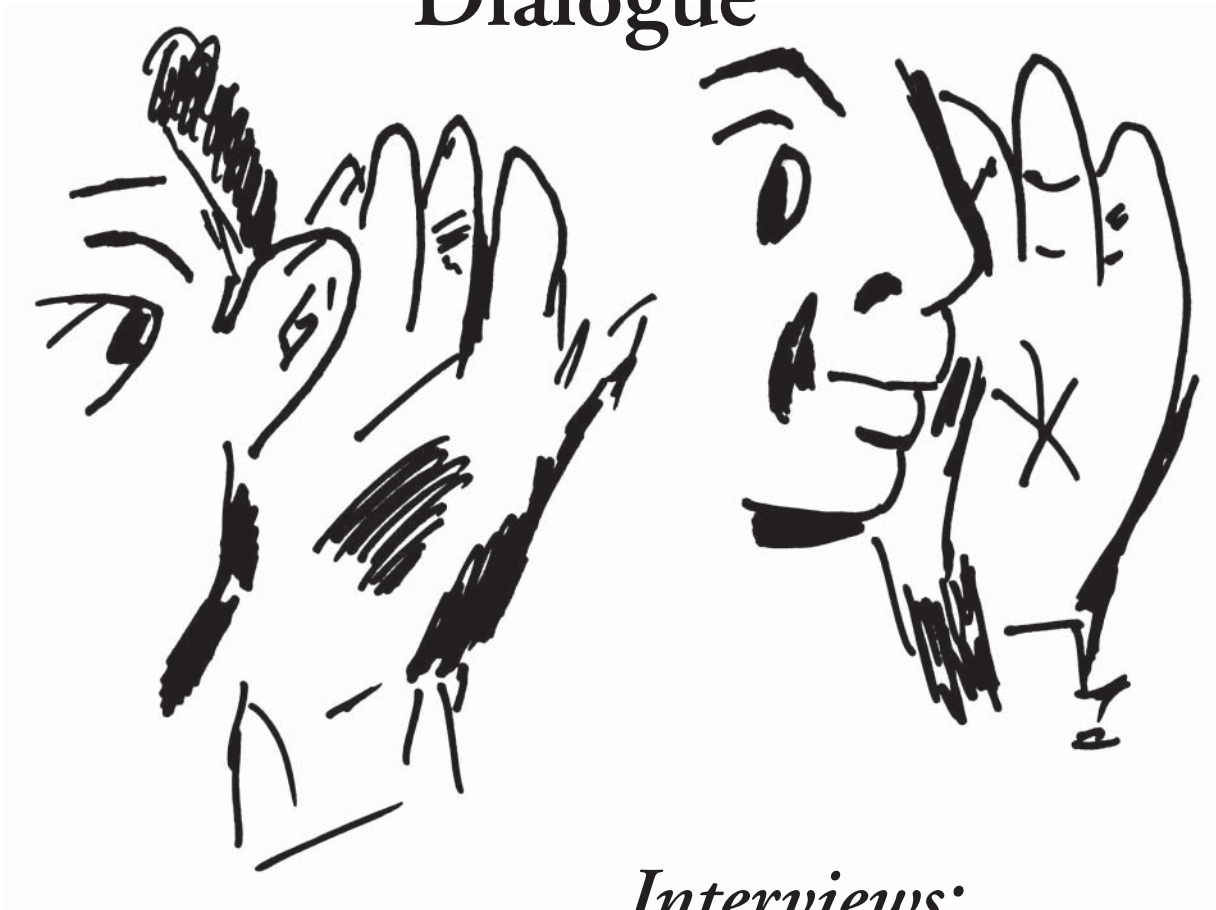

Shabbat Shalom

August 1998 / Ab 5758

The Jewish-Christian Dialogue



Interviews:

Rolf Rendtorff

Chaim Potok

Rabbi Philippe Haddad

The purpose of this journal is “to promote a climate of respect, understanding and sharing between Jewish and Christian communities; not only for the exercise of love and appreciation of the other, but also for the discovery of truths and values which surpass the genius of both traditions.”

This is the hope dreamed in the name of our journal, SHABBAT SHALOM: hope of reconciliation, hope of SHALOM, inspired and nurtured through a common reflection anchored in the experience of the SHABBAT.

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Shabbat Shalom

A Journal of Jewish-Christian Reflection

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Vol. 45, No. 2

Dialogue is Difficult



Jacques B. Doukhan, D.H.L., Th.D.

For nearly two millennia, Jews and Christians have stood in confrontation—a dispute between people who never seem to hear or understand each other, in spite of the memory of so much persecution and death. Theology seems to have lost its credibility when placed alongside racist judgments, sardonic smiles, and countless crimes. The separation has witnessed the emergence not only of two distinct religions, but of two peoples, two cultures, locked in radical opposition. Not

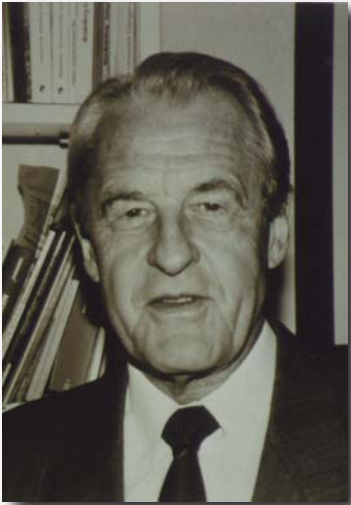
only are they enemies, they have differentiated themselves even on the biological level. Judaism and Christianity became two distinct races!

Real dialogue, real encounter between the Jew and the Christian, will be difficult or will not be. Indeed, today, cordial smiles and soft and civilized exchanges have replaced the tears and the harsh disputes of the past. But have we reached the stage when Jews and Christians finally meet and dialogue? Talking to each other, listening to each other, are part of the dialogue.

But is the dialogue really working? What does dialogue mean? After Auschwitz and two thousand years of the Christian teaching of contempt, is the Jewish-Christian encounter still possible?

And then to remember a time when to be a Jew and to be a Christian designated just one religion, one Law, and one people! A time when to be Christian was to be Jew and, conversely, a time when the great separation, that none could have foreseen, had not begun.

Rolf Rendtorff



S *habbat Shalom**: For a specialist of the Old Testament, it does not seem apparent or necessary—at least not initially—to enter into a dialogue with Judaism. Judaism is more or less restricted to historical study. How is it then, that not only your own interest

in Judaism was kindled, but that you actively became involved in dialogues between Christians and Jews?

Rendtorff: This is a rather curious question that is justified in our present historical setting. For it should actually be quite obvious that someone who has dedicated his life to the study of

the Hebrew Bible should also interest himself in the further development of the Hebrew history and language. That, of course, is no answer to your question, since your question is of a biographical nature.

By the way, if I may add, this question would no longer be posed to a younger specialist of

Rolf Rendtorff is Professor Emeritus of Old Testament Theology. From 1958 to 1963, he was Professor at the Kirchliche Hochschule Berlin, from 1963 to 1990 Professor at the University of Heidelberg, where he also served as Rector of the University (1970 to 1972). He has served as Visiting Professor at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, and at the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

Since his first visit to Israel in 1963, he has committed himself to German-Israeli as well as to Jewish-Christian relations. He was a cofounder of the German-Israel Society (1965) and served in different capacities in Jewish-Christian relations in Germany and in the framework of the World Council of Churches.

He is the author of many books in Biblical Studies as well as in Jewish-Christian relations. Some of them are translated into English including Men of the Old Testament, God's History, The Problem of the Process of Transmission in the Pentateuch, and Canon and Theology. He is coauthor of The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People: Statements by the World Council of Churches and Its Member Churches. The first volume of his Theology of the Old Testament is forthcoming (in German, followed by an English translation).

For the average Christian, Judaism is a topic from the past, a historical issue that is very far removed from the present.

the Old Testament. Many, including German Old Testament specialists, were in Israel at the Hebrew University during their time of study. I have personally contributed to the sending of a few hundred German students who spent a year in Jerusalem. Today, we have a much larger number of people who have reconstructed a relationship to Judaism in this manner.

Shabbat Shalom: One might say that you have been a pioneer in this area. Weren't you the first German professor who was given permission to lecture at the Hebrew University?

Rendtorff: I was handed an official invitation. At the time, my colleagues said to me, "To invite a German as a guest lecturer (after all, this was 1973) would be impossible, if you didn't speak Hebrew." But to invite a German and to say, "His lectures will be in Hebrew" was on the other hand a major attraction. That is the reason why they could invite me. For me personally, everything began from the outside looking in. In 1959, I was in the Arabic countries as a result of a course I was attending at the German Palestinian Institute. That was the time when the eastern part of Jerusalem belonged to Jordan. I had lived for several weeks in a hotel in Jerusalem that was directly at the Jaffa Gate and was thus able to look over the artificial wall that had been erected into the Jewish section of Jerusa-

lem. One was not allowed to enter this part of town and so it remained a foreign world. I told myself then, "You must also see it from the other side."

My own interest in Judaism corresponded to students' growing interest in Israel. German-Israeli student organizations already existed in the early sixties. And in 1963, I flew to Israel with a group of students from the denominational university in Berlin where I taught at the time.

At first, my interests were of a scientific, archaeological nature and later took on a more political viewpoint. My relationship to Israel at the time was politically based. I had become involved in discussions for diplomatic relations between West Germany and Israel, which had been nonexistent for the longest time. I am also the founder and have been the vice president of the German-Israel Society for many years. My interest, therefore, in Israel and Judaism begins at two opposite poles. At one end is my very deep love for the Hebrew Bible and the Hebrew language, above all biblical Hebrew; at the other end, my interest in the political aspect.

I soon discovered that I knew Hebrew, but then again I didn't. So I sat down and started to learn modern Hebrew. Then I used a semester dedicated to research and went to Jerusalem. There I was given private instruction by the well versed

teacher and director of an Ulpan (a typical Israeli language institute for new immigrants and foreigners). Within a few months, I was able to converse, since I was very familiar with the grammar and I knew a lot of biblical vocabulary. The same vocabulary words are used today as then, however limited. Thus within a few weeks, I was able to hold a five-minute lecture in modern Hebrew for a seminar taught by the professors Talmon and Haran. That was the first step. After that, I frequently returned to Israel for three different reasons: politically, scientifically, and for students. That last one as pioneer and founder of the program, Study in Israel.

Now I was able to develop discussions with Jewish colleagues who had studied extensively and were very knowledgeable of our traditions, for example: Shemaryahu Talmon, later also Moshe Greenberg. And then I began to study rabbinical Hebrew, which was surprisingly easy if one is versed in modern Hebrew. I noticed that

The Christian liberation from the law has become an anti-Jewish slogan.

rabbinical Hebrew, to a certain degree, was more related to modern Hebrew than biblical Hebrew, especially from the standpoint of grammar and vocabulary. Thus I became quite successful in acquainting myself with the basic elements of rabbinical exegesis. I want to state this very carefully: the door was opened in the endless and exten-

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sive field of rabbinical exegesis. I know the steps that need to be taken, where to get more information, and how to continue.

Shabbat Shalom: Do you mean to say that a new world was opened to you? A new world in terms of methodology and hermeneutics?

Rendtorff: Yes, certainly. I would like to give an example. If you ask a Jew about the exegesis of a certain text, and you ask how the text had been previously interpreted, the Jew would name Raschi. We would make references to Gerhard von Rad. Our approach is to mention the most recent interpretations, but a Jewish commentator would point to tradition, even if he knows, as a critical researcher, that the questions posed have changed over time. And that is why I turn to Raschi, Ibn Ezra or Nachmanides, whose Hebrew I love. This often leads to a completely different approach to the text. If you come from the German perspective of exegesis you are already blocked by the historical-critical way of posing questions so that you separate things that actually belong together. I still use the Hebrew

Bible I had used in my studies, intentionally . . .

Shabbat Shalom: Through a variety of avenues you were drawn into the dialogue with Judaism. You have mentioned your involvement in research, your political involvement, your work for students. Is the Jewish-Christian dialogue active in all of these areas? How would you define this dialogue?

Rendtorff: I must say that in a variety of ways I am an outsider. Indeed, I am someone who is in the middle of all the activities through my work with the research committee, The Church and Judaism. However, my opinions by no means reflect those of others. The questions I pose myself and those that are posed by the church, theologians, and the public in general are two different pairs of shoes. The topic of creating dialogues between Jews and Christians is gradually being realized in our *Landeskirchen* (provincial subdivisions of the Lutheran Church). This is to say that it is not a matter of course that such topics are discussed in our congregations. A wide spectrum exists but only a small minority of Christians are preoccupied with this subject.

Shabbat Shalom: How do you envision such a dialogue? In what specific directions do you believe it would be essential to move forward?

Rendtorff: There are two areas that should not be separated from one another and that should not be intermingled.

The first involves the political and ethical aspect—the keywords being anti-Semitism, also in Christian spheres, the Holocaust and *Shoah*. The second topic is from a theological aspect, namely the Christian relationship to Judaism as mother religion. These two issues are of greatest importance, and I would not be able to place one above the other. Yet, Christians, in particular German Christians, have difficulty with the theological issue unless they have come to terms with the first aspect. One needs to recognize the

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Christian contribution to the Holocaust which means acknowledging the theological origins of anti-Semitism. There are many influences that lead to anti-Semitism, not just the theological origins. Yet, it is clear that without the theological roots, anti-Semitism would not have existed.

Shabbat Shalom: Can you define that more closely? Which theological viewpoints led to the Holocaust?

Rendtorff: Now the two areas again become intermingled. The first step in the process that led to anti-Semitism with Christian origins was the idea that the Christian church was God's chosen people and thus God's former chosen people no longer existed as such. The resolution made by the Rheinisch Synod states the following: "We have

We are not the new Israel.

declared the Jewish people to be nonexistent.” For the average Christian, as well as for the well educated theologian, Judaism is a topic from the past, a historical issue that is very far removed from the present. That is also why you had formulated your introductory question. In the usual treatment of Church history, Judaism appears at the time of the Crusades or whenever the Jews were persecuted. But from a theological perspective and from the standpoint of Church history, Judaism is no longer a major topic of discussion since the Judaism in the biblical and theological sense of the Hebrew Bible no longer exists according to this widespread interpretation. It was removed by the Church. And this theory, also known as “substitution theology,” is the theological predecessor for the development of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism.

The next step, according to Robert Raphael Geis, was the unification of Church and state. This began with the Emperor Constantine. From this moment on, when Christianity became the official state religion under Constantine, one can observe the alternating role the Church and state played in establishing anti-Jewish laws in the next centuries. It really does not matter who brought about these laws. Under the Roman Christian empire, Jews were, at best, tolerated. In this state

which decorated itself with Christian insignias, the idea of the Jews being God’s chosen people was unthinkable. This was beautifully portrayed in the aesthetically pleasing pictures of Church and Synagogue. The figures at the Strasbourg Cathedral are a good example.

Shabbat Shalom: This was a theological excursion in understanding the development of Jews and Christians going their separate ways. Could it be possible that the unification of Church and state in the fourth century conscientiously issued ordinances against Jewish laws and regulations? I am thinking of the day of worship that was changed from Sabbath to Sunday. Since this time it has been extremely difficult to bring together Christians and Jews on a theological level.

Rendtorff: Yes, that is correct. And this is not only the case on a political level. For another theological aspect with which we must come to terms is our understanding of the law. The Christian liberation from the law has become an anti-Jewish slogan. In this respect your church is far more Jewish because you hold the *Shabbat* in a far different manner than many other Christians do Sunday. Yes, there are those who keep Sunday. But the manner in which we keep Sunday has almost become mere tradition.

This topic of the law is something I am confronted with on

many occasions in my discussions with Christian churches. Unfortunately there are Christians, even very enlightened Christians, that become irritated when they hear anything about the Jewish tradition of keeping the Sabbath.

Shabbat Shalom: I would like to come back to the second point you mentioned earlier, namely the relationship between Christians and Jews.

Rendtorff: Yes. That is a matter of self-defining Christianity. That is why I mentioned the importance of placing equal weight on both topics, the political-ethical aspect and the theological aspect, and not being satisfied with only the first issue.

Shabbat Shalom: What role does the Christian identity play with regard to Judaism in the Christian-Jewish dialogue?

Rendtorff: The question we need to ask ourselves is the following: If the Jews are still God’s chosen people, then who are we? This is the problem we need to grapple with. From what I have observed, the majority of people are apprehensive about posing such a question because they suddenly realize they may be pulling the carpet from under their Christian beliefs. For them, it is so self-evident that the Christians are God’s chosen people that it is no longer questioned. Thus this issue needs to be addressed very carefully.

I always approach it from a language perspective. We Christians claim to be the “new Israel.” I annoy my New Testament colleagues occasionally by saying that I had always learned to differentiate between *Israel kata sarka* [physical Israel] and *Israel kata pneuma* [spiritual Israel]. I took the concordance for

We must learn that Judaism and Jewishness are not in conflict with Christianity.

the New Testament and discovered that the phrase *Israel kata pneuma* [spiritual Israel] does not exist in the New Testament. At one point it says *Israel kata sarka* (1 Corinthians 10:18), which is best translated from the context to mean “the historical Israel.” The Pauline opposites of *sarx* and *pneuma* are not found anywhere in connection with Israel or the Christian church. In the New Testament, you also do not find the concept of “new Israel.” You do find at

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the end of Galatians (6:16) the formal greeting *Israel tou Theou*. However it is unclear what is meant by this greeting. I consider it unfair and dishonest, almost a jugglery, to teach theology students the terms *Israel kata sarka* and *Israel kata pneuma* because they sound Pauline, although they are not Pauline and have nothing to do with the New Testament. This means we are

not the new Israel.

Shabbat Shalom: The question, therefore, that must be posed, is a matter of identity. What are we Christians?

Rendtorff: I must admit that I am still searching for a means of addressing this issue. The Rheinisch Synod addressed the issue quite convincingly. They distinguished between “God’s chosen people” and “covenant” and expressed it accordingly as “the uninterrupted selection of the Jews as God’s chosen people” and the “acceptance of the church in the covenant God made with His people.” This I hold to be very important.

This definition of covenant is open to dispute, but I believe one can continue to work in this direction: that the Church and Israel belong in the covenant God made with humanity and that a second step in God’s move towards humanity is the acceptance of Gentiles into this covenant. This second step does not deviate from the Bible because before Abraham was called, God had already made a first covenant with Noah. I would also like to mention a very important text, namely Genesis 12:3. At the moment when Abraham is called by God, mankind is included as well. They were to receive a blessing with and through Abraham. That is for me the decisive point. Can we make it clear to Christians that the order of events cannot be changed as we have been doing it the last two thousand years? We should not attempt to define Judaism on the basis of our Christian identity. Instead, we should think in biblical terms and go from the basis that Israel is ‘*Am Adonai* (God’s chosen people) and will remain as such.

Then we must contemplate where and how we appear in God’s relationship to the world.

To Christians I say, “Please do not misunderstand me. I do not want you to become insecure with regard to your identity. But I do want you to reformulate your identity from a new perspective, taking into consideration your relationship to Judaism.” This is very important. When Christians have taken the first step—for many a very difficult one, of assuming responsibility for anti-Semitism and accepting the Christian contribution to the Holocaust—then they should not believe that the cake turns into dough when it is said that the Jews are God’s chosen people. Often the question is then asked, “Should we all become Jews?” No, of course not. This question shows a level of insecurity, insecurity in the sense that we can no longer think of the Church as God’s chosen people as we have done in the past. Maybe we should also redefine the term “God’s chosen people” and broaden the definition. I sometimes think I am the only one who reflects on this question. There are only a few people with whom I can exchange ideas over this issue. And I also find very little material about this subject in publications.

Shabbat Shalom: Your question regarding the covenant and God’s chosen people reminds of Paul’s similitude of the olive tree in the book of Romans. This olive tree has one root from which grow many natural branches which are clearly linked to the Jews. There are, however, also engrafted branches symbolizing the Gentiles, non-Jews, other nations.

For Paul all of these branches are held together by means of the common root. Here one has both groups grafted together as God's chosen people sharing the same basis. The question is, What is the root? What belongs to the root?

Rendtorff: I can easily imagine a group of Jews and Christians that come together and join together as illustrated by the olive tree. I know of more Jews with whom I have an understanding regarding this issue than Christians . . . sometimes I believe I know more Jews than Christians.

Shabbat Shalom: That is probably symptomatic.

Rendtorff: It is symptomatic. To be sure, a dialogue between Christians and Jews is concerned with developing a mutual understanding for one another and developing a relationship. But being nice to Jews is not the issue here. Instead, reflect upon who you are, considering that you are sitting across from a Jew who has a much earlier claim to belonging to God's chosen people than you. This brings us away from our Christian arrogance and turns us towards the Jew. But again this is not the point, that we turn toward the Jews. The point is, Are we turning towards our own Jewish tradition? For me, this is an extremely important element in the Christian-Jewish dialogue, namely to cause Christians to think, to reflect upon themselves, and to educate themselves.

I also go one step further. We must learn that Judaism and Jewishness are not in conflict with Christianity. Instead, we must reacquaint ourselves with our own Jewish roots, our own Jewish piece of identity. With

regard to dialogue and education within the Christian realm, it is very important that Christians are made aware of the fact, as Krister Stendahl stated decades ago, that they are a special kind of Jew. Stendahl, by the way, also said, "But we must ask the Jews if they are in agreement with our definition."

Such statements are always open to attack. We are not Jews, and we should not be a special kind of Jew. But we must rediscover, understand, and define the Jewish element in Christian-

We must rediscover, understand, and define the Jewish element in Christianity.

ity. The more Jewish we feel the easier it will be for us to live together with other Jews.

I do not want to make the assumption that Jews and Christians are identical. Not at all. That would not be good. But Christians should recognize the Jewish element as a fundamental part of their Christianity. We are dealing with the reclamation of what is Jewish in our tradition and in our own identity. This would result in the termination of the terms "Jewish" and "Judaism" as negative concepts, and we would also perceive things differently. I do believe, however, that this is an educational objective over generations.

Shabbat Shalom: You have touched on a very important point regarding what Christians could and must learn in such a dialogue. A dialogue is a two-way street. What do you believe the Jews could learn in such a dialogue? How do you believe

they would profit from such a dialogue between Christians and Jews?

Rendtorff: Considering that there are far more Christians in the world than Jews, it would certainly be important and useful to the Jew to become acquainted with Christian customs and practices. But also to see how the Christian tradition has developed over time.

That the Jews are dependent on this type of a dialogue from a theological perspective, I cannot imagine. There is the well

quoted word from Zwi Werblowsky of the asymmetry of the Jewish-Christian dialogue. And I believe that it does exist. I am quite certain that it has something to do with the historical course of events. Christianity evolved out of Judaism.

I know many Jews who are very involved in Jewish-Christian dialogues, but only because they were approached by Christians and they wanted to fulfill their wish. One, of course, must not generalize. I believe that of the rabbis in Germany, of whom there are a relatively small number in comparison to America...

Shabbat Shalom: Approximately how many rabbis are in Germany?

Rendtorff: About a dozen. I believe there are about two, maybe three, that participate in Jewish-Christian dialogues. And I experience it over and over again that rabbis will attend such events but show quite openly that they are not interested or

that they have an allergy to Christians that observe Jewish traditions. Of the German rabbis, there are but a few that participate. Maybe the percentages are not much greater in America but since the overall number is much larger, a few hundred rabbis do come together.

Therefore, let us return to the structure of what a dialogue could be. I want to state this rather bluntly. I do not believe that we have come to the point at the end of the twentieth century of having a real dialogue. I believe there are three steps. The first step involves overcoming the unfamiliar and admitting and confessing Christian responsibility for the Holocaust. The second step involves learning about Judaism. And not just that Christians comprehend Judaism but that they realize their own Jewish roots and their own ties to the Old Testament and the Hebrew Bible. Then the third step would be a real dialogue on the same level with the assumption that we are as well versed in Judaism as the Jews are in Christianity. And then maybe the Jews could meet us halfway by making inquiries about us. We, of course, cannot come from the standpoint that Jews are something exotic. If a Christian church has a Jewish guest speaker in Germany, it is usually perceived as being foreign or alien. In contrast to America, most Germans have never seen a Jew. One must admit, of course, that we in Germany are forced to see the whole problem from a more intense, theological basis. If I am the pastor of a parish in America, I have a good relationship with the synagogue next door. The rabbi and I will both be invited to special events

in the community as honorary guests. There are so many discussion topics that one would not raise the question, Are we God's chosen people or are you? Forget it! That is not our problem. But we pose completely different questions. We German Christian theologians must concern ourselves with this issue for other Christians. I believe that nowhere is this question so in-

In the Jewish-Christian dialogue, the essential ingredient is to come up with the right questions.

tensely studied as in Germany, even though it is only in relatively small groups.

Shabbat Shalom: Is this to say that the Jewish-Christian dialogue in Germany takes on an entirely different, more in-depth form than in the country where the greatest number of Jews in the world live?

Rendtorff: In Germany, our small group of people who investigate this question have made greater progress. Progress has been made in the theological sense. The studies have been more extensive. On the other hand, in America, cooperation between Christians and Jews is much better.

Shabbat Shalom: Maybe this is so because in Germany the relationship between Jews and Christians, also from a theological perspective, is encumbered by previous German his-

torical events. It was more poignant there than anywhere else in the world, therefore necessitating more intentional dialogue.

Rendtorff: I do believe that in Germany we are affected on a deeper level and that we eventually come closer to the decisive points. But here we still have the exploratory nature of making new discoveries. Compared to existing Christian dogmatics in which you might come up with a new idea but in truth it has already been stated or thought through many times over, the dialogue between Jews and Christians brings new questions to light. In the Jewish-Christian dialogue, the essential ingredient is to come up with the right questions.

Shabbat Shalom: One of the important questions for you seems to be which designation one uses as a Christian for the Old Testament. Does the designation have an impact on the discussions?

Rendtorff: That is an important question, especially since one is confronted with a dilemma as a partner in dialogue and as a Bible researcher. The term Old Testament is an honest term that has lost some in value. My colleague Zenger had the idea of replacing the term with the First Testament. I do not believe that one has improved anything thereby since it gives the impression that a First Testament is followed by a Second. And then the question remains, which of the two is more important. The first was there originally, but the second followed. And whether or not the second replaced the first is unclear by this terminology. I personally believe one should not

spend too much time on these arguments, but one should come to a decision and one should be able to support that decision. I do not believe that one should avoid one or the other terminology or insist on the one or the other either. When I speak with Jews, I always use the term the Hebrew Bible. For the other part, I use the term New Testament.

Shabbat Shalom: You mentioned that students today are more sensitive to this type of question. If you had a group of students in front of you who did not have an opportunity to go to Jerusalem, what would you recommend as a required seminar for students to be introduced to the Jewish-Christian dialogue? How would you entitle such a seminar, and what would it entail?

Rendtorff: The main point around which I would build this seminar would be the topic of Christian identity with respect to Judaism, including Judaism as it exists today. We Christians have forgotten that Judaism still exists, and we need to remind ourselves of that. In other words, to reconstruct Judaism for ourselves. To pull it out of the closet where it has been banned, to take a good look at it, and to present it in such a manner so that it is an honest reflection of how Judaism has existed for the last 2000 years up to our current times. We must ask ourselves what change this brings about in me when I study Judaism, something that is very real, even from a theological perspective, and something that also has a theology of its own. Those would be the type of questions I would pose.

In the past and in certain

circles even today, I have a tendency to provoke others where I thought it might be helpful. But there is no point in being provocative when one wants to awaken an interest among Christians for this type of dialogue. The same holds true for theology students. I would begin by asking, What do we actually know about Judaism? Why do we know so little? What happens when we know more? I would like to repeat that my emphasis is in reformulating our Christian identity. The more I think about it the stronger my convictions are that this is the key issue.

The question of formulating our Christian identity is open to debate. The same can be said for another issue that we have not yet mentioned, which does not surprise me, namely that of Christology.

Shabbat Shalom: You gave the signal. Does Christology have a place in Jewish-Christian dialogue? Is there room for the question of the Messiah?

Rendtorff: This issue is problematic because the concept of

tence: "Israel . . . crucifying . . . the Messiah." This sounds as if the Jews knowingly crucified *the* Messiah. This is a fully absurd assumption. That is why the disciples of Emmaus are so important to me. For many it was unclear if he was the real Messiah.

Shabbat Shalom: You have touched on the story of the Emmaus disciples. There it is said that Jesus showed them from Moses and the prophets (and at a later time even from the Psalms) that everything had to be fulfilled that way. He did not start with Christology and had, of course, no New Testament at hand. Rather he explained his messianic concept on the basis of the Hebrew Bible. Could you imagine a dialogue with Jews along this line?

Rendtorff: Absolutely. Only, for us Christians everything depends upon the belief that Jesus is the Messiah. And if Jews do not accept this point . . . so what? It seems that we are not able to discuss this question with Jews beyond a certain point.

What do we actually know about Judaism? Why do we know so little? What happens when we know more?

a Messiah in the Jewish way of thinking does not exist. I am referring to the term *The Messiah*. The *Bekennende Kirche* (Professing Church) of 1948 said the following with respect to the Jewish question (the so-called *Darmstädter Wort*): "By crucifying the Messiah, Israel rejected their call." It is important to look at every element in this sen-

Shabbat Shalom: Then, what does it mean for you that Christians regard Jesus as the Son of God?

Rendtorff: I have some wonderful experiences on that, especially with Jewish New Testament scholars like David Flusser, or Alan Segal from New York. At one meeting I had a discussion with Segal. I tried to pro-

voke him by saying: "This is impossible for a Jew." And he answered: "'Son of God'? Look into your Hebrew Bible and find it in Psalm 2. I have no problems with the term 'Son of God'." He even went further and tried to interpret the trinity from a Jewish viewpoint. He wanted to argue, of course with a twinkling eye, that what we do is all Jewish. There is nothing non-Jewish with Christianity.

Shabbat Shalom: How would you evaluate the role of messianic Jews in the Jewish-Christian dialogue against what we have discussed so far? Do they have any significance in this dialogue?

Rendtorff: I know messianic Jews personally. However, they are rarely convincing theologically. It is more important for me, as Peter von der Osten-Sacken has formulated, to have a bridge between Jewish Christians then and Jewish Christians today. You cannot remove or undo the 2000 years in between. However, I do not contest that a Jew has the right to the personal conviction that Jesus is the Messiah.

It is interesting to note that messianic Jews are only a subject of discussion as long as they insist upon being Jews. If they convert to Christianity, they will become Christians. However, they want to remain Jewish. The basic question, then, remains to be asked, What is their point?

Shabbat Shalom: You told me before the interview that you see yourself not in a position to evaluate the role which Sev-

enth-day Adventists could take on in a Jewish-Christian dialogue, and their contribution to it, though your ideas and advice would have been appreciated—especially as they would come from one who, very possibly, knows more about this dialogue than anyone else in Germany. I hope that in the future there may come the opportunity to have further thoughts on this specific subject.

In the moment when Jews recognize that we do not reach them out of curiosity or as tourists, but rather with true openness and genuine interest, they are ready to enter into fruitful dialogue.

Rendtorff: Maybe if there are any reactions to this interview coming from Seventh-day Adventists, I will be better able to reflect upon this matter.

Shabbat Shalom: Thus, responses are very welcome?

Rendtorff: Certainly.

Shabbat Shalom: Mr. Rendtorff, I want to thank you for your willingness to take part in this interview and thereby to challenge and to sharpen our understanding of Jewish-Christian dialogue. At the end of our interview, would you like to share with our readers one of your treasured experiences with Jews or Judaism which would encourage us to enter more deeply into dialogue?

Rendtorff: My own biography as a German Christian living in a generation that carries the responsibility for the *Shoah* is very much involved in the Jewish-Christian dialogue. I was

a soldier for three years, with the [German]Marines. At my age, I also could have been a guard in a concentration camp. You may understand, then, that it is extremely important to me how Jews, whom I have met, treated me as a Christian and as a German citizen. I would not have found my continuing way to Israel, if it were not for the invitation extended to me at my first visit to Israel into the home of

my colleague Isak Seeligman, who himself had been in the concentration camp of Theresienstadt. He not only invited me to his home, but also introduced me to Gershom Sholem. In a most heartfelt way, Seeligman received me, intro-

duced me to others and opened to me the doors of Jerusalem, though he was more of a reserved nature. This kind of obligingness is what I have always experienced so far. I think one would experience similar kindness with many Jews. This I want to pass on.

Our task is to deliberate the basic thought that we are younger ones on the way. We are the wild branches grafted in. This we should let Jews know, and on this basis, we should ask them to enter with us into dialogue. In the moment when Jews recognize that we do not reach them out of curiosity or as tourists, but rather with true openness and genuine interest, they are ready to enter into fruitful dialogue.

*This interview was conducted by Martin Pröbstle, a graduate student from Germany.

Chaim Potok

S *Shabbat Shalom**: Your books often describe a tension between two traditions. I am thinking of the Hassid torn between religion and secular philosophy, a daughter born to parents of a mixed heritage. Do you think this type of tension is healthy, and do you have any advice to those that may find themselves in such a situation?

Potok: It is not a matter of its being healthy or not, but it is a matter of its being the given situation. To a great extent, it is up to us to determine whether we can make it healthy. There is no way of avoiding coming up against ideas that are strange to you unless you lock yourself totally away from the world, and there are groups that do that. But, if you are in any way lo-

cated inside the world, you will come up against value systems and ways of constructing the human experience that are quite different from the way you have been taught. That sort of confrontation in its many faces and dimensions is what I try to explore in my books.

Shabbat Shalom: What is your definition of a Jew?

Potok: Legally, a Jew is someone born of a Jewish mother; culturally, a Jew is someone who participates in Jewish history; religiously, a Jew is someone who participates in Jewish traditions. So there are many definitions, but I think that the whole spectrum is necessary in order for a Jew to be a full and educated participant in this rather remarkable adventure we call the Jewish people, and its trajec-

tory through history. Although, from a legal point only, someone born of a Jewish mother is Jewish, this does not mean that you can't enter Judaism through conversion.

Shabbat Shalom: Do you think Jewish-Christian reconciliation is possible?

Potok: Reconciliation is not only possible but is devoutly to be hoped for. That would mean a good century of preaching from Christian pulpits that some major doctrines of Christianity have been wrong.

Shabbat Shalom: You have just spent some time among some Christians that have a high regard for Jewish laws and respect the same *Shabbat*. Do you have any comments on them?

Potok: I have known these Christians and many other

Since Chaim Potok published his first novel, The Chosen, in 1967, he has become one of the most popular and widely read authors on Judaism. Born in New York City, Chaim Potok first started writing fiction at the age of 16. In 1950, he graduated summa cum laude from Yeshiva University with a Bachelor of English Literature. From there, he went on to get his Master of Hebrew Letters and his rabbinic ordination at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (1954) and his Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Pennsylvania (1965). His novels include The Promise, The Book of Lights, Davita's Harp, My Name is Asher Lev and The Gift of Asher Lev. His non-fiction writings include Wanderings and Ethical Living for a Modern World: Jewish Insights.

There is no way of avoiding coming up against ideas that are strange to you unless you lock yourself totally away from the world.

kinds for thirty years or so. The fact that I am here means that I hold them in high regard. Otherwise, why would I be here? I am not here to convert them to Judaism, that's for sure. The point is that the best destiny for us is that our people become solidly educated in the group into which they were born, and at the same time remain open to ideas from the secular world outside our own—to face those ideas honestly and openly, with a willingness to give from themselves to that secular world and to accept that world's best ideas. It is that back-and-forth that is the best hope of Western Civilization: an intelligent back-and-forth. A back-and-forth that comes from ignorance inevitably leads to cultural aberrations and bloodshed.

Shabbat Shalom: You wrote *The Book of Lights* which tackles the Kabbalah. What place do you think mysticism has in today's religious landscape?

Potok: There seems to be some regeneration of mysticism as we get closer and closer to the millennium. I am not sure to what extent it is genuine or whether it reflects the usual fears that our species has as it turns a major corner of the calendar. We are always apprehensive when we finish a century and even much more when we finish a millennium.

But mysticism has played a major role in all religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It dimmed considerably as a result of the Enlightenment and the explosion of scientific thought. But there has been a lot of disillusionment this past century with rationalism and science. Such disillusionment leads to mysticism, which waxes and wanes depending upon where we are located in history. But mysticism as such is certainly an ongoing aspect of religious experience.

Reconciliation is not only possible but is devoutly to be hoped for.

That would mean a good century of preaching from Christian pulpits that some major doctrines of Christianity have been wrong.

Shabbat Shalom: Do you think it's a way of keeping the human and Divine in touch when they diverge?

Potok: Absolutely! And that is what happens again and

again in *The Book of Lights*. When there are no traditional religious answers, you reach out and somehow make contact with God through a mystical experience. The channel of communication is not through the rational part of the human being but through some primal prerational, protological element in the human being.

Shabbat Shalom: What kind of values or philosophical message do you wish to impart through your books?

Potok: I do not have any messages in my books. I do not think the novel is a didactic tool; it is not supposed to preach. If there is any message, it is the urging on my part that you read carefully and understand as best you can the lives and values of the people I write about. Very often what happens is that the reader substitutes his or her own conflicts for the conflicts in the books. A serious novel is a map or model of particulars, but something strange and magical occurs as the reader is experiencing that particular fictional world. A click occurs sometimes in the head of the reader and he or she finds himself or herself inside the book, participating in what is going on, no matter how strange the book may initially have been to that reader. If there is a message, it is that one should read the books as openly and as receptively as possible, and see what those lives are really like, and take from them things that may be pertinent to your own.

Shabbat Shalom: Your books have a very high Jewish content and flavor, and yet,

they are very popular among Christians. Do you have an explanation for this type of crossover?

Potok: When I was 15 or 16 years old, I read in rapid succession *Brideshead Revisited* by Evelyn Waugh, which is about upper-class English Catholics, and *Portrait of the Artist as a*

If there is a message, it is that one should read the books as openly and as receptively as possible, and see what those lives are really like, and take from them things that may be pertinent to your own.

Young Man by James Joyce, which is about middle-class Irish Catholics. I was a Jewish boy in New York, yet those books touched me profoundly; they convinced me that I wanted to spend my life writing serious fiction. How did those two books enter my life? I did not know anything about Catholicism. Those books engaged me in precisely the same way my books have engaged people who are not Jewish. The serious novel brings you news about worlds you might otherwise never encounter. It's an instrument of legitimate voyeurism. Just as I was profoundly affected by the writings of two Catholics, others

are by the writings of a Jew.

Shabbat Shalom: How do you go about writing? What is your typical day as a writer?

Potok: I am usually at my desk at about 8:30 or so in the morning. I reread everything that I have written until then in the manuscript. If I am more than halfway done, then I will start a few chapters back, rewriting and correcting as I go. Then I'll start the new day's work. Usually, I will have ended the previous day's work by sketching out in a paragraph where I want to go, so I don't start cold. I will work until one o'clock, and I will have lunch. Then I'll come back around two o'clock and work for another three hours or so. I will then go for a walk, have dinner, and then—whatever my wife and I decide to do for the evening: go out somewhere, take in a movie, have dinner together, hang out with our kids, who live nearby.

Shabbat Shalom: How do you decide what to write about? Do you start from an idea? How do you formulate a project?

Potok: Very often, I will start with a problem. I will ask myself: Suppose a Jewish boy is born with a really great gift for art. What is the worst problem he can encounter? Perhaps he would end up painting a crucifixion. Then comes the task of finding the boy, finding the community, and making the whole thing come alive on paper. That takes months and months of writing and a ruthlessness with yourself to throw away what is obviously not working and just keep trying it again and again

until somehow gears shift and you are going. Then the real writing begins. At that point, you are creating the first draft. A sculptor goes up to the quarry and finds a piece of marble; I have to create my own marble, which is my first draft. Then I can begin to work on it; then I start sculpting it. That is essentially the way it's done. That assumes an ability to put sentences together and a willingness to throw things out and rewrite mercilessly and not be satisfied until you are certain you've done your absolutely very best.

Shabbat Shalom: What are your future projects?

Potok: Right now I am

Those books engaged me in precisely the same way my books have engaged people who are not Jewish.

working with the violinist Isaac Stern on his memoirs. A novella was published recently in *TriQuarterly* and a book of short stories is coming out in the fall of 1998.

Shabbat Shalom: What are your dreams for Jews, for American society, for the world?

Potok: Civility and peace.

*Interview conducted by Ciprian Gheorghe, a graduate student at Loma Linda University.

Rabbi Philippe Haddad



S *habbat Shalom**: What, in your view, are the right conditions for authentic dialogue?

Haddad: The God of Abraham has been recognized as the One who spoke that the world may be. The Hebrew does not appreciate loneliness, not only because “it is not good that man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18), but also because his nature and subjective sensibility keeps him aware of the “Other.” God speaks: this is the first great discovery of monotheism. To speak means to recognize others and to allow them a place, to offer them life without imposing ours

on them. A *midrash* tells about the feelings of God during the story of the burning bush. Will He reveal Himself with a powerful voice? This may frighten Moses, who is still young in the experience of prophecy. Will He restrain His voice and make it soft and thin? It may then be confused with a desert breeze. The solution? God will take the voice of Amram, the father of the liberator. When the “father-son” relationship is successful, it is then possible to share ideas. Then, the “brother-brother” is possible, and the “man-woman” relationship can work.

To speak means also to be an adult, to give oneself and to recognize the

duties of respect, brotherhood, and love. In fact, the history of language is the same as the history of the Bible—even the same as human history. In the beginning, Adam receives life, but it is not enough for him. He also wants the forbidden fruit; he desires the totality. We must wait until Abraham sees the germination of the Hebrew, the *Ivri*, that is the one who passes over to the other side, the one who recognizes the existence of a second shore. And here the Hebrew language is very expressive; in a very metaphorical way, it suggests “the lips” of the river. It is to this God, to this common memory that a Jew, a Muslim, or a Christian should refer when

Philippe Haddad graduated from the Jewish Seminary of France and has functioned as a rabbi in Marseilles, Nîmes, and Paris. Since 1992, he has been the rabbi in charge of the youth and is the director of the youth movement Tikvaténou. Rabbi Haddad is also the author of two books: Ces Hommes qui parlaient, réflexion sur le prophétisme (These Men Who Spoke, A Reflection on Prophetism) and Yona, le prophète malgré lui, pièce de théâtre (Jonah, A Prophet in Spite of Himself, A Theater Play).

To speak means to recognize others and to allow them a place, to offer them life without imposing ours on them.

they meet. It is fortunate that we share a common memory.

Shabbat Shalom: How do you perceive the progress of the Jewish-Christian dialogue?

Haddad: From the beginning of my rabbinic ministry, I have been involved in interfaith dialogue in the context of organizations such as the Jewish-Christian Friendship or the Brotherhood of Abraham. There are quite a few rabbis who are involved in this dialogue in Paris and elsewhere in France. Because this effort is consistent with the brotherly logic of the biblical message, it also allows us to explain Judaism without any distortion to Christians who today are eager to return to their Hebrew sources. Indeed, I am struck by the progress of this dialogue. It is such that many universities and other professional associations organize these types of meetings.

Shabbat Shalom: What are the limitations of this dialogue?

Haddad: Some rabbis are reluctant to engage in this dialogue either for theological reasons or simply because of the weight of history. In regard to the first argument, I would answer that we are not repeating the disputes

“To remember” in Hebrew implies a commitment for the future.

of the Middle Ages, but we meet to hear each other and enrich each other. In response to the second argument, it seems to me that our look at the future for our children is more important than our stumbling blocks of the past. This does not mean that we

should forget. On the contrary, “to remember” in Hebrew implies a commitment for the future. Jules Isaac has denounced anti-Semitism and Vatican II has responded. The recent proclamations of the Pope have per-

To speak means also to be an adult, to give oneself and to recognize the duties of respect, brotherhood, and love.

plexed many of us. It is sufficient for the Church to recognize its errors. But let's not forget that we are just beginning and the emotional weight is still heavy. But if we meet as friends, as we sing in the Haggadah of Pessah, *Dayyenu*, “It is enough for us.”

Shabbat Shalom: How is this dialogue understood in Jewish tradition?

Haddad: The Bible says very harsh things toward the Canaanite cults, especially because they involve ritual murder and immorality. We understand why dialogue between the prophet Elijah and the priests of Queen Jezebel was impossible. But today the world has changed; a humanitarian spirit springs from our religions when they are not embarrassed by their extremists. In many ways, this dialogue which shows the good will of men and women of good faith contains something of the messianic aim of the prophets.

Shabbat Shalom: What are the good things that this dialogue can do?

Haddad: To be together is actually a great achievement. This dialogue shows to the secular person that we can be religious without being bigots and closed off from each other. True religion does not necessarily imply the ghetto, or the condescension and even the contempt for the other

religion; on the contrary, it calls for openness, humility, and listening to each other. I also believe that we must prove to the new generations that religion should contribute to the peace of the world and not only to its destruction. In a recent colloquium, I saw a Jew, a Christian, a Muslim, and an agnostic talking to each other. This scene had something messianic about it! To talk to each other, to dialogue, is also a means to repair the first crime of history, the murder of

Abel by Cain. Unfortunately, many Cains have arisen throughout the world. The greater our love, the greater the peace. Hope reminds one of the most beautiful message of monotheism.

Shabbat Shalom: As a rabbi greatly responsible for the Jewish youth of Paris, what is the challenge of the Jewish-Christian dialogue for young Jews?

Haddad: My master, the late Chief Rabbi Jais, liked to refer to Abraham as a fulfilled man, faithful

To be together is actually a great achievement.

to Particularism, yet open to Universalism. I like to transmit this idea to the young people. I believe that, as Jews, we should recognize the universal dimension of Abraham in the Christian mission. What was the intent on the apostles? We should be “Christians” in our Judaism, as Christians want to be “Jews” in their theology. The challenge also concerns us as citizens; as such, we must live in the city and be open and respectful to other traditions while remain-

ing faithful to ours.

Shabbat Shalom: How do you explain this new interest in Jewish-Christian dialogue, especially after the Holocaust?

Haddad: I believe that the discov-

The greater our love, the greater the peace.

ery of the horror of the camps and the works of Jules Isaac have played a great role in this awakening. Christians have begun to understand their part of the responsibility in the tragedy and feel the need of *teshuvah* (repentance). Consequently, after World War II, the dialogue between Jews and Christians began. As long as we talk to each other, we are able to weave the material of brotherhood. Hitler has lost, and God is the winner. Fifty years after the Holocaust, we realize that this message is still valid.

Shabbat Shalom: Is it an authentic dialogue, or is it like a nice talk over a cup of tea?

Haddad: The dialogue is a particular action, an open one and a courageous one. The Jew does not meet the Christian and the Christian does not meet the Jew as one meets ordinary people, one's colleague in the office, or someone at the bar. We carry the weight of our history, of our questions, our doubts, even our fears. I do not feel at ease when I am invited. I feel that I carry a responsibility; and I am sure that a priest would say the same thing. But we also carry hope, and it's this hope which brings us to meet each other.

This is why I am so sorry that there are not more rabbis or more Jews who participate in this dialogue. Of course, one can say that we Jews do not need the Christians to be Jews, whereas the

In my view there are no limits in an authentic dialogue.

Christians need their Jewish roots. To this argument, I will respond to the members of my community that the essence of the biblical message, of the practice of *Mitzwoth*, is brotherhood. As Joseph said, "These are my brothers whom I am looking for." "Love peace and seek it," states the Talmud. It is not enough to love values; we have to pursue them. You see, we are far from the little talk over the cup of tea.

Shabbat Shalom: What are the topics on which the dialogue should bear? Are there forbidden topics?

Haddad: In my view there are no limits in an authentic dialogue. We can speak of our values, of our religious rituals, we can study a text together. We can reflect on the problems of modern society. The only point which would bother me would be a theological disputation on the messiahship of Jesus

with the intention to prove that one is right over the other.

I am often asked who is Jesus for a Jew and if salvation depends on the obedience to the law. I answer according to my faith. The Christians will hear my answer as I hear theirs.

When I respond that Israel is a people of priests, or the witness of God, I do not do any Jewish apologetic; I specify that this implies the feeling of being responsible in the name of God. In fact, every man, every religion, every nation can play this role if they are careful enough. If there is no totalitarian attempt, we can walk together. And we know it since we want to dialogue.

Shabbat Shalom: What role does Israel play in the Jewish-Christian dialogue?

Haddad: Many Christians have understood the importance of the land of Israel for the Jews. This is the land of the fathers of the exiles, a land of refuge. As Jewish Philosopher André Néher put it, "A mystical land of the absolute . . . the land of Israel is the living sign that hope can be realized." This is a new picture of the Jews. They are no longer homeless; they can now settle under their fig tree or their vineyard. Of course, I do not ignore the problem of coexisting with the Palestinians. But peace will germinate. The Jewish-Christian dialogue should be accompanied by Jewish-Muslim dialogue. For the religious component of the conflict is an important element to address.

Shabbat Shalom: Do you have any suggestions for local religious leaders?

Haddad: I think that each city, each religious community should be involved in the Jewish-Christian encounter. It is the duty of the rabbi, the priest, or the pastor to take the initiative and call the other in order

to set up a meeting. We should also use the mass media. Local papers, radio, and

television are a good means to communicate our ideal and promote the Jewish-Christian friendship.

I think that each city, each religious community should be involved in the Jewish-Christian encounter.

*Interview by Richard Elofer, correspondent for *Shabbat Shalom* in Israel.

Hebrew Scriptures

Nostalgia for Dialogue

New Conditions for the Jewish-Christian Dialogue

Jacques Doukhan, D.H.L., Th.D.

There was a time when dialogue was still possible. People traveled from place to place, and on the Sabbath at the gathering in the synagogue, they had much to discuss. The conversation was exciting. The first words of the speaker caught everyone's attention. How well he spoke! The talk concerned a certain Messiah. So the worshipers followed attentively the discourse of the visiting rabbi from Jerusalem. Jew like them, he spoke their language and based his presentation on their well-known scriptural criteria. The Messiah he talked about could be recognized in the texts they read and studied earnestly day after day.

Already it was difficult to be a "Jew." Oppression was hard to bear. Everywhere the Jew was a

foreigner. So the Sacred Scriptures had become a welcome comfort. The people held desperately

*While Christianity
has withdrawn
from Judaism, even
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Judaism has gone
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direction.*

to this consolation. The Scriptures were read and loved and taken to heart.

And the more the rabbi on the platform talked, the more numer-

ous the passages that came to light from the ancient tradition. They were known by heart, and the audience repeated them in unison. Perhaps the speaker was right! Who knows? Perhaps the Messiah *had* come. The traveling rabbi's words were coherent. The stranger exhibited nothing of a pseudomystic in search of sensationalism. Well-balanced, serious, knowledgeable, he seemed to know what he was talking about.

So the people turned to the scrolls and to the best-known teachers. The news brought by the stranger seemed plausible. There was meditation and prayer and further verification of the texts. After extended discussion the visiting rabbi was consulted again. Finally, hearts were set on fire by this good news: the One whom the people had awaited,

It is no exaggeration to say that the Jews since Christian times have forged a good part of their theology, culture, and mentality in conscious opposition to Christianity.

had come! *Maran Atha*, “Our Lord has come.”

Life changed and became filled with faith, love, and hope. Life henceforth was centered in him. Salvation had come—this was now certain. May he soon come back! The people longed for him. The Aramaic expression *Maran Atha* was also used to express a fervent prayer, *Maran-na-tha*: “Our Lord, I pray Thee, come!” Daily life was set to this theme. The expression became a greeting.

The Lord—it was felt and lived—was very near. And yet these Jews remained Jews, for nothing had really changed. The Messiah they had accepted was the One their fathers had proclaimed in word and song. Here was, in fact, an occasion to return across the centuries to a renewal of the Everlasting Covenant. They felt all the better about it in that they had refreshed their roots.

When they evoked the person of the One they called Savior, the Christian Jews thought of a God of life, a God with whom it was good to walk through life, a God who could be loved. This was the God of Israel, the great God *Yahweh* that they continued to serve.

They came with fellow believers each Sabbath for worship, for an exchange of ideas, for a meal together. The times were indeed happy ones. The people began to dream that this would never end. When one met an old acquaintance at a crossroads, the story was told again and again. Friends listened, were intrigued, interested. Sometimes, of course, they were shocked, unhappy, and went on their way mumbling their objections. But never did this posture of communication provoke hor-

ror or scandal. The Jew who converted to Christianity had not yet become a traitor.

Yet, one day Christianity began to change its face. Its leaders had become inebriated with success. Compromise seemed to enhance the possibilities of more success. Christians became more and more numerous, acceptable, rich, and powerful. Pride became the casual spirit of many. It was then that, with disdain for its roots, Christianity turned outward and sought other roots.

The Church adopted another past, other customs, and observed another law. Everything conceivable was now done to distinguish Christianity from Judaism and to sever any ties with the Jews. A

Indeed, “being a Jew” should mean more than just being a non-Christian—a Christian in negative.

new religion was created as many Christians sought to discard the old. The new had to be different from the old—even opposed to it.

Did the Jews rest on the Sabbath? Sunday was chosen to replace it. An attempt was even made to change the date of Passover (Easter) so that the Christian celebration would not coincide with the Jewish.

Did the Jews worship a powerful, just, and almighty God? The effeminate figure of a wax-doll Jesus would be created. And jus-

tice and righteousness were replaced by “love.” This love was not to be the authentic type that flows from the depths of the heart, virile and frank; rather this was to be a roguish, finicky, oftentimes hypocritical love—a love that wanted to be love without speaking straight. This came to be known as so-called “Christian charity.”

Did the Jews believe in a living, invisible God? Soon, well-cut statues of a God in perpetual agony would appear everywhere. And the religion of life known to Israel was replaced by a religion of death. The feast days of ancient times marked by laughter and joy of life were to be replaced by sinister ceremonies symbolized by an instrument of death and torture.

An entirely new mentality appeared—one of mourning, mortification, and taboos. A new civilization came into being in which the Jew was to be a stranger, belonging to a different race. Suddenly, Jesus was no longer a Jew! He was created a blond with blue eyes. Zeal went so far as to try to demonstrate “scientifically” his non-Jewish origin. Christianity, it was said, owed nothing to Judaism. As for the Old Testament, it was relegated to the category of ancient, irrelevant documents without credibility.

With the passing of time, the fissure became a chasm. Everything seemed to cast the new religion into a total opposition to the old. The new had to be in every case whatever the old religion was not. The inevitable arrived. Contempt was born in the heart of the Jew for all that the new religion came to be.

A feeling of hatred on both

sides became almost commonplace. Reasons were advanced for this attitude. For instance, the Jews were now accused of the most terrible of crimes. They were said to be guilty of having executed God! Soon the Jews were cursed, then hunted, then confined to their own quarters, then

Christianity, which originally had its roots in Israel, adopted another law and became the enemy—the persecutor. All this made it virtually impossible for the Jew to dialogue with the Christian.

gassed. And all this was done with a clear conscience: “*Gott mit uns* [God with us].”

In the beginning, the situation was very different. When Paul addressed his fellow religionists, he could expect some success. The Jews listened to him, and many of them were baptized. This rite, which at that time was practiced in Judaism, did not at all imply a renunciation of Jewish origins and the adoption of a new religion. It implied, rather, a desire for cleansing and a decision to live a life more fully dedicated to the God of Israel.

But times changed. Christianity rid itself of everything that might recall its Jewish origins; in so doing, it lost its true identity. And the Jew got trapped in this development. While Christianity has withdrawn from Judaism, even setting itself up in opposition to it, Judaism has gone off in the opposite direction. By reaction, everything has been eliminated from its own genius that might suggest an affinity with the Church.

Do Christians read the Bible? Then the Jew will emphasize the oral tradition. Do Christians invoke the name of Jesus of Nazareth? Then let the Jew say nothing about him. Even to pro-

nounce his name would be blasphemy! Nor did it ever come to mind that it might be well to consult the sources and find out exactly what was involved. The matter had been settled in advance: this could not be the Messiah. Why not? The proof was very simple: Jesus of Nazareth was the

Messiah of the Christians!

And to make the case complete, the Scriptures, the tradition, were to be read with a different interpretation. Did the Christians propose a personal Messiah? Then an effort will be made to build a framework of Messianism based on a corporate Israel.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Jews since Christian times have forged a good part of their theology, culture, and mentality in conscious opposition to Christianity. One might even wonder if they now do not owe some of their very identity to that age-long clash.

From a theological perspective, Jewish scholar Michael Wyschogrod has observed a polarization between the two religious communities: “The more Christianity has moved in an incarnational direction, the more Judaism moved in a transcendental direction. I am firmly convinced that this doesn’t constitute a service to Judaism. I am not arguing that this tendency in Judaism is solely the result of a recoil from Christian ideas. But it is at least partly that, and we have here a situation in which both faiths have damaged one another.”¹

To recover their complete authentic identity, the Jews should, therefore, liberate themselves from

this reflex reaction to the Christians which they have developed through the ages. As long as the Jews categorically refuse to read the New Testament; as long as they fear to hear or speak about Jesus; as long as they insist in defining the Jew by opposition to the Christian, and do not have the courage or simply the tolerance to include among the Jews even those who read the New Testament and have embraced its message, and to accept them on their side in the synagogue and in Israel; the Jews still betray their insecurity as a Jew. This automatic emotional rejection based on centuries of suffering and oppression paradoxically suggests that their thinking and their spiritual destiny are still dependent on Christianity. For their identity has remained an identity of reaction. Their refusal derives more from their reactions to the Christians than from being a Jew. Indeed, “being a Jew” should mean more

Only when the Church will be bold and humble enough to be grafted again into the ancient olive tree; only then, the Jews will consider . . .

than just being a non-Christian—a Christian in negative.

On the other hand, the Christians should realize that they are the very reason why the Jews could not accept Jesus as their Messiah. It was not because they were stiff-necked or because Jesus did not fit their Jewish messianic ideas. The history of Christian origins tells us, on the contrary,

that the first Christians were no doubt all Jews; and there were many of them. The writings of the Jewish tradition reveal, furthermore, a considerable natural inclination toward the Christian message. The rabbis of the period were not far from the idea of a Messiah as understood in the gospel story.² But a rupture came. Christianity, which originally had its roots in Israel, adopted another law and became the enemy—the persecutor. All this made it virtually impossible for the Jew to dialogue with the Christian.

Only when Christians will engage in genuine *Teshuvah*, return to their Jewish roots, their original roots, reappraise the value of *Torah*, not only as a theological or spiritual exercise, but really in the concrete flesh of their existence; only when Christians will recognize the evil nature of anti-Semitism and will do everything to eradicate it from their hearts, their mouths, and their doctrines; only when the Christians will recognize the theological right for the Jews to be Israel and not claim at the same time that they are the “true,” the “spiritual,” and the “new” Israel that has replaced the old one; only when the Christians will recognize and respect the cultural but also the religious iden-

tity of the Jews, even those Jews who have joined them in their faith and their messianic hope, and will not try to alienate them, to transform them into their image and oblige them to worship, think, and behave the way they are used to, but instead learn from them in order to enrich their own Christian experience and refresh their Jewish roots; only when the Church will be bold and humble enough to be grafted again into the ancient olive tree; only then, the Jews will consider . . .

This whole scenario of the Church and Israel drawing near to each other instead of the traditional reacting and moving far from each other, appears to be just a utopia; and considering the weight of history today after the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel, this double mission looks impossible. To speak about the Judaization of the Church after these two thousand years of rejection sounds ludicrous and unbelievable. To speak about the “conversion” of the Jews after the Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel when the Jewish identity has become more than ever such a precious value, sounds indecent and intolerable. Yet history has such ironies. With these skepticisms and suspicions, the

Holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel have paradoxically produced a new climate for the Jewish-Christian encounter.

The Holocaust has revealed to the Church the horror of its iniquity and through this new shame obliged the Christians to rethink their relationship with the Jews. On the other hand, the State of Israel has liberated the Jew from the visceral reflex of reaction to the Christians.

Could it be, in these times of dialogue and openness and unexpected happenings, that the two former enemies suddenly wake up and understand that they need each other not only for their mutual salvation but also for the salvation of the world, and moving beyond the pride of their institutions begin to face their responsibility as witnesses to the great God above?

¹Michael Wyschogrod, “A Jewish View of Christianity,” in Rabbi Leon Klenicki, ed., *Toward a Theological Encounter: Jewish Understandings of Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991), 113-114.

²See Jacques Doukhan, *The Messianic Riddle*, forthcoming.

A Talmudic Story on Interfaith Dialogue

The Mishnah reports a disputation between Romans and Jews. The Romans asked the Jews: “If God does not desire idolatry, why does He not destroy it?”

The Jews answered: “If mankind had been worshiping objects unnecessary to the universe, God would have destroyed them. But since they worship the sun and moon and stars and trees, should God destroy His work because of their foolishness?”

The Music of Dialogue

*From Chant to Polyphony, an Esthetic Reflection on
Encountering the Other*

A. Hadas

In his account of the relation between the self and the other, Emmanuel Levinas describes the mode of discourse as one that respects the uniqueness of the two parties involved: “As non-violence it [the encounter] nonetheless maintains the plurality of the Same and the Other. It is peace.”¹

Dialogue has too often been misquoted in contexts of rhetorical persuasion or dismissed with polite nods of indifference. Yet, the virtues of tolerance or of solid convictions, although certainly laudable in other contexts, hardly contribute to the fruitfulness of dialogue. Indeed, the “tolerant” partner, who “accepts” his interlocutor’s opposing views without necessarily changing his position, is no different

from the “intolerant” one, who remains firm in his convictions whatever the argumentation. In both cases, there is no true exchange, just an accidental

And, indeed, there is a certain charm to monophony. The virtues of Gregorian chant are being acknowledged today with renewed interest. The beauty

The “tolerant” partner, who “accepts” his interlocutor’s opposing views without necessarily changing his position is no different from the “intolerant” one, who remains firm in his convictions whatever the argumentation.

overlap of views; no cohesion, indeed, no dialogue. This type of “dialogue” is monophonic in essence. The voices involved either silence the other, or let the other one ring unanswered. In any case, the result is monophonic: only one voice is heard.

of these lone voices, of their solid unity, ring true in our crowded, hectic, and fragmented daily lives. Indeed, monophony is somewhat reassuring. There are no conflicting voices. Diversity is minimized; order and discipline are

maximized. The absence of dialogue is an attractive notion and is often adopted as a protective stance, in an instinct of self-preservation. Better maintain what one has than put it up for debate, knowing that

For there to be fruitful musical dialogue, all voices must be heard, all voices must tell their own story.

one might well lose it all. Yet, it is precisely this fear of diversity that was the root cause of the short-livedness of monophony. Indeed, chant was short-lived because there was no room for growth. A melody can be spun to a certain point, but it has its limitations. One can hence safely say that polyphony “grew” out of monophony. It is the introduction in music of harmony, of chords, that led to its development. It is the chords of a piece that carry the melody to hereto unattainable heights. It is the harmonic progression of a piece that assures its growth, hence its viability. Polyphony, or the dialogue between different voices, holds the keys of life. Without it, the lone voice is destined to die as it falls from the lips that uttered it. In polyphony (and we think specifically of chamber music), that voice is answered by the others, it is even further developed by the others. Musical dialogue follows certain guidelines that may be extrapolated to any

type of dialogue: the two voices maintain their uniqueness, yet they harmonize, they agree, they form a cohesive whole. Further, the intermingling of the two voices assures a progression, a development, a dynamism which characterizes life itself, and which would be impossible to attain with one voice alone.

Musical Sketches

For there to be fruitful musical dialogue, all voices must be heard, all voices must tell their own story. Were all the voices to tell the same story, we would fall back into the monotony of chant; they would sing in unison. This is what Levinas meant in the opening paragraph in his description of dialogue as that which “maintains the plurality of the Same and the Other.”² Indeed, the specificity of the parties must be preserved for there to be genuine dialogue. In Judeo-Christian dialogue, both voices must be heard. One cannot “convert” the other into itself; one cannot speak for the other. And yet, this must not lead to cacophony; the two voices must somehow “blend.”

The Composition

Indeed, the cohesion of the voices necessitates a common ground. Musically, this is achieved by thematic means. Indeed, the theme is what unites the different voices, which either incorporate or develop it. For example, in Borodin’s quartet number 2, the cello introduces the theme. This theme is then incorporated into the other voices differently. Likewise, in fruitful dialogue, the parties involved need not express the issue in the exact same terms. Indeed, each party incorporates the

True dialogue occurs only between partners who know each other.

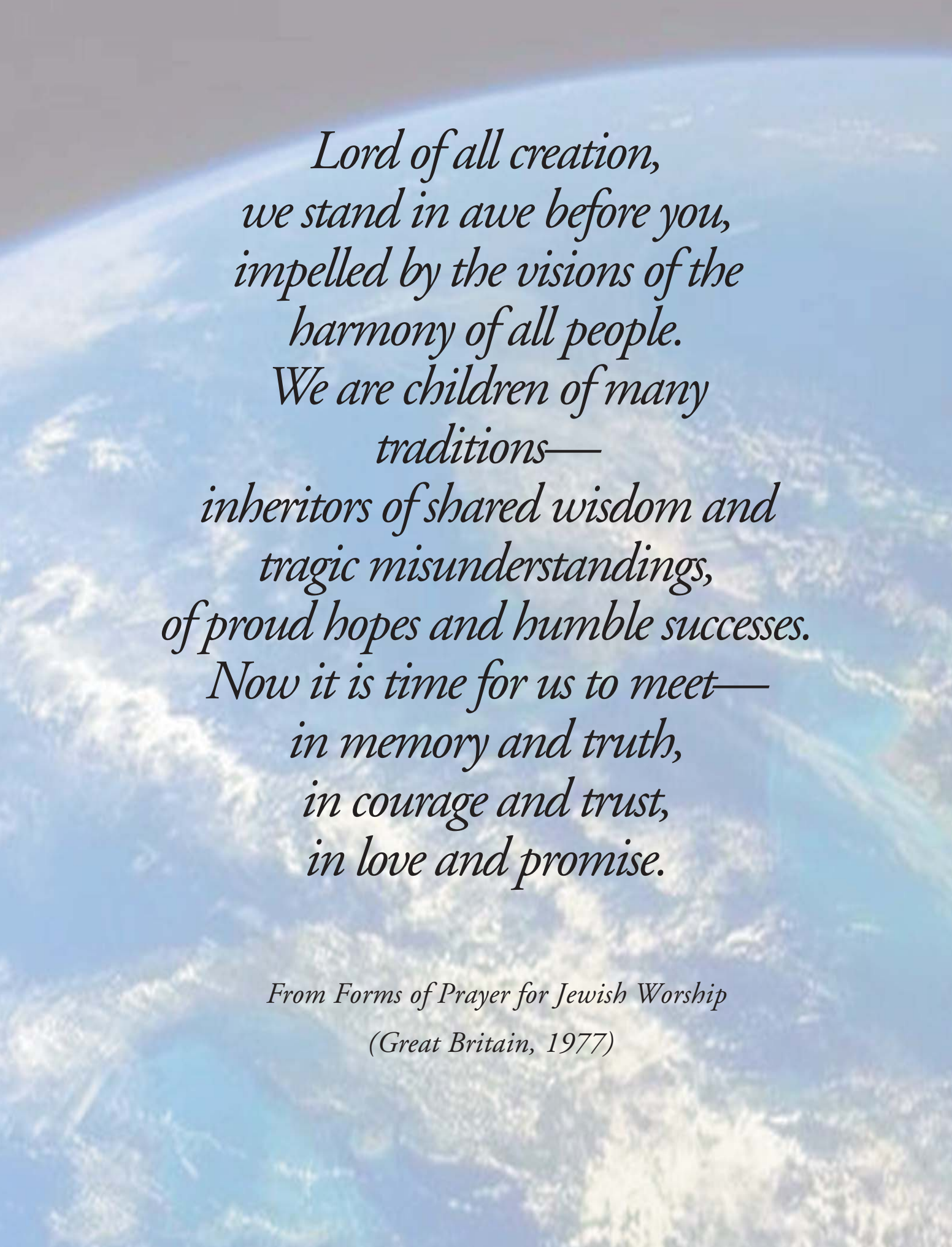
“theme” differently. Each gives the theme a slightly different ring, but it is still the same theme. Judeo-Christian dialogue might benefit from a search of the common themes and go from there. Of course, the quest for common themes necessitates that one learn from the other. In order to find the common elements between Judaism and Christianity, one must have in-depth knowledge of both. True dialogue occurs only between partners who know each other.

Polyphony as a Life-Form

The theme lives through the voices that carry it. In musical dialogue, the theme is constantly reformulated and developed. Through dialogue, the truths of both Judaism and Christianity can see themselves developed and enriched by the other. Were the two faiths to attempt a dialogue, the themes they treasure would stop sounding like stern plain-chant and swell into the textured and colorful polyphony of life.

¹Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Dordrecht; Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), 203.

²Ibid.



*Lord of all creation,
we stand in awe before you,
impelled by the visions of the
harmony of all people.
We are children of many
traditions—
inheritors of shared wisdom and
tragic misunderstandings,
of proud hopes and humble successes.
Now it is time for us to meet—
in memory and truth,
in courage and trust,
in love and promise.*

*From Forms of Prayer for Jewish Worship
(Great Britain, 1977)*

News From Israel

Richard Elofer

An Ultra Orthodox at the Head of the Antiquities Authority

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu plans to change the Antiquities Authority director, General Amir Drori, to a man from the Haredi parties and thus increase their influence on the Authority. The Haredies are unhappy about the archaeological excavations in Israel, particularly when bones are involved. The religious parties wish to control every excavation in Israel because they believe that to move Jewish bones is a profanation. This issue is very new in Israel because for the Antiquities Authority until four years ago the question at issue was not "Who is a Jew?" but "What is an antiquity?" Israel's Antiquity Law describes an antiquity as any object made by man before the year 1700 C.E. and any zoological or botanical remains before the year 1300 C.E. And when archaeologists discovered human bones, they would take them to a laboratory for cleaning and study.

To protest against the Prime Minister's plan, some members of the Knesset and demonstrators (workers from Antiquities Authority in Israel) smashed clay urns in front of the Knesset on Wednesday, July 1, to symbolize the "end of archaeology." In fact, if the religious parties take control of excavations in Israel, it will mean less freedom for the archaeologists.

Discovery on Ancient City of David

Employees working on Monday, July 22, in the City of David uncovered a fortified wall from the Middle Bronze Period in an area believed to have been outside the city's defense. Dr. Ronny Reich has directed these excavations in Jerusalem during past years and discovered near the Gihon Spring a new source of water. This discovery shows that the sophisticated water system heretofore attributed to the conquering Israelites predated them by eight centuries and was even more sophisticated than imagined. The entire system was built as a single complex by Canaanites in the Middle Bronze Period, around 1800 B.C.E. "We have to rethink all our concepts about the City of David that were formed over the last century," said Dr. Reich. It is presumed that the water system was still functioning when the city, inhabited by the Jebusites, was captured by David about 1000 B.C.E., according to the Bible.

The "Candelabra of Peace" at Ben Gurion Airport

A menorah sculpture more than five meters high and based on a design by Salvador Dali was dedicated Tuesday, July 22, at Ben Gurion Airport. The name of this menorah is "The Candelabra of Peace." French art publisher Jean-Paul Delcourt acquired the copyright for the design of the menorah

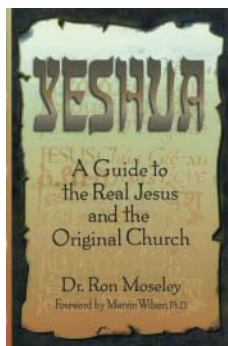
to mark Israel's 50th anniversary. According to Delcourt, Dali had created the design to show his admiration for the Jewish people. The dedication was attended by the Tourism Minister and the Ben Gurion Airport director.

A Bill Against Missionaries

For several years, religious parties in the Knesset have fought and voted against the Christian churches in Israel. The last stage was to present in the Knesset a bill which calls for serious sanctions against missionary activity in Israel. It passed a preliminary reading on Wednesday, May 20. This bill calls for a three-year prison sentence or NIS 50,000 fine for anyone found guilty of "preaching with the intent of causing another person to change his religion" even without distribution of printed material.

The bill was supported by 37 coalition Members of the Knesset, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his ministers, and was opposed by 28 opposition Members of the Knesset. Before this law becomes a regular law in Israel, it needs to be voted three times in the Knesset. The explanation of this bill is, "In recent years missionary activity has increased to worrying proportions. This is particularly evident among youth and new immigrants."

Recent Books



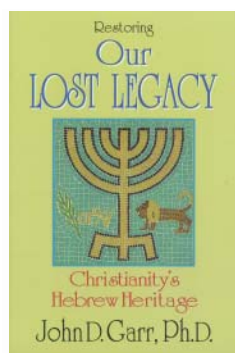
Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church, by Ron Moseley (Restoration Foundation, 1996), 212 pp., \$12.95.

“This refreshing new book by Dr. Ron Moseley opens up the history of the Jewish roots of the Christian faith. Every Christian should read this book” (Brad Young, Ph.D.,

Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Oral Roberts University).

“Written as a study text with useful review questions at the end of each chapter, *Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church* is must reading for serious students desiring to explore the historical and biblical linkage between the synagogue and church. I enthusiastically recommend this enlightening study of origins” (Marvin Wilson, Ph.D., Chairman of the Department of Biblical Studies, Gordon College).

Ron Moseley has studied the Jewish roots of Christianity at Princeton Theological Seminary and the Jerusalem and Hebrew Universities in Jerusalem. He holds a bachelor's degree in Religious Education and Master of Arts in history from Luther Rice College, and a Ph.D. in education from Louisiana Baptist University. Ron is founder and president of the Arkansas Institute of Holy Land Studies and South Central Graduate College. For the past sixteen years, he has pastored Sherwood Bible Church in Sherwood, Arkansas.



Restoring Our Lost Legacy: Christianity's Hebrew Heritage, by John D. Garr (Restoration Foundation, 1989), 239 pp., \$15.00.

“We've been robbed!” These words of a Methodist bishop in Brazil, an Anglican leader in India, and a Pentecostal overseer in Africa expressed the sentiments of

thousands of Christians around the world when they first discovered through the challenging teaching of Dr. John D. Garr the extent to which they have been deprived of the Hebrew heritage of their Christian faith.

For the past nineteen centuries, millions of believers have been denied their biblical legacy, the riches of the Hebrew foundations of their faith. Christian Judaeophobia, anti-Judaism, and anti-Semitism have conspired to rob them of the treasures of their heritage.

This volume presents selected essays and lectures in which Dr. Garr urges the church to recover its Hebrew heritage, its connection with the Jewish matrix from which it was produced. These pages call Christians back to the Bible, to the roots of faith that enrich lives and equip believers to achieve greater maturity through a more complete knowledge of Jesus, our Jewish Lord.

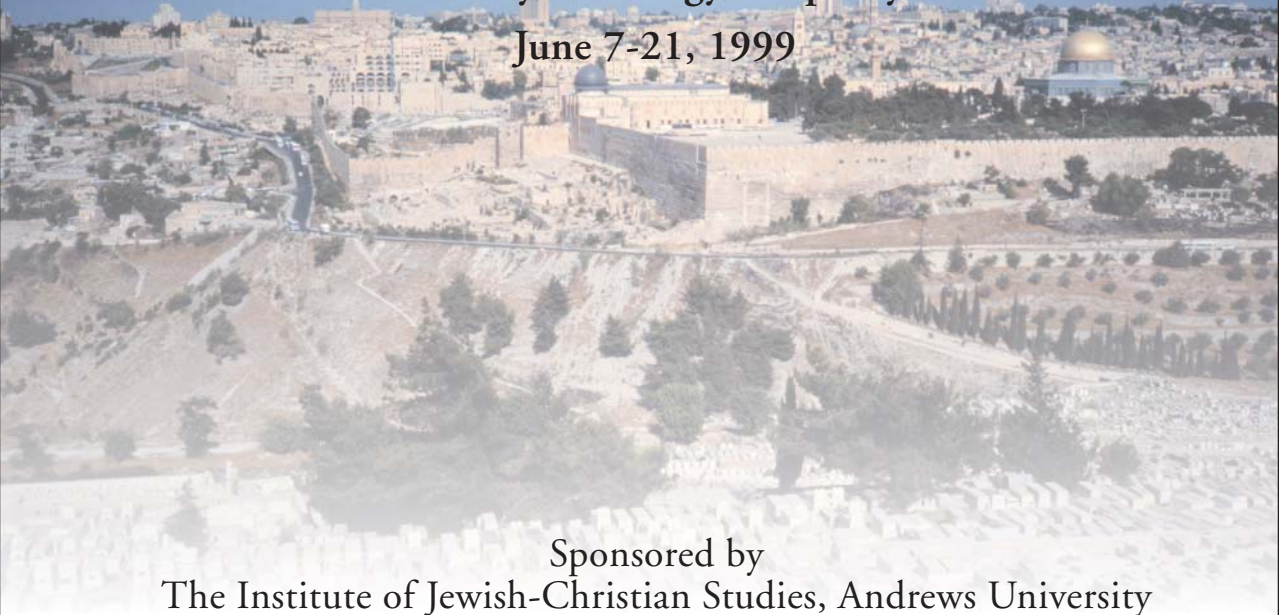
Restoring Our Lost Legacy presents vivid images of Christianity's heritage in the Hebrew faith: Biblical Judaism--The Root of Christianity; Hold to God's Unchanging Hand!; Christ, Our Righteousness; Jewish Jesus or Cosmic Christ?; The Secret to Fulfilling the Law.

Dr. John D. Garr is founder and president of Restoration Foundation, an international, transdenominational, multiethnic, and interracial networking organization that serves as an educational resource to the Christian church. Dr. Garr's teaching ministry is unique in that it combines excellent scholarship with intense spirituality and personal integrity. An academician with a pastor's heart, he is able to contextualize biblical truths in terms that laypersons can understand. His teaching challenges believers to a faith that manifests a biblically-sound, Christocentric lifestyle grounded in the Hebraic heritage of Jesus and the apostles.

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