

# CHRISTIAN AND JEWISH SCENE



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## ICCJ CRITICIZES WEA

The International Council of Christians and Jews has issued its "Twelve Points of Berlin" (*see centre pages*) to the World Evangelical Alliance. The "Twelve Points" is the ICCJ's response to the WEA's 2008 "Berlin Declaration on the Uniqueness of Christ and Jewish Evangelism in Europe Today". The ICCJ believes this latest in a series of WEA statements on Christian evangelism to Jews contains numerous theological 'weaknesses'.

This WEA document is the third to promote the practice of evangelising Jews. The first was the Willowbank Declaration of 1989 and the second was a WEA statement published in the New York Times in 2008. The 2008 "Berlin Declaration" was hailed by WEA's Rev. Dr David Parker (an Australian) as "an important support in taking the Gospel to the Jew first."

The ICCJ's Theology Committee chairman, Phil Cunningham, (*pictured*) replies: "We recognise that the WEA is grappling with the difficult question confronting Christian theology of how to reconcile mission with dialogue with Jews in the wake of the Shoah, as well as the long prior history of Christian oppression of



Jews.

"But the WEA seems to assume that the Jewish people do not continue to benefit from a grace-filled relationship with God – presumably because only Christ mediates such a relationship. "It is clear that *mutual* understanding is not the primary goal of dialogue for the authors of the "Berlin Declaration", Dr Cunningham said.

(*ICCJ Statement, centre pages*)

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## OBAMA COUNCIL APPROVES INTERFAITH RECOMMENDATIONS

President Obama's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships approved a series of recommendations recently aimed at reforming and encouraging the US government's efforts to work with faith-based organizations.

Among the recommendations, the 25-member council approved suggestions for strengthening the constitutional and legal footing of public-private partnerships. This included clarification of prohibited uses of direct financial assistance; protection of the religious identity of faith-based clients, and the assurance that the religious liberty rights of clients and beneficiaries of federal social service funds be protected.

Melissa Rogers, a Professor at Wake Forest University and the Chair of the Faith Council, said: "The Faith Council brought together diverse stakeholders to find common ground so that we can make positive changes for those most in need."

As Rabbi David Saperstein (*pictured*) of the Religious Action Committee of Reform



Judaism told the President, "These recommendations, if implemented, can make dramatic improvements in the way the federal government partners with civil society organizations. They can enhance transparency, effectiveness and efficiency."

Among the major recommendations of the task force on inter-religious cooperation is to involve religious communities more in the making of American foreign policy. "I believe the President is sincere in both his outreach to the faith and non-profit community," said Richard Stearns, president of World Vision and a member of the task force on poverty, health and development. "The issues are complex and he has some enormous challenges before him. It would be to his benefit to tap into the wisdom and experience of the council through this report as he addresses these complex issues. We all stand-ready to assist in his efforts."

*The Washington Post*

**Editor's note:** CCJ members are entitled to attend Sydney Alliance workshops for social change and the common good, contact Amanda Tattersall on 02 8007 6055.

## AROUND THE TRAPS...

### GREAT BRITAIN: CCJ YAD VASHEM SEMINAR

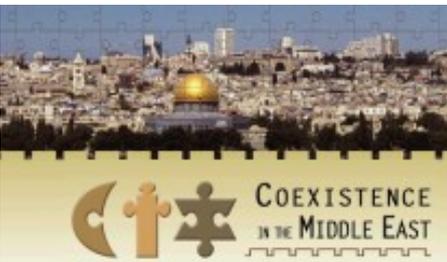
Britain's CCJ, together with the Yad Vashem Institute, conducts an annual 10 day seminar Christian clergy. The 2010 Seminar will take



place from October 4 – 15, 2010.

### ISRAEL: - INTERRELIGIOUS COORDINATING COUNCIL OF ISRAEL TOUR

The ICCI and the International Institute of Leadership are hosting a joint academic tour program with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for Summer 2010 (June 29 - July 27), as part of the "Coexistence in the Middle East" initiative, which promotes coexistence through the training of future leaders. The special academic program is also sponsored by the Israel National Commission for UNESCO.



### IRELAND: YOUNG LEADERSHIP COUNCIL CONFERENCE

The ICCJ's Young Leadership Council is to hold its next conference in Dublin, July 28 – August 1 2010. The YLC has some discretionary funds to assist potential delegates. To apply, email [ylcboard@gmail.com](mailto:ylcboard@gmail.com) before April 15.

### ENGLAND: FIRST OFFICIAL INTERFAITH WEEK

The UK Government last year decreed that November 15-21 2009 as the first ever national interfaith week, in recognition of Britain's multi-religious social fabric. CCJ CEO David Gifford said: "It may have had political and social intentions, but Interfaith Week also -maybe even inadvertently – offered a springboard for us to see "the other" in the image of God, in all their richness, striving, pain and joy."

### LONDON: CCJ INTERFAITH WEEK LECTURE AT THE HOUSE OF LORDS

CCJ members, Trustees and Vice Presidents gathered together at the House of Lords to hear Minister for Communities Shahid Malik speak about the situation facing people of different faiths in the UK, touching on the sensitive issue of what it is to be "British". The Minister told his own personal story of being a Muslim in Britain. The CCJ said that the evening 'got to the heart of issues facing interfaith dialogue.'

### EGYPT: GOVT SCRAPS SYNAGOGUE CEREMONY AFTER 'PROVOCATIVE' ACTS

Egypt cancelled the formal opening on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> March of a renovated 19th-century synagogue in Cairo in protest at what antiqui-

ties chief Zahi Hawass called "provocative" Jewish and Israeli actions. The Maimonides synagogue, known in Egypt by its Arabic name of Musa bin Maymun, is named after the 12th century Jewish scholar, philosopher and physician.

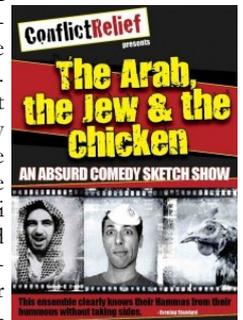


### NORWAY: OSLO JEWISH COMMUNITY LEADER SHOCKS JEWS

Jews in the Norwegian capital were shocked by community leader Anne Sander's remark last month that Israelis benefit from settlements like Palestinians benefit from suicide bombings. Anne Sander made the remarks in an interview to the Dagbladet newspaper, on the backdrop of the complicated situation between Jews and Muslims in Norway. Only 1,100 Jews live in Norway today, most of them in Oslo, alongside more than 70,000 Muslims. Norway has seen an increase in anti-Semitic acts in recent years.

### LUXEMBOURG: "THE ARAB, THE JEW AND THE CHICKEN" A HIT!

The Luxembourg Comedy for Freedom Festival had a hit with a UK based theatre company's "The Arab, the Jew and the Chicken". The company, Conflict Relief, was formed by two performers – one a Palestinian refugee the other an ex-Israeli Army officer - and uses comedy to explore conflict. Their next work in development is called "Peace from the East of the Middle". <http://conflictreelf.org/cms/home>



## EDITORIAL – NEVER FORGET

Here in Australia, it can sometimes seem as if the state of relations between Christians and Jews is of relatively minor importance – a 'boutique' interest amongst us 'godbotherers'. Yet the ICCJ's "12 Points of Berlin" recall us to reality.

The Berlin meeting was planned in a long transatlantic dialogue process. Present at the opening ceremony were not only Rabbis and Bishops, but Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel - who actually gave the opening lecture. In Germany, Christian Jewish understanding is not just a matter for churches and synagogues, or only civil society: in Germany, it is a matter for the State. It is to be regretted that Pope Benedict XVI had less to say on the state of Christian-Jewish relations last year than the German Chancellor.

Australia has been, in the main, a tolerant

society, and Australian Jewry has vigour and confidence. In Australia, the risk is that we forget.

For example, the draft National Curriculum School history syllabus defines the Holocaust as 'the persecution or genocide of *minorities*'. All Australian CCJs should consider the society in which we live, and ask ourselves if we do enough to 'spread the word' to the wider society of the crucial importance of good Jewish and Christian relations.

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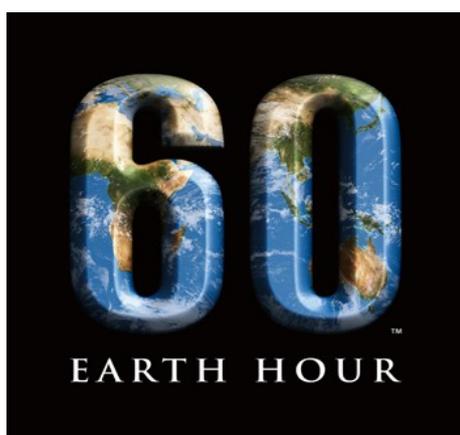
About 20 years ago, I left the NSW CCJ committee to have children. At that time, Mr Henry Mendelson had come on board, and agreed to take on *Christian-Jewish Scene*. He did so ever since. As I struggle to put together

this 80<sup>th</sup> (and my first) edition of *Christian-Jewish Scene*, I would like to pay tribute to Henry's hard work and dedication. On the occasions when I saw Henry over the last twenty years, his urbane good humour was always in evidence. It is a quality this editor has yet to master (especially on publication weeks). Perhaps in 20 years!

Kate Mannix  
Editor



## EARTH HOUR - INTERFAITH IN SONG AND DANCE



For this year's Earth Hour, on March 27, the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change action group organised a multi-faith group of our most talented artists to remind Australians, and the world, of the pressing problem of climate change.

"As climate change escalates and action to address it lags far behind, new hope is needed to lift our spirits," says ARRCC.

So as the lights went out across Sydney this Earth Hour, there was a candle-lit multi-faith vigil of song, prayer, dance,

reflection and meditation at Observatory Hill.

Artists and dignitaries included Tapestries of Sound, a world music band; the Baha'i choir, a 20 member mixed voice spiritual choir; Deepa Gupta, Indian Youth Climate Network cofounder; Patricia Corowa, Pacific Calling Partnership's Copenhagen delegation; Trish Watts, InterPlay Australia; and Rabbi Jeffrey Kamins, of Emanuel Synagogue and Council of Progressive Rabbis. - *the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change*.

## WOMEN'S INTERFAITH NETWORK RECEPTION

The annual Women's Interfaith Network gathering was held recently, attended by CCJ members including Sr Marianne Dacy and Sr Giovanni Farquhar.

NSW Premier Kristina Keneally was enthusiastic in her support: "As Premier, I can continue to support this important network which I encountered initially through my friendship with Josie Lacey. Josie is a prominent member of Sydney's Jewish community and an inter-faith activist, and was instrumental in founding the Women's Interfaith Network.

"My support for the Women's Interfaith



Network extended to duties that a local MP could assist with, which I as an official sponsor .

"At the risk of being labelled sexist, there is something that is deeply feminine—and deeply strong - about this particular aspect of the Network, and your area of work: the ability to be with someone else's spiritual reality—one that may be totally different to your own, and to do just that; to simply be with it.

"What it shows us, above all, is that all members of the Interfaith Network have genuine, solid, mature connection with their faith," the Premier said.

## ICCJ TO MEET IN TURKEY—2010 "SO THAT YOU MAY KNOW ONE ANOTHER"

The ICCJ is to hold its next conference in a Muslim nation for the very first time. The conference will be held in Istanbul between June 20 and 23, 2010.

The International Council of Christians and Jews has announced the theme of its 2010 Conference — 'So that you may know one another'.

Though the ICCJ's focus has been on Christian-Jewish relations, it is thought that the decision to meet in Istanbul recognises the many ICCJ member organisations which involve Muslims in dialogue.

"We have chosen as our theme a well-known



verse from the Qur'an (Sura 49,13): "So that you may know one another", say conference organisers.

"We will explore the potential but also the pitfalls of inter-religious dialogue. On each of the three days, a keynote speaker from one of

the three religions will address this question from the perspective of his or her own tradition, and there will be two respondents, each from one of the others."

The workshops will deal with a variety of related topics, such as anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, Muslim minorities in Europe, the exploration of our common heritage through text study, women's issues and social justice.

The ICCJ will offer the means for participants to experience the beautiful and fascinating city of Istanbul.

Registration for the ICCJ Conference in Istanbul may be downloaded from the ICCJ at <http://www.iccj.org>

# THE TWELVE POINTS OF BERLIN

**THIS IS THE CORE OF THE 2009 "12 POINTS OF BERLIN", THE ICCJ'S STATEMENT RESPONDING TO THE WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE'S 2008 "BERLIN DECLARATION" - THE WEA'S THIRD STATEMENT SINCE 1989 ENCOURAGING CHRISTIANS TO EVANGELIZE JEWS**

The International Council of Christians and Jews is committed to understanding and cooperation between Christians and Jews based on respect for each other's identity and integrity. We affirm that in honest dialogue each person remains loyal to his or her own essential faith commitment, recognizing in the other person his or her integrity and otherness [from ICCJ's *Mission Statement*].

These and other convictions are more fully expressed in the ICCJ's recent document, *A Time for Recommitment: Building the New Relationship between Jews and Christians*, which was issued at our annual meeting in Berlin, Germany in July 2009. It is also known as "The Twelve Points of Berlin."

It is because of our dedication to mutual affirmation and understanding between Jews and Christians that we wish to offer these reflections on a document coincidentally also issued in Berlin, but one year earlier. This is a study document of the theological commission of the World Evangelical Alliance, entitled "The Berlin Declaration on the Uniqueness of Christ and Jewish Evangelism in Europe Today." We recognize that its authors are grappling with the extremely difficult ques-

tion confronting Christian theology of how to reconcile mission with dialogue with Jews in the wake of the Shoah and the long prior history of Christian oppression of Jews.

While the statement is clearly motivated by a sincere desire for repentance and by an authentic love of Christ to spread the Gospel, in our opinion it suffers from a number of weaknesses.

We offer these comments and questions in order to further the theological discussions that we believe should occur both among Christians and in Christian-Jewish dialogue.

### 1.

We believe that Christian theologizing about Jews (and vice-versa) needs to engage the other's perspectives in a serious manner. That does not seem to be a consideration in the "Berlin Declaration."

### 2.

The statement correctly notes that, "Everyone needs what God offers by his grace: forgiveness of sin and a transforming divine presence in those who respond." However, it seems to assume that the Jewish people do not continue to benefit from a grace-filled relationship with God.

Perhaps this premise is based on the conviction that Jesus Christ is the only mediator of grace, but ought Christians therefore to conclude that divine grace, the gift of God's love and presence, is restricted only to baptized Christians?

Surely, the sacred scriptures of the Jewish people, which are rightly revered as canonical by Christians, testify to a God who ever-faithful, even when human beings fall short of God's desires.



To empty these scriptures of their significance to the Jewish people by judging them meaningful only in reference to Christ risks falling into the ancient heresy of Marcionism (the view that Jesus revealed a new God of love, displacing the judgmental "God" of the Old Testament).

But if, then, God is ever-faithful to the divine commitment to the Jewish people, then God's grace also continues to bless them. This is true even if, from a Christian point of view, God's Word Jesus Christ mysteriously mediates this grace-filled relationship in ways unknown to Jews and Christians alike.

### 3.

The statement quite properly affirms "the importance of dialogue in promoting mutual understanding and sympathy."



But by holding that "dialogue and evangelism are not mutually exclusive," and by admitting that "most of all", the authors want "to invite Jewish people and all others to consider the claims of Jesus," it is clear that mutual understanding is not the primary goal of dialogue for the authors of the "Berlin Declaration."

Even though it should be praised for recognizing that "Christians have much to learn from the Jewish people," the statement is, in fact, uninformed by Jewish self-understanding of their own religious experience and tradition.

The Jewish religious community understands itself to be in relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Religiously observant Jews employ various traditions of interpretation in following the mitzvot given in the Torah, evidence of their being embraced by God's love and blessing. Can Christians simply ignore this Jewish self-understanding in order to "challenge them to consider the message of the Messiah"?

How is such behaviour not arrogant and disrespectful despite the statement's claims to the contrary? If their self-understanding is dismissed, should Jews not rightly see dialogue an invitation to apostatize?

"We are convinced that authentic dialogue never seeks to persuade the other of one's own truth claims, but rather to change one's own heart by understanding others on their own terms, to whatever degree possible.

In fact, interreligious dialogue in the fullest sense of the term is impossible if any of the parties harbor desires to

convert the other.

It is also the general experience of both Christians and Jews that interreligious dialogue provides deeper insights into one's own religious tradition" (*A Time for Recommitment, The Story of a Transformed Relationship*, B,4).

**4.**

The "Berlin Declaration" affirms "the right of Jewish believers in Jesus to practice those traditions that affirm their identity," but seems unable to also affirm the religious identity of non-baptized Jews.



Instead, the statement is comfortable in taking away from the Jewish community the right to determine what constitutes authentic Jewish identity by simply asserting that "Jews can believe in Jesus" and still remain Jews. Is defining Jewish identity a right Christians possess?

**5.**

Finally, the statement lacks any hint that salvation in Christ has yet to reach its ultimate fulfilment in the Reign of God.

By only using the present tense in such phrases as "the fulfilment of God's promises," the statement disregards a key Christian understanding that salvation is both "already" and "not yet."

For instance, Christians pray daily to God that "thy Kingdom come." This unfinished dimension of salvation history is crucial for Christian-Jewish relations because it enables Jews and Christians to see each other as con-

tributing to preparing the world for the messianic age in distinctive yet complementary ways.

On the other hand, a one-dimensional stress by Christians on what has already been realized excludes Jews from any ongoing mission to witness to God before the nations, even if Jews believe they have that (and other) missions.

We recognize that many of the theological questions posed above relate to contrasting Christian understandings of how to interpret both Testaments of the Christian Bible—a very complex subject.

Therefore, the differences between the "Twelve Points of Berlin" and the "Berlin Declaration" about Christian relations with the Jewish people can be addressed only by conversation about biblical interpretation—a conversation to which Jews have much to contribute as well.

*Phil Cunningham/Theology  
Committee  
on behalf of the ICCJ  
Executive Board*

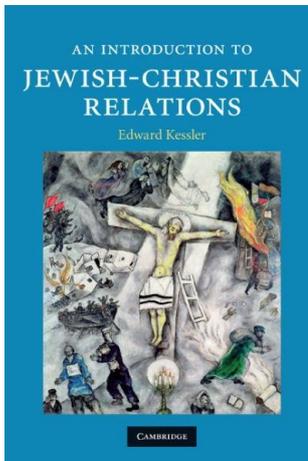
Full text may be found in 'Publications' menu, then 'Statements' at:  
<http://www.iccj.org/en/index.php>



## BOOKS

### **INTRODUCTION TO JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS**

BY EDWARD KESSLER, CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2010



This is an important new book by Dr Edward Kessler, of the Centre for the Study of Jewish-Christian Relations at Cambridge University.

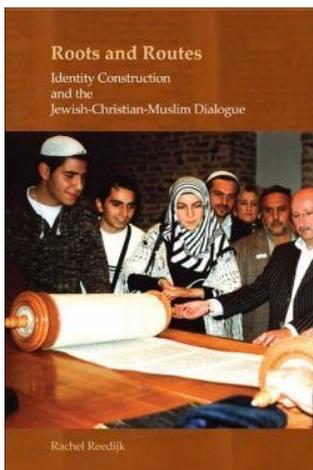
Kessler writes that relations between Christians and Jews over the past two thousand years have been characterised to a great extent by mutual distrust and by Christian discrimination and vio-

lence against Jews. In recent decades, however, a new spirit of dialogue has been emerging, beginning with an awakening among Christians of the Jewish origins of Christianity, and encouraging scholars of both traditions to work together.

### **ROOTS AND ROUTES:**

### **IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM DIALOGUE**

BY RACHEL REEDIJK, RODOPI, 2010



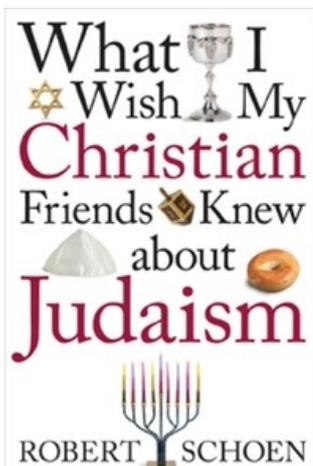
We engage in dialogue largely because we believe dialogue generates understanding. But interreligious dialogue can also meet with both suspicion and cynicism: the former because it may result in loss of identity, and the latter because important issues may be ignored. This book looks at the hitherto unanswered question of how Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogue affects the sense of identity amongst its participants.

In this study Rachel Reedijk tries to show how we construct religious iden-

tity in an interreligious context. This context exists against the backdrop of the dominance of Western society. Rachel Reedijk argues that, under the right circumstances, interreligious dialogue can move beyond polemics and apologetics and prepare the ground for understanding – that is, reducing prejudice and furthering the ability of all religionists to interpret their own stories.

### **WHAT I WISH MY CHRISTIAN FRIENDS KNEW ABOUT JUDAISM**

BY ROBERT SCHOEN, BAKER AND TAYLOR, 2010



An easy-to-use guide for the millions of Christians who are curious about the lives of their Jewish friends, family, and co-workers.

While admitting that describing what it's like to be Jewish is like describing snow, author Robert Schoen provides a smart and practical understanding of Judaism for a Christian audience.

Schoen discusses the different sects of Judaism and what they mean and believe; describes Jewish

ceremonies, holidays, and festivals; and explains religious texts, symbols, religious apparel, and kosher food.

The book includes a glossary of Hebrew and Yiddish words and a pronunciation guide.

## COMING UP...

### ***EASTER TRIDUUM***

The Easter Triduum (“The Three Days”)  
 Thu 1 Apr Holy Thursday  
 Fri 2 Apr Good Friday  
 Sat 3 Apr Holy Saturday  
 Sun 4 April EASTER SUNDAY

The Easter Triduum of the passion and death of Christ is the culmination of the Christian Church’s liturgical year. Lent – the time prior to Easter – is a time of focus, of preparation and a time of remembrance. It points to that which is central to the life of the Christian and culminates in the celebration of the Easter Triduum.



### ***YOM HASHOAH***

Yom Hashoah 2010 begins on Saturday evening April 10 and continues through Sunday April 11.

The internationally–recognized date comes from the Hebrew calendar and corresponds to the 27th day of Nisan.

That is the date on which Israel commemorates the victims of the Holocaust. In Hebrew, Holocaust Remembrance Day is called Yom Hashoah.

***The CCJ’s Annual Shoah Service is on Monday 3rd May 2010 at 6pm at St Mary’s Cathedral Crypt, Sydney***

### ***SHAVUOT—FESTIVAL OF WEEKS***

Shavuot is celebrated each year on the 6th of Sivan  
 Dates for 2010 (5770)  
 Erev Shavuot - Tuesday evening May 18  
 Shavuot Day 1 Wednesday May 19  
 Shavuot Day 2 Thursday May 20

Shavuot is the Jewish holiday that celebrates the giving of the Torah, the first harvest, and the ripening of the first fruits.





## NOT YET A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS?

The Councils of Christians and Jews are a vital part in the combined Christian-Jewish effort to foster social harmony. We aim to combat all forms of religious, racial and social discrimination using the powerful insights of Judaism and Christianity.

### JOIN TODAY!

I hereby apply for an annual membership of the Council of Christians and Jews:

Standard member:  3 yrs membership   
 Married couple:  3 yrs membership   
 Pensioner couple:   
 Single Pensioner/student/unemployed:   
 Educational Institution:  3 yrs membership   
 Religious Body:  3 yrs membership   
 I enclose cheque:  Visa  Mastercard  Expires \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

### TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Post Code \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

**THANK YOU! TEAR OFF AND SEND TO YOUR CCJ STATE BRANCH:**

“When two people relate to each other authentically and humanly, God is the electricity that surges between them.”  
 Martin Buber

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