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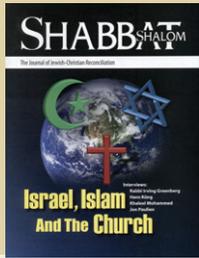
2011 Research at Andrews

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Jacques Doukhan has been the editor of *Shabbat Shalom*, a journal of Jewish-Christian reflection, for 16 years.



Pursuing Jewish-Christian Dialogue

BUILDING BRIDGES

Raised in the convergence of three cultures—Jewish, French and Muslim—**Jacques Doukhan**, professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis, has been a voice for Jewish-Christian dialogue for several decades. Two of his recent projects—*Israel and the Church: Two Voices for the Same God* (Hendrickson, 2002), and *On the Way to Emmaus: Searching the Messianic Prophecies* (forthcoming), stem from his longtime research interest at the intersection of Judaism and Adventism.

In *On the Way to Emmaus*, Doukhan examines Scriptural Messianic prophecies from an Old Testament and historical perspective. He utilizes exegesis of the text, its immediate historical context, other Scriptural writings, and ancient Rabbinic texts to determine which Messianic texts were legitimate in their time rather than given a Messianic interpretation later in history.

Doukhan identifies himself as a Jewish Adventist and has an extensive scholarly background in Jewish and Biblical studies that has transferred into a lifelong involvement in Jewish-Christian dialogue. He was the editor of *Shabbat Shalom*, a journal of Jewish-Christian reflection, for 16 years and served as the leader of Beit B'nei Shalom, a local Hebrew-Adventist congregation, for 11 years. Since 1999, he has served as the director of the Institute of Jewish-Christian Studies at Andrews University, an organization responsible for symposiums on the Holocaust, Jewish/Christian/Muslim relations, and other interfaith dialogues. “We produce a book after each symposium, and our intent is to provide information and make [Jewish-Christian relations] present in people’s minds,” he says. Doukhan has attended Jewish-Christian dialogues worldwide, and was involved in the first historical encounter between top Orthodox Jewish scholars and evangelical theologians at Emory University, Atlanta, Ga. This summer he was invited to Paris to join a

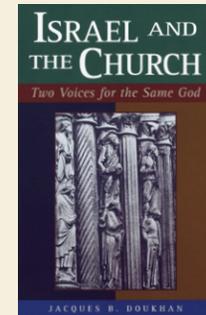
discussion at a gathering of Jewish Christians from Catholic, Christian Orthodox and Protestant communities.

For Doukhan, Jewish-Christian dialogue is significant both in a historical context and to shape the future. “Christianity comes out of the womb of Judaism,” he says. “You would not be able to call yourself a Christian and ignore that fact.” Yet ignorance and even hostility to Christianity’s Jewish origins has resulted in some of history’s most terrible crimes. Doukhan cites the example of the Holocaust: “Ignorance in these things can be very dangerous,” and failing to understand and sympathize can be fatal.

Understanding Christianity’s Jewish roots can enhance both faiths as well. “If you lose your roots, you lose your identity,” says Doukhan. “For a time, Christians lost the sense of the importance of the law, righteousness, Creation and the Sabbath. If you compare Jewish and Christian tradition, Christian tradition has, under the influence of Greek thought, emphasized spirituality as the highest good, with the result that the world—creation—is evil. Today, many Christians realize that and have come back to enjoy Creation as physically receiving the gift of God as well as stressing the importance of the spiritual life.”

Doukhan finds an appreciable overlap between the Jewish and Adventist faiths. “For me, Adventist thinking plays very well to Jewish sensitivities and thinking in several areas—the importance of Scripture, the Sabbath (of course), and the value of Creation, for examples.” He has written several recent articles on this topic, and is actively involved in recent faith and science dialogues on the Andrews campus. He reminds participants at these conferences of the ultimate importance of creation as an expression of the God they all believe in. “I am not a scientist, so I am not aware of many of those issues, but I do believe in the importance and value of creation. But I think there is much more in the value and text of creation than this discussion of creation and evolution,” he says.

His fusion of two similar religions begins with apologetics, he says, but aims to transcend simply defending one’s position. “If, as a Jew, you choose to embrace Christianity you have to justify yourself. So your journey begins with apologetics, but I am suggesting there is more than apologetics,” he says. “We learn from each other, and hopefully we can end up discovering something that transcends both beliefs.” Apologetics sometimes carries a negative connotation, he says. We are afraid to defend our differences “because



Published in 2002, this book deals with the intersection of Judaism and Adventism.

it has not been well done in the past. Sometimes, to defend a difference, we kill the different. It should not be that way—I defend my

difference, but at the same time, I should be aware that there is something I could learn that may strengthen or enhance my belief, or discover something I never even thought of.”

Doukhan’s goal is reconciliation between the two faiths, which have a long history of hostility and mutual unawareness. “The dream of reconciliation, when grace and law come together, I believe would be a sign of the end...In a way, without knowing it, Seventh-day Adventist people are working toward reconciliation without necessarily knowing or wanting it. It happens that in [the Seventh-day Adventist] context, you have grace and law, Old and New Testaments together, and that promotes and allows reconciliation.”

He continues to devote his time and scholarly activities to biblical studies and the Jewish-Christian reconciliation. His many books on Israel and the Church, Ecclesiastes and biblical prophecy have been translated into more than seven languages. He regularly teaches seminars on Messianic prophecy, Rabbinic literature and Jewish-Christian relations as well as his extensive involvement in interfaith dialogues. Doukhan is also intensively active in the domain of biblical exegesis and interpretation. He is presently the general editor of the *Seventh-day Adventist International Bible Commentary*, a new project that involves more than 60 Adventist scholars worldwide.

