

PREFACE

In our last number, we mentioned that the year 1985 marked the twentieth anniversary of the declaration *Nostra Aetate*. In most of those places where Jews and Christians meet in mutual recognition and for dialogical research, this anniversary was marked by congresses, symposia, and celebrations, during which a balance sheet was made of the work accomplished, including both progress and deficiencies and, on the basis of what has already been accomplished, exploring the possibilities of future developments. This was particularly the case in Rome, at the annual meeting of the International Jewish-Catholic Liaison Committee held in October 1985.

Following the impetus of that awareness, one can detect in recent months a sudden spurt in the relations between the Catholic Church and the Jews. Two major events, among others, have provided signs of this progress. First, the publication on June 24, 1985 of the *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church* by the Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. The numerous reactions to this document, whether favorable, reserved or critical, and the abundance of commentaries which it has elicited, suffice to prove that the encounter between Judaism and the Church calls upon the conscience of both Jews and Christians in an increasingly vital way. The current issue of *Immanuel* includes a major examination of this document from the Jewish point-of-view by Geoffrey Wigoder.

More recently, another major event occurred in the history of the rapport between Jews and Christians: the visit of Pope John Paul II to the synagogue in Rome. During the past year, various Jewish delegations representing the large international organizations have gone to the Vatican. This time, the head of the Church paid a visit to the local Jewish community. We are still too close to the event to evaluate its prophetic significance, but the sermon by Rabbi Toaf and the response of the Pope would seem to be documents which, over the course of time, will come to be seen as significant milestones on a path whose progress is irreversible.

If the enterprise of *Immanuel* needed any confirmation, these two facts would alone suffice to justify our work, indicating, in effect, a permanent interaction between the base and the summit, the center and the periphery. The progress of the relations between the churches and the Jews depends, in large measure, on the seriousness of our labor: mutual recognition, both objective and loyal, and biblical and theological research conducted in a trusting dialogue. The way is prepared for official declarations and decisions by leaders through the continuous work which the Spirit uses to arouse unexpected initiatives. But this work in turn receives inspiration and support from the documents which expound to the Christian community as a whole that which is discovered in silence and in patience by theologians and men of prayer.

This patience is none other than a certain suffering, and in particular that of seeing those who have been engaged in the same task, sharing our labor and our experience, fall by our side on the way. One of our companions in work has recently been taken from us. On Saturday, October 26, Father Alfred Delmee, who was responsible for the Catholic community of Jaffa, was killed in an automobile accident on his return from Jerusalem to Tel-Aviv. I was informed of the news in Rome, on the eve of the International Liaison Committee, and I informed the Holy Father of this loss at our meeting with him, as the two had been personally acquainted: they were classmates during their studies in Rome, and Karol Wojtyla had been the guest of the Delmee family in Belgium. This loss profoundly affected the flock of which he had been pastor – a devoted, attentive, tireless pastor.

It also effects *Immanuel*: Father Delmee was to have assumed, together with Professor Peli, responsibility for the fifth section of our journal, replacing Wesley Brown, who has returned to the United States. His knowledge and love of the Jewish tradition, his attentive interest in life in Israel, and his very sure theological judgment would have made him a valued collaborator for *Immanuel*. His name joins the list of those whom the Lord has taken prematurely. May his memory be a blessing.

We have named another friend of long-standing as his replacement, Reverend Geert Cohen Stuart of the Dutch Reformed Church, a member of the Ecumenical Fraternity and Chaplain to Christian students at the Hebrew University. He has lived in Israel with his family for many years and participates intensely in the life of the country.

The editor-in chief is not always master of the copy which he publishes. In examining the proofs of this number of *Immanuel*, I discovered a text which I certainly would not have myself included, and which my collaborators in the Ecumenical Fraternity had intended to surprise me. On October 9, 1985, the Consul-General of France in Jerusalem decorated me with the Legion of Honor. The members of the *Immanuel* Editorial Board who were present at that ceremony requested the text of the address which he delivered on that occasion, which they decided to publish. What can one do against the initiative of friends? If I have agreed to allow this text in the review, it is because the distinction accorded to me concerns precisely that task to which we in *Immanuel* are committed: the encounter between Jews and Christians in this country, in view of our mutual recognition and of our real friendship. Moreover, when I received this decoration, I experienced sentiments similar to those of the captain of an athletic team who has received an important prize, not only for himself but for his teammates – it is you, the contributors and readers of *Immanuel*, whom this distinction confirms and encourages in the task and the testimony for which we are gathered.

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