

A new approach to research for the Cardinal Bea Centre

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The 2013-2014 academic year saw the Cardinal Bea Centre hosting a series of meetings that had a great impact on the entire Gregorian University and even further afield. This series of meetings was inaugurated on the 23rd October 2013, by Professor Israel Yuval of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on the occasion of the XIII Brenninmeijer-Werhahn Conference. They continued on 16th January 2014 with Rabbi Avraham Skorka from Buenos Aires (Argentina), to then culminate in a busy round of engagements organized by the Cardinal Bea Centre for its annual theme under the heading of *“Un Libro – L’Una e L’Altra Tradizione”*. The various speakers included the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Riccardo Segni, the President of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism, Cardinal Kurt Koch, and Professor Daniel Boyarin of the University of California, Berkeley.

Professor Israel Yuval: a “revolutionary” interpretation

It is generally claimed that the Jewish-Christian relationship is characterized by an “asymmetrical” quality: whereas Christianity has its roots in Judaism, and thus is bound to the other religion in a relationship

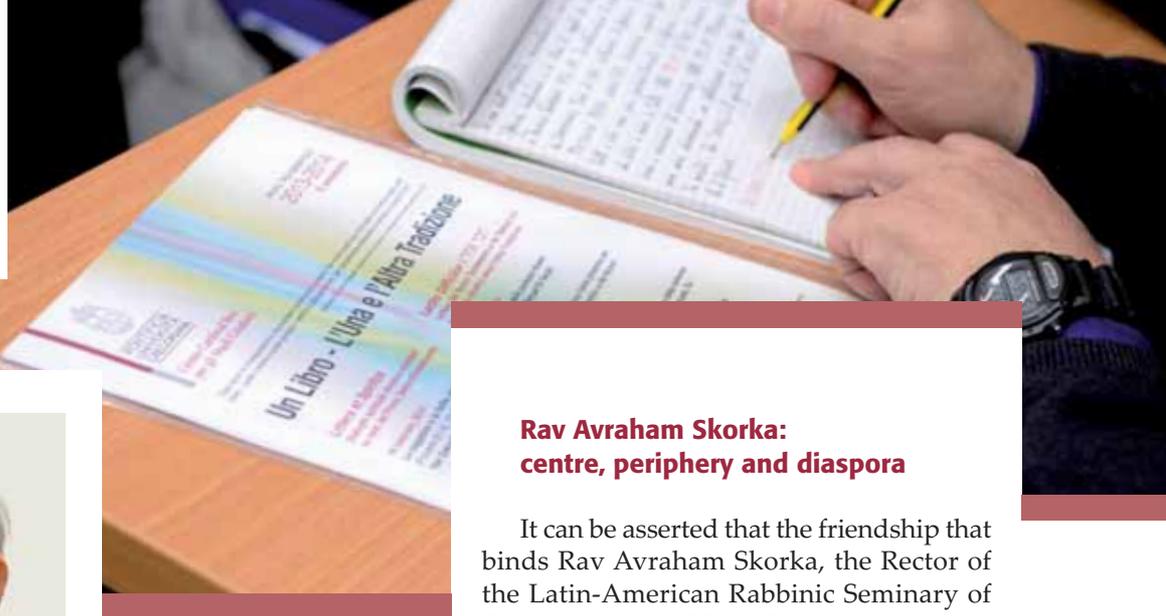
of dependency; Judaism can be considered an “independent” religion, as it is fully conceivable without any due reference to Christianity. Addressing this point, Professor Israel Yuval proposes a “revolutionary” interpretation: is it conceivable that Rabbinic Judaism developed in co-dependency with a religion that might be considered its “half-sister”? Or, drawing on the question which the title of his conference poses: “Does Rabbinic Judaism emerge from Christianity?” Even though the majority of Talmudic sources omit any references regarding Christianity, as Professor Yuval explains, it is conceivable to read this silence not as an indifferent attitude towards Christianity, but rather as an intentional attempt to ignore it. Moreover, there are good reasons to maintain that while the explicit subject of Rabbinic Judaism almost totally overlooked Christianity, the challenge the latter posed spurred the rabbis to create alternative institutions and positions to Christianity. Thus, the origin of the idea, which is so important for Rabbinic Judaism – the institution of Oral Law – can be linked with the existence of Christianity and the introduction of the New Testament in



order to interpret the Old Testament. Further examples of “innovations”, which Rabbinic Judaism is supposed to have introduced into its own tradition due to the constraining presence of Christianity, are

the organization of the holy days, in particular the liturgy of the Chanukkah Festival and the interpretation of the relationship between salvation and expiation.

Above:
Cardinal Kurt Koch and
Rabbi Avraham Skorka.
Photo by
BARBARA ANDOLFI



Rav Avraham Skorka: centre, periphery and diaspora

It can be asserted that the friendship that binds Rav Avraham Skorka, the Rector of the Latin-American Rabbinic Seminary of Buenos Aires, and Pope Bergoglio – in 2010 they co-published the book *Il cielo e la terra* together – is part of the tradition of a “Jewish-Christian constellation” that has seen meetings between Popes and leading figures of Judaism. In the modern era, this tradition has seen encounters between John XXIII and Jules Isaac, John Paul II and Elio Toaff. Rav Skorka seems to have been inspired by this exceptional series of meetings for his conference at the Gregorian University “Jewish-Catholic Dialogue Fifty Years on from the *Nostra Aetate*”. The conference’s subheading “A Latin-American Viewpoint” also introduces another element: just as the Pope comes from the Latin-American continent, the dialogue between Avraham Skorka and Jorge Bergoglio-Pope Francis is also part of a vital relationship between Centre and Periphery. From the origin of Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity, the two traditions have each had to face the task of organizing and structuring unity and diversity on their own: Jerusalem and the Promised Land with the Diaspora; Rome with the local churches spread out all over the world. Perhaps one development introduced by Rav Skorka’s conference itself is that now the two traditions, which previously followed independent paths in carrying out that task, have met. ▀

Above and on previous page:
The speakers of the various meetings organized by the Cardinal Bea Centre.

 All the conferences mentioned in this article were video filmed in their entirety and can be viewed on the university YouTube channel:
www.youtube.com/UniGregoriana