted where the Pope's personal outreach to the Jews, even *Nostra Aetate*, were leading. No one could have foreseen the extraordinary, in fact, miraculous step the Church would take under John Paul II's guidance.



▶ Rev. Avelino Gonzalez

This unimaginable step was taken in September of 1990 in Prague, when Cardinal Edward Cassidy, under the direction of the Pope, asked forgiveness of the Jews for acts of anti-Judaism on the part of Christians. He used the Hebrew word *Tshuvah*, a word that means a new direction. The apology was spoken in a language that was directed to the hearts of Jews, not Christians

This culminated in the Millennial Service of Repentance, during which the Catholic Church asked forgiveness for past acts in various areas. The prayer that Pope John Paul II read during this service was later inserted into the Wailing Wall by him during his historic visit to Israel:

8 See *Osservatore Romano* January 29, 1985.

“God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your name to the nations: We are deeply saddened by the behavior of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking your forgiveness, we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the covenant.” (Jerusalem, 26 March 2000)

I consider this act by Pope John Paul II to be one of the greatest of the Catholic Church. Maybe ever.

Following this act of repentance in Prague, Catholic Church representatives in European countries asked forgiveness, teshuvah of the Jews, and the first among them was Poland.

Pope John Paul II knew that, in addition to the profound suffering of the Jewish People during the Shoah, the two concerns that were uppermost in minds and hearts of the Jewish people were the recognition of Israel and missionizing.

With respect to missionizing, nothing could be clearer than his statement when he made his historic visit to the synagogue in Rome. There he said regarding the attachment of Jews to Christians:

But this attachment is located in the order of faith, that is to say, in the free assent of the mind and the heart guided by the Spirit, and it can never be the object of exterior pressure, in one sense or the other. This is the reason why we wish to deepen dialogue in loyalty and friendship, in respect for one another’s intimate convictions, taking as a fundamental basis the elements of the revelation which we have in common, as a “great spiritual patrimony” [cf. *Nostra Aetate*, 4].<sup>9</sup>

That Pope John Paul II was opposed to forced, or even coerced conversion is clearly demonstrated through the precious testimony recounted by journalist-author Lorenzo Gulli.

When John Paul II was a priest, a young child by the name of Schachne was brought to him to be baptized. He refused, since it was a Jewish child and his parents had entrusted him to this Christian couple named Yachowitch, with the express wish that he be reunited with his Jewish relatives in the case of their death. Many years later Mrs. Yachowitch wrote a letter to Schachne stating:

“I sought to baptize you and raise you as a Catholic, but a young priest prevented me. This priest became a bishop, then a Cardinal and now recently has been elected Pope.”

9 Quoted text from Historic Visit to the Synagogue of Rome *op. cit. Spiritual Pilgrimages*, 60.

The Chief Rabbi of Bluzhov, when he learned of this story said,

“The ways of God are merciful, marvelous and unknown to men. Perhaps it was the merit to have saved this Jewish soul that has led him to his becoming Pope.”<sup>10</sup>

With respect to Israel, the Pope repeatedly affirmed the Jewish right to have a homeland and in dealing with the Jewish claim on Jerusalem, the Pope speaks much more particularly and more emotionally. He states,

“Jews ardently love her and in every age venerate her memory, abundant as she is in many remains and monuments from the time of David who chose her as the capital, and of Solomon who built the Temple there. Therefore they turn their minds to her daily, one may say, and point to her as a sign of their nation.”<sup>11</sup>

I believe that anyone reading the statement as to the Jewish bond with Jerusalem cannot help but notice the understanding Pope John Paul II had of the historical and emotional tie between Jerusalem and the Jewish people. It is certainly a significant addition to the remarks made in the homily at Otranto. But it is even more, since the Pope does not leave it there as he might well have done. Instead, after describing the significance of Jerusalem as a city of religious significance for the monotheistic faiths, he continues dealing with the contemporary situation and states in his 1984 statement *Redemptionis Anno*, 7.

“For the Jewish people who live in the state of Israel and who preserve in that land such precious testimonies to their history and their faith, we must ask for the desired security and the due tranquility that is the prerogative of every nation and condition of life and of progress for every society.”<sup>12</sup>

The attitude and understanding of the Jews is not simply a peculiarity of the Pope, but is rooted in his fundamental philosophy, which underscored the claims of humanity to life and life more abundant, and which also engaged his ecumenical and interreligious work and the belief that Jews and Christians share in that work.

10 LORENZO GULLI, *Papa Wojtyla e “I Fratelli Maggiori”* (Nova Itenera 2005) 89.

11 MARSHALL BREGER, (ed.), *Jews and Catholics in the Last Half Century, the Vatican Israel Accord*, (7a) (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004) 16.

12 Quote from Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, “Anti-Semitism: A Catholic Critique”, in ANTHONY J. CERNERA (ed.), *Toward Greater Understanding* (Fairfield: Sacred Heart University Press, 1995) 24.

He firmly believed that religions have a decisive role, not merely to preserve themselves and their traditions, but also and most important, to be the conscience of society and the voice of humanity. Pope John Paul II put it well in an address on the 22nd of March, 1984, to representatives of the Anti-Defamation League, when he affirmed:

“The encounter between Catholics and Jews is not a meeting of two ancient religions each going its own way, and not infrequently, in times past, in grievous and painful conflict. It is a meeting between brothers... Yet we are not meeting each other just for ourselves. We certainly try to know each other better and to understand better our respective distinctive identity and the close spiritual link between us. But, knowing each other, we discover still more what brings us together for a deeper concern for humanity at large.”<sup>13</sup>

“...a deeper concern for humanity at large...”  
The Biblical injunction to the Jews, to “be a blessing” was, for the Pope, a mission and a responsibility that joined Catholics and Jews, and was a shared call to all humanity. Nowhere was his belief in this obligation clearer than in his first Encyclical and in his statement at the Atomic Bomb Museum in 1971.

In the Homily during the Holy Mass at Auschwitz-Birkenau on June 7, 1979 he said:

“Can it still be a surprise to anyone that the Pope... from the diocese in whose territory is situated the camp of Auschwitz, should have begun his first Encyclical with the words “*Redemptor Hominis*” and should have dedicated it as a whole to the cause of man, to the dignity of man” to the threats to him, and finally to his inalienable rights that can so easily be trampled on and annihilated by his fellowmen? Is it enough to put man in a different uniform, arm him with the apparatus of violence? Is it enough to impose on him an ideology in which human rights are subjected to the demands of the system, completely subjected to them, so as in practice not to exist at all?

Then, in the same vein, with the same hope for humanity at the Peace Memorial Hall on February 25, 1981, at the Atomic Bomb Museum the Pope spoke to:

“The Heads of State and of Government, to those who hold political and economic power, I say: let



▶ Refreshments offer an opportunity of conviviality and interconnection among fellows

us pledge ourselves to peace through justice; let us take a solemn decision, now, that war will never be tolerated or sought as a means of resolving differences; let us promise our fellow human beings that we will work untiringly for disarmament and the banishing of all nuclear weapons; Pope John Paul: let us replace violence and hate with confidence and caring.”

On January 18, 2005, the largest delegation of Rabbis and Jewish leaders went to the Vatican to thank him and bless his efforts for reconciliation.

He often said that Abraham was told to be a Blessing for the world and that Jews and Christians should begin by being a blessing for one another. We wanted to convey to him what a blessing he was to the Jewish people and that we wanted to pray for him, and we suggested the Priestly Blessing from Numbers. And at that last major audience, the Pope consented and two other rabbis and I pronounced the Priestly blessing over him.

MAY THE LORD BLESS YOU AND KEEP YOU.

MAY THE LORD CAUSE HIS COUNTENANCE TO SHINE  
UPON YOU AND BE GRACIOUS TO YOU.

MAY THE LORD CAUSE HIS COUNTENANCE SHINE UPON  
YOU AND GIVE YOU PEACE.

Three months later this saint, this Pope, this giant of humanity left us. He was, and continues to be a blessing to all of us assembled here, and to the world, and impels us to make of our lives a blessing.

13 CERNERA, *op. cit.*, 31.

## PATRIZI DI BELLEGRA. PRESBITERI AL SERVIZIO DELLA CURIA ROMANA DAL XVIII AL XX SECOLO

Dott. Davide Bracale  
Segretario, Centro Pro Unione

Discorso tenuto al Centro Pro Unione, sabato 12 ottobre 2019



La pubblicazione *Patrizi di Bellegra. Presbiteri al servizio della Curia Romana dal XVIII al XX secolo* è una coniugazione tra *amor et ratio*, che ha permesso di conciliare il sentimento con l'intelletto, superando la narrazione sulla famiglia Patrizi e immergendosi nella scientificità della ricerca. Questo amore mi ha felicemente spinto a consegnare la storia della famiglia e, in particolare, dei suoi presbiteri attraverso un metodo ed un volume che rispondessero al rigore dell'indagine scientifica contro l'alibi dell'ignoranza o la presunzione della diceria. Indro Montanelli, in un ciclo di interviste sulla storia d'Italia, disse: "Gli italiani non imparano niente dalla storia, anche perché non la sanno" (*La Storia d'Italia di Indro Montanelli*). Per quanto riguarda il partecipio storico oggetto della pubblicazione, è offerta la possibilità di conoscere una realtà prima d'ora inedita e quindi inesplorata, ma spetterà all'eventuale lettore saperne trarre vantaggio. Emerge con forza dalla documentazione d'archivio presa in analisi che la famiglia Patrizi di Bellegra abbia avuto una storia ed in essa attivamente agì. Don Lorenzo Patrizi, archivista del Sant'Uffizio, affrontò i postumi dell'invasione napoleonica; don Giuseppe Patrizi era docente di diritto canonico all'Archiginnasio della Sapienza e Maestro di Camera del card. Angelo Mai di leopardiana memoria; Mons. Pietro Patrizi sfidò il governo dell'Italia unita, poiché fedele a Pio IX e, infine, il più grande: Mons. Nazareno Patrizi, che non solo fu decano degli avvocati rotali e prelado della corte pontificia per sovrana concessione di S. Pio X e di tutti i suoi successori fino a Pio XII, ma poeta, gentiluomo e umanissimo pastore, prodigo fino in fondo nelle opere di pietà. Cionondimeno il volume *Patrizi di Bellegra. Presbiteri al servizio della Curia Romana dal XVIII al XX secolo* è semplicemente una voce attuale al loro operato storico.

Voglio, infine, ringraziare il personale speciale degli archivi dell'Abbazia Territoriale di Subiaco e della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede.

Ricordo, poi, che i Frati Francescani dell'*Atonement*, fondatori del Centro Pro Unione, hanno presenziato a molte delle attività in memoria della famiglia Patrizi. In primo luogo la presentazione del libro *Mons. Nazareno Patrizi*, recensito tra gli altri da *Famiglia Cristiana*, *Giorni di Storia* e *Tv2000*. Il concerto di beneficenza "Maria Advocata Nostra", in favore delle missioni per l'unità dei cristiani, presso la chiesa di S. Onofrio al Gianicolo, e le celebrazioni eucaristiche nella basilica dei Ss. Celso e Giuliano in Roma e presso la cappella di Santa Lucia a Bellegra. In quest'ultima sede, il parroco, parte delle autorità locali e soprattutto la popolazione si sono riuniti per la messa presieduta

dall'avvocato rotale don Paolo De Luigi con predicazione di P. Giacomo Puglisi, SA; cui è seguita la posa conclusiva dello stemma di Mons. Nazareno Patrizi.

Concludiamo col salmo 85, capace per analogia di riassumere sia la provenienza dalla terra che la costante presenza di giuristi tra i Patrizi:

*La verità germoglierà dalla terra e la giustizia si affaccerà dal cielo.*

*Amore e verità s'incontreranno e giustizia e pace si baceranno (Sal 85, 11-12).*



▶ Davide Bracale e il coro durante la presentazione

## Patrizi di Bellegra

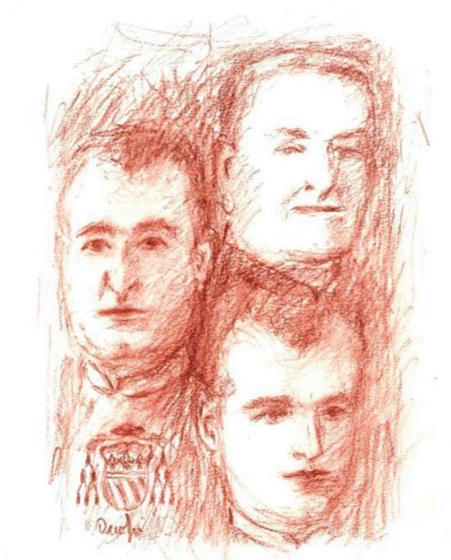
Presbiteri al servizio della Curia Romana dal XVIII al XX secolo  
Davide Bracale

DAVIDE BRACALE



### *Patrizi di Bellegra*

*Presbiteri al servizio della Curia Romana  
dal XVIII al XX secolo*



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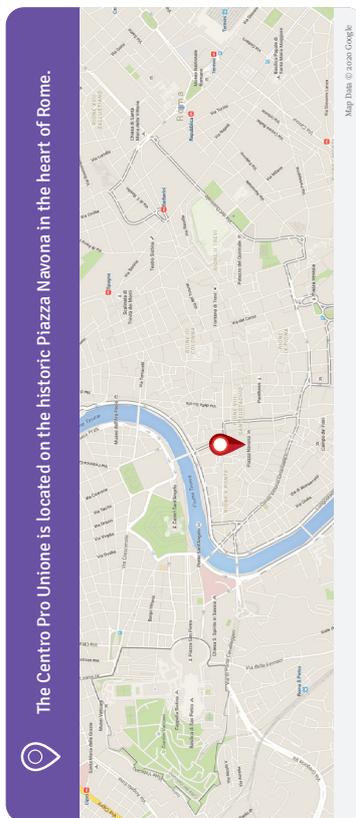
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### Ecumenical & Interreligious Movements from a Catholic Perspective

**22 June - 10 July 2020**

#### Aim

This course is designed to introduce participants to the ecumenical and interreligious movements from a Catholic perspective. It will offer a historical and theological overview of the issues that divide Christians as well as the bonds that unite them. The program will explore relations with other religious traditions. The course, which is in English, is for men and women who are in preparation for ministry or religious life, who are in the mission field, who are ecumenical officers or members of ecumenical commissions, or who are looking for a sabbatical experience led by qualified professors and ecumenists.

#### Faculty

The faculty includes, but is not limited to, staff members of the Centro Pro Unione (Rome) and the Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute (New York).

The Course is "Recognized and Endorsed" by the Graduate Theological Foundation (USA) which can grant up to 6 graduate credits for qualified graduate students.

### Schedule

The schedule for the three weeks is the same Monday through Friday: morning prayer followed by three 60-minute lecture segments.

The afternoons are for on-site excursions and lectures (Roman catacombs, Basilica of St. Peter and excavations, St. Clement, "Roman ghetto," Synagogue and museum, Mosque and Islamic center, and others). Weekends are free.

#### Week I

Reformation, both Protestant & Catholic:  
A Close Assessment of Their Reality

Biblical foundations; factions and divisions within the Church; an overview of the Reformation and Catholic Reform movements, the modern ecumenical movement; Vatican II and the Catholic principles of ecumenism; World Council of Churches; worldwide ecumenical and interreligious organizations; Eastern Christianity. On June 29, Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, participation in the Papal Mass of the Pallium.

#### Week II

From Division to Dialogue

Exploration of the various dialogues which exist between the churches, their context and results; ecumenical documents; reading of ecumenical texts; concept of reception in the ecumenical movement; visit to the Pontifical Councils for Promoting Christian Unity and for Interreligious Dialogue.

### Week III

Christians & World Faith Traditions

Jewish-Christian relations; Christian responses to people of other faiths; fundamentalism as a worldwide phenomenon; Catholicism and Islam in dialogue; new religious movements; grassroots ecumenism.

24' Documentary about the Summer School  
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The cost of the course is US\$300 (non-refundable) which is payable at the time of application.  
Deadline for application is March 31st.

Upon acceptance of application, a list of possible lodgings in Rome will be mailed or faxed. Booking of lodgings is the responsibility of the applicant. Housing cannot be guaranteed after application deadline. Transportation (from North America), lodgings and meals will be approximately US\$3,500.

The Centro Pro Unione is located on the historic Piazza Navona in the heart of Rome.

Application can also be filled out on-line:  
[www.prounione.it](http://www.prounione.it)

22<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE / 2019

**Speaker** Prof. Adam Afterman



Professor Adam Afterman is the Chair of the Department of Jewish Philosophy and Talmud at Tel Aviv University and a Senior Fellow at The Center for Religious and Interreligious Studies at Tel Aviv University.

He is the Co-Director of the John Paul II Center for Interreligious Dialogue in Rome and Senior Research Fellow of the Kogod Research Center for Contemporary Jewish Thought at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem.

Between 2008-2018 he was a member of the Steering Committee of the Interreligious Theology Conference at the Shalom Hartman Institute.

In Spring 2015, he was a visiting lecturer at the Harvard Divinity School.

His most recent book *"And They Be One Flesh": On the Language of Mystical Union in Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2016) explored the linguistic developments within Jewish theology and Jewish mysticism concerning mystical union of man and God.

His article "From God to Godhead: The Mystical Theology of Kabbalah," is forthcoming in the *Cambridge Companion to Jewish Theology*, ed. Steven Kepnes (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

"AND THEY SHALL BE ONE FLESH": ON THE LANGUAGE OF MYSTICAL UNION IN JUDAISM

Adam Afterman

SITFP 26

BRILL

Conferences 2019



The Centro Pro Unione invites you to the Twenty-second annual conference in honor of the

22<sup>nd</sup>

Servant of God  
Father  
PAUL WATTSON  
and  
Mother  
LURANA WHITE

founders of the Society of the Atonement

Speaker  
Prof. Adam Afterman

on the theme  
The "Holy Spirit" in Medieval Jewish Philosophy and Spirituality

Thursday, 12 December 2019  
6:00 pm

Via Santa Maria dell'Anima, 30  
1<sup>st</sup> floor · 00186 Rome



12 December 2019

Annual Conference Wattson – White

Historical note

Society of the Atonement

In 1898, the Spirit of God inspired Sister Lurana White and Father Paul Wattson to establish a religious community to be called the *Society of the Atonement*.

The Founders had the vision of a religious congregation dedicated to the unity of Christians and to reconciliation in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. Since the Founders were Episcopalians, the roots of the Society were implanted in that ecclesial communion until 1909, the year in which the Friars and Sisters of the Atonement entered into full communion with the Catholic Church. This was the first time that a corporate reunion with Rome took place since the Reformation.

Among the various activities of the Society of the Atonement, special mention needs to be made of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begun by Fr. Paul in 1908 and celebrated today throughout the world.

From the humble beginnings in an abandoned church, St. John's-in-the-Wilderness, in an area called Graymoor (New York), the Society of the Atonement has dedicated its efforts for the unity of the Church and reconciliation in several countries: the United States, Canada, Japan, England, Ireland, Brazil and Italy.

Yearly conferences honoring the memory of Fr. Paul Wattson were begun in 1974 at The Catholic University of America, Washington, DC, then, in 1980, at the University of San Francisco. To these were added in 1995, the *Paul Wattson Lectures* at the Atlantic School of Theology, Halifax, in 1996 at the Toronto School of Theology and in 2017 at the Chicago Theological Union. The *Paul Wattson Lectures* are given by international experts in the field of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue.

In 2013 the cause for the canonization of Fr. Paul of Graymoor was introduced in the Archdiocese of New York.

Since 1998, the Centro Pro Unione organizes lectures each year in December to honor Fr. Paul Wattson and Mother Lurana White, co-founders of the *Society of the Atonement*. Earlier lecturers were Enzo Bianchi, Sarah Anne Coakley, Archbishop Bruno Forte, Anna Marie Aagaard, Robert Taft, SJ, Dame Mary Tanner, Angelo Maffei, Msgr. Eleuterio Francesco Fortino, Gillian Kingston, Timothy Radcliff, OP, Dr. Jane Williams, Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, M. Afr., Turid Karlsen Seim, Kurt Cardinal Koch, Hervé Legrand, OP, William Henn, ofm Cap, Walter Cardinal Kasper, Petros Vassiliadis, Rabbi Jack Bemporad, Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia, Michael Calabria, ofm and Muhammad Shafiq.

Visit Atonement Friars' Website · [www.atonementfriars.org](http://www.atonementfriars.org)

Graphic: Robert - updated by Neo

## Identification of the Centro - Remodeling the logotype symbol and lettering in 50 years of activity

A logo is a graphic mark, emblem, or symbol used to aid and promote public identification and recognition. It may be of an abstract or figurative design or include the text of the name it represents as in a wordmark, including a careful typographic lettering.

The extensive activities promoted by our Ecumenical Center – training, publications, multimedia, web and social media – are identified through ad hoc visual communication. The identifying symbol of the Center is its logo. Over the years the logo has evolved, starting in the 1960's from its first monochrome version on the Bulletin. This was followed by a typographic revision with the introduction of color in the subsequent years finally arriving at the first digital versions with the advent of computer technology – found on the first version of the website in 1999.

### Logo changes

Later versions saw the use of precise lettering, the careful choice of fonts and pictogram revisions. In successive prototypes aesthetic improvements were made: introducing shades of color around the globe, implementing refinements in the figures, and finally in the CMYK four-color format of the official publications and digital media using the RGB color method.

### 50 years of activity

For the 50th anniversary of the Centro, a special logo was designed that was used throughout the 2017-2018 celebrations. Subsequently, in 2019 the previous bordeaux version was replaced with a restyled version of the special anniversary logo.

The logo of the Center has been adapted, in the colors and stylistic features, for the various publishing media.

### Social and digital media

For example in social media, the logo has been proposed by a particular version where the symbols are uniformly dyed in light blue resting on a vertically shaded background from yellow to white.



### The first uses

Beginning with the publication of the *Bulletin* in 1969, the logo is visible on its cover.



### The first version of the logo

The first version of the logo with the globe and pictograms was introduced starting in 1974 as seen from the cover of the *Bulletin* published that year.



### First change / Mono color

In 1993, the logo had a first change. From that year until 2012, the printed version of the *Bulletin* appeared with the monochromatic red logo, as can be seen in the image beside. Note the change in the globe, which is proposed with an inclination of the axis.



### Prototypes and experiments over time

In February 1999 there was an exchange of ideas by the staff concerning a possible stylistic modification of the logo. Proposals were drawn up, such as the next draft. But then it was decided to give continuity to the traditional appearance of the logo, related to the graphic line of the historical logo.



### Website launch

In 1999 the Center creates its own website with a revised logo. The lettering takes shape and the font chosen for this version for the website is the "Copperplate Gothic".



### First major restyling

Since 2013 the *Bulletin* has been published only in a digital version on the web. The logo used was the one with the restyled globe and pictograms. Comparing the images below, one can see the changes in the details of the pictogram – now more curved and less static. Also a shade of light blue has been applied to the globe to make it more dynamic by evoking the color of the planet Earth seen from above.



### The era of social media

In January 2013, with the advent of global dissemination of social media, the Center launches its own profile on Twitter. This profile is linked to the website, expanding its activity in telematic media. For this occasion an *ad hoc* logo is elaborated, with the predominance of sky-blue evenly distributed on the globe and with the pictograms that projects a clear external glow is now positioned on a gradient background from yellow to white.



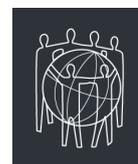
Centro Pro Unione  
"Ut Omnes Unum Sint"

### Website 2.0

The second version of the Center's website is published on the network in 2014. In conjunction with this launch, the logo is undergoes a redesign in the lettering. The biblical phrase "Ut Omnes Unum Sint" (Jn 17:21) is inserted in the logo between quotation marks (from the Latin 'that all may be one'). The font chosen for this version is "Sansation". In the figure below, see a variant of the logo used on the website.



Centro Pro Unione  
"Ut Omnes Unum Sint"

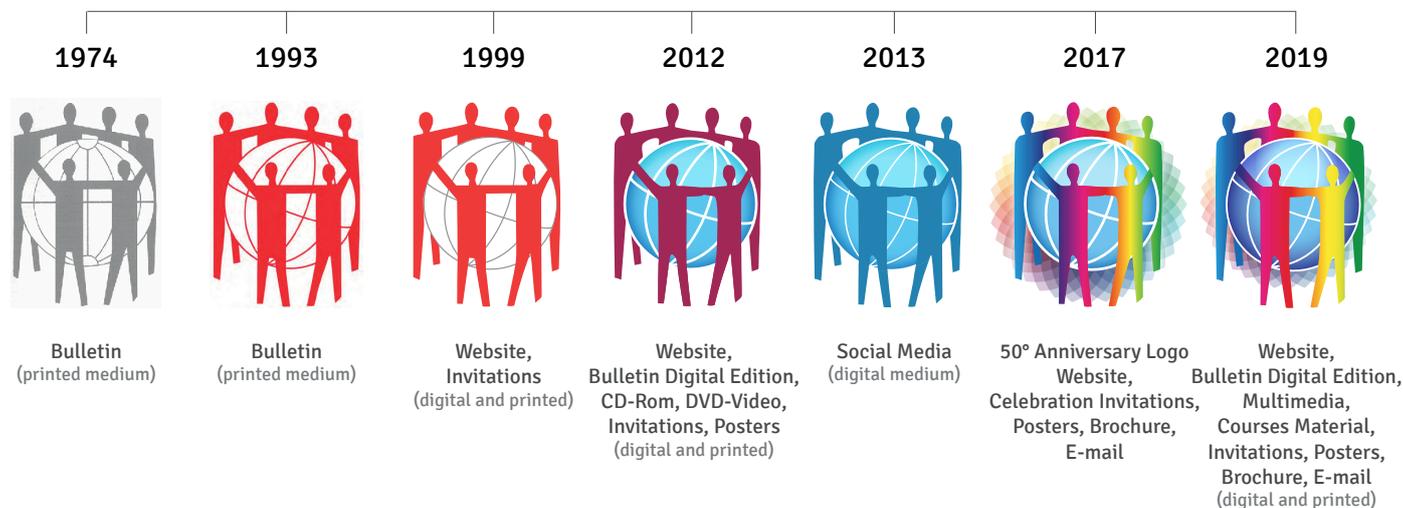


### Layout outline / high contrast style

An elaborate variant of the logo is the "outline" version. This appeared on various media – printed and digital gadgets – where a high contrast of the figure is required due to the surface where it is placed, most often on a dark color or on jagged or uneven surfaces. In order to appreciate the visibility of the logo, a version with "only contours" is needed. The figure below is an example of the logo, with lettering, in high contrast black and white, proposed in 2015.



## Centro Pro Unione / Logotype Remodeling



  
Centro Pro Unione  
Ut Omnes Unum Sint

**New Website 3.0 / Identity and coordinated image on activities, gadgets and course materials**

2016 saw the website expand with new sections with the library having a wider and more accessible catalog, and a new publishing platform. So for the 3.0 version of the site, the logo lettering is adapted to the new needs with a more formal and classic font but just as elegant in shape. The slogan Ut Omnes Unum Sint is proposed without the quotes. The chosen character is the "Canaro".



**50th anniversary of activity**

For the celebration of the 50 years of activity of the Center, a study of the logo was prepared. By drawing on the experience made up to now and projecting towards the future, this study maintained the commitment to promote ecumenism but to look at the challenges of the coming years.



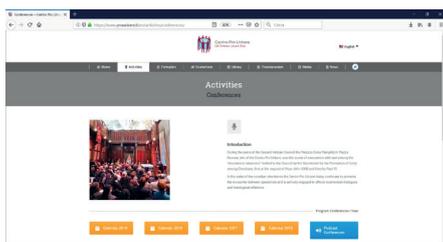
**2019 / until today — Launch of the new logo for publications and digital media**

Based on a slightly restyled the model of the 50th anniversary logo, the new logo of the Center is proposed in its full chromatic expressiveness, highlighting the properties already reported in the previous study, such as: Multiplicity, Encounter and Unity looking forward to the road ahead.



Centro Pro Unione  
"Ut Omnes Unum Sint"

## Other Logotypes | Activities and Projects



**WebTV**

In 2016, the Center's WebTV was launched with its own logo and an identity designed for the broadcasting of audiovisual content.



**Logotype 120 Seconds of Ecumenism**

Simultaneously with the WebTV, the ecumenical formation series, entitled "120 Seconds of Ecumenism", began in the style of short clips. The series logo is included in the opening and closing titles of the videos.



**Summer School Logo**

Among the formation activities of the Center is the Summer course in ecumenism that has its own special logo. It is disseminated on all digital and printed media: teaching materials, promotion on the web and social media, documentary videos and gadgets.



► Article compiled by Espedito Neto  
Graphic designer Centro Pro Unione

Per ordinare il materiale della  
Settimana di Preghiera per l'Unità dei Cristiani



Visita il sito web del Centro Pro Unione:

[www.prounione.it](http://www.prounione.it)

# Ci trattarono con gentilezza

(Atti degli Apostoli 28, 2)



Giotto - Accoglienza: particolare degli affreschi della Cappella degli Scrovegni, Padova

**SETTIMANA DI PREGHIERA  
PER L'UNITÀ DEI CRISTIANI  
18-25 gennaio 2020**

Poster

English Language

Spanish Language

# They Showed Us Unusual Kindness

(cf. ACTS 28:2)

# Nos Mostraron Una Bondad Inusual

(cf. HECHOS 28:2)



Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2020

Semana de Oración por la Unidad Cristiana 2020

To Order Material for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity



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A Ministry of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement





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