FOCUS ON JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS
A. Roy Eckardt, Consulting Editor

The Relationship of Judaism and Christianity
Irving Greenberg

Jews and Christians
John T. Pawlikowski

Post-Holocaust New Testament Scholarship
Clark M. Williamson

The Jewish “No” to Jesus and the Christian “Yes” to Jews
J. (Coos) Schoneveld

Heschel’s Significance for Jewish-Christian
Eva Fleischner

Homiletical Resources from the Hebrew Bible
Michael Chernick
Quarterly Review (ISSN 0270-9287) provides continuing education resources for professional ministers in The United Methodist Church and other churches. A scholarly journal for reflection on ministry, Quarterly Review seeks to encourage discussion and debate on matters critical to the practice of ministry.

Falling within the purview of the journal are articles and reviews on biblical, theological, ethical, and ecclesiastical questions; homiletics, pastoral counseling, church education, sacred music, worship, evangelism, mission, and church management; ecumenical issues; cultural and social issues where their salience to the practice of ministry can be demonstrated; and the general ministry of Christians, as part of the church's understanding of its nature and mission.

Articles for consideration are welcome from lay and professional ministers, United Methodists, and others, and should be mailed to the Editor, Quarterly Review, Box 871, Nashville, Tennessee 37202. Manuscripts should be in English and typed double-spaced, and the original and two duplicates should be submitted. No sermons, poems, or devotional material are accepted. Queries are welcome. A style sheet is available on request. Payment is by fee, depending on edited length.

Quarterly Review is published four times a year, in March, June, September, and December, by the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry and The United Methodist Publishing House. Editorial Offices are at 1001 19th Avenue, South, Box 871, Nashville, TN 37202. Circulation and business offices are at 201 Eighth Avenue South, Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202. Second-class postage paid at Nashville, Tennessee. Quarterly Review is available at a basic subscription price of $15 for one year, $26 for two years, and $33 for three years. Subscriptions may be obtained by sending a money order or check to the Business Manager, Quarterly Review, Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202.

Postmaster: Address changes should be sent to The United Methodist Publishing House, Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202.

Subscribers wishing to notify publisher of their change of address should write to the Business Manager, Quarterly Review, Box 801, Nashville, TN 37202. An index is printed in the winter issue of each year (number 5 for 1981 only; number 4 thereafter).

Quarterly Review: A Scholarly Journal for Reflection on Ministry
Winter, 1984

Copyright © 1984 by The United Methodist Publishing House and the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry
CONTENTS

Focus on Jewish-Christian Relations
A. Roy Eckardt, consulting editor

Editorial: When an Editor Needs an Editor ................................................................. 3

The Relationship of Judaism and Christianity: Toward a New Organic Model
Irving Greenberg ........................................................................................................... 4

Jews and Christians: The Contemporary Dialogue
John T. Pawlikowski .................................................................................................... 23

The New Testament Reconsidered: Recent Post-Holocaust Scholarship
Clark M. Williamson .................................................................................................... 37

The Jewish "No" to Jesus and the Christian "Yes" to Jews
J. (Coos) Schonfeld ................................................................................................... 52

Heschel's Significance for Jewish-Christian Relations
Eva Fleischner ............................................................................................................. 64

Homiletical Resources from the Hebrew Bible for Lent
Michael Chernick ......................................................................................................... 82

Index to Volume Four ............................................................................................... 103
EDITORIAL

When an Editor Needs an Editor

When you look for a consulting editor, you normally seek an expert in the field. We had no trouble identifying such an authoritative figure when we decided to publish an issue with a focus on Jewish-Christian relations. A. Roy Eckardt has published an enormous number of books, articles, and reviews on this theme over a period of several decades, and we were fortunate that he agreed to serve as our consulting editor for this winter. Roy recently retired from the Department of Religion Studies at Lehigh University, but he continues to research and write. Among his many works are Elder and Younger Brothers: The Encounter of Jews and Christians (Schocken, 1973), Your People, My People: The Meeting of Jews and Christians (Quadrangle/New York Times, 1974), and as co-author with his wife, Alice, Encounter with Israel: A Challenge to Conscience (Association Press/Follett, 1970) and Long Night's Journey into Day: Life and Faith after the Holocaust (Wayne State, 1982). Of course Roy has done more than write and teach, and his participation in seminars, symposia, and various interfaith discussions on this continent and abroad would take another page or two to describe.

For those who would like to continue to reflect on Jewish-Christian studies after reading parts of this issue of QR, an excellent resource is an annotated bibliography Roy prepared for the Journal of the American Academy of Religion in March, 1981, "Recent Literature on Christian-Jewish Relations."

As a consulting editor, Roy has helped us locate writers who are knowledgeable and can write perceptively on sensitive and critical issues. He has offered his own criticisms and suggestions on the manuscripts and has used a variety of creative devices to see that writers produced when they were supposed to and in the way we asked them to. We hope readers will appreciate the "unseen hand" behind this special edition, and if they do they should direct their gratitude to Roy, whose counsel and work we greatly admire.

—Charles E. Cole
THE RELATIONSHIP OF JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY: TOWARD A NEW ORGANIC MODEL

IRVING GREENBERG

"This paper is an attempt to ask Jews and Jewish thinkers to focus not only on Christian failure and the Christian tradition of teaching of contempt . . . [but] whether it is possible for Judaism to have a more affirmative model of Christianity."

This paper does not focus on the Holocaust but in part it is a response to the Holocaust. In the light of the Holocaust, the willingness to confront, to criticize, and to correct is the ultimate test of the validity and the vitality of faith. One might say that that religion which is most able to correct itself is the one that will prove itself to be most true. Those who claim they have the whole truth and nothing but the truth and there is nothing to correct thereby prove how false and how ineffective their religious viewpoint is. The most powerful proof of the vitality and the ongoing relevance of Christianity is the work of people like Alice and Roy Eckardt whose fundamental critique of Christianity is surely one of the most sustained and devastating moral analyses in its history. But their work, and that of others like them (Paul van Buren, Rosemary Ruether, Eva Fleischner) is both healing and affirming of Christianity.

In that spirit, this paper is an attempt to ask Jews and Jewish thinkers to focus not only on Christian failure and the Christian tradition of teaching of contempt. "The Holocaust cannot be used for triumphalism. Its moral challenge must also be applied to Jews." (See my "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust," in Eva Fleischner, Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? [New York: KTAV, 1977], pp. 20-22.) This paper asks whether it is possible for Judaism to have a more

Irving Greenberg is an Orthodox rabbi and is president of the National Jewish Resource Center, an organization devoted to leadership education, policy guidance, and intra-Jewish, ecumenical spiritual renewal. Rabbi Greenberg has written extensively on Judaism and Christianity after the Holocaust.
affirmative model of Christianity, one that appreciates Christian spiritual life in all its manifest power. If for no other reason, let this be done because if we take the other's spiritual life less seriously, we run the great risk of taking the biological life less seriously, too. It was the Christian theological negativism and stereotyping of Judaism that created that moral trap into which all too many Christians fell during the Holocaust. At the least, it encouraged relative indifference to the fate of the other. In the light of the Holocaust, Jews have to ask themselves: Is there anything in Jewish tradition or the Jewish model of other religions like Christianity that could lead to some indifference to the fate of others?

After the Holocaust, a model of the relationship of Judaism and Christianity ideally should enable one to affirm the fullness of the faith-claims of the other, not just offer tolerance. It is important to avoid a kind of affirmation of the other that is patronizing. Take Martin Buber, our master and teacher. In Buber's book *Two Types of Faith*, and other writings on Christianity, one is fascinated by the incredible openness (which profoundly affected me). Martin Buber speaks of "my brother Jesus." (The daring and the power of that statement! I could never use that term.) Yet in Buber's approach, Jesus' true religion is the subterranean religion which runs through Judaism also. The Christianity that Buber loves turns out to be suspiciously like the Judaism that Buber loves. That religion, theologically misled by Paul, turns into the Christianity we all know. Now Buber in his own way was a remarkable pioneer—but is that ultimately the message?—that Christianity is a wonderful religion when it fits (our) Jewish ideas? Should not Jewish theology seek to be open to Christian self-understanding, including the remarkable, unbelievable claim of Resurrection, Incarnation, etc.? Can one, as a Jew, take these claims seriously without giving up one's Jewishness?

Up to now, the agreed response is that if you take such claims seriously, there is nothing further to be as a Jew. This is why Jews who are serious Jews have rejected these claims in the past.

This paper seeks to articulate a model that would allow for the Christian possibility without yielding the firm conviction that Judaism is a covenant faith, true and valid in history. I believe that Judaism has never been superseded, and that its work is yet unfinished. We need a model that would allow both sides to respect the full nature of the other in all its faith-claims. (One must recognize that there is a whole range of Christian self-understanding and a whole range of Jewish self-understanding, from the most secular to the most fundamental-
ist. Ideally, a model should allow room for that range of model, and still not exclude the fullness of the faith-claims of the other.) Last, but not least, the model is willing to affirm the profound inner relationship between the two, and to recognize and admit how much closer they are to each other than either has been able to say, without denying the other. Up to now, the affirmation that the two religions are profoundly close was made by Christians who claimed that Christianity grows organically out of Judaism in the course of superseding Judaism. To the extent that there have been Christians who have affirmed Judaism as valid, they have had (to a certain extent) to overemphasize Jewish differentiation in order to make space for Jewish existence. To the extent that there were Jews willing to see Christianity as a valid religion, they also tended to stress the differences, in order to protect Judaism. This model will seek to reduce the gaps without denying the authenticity of the other.

THE SCRIPTURAL MODEL

Judaism is a religion of redemption. The fundamental teaching of Judaism is that because this world is rooted in an infinite source of life and goodness, which we call God, life within it is growing, increasing, perfecting. Life is developing to become more and more like God. The ultimate achievement so far is the human being. The human being is in the image of God, so much like God that one can literally use the imagery of a human-like God. In the case of the human, life is of infinite value, equal and unique. Judaism claims that this process will continue until life's fullest possibilities will be realized, until life finally overcomes death.

If that is not incredible enough, Judaism makes a further claim. The world that we live in, in the realm of the history of humans, is where this perfection will come. There is another realm—rabbinic Judaism affirms a world to come. This perfection of life will be achieved in the realm which the five senses can see and measure, in the realm of history. Sickness will be overcome; poverty and oppression will be overcome; death will be overcome. The political, economic, and social structures will be restructured, to support and nurture the perfection of life.

Finally, Judaism said that if God is good and God is a source of infinite life and infinite goodness, no one should have died in the first place. To perfect the world, it would not be enough to overcome death prospectively. Judaism goes on to say there will be resurrection. All
those who have died will come to life. Then all will know that everything about God is true. Faith is not a fairy tale. If all this does not happen, then the whole Torah is an illusion, a fable. This affirmation is part of the courage and daring of Judaism. It set the test of its truth not in another world which cannot be measured, not in a world from which there are no travelers who have returned with firsthand reports. Judaism insisted that redemption is going to happen in this world, where you can see it, measure it—and if it does not happen, then the religion is revealed to be an illusion.

This vision of Judaism was set in motion by a great event in Jewish history—the Exodus. Exodus points to a future goal in that it promises that not only Jews will reach the Promised Land of freedom and equality but all people will. By its own definition, then, Judaism is a religion that is open to further events in history. Or to put it another way, Judaism has built into its own self-understanding that it must generate future messianic moments. And the central revealed metaphor that guides this process from the beginning is covenant. The covenant is between God and Israel. God could do it alone. But the achievement of total perfection of the world will take place as the result of the efforts of both partners. Although the promised perfection seems beyond human capacity, the two partners between them can achieve it. In theory, the divine respects human free will. Therefore this final perfection cannot simply be given by God or brought on by human effort.

The covenant makes possible the process of getting to the final redemption. The covenant is Israel's commitment not to stop short of perfection. It is the pledge to testify, to teach the world, to witness to other human beings. And the covenant also implies that we can answer the question: What do I do now? The answer is: step by step. Use an army to reduce the possibility of war. If one has to fight, kill as few people as possible. A commitment to achieve perfection step by step means that the model of perfection itself unfolds in history.

To summarize: Judaism is a religion of redemption and perfection, rooted in history, operating through a covenant, illuminated by history, open to further events of revelation which will clarify its message, with an implied pedagogical model of the relationship of God and humans in which God will help the humans unfold, but will not force them to be free.

JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

In light of all this, to be a faithful Jew is to look forward to further events of revelation and redemption beyond the Exodus—events that
As long as Jewry is generating messiahs, it is faithful to its own calling.

calling. If Judaism does not generate messiahs—at least until the final messiah does come and straighten out the whole world—then there is something wrong.

(In writing about the Holocaust, I once wrote that I was ashamed of the fact that, in this generation, there was not at least a false messiah. A false messiah would show that the Jews were truly living up to their vocation, which is to hope and expect the messiah, particularly in such tragic times. If one hopes for the messiah and a false one shows up—well, it is regrettable but at least one has tried. Not to generate even a false messiah is a sign that people are complacent; they have either lost hope or do not care.)

The later event which illuminates the earlier event and guides us to its fulfillment is the messianic moment. This is why I believe the early Christians were faithful Jews when they recognized Jesus. Like good, faithful Jews, they were looking for the messiah, particularly in a different century. Lo and behold! They recognized his arrival. That is a very faithful response of a Jew—to recognize that the messiah has arrived, and to respond.

The early Christians were equally faithful, and equally acting out of loyalty to their Jewish understanding, when they responded to a
further event, one they had not anticipated at all; namely, the messiah’s death.

Caution: Whenever one responds to a new event, believing this event illuminates the original event, there is a risk. On the one hand, the response shows faithfulness. On the other hand, there are great dangers. One risk is to give your trust and faith to a false messiah—the new arrival may turn out not to be the true messiah. There is a further risk—the new developments may lead to a transformation of the original ideas. Then, out of trying to be faithful to the new experience, one may find oneself in some way leaving behind or betraying the original commitments. Which then are true: the old ideas or the new ones? Or both? The answer, of course, is that there is no guarantee in advance. Wait until it is all clarified and it will be too late. One must respond right now. Faith response is a wager of one’s own life, out of faithfulness.

Consider the Jewish Sitz im Leben of those faithful Jewish Christians responding to the messiah. Here was this man whom they experienced as the messiah. He was shockingly killed. It was a terrible, degrading death. Equally shocking was the belief the messiah was supposed to bring the final perfection: peace, dignity, prosperity, independence. Instead of doing all this, this messiah died miserably, according to some reports, even in despair and self-denial.

Now, as faithful Jews (they still were not Christians) how ought they to have responded to his death? Should they have said, “He was a false messiah”? Should they have betrayed the original insight that this person was the messiah? Or should they have thought, “Maybe this death is another event that illuminates the meaning of the previous event”? Maybe the Crucifixion is not a refutation of Jesus’ being the messiah, but rather a clarification of the nature of redemption. Up to now, they thought that the messiah would straighten out the political and economic world, because that was the mental image of what it meant to perfect the world. But if I as an early Christian knew this was the messiah but he did not bring worldly liberation, I had an alternative to yielding faith. The alternative was to say that the death is teaching a lesson. The lesson is that true redemption is not in this world. The kingdom of God is within you. Faith leads to a world of spiritual perfection: even though I am a slave, I am free in Christ.

The Christians responded faithfully but later history suggests they made a hermeneutical error. To put it another way: In retrospect, it was a mistake to say that the explanation of the Crucifixion is that
In short, the classic Christian interpretation that Christianity has superseded Judaism is an understandable hermeneutic, rooted in Jewish models of interpretation and capable of being derived out of faithfulness to past Jewish modes of thinking.

the redemption is beyond history. That judgment generated a fundamental continuing problem of Christianity. In its faithfulness to its vision of Christ come—pitted against the shocking reality of a world of suffering and evil and poverty—Christianity is continually tempted to answer: “This vale of tears is not the real world. The world of suffering and oppression does not matter. It is trivial or secondary. The world that really counts is the spiritual world. That is where you can be born again—and free right now.” But this finding betrays the fundamental claim of Judaism that life itself and not only after life will be perfected.

As they struggled with the meaning of their faithfulness to Jesus, Christians went on to make a second error, when the destruction of the temple came a generation later. But this second error was again the outgrowth of a response of faith to a great historical event—another paradigmatic, authentic act of a religious Jew. In the light of the destruction, Jewish and Gentile Christians concluded that they had misunderstood. They thought that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Jewish promises within the bounds of Jewish life and hope going on as before. But if the Jews do not accept Jesus, even after their temple is destroyed, is this not a proof that God has in fact rejected them? And using the same hermeneutical model, would not Gentile Christians conclude that the acceptance of Christianity in the world proves that Jesus came not to continue the old and the original covenant, but rather to bring a new covenant to humanity? And since the Jews failed to understand, have they not forfeited the promise? In short, the
conclusion itself was devastating for future Jewish-Christian relations. In effect, the response to the destruction created a model of relationship in which the mere existence of the Jews is a problem for Christianity. The obvious temptation—continually given in to—was to solve the problem by getting rid of the Jews.

There were and are three classic Christian ways of removing the Jewish problem. One was to insist that the Jews were not really alive: Judaism was a fossilized religion; Jews are children of the devil; they are dead, but the devil is pumping them up, etc. This is the way of caricature and dismissal; of stereotypes of legalism and spit Judentum. In taking this tack, Christians did not deal with the possibility that God was keeping the Jews alive because God wanted their testimony to go on until the world itself was redeemed. The second way was to convert Jews to become Christians so there would be no problem. However, by and large, the Jews declined to yield their witness.

The third way, if the other two did not work, was to kill the Jews—then there was no contradiction between Jewish existence and Christianity anymore.

The supersessionist interpretation continually tempted Christianity into being neither the gospel of love it wanted to be, nor the outgrowth of Judaism seeking to reach out and realize Israel's messianic dream that it could have been. Christianity was continually led to become an otherworldly, triumphalist religion that put its own mother down; it spit into the well from which it drank.

The rabbis and the Jews had a similar problem from the other side. After all, they sensed the profound continuity from Judaism into Christianity. The hermeneutical language of Hebrew Scriptures makes many of the same claims. What made it worse, or more difficult, was that Christianity triumphed. Christianity became a world religion, far greater in its numbers than Judaism. How can one account for that, if one believes that Judaism is true and the messiah has not come yet? In Jewish terms, could there be more clear proof of Christian claims than the fact that it triumphed in history?

The Jews, too, handled the problem by a series of responses. First, the Christian victory was not really a victory: “Look how evil the world is even after Jesus' career.” This is the bedrock of Jewish response to Christianity but it did not deal with the possibility that the nature of redemption was being redefined—or widened—or partially realized.

Second, Christianity is neither a gospel of love nor God’s message, because look how cruel Christians are to Jews. Far from bringing
redemption, Christianity has brought a whole new sum of evil and cruelty into the world. That is the best proof Christianity is not a true religion.

Third, Christians claim to supersede Jewry. Christians themselves say that if Christianity is true faith, then Judaism does not exist or has no right to exist. But Jewry knows that it is alive and vital. Obviously, Christianity must be false. If your truth means that I am not valid, but I know my own validity, then you must be false.

The fourth Jewish response was that Christianity triumphed among the Gentiles. No Jew would fall for that fairy tale of a virgin mother. If you were pregnant from someone else, what would you tell your husband? This is fundamentally how medieval Jews handled Christianity. Joseph was a fool enough to believe. With one Jew, you never can tell. But the Jews as a whole would not buy it. That a whole world would buy it proves that Gentile heads can be filled with anything. This understanding bred contempt for Gentiles rather than appreciation for their joining in the work of achieving total redemption, i.e., both worldly and spiritual. Of course, the contempt was earned and reinforced by Christian mistreatment of Jews.

Just as Christians were tempted to step out of history because the messiah had come already and the ongoing suffering was a problem, so the answer was that history did not matter. Jews were also tempted to step out of history because in that arena, Christianity had won. To which the Jewish answer was that what happened in history was now unimportant. Christianity had triumphed—temporarily. When the final redemption comes, all these huge statues and towers will come crashing down, and humanity will know the truth. Jewry, this small, pitiful people which had no political clout has really been the heart of the world. All the rest has been just a big, flashy show, up front—temporarily. Therefore, Judaism also stepped out of history to wait for its final redemption.

The one thing the rabbis would give Christianity, then, is that Jesus was a messiah—a false messiah. This negative view conceded very little. Jesus was not the only false messiah in Jewish history; he was neither the first nor the last. In the seventeenth century, Shabbetai Tsvi, one of the great false messiahs of Jewish history, swept the Jewish world. The Jews are still looking for a messiah. So, if a few Jews followed Jesus, it proved nothing. The rabbis concluded that Christianity was an alien growth, developed by those who followed a false messiah.

The rabbis perhaps erred here. Understandably, they did not do
Out of defensiveness, the rabbis confused a "failed" messiah (which is what Jesus was) and a false messiah.

Out of defensiveness, the rabbis confused a "failed" messiah (which is what Jesus was) and a false messiah. A false messiah is one who has the wrong values: one who would teach that death will triumph, that people should oppress each other, that God hates us, or that sin and crime is the proper way. In the eighteenth century, a putative Jewish messiah named Jacob Frank ended up teaching his people that out of sin comes redemption; therefore, one must sin. Such is a false messiah.

A failed messiah is one who has the right values, upholds the covenant, but who did not attain the final goal. In the first century, 130–135, Bar Kochba, the great Jewish freedom fighter who led a revolt against Rome that temporarily drove Rome out of Jerusalem, sought to free the land. He was hailed by Rabbi Akiva and many great rabbis as the messiah. His rebellion was crushed; it did not bring that final step of redemption. It turned out that he was a failed messiah. But Akiva did not repudiate him. Since when is worldly success a criterion of ultimate validity in Judaism?

Calling Jesus a failed messiah is in itself a term of irony. In the Jewish tradition, failure is a most ambiguous term. Abraham was a "failure." He dreamt of converting the whole world to Judaism. He ended up barely having one child carrying on the tradition. Even that child he almost lost.

Moses was a "failure." He dreamt of taking the slaves, making them into a free people and bringing them to the Promised Land. They were hopeless slaves; they died slaves in the desert; neither they nor Moses ever reached the Promised Land.

Jeremiah was a "failure." He tried to convince the Jewish people that the temple would be destroyed unless they stopped their morally and politically wrong policies; he tried to convince them to be ethically responsible, to free their slaves, not to fight Babylonia. No one listened.

All these "failures" are at the heart of divine and Jewish
achievements. This concept of a "failed" but true messiah is found in a rabbinic tradition of the Messiah ben Joseph. The Messiah ben David (son of David) is the one who brings the final restoration. In the Messiah ben Joseph idea, you have a messiah who comes and fails, indeed is put to death, but this messiah paves the way for the final redemption.

In fact, Christians also sensed that Jesus did not exhaust the achievements of the final messiah. Despite Christian claims that Jesus was a total success (the proof being that redemption has been achieved; it is of the otherworldly kind) even Christians spoke of a Second Coming. The concept of Second Coming, in a way, is a tacit admission that if at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

One might argue then that both sides claimed—and denied—more than was necessary in order to protect their own truth against the counterclaims of the other. Both sides were too close to recognize each other, and too close and too conflicted to come to grips with each other's existence as valid in its own right. Both faiths stepped out of history to protect their own position—Christians denying anything revelatory further can happen in history because Christ is the final revelation; Jews denying any further revelation in history because Judaism is a covenant that cannot be revoked.

There was even more theological fallout to these moves. Religion tended to abandon the world to Caesar or to mammon. Religion all too often ended up as an opiate of the masses, i.e., promising people fulfillment in the great by-and-by if they accept suffering and the world as it is. In a way, each group was defining the sacred out of history into another realm.

Placing the sacred beyond history protected faith from refutation and disappointment but the cost was high. It is not surprising then that each faith tended to generate movements from time to time that sought to redress the balance or that sought to bring the "missing" part of redemption into being. What was defined as "missing" grew out of the interaction of tradition, local culture, and the historical condition of the group. Since the concept of redemption can be pushed toward a spiritual realization or a worldly one, both religions developed parallel responses along a spectrum of positions within each faith. These developments further complicated the relations between the two faiths even as they ensured even greater overlap and parallelism between them.

In retrospect, a key moment of division came in the differential response of the two groups to the destruction of the Second Temple.
The Christians reacted to the destruction as the best proof that the Jews had forfeited their covenant. If the main vehicle and channel of Jewish relationship to God has been cut off and destroyed, is this not decisive proof that God has rejected Jews? In fact, the Jewish Christians left Jerusalem before the final destruction, thus, as the Jews saw it, abandoning the Jewish people. Christians assumed that Jewry had no future and went off to make their own religion, their own faith, their own home, their own future.

The Christians were wrong. Judaism did not disappear, the Jews did not disintegrate. The rabbis encountered a crisis equal to the early Christians' experience of the Crucifixion, i.e., being cut off from the channel of revelation and connection to God, with the question gnawing at their faith: Why did evil triumph in this world? The same questions that Christians raised, Jews understood, too. Does the destruction mean that the Jews are finished? Does it mean the covenant is finished? The rabbis responded with faith in the covenant and trust in God and the goal. The rabbis answered, as the prophets before them, that the destruction was punishment for sins, and therefore a mark of divine concern—not rejection. The most fundamental insight of the rabbis was: Why did God not vanquish the Romans, even as God had destroyed the Egyptians? The rabbis concluded that God had "pulled back"—but not to abandon Jews and not to withdraw from this world because of some weakening of concern. Instead of splitting the Red Sea again, God was calling the people of Israel to participate more fully in the covenant. Instead of winning the war for the Jews, God was instructing the Jews to participate in redemption themselves. The Jews failed to do so adequately. They engaged in civil war and fought each other instead of the Romans. Since they had timed and conducted their rebellion wrongly, the Jewish failure was the Jewish failure, not God's rejection. The lesson of the destruction was not that God had abandoned Israel, but that God was deliberately hiding in order to evoke a greater response, a greater participation in the covenantal way.

This "hiding" can be seen as a kind of "secularization" process. In the temple, the manifest God showed overwhelming power. In the old temple, God was so manifest that holiness was especially "concentrated" in Jerusalem. If one went into the temple without the proper purification ritual, it was like walking into a nuclear reactor without shielding; one would inescapably die. The synagogue is a place one can enter with milder preparation and far less risk. The divine is present but its power is "shielded."
In "hiding," divine was calling on Israel to discern the divine, which was hidden but present everywhere. The manifest God is visible in Jerusalem. The hidden God can be found everywhere. One need not literally go to Jerusalem to pray. One can pray anywhere in the world. The synagogue, which was a secondary institution before the destruction, became a central institution afterward. In the temple, God spoke, either directly, or through the breastplate, or through the prophet. The synagogue is the place you go to when God no longer speaks to you.

The deepest paradox of the rabbis' teaching was that the more God is hidden, the more God is present. The difference is that in the good old days one did not have to look—the divine illumination lit up the world. Now, one must look. If one looks more deeply, one will see God everywhere. But to see God everywhere, one must understand. The key to religious understanding is learning. The Jewish people, in biblical times an ignorant peasantry, awed by sacramental, revelatory experiences in the temple, were trained by the rabbis to learn and study. Now that God no longer speaks directly, how would one know what God wants? The answer is to go to the synagogue; there one does not see God visibly, but one prays and asks God for guidance. Go ask a rabbi: "What does God want from me?" and the rabbi answers, "I do not have direct access. I will study the record of God's past revelation. I will study the precedents for the situation and give you my best judgment as to what God wants right now." Note that the human agent takes a much more active part in discerning God's will but the answer is much less certain at the end of the process. Whenever one asks a question, rabbis disagree. When there is human participation, there is disagreement but both views are valid.

In the triumph of the rabbis, there was an incredible transformation of Judaism. The manifest, sacramental religion of the Bible was succeeded by the internalized, participatory, more 'laic' faith of the rabbinic period. Indeed, the rabbis came to the conclusion that they had lived through events comparable almost to a reacceptance of the covenant. Even as Christians responded to their great religious experiences by proclaiming its record to be a New Covenant, Jews responded to theirs by affirming a renewal of the covenant.

In short, to reverse a classic Christian explanation of the relationship of Judaism and Christianity, I would argue that both Judaism and Christianity are outgrowths of and continuous with the biblical covenant; that indeed Christianity is closer to the biblical world, but not in the triumphalist way that Christianity has always
RELATIONSHIP OF JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

claimed. Rather, Christianity is a commentary on the original Exodus, in which the later event—the Christ event—is a manifest, "biblically" miraculous event. God becomes incarnate and self-validating through miracles. Obviously, many Jews will argue that closing the biblically portrayed gap between the human and the divine, between the real and the ideal, by Incarnation, is idolatrous or at least against the grain of the biblical way. But even if Incarnation is contradictory to some biblical principles, the model itself is operating out of classic biblical modes—the need to achieve redemption, the desire to close the gap between the human and divine which includes divine initiatives, etc. Thus one can argue that Incarnation is improbable and violative of other given biblical principles or that it is unnecessary in light of the continuing career of the Jewish people. But one can hardly rule out the option totally, particularly if it was intended for Gentiles and not intended for Jews. This approach grants Christianity legitimate roots in the biblical, but also locks it into a biblical mode of theological action.

By contrast, Judaism went into a second stage, continuous but developed out of the biblical mode. In this stage, God is more hidden, Judaism is more worldly. In this stage, the human matures and the covenantal model leads to greater responsibility for human beings. I personally consider the rabbinic to be a more mature mode of religion. However, I would also affirm that the sacramental mode (Christianity) is most appropriate for Gentiles. This is the first step of Gentile covenantal relationship with God. Jews were in the same mode in their first stage, also. The choice of this mode bespeaks the divine pedagogy of love which approaches people where they are and, only after they have grown into the covenant, leads them to new levels of relationship. Nor does my analysis foreclose the possibility that sacramental Christianity is in fact a higher form of biblical religion, i.e., one in which God is even more manifest and present.

N.B.: The foregoing model of the relationship of Judaism and Christianity to each other and to biblical faith is offered with great diffidence. The statement that Christianity is closer to the biblical mode can be misused to reassert the old Christian claim that Christianity is the true outgrowth of the biblical covenant and that Judaism is cut off from its roots. Moreover, the model opens great vistas of Christian legitimacy in Jewish eyes without any guarantee that the ongoing Christian denial of Jewish validity will be stopped. My affirmations, then, may feed Christian triumphalism and supersessionism. I acknowledge the risk but I think it is worth risk to
overcome the dismissals and divisiveness which weaken the role of both religions. I turn to Christians in trust and love and depend on them to prevent triumphalist abuses. Failure to prevent would only prove that Christianity is not a valid hermeneutic on the biblical covenant. It would suggest that the sum of woe brought into the world by Christianity will go on and on, undermining its claim to be a legitimate major step forward on the road to redemption.

By the same token, many Christians will find the concept that God called Jewry to a new level of relationship in the covenant a denial of their own belief in Christ as the ultimate event. I do not underestimate the challenge in giving up the monopoly claims or in recognizing Judaism as a form of independently valid relationship to God. Yet, this model offers the affirmation of the fullest possibilities of Christ: from God Incarnate to prophet or messiah or teacher—freed at least of the incubus of hatred and monopolistic claims of owning God. For this model to work, Jews as well as Christians will have to have faith in the sufficiency of God's capacity to offer love enough for everyone and that the Lord who is the Makom/Place, who is "the ground of all existence" has many messengers.

IN A NEW ERA: AFTER MODERNITY AND AFTER HOLOCAUST AND REBIRTH OF ISRAEL

The history which both religions denied in order to claim their own absolute validity came back to haunt them. In the modern period, the revolt of humans against oppression, suffering, and inequality led to an enormous growth of secularism and rejection of religion. Both Christianity and Judaism lost serious ground to revolt in the name of the very goal they were pledged to achieve in the first place. And both faiths were forced back into history by the overwhelming weight of modern culture and scholarship which continually dug at their claimed foundations, i.e., transcendent extrahistorical truth. Modern scholarship insisted that the denial of history is false. Revelation is in history. To deny that, one must ignore or contradict archeology, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, history, which is to say, to be judged to be false, nonfactual, by the standards of modern culture. Reluctantly but inexorably, both religions have been forced to confront their own historicity.

An event of great historical magnitude has now gone beyond modernity in pushing faith back into the maelstrom of history. In the Holocaust, Jews discovered they had no choice but to go back into
history. If they did not have power, they would be dead. The only way to prevent a recurrence was for Jews to go to their land, establish a state and protect themselves, to take responsibility so that the covenant people could be kept alive. In this generation, the Jewish people—secular as well as religious—took responsibility for its fate, and for the fate of the divine covenant with Jewry. This is the meaning, not always recognized, of the re-establishment of the state of Israel.

Christians also have been forced back into history by the impact of this event. Those faithful Christians realized that the evil portrait of Judaism, the whole attempt to assure Christian triumphalism, had become a source of the teaching of contempt and had convicted Christianity or implicated it in a genocide to which it was indifferent or silent. The Holocaust forced Jews and Christians to see that the attempt to protect faith against history was an error and that both religions can have no credibility in a world in which evil can totally triumph. I have argued elsewhere that the true lesson of the Crucifixion had been misunderstood by Christians because of their past triumphalism. In the light of the Holocaust, one would argue that the true lesson of the Crucifixion is that if God in person came down on earth in human flesh and was put on the cross and crucified, then God would be broken. God would be so exhausted by the agony that God would end up losing faith, and saying, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” If God could not survive the cross, then surely no human can be expected to. So the overwhelming call for both religions is to stop the Crucifixion, not to glorify it. Just as Jews, in response, took up arms and took up the power of the state, so Christians are called simultaneously to purge themselves of the hatred that made them indifferent to others, and to take up the responsibility of working in the world to bring perfection. This is the common challenge of both faiths; they can ill afford to go on focusing on each other as the enemy.

There is another possible implication. Destruction of the temple meant that God was more hidden. Therefore, one had to look for God in the more “secular” area. Living after the Holocaust, the greatest destruction of all time in Jewish history, one would have to say that God is even more hidden. Therefore, the sacred is even more present in every “secular” area. Building a better world, freeing the slaves, curing sickness, responsibility for the kind of economic perfection that is needed to make this a world of true human dignity, all these activities pose as secular. But in the profoundest sort of way these
The question is not: Where was God during the Holocaust? . . . God was with God's people—suffering, starving, being gassed and burnt alive. And that responsibility of holy secularity is the responsibility of all human beings.

Similarly, apply the rabbis' analysis of why God did not stop the Romans to the question of why God did not stop the Holocaust. The question is not: Where was God during the Holocaust? God was where God should have been during the Holocaust. God was with God's people—suffering, starving, being gassed and burnt alive. Where else would God be, when God's people are being treated that way?

The question is not: Where was God during the Holocaust? . . . God was with God's people—suffering, starving, being gassed and burnt alive.

The real question is: What was God's message when God did not stop the Holocaust? God is calling humans to take full responsibility for the achievement of the covenant. It is their obligation to take arms against evil and to stop it.

The implication of this model is that Judaism is entering a third stage, or at least a new level of covenantal development. This is the ultimate logic of covenant: If God wants humans to grow to a final perfection, then the ultimate logic of covenant is for humans to take full responsibility. This does not mean the human arrogance that dismisses God; the human arrogance that says more human power is automatically good. "Covenantal commitment" implies the humility of knowing that the human is not God. The human is like God but is ultimately called by God to be the partner. This implies the humility of recognizing that one is a creature as well as a creator. Using this covenantal understanding, one can perceive God as the Presence everywhere—suffering, sharing, participating, calling. But trust in God or awareness of God is necessary but not sufficient for living out faith. The awareness moderates the use of power; trust curbs power ethically. But the theological consequence is that without taking power, without getting involved in history, one is religiously irresponsible. To pray to God as a substitute for taking power is blasphemous.

activities are where God is most present. When God is most hidden, God is present everywhere. If when God was hidden after the destruction of the temple, one could find God in the synagogue, then when God is hidden after Auschwitz, one must find God in the street, in the hospital, in the bar. And that responsibility of holy secularity is the responsibility of all human beings.
The new human responsibility level implies that the events of our lifetime are revelatory. Therefore, one has to incorporate those events into religion and into our understanding. If we are to be true partners with God, and if we have full responsibility, then we are morally responsible for our own traditions. If there is anything in our own traditions that demeans, or denies, or degrades somebody else, then one cannot answer: it is the Word of God and so be it. One must answer: it is my responsibility. God has given me a call to take responsibility. Even if that means one must argue with God or confront God, that also is responsibility. If, indeed, God said that only a male can stand in for God, then someone who is faithful to God would have to argue with God: "It is not right—woman is also your creature, in your image." If God declared the Jews blind and hateful, to be treated as pariahs, then one must confront God and call God back to the universal love which God has revealed to humanity.

This is a time of major transformation in which the past experiences on the road to perfection are reinterpreted in light of the events of our lifetime for both religions. I believe we are living in an age of the Jewish re-acceptance of the covenant. The re-creation of Israel is the classic covenantal symbol. If you want to know if there is a God in the world and is there still hope, if you want to know whether there is still a promise of redemption—the Bible says one goes back to Israel and makes the streets of Jerusalem resound with the laughter of children and the sounds of bride and groom dancing. That is what is happening in Jerusalem right now. This is true notwithstanding all the political, economic, and moral flaws of the new earthly Jerusalem. The flaws, the tragic conflicts with Arabs, the difficulties, all these are part of the fundamental proof that here we have the hidden Presence. This moment of revelation is fully human; this moment of redemption is humanly fully responsible in the presence of God.

One might suggest that the Holocaust has its primary impact on Judaism. Nevertheless, as a Jewish theologian, I suggest that Christianity also cannot be untouched by the event. At the least, I believe that Christianity will have to enter its second stage. If we follow the rabbis’ model, this stage will be marked by greater "worldliness" in holiness. The role of the laity would shift from being relatively passive observers in a sacramental religion to full (or fuller) participation. In this stage, Christianity would make the move from being out of history to taking power, i.e., taking part in the struggle to exercise power to advance redemption. The religious message would be not accepting inequality but demanding its correction. The
movement is toward learning and understanding as against hierarchy and mystery. Christians—as Jews—will recover the true role of Israel/Jacob who struggles with God and with people, for the sake of God and of humanity.

Unless this shift takes place, those Christians who seek to correct Christianity vis-à-vis Judaism will be blocked by the fact that within the New Testament itself are hateful images of Jews. Therefore, humans must take full responsibility—not out of arrogance, not out of idolatry. It must be done without making God into the convenient one who says what one wants to hear. Out of the fullest responsibility to its covenant partner, Christianity can undergo the renewal which I believe it must undertake.

The unfinished agenda of the Jewish-Christian dialogue is the recognition of the profound interrelationship between both. Each faith community experiencing the love of God and the chosenness of God was tempted into saying: I am the only one chosen. There was a human failure to see that there is enough love in God to choose again and again and again. Both faiths in renewal may yet apply this insight not just to each other but to religions not yet worked into this dialogue. Humans are called in this generation to renew the covenant—a renewal which will demand openness to each other, learning from each other, and a respect for the distinctiveness of the ongoing validity of each other. Such openness puts no religious claim beyond possibility but places the completion of total redemption at the center of the agenda.

Judaism as a religion of redemption believes that in ages of great destruction, one must summon up an even greater response of life and of re-creation. Nothing less than a messianic moment could possibly begin to correct the balance of the world after Auschwitz. This is a generation called to an overwhelming renewal of life, a renewal built on such love and such power that it would truly restore the image of God to every human being in the world.
JEWS AND CHRISTIANS: THE CONTEMPORARY DIALOGUE

JOHN T. PAWLIKOWSKI

The age of proselytizing is over; the age of dialogue has begun between Jews and Christians.

A Jewish leader in the contemporary interreligious dialogue, Rabbi Henry Siegman of the American Jewish Congress, once termed the church-synagogue relationship "asymmetrical." What he meant was that Jews and Christians frequently come to mutual sharing today with different goals and different histories. This needs to be understood by both sides if the dialogue is to be meaningfully sustained.

Jews, as a minority, more often than not look to the dialogue as a way of ensuring the security of the people Israel throughout the world. Eradication of the vestiges of classical anti-Semitism from Christian education and liturgy naturally becomes a prime component of this goal. Generally speaking, spiritual and theological enrichment has not been very high on the Jewish agenda. Christians on the other hand are usually led to the dialogue from a twofold motivation. First, there is the genuine desire to overcome the brutal legacy of Christian anti-Semitism which, while not the sole instigating cause of Naziism, certainly was its indispensable seedbed. Allied to this goal is the desire to improve concrete relations between church and synagogue today, in part to forge coalitions on other joint social objectives. But just as vital is the realization that a proper understanding of Judaism—biblical, Second Temple, and post-biblical—is absolutely crucial to the full articulation of the basic Christian message.

John T. Pawlikowski, O.S.M., is professor of theology at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. His books include The Challenge of the Holocaust for Christian Theology (1978) and Christ in the Light of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue (1982). Hispanic readers will be interested in his article on the Jewish roots of Christianity and their implication for dialogue, "Nuestras Raíces Judías," available from the author. Pawlikowski has conducted workshops in business ethics for corporate officials, has been a consultant to the U.S. Catholic Conference on energy questions, and has been involved in politics and ethical questions in Poland, Northern Ireland, and South Africa.
Among those Christians who have been touched by the dialogue with Jews and the Jewish tradition there exists a growing conviction that a subtle Marcionism still resides in the churches. This anti-Jewish disease not only harms relations with Jews but blocks the church from genuine engagement with the world. The latter point has been emphasized, albeit indirectly, in the insistence of several prominent liberation theologians that the liberating spirit of the Exodus covenantal tradition must become central in present-day Christian faith expression. Authentic renewal in the church is dependent on a recovery of the Jewish context of its origins. Judaism stood at the heart of Jesus' spirituality and that of the early church. Judaism was not merely perceived as prelude, much less foil, as Christians have so often maintained subsequently. So even if the Jewish response to actual dialogue might be slow at times and places (at least partially understandable given the history of Christian anti-Semitism) Christians still have every reason to engage in a thorough study of the Jewish tradition past and present for the sake of their own religious integrity.

In the following pages we will explore the issues from the church's side in the dialogue, both in terms of improved Christian-Jewish relations and the enhanced understanding of Christianity itself through a greater appreciation of its Jewish roots. There are, of course, issues that the Jewish community must face for honest encounter with Christians. But before Christians push the Jewish community too hard on some of these, we need to come to grips with the agenda on our side. We must never forget that there has been a tremendous imbalance in our relationship over the centuries. Though this fact should not prevent Christians from making justified critiques of Jewish stances on some issues, our historical "oppressor" status relative to the Jewish people does place upon us the burden of starting the reconciliation process as a demonstration of our sincerity and conversion.

The first issue that deserves our attention is in fact one of the oldest—the Crucifixion story. Throughout the centuries the accounts of Jesus' death served as a source of deep conflict between the communities. Jews, assumed by Christians to be responsible for Jesus' death, were frequently persecuted as "Christ-killers." Vatican II and numerous Protestant denominations have laid to rest this historic deicide charge against the Jews which modern biblical scholarship has shown to be baseless. But this change at the official teaching level has not ended all the problems connected with the narration of Christ's death. On a popular level many believing members of the church
remain profoundly tainted in their outlook on the Jewish people by this fable. Popular culture with its *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Godspell* and with its myriad passion plays tends to reinforce the stereotype of Jewish collective responsibility for Jesus' death that has been so traditional in the churches.

Over and above removing the negative aspects of the classic depiction of the Crucifixion story it is important for people in the church to begin to recognize its potential for unifying Jews and Christians. The Lutheran ethicist Franklin Sherman captured this point well some years ago when he wrote, "The symbol of the agonizing God is the Cross of Christ. It is tragic that this symbol should have become a symbol of division between Jews and Christians, for the reality to which it points is a Jewish reality as well, the reality of suffering and martyrdom" (*Worldview*, September, 1974, p. 29).

Until this more positive side of the Crucifixion story relative to Judaism begins to emerge in Christian consciousness the anti-Semitic interpretation long associated with it will not be finally excised from the church.

In relating the story of Jesus' death the Christian churches need to begin stressing that the religious ideals which Jesus preached, and which he tried to implement in the social structures that were part of his milieu, were shared by the most creative and forward-looking forces in the Judaism of the period. It was this preaching and action that brought Jesus to Calvary. Most Christians still look upon Jesus as standing alone in his challenge to the authorities, as in conflict with the entire Jewish population of the period. In actual fact Jesus and his followers stood in concert with a significant part of the Jewish community in opposing the Romans and the oppressive priestly elite of the Jerusalem Temple. In a real way his death bore witness to the same ideals proclaimed by other rabbis.
The Jewish historian Ellis Rivkin has brought out as well as anyone the connections between Jesus and Judaism relative to the Crucifixion. He insists that for a proper understanding of Jesus' Crucifixion we need to replace the question *who* crucified him with the question *what* crucified him. As Rivkin interprets the events, Jesus died a victim of Roman imperial policy. His death was ordered by the type of political regime which throughout history has eliminated those who have stood up for human freedom, insight, and a new way of understanding human interrelationships. Those Jews who might have collaborated with the Romans in Jesus' execution deserve to be condemned in Rivkin's view. The Jewish masses, however, were greatly oppressed under the Roman colonial government, so much so that they would undertake an outright revolt against its tyrannical authority less than thirty years later. Hence, rather than serving as

The time has come to eliminate the term "Old Testament" from the Christian vocabulary about the Bible and to use instead the term "Hebrew Scriptures."

Jesus' executioners, the majority of the Jewish population, insists Rivkin, saw in his Crucifixion "their own plight of helplessness, humiliation and subjection."

Another important element in the restoration of the Jewish context of Christianity is a deeper appreciation within the church of the first part of our Bible—the Hebrew Scriptures. Too often Christians have simply looked upon the so-called Old Testament as a prelude to the spiritual insights found in the New Testament. We need to increase our consciousness of the Hebrew Scriptures as a source of ongoing religious meaning for us in their own right, and not merely as a backdrop for the teaching of Jesus. It is helpful here to recall that for Jesus and his apostles there was no "Old" Testament. They viewed the Hebrew Bible as "the Scriptures," as standing at the core of their religious identity. This is an attitude contemporary Christianity needs to recapture. Contemporary Christian spirituality and preaching remain peripherally influenced at best by the Hebrew Scriptures.

The time has come to eliminate the term "Old Testament" from the Christian vocabulary about the Bible. Though admittedly the word *old* can connote "reverence" or "long-standing experience," used in reference to the first part of the Bible it tends to create an attitude that
The period 150 B.C.E. to C.E. 50 was not altogether sterile religiously and gave rise to many new, creative groups, including the Pharisees.

develop into an attitude that sees postbiblical Jewish religious expression as totally shallow and decadent. This is far from the historical situation. Central to avoiding this dangerous trap is a renewed appreciation of growth during the Second Temple period in Judaism.

Most Christians remain unaware of a gap in the Bible of approximately two centuries. The last book of the Hebrew Scriptures—the Second Book of Maccabees—dates from around 150 B.C.E. And even if we include the Wisdom literature written in Greek around
90 B.C.E. (and not part of the Jewish or Protestant canon), much more than a hundred years passed until the appearance of the initial Pauline letters around c.e. 50. The usual Christian attitude has been that this was a very sterile period in Judaism in which people had lost touch with the soul of the Jewish religious tradition represented by the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Psalms. An empty legalism dominated Jewish faith at this time and hence many Jews were hungry for the new spiritual insights offered by the early church—so ran the classic stereotype. As a result of a growing body of Christian and Jewish scholarship on this historical period, we now know that such a picture of a sterile, legalistic Judaism in the Second Temple period, or what Christians sometimes term the “intertestamental period,” is far from accurate. True, some segments of Judaism had fallen into such a state. But new creative Jewish groups emerged on the scene to counter this regressive tendency. And it was these innovative forms of Judaism that most directly influenced the teaching of Jesus and the structures of early Christianity.

Among these new innovative groups the Pharisees were the most prominent. The mention of the term “Pharisee” typically conjures up among Christians images of fierce opposition to Jesus, of harsh legalism, of shallow piety. The Pharisees seem to most churchpeople to be representatives of everything Jesus condemned. This understanding of the Pharisees, however, symbolizes the general ignorance of Second Temple Judaism in the church. Fortunately an increasing number of biblical scholars and historians have begun to question this Christian bias.

The Pharisees sought to make the Torah come alive in every Jew by adapting its commandments to changing life patterns in Judaism. Contemporary research has shown that the Pharisees were no strangers to the deepest meaning of the law. It now appears likely that Jesus attacked only certain groups within the Pharisee movement, not the movement as a whole. And even in these controversies their differences did not obliterate the similarity of their basic position on what it meant to be a religious person. In large measure Jesus’ battle with “the Pharisees” needs to be understood as an “in-house” struggle.

As with most scholarly questions about the ancient period, there is far from full agreement among present-day researchers about all aspects of the Pharisee movement. Hence some caution is necessary in reaching conclusions about Pharisaism itself and its relationships to Jesus and the early church. But running through the various viewpoints are some trends which include the following.
Central to the Pharisee challenge to the established form of Judaism after the rebuilding of the Second Temple stood a new outlook on the relationship between God and the human person. It was one marked by a notion of a far more personal and intimate divine-human link than previous expression of Judaism could conceive. This new perception represented so fundamental a change in religious consciousness that the Pharisees felt obligated to replace the names for God found in the Hebrew Scriptures with ones more expressive of the new union between God and the human family which they had uncovered. Among the principal names they applied to God was “Father.” While this term has definite limitations in our era because of its inability to express fully the femininity of God, in its setting it spoke not of gender superiority but of a heightened sense of the profoundity of God’s link to each individual person.

This new sense of divine-human intimacy ultimately undercut the basis of the intermediary/hereditary system of religious elitism which prevailed in the older Sadducean temple/priesthood concept of Jewish religion, up till then the dominant form of Judaism. As the Pharisees saw it, all men and women, no matter what their social status or bloodline, had such standing in the sight of God that they could relate to God on a personal basis without further need to use the temple priests as intermediaries. The prominent Jewish scholar on Pharisaism, Jacob Neusner, has written the following about the ultimate implications of this aspect of the movement in his volume *From Politics To Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* (Prentice-Hall, 1973): “The Pharisees thus arrogated to themselves—and to all Jews equally—the status of Temple priests, and performed actions restricted to priests on account of that status. The table of every Jew in his home was seen as being like the table of the Lord in the Jerusalem Temple. The commandment, ‘You shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy people,’ was taken literally: everyone is a priest, everyone must keep the priestly laws.”

The consciousness transformation regarding the God-human relationship led the Pharisees to undertake a major overhaul of the liturgical, ministerial, and institutional life of Second Temple Judaism and, in so doing, lay some of the groundwork for the early Christian church. Picking up the mantle of the prophets, the Pharisees hoped to translate prophetic ideals into the daily lives of the Jewish people of their time.

Among the revolutionary changes brought about by the Pharisees
Among the contributions of the Pharisees were the development of the synagogue and the growth of the role of the rabbi.

Frequently temple and synagogue are employed as synonyms. This regrettably has the effect of blurring the profound differences in their basic conception. The temple was seen primarily as the house of God, the synagogue as the house of the people of God. The distinction was crucial. The temple served chiefly as a locale for cult and sacrifice. The synagogue, as developed by Pharisaism, was intended to go far beyond this goal. It was designed to address the total needs of the community—prayer, study, justice.

The second innovative feature of the Pharisee revolution was the growth of the role of the rabbi who gradually replaced the temple priest as the central religious figure in Judaism. The rabbi's task was to interpret and, more importantly, to specify the religious obligations incumbent upon a believing Jew. He was neither prophet nor priest. Any layman could become a rabbi regardless of his birth. The rabbinic role was an acquired not an inherited one in Second Temple Judaism. It was based on the strength of a person's service to the community.

The crucial dimension of the rabbinate that needs careful scrutiny is the fact that the rabbi was not a cultic figure. His role was one of instruction and interpretation. What is especially significant about the rabbinate is its noncultic status. A person whose primary mission consisted in offering specific interpretations with respect to the religious and social problems of the day gradually replaced the temple priest as the principal human symbol and representative of Jewish religious commitment.

A new appreciation of the synagogue and the rabbinate as developed by the Pharisees will provide a sound basis for discussions about lay ministry and about such movements as the "basic communities" springing up in Latin America and elsewhere. It will also aid Christian self-understanding in other central areas such as eucharistic theology, the theological meaning of tradition, afterlife, and social ethics.

In view of this positive link between Christianity and Pharisaism we
No discussion of the State of Israel in the dialogue will prove successful unless Christians clearly acknowledge the vulnerability of Israel.

No discussion of the State of Israel in the dialogue will prove successful unless Christians clearly acknowledge the vulnerability of Israel. It remains deeply affected by the general turbulence in Middle East politics, superpower rivalries, and a pervasive anti-Israel
theological stance in Islamic religious circles. Israel's national ethos remains strongly conditioned by the trauma of the Holocaust and the memory of persecution in Arab lands and in the USSR. As a survivor of Auschwitz once told me on a late-night walk on his kibbutz in northern Galilee, "You must understand that this land is our resurrection." Too few Christians, especially many of those prepared to criticize Israeli governmental policy, appreciate or affirm this continuing sense of vulnerability. All such criticism from Christians that fails to display a deep sensitivity for this understandable sense of Jewish vulnerability deserves to fall on hard ground.

And the Holocaust too cannot be forgotten in any discussion of Israel. The moral stain remains deeply embedded in the Christian soul. While proper response to Christian failure during the Nazi period should not be excessive guilt but continued support of the people Israel today in both their religious and political dimensions, the Holocaust must remain central to Christian memory. And while the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 should never be viewed as a recompense for the Holocaust from the West, the deep, abiding connection between the two events needs to be understood by Christians.

Once Christians have grasped this Jewish sense of vulnerability then they properly may raise questions about changing aspects of Israeli life and policy. For one, Christians will need to understand better the gradual emergence of Oriental Jewry, largely people who fled to Israel from Arab countries. They are acquiring a new social and political prominence that in all likelihood will profoundly affect the overall ethos of the country and in time have important consequences for the Christian-Jewish dialogue. Some have seen the Oriental Jewish community as archconservative in terms of a political accommodation with the Palestinians. But some Oriental Jewish leaders such as former Israeli president Yitzhak Navon have cautioned about any easy assumptions in this regard. Over and above politics there is the whole range of Oriental Jewish religious thought and liturgy which has hardly penetrated Christian consciousness in the dialogue. The ascendency of Oriental Jewry may be the catalyst for freeing the Christian-Jewish dialogue from its almost exclusively Western context up till now.

The issue of Israeli treatment of Arabs, both in Israel proper where many have spoken of a growing marginalization of Israel's Arab citizens and in the administered areas, will grow as an issue in Christian-Jewish relations. Certain Christian groups have tended to
over exaggerate the negative record of Israel in this regard. But there are definite problems of domestic prejudice as well as seeming annexationist policies on the West Bank that can no longer be swept under the carpet in the dialogue. This also holds true for the case of Jewish terrorism against Christian and Muslim institutions in the country. While such Jewish terrorism pales in comparison to terrorism from the Arab side, it represents a growing concern, as does increasing ultraorthodox Jewish influence in the city of Jerusalem. Finally, Israel's growing involvement in political events in Central America and Africa must be addressed. This involvement is the basis for increased criticism of Israel within the churches by those with little direct interest in the Middle East. While firmly resisting the attempts in some church and political circles to isolate Israel totally as a political pariah, there is room here for serious questions by Christians to their Jewish partners in the dialogue. Jewish appeals to Israeli self-interest, while to be taken seriously, will not end the concern on the part of Christians. Apart from political dimensions of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the dialogue will also need to turn its attention to what scholars have termed the Jewish "land tradition," a tradition with deep roots in the Hebrew Scriptures. Pioneering work by several Christian scholars will prove especially useful in the discussion. Prominent among these scholars are W. D. Davies, Walter Brueggemann, and John Townsend. Although differences exist in their perspectives, they nonetheless seem to agree that (1) the New Testament does not clearly rule out Judaism's historic claims to the land; and (2) that land remains important for Christian faith as well, at least to the extent that the process of salvation in Christianity is deeply rooted in the process of human history. (Davies's most recent volume, The Territorial Dimension of Judaism, is especially strong in bringing out the land dimension of Judaism.)

While recognizing that the theological approach to the land may be one of the basic differences between Christianity and Judaism, Christians can still profit greatly both in their own self-understanding as well as in their understanding of Jews through discussions of the land tradition. Christians can also properly address some questions to their Jewish brothers and sisters. Does the land tradition in Judaism necessarily demand perpetual sovereignty over a piece of real estate in the Middle East? Could the values inherent in the land tradition be sustained under some other political arrangement? Put another way, is the nation-state de fide in Jewish theology? Another major question concerns the relationship between Zionism and the more universal-
Jews and Christians must probe the Holocaust together, for Naziism was not simply another example of human brutality on a mass scale—it marked the beginning of a new era in human history.
The most promising theological avenue to explore is that of seeing Judaism and Christianity as two distinctive religions, each with a unique faith despite their historic links.

have undertaken this effort in my volume Christ in Light of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue. Paul van Buren is at work on a multivolume effort along these lines. Other Christian scholars are working on pieces of a new Jewish-Christian relational model for theology. The effort, still very much in its infancy, must continue.
At this moment no single theological reformulation of Christianity’s relationship to Judaism has won general acceptance. The only areas in which there is significant consensus among scholars who have studied the question are (1) that the Christ-event did not invalidate the Jewish faith perspective, (2) that Christianity is not superior to Judaism in every way, nor is it simply the fulfillment of Judaism, and (3) that Christianity needs to incorporate dimensions from its original Jewish context, most notably the sense of rootedness in history. The respective positions advocated by dialogue scholars that Christianity is essentially Judaism for the Gentiles, or that the Christ-event is one among several messianic experiences in world history, or that Christianity and Judaism are distinctive religions, each with a unique faith perspective despite their historic links, have each drawn support from several scholars. It is my belief that the third position remains the most promising for further development.

Within this third approach certain suppositions are crucial. The first is that any christology which simply presents the meaning of Jesus’ ministry as the fulfillment of Jewish messianic prophetic is invalid. Others include the recognition that the basic link between Jesus and Judaism is to be found in his appropriation of the revolutionary vision of Pharisaism, the realization that the basic difference between Christianity and Judaism lies not so much in fulfillment/nonfulfillment as in the notion of the Incarnation and the awareness that Judaism’s principal contribution to christological thought comes from an understanding of the Exodus covenantal tradition and the sense of peoplehood and salvation within history that this tradition entails. Additionally this perspective recognizes that Christian-Jewish dialogue on the christological questions has implications for the church throughout the world and not only in the North Atlantic region as has sometimes been implied. Because there is no way fully to grasp christology without understanding the thoroughly Jewish context of Jesus’ ministry, Christian knowledge of Judaism becomes an imperative, irrespective of the presence or absence of Jews in a particular geographic area. Likewise it is aware that Christianity and Judaism will both have to prepare themselves to relate their covenantal theological traditions to other world religions and ideologies. The growing interdependence of the world community makes this a theological as well as an ethical imperative for both faith communities.

In summary, the age of proselytizing, prejudice, and confrontation between Judaism and Christianity is over. Despite continued tensions the age of dialogue has begun.
Contemporary scholars seek to correct an interpretive error made a century ago.

First, let us make our presuppositions clear. Whether there is anti-Judaism in the New Testament or in certain selected documents or passages within it is a matter of serious scholarly dispute today. It is not the purpose of this essay to enter into this dispute. What is not in question is that there are strongly negative images of Jews and Judaism in the New Testament and that what we may fairly call “anti-Judaism” has long constituted a frame of reference in terms of which these images and the larger New Testament have been interpreted. It is this interpretive scheme which is being decisively challenged by several recent scholars. This challenge to the anti-Judaic hermeneutical model arose before the period of Hitler’s Holocaust against the Jews (1933–45); it is only since the Holocaust, however, that it has been picked up and renewed within the discipline of biblical scholarship. The purpose of this essay is to indicate the character of the alternative proposal in the hope that ministers of the gospel will familiarize themselves with it and make use of it in their preaching and teaching.

Before depicting the constructive alternative, we must describe the anti-Jewish model of New Testament interpretation. In the light of this description, the significance of the emerging new paradigm will be more clearly visible. Three twentieth-century Christian scholars, Charlotte Klein, George Foot Moore, and E. P. Sanders, have delineated the structure of anti-Jewish biblical scholarship.

Essentially, Klein’s work focuses on four areas of concern: the so-called “late Judaism,” law and legalistic piety, the Pharisees, and...
Jewish responsibility for the Crucifixion. Her careful analysis of scores of German biblical scholars can only be briefly surveyed here. As a rule, they fix the name of “late Judaism” (emphasis mine) on that phase of Israelite religion running from Ezra and Nehemiah and the return from Exile to the period of the revolt of Bar Kochba. The very name they use for it indicates that they regard it as Judaism in decline and on the way to its own death, a Judaism in relation to which Jesus, Paul, and Christianity can only be understood in terms of the starkest contrast. Overwhelmingly, German scholars characterize this Judaism as inauthentic, a Judaism that turned its back on genuine faith in the Lord, the God of Israel, and the message of the prophets. Henceforth, Judaism is on the wrong track, having abandoned its true faith. Georg Fohrer once said that it failed in its “divine task by constantly falling away from the way of life imposed on [it] . . . and wanting to use God merely as metaphysical security for [its] own life.” (Although typical of Fohrer’s earlier views, this kind of remark is no longer indicative of his thought.)

Late Judaism is described, hence, as an absurd result of a decadent, “blind” rabbinic scholarship that is exaggeratedly preoccupied with the letter of the law. It mistakenly sought to re-establish temple worship and the political security of the people in a state of their own, failing to realize that Jews are a religious community rather than a nation and that ideally they should live under nomadic conditions, wandering among the nations, to ensure the purity of the central Jewish message of freedom. It is incredible that Augustine’s old theology of the wandering Jew should have itself found a home in modern, ostensibly “critical” biblical scholarship! But here it is, together with its obvious implications, for anti-Jewish thinkers, for contemporary international affairs: the State of Israel is a theological mistake of late Judaism.

“Late” Judaism, then, is both preparatory for and inferior to Christianity. Jesus is interpreted as having rejected this “old” Judaism and, with his words and work, it no longer forms a part of the history of Israel. In him and in his Crucifixion by Jews, Jewish history comes to an end. On this model, “late” Judaism was in a state of decadence, orthodoxy, and legalism. Its faith had become externalized and rigid; God had become distant and the prophetic message forgotten. Jesus decisively rejects this old, dead Judaism.

Law and legalistic piety typify “late” Judaism and are condemned. That Torah is hardly rendered with accuracy as “law” is not acknowledged. Joachim Jeremias goes so far as to call legalistic piety
the “cancer” of Judaism. Such piety “separates us from God.” Consequently, legalistic exegesis of the Old Testament is “blind.” Only the church can read the Scriptures. Legalistic Jews were “deaf to the gospel.”

Jeremias is or is thought to be by some a counterweight to Rudolf Bultmann in New Testament scholarship. Both share a common failing, however: neither knew Second Temple Judaism from its own sources and each was quite capable of caricaturing it. Bultmann’s anti-Jewish remarks are scattered throughout his writings. Critics of Bultmann, however, sometimes go overboard and charge him with anti-Semitism, which is racist Jew-hatred and something different from harboring negative images of first-century Judaism. In an address called “The Task of Theology in the Present Situation,” delivered on May 2, 1933, Bultmann declared:

> it is clear that we have to decide whether Christian faith is to be valid for us or not. It, for its part, can relinquish nothing of its nature and claim; for ‘verbum Domini manet in aeternum.’ And we should as scrupulously guard ourselves against falsifications of the faith by national religiosity as against a falsification of national piety by Christian trimmings. The issue is either/or!4

Whatever his failings, Bultmann never lost sight of the promise and command of the gospel.

The third major theme in the anti-Jewish interpretive model is the Pharisees, who continue to be represented as the enemies of Jesus’ teaching. This theme can carry over even into liberation theologies. When Jon Sobrino discusses Jesus’ approach to prayer, he does so under the rubric of “Jesus’ Criticism of Contemporary Prayer.” He starts with the Lukan version of the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, in which, he says, “Jesus condemns the prayer of the Pharisees [note the plural] because it is the self-assertion of an egotistical I and hence vitiated at its very core.” Sobrino transforms a parable into a general indictment. The Pharisee’s “pole of reference” is not to God but to himself. Also, the Pharisee is “even less oriented toward other human beings. He holds them in contempt . . . and he thanks God that he is not like them’” (Christology at the Crossroads, p. 147). Pharisaic prayer is a mechanical ceremony in self-deception. The issue of Jesus’ understanding of prayer is used merely as an example; on every point Jesus contradicts the teaching of the Pharisees. The way Sobrino, following Jeremias, knows this is by

39
applying the "criterion of dissimilarity" to the figure of the historical Jesus.

Last, Jewish guilt in the death of Jesus is the theme in which the anti-Jewish reading of the New Testament reaches its zenith. Klein cites Karl Rahner as stating that "the crucified Lord is betrayed and abandoned by his friends, rejected by his people, repudiated by the Church of the Old Testament." Jeremias claims: "It was an act of unparalleled risk which Jesus performed when, from the full power of his consciousness of sovereignty, he openly and fearlessly called . . . [the Pharisees] to repentance, and this act brought him to the cross." In the last analysis, the religious leaders of Judaism have Jesus killed, because of his teaching. He "is eventually condemned because of his conception of God" (Christology at the Crossroads, p. 206).

More than sixty years ago, George Foot Moore pointed out the distorting nature of this anti-Jewish frame of reference. He showed that the interpretation of Judaism given by Ferdinand Weber in his System der altsynagogalen Theologie aus Targum, Midrasch, und Talmud had for forty years "been the chief resource of Christian writers who have dealt ex professo or incidentally with Judaism at the beginning of the Christian era" ("Christian Writers," p. 228). Weber's collection of Jewish source-material reflected his view of Judaism: antithetical to Christianity, based on the belief that works earn salvation, denying the grace of God, a works-righteousness that was uncertain of its own salvation. Moore also demonstrated that Weber's interpretation was continued by Emil Schürer and Wilhelm Bousset, two highly influential scholars. On their use of Weber, he comments that "a delectus of quotations made for a polemic purpose is the last kind of a source to which a historian should go to get a just notion of what a religion really was to its adherents" ("Christian Writers," pp. 221-22).

Fifty-six years after Moore's classic essay, E. P. Sanders published his Paul and Palestinian Judaism, in which he delineates the historical course of this "Weber/Schürer/Bousset description of Judaism." Sanders corroborates Klein's demonstration that numerous biblical scholars have persisted in using this model to interpret Judaism. His own fresh and penetrating depiction of Second Temple Judaism leads him to conclude that "the Judaism of before 70 kept grace and works in the right perspective, did not trivialize the commandments of God, and was not especially marked by hypocrisy." Sanders proceeds to note:

The frequent Christian charge against Judaism . . . is not that some individual Jews misunderstood, misapplied and abused their
religion, but that Judaism necessarily tends towards petty legalism, self-serving and self-deceiving casuistry, and a mixture of arrogance and lack of confidence in God. But the surviving Jewish literature is as free of these characteristics as any I have ever read (Paul and Palestinian Judaism, p. 427).

What one does find in reading Jewish literature is that the promise and command of God are always kept in relationship to one another and that the grace of God in choosing and ultimately redeeming Israel is strongly emphasized.

Although brief, this description of the anti-Jewish interpretive scheme provides the backdrop against which the new scholarship can be represented.

THE PHARISEES

In the anti-Jewish paradigm which has just been reviewed, the Pharisees are regarded as the chief examples of what went wrong in Judaism; it was to what they stood for that Paul and Jesus were in total opposition. Yet in the emerging scholarship it is precisely they whose reputation is most being refurbished. Two points are involved, one negative and one positive. Negatively, (a) Paul never mentions Pharisees as his enemies, and (b) scholars increasingly recognize that the conflicts between Jesus and the Pharisees in the Gospels are the products of later hostility between the Pharisee leaders of the synagogue and the church of the late first century. Writes Norman Perrin:

So the diatribe against "the scribes and Pharisees" in Matthew 23 does not reflect a conflict between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees of his day, but one fifty years later between Matthew and their descendants spreading their influence from Jamnia.8

The late first century was a time of desperation and conflict for both church and synagogue, each threatened by turmoil from within and by the Roman Empire from without, and the later New Testament writings reflect the Christian side of this dissension.

The positive point is that in the new scholarship the image of the Pharisees is drastically improved. Here they are no longer the polemically targeted "chief heavies" of the New Testament but, rather, the one group of official Jews (the others being the Sadducees,
the Zealots, and the Essenes) who are sufficiently popular with the people to survive. All the rest, except for the followers of Jesus, disappear.

The problem of reconstructing a historical picture of the Pharisees is much the same as that of retrieving the historical Jesus. We have to work backwards from later sources, sources motivated by other than historical concerns. Nonetheless, a battery of scholars has devoted much attention to this quest and within the confines of historical probability we can make the following points.9

The Pharisee method of teaching, called the "oral Torah," teaches by way of interpreting the written Torah; "it is written, but the meaning is . . . ." Matthew regularly attributes this method to Jesus: "You have heard it said, but I say unto you," a technical Pharisee expression. The Pharisees also created the role of the rabbi, the one who so teaches and who interprets, specifies, and transforms

In the new scholarship the image of the Pharisees is drastically improved.

Inherited teachings and obligations. All in all, the Gospels contain forty-two references to Jesus as teacher/rabbi and he teaches not only by oral Torah but by telling stories, also a favorite rabbinic approach. We are frequently told by the Synoptics that it was Jesus' custom to go to the synagogue (Luke 4:16), the institution that embodied the Pharisee type of faith.

As to content, the teachings attributed to Jesus are so remarkably parallel to those of the liberal Pharisees, followers of Hillel (the conservative Pharisees were of the school of Shammai) that Jacob Neusner declares: "Some of his [Hillel's] teachings are in spirit and even in exact wording close to the teachings of Jesus."10 Jesus' proclamation that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27) reflects the Hillelite saying attributed to Rabbi Jonathan ben Joseph: "Scripture says, 'The Sabbath is holy for you' (Exodus 31:14). This means it is given to you (man) not you to the Sabbath."11 Jesus' simplification of all the commandments into two is similar to what is found both in Hillel and Philo; his use of the Shema ("hear, O Israel") and his teachings on prayer (both the Lord's Prayer and the parable of the Pharisee and the publican) are in the Pharisee
tradition. Also, the Pharisees were highly self-critical to the extent that
the criticism of them attributed to Jesus in the Gospels, if authentic,
need be no more than Pharisee self-criticism. In spite of what the
anti-Jewish paradigm says, the Pharisees also laid great stress on the
all-presence of God (the Shekinah) and on the grace of God.12

A great Jewish scholar of our time, Leo Baeck, a rabbi who survived
Theresienstadt and Hitler’s attempted “final solution,” sums it up this
way:

Jesus, in all of his traits, is completely a genuine Jewish character. A
man such as he could only grow up on the soil of Judaism . . . . Jesus
is a genuine Jewish personality, all of his striving and acting, his
bearing and feeling, his speech and his silence bear the stamp of the
Jewish manner, the imprint of Jewish idealism, and the best of what
Judaism gave and gives, but what only existed, at that time, in
Judaism. He was a Jew among Jews; out of no other people could a
man such as he have been able to have this effect; in no other people
could he have found the apostles who believed in him.13

Jesus’ ethical teachings seem clearly continuous with those of the
contemporary school of Hillel; when the content differs, the method is
the same. Obviously there is much else in the sayings attributed to
Jesus (eschatology and apocalyptic, the coming kingdom of God and
Jesus’ role in that coming) which is beyond the scope of our discussion
here. The argument is not that Jesus was just another Pharisee or that
he was in no way different from them. Precision in this matter is
probably beyond the reach of possibility.

The following do seem to be fair conclusions: (a) a more objective
view of the Pharisees results in a more favorable and less biased
picture of them; (b) the conflicts portrayed in the Gospels between
Jesus and the Pharisees are retrojected from the embattled situation of
the later first-century church; (c) ministers of the gospel should
familiarize themselves with this new scholarship on the Pharisees and
cease perpetuating negative images of the forebears of the synagogue
across the street; and (d) the good news of God is expressed in every
pericope of the Gospels, including the conflict stories. This good news
is what we should preach and teach, the promise of the love of God for
each and all and the command of God for justice to each and all.

When we turn to the Apostle Paul, we find a wealth of scholarship
which takes a new look at the apostle to the Gentiles.14 In spite of this
abundance of new scholarship, however, pastors will find that the traditional anti-Jewish interpretation of Paul is still present in commentaries on his letters. For instance, in his commentary on Romans, Matthew Black comments:

The key to an understanding of Paul's essential thesis is his conviction of the total bankruptcy of contemporary Pharisaic "scholasticism," which seemed to base the whole range of active right relationships within the Covenant ("righteousness") on the meticulous observation of the injunctions of the torah as expanded in the "tradition of the elders." This was "legalistic righteousness," a form of ethics based entirely on a code, external and "written," losing sight entirely of the gracious personal Will of a holy and good God, of which it was originally intended to be the divine vehicle of expression. 15

Were the question for Paul indeed that of Pharisaism or the gospel, it is striking that he never once put it that way. Nor does he ever juxtapose law and gospel. He never speaks of Pharisaism. In the one passage where he uses "Pharisee," he says:

If any other man thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law blameless (Phil. 3:4-6).

Paul will express regret for having persecuted the church (Gal. 1:13), but he never expresses regret for having been a Pharisee. And his one autobiographical comment on his relationship to the law, found in the passage quoted above, states that as to righteousness under it he was "blameless."

In Paul among Jews and Gentiles, Krister Stendahl interprets Paul's thinking as having had as a basic concern the relation between Jews and Gentiles with which, he says, the main lines of Pauline interpretation "have for many centuries been out of touch . . ." (p. 1). Stendahl seeks to show that Paul's doctrine of justification was worked out in order to defend the rights of Gentile converts to be full and genuine heirs to the promises of God to Israel and not as a response to the kinds of pangs of conscience which Luther had with the law. He regards Romans 9–11 as the climax of Paul's most famous letter, i.e., Paul's reflections on the relation between the church and the Jewish people. Paul does not say that ultimately Israel will accept
Jesus as the Christ but simply that “all Israel will be saved” (11:26), and Paul writes this whole section of Romans (10:18–11:36) without using the name of Jesus Christ. The final doxology in the passage is the only one in Paul without a christological reference. Says Stendahl:

It is tempting to suggest that in important respects Paul’s thought here approximates an idea well documented in later Jewish thought from Maimonides to Franz Rosenzweig. Christianity . . . is seen as the conduit of Torah, for the declaration of both monotheism and the moral order to the Gentiles. The differences are obvious, but the similarity should not be missed: Paul’s reference to God’s mysterious plan is an affirmation of a God-willed coexistence between Judaism and Christianity in which the missionary urge to convert Israel is held in check (p. 4).

In working his way toward this conclusion, Stendahl makes several points. First, following his method of insisting on a simple reading of

Stendahl argues that we must see Paul’s experience on the Damascus Road as a call rather than a conversion.

the text unobscured by what we already think we know, he contends that we must see Paul’s experience on the Damascus Road as a call rather than a conversion. Conversion usually connotes a change from one religion to another, in this case from Judaism to Christianity. Paul, however, was not converted but called to the specific task of apostleship to the Gentiles. Of his own experience, Paul says: “when he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles . . .” (Gal. 1:15-16). In this comment are found clear allusions to those calls issued to Isaiah and Jeremiah that they become prophets to the nations (Isa. 49:1, 6; Jer. 1:5). Rather than being a conversion, Paul’s experience brought him to a new understanding of the law “which is otherwise an obstacle to the Gentiles” (p. 9). A careful reading of the three accounts of Paul on the Damascus Road yields the same result (Acts 9, 22, and 26). Paul did not change his religion: “It is obvious that Paul remains a Jew as he fulfills his role as an Apostle to the Gentiles” (p. 11).

Second, Stendahl notes that “justification” and words related to it
appear pervasively in the Pauline epistles, while "forgiveness" and the verb "to forgive" shine by their absence.

Paul's doctrine of justification by faith has its theological context in his reflection on the relation between Jews and Gentiles, and not within the problem of how man is to be saved, or how man's deeds are to be accounted, or how the free will of individuals is to be asserted or checked (p. 26).

Whenever we find Paul discussing justification, a quick check of the context will disclose, lying near at hand, a specific reference to Jews and Gentiles. For example:

For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is one; and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of their faith and the uncircumcised through their faith (Rom. 3:28-30).

Paul goes on to comment in this passage that to hold this view is to uphold, not overthrow, the law.

This use of the doctrine of justification is continued by a student of Paul who wrote to the Ephesians: "For by grace you have been saved through faith"; and three verses later says, "Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh . . . were . . . separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:8, 11-12). The doctrine of justification, then, has not so much to do with the forgiveness of the individual as with the salvation-historical inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God.

Paul, says Stendahl, is "our champion, a Jew who by vicarious penetration gives to us Gentiles the justification for our claims to be God's children in Jesus Christ" (p. 76).

Third, Stendahl issues a stern caution against our Protestant and Western tendency to interpret Paul in the light of what he calls our "introspective conscience." Usually we follow the Augustinian-Lutheran interpretation of justification in terms of a struggle with the conscience. Paul, however, had very little to say about his own sin, whereas he said a lot about his physical weakness, his "thorn in the flesh" (pp. 40-52). Paul's own conscience was apparently quite "robust" (p. 80). Luther's interpretation of Paul arose in the context of late medieval piety in which Paul's comments on law, works, Jews,
Gentiles, etc., came to be regarded as a discussion of legalism and grace. "Where Paul was concerned about the possibility for Gentiles to be included in the messianic community, his statements are now read as answers to the quest for assurance about man's salvation out of a common human predicament" (p. 86). This Lutheran interpretation has a considerable impact on the reading of specific texts. Reinterpretation of a classic text is by no means illegitimate; indeed it is necessary if a text is to remain a classic. Also, reinterpretation may make possible significant theological insight, as in Luther's case it certainly did. To fail to note that one is reinterpreting, however, can result, in this instance, in attributing to Paul a view of Judaism that he did not hold and in missing his salvation-historical way of saying that through the no of Jews to Jesus, the Way was opened for the gospel to move to the Gentiles.

In his "Paul and the Torah," Lloyd Gaston argues that Paul was an apostle to the Gentiles, that he was commissioned by the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15; Gal. 2:1-10) to preach among the Gentiles, that he was not commissioned to preach among Jews and that he apparently never did. All his letters were sent to congregations overwhelmingly made up of Gentiles. Foremost among the problems faced by those Gentile followers of Jesus was the right of Gentiles qua Gentiles to full citizenship in the people of God without adopting the Torah of Israel. Gaston's thesis is that legalism—"the doing of certain works in order to win God's favor and be counted righteous—arose as a gentile and not a Jewish problem at all" (p. 58). It was the God-fearers not under the covenant who "had to establish their righteousness by the performance of certain works, compounded by uncertainty as to what these works should be" (p. 58). The term "works of the law," not found in any Jewish texts, refers to the Gentile habit of adopting certain Jewish practices as a means of self-justification. How else can Paul address the Galatians with the question: "Tell me, you who desire to be under law, do you not hear the law?" (4:21). In this passage, remarks Gaston, one hears Paul the Pharisee who really knows the Torah replying to amateurs who are only "playing with the idea" (p. 64). "When Paul is most negative about the law, he opposes it to—"the law, i.e., the Torah! Opposed to 'the other law, the law of sin' is 'the Torah of God' (Rom. 7:22)'" (p. 65).

Paul spoke as he did to Gentiles because with them a new vocabulary was necessary. He never spoke to them of repentance, a central Jewish idea, because "that meant turning back to the God of the covenant, and Paul was interested in gentiles turning to him for the first time" (p. 65). Gaston's article is useful to ministers in helping
us to see clearly to whom and therefore to what problem Paul was writing. Paul never wrote a letter to a synagogue of Jews advocating that they abandon the Torah. He did write against Gentiles infatuated with Jewish ways and intent on playing at being Jews and frequently his criticism of them was itself quite Jewish: “Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision” (Rom. 2:25).

According to J. Christiaan Beker in his Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought, the model of Paul as the originator of catholic Christianity was the model of Paul as having liberated Christianity “from its so-called Jewish limitations. Paul the catholic theologian was the ‘universalist,’ and the key to his achievement was his antipathy to everything Jewish” (p. 339). Beker declares that “this popular picture of Paul as the originator of catholic dogma and the enemy of Judaism is completely erroneous” (p. 340). Contrary to the traditional view, Beker comments frequently upon Paul’s “lack of narcissistic self-concern and introspection,” and on his reticence “about his conversion experience” as contrasted with the fact that Paul was “extremely outspoken about his apostleship” (pp. 4-5). He attributes much of the interest in Paul’s “conversion” to turn-of-the-century scholarship with “its strong psychological and romantic interests” and contends instead that Paul is preoccupied by his call to the apostolate and gospel as service to the world (pp. 6, 8, 10). It is Beker who points out, illuminatingly, that Paul never speaks of Christ as having “fulfilled” the promises of God to Israel. In place of such an expression, Paul says that Christ “became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy” (Rom. 15:8-9). The verb bebaidsai is “to ratify or confirm.”

Also, Beker points out that Paul maintains a tension between God and Christ, so that Christ is never “fused” with God (p. 344). For instance, Paul tells the Corinthians, “Let no one boast of men. For all things are yours . . . and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” (I Cor. 3:21,23). Paul’s is a theocentric, not christocentric, christology. Paul’s christology is affirmed against the prospect or horizon of God’s final eschatological kingdom “that will break into history and transform all creation in accord with the messianic promises” (p. 345), a consummation which will take place only with Israel’s participation in it. These natural olive branches will be grafted back “into their own olive tree” (Rom. 11:24; emphasis mine).

The works of Markus Barth, W. D. Davies, and E. P. Sanders are
CONCLUSION

Scholars are now candid about Luther's vulgar writings against the Jews. In *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543), Luther actually advised Christians to burn synagogues, destroy the homes of Jews, and forcibly remove Talmuds and Prayer Books from Jewish possession; finally, he advocated the expulsion of all Jews from Saxony. And, in fact, they were ousted from Saxony in 1543 as a result of Luther's writing and preaching. All the more striking, then, is his earlier (1520) statement which reflects the very core of Luther's theology:

> it is not enough or in any sense Christian to preach the words, life, and works of Christ as historical facts, as if the knowledge of these would suffice for the conduct of life; yet this is the fashion among those who must today be regarded as our best preachers. Far less is it sufficient or Christian to say nothing at all about Christ and to teach instead the laws of men and the decrees of the fathers. Now there are not a few who preach Christ and read about him that they may move men's affections to sympathy with Christ, to anger against the Jews, and such childish and effeminate nonsense. Rather ought Christ to be preached to the end that faith in him may be established that he may not only be Christ, but be Christ for you and me, and that what is said of him and is denoted in his name may be effectual in us.

What Luther is saying here is that the business of Christian preaching and teaching is to preach and teach the gospel, nothing else. Certainly we are not to arouse anger against Jews in the name of Christ nor so to tell the Christian story that our way of telling it will either invite such anger or convey, subliminally or otherwise, the supposition that it is Christian to tolerate it.

More fundamentally, we need to take much more radically the insight of Paul and Luther that justification is by grace. The justification of Gentile Christians is by the sheer grace of God and not by some spurious "work" of overcoming Judaism. It is in the nefarious notion of Christian negation and supersession of Judaism that works-righteousness achieves its final and most deadly triumph. Let us, instead, preach Christ, to the end that faith in him may be established and that he may be Christ for each of us.
NOTES


11. Yoma, 85b.


14. In addition to E. P. Sanders, Paul and Palestinian Judaism, cited above, the following are helpful:


NEW TESTAMENT RECONSIDERED

17. See, e.g., Has God Rejected His People?, pp. 101-03.

Scripture quotations unless otherwise noted are from the Revised Standard Version Common Bible, copyrighted © 1973 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. and are used by permission.
THE JEWISH "NO" TO JESUS AND
THE CHRISTIAN "YES" TO JEWS

J. (COOS) SCHONEVELD

What is the situation in Germany today with regard to the shameful anti-Judaism of many leading Christian theological and biblical scholars?

What influence has the Holocaust exerted on Christian thinking in Germany and Europe with regard to the Jewish people? The answer to this question really depends on the extent to which the Holocaust has been allowed to exert an influence, because one widespread reaction has been to suppress the thought of the Holocaust and to continue Christian thinking and theology as if the Holocaust had not taken place. In that case the issue of Christian-Jewish relations is avoided. On the local level one can notice that members of church congregations are eager to deal with this issue, but the pastors shun it, perhaps because subconsciously they feel that the foundations of Christian faith are up for re-examination once the relation between the church and the Jewish people is seriously considered. If challenging questions are asked which touch essential elements of Christian faith, the reaction is often one of defensiveness and a refusal to deal earnestly with the questions involved.

An interesting case is the reactions to the Statement of the Synod of the Protestant Church of the Rhineland in the Federal Republic of Germany.\footnote{Dr. J. Schoneveld is general secretary of the International Council of Christians and Jews at the Martin Buber House, Heppenheim, West Germany.} This statement, issued in January 1980, was the result of many years of reflection and meant a recognition by this church that the Jewish people has remained the people called by God to fulfill its God-given mission in the world. The statement was but one further step of the many taken by some churches after the Holocaust to find a new relationship to the Jewish people. However, shortly after the publication of this statement members of the theological faculty of Bonn University issued "considerations," which they attacked it with arguments aimed at the restoration of age-long theological
JEWISH "NO" AND CHRISTIAN "YES"

positions that denied the Jewish people any legitimate place in God's
design after the coming of Christ. The whole style of argumentation
signified a refusal to reconsider these theological positions, and a
tendency to a Christian thinking as if Auschwitz had not taken place.
In this regard the Bonn professors failed the theological criterion
which the Catholic theologian J. B. Metz had set forth: "not to engage
in a theology of any kind that remains untouched by Auschwitz or
could have remained untouched by it." Metz gave his students the

advise "Leave alone any theology which actually could have been the
same before or after Auschwitz." A very different reaction on the
statement of the Synod of the Church of the Rhineland was given by a
German psychologist, Hanna Wolff, in her book *New Wine—Old Skins;
Christianity's Problem of Identity in the Light of Psychoanalysis." Her
answer to the synod's statement consists in the glorification of
Marcion, the church leader of the second century of the Christian era
who tried to detach Jesus from Judaism and saw him as the
manifestation of a different God than the God whose will was
revealed to Israel. According to Wolff, Christianity has until now
never really got out of the shadow of Judaism. That is its guilt, its
tragic and existential problem. To cut all ties with Judaism would, in
her opinion, be the proper consequence to be drawn from the
guilt-laden history of the Christian relationship toward the Jewish
people, a relationship which has culminated in Auschwitz. She
knows that something is very wrong in the traditional attitude of the
church to the Jews, and she quotes a remarkable statement by the
famous church historian Adolf von Harnack, whose theology
displayed Marcionite tendencies. It was quoted by the Jewish
theologian Pinchas Lapide: "Such injustice as perpetrated by the
Gentile churches towards Judaism is almost unheard of in world
history. The Gentile church denies it everything; takes its holy book
away from it, and while she herself is nothing else than a transformed
Judaism, she cuts off every connection with it: the daughter rejects the
mother after having plundered her." The mere thought that Christianity might be a transformed Judaism
is horrifying for Wolff, and tendencies in contemporary Christian theology to seek what Jews and Christians may have in common fill her with anger. She writes a book in which the whole Hebrew Bible and all Jewish elements in Christianity (or in any case the caricatures she gives of Jewish elements, since she shows herself to be very ill-informed about Judaism!) are thrown overboard. In this way she hopes to solve the identity problems of Christianity. Since the Jews, during the Second World War, were physically removed and exterminated from Germany, she now wants a Christianity in Germany "purified" from all Jewish traces. It is not surprising that the Christianity she presents is a rather meager extract of some sayings of Jesus adapted to psychotherapeutic needs of individuals in distress.

She has, however, rightly seen that Christianity had developed a very complicated, ambivalent, and almost pathological relationship towards the Jewish people. She is aware that, in the words of von Harnack, Christianity has plundered her mother, Judaism, by claiming to be the true Israel and by denying the Jews the ability to read their Scriptures validly and correctly. But her solution of simply rejecting the mother is self-destructive and at least as pathological as the traditional Christian relationship to the Jewish people, especially in view of the post-Holocaust situation in Germany.

From both these types of reactions to the statement of the Synod of the Rhineland it becomes clear that the relationship to the Jewish people is still a very sensitive matter to German consciousness. Christians in Europe are confronted with the empty place left in their countries by the disappearance of many Jewish communities. In the first decades after the Second World War, awareness of this absence was suppressed by the feverish reconstruction of the devastated cities of Europe and the rebuilding of the economy. Now after forty years the victims of the Holocaust are more hauntingly present than immediately after the war, despite all the pronouncements that the time has come to forget and to forgive. The statement of the Rhineland Synod is a courageous attempt to come to grips with the real questions posed by the Holocaust to the churches. It is the result of serious and engaged Christian rethinking in relatively small circles of people who dared to expose themselves to painful self-examination.

The center of this movement has been the working group of Christians and Jews at the German Protestant Kirchentag. The Kirchentag is a large gathering of Protestant Christians convening once in two years and attracting, in recent years, several hundred thousand participants, most of them young laypeople. They have
been a source of renewal of the church in Germany, although the relationship with the official, largely bureaucratic church structure is rather tense. One of the significant things in this working group was that Christians with the help of a small number of the Jews who had remained in Germany, or settled here after the War, became engaged in serious efforts to come to grips with the terrible recent past in the relations between Christians and Jews. Christians confronted themselves with this past not in isolation, alone with their guilt, but face-to-face with Jewish dialogue partners who helped them to face this past and thus to set foot on the way to a new future. Christians engaged in this process have experienced this as liberation and as inspiration for new Christian thinking. On the Catholic side in Germany a similar process has taken place in the lay movement led by the Central Committee of German Catholics, which organizes the so-called Katholikentag, an event similar to the Protestant Kirchentag.

As a result of this Christian-Jewish dialogue against the background of a horrible past, creative theological thinking has taken place on the Christian side, which took its point of departure in the reflection on the relation between the church and the Jewish people but also affected other areas of theology. It became very clear that by dealing with Christian-Jewish relations one had to deal with the foundations of the Christian faith.

Others received the opportunity to get acquainted with the research on Jewish tradition and history in the State of Israel, where Jewish scholars could examine the past of the Jewish people, especially those crucial centuries of the Second Temple period, at the end of which Christianity emerged, with far less apologetics and defensiveness than was the case in the Diaspora. Christians who had the chance to study at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and other universities in Israel became deeply impressed by this scholarship, which had a great impact on their theological thinking.

I am writing this essay as one of those Christians: for thirteen years, from 1967 to 1980, I lived in Jerusalem as representative of the Netherlands Reformed Church especially assigned for Christian-Jewish relations. Since 1980, when I was appointed General Secretary of the International Council of Christians and Jews which has its seat in the former residence of Martin Buber in Heppenheim in West Germany, I have come in close contact with the before-mentioned circles in Germany which with the help of Jewish friends engaged in serious re-examination of their Christian thinking. In this essay I put into words my own Christian thinking as it has been influenced by
these experiences in Jerusalem and Germany. It is an individual crystallization of insights which I received in those years.

Is Christianity in essence anti-Jewish, as maintained by the New Testament scholar, Gerhard Kittel, editor of the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*? Kittel, who was a member of Hitler's Nazi party, wrote that the New Testament was the "most anti-Jewish book in the whole world." From a diametrically opposite point of view, that of a sharp critic of the long anti-Jewish history of the church, the American theologian Rosemary Ruether seems to share this thesis in writing that anti-Judaism is the left hand of christology. If this is so, can one, after the Holocaust, remain a Christian in good conscience? And when one sees the age-long Christian anti-Judaism against the background of the other records of oppression and persecution in Christian history, e.g., of heretics, of women, of colonized nations, and of people of different skin color, the question of the intrinsic moral quality of Christian thinking poses itself: Is Christian thinking in its very essence authoritarian, absolutistic, and exclusive? And to the extent that this is so, can that have to do with the origin of Christianity as a messianic movement that announced that the end of history had come and claimed to bring the ultimate solution to the problems inherent in the human condition? An East German writer of Jewish descent, Stefan Heym, said in his opening address to the 1982 annual convention of the International Council of Christians and Jews in Berlin:

> It seems that whenever the proponents of a doctrine promising salvation fail to deliver the goods within a reasonable space of time, they tend to create a rigid hierarchy and impose on their followers the discipline of rules and dogma in order to keep them in line; and woe to those who dare deviate from the ordained philosophy and its officially approved commentaries.

He started his address with the words: "In the beginning there was this false hope," referring to the early Christians awaiting Jesus' final return in their lifetime, expecting the kingdom of Christ to be just around the corner.

Is Kittel after all right in saying that there are no more irreconcilable opponents in the world than real Judaism and real Christianity? If I honestly face the fact that the Jewish people and Judaism consciously decided not to accept Jesus as the one the church confessed him to be, can I then as a Christian, i.e., from the depth of my faith-commitment
to Jesus Christ, accept and affirm the Jewish people as still called by
God to fulfill its God-given mission and Judaism as a valid response to
this calling? The German theologian Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt
has concisely formulated the problem as follows: “We will have
Christian anti-Judaism only then behind us, when theologically we
will have succeeded in making positive sense of the Jewish ‘No’ to
Jesus.”

But let us first see, how we can say “yes” to the Jewish people on the
basis of our belief in Jesus Christ. Only then can we deal with the
Jewish “no” to Jesus.

Common to Judaism and Christianity is the belief that the human
person lives by the Word of God. But as we consider how God speaks
to us, Jews and Christians do not seem to have anything in common
anymore. For Jews, the Word of God par excellence is the Torah given
to Israel on Mount Sinai in the double form of the written Torah and
the Torah orally transmitted in tradition. According to the Midrash,
the voice of God on Sinai was echoed in seven voices, and the seven
voices changed into seventy languages, so that all nations could hear
the Word of God. Therefore everybody can live by the Word of God.
For Christians, the Word of God par excellence is Jesus Christ, the
Word of God that became flesh, a human person, in Jesus Christ.
God’s Spirit was poured out on all flesh, according to the Pentecost
story in the Acts of the Apostles, so that each in his own language
heard about the mighty works of God. Everybody, therefore, can live
by the Word of God. The Word of God, whether understood in a
Jewish or a Christian sense, has universal meaning: Jews say it is the
Torah; Christians say it is Jesus Christ. This disagreement is even
exacerbated by the traditional Christian claim that Jesus is the true
Word of God, superseding and replacing the Torah. This claim has
made possible “the greatest injustice in world history” about which
von Harnack spoke in the above quotation.

The preservation of “Judaism despite Christianity” which is
inexplicable from a traditional Christian standpoint must be a “finger
of God” for us, forcing us to rethink our traditional views. “Judaism
despite Christianity” comes from the title of the English translation
of the profound correspondence between the Christian Eugen Rosen-
stock and the Jew Franz Rosenzweig written at the front during the
First World War. Let us therefore start again with what is common to
Jews and Christians despite everything: the Word of God. What does
God say to us? One of the first attempts to express this in a short,
concise statement is made in Micah 6:8: “He has told you, O
Jesus was "Torah in the flesh," a man who embodied Torah, all of whose actions were Torah.

As a Christian I confess "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14). I believe that in this confession the "Word" should be understood in the sense of "Torah" and that thus "the Word became flesh" should be understood as: "the Torah took on flesh and blood." This means: Jesus was so to speak, "Torah in the flesh," a man who embodied Torah, all of whose actions were Torah. In him became transparent the purpose of the Torah to bring about a kind of human existence in which the image of God is visible.

All this is confirmed and strengthened as we look at the picture drawn of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. When we disregard for a moment such polemical passages as those regarding the scribes and Pharisees which reflect the tensions between the early Christian community and the Pharisee movement about forty years after Jesus' death, and look at what Jesus actually said and did, then a genuinely Jewish picture emerges. The Sermon on the Mount strongly resembles rabbinic teachings, and Jesus' parables and sayings find remarkable parallels in rabbinic literature. He lived a Jewish life, marked by the sign of the covenant, the circumcision, from the eighth day of his life. He went to the synagogue and prayed Jewish prayers that even today are prayed in the synagogues all over the world. His life and behavior were articulated by the commandments given to man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to be humble in going with your God?" After God had created man and woman in God's image as the governors of all creatures, God attached the phrase "very good" to the finished work. In this verse of Micah, good is doing justice, loving kindness, and being humble in going with God. In a human community where these requirements are fulfilled, God's image becomes visible. That is what God tells humanity through the Word of God. When we look at Jewish tradition this is in a nutshell what the Torah spells out in great detail. The purpose of the Torah is to create such a community, and its final goal is that the whole of humanity will live according to these requirements of God, which in the Micah verse are addressed to "Adam," humanity. Then it will be visible that "Adam," the whole of humanity, has been created in the image of God.
Moses on Sinai; he contributed his share to interpreting the Torah, as the Pharisees did, to let it pervade and influence all areas of life in a time when many rules of behavior were not yet fixed, but were still a matter of debate and even controversy. He shared Jewish hopes and expectations of redemption although he may have rejected certain political expressions of these expectations, as did other Jews, notably among the Pharisees. Jewish and non-Jewish scholars confirm that Jesus' teachings stood very near to Pharisee teachings. In all this, Jesus put his own emphases as was done by other great teachers. He was especially concerned about those Jews who lived on the margins of Jewish society and were looked at askance by the majority: tax collectors, prostitutes, and mentally and contagiously ill people. He wanted to bring these lost sons and daughters of Abraham back to the fold of the community of the covenant (see Luke 15:1-32; 19:1-10).

When I confess that "the Word became flesh" I affirm that in this Jewish life lived according to the Torah, in which the image of God became visible, God speaks to me. There is no doubt that such a life according to the Torah has also been lived by others than Jesus, Jews and non-Jews, before and after him. What makes the difference is the Resurrection. But here, too, we are close to Pharisee conceptions. Since the time of the Maccabees the big religious question for many Jews was how one could reconcile the justice of God with the fact that those who were faithful to the Torah were murdered and martyred. The way of life according to the Torah seems to come to a dead end; as soon as the image of God becomes visible in a human being or a human community, it is destroyed by the powers of evil. It is in response to these vexing questions that the belief in the resurrection of those who died as martyrs sanctifying the name of God emerged in Judaism and became strong especially in Pharisee circles. In the resurrection the martyrs were vindicated or justified by God in the face of the powers of evil.

Jesus, a Jew who lived according to the Torah, in whom the image of God was visible, also died as a martyr. As so many other Jews, before and after him, he died a typically Jewish death, a martyr's death, or, with a profound Jewish expression, a death for the sanctification of God's name, on a Roman cross. At this point the crucial event takes place which is constituent for the Christian faith: the Resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Through this event Jesus' disciples find hard evidence that the image of God cannot be destroyed: "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" The Resurrection means that the path of the Torah does not come to a dead end but is the way of life. It means that
the Word of God which tells us what is good: to do justice, to love kindness and to be humble in going with our God, is trustworthy, discloses the future, and is a source of hope. When I believe in Jesus as the Resurrected, I accept this Word of God. I base myself on the basic assumption and take the stubborn stance, that the image of God cannot be destroyed—not in any fellow human being (therefore I am required to come to the defense of those whose human dignity is denied and in whom the image of God is violated), nor in myself (therefore I don’t sink into despair, when I find the forces of evil and sin working in myself). The preciousness and inviolability of the image of God in my fellow human beings and in myself are proclaimed in the Resurrection of Jesus.

The Resurrection means the vindication of Jesus as a Jew, as a person who was faithful to the Torah, as a martyr who participated in Jewish martyrdom for the sanctification of God’s name. What else can this mean than the validation of the Torah and vindication of the Jewish people as God’s beloved people? The Resurrection of Jesus confirms God’s promises as well as God’s commandments to the Jewish people. Nowhere does the New Testament say that Jews by believing in Jesus Christ would cease to observe the commandments. In the past Christians have always connected the Jews with the death of Christ: they were called Christ-killers, or the charge of deicide was thrown at them. I see the Jewish people in the light of the Resurrection. I see their survival throughout the centuries in the light of what the Resurrection means: the affirmation of the Torah, of the people of Israel, and of Jewish existence. Therefore Christian affirmation of the Jewish people ought to belong to the very center of the Christian faith. And if in the present the Jewish people gets a new chance to survive and revive, particularly through the existence of the State of Israel, I see this in the light of the Resurrection. Needless to say this does not mean blanket approval of what the State of Israel does.

But if it is so good, why then is it so bad? How are the bitter controversy and hate between Jews and Christians to be explained? It seems that the crucial point of controversy was the Resurrection of Jesus as the decisive, eschatological act of God, i.e., as the beginning of the great revolution that would “scatter the proud in the imagination of their hearts, put down the mighty from their thrones, exalt those of low degree, fill the hungry with good things and send the rich empty away” (Luke 1:52 ff.) and would establish the new order of the kingdom of God governed by justice, peace, and joy (Rom. 14:7). The followers of Jesus were deeply convinced that the
JEWISH "NO" AND CHRISTIAN "YES"

The messianic age had arrived and that they were a community standing at the consummation of history and that the kingdom of God was just around the corner. A part of the early Christian community believed that in the light of the approaching divine revolution new rules were required with regard to the Gentiles. Now in order for the Gentiles to join the covenant of God with Israel and thus enter the world to come (as a rabbinic saying has it: the whole of Israel has a share in the world to come) and be saved from the Last Judgment, it was no longer necessary to join the covenant of Sinai involving circumcision and the observance of the "613 commandments" of the Torah, but they could enter the covenant with the God of Israel through incorporation into the "body of Christ" and in this way get a share in the world to come. This understanding of the Resurrection as the eschatological act of God bringing about the new order of justice, peace, and joy led the disciples of Jesus to call him "messiah." The majority of the Jewish community, however, did not perceive that what had happened to Jesus was the decisive turning point in history and did not share the conclusions drawn from it by the early Christian community, nor were they convinced that Jesus was the messiah, since in no way was the new order coming about.

Now after 1950 years the plain fact is that the divine revolution on which the early Christian community counted has not materialized. The church had to abandon the thought that it stood at the end of history. It continued to live within history, but by doing so it claimed to continue the history of Israel, to replace the Jewish people as God's people and to be the "true" or the "new" Israel. Jesus, now designated with the name "messiah," remained the central figure of this community, but no longer as the eschatological figure who fulfills the Torah, but as the normative figure who replaces the Torah, so that the Torah was no longer the norm, but Jesus Christ became the norm of thought and action. Although the church maintains that Jesus has fulfilled the Torah, in reality the Torah remains unfulfilled, because the new world order of doing justice, loving kindness, and being humble in going with God has not yet come to humanity.

At this point we meet the Jewish "no" to the claims made by the church for Jesus. As Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt has pointed out, this Jewish "no" is an expression of Jewish faithfulness to the Torah, to its God-given calling. This is the dignity of the Jewish "no" to Jesus.
Jews know that as long as the world is not redeemed, and the image of God has not yet become visible in the whole of humanity, they have to remain faithful to the Torah. Thus is the Jewish people a constant reminder to the church that we still live in an unredeemed world. This means that their enmity toward the gospel is an enmity for our sake, to speak with Paul (Rom. 11:28).

Jews know that as long as the world is not redeemed, and the image of God has not yet become visible in the whole of humanity, they have to remain faithful to the Torah.

The church is often inclined to evaluate the significance of cross and Resurrection so highly that it falls into the temptation of a "realized eschatology." The light which it has seen in Jesus Christ is so shining that it often blinds its eyes for the darkness and the evil that still exist in the world. The German New Testament scholar, Peter von der Osten-Sacken has drawn our attention to a process that already started in the New Testament: Since the consummation of history did not take place within the expected span of time of, at the most, one generation, the conclusion drawn by the early Christian community was not that the struggle of the risen Jesus against the powers of evil was much more laborious and tiring than originally expected. Instead, the response was often to ascribe to Jesus in heaven more and more power and might, and to make him more and more equal to God and to minimize the subordination of Christ to God at the end of time (see I Cor. 15:28). This has led to a triumphalistic attitude in the church ignoring the struggle to be waged for justice and peace on earth. It has also led to a tendency to look away from the earth and expect salvation in heavenly, transcendental spheres. The claim to possess the invisible salvation led further to authoritarian and intolerant attitudes to those (e.g., the Jews) who were not prepared to accept this claim.

The "no" of the Jews to the elevated claims made by the church for Jesus is the reverse of their faithfulness to the Torah, their hope for the world's redemption. This "no" that Paul could not but describe as "a hardening that has come upon part of Israel" (Rom. 11:25), is now, after nearly twenty centuries, to be valued positively by Christians as the hard shell to preserve the love for the Torah in a world that is still awaiting redemption.

Let us be honest and recognize that both Israel and the church are
JEWISH "NO" AND CHRISTIAN "YES"

still far away from the expected redemption. Instead of standing as the eschatological community at the end of history, the church has entered history as a community parallel and often in rivalry and conflict with the Jewish people. The net result of the messianic outburst that took place in the year 33 within the Jewish community, as a response to the events around Jesus of Nazareth, has been that a new access, a new gate, in particular for non-Jews, has been opened to the way of the Lord which began with Abraham (Gen. 18:19) and will end in the kingdom of God. It is not true that the church has replaced Israel or has taken over its vocation. Both Israel and the church await the fulfillment of the Torah, when the image of God will be visible in the whole of humanity. The Jews await this final Day incorporated in the people of Israel, the Christians incorporated in the body of Christ. And both are judged by the same God to whom they have to answer, if they have been faithful to their particular vocation. The Jews have expressed their faithfulness in a "no" to Jesus as his church tried to take the Torah away from them. Christians may express their faithfulness in their "yes" to Jesus who embodied the Torah, and therefore also in a "yes" to his brothers and sisters, the Jewish people.

NOTES


9. This author's translation from the Hebrew.

HESCHEL'S SIGNIFICANCE
FOR JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

EVA FLEISCHNER

Abraham Joshua Heschel did his best to help Christians understand they could overcome their failure and become truly human.

We all have our stories to tell about Abraham Joshua Heschel—allow me to tell one also, a story I received from a friend:

The Jesuit Daniel Kilfoyle was one of the founders of Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam. After the first few meetings he was forbidden by his superiors to remain with the group. Kilfoyle decided to go to one more meeting, so that he could tell his friends in person why he would not be able to stay with them. Heschel sat across the table from him as he spoke. When he had finished, Heschel got up, came around to where Daniel was sitting, and embraced him saying: "You are my brother!" In some mysterious way Abraham Heschel, the Jew, respected the Jesuit's decision to obey and understood his pain.

What was it about Heschel that gave him this capacity for understanding a tradition and a discipline that were—at least in this case—quite alien to his own, a discipline which, by the 1960s, even some Catholics had difficulty in understanding and accepting? How was it that, less than three months after his death, America magazine published an entire issue dedicated to Heschel, in which Protestant and Catholic scholars joined with Jewish scholars in paying tribute to Heschel? John Bennett, at the time president of Union Theological Seminary where Heschel had been a visiting professor, wrote in that issue that "Abraham Heschel belonged to the whole American

Eva Fleischner is professor of religion at Montclair State College in New Jersey and a member of the Bishops' Secretariat for Catholic Jewish Relations. She is the author of Views of Judaism in German Christian Theology since 1945 (Scarecrow, 1975) and of a Holocaust bibliography and a number of articles. She also edited Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? (KTAV, 1979).

This essay was originally delivered at a Heschel Symposium at the College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, Minn., in 1983. It has been shortened for publication here, but the full version will appear in a volume to be published by McMillan.
HESCHEL’S SIGNIFICANCE

religious community. I know of no other person of whom this was so true. . . . He seemed equally at home with Protestants and Catho­lics.” 2 We have all heard the tributes paid him by the Christian theologians at this symposium. Jewish scholars also bear witness to Heschel’s impact on Christians. Samuel Dresner wrote of Heschel’s “fraternity with the Christian community.” 3 And in a paper given at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum said that “Americans of all religions and races discovered in Heschel a rare religious genius of penetrating insight and compassion.” 4

How do we explain this extraordinary phenomenon: a Jewish religious thinker, utterly and profoundly Jewish, who touched and affected not just the lives, but the thought of Christian theologians? I hope to throw some light on this question by examining the role that Heschel played in bringing Jews and Christians closer to each other. I shall approach my subject in three parts:

First, I shall examine those writings of Heschel in which he speaks explicitly of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. To this group belong not only passages that reveal Heschel’s remarkable understanding of and sympathy for Christianity, but also his trenchant and honest—at times painfully honest—articulation of Christian failure, Christian sin vis-à-vis Judaism in the course of history, such as the attempts at forced conversion, the “Teaching of Contempt,” and Christianity’s role in the Holocaust.

The second section will deal with Heschel’s influence on the Second Vatican Council. It is closely related to the first, but I examine it separately because of the historical importance of Vatican II for the religious history of the twentieth century in general, and for Christianity’s relationship to Judaism in particular.

In the third and last part I shall briefly look at Heschel’s work more broadly, to see how Abraham Joshua Heschel the Jew, Heschel the Hasid, has influenced Christianity today. While the theme of this paper—Jewish-Christian reconciliation—will be implicit rather than explicit here, this area may well prove to be Heschel’s most enduring and profound impact on Christianity. It can perhaps be seen as the source and wellspring of the first two parts of my paper.

One common thread runs through all three sections: the great-heartedness, the generous, deeply caring figure of Abraham Heschel. His personal impact on Christians—whether on renowned theologians, popes and cardinals, or on large lay audiences, such as the gathering at the 1969 Milwaukee Liturgical Conference—was as immediate and profound as was the impact of his writings. Or to put it
in a Jewish way: word and deed were always at one in the life of this holy man.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF JEWS AND CHRISTIANS TODAY AND IN HISTORY

Heschel was profoundly optimistic about Jewish-Christian relations. In a 1966 article he spoke of the new atmosphere of mutual esteem that had come about, and rejoiced in the fact that he now had Protestant and Catholic students in his classes. It was an important time for him: he had recently become visiting professor at Union Theological Seminary, and his hard work during Vatican II had borne fruit. He saw the ecumenical movement as a new horizon of hitherto unimaginined possibilities. But his optimism was not a facile one. Just as during Vatican II it had taken much faith and perseverance for him to continue to believe that an ancient and often sordid history could be turned around, so too there remained moments of discouragement. Jacob Teshima, a student of his at Jewish Theological Seminary, recalls going for a walk with Heschel right after the Munich massacre. Heschel spoke with anguish: "Oh, how I pray for the peace of Jerusalem. But look at the cool indifference of the world's Christians! ..." He knew times of discouragement, probably many more than we are aware of. But he did not allow them to overcome his hope or to paralyze his efforts to bring Jews and Christians closer to each other.

Heschel's theological impact on Christians is all the more striking because he believed that certain limits must be respected in the dialogue. Thus he held that Jews and Christians should not discuss the figure of Christ. Christology was out of bounds because Heschel believed that each religion is entitled to the privacy of its holy of holies; Judaism too "must always be mindful of the mystery of aloneness and uniqueness of its own being." What then was the ground for Heschel on which Jews and Christians could meet face to face and engage each other in meaningful conversation?

Jews and Christians have much in common but are also separated. The differences must be explored, along with the vast heritage which they share. Common ground and separation are both necessary and should be affirmed. For each community must retain its identity, while respecting and understanding the other. This means that we must understand what we have in common, as well as what divides us. To slight either would make our conversation meaningless. The
The question for Heschel was always: How can we talk with each other out of our specific and partly different commitment of Jews and Christians? Out of commitment, not without commitment.

In every God-human relationship—and this relationship was at the heart of all that Heschel wrote and did—there are four dimensions: creed or teaching; faith or the assent of the heart; law or deed, which concretizes the first two; and the context in which faith is lived in history, the community.9

We are united in the dimension of the deed by our common concern for safeguarding and enhancing the divine image in our fellow human beings, by building a world where justice and freedom can prevail. There is commonality also in the realm of faith (which for Heschel is always distinct from creed): our awareness of “the tragic insufficiency of human faith,” even at its best, our anguish and pain in falling so far short of the divine command, in being callous and hardhearted in response to God’s invitation. All this unites us.

And what divides us? Creed, dogma: “There is a deep chasm between Christians and Jews concerning . . . the divinity and the Messiahship of Jesus.”10 Yet the chasm need not be a source of hostility. For, “to turn a disagreement about the identity of this ‘Anointed’ into an act of apostasy from God Himself seems to me neither logical nor charitable.”11 The chasm remains, but we can extend our hands to each other across it provided we are willing to recognize that doctrine, all doctrine, can only point the way: it can never hold fast the mystery of God. The goal of our journey is not doctrine but faith; along the way doctrines can serve as signposts, but “the righteous lives by . . . faith, not by . . . creed. And faith . . . involves profound awareness of the inadequacy of words, concepts, deeds. Unless we realize that dogmas are tentative rather than final . . . we are guilty of intellectual idolatry.”12

The challenge for Heschel was not how to relate to a religious institution different from his own, but rather, to human beings who worship God in another way, “who worship God as followers of
Jesus.” Can Jews accept this different way as valid? Can they not just tolerate it, but revere it as holy?

Heschel’s answer is an unequivocal yes (we shall see later that he asks no less of Christians). This yes is based on two convictions—both, I believe, revolutionary not only fifteen years ago but still today.

The first, strongly held and repeatedly affirmed, is Heschel’s belief in religious pluralism; not as an evil necessity of which we must grudgingly make the best, but as desire, even delight, of God. “God’s voice speaks in many languages, communicating itself in a diversity of intuitions.” Why should it not be God’s will in this earthly eon that there be a diversity of religions, a variety of paths to God? Heschel finds no evidence in history that a single religion for the citizens even of one country is a blessing. Rather, the task of preparing the kingdom of God seems to him to require a diversity of talents, a variety of rituals, “soul-searching as well as . . . loyal opposition.” In his December 10, 1972, interview with Carl Stern, which was to be his last gift to us, he asked Stern if he would really want all the paintings in the Metropolitan to be alike; or, would the world be a more fascinating place if all human faces were the same? In this eon, at least, diversity of religion seems to him to be the will of God, with the prospect of all peoples embracing one form of worship reserved for the world to come. It is not diversity of belief that is responsible for today’s crisis; we stand on the edge of the abyss “not because we intensely disagree, but because we feebly agree. Faith, not indifference, is the condition for interfaith.”

A second conviction underlies Heschel’s belief that respect of each other’s differences is both necessary and good: his insistence that religion and God are not identical. Religion is only a means, not the end. It becomes idolatrous when regarded as an end in itself. The majesty of God transcends the dignity of religion. There is only one absolute loyalty in which all our loyalties have their root, and to which they are subservient, loyalty to God, “the loyalty of all my loyalties.” God alone is absolute. Everything else, when it becomes its own end, runs the risk of being idolatrous. Therefore religion stands under constant judgment and in need of repentance and self-examination. These words, written by Heschel with reference to Vatican II and the church’s need always again to reform itself, had a wider application for him to all religions, including his own.

The relationship between Jews and Christians which is forged out of our common ground and differences is today threatened by a common crisis. We live in a time when all that we hold most dear is in danger of being lost: moral sensitivity, justice, peace, our whole
biblical heritage, the very survival of God's presence in the world. Because the crisis is universal, Jews and Christians must work together to save the world from destruction, to preserve those values that make life human and worth living. We can hope to succeed only through a joint effort; we need each other, because the task is too overwhelming for each of us alone. Are we ready to face the challenge? This is how Heschel describes our common task: “The supreme issue is today not the halakah for the Jew or the Church for the Christian... the supreme issue is whether we are alive or dead to the challenge and the expectation of the living God. The crisis engulfs all of us. The misery and fear of alienation from God make Jew and Christian cry together.”

We really have no choice. Either we work together to keep God alive in the world, or we will both be engulfed by nihilism, which Heschel sees as a worldwide counterforce to the ecumenical movement. Because we confront the same dangers and terrors, and stand together on the brink, “parochialism has become untenable... no religion is an island. We are all involved with one another. ... Today religious isolationism is a myth.”

The current need for Jews and Christians to work together is, however, more than a strategic necessity for Heschel; it is rooted in history. We are linked historically, and the destiny of one impinges on the destiny of the other. It has always been so. Even in the Middle Ages, Jews lived in only relative isolation and acknowledged that Christianity's spiritual impact on the world was important also to them. “If the non-Jews of a certain town are moral, the Jews born there will be moral as well.” Heschel quotes Rabbi Joseph Yaabez, one of the victims of the Inquisition, who blessed God for the faith of Christians, without which “we might ourselves become infirm in our faith.”

And yet, despite such moments of insight and recognition, our history is full of prejudice and bigotry. “This is the agony of history: bigotry, the failure to respect each other's commitment, each other's faith.” How can we be cured of our bigotry? How can we learn to rejoice in one another's triumphs rather than each other's defeats? The answer for Heschel lies in the awareness of our common humanity, which for him is never mere humanity. Meeting another human being offers me an opportunity to encounter the divine presence here on earth. In the other's presence I stand on holy ground. Why should this holiness disappear if the other holds religious beliefs that differ from mine? “Does God cease to stand before me? Does the difference in commitment destroy the kinship of being human?”

Heschel again looks to his own tradition for an answer. “The pious
of all nations have a share in the world to come and are promised eternal life.” Jews must therefore respect the faith of Christians. They must do more. Following the tradition of Maimonides, Jehuda Halevi, and Jacob Emden, they must acknowledge Christianity’s positive role in the divine plan of redemption. Because of Israel’s mysterious election (“in you shall all the tribes of the earth be blessed” [Gen. 12:3]), Judaism has a vital stake in the spiritual life of other peoples, particularly Christians, through whom the message of the living God has spread to the ends of the earth. Unlike some Jewish thinkers who, while acknowledging Christianity’s debt to Judaism, see the relationship as a one-way street, Heschel believes that the mother cannot ignore her children.

Heschel demands no less of Christians, however, than he demands of himself and his fellow Jews: genuine acceptance of and respect for Judaism. This implies several “precepts,” which Heschel spells out quite clearly. I believe he felt the freedom to do so because they concern the history of Christianity, rather than its central affirmation of faith in Christ.

All attempts to convert Jews must be abandoned, for they are a call to Jews to abandon their people’s tradition.

The first “precept” is no more mission to the Jews. All attempts to convert Jews must be abandoned, for they are a call to Jews to betray their people’s tradition, and proof of the failure to accept Judaism as a way of truth, a way to God, valid in its own right.

Renouncing mission to the Jews requires a major change in the church’s attitude. “For nineteen hundred years the Church defined her relation to the Jews in one word: Mission. What we witness now is the beginning of a change in that relation, a transition from mission to dialogue... We must insist that giving up the idea of mission to the Jews be accepted as a precondition for entering dialogue.” The problem, however, is that many Christians are still not sufficiently sensitive to this issue, and do not understand that “we are Jews as we are men.”

Heschel recalls his conversation with Gustav Weigel the night before Weigel’s death. They talked in Heschel’s study at Jewish Theological Seminary.
We opened our hearts to one another in prayer and contrition and spoke of our own deficiencies, failures, hopes. At one moment I posed the question: Is it really the will of God that there be no more Judaism in the world? Would it really be the triumph of God if the scrolls of the Torah would no more be taken out of the Ark and the Torah no more be read in the Synagogue, our ancient Hebrew prayers in which Jesus himself worshipped no more recited, the Passover Seder no more celebrated in our lives, the Law of Moses no more observed in our homes? Would it really be *ad majorem Dei gloriam* to have a world without Jews?

As I reflected on this passage some time ago I began to wonder what Weigel had said in reply. Heschel does not tell us. I thought that perhaps Mrs. Heschel would know, so I went to see her. She remembered Heschel coming home late that night very moved by his conversation with Weigel, but did not recall his speaking of the Jesuit's response. So the two of us sat there wondering and talking, and soon we were joined by Susannah Heschel and a friend, who were visiting that Sunday. We read the whole passage aloud, slowly. And suddenly the answer emerged, quite clearly. "We opened our hearts to one another in prayer and contrition and spoke of our own deficiencies, failures, hopes." That was how their discussion began: in prayer and contrition. How could Fr. Weigel's response to what followed have been anything but a profound affirmation of Judaism as Judaism? The four of us, as we sat in the Heschels' living room that sunny Sunday afternoon, felt in agreement, reassured, and at peace.

"Would it really be to the greater glory of God to have a world without Jews?" When presented in such terms, it is difficult to imagine even the most fundamentalist of Christians answering, yes! But alas, we do not have enough Heschels in the world—men, and women, whose love of their God and people and tradition is so radiant that it is quite obviously sacred, so that it becomes inconceivable to wish it away. Convert Heschel to Christianity? A monstrous idea. It is unlikely that the effort was ever made. Why, then, the profound indignation that resounds in his famous—and to many of us so shocking—statement, made at the time of Vatican II and repeated still in the 1972 Stern interview: "I'd rather go to Auschwitz than be the object of conversion"? His indignation was no doubt rooted in his identification with his people's repeated suffering in the course of history and the fear that, unless Vatican II explicitly renounced mission to the Jews, the indignity and suffering would continue.
Fortunately, Heschel saw signs of hope in our time, among both Catholics and Protestants. I shall deal with Vatican II below, but let me quote here a few words in this context: "I must say that I found understanding for our sensitivity and position on this issue on the part of distinguished leaders of the Roman Catholic Church." Some Protestant theologians also had begun publicly to reject missionary activity to the Jews—among them Reinhold Niebuhr and Paul Tillich. At a joint meeting of the faculties of Jewish Theological Seminary and Union Theological Seminary, Niebuhr repudiated Christian missionary activity in part because "Practically nothing can purify the symbol of Christ as the image of God in the imagination of the Jew from the taint with which ages of Christian oppression in the name of Christ have tainted it." This is a reference to what has come to be called the "Teaching of Contempt." Renouncing all such teaching is the second "precept" incumbent today upon Christians who are sincere in their desire to take Judaism seriously.

It is no easy task. The problem is almost as old as Christianity. Christianity was born of Judaism, but "the children did not arise to call the mother blessed; instead, they called her blind." The original affirmation became repudiation, Jewish faith came to be seen as superseded and obsolete, the new covenant as abolishing and replacing the first. "Contrast and contradiction rather than acknowledgment of roots, relatedness and indebtedness, became the perspective."

As we today know so well, this perspective was to have tragic consequences, once Christianity emerged from its initial status of a persecuted minority religion and became linked with the power of the Roman Empire. Heschel is painfully aware of the heavy burden of guilt which Christianity has incurred vis-à-vis Judaism over the centuries, including a share in the Holocaust. In his talk On Prayer at the 1968 Liturgical Conference in Milwaukee he said: "It is with shame and anguish that I recall that it was possible for a Roman Catholic church adjoining the extermination camp in Auschwitz to offer communion to the officers of the camp, to people who day after day drove thousands of people to be killed in the gas chambers."

The first four words of this sentence strike me as truly extraordinary. Heschel speaks here of the failure—the gigantic failure—of a major religious community not his own; yet he uses the word "shame." Are we ever ashamed of the sins of others? We may be shocked and scandalized, we may accuse and blame. But we are ashamed only if in some way we feel related to, identified with, these
HESCHEL'S SIGNIFICANCE

others—if, in other words, they are not totally "other" to us. How are we to explain Heschel's use of the word in this context? It seems to me that, for him, the failure of the church is not simply failure of the church, but threatens faith everywhere; it is a warning to all who would call themselves religious, a sign that we all have lost our ability to be shocked at the monstrous evil all about us. It was this that made Auschwitz possible; we must regain our moral sensitivity. And so he continues, in the very next sentence; "Let there be an end to the separation of church and God . . ., of religion and justice, of prayer and compassion."

The Holocaust raises the issue of the complicity and silence of the churches as no other event in Western history does. This has become a scandal for Jews and, I am glad to say, for many Christians as well. For some Jews, the scandal is so great that they refuse all dialogue—I can understand them. Others are willing to enter into conversation with Christians, but wonder whether Christianity has lost its credibility since Auschwitz. I can understand them also—some Christians have raised the same question. Heschel's reaction, however, appears different to me. Here he is, at the Liturgical Conference, speaking in very strong terms of the failure of the Roman Catholic Church. Yet his words are not so much an accusation directed at Catholics as a warning to religious people, to religious institutions, everywhere. What could so easily and understandably have become yet another wall between us becomes instead a source of anguish at human frailty, a frailty from which none of us—not Jews, not Christians—are exempt. "We have no triumph to report except the slow, painstaking effort to redeem single moments in the lives of single men, in the lives of small communities. We do not come on the clouds of heaven but grope through the mists of history."

Notice the "we," again a matter of terminology, seemingly small perhaps, yet so significant. Heschel's concern with the plight of being human, with the tragedy of the human condition, cuts across all religious creeds. We are all sinners, Jews and Christians alike. Perhaps it is this awareness, this deep sense of "we-ness," that enables him to refrain from condemning Christians. I at least do not feel condemned as I read him, nor do I feel that my church is condemned by this man—not even when he points to our sins during the Holocaust. Indeed, I have heard some Christians speak much more harshly of Christianity's failure at that time; I have spoken of it much more harshly myself. Is there not some deep font of compassion in Heschel for all human creatures, everywhere, without exception, a compassion which is somehow lacking—or at least diminished—in

73
me, in many of us? I am not sure. But I do know that his refusal to condemn is profoundly healing. I believe it is one of his greatest gifts to us as we strive for reconciliation. He was not blind—far from it: he saw more clearly than many. "His was not the simplicity of innocence."

Yet he does not judge or condemn. It is as if he suffers with us who have failed. And this, after all, is the literal meaning of compassion.

"As long as there is a shred of hatred in the human heart, as long as there is a vacuum without compassion anywhere in the world, there is an emergency."

And why is there so much hatred and rage? "Because we do not know how to repent."

But if all are in the same predicament, there is also hope for all. "History is not a blind alley, and guilt is not an abyss. There is always a way that leads out of guilt: repentance or turning to God."

It is typical of Heschel that the overcoming of hostility, the healing of ancient wounds, is a task for both communities. He calls upon Jews to ponder seriously the responsibility in Jewish history for having given birth to two world religions. The children did not arise to call the mother blessed but, he asks—it is his question, I would not dare ask—"does not the failure of children reflect upon their mother? Do not the sharp deviations from Jewish tradition on the part of the early Christians who were Jews indicate some failure of communication within the spiritual climate of first-century Palestine?"

Heschel asks this question after centuries of Christian defamation and persecution of Jews, after the Holocaust. . . .

Again in typical fashion, he moves from the problem, the difficulty, the tragedy, to the opportunity, the new possibility, the hope. Christianity's turning away from the ancient and pernicious teaching is only the first stage in a new era of friendship between Christians and Jews. Heschel believes that we live in a uniquely privileged moment of time, when Christians look at Jews with wonder and hope, a fact which confronts Jews in turn with a new challenge: "We Jews are being put to a new test. Christians, in many parts of the world, have suddenly begun to look at the Jews with astonishment. In particular, the attitude of the Christian community in America is undergoing a change. Instead of hostility, there is expectation. . . . Many Christians believe that we Jews carry the Tablets in our arms, hugging them lovingly. They believe that we continue to relish and nurture the wisdom that God has entrusted to us, that we are loaded with spiritual treasures."

Permit me here to quote a brief excerpt from the 1973 French Bishops' Guidelines for Christians in their Relationship with Jews, which is
HESCHEL'S SIGNIFICANCE

proof, I believe, that Heschel's hope was not overly sanguine:

The permanence of this people through the ages, its survival over civilizations, its presence as a rigorous and exacting partner **vis à vis** Christianity are a fact of major importance which we can treat neither with ignorance nor with contempt. The Church which claims to speak in the name of Jesus Christ and which through Him finds itself bound, since its origin and forever, to the Jewish people, perceives in the centuries-long and uninterrupted existence of this people a sign the full truth of which it would like to understand. 39

This new Christian expectation is a challenge to the Jewish community, a **kairos**. "Here is a unique responsibility. Such occasions come rarely twice. Are we prepared for the test?" 39

He at least did what he could to meet it. Fritz Rothschild has written that, when asked later why he had let himself become involved with Vatican II, Heschel replied: "The issues at stake were profoundly theological. To refuse contact with Christian theologians is, to my mind, barbarous. There is a great expectation among Christians today that Judaism has something unique to offer." 40

And so he allowed himself to become involved with Vatican II—"involved" is too weak a word. He gave of himself tirelessly during the council, to the point of exhaustion at times, on one occasion traveling to Rome for a special audience with Pope Paul VI literally on the eve of Yom Kippur. Let me at this point move into the second part of my paper and consider Heschel's role at Vatican II.

HESCHEL AND THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL 41

It is generally known that Heschel played an important role at Vatican II, although a detailed study on his contribution has yet to appear. 41 During the preparatory stage Heschel acted as consultant to the American Jewish Committee and other Jewish agencies, which had been asked by Cardinal Bea's Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity to prepare background documentation for the council. With Heschel's help three memoranda were submitted to Cardinal Bea. The first two dealt with various problem areas in Catholic teaching and liturgy. In a third, submitted in May, 1962, Heschel proposed that a new beginning be made with a Vatican Council declaration that would recognize the "permanent preciousness" of Jews as Jews, rather than seeing them as potential converts, and that would expressly repudiate anti-Semitism and the deicide charge. 43
In February, 1962, the year in which the council was to open, three of Heschel's books were sent to Cardinal Bea, who warmly acknowledged them "as a strong common spiritual bond between us." The books were *God in Search of Man*, *Man Is Not Alone*, and *The Sabbath*.

Discussion of the Declaration on the Jews was postponed to the second session, scheduled to open in September, 1963. In the spring of that year Cardinal Bea visited the United States, speaking at Harvard and in New York City. Heschel chaired a private meeting between Bea and a group of Jewish leaders and was the speaker at an interfaith banquet held in the cardinal's honor, which was attended by U.N. officials and political and religious leaders. On this occasion Heschel addressed the common threat faced by all human beings today, the threat of evil, of the darkness all about us, a darkness of our own making. He also spoke of the great spiritual renewal inspired by Pope John XXIII.

Pope John died on June 4, 1963, and the second session opened in September under his successor, Paul VI, who supported the secretariat's position with regard to the Jewish people. The promising beginning that had been made was, however, destined to undergo much turbulence and controversy. Despite the support of Paul VI, opposition to the proposed declaration grew and pressures on the secretariat began to mount. In November, 1963, Heschel wrote to Cardinal Bea, expressing his deep concern that the theme of conversion of the Jews had been introduced into a new text.

A new version of this draft appeared in a newspaper story shortly before the third session was to open. The original text had been watered down, and the hope was expressed for the Jews' eventual conversion. In a statement of September 3, 1964, Heschel strongly condemned the new version. His harshest words were reserved for the theme of conversion, and show that he could, if necessary, be sarcastic—a tone which was generally quite alien to him:

> it must be stated that *spiritual fratricide* is hardly a means of "reciprocal understanding." . . . Jews throughout the world will be dismayed by a call from the Vatican to abandon their faith in a generation which witnessed the massacre of six million Jews . . . on a continent where the dominant religion was not Islam, Buddhism, or Shintoism.

The situation was so critical that the AJC arranged an audience for Heschel with Pope Paul VI for September 14, 1964, literally the eve of
HESCHEL'S SIGNIFICANCE

Yom Kippur. Despite the great personal inconvenience to him, Heschel felt he must go. The audience lasted thirty-five minutes, and Heschel later described the pope as having been friendly and cordial.

Maneuvering in both camps continued into the fourth session. Eventually enough support for the earlier text was marshalled so that the document that was officially approved on October 28, 1965, and which we know as *Nostra Aetate*, did not make any reference to proselytizing. It was greeted with a mixture of relief and regret; as admittedly a compromise, but also, as making possible a new beginning. There is no doubt that the latter view has indeed been vindicated by developments that have taken place since then—developments which are greatly indebted to Abraham Heschel.

Let me speak briefly about what I call the aftermath of Heschel's involvement in Vatican II, both from his point of view and from that of the highest authority in the Catholic Church.

There are several references to Pope John XXIII in Heschel's writings. In the 1966 *Jubilee* article already referred to, Heschel wrote that "Pope John was a great miracle, who captured the hearts of Christians and non-Christians alike through his sheer love of humanity. With John and the Council hearts were opened—not only windows . . . but hearts." 44

Reflecting on the controversy and on his successful attempts to delete any reference to the conversion of Jews from the council document, Heschel said in 1967: "The Schema on the Jews is the first statement of the Church in history—the first Christian discourse dealing with Judaism—which is devoid of any expression of hope for conversion." 45

What about the pope who had received Heschel in a special audience two days before the third session? Apparently, Heschel's influence on Paul VI had gone far beyond that meeting. In a general audience in Rome on January 31, 1973, shortly after Heschel's death, the pope reminded the pilgrims that "even before we have moved in search of God, God has come in search of us." The editors of *America* magazine, in quoting the Pope's words, commented that the most remarkable aspect about this statement was the fact that the subsequently published text of the papal talk cited the writings of Abraham Joshua Heschel as its source. In the memory of veteran observers of the Roman scene, this citation was an unprecedented public reference by a pope to a writer who was not a Christian." 46
HESCHEL'S INFLUENCE ON CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

I believe that Heschel's impact on Christianity goes beyond his involvement in the ecumenical movement and his work at Vatican II. I shall summarize it in three brief points.

First: We have already seen that Heschel's books were read by Cardinal Bea and Pope Paul VI. Long before, however, as early as 1951, Reinhold Niebuhr hailed Heschel as a "commanding and authoritative voice . . . in the religious life of America." As the body of Heschel's work grew, so did his influence on Christian theologians. J. A. Sanders has proposed the intriguing thesis that Karl Barth's *Humanity of God*, published in 1956, was influenced by *God in Search of Man*, published the year before. Whether through personal friendship or his writings—and frequently through both—Heschel affected the very fabric of Christian thought.

Second: Because God was a shattering reality for Heschel, because the world of the Hebrew prophets was uniquely his own, Sanders wrote, "many Christian thinkers learned that God already was, and had been for a long time, what traditional Christian dogma taught was revealed only in Christ." Precisely because he was steeped in his own tradition, because he was Jewish in every fiber of his being, Heschel was able to mediate to Christians the riches of what is also their biblical heritage.

revealed only in Christ." Precisely because he was steeped in his own tradition, because he was Jewish in every fiber of his being, Heschel was able to mediate to Christians the riches of what is also their biblical heritage. He saw more clearly than some Christian theologians that the battle with Marcion has not yet been won, that all too often the Hebrew Bible still takes second place to the New Testament. He gave a vivid illustration of this from Vatican II, where each morning after Mass an ancient copy of the Gospel was solemnly carried down to the nave of St. Peter's and deposited on the altar. "It was the Gospel only, and no other book." A simple pious practice, or the expression of a still deep-rooted theological view that the Hebrew Scriptures are not fully equal to the Christian Scriptures? The latter, it would seem, in light of a text Heschel quotes from
Karl Rahner, that "ultimately God effected the production of the Old Testament books to the extent that they were to have a certain function and authority in regard to the New Testament." Against such a view Heschel insisted, again and again, that the Hebrew Bible is primary for Christians as much as Jews, because Jesus' understanding of God was the Jewish understanding of God, Jesus' preaching was about Torah and the Prophets, and the Christian liturgy is permeated with the Psalms. Heschel's conviction is being validated today by the best Christian biblical scholars. We might ask, however, is it really validation of Heschel, or instead, Heschel's influence on these scholars?

My last point is closely related to the second. More perhaps than anyone else Heschel has opened up to Christians the splendors of Jewish tradition—of the Bible, the sabbath, Hassidism, the rich life of East European Jews prior to the destruction, the mystical meaning of Israel. "To encounter him was to 'feel' the force and spirit of Judaism, the depth and grandeur of it. He led one, even thrust one, into the mysterious greatness of the Jewish tradition." Allow me to quote here some words from the guiding spirit of this symposium, Dr. John Merkle. In a letter to me, Dr. Merkle wrote, "Simply by living and teaching as he did, Heschel may have done more to inspire an enhanced appreciation of Judaism among non-Jews than any other Jew in post-biblical times . . . ."

These words resonated in me at the time, I had a hunch they were true; but I was then only just beginning my work on this paper. My research over the past months has confirmed that hunch. If Dr. Merkle is indeed correct, then this is, I believe, Abraham Heschel's greatest contribution to the reconciliation of our two communities. For I have long been convinced that the greatest hope for achieving this reconciliation, the surest antidote against Christian anti-Judaism, is for Christians to discover the splendor of a Jewish tradition alive today; so profoundly alive that it can give birth to an Abraham Heschel.

Let me close with words which Heschel wrote about another man, a dear friend, Reinhold Niebuhr, at the end of a penetrating critique of Niebuhr's writings on the mystery of evil. The words seem to me to apply also to the man who wrote them:

His spirituality combines heaven and earth, as it were. It does not separate soul from body, or mind from the unity of man's physical and spiritual life. His way is an example of one who does justly, loves mercy, and walks humbly with his God, an example of the unity of worship and living."
NOTES

8. "No Religion Is an Island," Union Seminary Quarterly Review 21 (January 1966): 117-34. This address also appears in E. E. Talmage, ed., Disputation and Dialogue (New York: Ktav, 1973), pp. 337-59. All my references are to the text in Talmage; henceforth the abbreviated title, "No Island," will be used. The text here referred to occurs on p. 345 in Talmage.
10. This and the preceding quote are from "No Island," pp. 348 and 352, resp.
20. References here and through the following paragraph are from "No Island," pp. 344, 345, and 346.
29. The term was first used in the 1950s by the French historian Jules Isaac. See his Teaching of Contempt (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964); and also Jesus and Israel (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971). The term has in recent years become part of our vocabulary when referring to the history of Christian anti-Judaism.
HESCHEL'S SIGNIFICANCE

41. The entire section dealing with Vatican II has been greatly abbreviated from the original text for the purposes of this article.

42. On February 23, 1983, at a one-day symposium held at the Jewish Theological Seminary in memory of Heschel, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, who had worked closely with Heschel throughout the council, presented a paper on Heschel and Vatican II. I am deeply indebted to Rabbi Tanenbaum for giving me a copy of his paper and permitting me to use it.

43. Tanenbaum, "Heschel and Vatican II—Jewish-Christian Relations." Paper presented at the Memorial Symposium in honor of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. The following material on Heschel and Vatican II is taken largely from this paper, especially pp. 15, 16, 17, and 21.


49. Sanders, p. 61.


51. Quoted from Rahner by Heschel in "The Jewish Notion of God," p. 112, n. 3.

52. See, for instance, Bernhard W. Anderson, "Confrontation with the Bible," in Theology Today 30 (October 1973) 267-71.


"Our people is only a people by virtue of the Torah." This sentiment, enunciated in the tenth century by Saadyah Gaon, a Jewish leader, legalist, and philosopher, has been at the core of Jewish homiletics even prior to its actual formulation. At first, Torah was the Pentateuch, but soon the term covered the Prophets and Writings as well. Interpretations which served as the basis for all of Jewish life became the laws of Torah which structured Jewish communal and cultural life. Though these laws guided a sector we would now call secular, Jews recognized them as religious regulations because they grew out of God's revelation to Israel. Similarly, the lore, theology, philosophy, and "salvation history" of Judaism had their roots in this revelation called Torah. Finally, the term "Torah" came to signify all texts, traditions, and sentiments which Jews recognized as holy and enduring. Thus, Torah grows, and the outgrowths themselves become Torah for other generations, and so the process goes. "The words of the Torah are fruitful and multiply" (Babylonian Talmud Hagigah 3b; see bibliography).

The special method by which this growth took place is called midrash in Hebrew. Some scholars feel that this process began in the biblical period itself, but its most significant developments occurred in the postbiblical era. The word comes from a Hebrew root meaning to inquire, seek, or require. All these translational shades of meaning are important because they all contribute to an accurate understanding of the task of midrash. The Jewish community's rootedness in the sacred texts and oral traditions of its past created a dialectic with its will to live...
HOMILETICAL RESOURCES

according to God's Word in the present and future. As the community recognized that it required renewal for its present and future, it inquired of and sought a link with its past. The act of interpreting the past for the needs of the present—that was and is midrash. When interpreters sought in Torah for communal standards, rules, and law, they created halakhic midrash, interpretations to produce or support law. When they searched Torah for theology, spiritual values, religious principles, ethics, consolation, even entertainment, they created aggadic midrash or homilies.

One should not be misled into thinking that the interpretational activity described above was dedicated to the pursuit of a progressive uncovering of the plain meaning of ancient texts or traditions. That was the work of commentators and translators, and the Jewish people have produced such people. But the midrashists' work was something else. They saw their task as making the text and tradition live in the midst of the community. Hence, as they searched and inquired of the past's legacy, perhaps a verse, or part of a verse, or even a single word of the tradition might, as it were, leap from the page to provide for the need of the day. The element that provided for the community's sustenance was used for that purpose. Inevitably, this meant that issues of conformity to the text's "plain meaning," though significant, were not primary, and sometimes they were simply overlooked. The "preacher of Dubnow," R. Jacob Kranz (nineteenth century), described the process as one of making arrows appear to have hit the bull's eye by painting targets around them. That view rightly indicates that Jewish homilies have been most significant when our teachers found the issues pressing hardest on the Jewish people's minds and hearts and addressed them through the creative and sensitive application of the tradition to life.

The process I have described generated various types of homiletical statements. Some retold and embellished biblical narratives or painted often startling and probing portraits of biblical personalities. Gaps in the Bible's narrative were filled with oral traditions and folk-lore, and the text became illuminated with a new light. In such cases, the midrashic preacher used the Bible's text archetypically. In this manner the redemption from Egyptian bondage could become the symbol of God's saving power in any generation, and Moses could become the model for virtuous communal leaders and teachers of any Jewish community. These homilies gave assurance that no Jewish generation was an orphan. The nation's God and its fathers and mothers traveled along with all Israel through time and space. Their
presence and experiences were as vital and important today as they
were in the past. Through the homily, the Bible and biblical forebears
lived again and thus could guide the generations.

A second homiletical format addressed the meaning of Jewish
religious and ethical life. The homily might typically center on a key
area of Jewish religious observance in order to explore the multiplicity
of spiritual and moral messages it contained. For example, a timely
homily on the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles (Heb., Sukkot,
see Lev. 23:39-43), a holy day which usually occurs in the middle of
the fall, might stress the need for our renewing our closeness with
nature. The preacher might suggest that we do this in order to
experience our shared "creatureliness" to the end that we may
recognize God as the creator. He or she might indicate that seven days
and nights spent in the outdoors, under roofs of natural material and
open enough to see the heavens, teaches us that the houses we build
sometimes protect us too well. In them we do not see or feel either the
grandeur of God or the shivering of those who have only huts as
shelter. In this way a ritual central to the observance of the Jewish
festivals becomes a challenge to recognize God more directly in our
lives and to begin again, with God's help, the work of redeeming the
downtrodden. The message is consistent with the rationale which
Torah gives for the observance, "so that your generations may know
that I provided shelters for the Israelites when I brought them forth
from Egypt, I am the Eternal" (Lev. 23:43, author's translation). It has
only been made more manifest and clear by the process of midrash.

Finally, Jewish preaching certainly has concerned itself with purely
theological themes as well. I did not, however, place this form of
homily first because it is a less commonplace phenomenon. In the
central work of rabbinic Judaism, the Talmud, little direct attention is
given to purely theological issues and dogma. This phenomenon set
the tone for Jewish teaching in general and for sermons as a particular
form of Jewish teaching. Nevertheless, important events confronting
the Jewish community from the outside or from within frequently set
off theological probing, discussion, and debate. For example,
Judaism's confrontation with the thinking of the Church Fathers led it
to consider the question of covenantal mutability and the question of
whether God changes His/Her mind. Similarly, Karaism, an internal
Jewish movement of the eighth century, which sought to dispense
with the rabbinic tradition and to understand the Bible as literally as
possible, moved rabbis to make theological responses. Obviously, the
rabbinic Jewish community was anxious to prove to itself and its
Karaitic opponents that its tradition was as much Torah as the written word of the Bible. Judaism as we know it today is testimony to the success of such efforts.

Other issues confront the Jewish community today and, of course, generate theological sermons as well as books and essays. We confront again the ongoing religious problem of evil, having endured the Holocaust. We re-evaluate the theological significance of the Holy Land because of Israel's rebirth. We re-examine the idea and meaning of Jewish chosenness as we confront religious pluralism as a serious reality in American society. Indeed, the very meaning of God becomes an urgent sermonic issue in an age that has spoken of God's "death" and in a time which has questioned the meaningfulness of almost everything. Jews, like all others who are part of a community of believers, cannot avoid the theological task when the moment demands a theological response. Hence, we have a renewal of the theological sermon in the synagogue as age-old Judaism seeks to speak of God in the contemporary world. New demands and new inquiries lead to new midrash. The process goes on, and we "renew our days as of old" (Lam. 5:21).

Finally, as part of this introduction and orientation to the Jewish homily, I believe it is important to note the significance of particularism and universalism as factors in Jewish life and thought. Judaism has not been a missionizing faith for well over a millennium, nor has it been a "majority" faith at any time. This has meant that Jewish teachers have directed their message inward toward the Jewish community for a long time. This reality has shaped the language, form of expression, and contents of the Jewish homily making it a particularistic work, a work best understood by Jews. Side by side with this particularism there has always been a strong current of Jewish universalism. It expresses itself in the hope for the "days of the messiah" in the future and legislation "for the sake of peace" (BT Gittin 59a, 61a) in the here and now. Jewish liturgy, especially during the High Holy Days in the fall, prays for the entire world's sustenance and safety. Similarly, Jewish lore explains the seventy sacrifices of the Sukkot festival (Num. 29), which were offered when the temple stood, as offerings on behalf of the "seventy nations" which constitute the human family.

This mixture of the particular and the universal makes the Jewish homily a partly accessible and partly inaccessible communication to the non-Jewish world. In each of my attempts to share what a Jew would teach about the Hebrew Bible sources of the lectionary for
Lent, I struggled with this reality. It is therefore my hope and prayer that the results of this struggle will provide a glimpse into the traditions of Jewish preaching and teaching formulated in such a way that all may share their treasure.

Note: The following lections, taken from the new Common Lectionary, are for the second, third, and fifth Sundays in Lent. Two of the lections have been divided into two parts for interpretation. Preachers may want to combine these for one Sunday's sermon or use them for other preaching occasions in Lent.

**GENESIS 17:1-10**

"And when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Eternal appeared to Abram and said to him: 'I am God Almighty [Heb., 'El Shaddai]. Walk in my presence and be whole. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you greatly'" (Gen. 17:1-2).

With these words we begin the covenant history of the Jewish people. God speaks to Abraham as 'El Shaddai in this event, and as the rabbinic interpreters tell us, this name indicates God's ability to limit. God is the one who said, "enough" (Heb., dai). Had God not spoken this word, creation would have extended infinitely (Gen. Rabbah, 46:2). Thus, paradoxically, God's "limited creation" becomes the sign of God's omnipotence. Why does God address Abram under this name at this moment?

Jewish mystics understood God’s act of limitation in an especially profound way. They taught that in order to grant space to a finite and corporeal world, God bounded himself in. This act made way for the universe. More than that, it made room for covenantal relationship. By limiting himself, God provided the possibility of an "other," and the existence of another creates the potential for sharing. In covenant, that sharing occurs. The parties to the covenant give and receive according to the terms they have set with one another. The binding quality of these terms limits the parties to the covenant, but the unity it forges enhances them.

Amazingly, we find that God was indeed under limits as Abram’s covenant partner. When considering action against Sodom and Gomorrah, God said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that which I am doing seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation?" (Gen. 18:17-18). God was no longer a free agent in history.
Covenanted to Abraham, he would have to counsel with the partner and hear his suggestions. Abraham's daring bargaining before God becomes more comprehensible in light of the covenant. God must hear his requests and even grant them so long as Abraham upholds his covenantal obligations. And so it was. Abraham asks for God's forbearance toward Sodom and Gomorrah on condition that there are ten righteous persons in the cities, and God grants it.

God's appearance to Abram under the name 'El Shaddai expressed God's willingness to be limited by covenant, but was Abram prepared to sacrifice his autonomy to God? Human willingness to part with the figment of our omnipotence is not the norm. The primordial serpent in Eden knew that well when he offered Adam and Eve the seemingly limitless power attached to being like God (Gen. 3:5). Yet, Abram, despite his tremendous wealth and power, was well-trained in the recognition of his limitations. He and his wife, Sarai, could not get what they desired most, a son and heir. Addressed by 'El Shaddai, Abram recognizes more than a covenantal offer. He recognizes a God who understands what limitations mean. He recognizes God in search of man, a God who, like himself, needs another.

The sign of the covenant which God demands, circumcision, becomes a more comprehensible symbol in light of the above. The sign of circumcision is placed on the organ which itself connects most intimately two lovers in search of ultimate sharing. Neither one alone is complete. Only in their union can some sense of wholeness be found. Finding one another depends on admitting limitation, confessing mutual dependence, and risking intimacy. All the elements of covenant are present between honest lovers, and God and Abram love each other. Circumcision also cedes to God Abram's control over his own flesh. By refashioning his own body according to God's command, Abram expresses that he is not so autonomous as to render the notion of covenant meaningless. Abram shows that he recognizes self-limitation and acquiescence to the demands of an other as the necessary elements of sharing, of giving, and, ultimately, of receiving in return. As we know, God will test Abram, even to the point of asking for the return of all he covenanted for, to the end that God will bless Abraham with all things (Gen 24:1). After the events at Moriah, both partners—God and Abram—we'll be bound forever. But Abram demands things of God, too, and at the covenantal moment described in Genesis 15, it is a child that Abram seeks. Now, when God demands that Abram make himself physically less, now is when that demand is honored!

Covenant, because of the richness of connections it creates, is often
bewildering in its manifestations. It empowers and controls, limits and enhances, equalizes and points out the inequalities of its divine and human partners (see Gen. 18:23-27). But no matter how bewildering aspects of the covenantal relationship may be, one issue is clear. The bonds of the covenant commit its parties to mutual concern, care, and in Abraham's case, love. God now knows that those who will follow Abraham will have been taught by him to be God's ambassadors to the family of humankind. They will sanctify God's name before all the world. Abraham's seed will know that their parent's merit and model assure them of God's love. God needed Abraham and needs us as well. After all, 'El Shaddai covenanted with Abraham's children after him. So long as we carry our covenantal responsibility as Abraham did, we may live with hope that God will, in the end, reward covenantal responsiveness with redemption.

Jews throughout the generations have spoken of "the joy of commandments." Living under the covenantal obligations of Torah was never a burden to faithful Jews. Indeed, we have insisted that those who observe the Torah are truly free (Mishnah, Abot 6:2). The covenant has always reminded us of marriage, in this case, between God and Israel. Our liturgy—morning and evening—connects God's love with God's law. Thus, we signal with our lives that we believe that we can give something to God as God has given to us. "I shall betroth you to me forever" (Hosea 2:20) is whispered from God to Israel and back again as each Jewish generation renews the covenant and imprints its sign in the flesh of its children.

GENESIS 17:15-19

"One who changes his name changes his luck" (BT Rosh Hashanah 16b). God changes Abram into Abraham and Sarai into Sarah and their fortunes change completely. "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah should suckle children?" (Gen. 21:7). The answer before the renaming would have been, "No one!" But Sarah did give birth to a son, and Abraham called him Isaac, "laughter," as God had told him. What is in a name!

At creation's beginning we find God giving things their name. Day, night, heaven, sea, man, and woman all receive their names from God according to the biblical narrative. God brings all living things to Adam who gives them names, and God was interested to see what Adam would call them (Gen. 2:19-20). Names are the beginning of relationships. Had Adam failed to name the creatures he lived with,
God would not have created woman. Adam would have shown that he did not need others. But God knew Adam's need. After all God had made him and so knew "it is not good for man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18). Now Adam would recognize the need for relationship through his desire to be able to somehow speak someone else's name, to recognize others' existences and natures.

God's role in changing Abram's and Sarai's name expresses God's special relationship to these people as God's own. No longer will Abram be Terah's son, nor will Sarai be daughter to her parents. Abraham and Sarah are God's new creation, named by God and, thus, become new creatures with a new future planned by their maker.

The story of Abraham and Sarah tells us that the creation story repeats and repeats. Each new creation receives a greater covenantal charge and opportunity. Adam and Eve covenanted with God to have Eden for the observance of one obligation. Noah's generations had all of the new creation they would share in if they would hew to God's seven covenantal demands. Abraham and Sarah, chosen to create anew after the disobedience of the tower of Babel, set the stage for Sinai. What connection links creation and covenant? The need of both humankind and God for one another. God, the Almighty, the complete, the perfect, somehow, someway chooses to need us, to need another. We, seeking to be whole, need Him/Her, too. Covenant creates the link and forges the bond between us.

The knowledge that there is the ongoing renewal of creation, that "God renews eternally and each day the work of the Beginning" (Prayer Book, morning service), provides us with hope. No matter what flaws in creation or the covenant which attends it we have wrought, tomorrow we begin anew. According to the Jewish tradition, humanity is a partner with God in the ongoing act of creation just as we are God's partner in covenant. Each day challenges us to make as much right as we can, "to repair the world in the image of God's Kingdom" (Prayer Book, 'Amen/Adoration), as both a creative and covenantal act. Is there any wonder then that the changed persons, Abraham and Sarah, the covenant couple, will now have a child? Is there any other symbol of a new creation as vivid as birth? And the child's name must signify all the joy linked with new hopes and new beginnings: Isaac, the one who will laugh.

In the light of these views, Maimonides's rule regarding a penitent person is psychologically sound. He wrote:

It is part of the way of penitence for the penitent to cry out before God in tears and supplication, to perform acts of charity according to
his ability, to distance himself from the matter in which one sinned and to change one's name . . . (Laws of Penitence 2:4).

The new name of the penitent points to the totally new creation the penitent has become. The rending of covenantal bonds caused by the disobedience of the sinner is repaired by repentance. In the Jewish tradition even more than that occurs. Repentance out of love turns past faults into merits. The very reality of time and space is changed and everything is created anew. "Yesterday the sinner was separated from the God of Israel; he prayed and was not answered and performed commanded acts, and they were rejected. Today, the penitent cleaves to God, prays and receives immediate response, performs the commandments, and is received with joy and pleasure" (Laws of Penitence 7:7). Indeed, "one who changes his name changes his fortune," and the new name is always a joyous one if the new path chosen links one to God.

As we read Gen. 17:15-19 we recognize that the aged Abraham cannot believe in being created anew. His hundred years and the ninety of Sarah weigh heavily on him. The miracle of daily re-creation, new covenants, new names must compete with the reality of the years and their pains. It will be enough if Ishmael will live, says Abraham. But God responds, "Nay, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son!" (Gen. 17:19). We, too, become disillusioned—some would say "experienced," worldly-wise—and we are willing to settle for what is. We do not share the vision of the world as our Partner sees it: new each day and filled with opportunity, open to repair and perfection if we but will and act as if it were so.

This is why the covenant as it will be observed through all the generations of Israel is sealed in Isaac's flesh: "And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him" (Gen. 21:4, compare Gen. 17:12). Isaac, child of laughter, son of a new-old couple, new hope in the face of jaded experience, is himself a new creation. Seven days must pass in his life and in the life of every Jewish male child before the covenant of circumcision will be observed. This signifies God's role in the creation of the world which took seven days. Circumcision takes place on the eighth day as a sign of the human role in shaping new life and new worlds (compare Kiddushin 30b). The mind and heart of a newborn are a tabula rasa ready to be shaped and formed toward the making of a better world, toward striving for better values, toward bringing the redemption. When we continue the covenant in our children's lives,
we renew in ourselves the commitments to hope for redemption. We begin again to work to fulfill that hope through lives we would want our children to model and reaffirm with their children. We pass the covenant from generation to generation.

A Jewish folk idea says that prior to birth an angel obliges the child-to-be-born to swear that he or she will become a zaddik, a saintly person, and not, God forbid, a rasha', an evil person. It is hard to keep the oath. Life whittles away at our resolution. Creation and covenant alike wear down. "Blessed is our God, Ruler of the World, who has commanded that we involve ourselves in the words of the Torah" (Prayer Book, morning service). When we fulfill that commandment, then we read of Abrams and Sarais turned into Abrahams and Sarahs, and we see how tired, worn-out lives become new and laugh out of doubt and into joy. We see that as broken as life may make us, turning to our creator and our covenantal tasks renews, repairs, and, with God's help, redeems.

Who would have told Abram that Sarai would suckle children? No one. But no one would deny that Abraham and Sarah, the changed couple, did have a son. Countless generations have read their story. It still beckons us to change our visions and our styles, to believe in new beginnings and changed fortunes. It challenges us to hope and act in such a way that we may all share in the joy of a redeemed creation.

EXODUS 20:1-17

The Ten Commandments, in Hebrew the Ten Statements, are central to both Judaism and Christianity. For Judaism, they represent the beginning of revelation which would finally unfold into 613 covenantal responsibilities called mitzvot, commandments. Indeed, Saadyah Gaon, a tenth-century Jewish philosopher, and the great book of Jewish mysticism, the Zohar, claim that all the commandments are contained in concise form in the Ten Commandments revealed at Sinai. These rules represent the details of Jewish living and cover the totality of life's activities. This system attempts to tie the totality of human activity to God, in this manner to sanctify it, and, thus, to infuse the totality of human experience with significance and worth. The message the 613 commandments seeks to convey is: there is no human act or relationship which is unimportant in the eyes of God. Furthermore, there is no realm of being which cannot become a point of departure for a meeting with the divine. Yet, the Ten Commandments contain the content of the theophany witnessed by
all Israel at Mt. Sinai and therein lies their special place in Judaism. We shall, therefore, give attention to some of the Ten Commandments individually.

"I am the Eternal, your God, who took you out of the land of Egypt." (Exod. 20:2)

It is the normal course of traditional Jewish thought to express itself in community or group terms. "All Israel is responsible for one another" (BT Shebucot 39a) is typical of this pattern of thought as is the thoroughgoing use of "we" throughout the liturgy. No doubt it is this tendency of thought that raised the question, "Why were the Ten Commandments spoken by God in the singular form?" (Pesikta Rabbati, 21). Many answers have been suggested, but one of the best of them is that at Sinai God appeared to each individual differently. To one, God seemed to sit; to another, God seemed to stand. Yet another perceived God as a youth, while someone else received the revelation of God as an old man (Pesikta Rabbati, 21). This is not a claim that God is any one of these, but rather a statement about the need of people to personalize their experience of God and Judaism's belief that God agrees to such personalization.

This stance has made Jewish thinking very uncomfortable about "defining" God too closely. Indeed, it would be considered arrogant to try to do so. Who are we, mere mortals, to close the divine infinity into measurements we have set? How do we dare tell others that our vision of God is the only true vision? In this regard it is interesting how R. Abraham b. David of Posquierres responded to Maimonides's dogmatic statement that those who believed God has a shape or form of any sort were heretics (Maimonides's Code, Laws of Penitence, 3:7). He stated:

Why does he call such a person a heretic? How many greater and better persons than him [Maimonides] accepted such a notion according to what they saw in biblical texts and even more so from what they saw in some Jewish lore which confused their minds?

R. Abraham did not believe in God's corporeality, as he himself states, but neither did he believe that anyone had the right to classify those who did as heretics. The divine reality appeared to great and good people in many ways. It was unfair to characterize others' views as
heresy when the issue was each person's personalization of the One who had taken him or her from Egypt.

This theological openness is crucial to true knowledge of God and to true religiosity. It declares the "I shall be what I shall be" (Exod. 3:14) of God to be true, and prevents it from becoming a caricature drawn by some authoritarian person with enough hubris to say, "God is what I say God is." When R. Mendel of Kotzk was asked what the true path to God was, he could only respond, "What kind of God would God be if there was only one true path to Him?!" In saying that he spoke the Jewish heart and mind. Indeed, he gave an entire address on Jewish dogmatic theology and declared that if one exists, its canons are small indeed. The God who took Israel out of Egypt may have asked for communal adherence to covenantal laws, but She or He addressed each man and woman according to his or her own needs and abilities. The 613 commandments may all be Israel's responsibility, but the God to whom their observance is the sign of loyalty is the God to whom those who crossed the sea sang, "This is my God and I will extol him" (Exod. 15:2). In that spirit, Judaism could allow debate even about the proper way to observe the rules of the covenant declaring, "Both this opinion and that are the words of the living God." (BT Eruvin 13b).

"Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy."

Of all the institutions of Jewish life, the sabbath (Heb., shabbat) stands out as one of the most central. It, along with circumcision, was under constant attack throughout antiquity. It was as if the Hellenistic world knew that the successful eradication of these observances would signal the death of Jewish life and culture. Why was life and limb sacrificed to maintain sabbath observance? Wherein lies the centrality of shabbat for the Jew? What about it is significant at the universal level?

The word sabbath itself means cessation. In traditional Jewish practice this meaning is lived out by a total cessation from any activity which will bring about significant and enduring change in an object or environment. For example, one may not plant something on shabbat because that brings about changes in the seed or plant in a significant and ultimately enduring way. The net result of such restriction is detachment from the utilization and manipulation of one's external world. One day a week that world is left to itself, in the state of being it was when shabbat began at sunset on Friday. Only the saving of a life will suspend this cessation of activity which constitutes the sabbath rest.
Jewish tradition holds that sabbath observance testifies to the fact that God is the creator and ruler of the universe:

The five commandments (on the first tablet) parallel the five commandments (on the second tablet). . . . It is written "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy" (Exod. 20:8) as the fourth commandment. Parallel to it (as the eighth commandment) it is written, "Do not bear false witness" (Exod. 20:16). This indicates that anyone who desecrates the sabbath testifies falsely that God did not create the world and rest on the seventh day. Conversely, those who observe the sabbath testify that God did create the world and rest on the seventh day . . . (Mekilta, Bahodesh, 8).

Cessation from creative work, from tampering with the world around us, states tangibly our agreement that it is not totally ours, that we are not the ultimate rulers over it. Six days we manipulate it, shape it, dominate it. On the seventh, God asks us to return it to Him/Her. By acceding to that request, we do testify that ultimately the "earth is the Eternal's with the fullness thereof" (Ps. 24:1), and we let go of it and return it and ourselves to God.

Acknowledging the rights of the creator of the universe over that which She or He made returns the sense of being a creature to us. We begin to recognize that we are one with all other created things before God. We all share in being the work of God's hands. This sense proposes that when we return at sabbath's end to our work in and with the world we should return with a gentler, more respectful attitude toward all of creation. On shabbat the great and the lowly, humanity and beast, master and slave are equalized in their position before God who made them all (Exod. 20:10). Rabbinic Judaism recognized even the right of inanimate objects to "rest" on the sabbath when it restrained Jews from using any tool for its normal work purpose on the sabbath day (see BT Shabbat 18a). We and all things are partners in each other's existences, and all of our existences are God's.

Sabbath also provides an opportunity to step back from molding and shaping the world so that we may just look at it. As we take that look we can judge from a bit of a distance, as an artist would, whether we like what we have done with our world during the past week, or month, or year. We can plan to do better, or differently, or, perhaps, cease from doing any more. Cut off from direct and intense interaction with the world outside of us by the sabbath rules governing prohibited labor, we are freed to turn to our internal worlds. We are
granted time to tend to the world of human relationships as opposed to the world of material relationships. We can “resoul.”

How the modern world needs sabbath! We have polluted air and water and earth because we deemed ourselves rulers of the earth when that title belongs only to God. We have not taken the time to learn that we are one with all created things, and to what pass has that brought us? Our failure to build rich inner worlds, filled with loving care and a sense of awe and partnership with each other and with creation, has brought us to the edge of self-annihilation. We do not need time “to kill.” Rather, we need time to stop and look inward and out, a moment to pause. At the crossroad which sabbath provides between week and week, we may see, as God did, what is good in our creativity so we may maximize it. Our cessation from work can help us plan sensibly for making our efforts produce life and joy, not death and destruction. We are the rulers of creation, right down to the very atoms thereof. But do we truly rule or do our creations now rule us?

When sabbath wanes, as a sign of re-entry into the workdays of the week, the Jew lights a candle of braided wax and wicks and recalls how God created light on the first day. The candle is woven and not of one piece symbolizing how human creativity can be a mix of good and evil, a source of positive building and horrendous destruction. The fire we hold in our hand as the week begins challenges us all with the question of how we will use creation’s gifts: to light and warm, or to burn and destroy. The six workdays teach us that we are capable of accomplishing anything our creative imaginations will. The seventh day poses the question, “But should we?”

“You shall not murder.”

The fact that Jewish tradition has developed continuously through different eras and in a great variety of places has meant that it could refine and redefine its biblical legacy in light of its new experiential insights. The directions of the prohibitions on murder and thievery, elemental to the protection of life, property, and communal order, became richer in meaning as Jewish life progressed. What are simple enough statements in their biblical locus developed subtle ethical nuances which tell us something important about the Jewish tradition’s ethos.

Genesis already provides a theological grounding for the prohibition on murder. It states that such an act should be punished by death
because humanity is created in the image of God (Gen. 9:6). Rabbinic sources adopt the same approach when they state:

It is written, "I am the Eternal, your God" and over against this it is written, "You shall not murder." Torah testifies that one who murders is regarded as one who lessened the Image of the King... (Mekilla, Bahodesh, 5).

This concern for the value of a life because each life is unique, i.e., each human life is "one" just as God is "one," meaning without peer (compare Exod. 15:11), led to a deepening of the meaning of "You shall not murder." Indeed, the sense of the value of the individual finally prompted the rabbinic legal tradition to re-evaluate the question of the meaning of capital punishment. This led to a change in the sense of capital punishment's purpose which, for the Bible, is either retaliation, deterrent, or the maintenance of an orderly society (Lev. 24:17-22; Deut. 17:6-7, 12-13). For the rabbis, however, capital punishment was part of a program of repentance. Violation of those laws in the Torah which required the death penalty were sins needing atonement. Hence, "those sentenced to death confess" (Mishnah, Sanhedrin 6:2) because their death is their atonement and is efficacious only when accompanied by penitence.

This new sense of what capital punishment represented, as well as further consideration of the concept of the image of God, pressed some rabbis toward the conclusion that capital punishment should be avoided even in cases where the Torah might require it. From their perspective, the Torah could be construed to demand total certainty that a crime carrying the death penalty was committed with criminal intent and awareness of the penalty. Furthermore, the Torah's concern for careful examination of witnesses in death penalty cases (Deut. 19:18) could serve as the basis of such meticulous scrutiny that no two witnesses could produce equivalent evidence except in the rarest cases. Both "strategies" were employed, and the end result is found in a statement by R. Akiba, one of the greatest sages of rabbinic Judaism (ca. 90-135): "Had I been a member of the Court when it was empowered to impose the death penalty, no person would have been put to death" (Mishnah, Makkot, 1:10).

The process we have described does not abolish the Torah's law of capital punishment. Given rabbinic theology, that could not happen. Rather, some rabbis interpreted certain requirements of the Torah stringently, for example, the laws of testimony, in order to make
capital punishment nearly impossible. Behind this process, however, stood the rabbinic sense of respect for God’s image and the deeply felt notion that spilling blood meant its diminution. That being settled, many rabbis recognized that they had to limit bloodshed whether inflicted by vicious criminals or by the court. It is not surprising that Akiba, who said, “Beloved is humankind because it has been created in the Divine image” (Abot 3:14), is foremost in his opposition to capital punishment.

The development of ethical meaning for “You shall not murder” did not stop at the point of special regard for human life that we have seen. Rather the tradition moves on to consider the emotional and spiritual core of human life as an issue no less significant than the physical life of a person. Thus the Talmud rules, “Anyone who embarrasses one’s fellow in public is as one who sheds blood” (B. Mezi’a, 58a). R. Nahman b. Isaac commented, “What has been said is well said, for we have seen that the face of the embarrassed party blanches.” Hence, the act is considered a form of bloodshed.

At a more philosophical level, however, the act of denigrating and embarrassing another shares with murder the characteristic of defacing and minimizing the divine image. If one considered the true value of each person granted by his or her creation in God’s image, one would perforce have to refrain from belittling one’s fellow. As a hassidic bon mot puts it, “Which is greater, a sin against God or a sin against man? Certainly a sin against man, for that is a sin against the Divine Image as well!”

Other Jewish folk traditions realize the notion of the divine image in Jewish life. In counting toward the quorum of ten needed for communal prayer, the traditional practice is to use the ten Hebrew words of Ps. 28:9 for the count. Eastern European Jews can be heard to count people using the Yiddishism “nisht eins,” “not one.” These circumlocutions indicate the deep-seated unwillingness to reduce a human being created in God’s image to a number. It is this ethic which impels the “holy society” which buries the dead to address even a corpse with a plea for forgiveness if, perchance, the preparations for burial have been done without appropriate sensitivity toward the dignity and privacy due a human being. In death, as in life, a person remains what he or she was, the dwelling place of God’s image which endures forever.

This is the ethical sensitivity which characterizes the best in Jewish traditional thought. It is a sensitivity desperately needed in an era when the value of each person is questioned and frequently eroded by
many processes of dehumanization. Care, humanity, and a zealous protection of the dignity of each individual are the only guarantees of our ultimate worth. We are naked and unprotected, weak and strong alike, when we sacrifice even one person's uniqueness and value. Those who were reduced to numbers, and then to ashes, testify that this is so. We are citizens of a century whose ideologies and technologies must serve as a warning to listen diligently to their testimony. "You shall not murder"—not with weapons, nor with your tongue, nor with apathy toward the root of all human dignity, the image of God in each person.

Advent for the Christian community celebrates a relived memory and a hope. It represents four weeks of anticipating the birth of Jesus as a retrospective event and as a prospective, redeeming event for the future. The Christian ecclesia's reading of Jeremiah 31:31-34 hears in Jeremiah's words a prophecy which foresees events meaningful to the experience of the church: a new covenant, the law written inwardly, on the heart, and an age of forgiveness and direct knowledge of God.

Jewish readers understood the chapter as a prophecy of an age to come, the messianic era in which the land of Israel, the people of Israel, and the God of Israel would be reunited covenantally forever. The ultimate external, historical "proof" that all parties to the covenant were fulfilling their covenantal responsibilities was the possession of the land by a sovereign Jewish people. The messianic era dawned when that reality could be eternally guaranteed by an ongoing fulfillment of the Torah, the law, by the Jewish people with God's help.

Given the history of Judaism and Christianity, Jews did not hear in this passage of Jeremiah what Christians do. This does not mean that as that history unfolded Jews were uninterested in or unaware of the Christian comprehension of this passage. Indeed, R. David Kimchi, a medieval Provencal Jewish grammarian and commentator, commented directly to the Christian understanding of this text, especially regarding the "new covenant" section of it. Kimchi writes:

The new aspect of the covenant (described in Jeremiah 31:32) is that it shall be upheld and never be broken (by Israel) as was the Sinaitic covenant which God made with Israel. One who says that the Prophet foresaw a new Torah to come, a Torah unlike the one given at Sinai... the response to him is as follows:
What is meant by “not according to the covenant I made with their fathers” is that they broke it. The “new” covenant will not be broken because “I will put my law (Heb., Torah) in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it,” that it shall not be forgotten by them forever. Hence, the renewal of the covenant is merely its eternal maintenance.

And behold, Malachi, the last of the prophets, in his closing words states “Remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, even statutes and ordinances.” Certainly that passage refers to a future time, as Malachi closed, “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, etc.” Hence, there will never be a new Torah or covenant save the one arranged at Sinai.

I have put all this forward in order to make it obvious that the issue of Jewish-Christian relationships, especially at the religious and theological level, is still an issue of texts and contexts. While we often read a shared literature, the Hebrew Bible, what we see and hear there is conditioned by what our particular faiths have taught us to expect to find. Inevitably if we are to remain loyal to our faiths—and here I mean also the inner faith each of us has in our particular system of religion—we will continue to hear God’s Word differently. The question this raises about the meaning of interfaith dialogue is large. What purpose does it serve? Don’t the same essential differences persist along with their inevitable polemical appendages?

The answer to the last question is yes if one assumes that the function of dialogue is the creation of unified religious thinking and community. That assumption means, at least to me, that all the dialogical partners are on a gentle—but serious—conversionary mission. It is hard for me to conceive that those who love and have rooted faith in their particular traditions would even enter dialogue settings if that was dialogue’s manifest purpose. Indeed, some people do not join interreligious dialogue because that is precisely their sense of dialogue’s function!

If religious unity is not what dialogue is about, then what is it about? Here I can only speak for myself. For me, the hopes placed in dialogues with other religious groups besides my own—and sometimes even in dialogues within my own faith community—are best illustrated by a short hassidic interpretation of the first blessing of the central prayer of the Jewish liturgy. The prayer begins, “Blessed are You, our God and God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” The hassidim said, “Why the
repetition? Say simply 'the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' The prayer, however, must call God the God of each patriarch separately because their experiences of the Eternal One were each different."

Dialogue's function, for me, is not the eradication of different ways to God or experiences of Him/Her, but a stirring opportunity to clarify and rejuvenate one's own "standing before God" in a framework which validates the rousing finale of Psalms, "Everything that hath breath shall praise the Eternal" (Ps. 150:6). In dialogue we see one another taking our faith, our religious heritages, and our beliefs seriously. Dialogue cannot take place among "devil's advocates." It can only occur between people with a passion for the particular and a will to share the insights particular "ways to God" offer; but those "ways" must really be their ways.

Dialogue is a process in which, for all our differences, we try to understand and develop sensitivities. It is a means to get beyond stereotypes which proclaim Christians cruel Crusaders and Jews and others aspiritual infidels. It is a situation in which we come to recognize that "those others really mean it" in terms of their faith commitments, just as "we" do. Because that is so, we become more compassionate and comprehending regarding our differences, though we may never give them up.

The very term "dialogue" assumes two voices. Differences make two voices, or more, possible. Once we value the people we talk with, we get beyond trying to swallow them up into unrelieved sameness. We behave as God did at the time of creation—we create diversity and proclaim it "very good."

Jeremiah dreamed of an age where people would cease teaching each other "know the Lord" in the voice of command and domination. He foresaw a time when all would know God, the great and the small, each in their own way. Perhaps, we have a chance to help speed the fulfillment of that vision by open, sensitive, nonmanipulative, and pluralistic dialogue.

NOTES

1. Jewish tradition teaches us that all of humanity is linked to God through the Noahidic covenant, which obliges mankind to seven commandments regarding religion, societal order, sexual morality, and kindness to animals.

2. The quotation from Pesikta Rabbati ends as follows: "If a heretic should say to you, 'There are two gods,' respond thus, 'He is the God who revealed Himself at the Red Sea: He is the same God who appeared at Sinai.'"

3. The word wa-yinnafash in Hebrew is rendered as "and He rested." However, it is related to the Hebrew word nefesh, soul, and could be translated "and He was souled."
BIBLIOGRAPHY:

A GUIDE TO SOME SOURCES OF JEWISH THOUGHT

Classics of Jewish Law

*Mishnah,* edited and translated by Philip Blackman, New York: Judaica Press, 1964, 7 volumes. The work is the earliest collection (ca. 200) of rabbinic law which covers both civil and religious legislation in Judaism.

The *Talmud* (referred to in the article as BT, Babylonian Talmud), edited by Isadore Epstein, London: Soncino, 37 volumes. The Talmud is the great compendium of law and lore which has generated most of traditional Jewish thought and literature. It developed over the 3-7th centuries.

Classical Homiletic Sources

*Mekilta,* translated by Jacob Z. Lauterbach, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1949, 3 volumes. An early legal and homiletical work on the Book of Exodus. Other such works exist for Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, but, unfortunately, are not translated into English.


Classics of Jewish Mysticism and Hasidism


*Soul on Fire,* Elie Wiesel, New York: Random House, 1972. Portraits and stories by the great hasidic teachers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Hasidism was an emotional and charismatic renewal of Judaism based on many of the teachings of Jewish mysticism. It began in the mid-eighteenth century.


Classical Jewish Philosophical Works

The Guide of the Perplexed, Moses Maimonides, translated by Shlomo Pines, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963. 2 volumes. The great philosophical Jewish response to medieval Aristotelian thought. The work is one of the basic philosophical texts of Judaism. It generated philosophical debate, controversy, and interpretation for centuries after its publication.

Some Contemporary Jewish Homiletical Resources

Meditations on the Torah, B. S. Jacobson, Tel Aviv: Sinai, 1956. A thematic analysis of significant themes in the weekly lectionary portion of the Pentateuch.

Studies in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, Nehama Leibowitz, translated by Aryeh Newman, Jerusalem: World Zionist Organization, 1958-, 5 volumes. A presentation of major exegetical themes, traditional and modern, for each of the weekly Pentateuchal readings by the foremost living authority on Jewish biblical commentary.

Sermon collections and manuals are published by the rabbinic organizations of the three major Jewish religious groups in the United States. These may be obtained from the Central Conference of American Rabbis (Reform); Rabbinic Assembly of America (Conservative); and Rabbinic Council of America (Orthodox). The organizational offices of each group are in New York City.

Contemporary Jewish Philosophies, William E. Kaufman, Reconstructionist Press, 1976, and Faith and Reason, Samuel Bergman, translated by Alfred Jospe, Washington, D.C.: B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation, 1961. Both volumes introduce the major Jewish thinkers of the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries whose impact is most strongly felt today in the contemporary Jewish community. Though it is best to read each of these thinkers' philosophies/theologies independently, these two works accurately identify the "heroes" in the field. They also provide a synopsis of the thinkers' views and some critique.
INDEX TO VOLUME FOUR

Authors

Atkinson, Clarissa W., 1:101-8
Ball-Kilbourne, Gary L., 1:43-54
Burtner, Robert W., 1:22-30
Chandler, Ralph Clark, 2:8-27
Chernick, Michael, 4:82-100
Cole, Charles E., 1:3-9, 2:3-7, 3:3-8, 4:3
Collins, Adela Yarbro, 3:69-84
Eckardt, A. Roy, consulting editor, number 4, winter
Fleischner, Eva, 4:64-81
Geyer, Alan, 2:66-75
Goodhue, Tom, 2:57-65
Greenberg, Irving, 4:4-22
Guth, James L., 2:44-56
Hanson, Paul D., 3:23-39
Jennings, Theodore W., Jr., 3:54-68
Jewett, Robert, 3:9-22
John-Charles, 2:103-8
Lister, Douglas, 1:9-21
McClain, William B., 1:96-100
Mathews, James K., 1:91-95
Newsom, Carol A., 3:40-53
Pawlikowski, John T., 4:23-36
Potthoff, Harvey H., 76-102
Richey, Russell R., 1:31-42
Schoneveld, J. (Coos), 4:52-63
Stanley, T. L., 2:28-43
Tilson, Everett, 1:55-90
Trotter, Mark, 3:85-108
Tucker, Gene, consulting editor, number 3, fall
Tyson, John R., 1:9-21
Weber, Paul J., 2:28-43
White, James F., editor and author of introduction to “John Wesley’s Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America,” Methodist Bicentennial Commemorative Reprint, published at time of number 2, spring, in separate volume.
Williamson, Clark M., 4:37-51

Titles

“Apocalyptic and Contemporary Theology,” 3:54-68
“Black People in United Methodism: Remnant or Residue?” 1:96-100

103
"Christian as Steward in John Wesley's Theological Ethics," 1:43-54
"Churches and Peacemaking in 1984," 2:66-75
"Coming to Terms with the Doom Boom," 3:9-22
"Counting," 2:3-7
"Dom Gregory Dix's The Shape of the Liturgy," 2:103-8
"Ecclesial Sensibilities in Nineteenth-Century American Methodism," 1:31-42
"Education of the Christian Right: The Case of the Southern Baptist Clergy," 2:44-56
"Heschel's Significance for Jewish-Christian Relations," 4:64-81
"Homiletical Resources for the Season after Pentecost," 2:76-102
"Homiletical Resources from the Hebrew Bible for Lent," 4:82-100
"It Never Got Much Better than This," 1:3-8
"Jewish 'No' to Jesus and the Christian 'Yes' to the Jews," 4:52-63
"John Wesley in Switzerland," 1:22-30
"John Wesley's Sunday Service, special volume published with number 2
"Most Pressing issue before the Church," 1:91-95
"Past as Revelation: History in Apocalyptic Literature," 3:40-53
"Questionable Pursuits," 3:3-8
"Relationship of Judaism and Christianity: Toward a New Organic Model," 4:4-22
"Shame," 2:57-65
"Shape of the Liturgy," 2:103-8
"'What the Spirit Says to the Churches': Preaching the Apocalypse," 3:69-84
"When an Editor Needs an Editor," 4:3
"Women and Religion" (reviews), 1:101-8

104
INDEX

Major Subjects

Altizer, Thomas J. J. 3:65-67
Anti-Judaism, 4:37, 39, 56-57
Anti-Semitism, 4:23, 39, 49, 75
Apocalypticism—see fall, number 3.

Bangs, Nathan, 1:33-37
Blacks, 1:96-100
Book reviews, 1:101-8, 2:103-8

Chardin, Teilhard de, 3:64-65
Crisis theology, 3:57-59

Daniel, Book of, 3:47-50, 82
Disarmament, 2:66-75
Dix, Dom Gregory (review), 1:103-8

Easter, homiletical resources for, 1:55-90
Electronic church, 2:16-20
Enoch, First Book of, 3:43-47

Falwell, Jerry, 2:8-27 passim
Fundamentalism, 2:8-27 passim

Heschel, Abraham Joshua, 4:64-81
Holocaust, 4:4-5, 8, 19-21, 32, 34-35, 37, 52-54, 71-74, 76

Israel, as contemporary nation, 4:21, 31-34, 38, 55, 60

Jewish-Christian relations—see winter, number 4.

Keller, Rosemary S. (review), 1:101-8

Lent, homiletical resources for, 4:82-102
Liberation theology, 3:62-64
Lindsey, Hal, 3:10, 15-17, 40-42

Midrash, 4:57, 82-83 (Chernick)
Millennialism, 3:9-22
Moral Majority, 2:8-27 passim, 2:44-56 passim

Parables, 2:76-102
Pentecost, homiletical resources for, 2:76-102, 3:85-108

105
Politics, and 1984 election, 2:66-75; and lobbying, 3:28-43; and theology, 3:60-62
Postmillennialism, 3:11-12
Premillennialism, 2:10-12, 3:11
Queen, Louise L. (review), 1:101-8
Rabbi, as central Judaic figure, 4:30
Religious interest groups, 2:28-43
Revelation, Book of, 3:69-84
Ruether, Rosemary R. (review), 1:101-8; 4:56
Stevens, Abel, 1:38-39
Stewardship, 1:43-54
Supersessionism, 4:10-11, 49, 61
Synagogue, as different from temple, 4:30-31
Talmud, 4:82-102 passim
Theology of history (Wolfhart Pannenberg), 3:59-60
Thomas, Hilah F. (review), 1:101-8
Vatican II, 4:75-77
War, 1:91-95
Weidman, Judith L. (review), 1:101-8
Weiss, Johannes, 3:55-56
Wesley, Charles, 1:9-21
Wesley, John, 1:9-21, 43-54; special volume published with number 2
Women, ministry of (reviews), 1:101-8
Coming in QR
Spring 1985

Faith Without Foundations
Jay McDaniel

The Church and the Sexual Revolution
Raymond J. Lawrence

Personal Library—Public Resource
Dale Goldsmith

New Directions for the Iona Community
Robert Gustafsson

Do Something Pastoral!
David G. Hawkins

Recent Books and Emerging Issues
in the Study of Apocalyptic
John G. Gammie

Homiletical Resources: Epistle Lections for Pentecost
David Watson


Issues of Quarterly Review are available on microfilm and microfiche. For those desiring this service, order from:
University Microfilms International
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106
Quarterly Review is a publication of The United Methodist Publishing House and the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry.