

God's Words in Dialogue: Dabru Emet, Dei Verbum, Nostra Aetate

PETER W. OCHS

pochs2@pochs2.com

University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903

My deepest thanks to all of you here at the CCJR (Council of Centers on Jewish-Christian Relations)—including those who graciously housed me in their Boston College Center for Christian-Jewish Learning, and 25 years ago in the Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies. For what and whom I most care about, this is a highest honor. I look to you all and to all your centers as agents of the most urgent service: across times of inter-group hatred and conflict to work so hard for dialogue, peace, and shared reasoning among Christian and Jewish traditions and communities. We serve religions that seek to serve God here on this earth—whatever the challenges. Serving God in human terms means enabling God's words and commands to live within our worldly actions, feelings, and reasonings. We pray that this enablement is for the good, lifting up our capacities to where only God's word can draw us. But this enablement may also tempt us to think, feel, and act as if some of our own human words are God's words and that these human words therefore merit the honor and authority we owe to divine life. This last sentence expresses my minimal way of explaining to myself how members of religious groups could possibly say and do what they say and do against other religious groups.

My talk is stimulated by one set of questions: (1) What kind of activity best contributes to the repair of misrepresentation, of tension, and of conflict between Christian and Jewish communities? (2) Within this activity, what kinds of reasoning and judgment best serve as engines of such repair? (3) And how could studies of Dabru Emet, Nostra Aetate and Dei Verbum help uncover useful answers/responses to these questions?

I am honored to begin with the two documents that celebrate birthdays today: Dabru Emet and Nostra Aetate. For both documents I first restate what you already know about the setting of these documents. I then celebrate each document as a beacon of hope. I use one metaphor: That this beacon is like a lighthouse that awakens passing ships to take special care, for there are dangerous shoals and rocks in this area; you must use your best instruments to avoid these dangers and sail only in safe waters. I then add something you might find surprising. Within this metaphor I note that by itself the lighthouse beacon gives information only to those who already know how to read its cautions and then make use of technical instruments to identify the dangers more precisely and sail to safe waters. I then ask: if these two documents are like beacons, how will existing religious communities know

how to read the beacons and steer clear of anti-Christian or anti-Jewish actions, whether these actions are taken intentionally or not? I suggest that *Dei Verbum* provides an answer that may not be apparent in the literal texts of these two celebrated documents.

1. **Dabru Emet**

At the Jewish Theological Seminary, where I took a Masters in rabbinics, my beloved mentor, Max Kadushin of blessed memory, was irritated by us students whenever we offered a strong claim about an ancient text. He would ask, “was you dere, Charlie?” Well, I begin with one document—*Dabru Emet*—about which I can say, yes dear Kadushin, I was dere.

My brief summary of what was dere. Beginning in 1969, the Institute for Christian and Jewish (and now Muslim) Studies, sponsored the Christian Scholars Group¹: a courageous group of distinguished scholars whose goal was to remove anti-Jewish formulations from Christian liturgical and educational literatures. They pursued this work with great diligence and worldly effect even while facing considerable criticism from their constituents and peers. In their words, the Scholars “sought to develop more adequate Christian theologies of the church's relationship to Judaism and the Jewish people. ... For most of the past two thousand years, Christians have erroneously portrayed Jews as unfaithful, holding them collectively responsible for the death of Jesus and therefore accursed by God. In agreement with many official Christian declarations, we reject this accusation as historically false and theologically invalid.”²

In 1996, under the leadership of co-founder Charlie Obrecht and Director Reverend Christian Leighton, the ICJS asked a gathering of 40 Jewish scholars to consider how Jews could honor the remarkable work of the Christian scholars. Throughout one whole day, the group strongly verbalized more than 40 different opinions, displaying much energy, some laughter, and a lot of complaining. By the end of the day, 36 of the group departed, and only four of us remained, my living colleague David Novak and two beloved colleagues of blessed memory Tikvah Krymer-Kensky and Michael Signer. Another dear colleague of blessed memory, Michael Wyschogrod lingered with us for a few more hours but eventually retreated from our non-Orthodox company.

The four of us met frequently over the next two years with Chris Leighton and sometimes Charlie Obrecht. We spent hours at the ICJS or sometimes shared meals in New York City. After several months we decided that our goal would be to create a statement eventually called *Dabru Emet* (*Speak the Truth*), with the 8 propositions you may read in your copies of the statement.

¹ See https://www.iccj.org/fileadmin/files/pdf/222-Misc-PDF/Easter_Video_Series_-_Christian_Scholars_Group.pdf. And for the ICJS, see <https://icjs.org/>.

² <https://www.jrelations.net/statements/statement/a-sacred-obligation-rethinking-christian-faith-in-relation-to-judaism-and-the-jewish-people.html>

In the words of the ICJS, “Dabru Emet sought to put on public record the most current Jewish perspectives on Christianity. On September 10, 2000, an unprecedented, full-page document appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Baltimore Sun*, and other major newspapers and major religious Internet sites. The phrase *Dabru Emet* comes from the verse: “These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to one another, render true and perfect justice in your gates” (Zechariah 8:16).³

An introduction to the document states, “Throughout the nearly two millennia of Jewish exile, Christians have tended to characterize Judaism as a failed religion or, at best, a religion that prepared the way for, and is completed in, Christianity. In the decades since the Holocaust, however, Christianity has changed dramatically.” It goes on to note remorse from Christians regarding mistreatment of Jews and Judaism and vigorous efforts to reform. Declaring that these efforts “merit a thoughtful Jewish response,” the authors state that “it is time for Jews to reflect on what Judaism may now say about Christianity.”

Dabru Emet became a catalyst for charged conversation, from withering criticism to extravagant praise. For the most part, however, it was warmly received in both Jewish and Christian communities. Statements of gratitude were issued by major divisions of the Catholic and Protestant churches. The document was translated into many languages and was the subject of numerous editorials, commentaries, and symposia. By spring 2001, more than 225 leading Jewish scholars and theologians from around the world had signed Dabru Emet.... In some ways, *Dabru Emet* served as a capstone to Jewish-Christian relations in the 20th century, and is a significant, as well as contested, moment in the fields of modern Jewish Thought, Jewish-Christian relations, and Interfaith/Interreligious Studies.⁴

Here is my response to the text 25 years later: for me the text was a Theopolitical event specific to its time, composed, first, to honor the sacrifice and remarkable productivity of the Christian Scholars’ group and, second, to interrupt a global Jewish tendency to adapt to the realities of life in dominantly Christian lands while avoiding any theological engagement with Christianity per se, as if there were nothing to be gained and much to be lost by such engagement. I am most proud of Dabru Emet for challenging that avoidance and stimulating broad activities of engagement throughout the Western world at least.

I do not, however, believe that it is helpful to revisit the eight propositions of Dabru Emet and debate their meaning and force, whether for the sake of praise, understanding or deep criticism. I believe it is not helpful to regard *propositions* as some starting point for Jewish Christian engagement. Situated in their historical context, these propositions served as great lighthouse to help awaken Jews and Christians not to crash on the rocks of intra-theological conflict, but to sail instead toward peaceful and nurturant waters.

I hope you do not mind my more technical account of the limits of lighthouses. Linguistically they appear as sets of subject-object judgments, propositions as we

³ <https://www.ccejr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/jewish/dabru-emet>

⁴ <https://www.ccejr.us/dialogika-resources/documents-and-statements/jewish/dabru-emet>

call them, which means that they carry with them the otherwise unstated presumptions of Hellenic and modern Western thought that individual human judgments can tell us things directly about what's out there, in ways that can be judged as either true or false, clearly and unambiguously. For example: "We worship the same God." That was a Theo-politically powerful statement, but not because it is true or false and not because we know clearly what it means. It was powerful because it pushed like a wind that unsettled things, like storms blowing the leaves and limbs of old trees. We needed to unsettle things! But propositions declared from a public stage do not display the deep, inexplicit sources that might warrant them; and they do not display and reform and promote the potentially heaven-sent but worldly processes through which Jews and Christians can test then develop and promote the long-range goals of such pronouncements.

My first argument is that reasoning by way of propositional statements is no longer the best activity for repairing and nurturing Jewish Christian engagements. In the last section of my talk, I shall look to *Dei Verbum* as shining a light on how, when joined to Tradition, Scripture provides instruction in a different way of reasoning, one that I consider redemptive and of urgency for Jewish-Christian theological engagement. But first I celebrate the birthday of *Nostra Aetate*, which I read as a lighthouse that illumines the dangers of Christian anti-Judaism somewhat parallel to the way that *Dabru Emet* illuminated the dangers of Jewish disengagement from Christianity. But *Nostra Aetate* is also more than a lighthouse. Its propositions are optative descriptions of how the Catholic Church would now engage the world and engage other religions, including Judaism. I read the propositions, secondly, as recognizing certain pairs of contradictory beliefs, for example in Judaism and Christianity, but suspending the principle of non-contradiction for these pairs and thus allowing the possibility of dialogue across difference rather than either dialogue without difference (a tendency in *Dabru Emet*) or difference without dialogue (a tendency in the pre-Vatican church). I read the propositions of *Nostra Aetate*, thirdly, as indices of how the vast institutions of the church will now act in the world, God willing and various Catholic factions willing. The only important factor I do not see is the interactive process of scripture-based reasoning.

2. *Nostra Aetate*

Drawing attention again to my teacher Max Kadushin's warning, I was indeed *not dere* at Vatican II, so my summary of *Nostra Aetate* reflects readings in the work of many Christian scholars, some of them here. I shall cite Michael Barnes: "A mere thirty sentences in the Latin text, *Nostra Aetate* has done much to repair the damage wrought by centuries of Christian anti-Semitism. At first it seems an unlikely result of *ressourcement*. While the text is peppered with scriptural allusions, nothing is developed in any detail. There are no patristic references apart from one obscure letter from Gregory VII. Yet this act of coming to terms with the

Shoah represents the experience of a learning church—not just atoning for the sins of the past but retrieving a sense of its spiritual debt to the people of Israel.”⁵

Barnes continues: “Pastorally the most important dimension of NA lies towards the end where the Council comes closest to issuing an old-style anathema: Against any representation of the Jews as accursed or rejected, Christians should ‘take care that . . . they teach nothing which is not in keeping with the truth of the gospel and the spirit of Christ.’ Theologically . . . it lies with the insistence that ‘because of their ancestors the Jews still remain very dear to God, whose gift and call are without regret.’ Learning from its experience of the ‘Jewish question,’ NA introduces Paul’s meditation in Romans 9–11 to make the point, not just that God . . . will fulfill . . . the promises He made to Israel, but also that God . . . will in due time graft back the broken branches of the true olive tree which is Israel. . . . Jews and Christians are linked by a trajectory of faith which is rooted in a common heritage of divine revelation and human response.”⁶

In his commentary on NA, *The Church and the Jewish People*, Augustin Cardinal Bea argues that the church finds its proper origins in the election of Israel. . . . Abraham and Christ are related by a “period of long and arduous preparation which God willed.”⁷

Turning now to my comment, I ask: what activity within *Nostra Aetate* best contributes to the repair of Jewish Christian tensions and misrepresentations? And what kinds of reasoning serve as engines of such repair? I offer three hypotheses:

Hypothesis #1: is that Nostra Aetate performs a dual effort to recognize contradictory claims in Judaism and in Christianity while suspending the very principle of non-contradiction for certain pairs of claims, so that the differences displayed in those pairs no longer obstruct mutual engagement and dialogue.

I would state the contradictions this way: Vatican II inherited two claims: 1) That the God who would be incarnate in Jesus was the same God who loved the people Israel and bound Israel in a covenant. 2) That this God completed salvation history by presenting himself in Jesus as the Christ/Messiah of the Jews.

Prior to Vatican II, the Church drew the following inference from this contradiction: These two theological claims contradict each other because, if the Jews rejected God in Jesus, then Jesus could not have maintained Israel’s covenant with this God and could not therefore maintain his covenant with this people. I read this contradiction into Article 4 of *Nostra Aetate*:

(1) The truth of Christianity is that: “Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation. It is, therefore, the burden of the Church’s preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God’s all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.”

⁵ Michael Barnes, SJ, “Opening Up a Dialogue: Dei Verbum and the Religions,” in *Modern Theology* 29:4 (Oct 2013): 12.

⁶ Michael Barnes, SJ, 21.

⁷ Augustin Cardinal Bea, *The Church and the Jewish People* (London: Chapman, 1966), 58. Cited in Barnes.

But (2) The Jews rejected this truth: “As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation nor did the Jews in large number accept the Gospel; indeed, not a few opposed its spreading. And the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ.”

If Vatican II applied Aristotle’s principle of non-contradiction universally, I do not see how *Nostra Aetate* could bypass this defining contradiction. But Article 4 does in effect bypass it through words like these:

- Nevertheless, God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues—such is the witness of the Apostle....
- Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures.

Article 4 does not argue against propositional contradictions. By fiat, it simply annuls the effect of this primary contradiction. It is a change of will by the magisterium, perhaps comparable to the word of God in the story of Noah, “The Lord smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: ‘Never again will I curse the ground because of humans, even though every inclination of the human heart is evil from childhood. And never again will I destroy all living creatures, as I have done.’”

My argument is not about the will of Vatican II, nor about the additions to Article 4 that the Church has offered since then. My argument answers my own question about the *method* of this document, *how* it displays the ultimate source of the will that would continue to guide Catholic-Jewish engagement until the end of days. As Jewish philosopher, I am accustomed to reading the divine word of Torah as irreducible to the finite logics of human reasoning and thereby to both Aristotle and modern philosophy’s principle that one cannot assert the truth of two contradictory propositions, such as “This is Salt + And it is Pepper.” This principle applies to most of our daily work and business but not to way we receive liturgies, sacred devotions, the love of others, poetry, and the narratives and instructions of Torah. I therefore criticize efforts by Jewish or Christian hermeneuts and theologians to apply the logic of everyday business to scriptural reading and interpretation as well as to theology. And this may be the Jewish philosophic source of my reading Article 4 as suspending the principle of non-contradiction. *Beyond Article 4, I believe this suspension is vital to most Jewish-Christian inter-religious engagement and dialogue.* The alternatives are to cover-over our true differences in obedience to some wish for public niceness, or to read our life in this world as defined irreparably by conflict over our deepest beliefs and values, or as best served by mutual avoidance. But perhaps you believe that my argument has covered-over the actual will of Vatican II, perhaps through some act of Jewish wish-fulfillment? If so, I am afraid that my concluding section extends that act to *Dei Verbum* as well.

3. *Dei Verbum*, the Constitution on Divine Revelation

Guided by my readings in Catholic theology, I turn to *Dei Verbum* for answers to most of my questions. *Dei Verbum* was promulgated quite late, on November 18, 1965, after much debate and compromise. Despite that, it is remembered by many as the most characteristic document of Vatican II, one that opened the door for Catholic biblical scholarship. Father Robert Murray wrote that *DV* is “the most theologically concentrated” of the four major Constitutions “but in its wider relevance it both undergirds and touches most of the Council documents.”⁸ Michael Barnes writes that “The retrieval of a sense of scripture takes the church back to the sources of theological reflection in the Paschal Mystery itself and, in so doing, encourages a sensitivity to the ways of God’s work of self-revelation throughout history.”⁹ As *Dei Verbum* puts it: “This tradition comes from the apostles’ progress in the church under the assistance of the Holy Spirit. There is growth in understanding of what is handed on, both the words and the realities they signify.”

One of my mentors, the ecumenical historian George Lindbeck of blessed memory, served as the official Lutheran representative at the Council despite his youth. He told me how close he felt to the “nouvelle théologiens” who were so influential before and during the Council, including de Lubac and Daniélou, and others. The time he spent with them had a significant influence on what became his postliberal Christian orientation. I believe his account shows that what we may think of as a strictly Protestant postliberal movement overlapped in most of its ways with the spirit of Vatican II and with the work of these innovative theologians. While some associate the doctrine of *sola scriptura* with a strictly reformational turn, the postliberal theology I saw practiced by Lindbeck, Robert Jenson, Hans Frei, Stanley Hauerwas, David Ford and Daniel Hardy was not grounded in scripture alone but in an approach to Scripture, interpretation, tradition, prayer and contemporary social in religious reform that harmonizes fully well with *nouvelle* doctrines.

Lindbeck told me these things about Vatican II during a gathering for Jewish textual reasoning (TR) that I hosted in 1997 at Drew University and that he attended as one of four Christian respondents.¹⁰ The Jewish antecedent to Abrahamic scriptural reasoning, TR is an activity of Jewish rabbinic and scriptural text interpretation across the differences of various Jewish denominations and academic and rabbinic disciplines. In his essay for the conference book, Lindbeck wrote that the scriptural commentary, textual play, and theological dialogue at the textual reasoning event reminded him of aspects of Vatican II.

The Catholic theologian and scriptural reasoner, Kevin Hughes, argues that a scriptural logic works at the center of Vatican II, fulfilling the promise of the

⁸ Robert Murray, “Revelation (*Dei Verbum*)”, in Adrian Hastings (ed.), *Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and After* (London: SPCK, 1991), p. 74. Cited in Michael Barnes.

⁹ Michael Barnes, 24.

¹⁰ Personal conversations.

nouvelle théologie. He writes that, "While the Second Vatican Council's clarion call to engage the wider world in *Gaudium et Spes* and *Nostra Aetate* opened the doors for Catholics to engage other religious communions in dialogue, the call itself did not present Catholics with any particular models or rules¹¹ for engagement. However, when this invitation is taken together with the deep scriptural logic recovered for the Catholic Church through the tireless work of de Lubac and Daniélou, Catholics can recover the internal resources, the 'deep reasonings,' that allow them to come to the Abrahamic tent of meeting with fitting gifts....The broader return to scripture, as framed by *Dei Verbum*, creates the opportunity for Catholic self-understanding to return to its own deepest roots, not ... in flight from modern criticism, but in tandem with it."¹²

In the words of Michael Barnes, "Two words sum up the 'style' of the Council: *aggiornamento*, bringing the church into the world of today, and *ressourcement*, the retrieval of theological sources which occupied so much scholarly attention in the Catholic Church between the nineteen-thirties and the nineteen-fifties. If the former is a reminder of the original vision of John XXIII, the latter is crucial in understanding the 'deep structure' of the Council (as displayed in the first session of the Council, which focused primarily on the Pastoral Constitution on the Liturgy)."¹³

In the words of Étienne Gilson, "If theological progress is sometimes necessary, it is never possible unless you go back to the beginning and start over."¹⁴ "What was necessary was a 'return to the sources of tradition.' The theological revolution that the Church so desperately needed had to begin with, in the words of Péguy, 'a new and deeper sounding of ancient, inexhaustible, and common resources:'¹⁵ Hence, '*ressourcement*,' ... which was not ultimately a work of scholarship but of religious revitalization. ... The events and words of Scripture, the rites of the liturgy, the creeds and decrees of the councils, the teaching of the Fathers, Doctors, and great spiritual masters, all of these organs of tradition are, for them, sources [that] channel the one, incomparable Source that is the Mystery of Christ."¹⁶

My reading of Dei Verbum answers my two defining questions: where is the actual engine of inter-traditional dialogue, the on-the-ground working process that

¹¹ "Rules" here should be understood in the sense of rules of grammar rather than "by-laws" or prohibitions.

¹² Kevin I. Hughes, "Deep Reasonings: Sources Chrétiennes, Ressourcement, and the Logic of Scripture in the Years Before—and After—Vatican II," *Modern Theology* 29:4 (October 2013): 33.

¹³ Michael Barnes, SJ, 13.

¹⁴ É Gilson, review of *Augustine et théologie moderne* and *Le Mystère du surnaturel*, by H. de Lubac, in *La Croix* (18-19 July 1965), quoted by É. Gilson, Letters of Étienne Gilson to Henri de Lubac, trans. by Mary Emily Hamilton (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), 179. This citation appeared in Marcellino D'Ambrosio, "Ressourcement Theology, Aggiornamento, and the Hermeneutics of Tradition," *Communio* 18 (Winter 1991): 36.

¹⁵ D'Ambrosio offers this footnote, "C. Péguy, from a preface to the *Cahiers de la Quinzaine* of 1 March 1904, repr. in his *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: N.R.F., n.d.), 12: 186-192 and reproduced in part by Congar, *Vraie*, 602," in D'Ambrosio, 36.

¹⁶ [D'Ambrosio](#), 37.

can deliver inter-religious engagement and not only hope for it? In the spirit of my Reformational and Catholic postliberal mentors, I read DV as not only a beacon but also a wind that blows ships away from the rocks: call it a set of instructions for how to identify and follow this wind. I learn to read DV as prototype of the dimension of Vatican II that brings the light of *Nostra Aetate* into potentially real action in the world. And I read this prototype as ultimately God's spoken word, *Verbum*, displayed in Scripture as Torah for Jews and as Jesus Christ as narrated in the gospel for Christians. And I read scripture as no mere book but as a word that is also a person (Jesus Christ or Torah within the people Israel) and this person is a real pain in the neck who doesn't just suggest nice things but demands and commands and pushes them until they are done even if it takes until the end of time or perhaps to the end of some this time (a kind of meantime end). Even as a Jew therefore I love *Dei Verbum* because I trust that it can command Catholic action toward the Jews and because it is a type of utterance that reminds and clarifies for me how the divine word enters the world to get its purposes done.

For the concluding section of my talk, I select six excerpts from Dei Verbum and, for each one, I share what I think Dei Verbum says to me as a Jewish philosopher who asks: where is the actual engine that would enable Jewish-Christian engagement and dialogue.

So here we go.

1a) **DV 3:** God who through the Word creates all things (see John 1:3) and keeps them in existence, gives (humanity) an enduring witness to Himself in created realities (see Rom. 1:19-20).

1b) *Dei Verbum* says to me that God through his word is the engine of all things in this universe.

2a) **DV 2:** In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will (see Eph. 1:9) by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature (see Eph. 2:18; 2 Peter 1:4).

2b) *Dei Verbum* says to me that the word that creates all things is also the word that displays itself to us humans in Christ, so that Christ is the engine of our capacity to receive God the creator who is also God the Redeemer. I learn therefore that the unity of the divine word shows itself in the unity of the word that creates the universe and the word that redeems humanity.

3a) **DV 6.** Through divine revelation, God chose to show forth and communicate Himself and the eternal decisions of His will regarding the salvation of men. ... He chose to share with them those divine treasures which totally transcend the understanding of the human mind.

3b) *Dei Verbum* says to me that what is built through human understanding alone is not the engine of creation and not the engine of redemption.... In a moment I will draw the inference that what is built through human understanding will fail as an engine of Christian-Jewish engagement.

4a) **DV 7:** Christ the Lord¹⁷ commissioned the Apostles to preach to all men the Gospel which is the source of all saving truth and moral teaching.... The Apostles left bishops as their successors, “handing over” to them “the authority to teach in their own place. This sacred tradition... and the Sacred Scripture of both the Old and New Testaments are like a mirror in which the pilgrim Church on earth looks at God... until she is brought finally to see Him as He is, face to face” (see 1 John 3:2).

4b) *Dei Verbum says to me* that it is through holy Scripture that God delivers the message and redeeming power of his word... to all peoples. *Without Scripture therefore I cannot find the complete engine that I seek. But which Scripture?*

5a) **DV 11:** Holy mother Church, relying on the belief of the Apostles (see John 20:31; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-20, 3:15-16), holds that the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author....

DV 14. The plan of salvation foretold by the sacred authors, recounted and explained by them, is found as the true word of God in the books of the Old Testament: these books, therefore, written under divine inspiration, remain permanently valuable. “For all that was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

5b) *Dei Verbum says to me* that the Christian and the Jewish traditions and communities are instructed in God’s word by way of NT and OT respectively. For DV of course the instructions are on different levels of completion and authority. But a Jewish *Dei Verbum* – such as *Duties of the Heart* by Bahya Ibn Paquda (11th century) and *Or Hashem/Light of the Lord* by Hasdai Crescas (14th cent) has its own unequal claims – as each should.

My inference is that the engine I seek is a dual engine: Gospel and Torah. Is this engine unified, divided or something else?

6a) **DV 24:** Sacred theology rests on the written word of God, together with sacred tradition, as its primary and perpetual foundation.... For the Sacred Scriptures – since they are inspired, really are the word of God; and so the study of the sacred page is, as it were, the soul of sacred theology.

And **DV 25.** Therefore, all clergy must hold fast to the Sacred Scriptures through diligent sacred reading and careful study.... And let them remember that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that God and man may talk together; for “we speak to Him when we pray; we hear Him when we read the divine saying.”... It devolves on sacred bishops ... to give the faithful ... suitable instruction in the right use of the divine books, especially the New Testament and above all the Gospels.

6b) *Dei Verbum therefore says to me* that the engine of the Catholic scriptural engine is the tradition, as the chain of transmission of the divine word and of the institutions and communities of the church that receive and retransmit that tradition. I infer that, in the context of your Centers, I can move from the term Catholic

¹⁷ In whom the full revelation of the supreme God is brought to completion (see 2 Cor. 1:20; 3:13; 4:6).

to the word Christian as well; I can move as well to the Jewish scriptural engine and its rabbinic chain of transmissions.

But, looking at our world of strife that precedes and surrounds your centers, I also infer that the traditions and the communities may too often live in terrible conflict or smoldering conflict. If so, what do Dei Verbum, Nostra Aetate, and Dabru Emet say to me about the engine of repairing conflict and terribly broken relations?

Collectively the three documents say these five things to me:

- 1) Conflict between traditions that are generated and grounded in God's word are either signs, God forbid, that that word is itself broken, or signs that Jewish and Christian humans have broken and betrayed that word.
- 2) I will not at all ignore the awful question, God forbid, but could that word itself be wounded? As a finite and therefore broken creature, I have nothing to say to or about that question.
- 3) I therefore close with the second possibility, conflict between these two traditions betrays the source of those traditions.
- 4) If so, what engine enables real repairs of this betrayal? This engine would not be a product of human understanding, since the finitude of this understanding precludes its capacity to say anything about conflict between chains of transmitting God's nonfinite word.
- 5) The engine of repair, I infer, could be nothing other than the divine word itself. But through what engines could this word redeem? And how would such engines appear within your brave Centers of Christian Jewish understanding?

These three documents that we celebrate prompt me to say: Well, how about the engine of "God's word conversing with God's word?" What would be the engine of that conversation, what words of Holy Scripture or creatures of Creation or practices of worship, compassion, or justice? And what place would God's word and these engines of God's word have within your centers?