Box 2, Folder 17, Lecture, 5 May 1970.
I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to be here with you, and for the privilege of the invitation. Not the least part of the delight in accepting the invitation was the opportunity that it afforded me to meet once again with a revered and greatly admired scholar, Dr. Albert Outler. Whenever we have had dialogues with the Methodist Church nationally and have found difficulty in making distinctions between what constitutes Methodist theology as compared with, let us say, Baptist theology, somehow that question was invariably resolved by someone saying, "Well, there is Dr. Albert Outler. He is Methodist theology." And so it is a great pleasure to be with Dr. Outler again, as it was at Notre Dame where the Roman Catholics brought us together, and earlier at Vatican Council II.

My assignment, as I understand it from the letter of invitation and from the description given to you by Dr. James Ward, is to try to do a rather impossible thing during the forty to forty-five minutes in which I am to speak -- and that is to try to undertake a tour d'horizon of Jewish-Christian relations from a Jewish perspective. This presentation is intended as an overview of the major issues and concerns as seen in the Jewish community, both in the academic and intellectual aspects of the Jewish community,
as well as in the living experience of the Jewish people that I encounter in a variety of ways in my travels around the country and in other parts of the world. I submit that this will have to be necessarily a somewhat sketchy presentation of themes, each of which would require for any adequate treatment a full lecture. As you will see, each of the subjects which I should like to identify as being central to the current Jewish-Christian agenda has spawned very substantial literatures, and each of the themes could in themselves constitute the basis of
an entire seminar of not just one day.

At the very outset, I should like to suggest that for reasons of architecture, that I point to at least three areas in which there has been quite substantial progress, growth, development in understanding and in relationships between the Christian and Jewish communities, and particularly the Catholic and Protestant communities in relationship to the Jewish community. I specify that because I believe we have another set of concerns which are emerging out of the present situation in relation to the Eastern Orthodox churches. And these three areas, I would submit, fall under the categories of the increasing attention and serious attention that has been given to the highest teaching authorities and institutions of the Roman Catholic and the Protestant communities with regard to Christian responsibility for certain traditions of Christian teaching that has nurtured anti-semitism over the greater past almost two millenia.

Secondly, I would submit that there has been substantial growth and progress, although it needs to be qualified again with some distinction, but clearly in the perspective of 2000 years of Jewish-Christian relationship there has been substantial growth and development in the Christian address to the problem of the theology of Israel, theology of the Jewish people in
the context of a sort of theology of the people of God, which I should like
to allude to in a moment. And related to that there has begun to be, although
much less substantial growth and progress, a facing up to the question of much
of the historic amnesia that has obtained in church history with regard to the
portrayal of post-Biblical Judaism, Rabbinic Judaism, and the pedagogic process
of Christendom. In this second area of the question of the theology of Israel—
an adequate understanding of the theology of the Jewish people—let me say that
there is a companion problem on the Jewish side, namely, the issue of the Jewish
community developing an adequate Jewish theological understanding of the place
of Christianity and Christians in God's divine plan—which also needs to be
examined in terms of the present agenda.

And thirdly, in terms of areas in which there has been substantial
growth and progress, the common address on the part of Christians and Jews
to their common concerns as people and as communities, to the ranging issues
of social justice and international economic development and related problems.
I should like to submit that in identifying these problems, the progress has
been in some areas more substantial than in others, and that in all cases
the progress is marked by some ambiguity in terms of the unfinished agenda
which is still to be faced.
Now, let me deal in rather summary fashion with the first area of concern, namely, that of the address on the part of Christian leadership to the problem of anti-Semitism and the roots of anti-Semitism in western culture and the influence in terms of certain forms of Christian teaching and tradition. I would submit that any fair and objective reading of what has been taking place in the western Christian community with regard to this issue would lead one to conclude that we have passed a major landmark in this area of concern, a landmark which must be located in the extraordinary action of Vatican Council II. I recall the days in which I was in Rome as personal guest at the time of Cardinal Bea and of Cardinal Suenens, who was then chairman of the Bishops' Commission of American on Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Affairs. As a Jew who comes out of rather orthodox background in his early origins, and whose family was victimized on my wife's side by German Nazi anti-Semitism and on my parents' side by Russian-Polish anti-Semitism, I recall standing in Rome in St. Peter's Basilica at the time of the intervention of Cardinal Bea as he introduced that particular declaration, and I found it simply incredible. There in the presence of some 2000, perhaps 2500, Fathers from throughout the world, of the Roman Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church literally faced the issue of the church's responsibility for the abuse of Scripture and the New Testament teachings as it is developed in certain traditions for the basic
"themes of contempt" as I call those and literally sought to turn the church around in a totally opposite direction. Despite all the ambiguities of the language that existed in the Vatican Council declaration and continued to exist, The Vatican Council Declaration on Non-Christian Religions, there can be no question that in the perspective of 1900 years this was a major revolutionary turning point on the part of the Roman Church and the argument that we who were involved in the Jewish community in relating to the Roman Catholic hierarchy, both here and abroad, sought to make clear to those who were skeptical about that process, was that this was the beginning, the first step, in a process and I am persuaded that the events since that time have more than amply justified the involvement of the Jewish community in that cooperative process with the Roman Catholic Church, because as I hope Father Hopkins will have more time to address himself to this question, what emerged as a result of Vatican Council II was the Bishops' Guidelines on the United States on Jewish-Catholic relationship which clarified much of the ambiguous language which went on to deal with the basic themes in a very direct and frontal way, the problems of teaching that were centered around the misrepresentation of the Pharisees, the problem of the false conflicts as they...
were portrayed in so much of the teaching in relationship to Jesus and the
Pharisees; and the basic teachings of the hostility between Judaism and
Christianity as founded on the Non-Christic tradition of Judaism being a
religion of harsh legalism, Christianity being a superior religion of love;
all of these questions were faced directly and frontally in the Bishops'
Guidelines on Catholic-Jewish Relationships, which now in fact have become
the basis of a major program on the part of many levels in the Roman Catholic
community—clergy, teachers, religious education, textbooks—of creating
whole new Christian culture with regard to the attitude toward Jews under
the new perspectives the Vatican Council opened up.

Let me say In a companion way that the action of the World Council
of Churches in 1961, which also sought to face these questions, represented a
major contribution to a movement forward to facing the issue of anti-semitism
within the Protestant and Eastern Orthodox Communities.

But perhaps, if time will allow later on, I must confess that there is a rather
strange kind of out-of-phaseness which we experience in relationship to
much of the national Protestant leadership on this question, because while
it is true that prior to Vatican Council II, perhaps 98% of Jewish-Christian
dialogue was essentially that between Protestants and Jews, since Vatican
Council II, dialogue has been, at least up until the past two years, something like 85% Roman Catholic-Jewish. It is only now beginning to turn into a new cycle of relationships with Protestant leadership, and we find ourselves increasingly now dialoguing with good friends in the Southern Baptist Convention, the Lutheran Church, the Presbyterian Church, that's a relatively new phenomenon in recent decades. I think, in terms of the unresolved aspect of that agenda, without wanting to dwell too long on this point, there is reason for very serious concern in the Jewish community as to the depth of the commitment of national Protestant leadership to really implementing the insights which have emerged out of contemporary scholarship with regard to the problems of Christian teaching about anti-semitism because as of this moment, with the exception of the Southern Baptist Convention which raises some questions in terms of the way in which the person approaches the problem, there continues to be a situation in which not a single Protestant denomination on-the-national-level has a single person working on the problem of Jewish-Christian relationship. Not a single national Protestant denomination ecumenically or denominational, has a person committed to the single objective of dealing with the problem of uprooting the sources of anti-semitism in
Protestant culture or to deal with the problem of a more affirmative relationships that have emerged theologically and historically between Christians and Jews.

The reason I begin this presentation in terms of the present agenda of Jewish-Christian relationships today, is that there is a tendency on the part of some to feel that there is a peculiar kind of Jewish paranoia with regard to anti-semitism that somehow Jewish identity requires anti-semitism, whether real or imagined, to keep the community intact, just as some people have felt that there is a kind of paranoia in elements of the Black community which talks about genocide and all of this sort of thing--repression--because this is the dynamics of the group achieving a sense of its self-consciousness in order to relate to a majority of society. Let me say that I wish there were such a fantasy life of the Jewish community. We could deal with it seriously. Tragically, and I think if Christians want to understand something about the mentality and behavior of Jews in response to a whole variety of issues, Jews are deeply preoccupied with the problems of anti-semitism today in a way that in some ways are unknown to Christians because we find ourselves confronting a whole new constellation of anti-semitism internationally, with spill-over nationally, which really has kept our community considerably upset these days and weeks and months and Black friends
find it difficult to understand, because they see Jews as part of a WASP establishment—you know, we've made it why are Jews so preoccupied with anti-semitism or a few utterances from a Stokely Carmichael. We're facing the situation, to say this again in very condensed form, in which the Jewish community has become the object of manipulation by the Soviet Union, in which it is using anti-semitism, classical theological anti-semitism, and the great paradox of a government committed to uprooting religious teaching in the life of its own society, using classical Russian Orthodox anti-semitism as a way of exploiting and building its relationship with the Arab countries to demonstrates its friendship and its alliance with the Arabs, and is exploiting today the classic forms of teachings about the Jews that were characteristic of the czars at their worst period of time. And those themes which the Soviet Union is now manufacturing out of an official institute on anti-Semitism in the Ukraine, with a professor writing encyclopedia articles about it, publishing books on "Judaism Unmasked," demonstrating that the Jews for theological in an international conspiracy—the themes of the discredited reasons are involved in participating in the predicates of the leaders of Zion, is now being imported into Western Europe, Latin all of that material has not become the basis of other forms of this which America, and the United States primarily by propagandists for the are being incorporated in this country in very substantial amounts through extremist factions of Arab nationalism and their radical left allies, persons involved in promoting the Arab cause, and I want to talk about the
legitimacy of parts of the Arab cause to which I feel a strong commitment.
There is no term of legitimate forms of Palestinian nationalism, but it is totally illegitimate for Arabs to use anti-Semitism as part of their struggle against Zionism and against Israel. And the nation is being swamped, both in overt and covert ways, with forms of anti-Semitism, including the revival of the ritual blood rivals in Islamic form which is being brought about by propaganda activity of the Nazis and their sympathizers in the 1930s, in this country.

And so the phenomenon of anti-Semitism today, as we experience it in its political and sociological forms, with a continued appropriation of theological nurturing of anti-Semitism by a variety of sources, makes this question a basic question in terms of the dialogue between Christians and Jews, and indeed, Jews are concerned as they look to Christian colleagues for some response on the Christian side to the problem. Let me suggest that the problem will become much worse, rather than better, as this nation continues to go through its present revolutionary upheaval. We are now in an extremely ambiguous situation in which the potentiality of the resurrection of anti-Semitism in demonic forms is here with us, because on the one hand, as we deal with the crisis of Vietnam and Cambodia, Jews on the one hand are...
being singled out by the radical right, because so many Jewish kids are
involved in the New Left on the campuses, and in protest movements, and now
the radical right is exploiting in this country a theme of the Jewish-
Communist-Marxist-Zionist conspiracy to destroy America, and therefore
the elders of young Jewish kids very try to cool it, and the parents now find
it increasingly difficult to want to speak out on Vietnam and Cambodia, and
then because they are silent, the New Left is now hitting the Jewish estab-
ishment for coping out for Jewish reasons, and so Jews are be damned if they
do and damned if they don't, and all of this, the themes of anti-semitism
are being incorporated as ways of signaling messages to the Jewish community
about its continued marginality in relationship to the mainstream of American
society.

I move from that area of concern which is existential and deeply
significant for the Jewish self-consciousness today, because some of the
other concerns which one would prefer to talk about of times are considered
luxuries in the face of some of the hard reality problems of survival and
the sense of the security of the Jewish people here and abroad. But never-
theless I think the question of the new context in which Jews and Christians
relate to each other must be faced in terms of what I take to be a
namely, the rediscovery by Christians of Judaism and the Jewish people,
substantially healthy development in our encounter; and that is that it is
increasingly clear that even for internal Christian theological reasons,
as the churches go through their own process of renewal and reform, and find

it essential to reconceptualize the classic traditional categories within
which Christians have done theology, and are seeking to recover the early
foundations in which the church constructed her being, her existence, are

inevitably brought back to face the reality of the biblical and Hebraic
modes of the origins of the church, and of the biblical-theological categories.
And in the process of doing that, many Christian theologians and church
historians are becoming aware of the vitality and the continued reality of
the Jewish people as a living witness to that tradition which they now are

beginning to recover as their own. And I think it is quite clear as one (Prof. Jules Isaac or Dr. James Parkes)

or any of the church historians who have been

writing about the early centuries, that this is a relatively new development,
because in much of Christian theological writing and church historical material,
Judaism ceased to exist with the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in
the first century. And everything that has existed since that time in terms

of post-biblical and rabbinic Judaism has been a rather anomalous kind of

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1. In the Teaching of Contemporaries Jesus and Israel (Holt, Rinehart and Winston) by

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2. In Jules Isaac’s study, Church and Synagogue, Judaism and Christianity by

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thing which somehow you are not able to make sense out of. Indeed, Toynbee said something quite real when he spoke of the Syriac fossil of Judaism. He was speaking of sentiment which was widespread in many terms of Christian thought as we have perceived it at least.

It has become increasingly clear that there has now begun to develop, in terms of a commitment to truth, an effort to understand the realities of an encounter with living Judaism today, virtually a new discipline of thought, both in the Roman Catholic and the Protestant communities, with regard to developing a more adequate theology of Israel as a living, vital, dynamic, witnessing, worshipping, praying community. And the need cite Edward Flannery, Cornelius Rijks, Kurt Huba, John Osterweil, Marcel De Loos, and Gabriel Novan, only the writings of people like Hans Kung, Father Gregory Baum, in the Catholic scholar such as Protestant community people like Krister Stendahl, W. D. Davies, Albert Coe, or Rev. Franklin Bacht, Markus Barth, Elwyn Smith, Ryley, Eckhardt, Eberhard, many others, the have come to the hard firm conviction that there is a new conception required in terms of understanding of Israel is required. A theology of the covenant, and one of the more recent formulations of such a question which makes some impression in terms of how the question of an understanding of the theology of Israel and the permanent validity of Judaism of the Israel and the Church, and the co-existence between the two covenants is to be found in an essay by Dr. Monika Heltwig in the Journal of Eccumenical Studies, by Dr. Monika Heltwig writing on Christian theology and the covenant of Israel,
and she makes the point which I should like to read briefly in this form:

"Christianity has been confronted with a logical dilemma in terms of seeing Christianity as superceding Judaism and the fact that the Jews were blind to the revelation of Jesus as the Christ," and she goes on to say that the 'Christian position on the blindness of the Jews rests rather heavily on the assumption that revelation is a past event and consists of what God told us. Being just and merciful, God would guarantee an adequate relaying of the truth and sufficient supporting evidence that make it convincing to all. Implicit in it is a definition of the truth which revelation is concerned as simply verbal conceptual, more specifically, propositional. The process of revelation is seen as communication of fully shaped and immutable concepts in a mechanical and paraexperiential model. Today we are at an important moment of truth and opportunity. Not only does this understanding of revelation render the truth claims of the Jewish and Christian communities ultimately irreconcilable. The Christian theologians themselves have found that they can no longer work with this model in attempting to answer contemporary questions about Christian life. Christian theology can no longer remain internally coherent in a two-story universe in which grace is separate from nature in the sense that it operates outside of the sphere of human experience.
We are being compelled to rely on our experience and observations of the historical situation for the interpretation of God's intervention in history.

We simply cannot answer the questions of contemporary Christians in terms of an understanding of revelation as instantaneous transfer of fully conceptualized knowledge from the realm of non-experiential supernatural to the experiential natural. Roger Shinn, of Union Theological Seminary, has said in a felicitous utterance that revelation is that event which alters the capacity for perception. We may be approaching the point of dialogue at which Jewish and Christian thinkers can attempt to express to each other on behalf of their respective traditions the meaning of those events which have altered their capacity for perception. Such truth-claims need by no means be mutually exclusive. They are far more likely to be complementary, and dependent upon each other for fuller comprehension.

And Dr. Hellwig goes on to build a theology of the co-existence of Judaism and Christianity by building on Romans 9-11 in which ultimately she comes to a conclusion which Yehuda Halevi forecast in the twelfth century that it is quite conceivable despite our human perversity that God in his own plan established one covenant with many branches, and that Judaism, Christianity and Islam are branches grafted on to the common trunk, rooted in the one
covenant, and that the more appropriate role for them as sons and daughters of the common covenant is to be complementary and supplementary to each other, rather than exclusivistc and polemical in their relationships with one another.

Let me briefly make the observation that because of that polemical history which dates back to the first four centuries of our encounter when the church and synagogue broke with one another and set patterns that have determined our history and our fate and destiny across the millennia, that in part one recognizes the magnitude of the problem as one surveys the way in which church history continues to support this way of misunderstanding each other that even as we talk on one level of building common bonds of understanding and theological co-existence, as one looks into much of church historical writing and Jewish historical writing, it is evident that by and large we are continuing to develop two different universes of discourse among our young people. To illustrate the point very briefly, if one reads, for example, Father Philip Hughes' account of the crusades in his history of the Catholic Church, and then compares that with the writing of Naiman Margolits, Jewish historians, as standart Margolits, Solomon Ganzel, and also Berargit in [Isel and Grazielle?], it is as though two universes are being dealt with.
each of which in terms of the way in which they communicate about each other,
are destined to make Christians and Jews not understand each other, to con-
tinue to relate to each other across the barricades. Father Hughes speaks
of the crusades as a holy, noble venture to redeem the Holy Land and the
Holy City of Jerusalem from the hands of the infidels, and the Jews are not
mentioned once in his account of the crusades. But if you read all of the
Jewish accounts of that period, the crusades were an unmitigated pogrom, and
Jewish texts highlight at
it begins with an account of how at the end of the first crusade, all of the
Jews in Jerusalem were packed into the synagogue and the synagogues were

Thus, in the Jewish understanding, the crusades were far
burned; all of this for the sake of the redemption of the Holy Land, so that
holy or noble Christian, raised on this reading of history, can never
understand why Jews shudder at the very mention of the word "crusade.

From the corrective insights of both of our traditions, I'm afraid we are going to
continue to perpetuate the problem. And let me say the problem exists on the
Jewish side as much as it does on the Christian side. One reads, for example,
Jewish historic accounts of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment and
composes them with Catholic histories of the same period, one begins to under-
stand the bi-focal visions we have and the way in which we will continue to
misperceive each other. Because in much of the Jewish account of the French
Revolution, it is hailed as the salvation of the Jews. As indeed it was, because it was the French Revolution that enabled the Jews to enter into civic equality for the first time in virtually 1700 years in the Christian West and to enter into full civic status. The Jewish history books never mention the fact that the French Revolution was a pogrom against the Roman Catholic Church, and that many of the orders of the sisters and the priests who are here in this country are here **mzkhah** as displaced persons of the French Revolution. The convents were destroyed, monasteries were uprooted, most of the major universities under Catholic auspices were eliminated.

The French Revolution in that process of disestablishment, and to many European Christians, who have this kind of guarded feeling about the ultimate absolute value of the Revolution and the Enlightenment, they speak a language which many Jews do not begin to comprehend. And so here is an arena of unfinished business on the Jewish-Christian agenda which is worthy of further exploration.

There is a whole area of social justice which I'd like to put aside and more adequate treatment than time allows, for awhile, because I want during the few moments that are left to us to concentrate on the present moment in the Jewish-Christian dialogue in terms of the issues which are, at least from a Jewish point of view, fundamental
for any understanding of our present relationship and of the future possibilities of the unfolding of our encounter. In a certain sense, the kind of things that I have tried to address myself to thus far are really very conventional ways of approaching the Jewish-Christian dialogue. These are almost standardized textbook issues. They exist without almost any reference to time.

One can talk about the Jewish-Christian relationship over the past 1900 years and one will have to face all of these questions as the central, perennial questions of the dialogue--anti-Semitism, the theology of the people of God, of the people of Israel, theology of Christianity—as well as the problem of historic portrayals of both of our respective experiences.

But there is a new turn in our relationship which has been transforming, and the Jewish understanding of itself, of its vocation, of its selfhood. It is virtually impossible, it seems to me, in terms of any kind of reality-oriented dialogue, for Christians and Jews to talk with each other unless they face the centrality of that new Jewish self-consciousness in the Jewish community. That has very much to do with the experience the Jews have undergone literally throughout the world since the 1967 war in the Middle East.

Now, here, too, it is quite possible to deal with the transformation and the Jewish understanding of Jewish peoplehood and the Jewish understanding of...
our relationship of our faith and our self-consciousness as a people, a
trans-national people, and our relationship to the land and the State of
Israel, one can deal with this question also in quite conventional ways.

And I daresay that the overwhelming majority of the dialogue between
Jews and Christians in which the issue of Israel has emerged, and whatever
understandings or misunderstandings have developed between Christians and
Jews around the Middle East crisis, the vast majority of the dialogue has
taken place on the basis of these conventional portrayals. And let me say,

There is great validity to that, and I think every Jewish-Christian dialogue
if it is to be honest to the understanding of both partners to that dialogue,
must go through that process. That is to say that I think it is essential
that one, from the Jewish point of view, as a partner of the dialogue, com-
municate to the Christian community that what Jews reenacted almost traumatically
in their response to the threat to the annihilation of Israel in May and June
of 1967, was an awareness of the importance of Israel in terms of its his-
torical, religious, liturgical dimensions of the Jews. And the Jew, and there
are many Jewish scholars in this room, and rabbis who could do as easily an
effective job as me, because it is that widespread in the Jewish self-under-
standing, one could trace the historic relationship of the Jewish people to
the land of Israel literally across 3000 years. From the beginning of the promise given to Abraham down through every century the fact that there have been periods of Jewish settlement, whether there was a Jewish state or a Jewish commonwealth, or a Jewish sovereignty, or whether the Jews lived in the Dispersion, there were always Jewish communities present in the Holy Land, always communities which sought to retain a commitment and loyalty to the promise given to the forefathers, as well as to retain a community that would point toward the future promise. One could as well make a very substantial presentation on how in almost conventional ways, which is an indication of the depth to which it has penetrated Jewish consciousness, Israel has meant as a land, as a place of the origin of the Jewish people as a historic community, what it has meant religiously to the Jews. One could point to the fact that any prayer book that one would open up would find references to the restoration of Jerusalem to her former glory that the daily prayer services, the Sabbath prayer services, the pilgrim festivals of Passover and Shavuot (Pentecost) and Succoth and Shemini [2] simply incomprehensible without reference to the centrality of Israel and the Jewish self-understanding of the past, the present, and the future promise. And yet, as one begins to think about that process of communication, of what Israel has meant to the Jewish people,
historically, theologically, religiously, liturgically, one becomes aware of the difficulty that Jews are building into their communications to Christians because the effect of that kind of interpretation is to say, all right, that's a Jewish hang-up. That is your Jewish thing and your Jewish problem, and as a matter of ecumenical friendship, we will seek to understand that this is your difficulty. And one, in fact, sees this in the latest Vatican Council declaration on the Jewish people. There is an almost a spirit of extraordinary friendship in that document. There is almost an unintended recognition that we really don't comprehend this whole business of the universal religious community and its relationship to that land and to Jews. I believe that the document states that simply, the Jews must respect the fact that there is a bond between the people and that land of Israel, which is to say that we'll shelve that for the moment until the Messiah comes and works that out for everybody.

I'd like to submit in the few moments available that there are at least two profound theological, intellectual, spiritual issues that Jews are struggling with in their understanding of the relationship of their being adherents to the universal faith of Judaism, to the prophetic universalism, and their ties to the rabbinic Judaism, and its relationship to that particular land. These, I submit, and that particular place which are not just Jewish questions, which are...
questions not just of moment to the Jewish self-understanding, but which are
I would submit have quite potentially the deepest intellectual and spiritual
importance to Christians as well and therefore I would like to make the
case--and I'm really doing myself a disservice because I have spent more-
time on the other aspects of the question than I should have reserved for
this time, but simply to establish the question which perhaps we can get
into at greater length during our discussion--I would submit that the thing
What
finds the meaning of
that Jews are struggling with as they are trying to make sense out of what
does it mean, with the restoration of the state of Israel, and now the
Great preoccupation with what it means for a universal tradition to be related
to a holy land and holy places and holy cities is that we are engaged
in the deepest kind of struggle to try to retrieve some validity for the
meaning of religious symbolism in the consciousness of religious man today--
of the homo religioso. We live at a time at which contemporary historians
and culture historians tell us, an age of a highly rational, mechanical
culture. We live at a time in which the control of nature has been dominated
by rational thinking and as Cyril Richardson has written in Ernest Johnson's
book on Religious Symbolism, that we are likely to think of symbolism as
being something essentially unnecessary. We deal in hard facts, which do not lend themselves to the symbolic. We think of a symbol as standing for something else, and we imagine that as soon as we grasp that something else, the symbol has served its turn and is no longer of use. It is the something else to which the symbol points that is the reality, and hence we no longer need the symbol, once we have passed beyond it to the truth that it tells. That is why as a culture we have so few symbols. That is why, incidentally, in America today we find people trying to develop a civil religion with civil religious symbols because the classic historical, traditional symbol system has collapsed in this rational, technical culture. So we imagine that our control of nature brings us into direct contact with reality which we can manipulate to our own ends and which needs no symbolic expression.

And yet the irony of this moment in which rational man finds symbols to be a kind of buffer against reality and therefore useless takes place at a time in which psychotherapy and psychoanalysis have had their greatest dominance as one of the useful arts of therapy in modern western man's pursuit of wholeness and spiritual health. Psychotherapy deals in nothing else than the symbol life of the human being, and the whole internal self-understanding and self-consciousness of man is mediated entirely through the symbol system.
The whole dream of life of man that is the symbol that articulates the deepest unconscious awarenesses of man. And yet, in the public religious life I submit that part of the crisis of faith that exists today is crucially located in the question of the collapse of belief in religious symbol systems. I have been reading a good bit of the literature about the current debate over the eucharist and communion, and I have been struck by some rather interesting analogies that the whole question as to whether the divine presence is present in reality in the two elements of the eucharist or in the communion, or whether the eucharist is simply commemorative or on the memorial of the past, or the whole question of the transcendence of spiritual reality, are and the immanence (in the life of man, of the holy and the sacred) being experience in human existence, in the life of the individual, in the life of the community, are not unlike some of the questions that Jews are struggling with when they probe the meanings of the Shechinah, debate the question of what did our forefathers mean about the presence and its mediation of the divine presence, because mediated in the life of the Jewish people or centered in the holy temple and the holy sacrificial system. And all that the holy sacrificial system has preserved in terms of the presence of the holy and the sacred in the life of the Jews. And so, I should like to raise the question, at least the possibility, that what Jews are engaged in in seeking
to articulate some meaningful understanding of the holiness of the Holy Land, and of the meaning of sacred values, and the validity of religious symbols as the way of expressing the quality of spirituality and transcendence, and the presence of the sacred in the life of our people is a problem that is being dealt with in these particular forms and structures of Jewish life.

But I would infer that if Jews are able to make a valid intellectual case for the articulation of their universal tradition in relationship to that particular historic society and time, then question, that it will not have been without some relevance for others who are engaged in the struggle to try to make some sense out of the present crisis in faith.

A final observation I should like to make as I run rapidly out of time is that involved also in the question of the relationship of Judaism to the land of Israel is our facing what must be a very difficult thing for many Christians who, as I have indicated, finally after many years, hundreds of years, of although they’re not wanting to face the question, finally coming to resolve the question, that indeed we are now prepared to understand Judaism as a valid form of God’s action in history and that prophetic universalism has a claim to truth and value that is as legitimate as the claim of other
universal traditions. Suddenly finding Jews spread throughout the whole
dispersion of the world, affirming and living and giving witness to this
universal tradition, suddenly seeming to turn around and face toward this
particular land and this particular piece of real estate, became the most
famous phrase since June of 1967. What do you Jews have to do, what does
Judaism have to do with that particular piece of real estate? Isn't that
kind of tribal regression for you to try to locate a faith of that dimension
into that particular piece of geography? And I think here that we are in-
volved quite profoundly in another area of concern that also may have some
deep implications for Christian self-understanding as the Christian community
seeks to deal with the problem of the crisis in present religious life, and
that is the problem of the relationship of the universal to the ridiculous.
And I would submit that part of the difficulty we face is one level the problem
of religious language, indeed, the problem of language altogether. And there
is involved in facing the question of language, our needing to make dis-
tinctions between factual language, the language of science and rationalism,
and poetic, religious, mythic language which deals with reality on another
order of existence. And the problem of the universal in particular, as well
as the problem of the language of the universal in particular, as a problem
which has for centuries occupied the most settled philosophers and theologians,
and it is not going to be resolved here, not in these waning moments of this
presentation.

Much of this presentation and much of this discussion of the universal
in particular may be bypassed if we realize that the problem is not answerable
in the terms in which it is proposed, simply because they confuse the map with
the territory. That is to say, that much of the factual language which we use
in our conventional discourse today is something like the map which abstracts
from the reality of experience, and it has the same relationship to reality
that the map has to all of the richness and the depth and the vitality of
the terrain. Good and evil are abstract categories, and categories do not
perform their function unless they are kept distinct. Therefore, it is per-
fectly proper that the concepts of good and evil be distinct, dualistic,
irreconcilable, and that they be firm and clear as any other measure. But
the problem of the duality, or the inherent contradiction between the uni-
versal and the particular arises only when the abstract is confused with
the concrete, and when it is thought that these are clearly distinguishable
entities in the natural universe. Factual language in which categories of this kind the universal belongs is never more than a strictly limited symbolism for what is happening in nature. The image, the religious, poetic or mythic image, is closer than linguistic categories to events themselves from the natural pattern.

And here I think it is important to indicate that it is not only a question of language, it is a problem of the philosophical inheritance of the western world. And I need not dwell at too great a length on the question of the metaphysical dualisms which have come down to us through the scholastic tradition in which the universal has been, as it were, elevated to a category of superior form of being, and the particular is seen as an inferior form of existence. One needs to read people like Léon Dewart or Rosemary Reuther or some of the other newer theologians today who are engaged in the de-hellenization of dogma, who are seeking to break down the disparities of the dualism between essence and existence, and who now are making the case that one cannot really talk of universalism in abstract ways, especially in the scholastic sense, without seeing that the universal does not exist without relationship to its being expressed in the particular in the concrete experience
of many and that the particular takes on no meaning without its being a form of representation of universal meanings of the larger consequence.

And finally, I would make the observation in terms of the present understanding of the problem of the universal and the particular that I think it is quite essential to face the question of the degree to which double standards, kind of selective readings of each other's experiences have obtained, and how much cultural bias enters into seeing this question, and frequency we have been guilty of producing our view tradition it do with this I should like to conclude, point out that projections and contrast that with the reality of the other hand. Can bring to measure up to perfectionist standards.

There is a certain sense in which much of the dialogue which we have been engaged in by Christian scholars about the Middle East situation which has involved any thinking a kind of unintentional shell game has taken place. But I think that in the enormous amount of much of the never writing and theology that has been developing in recent years, there is a clue which can help us understand each other on this question, and here I would cite as my proof text for the point I should like to make, that there is a sense in which Jews understand themselves as they reflect this through Christian self-understanding when Christians speak of the church universal. There is a projection of the conception which is of the church and its ideal-typical sense that there is a conception, messianic,
and which speaks as an instrument of the church universal which represents a superior form of God's action involving the whole human family. In a philosophical sense there is a reality to that and I think Jews understand that just as Jews speak of the family of God and of Jews who can draw from their own biblical and rabbinical tradition as they speak of the Lord God of Israel being the Lord God of all the nations. Indeed, one of our great scholars, Gershom [2], spoke of the church universal as the church universal and yet in terms of the reality in which the church universal is experienced by its communicants, that experience is not unlike the thing which Jews are wrestling with today. That is to say, if one reads Herbert Richardson in his book, Towards an American Theology, he makes the observation that if one really wants to understand the Christian situation, one must understand Christianity as a universal church as it was experienced in its spatial centers. That is to say, one can really not speak of the church universal or the universal Christian faith apart from the various historic forms in which it was experienced by its communicants and continues to be experienced today. Thus he says that Christianity exists in the modality of Latin-Hispanic
culture, and that is Latin Christianity. And Latin Christianity informed Latin-Hispanic culture, shaped it, as in turn shaped by it. But one cannot speak of the universal church in its Protestant Reformation form without understanding the degree to which the Reformation tradition was deeply implicated in the culture, the society, the economics, the politics, of northern-western Europe, and the degree to which the Reformation church cannot be understood apart from the degree to which the culture, the society, the history shaped the church in its deepest spiritual formation. And obviously, as one looks at Byzantine culture, one cannot understand the Byzantine Orthodox Church apart from its relationship to the Byzantine Empire and the degree to which the imperial form of that culture shaped the imperial theology and the very hierarchical and ecclesiastical structure of that church.

That was the spatial center of the Orthodox Church. The Latin-Hispanic culture is the spatial center of the Latin Christianity and Reformation church found its spatial center in northwestern Europe. Today, as Richardson says, the spatial center in which whatever really significant dynamic theology will develop today in Protestantism, and perhaps Catholicism, will take place in the dynamic centers of American culture as Christianity seeks to engage scientific, technological civilization here and Orthodoxy in the Russian orbit.
I would submit that the land of Israel represents for the Jewish people the spatial center of Judaism. It is the microcosm in which the experience of Christendom and Christianity's encounter with history and modernity which has taken place in these various spatial centers finds its analogies in the way in which Judaism is seeking to engage modernity and history in the land of Israel. The disparity in our perception of this has more to do with demography, with the quantity of persons, and there been five hundred million Jews in the world with Israel with its spatial center, undoubtedly, there may have been other spatial centers flowing out in the dispersion but related to Israel as the center of Jewish cultural, religious life, historic origins, and messianic promise for the future.

And I would submit the degree to which Jews are able to resolve the relationship in constructive ways, are able to overcome the power, the temptations of being exposed to secular power, and the potential corruptions of secular power, are able to moralize and spiritualize their relationship to that spatial center, to that degree we are engaged in/undertaking which indeed is uniquely Jewish, but hopefully, may have some instruction for others who are concerned about the present spiritual crisis for the whole of mankind.