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Using Vatican Council II's *Nostra Aetate* as a benchmark we are now three decades into the contemporary Christian-Jewish encounter. In actual fact the roots of the dialogue go back somewhat earlier as a pioneering generation of biblical scholars, educational researchers and ecumenists laid the groundwork for that historic document as well as for similar statements in other Christian denominations.' As we look back over those three decades, we can discern three important phases of the dialogue generated by this document and its attendant Protestant statements. These phases are not entirely sequential in nature. Though we stand on the threshold of phase #3, not all the crucial work of the first two phases has yet been completed.

Phase one can best be described as the "cleansing" phase. It has primarily affected Christian education. Made possible by initial textbook studies on Protestant and Catholic materials at Yale and St. Louis universities and subsequent surveys, this phase has involved the removal from mainline Christian educational texts of the charge that Jews collectively were responsible for the death of Jesus, that the Pharisees were the arch-enemies of Jesus and spiritually soulless and that Jews had been displaced by Christians in the covenantal relationship with God as a result of their refusal to accept Jesus as the Messiah, that the "Old Testament" was totally inferior to the New and that Jewish faith was rooted in legalism while the Christian religion was based on grace. This phase is substantially complete as far as it goes for most of the mainline churches.

The second phase of the contemporary encounter between Jews and Christians dates back in some ways even further than the textbook studies. It is rooted in the new approach to the study of the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament which began with several key individuals prior to the Second World War. Clearly a major shift of emphasis is underway in Christianity relative to the Hebrew Scriptures. Increasingly respected scholars are recognizing the value of the books of the Hebrew Scriptures in their own right and not merely as a backdrop for New Testament teaching. Research resulting from the contemporary Christian-Jewish encounter has begun to impact even more profoundly on New Testament interpretation, both with respect to the teachings and person of Jesus and the pastoral journeys of St. Paul. Recent years have seen a profound shift in New Testament exegesis with an increasing number of scholars emphasizing that Jesus must be returned to his essentially Jewish context if the Church is to understand his message properly.

The third phase of the dialogue, the theological, still remains a fledgling enterprise. A number of Christian theologians, and a few Jewish religious scholars, have attempted to rethink the relationship between the Church and the Jewish people in fundamentally new ways. But their work has not had widespread impact to date. A few leading Protestant and Catholic theologians have taken up the issue of late, principally Jurgen Moltmann, as a major concern in their overall theological

perspective and so there is some basis for optimism. Official Christian theological documents not specifically related to the dialogue have by and large failed to incorporate the changed thinking emerging from the theologians of the dialogue and the new research in Scripture. Little has also been done to bring this new theological vision to bear on the shape of Christian worship.

In short, a critical need remains to "mainstream" the results of the dialogue if it is not to remain an isolated experience limited to a select number of Christians and Jews. The potential exists for a major transformation in mutual understanding, but it is a potential far from realized in the Christian and Jewish communities at large.