Uneasy Allies?
Evangelical-Jewish Relations Today

November 30-December 1, 2005
The Jewish Theological Seminary
New York City

A conference cosponsored by
The Louis Finkelstein Institute for Religious and Social Studies
The Feinstein Center for American Jewish History, Temple University
The Center for Religious Inquiry Across the Disciplines, Baylor University

This two-day conference will explore the state of relations between Protestant evangelicals, the largest segment of American Protestantism, and the Jewish community. Issues to be addressed include: what Jews and evangelicals think about each other, the level and quality of contacts between the organized Jewish community and evangelical groups, nature of support for Israel, attitudes toward mission and conversion, and approaches toward the role of religion in public and political life.

About The Jewish Theological Seminary and The Finkelstein Institute

The Jewish Theological Seminary was founded in 1886 through the efforts of two distinguished rabbis, Dr. Sabato Morais and Dr. H. Pereira Mendes, along with a group of prominent lay leaders from Philadelphia and New York. Its mission was to preserve the knowledge and practice of historical Judaism. In 1887, the first class of ten students was held in the vestry of the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue, New York City's oldest congregation. Since then, JTS has greatly expanded its mission, created a beautiful Manhattan campus, and evolved into the prestigious center of Jewish learning it is today. A Jewish university with a world-class faculty and diverse student body, JTS grants undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees through its five schools and offers enriching programs for the Jewish community in the United States, Israel, and around the world.

The Jewish Theological Seminary’s schools and facilities include The Graduate School; The Rabbinical School; H.L. Miller Cantorial School and College of Jewish Music; William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education; Albert A. List College of Jewish Studies; the Rebecca and Israel Ivry Prozdor, a model supplementary high school; a summer school; five research institutes, including the Melton Research Center for Jewish Education; lay leadership and professional institutes; community education programs; student residence halls; and the incomparable collections of The Library. The acclaimed Jewish Museum, established by JTS in 1904 and now an independent affiliated institution, is the foremost conservator of Jewish culture in North America. Consortia with renowned academic neighbors, including Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University, further support and enhance the scholarly ambiance of the learning community.

Since 1938, The Jewish Theological Seminary’s Louis Finkelstein Institute for Religious and Social Studies has maintained an innovative interfaith and intergroup relations program emphasizing conversation between communities about matters of public significance. Its ability to join voices from different academic, social, and religious communities has resulted in unique conferences and interfaith cooperation. It has brought the relevance of Judaism and other religions to prominence in scholarly and practical fellowship on theological, ethical, and scientific issues.

Today, The Finkelstein Institute maintains this objective with a renewed focus on the problems of religion and the public sphere. The proper public role of religion in a liberal democracy, both in the United States and abroad, is a persistent and controversial problem. The Institute sponsors conferences on the theoretical, political, and theological dimensions of this problem, looking at such enduring issues as the role of virtue in liberal societies or the place of religion in national self-definition. In addition to its theoretical interest, the Institute sponsors conferences on current topical issues, such as the current state of the law of church and state, or bioethical problems, such as stem cell research and cloning.

Then as now, The Finkelstein Institute strives to be a venue for advancing the democratic conversation at the intersection of religion and public affairs.