

CHRIST AND THE JEWISH-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE

---an evaluation of contemporary perspectives

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Norman Cousins remarked sometime ago that "Christianity and Judaism share one of the great reluctances of history. Both are reluctant to live openly and fully with the fact that Jesus was a Jew. Christianity's theology has never been able to explain to itself why Jesus should have come out of Judaism. And Judaism has tended to dwell outside the full significance of the Jewishness of Jesus and his vast spiritual role in human history."<sup>1</sup> This cryptic statement hits dead center on a central issue in the Christian-Jewish dialogue: Christology. Both of our faith communities, it seems to me, have to re-examine their traditional approaches to the significance of Jesus' appearance in history. I shall concentrate in this essay on the scope of the necessary Christian re-examination. My intention is to introduce the dimensions of this new interreligious quest and indicate a few of the roads it might profitably take. In no sense will I offer a fully elaborated hypothesis. This is something I plan to undertake in a forthcoming book.

For Christianity today the question must be how it can articulate its self-identity without automatically denying the continued validity of Judaism as an ongoing expression of fundamental religious realities after the time of Christ against the traditional background of the "New Moses," "New Covenant," "New Jerusalem" vocabulary. Coming to grips with this will not be easy for Christians because we are talking about faith statements which have been central to Christian theology from its earliest days.

Some Christians have tried to solve the problem by appealing to Romans 9-11. Granted there are some sections in these chapters that convey a positive tone, a deep feeling on the part of Paul for his people, when taken by themselves. And in fact these chapters do challenge any simplistic Christian notions about the automatic end of Judaism as a living religion and the consequent rejection of the Jewish people with the advent of Jesus. But ultimately Romans 9-11 ends on a conversionist note that I find unacceptable. Paul says that Israel's zeal is misguided. Jews have failed to recognize the righteousness that comes from God and try to promote their own idea of it. The Jews can be grafted back onto the true tree, but only if they give up their unbelief. Israel has become blind, albeit only temporarily; the Jews

are disobedient. While the Jewish people remain loved by God and He has revoked neither his gift to them nor their chosenness, they "are enemies of God with regard to the Good News"<sup>2</sup> This is hardly language that will promote a spirit of equality and respect in any encounter between the two faith communities. No, I am afraid that more radical surgery than Romans 9-11 can offer us is imperative if we are to achieve any genuine breakthrough in our contemporary dialogue with Judaism

Several present-day biblical scholars and theologians such as Rosemary Reuther,<sup>3</sup> J. Coert Rylaarsdam,<sup>4</sup> Monika Hellwig,<sup>5</sup> Gregory Baum,<sup>6</sup> A. Roy Eckardt,<sup>7</sup> James Parkes,<sup>8</sup> and Peter Chirico<sup>9</sup> have attempted such surgery, reaching the conclusion that part of our traditional Christology is severely inadequate and should perhaps be discarded. As Christians we must come to view the Jewish "no" to Jesus as a positive contribution to the ultimate salvation of mankind, not as an act of unfaithfulness or haughty blindness -- that is a major thrust of this new theological search

Let us now look a bit more closely at some of the positions espoused by the above-mentioned scholars. Gregory Baum insists on the need to recognize that while Judaism is founded upon the revelations of the Hebrew Scriptures (and still draws inspiration from the Bible,) it has become through a great variety of factors a religion in its own right, not the immediate precursor of Christianity. In his view Judaism's destiny is not

to disappear and give way to Christianity. Judaism continues to exercise a positive role in God's plan of salvation. The saving presence of God in Jewish religion is the source of its extraordinary vitality and its resilience against all its adversaries<sup>10</sup>

*Discontinuity* \* Baum's position would generally place him in that category of theologians who see Judaism and Christianity as two basically distinct religions (despite their shared biblical patrimony). Some label this "the double covenant theory." Without making this category too hard and fast, we might also include Rosemary Reuther, James Parkes, Peter Chirico and J. Coert Rylaarsdam in this group

Rosemary Reuther takes the stand that the Messianic Age has not come, something she believes emerges as an inescapable fact of history,

something with which Christians have not sufficiently reckoned up till now. In her eyes human history remains as much, perhaps even more, mired in ambiguity, sickness, sin and death as it was prior to the coming of Jesus. If the church wants to affirm that the term "Christ" refers to the Messiah of Israel's hope, then it must also come to appreciate that

from the standpoint of that faith of Israel itself, there is no possibility of talking about the Messiah having come (much less of having come two thousand years ago, with all the evil history that has reigned from that time until this), when the reign of God has not come. 11

She bluntly postulates that

What Christianity has in Jesus is not the Messiah, but a Jew who hoped for the coming of the Kingdom of God and who died in that hope. 12

The pioneer scholar in modern Christian-Jewish dialogue James Parkes anchors his version of the "double-covenant" theory in what he calls the different but complimentary revelations of "Sinai" and "Calvary," Sinai centering around the community while Calvary enlightened the understanding of the individual person:

That highest purpose of God which Sinai reveals to men as community, Calvary reveals to man as an end in himself. The difference between the two events, both of which from the metaphysical standpoint are identical as expressions of the infinite in the finite, of the eternal in the world of space and time, lies in the fact that the first could not be fulfilled by a brief demonstration of a divine community in action; but the second could not be fulfilled except by a life lived under human conditions from birth to death, 13.

That is Parkes' central thesis.

A stress on the individual began to grow in Jewish literature in the exilic and postexilic periods according to Parkes. Witness, he says, the concern with the individual in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Wisdom literature, Job and among the Pharisees. It is out of this movement that Jesus stepped into history. The revelation of Calvary did not replace Sinai, nor could Sinai simply absorb it and remain unchanged. In the life and teaching of Jesus the earlier revelation and the new revelation stand together in creative tension with one another. In the



Christian concern with man as person, nothing is taken away from the power or meaning of the working out in history of the revelation of Sinai. Sinai did not mark the beginning of human concern with the moral problems of men in society. Behind Sinai were centuries of experience which were both human discoveries and divine revelations. What ~~was~~ occurred at Sinai was the full development of a long and slow growth in man's understanding of community, even though it took centuries to realize the full extent of Sinai and it still remain difficult to define the complete meaning of that revelation. In the same manner what had been growing in Judaism since the period of the exile attained its full development with Calvary and has been subject to interpretation ever since:

/ The divine plan for human society is given its full meaning when the divine plan for man as person is revealed within it. In Jesus the ultimate unity is not destroyed; Paul still struggles to maintain it. But in the complex setting of first century life the two halves broke apart, and the beginning of the second century witnessed two religious confronting each other -- Judaism and Christianity. 14

For Parkes Judaism and Christianity are inextricably linked together as equals, for the tension that exists between them is not rooted in some Barthian metaphysic forced upon history from without, but in the perennial and inevitable experience of tension in ordinary human life between man as social being and man as individual person, as an ultimate value in himself, as one formed in the likeness of God. This tension extends to the whole of life and will endure so long as the world endures.

For J Coert Rylaarsdam the basic tension between Judaism and Christianity can only be understood by recognizing the existence of two distinct covenants in the Hebrew Scriptures. The first, the covenant with Israel, represents the side of history and signifies a socio-religious union called into being by God. It includes a mutual pact of faithfulness and responsibility between God and his people. This covenant is characterized by the continuity between Gospel and Law and includes both the motif of the recital of the covenant and the motif of obligation. The biblical themes of the first covenant reflect the belief that the only significant world is that of man and history, especially as seen through the particularity of Israel, the Chosen of

Yahweh This covenant is future oriented and the events related constitute a salvation history replete with "acts of divine rescue." It is an open series. This salvation history cannot be reconciled with the advent of Jesus and was not as significant for the New Testament writers as the second covenant.

The second covenant is the covenant with David As interpreted by Rylaarsdam, it represents the eschatological tradition. The principal characteristic of this covenant is the holiness attached to the mountain of Zion and the divine presence as revealed through the dynasty of David This marked a new beginning and continued to be in tension with the first covenant to which it was finally accommodated although never absorbed This covenant alludes to and celebrates a supratemporal order of significance God is King - of creation and of the nations. "Law" and "history" are largely absent from the Davidic covenant. Whereas there is no Alpha-Omega aspect to the future oriented first covenant, the second celebrates Alpha with emphasis on its significance for the present and thus adumbrates many Christian "theological and liturgical motifs "

The tension between these two covenants ultimately produced several sects, one of which became the eschatologically oriented Christianity. This new faith contained the same tension but with a reversal of the priority of the two covenants In the words of Rylaarsdam,

However Jesus may have understood his vocation, at the outset Christians interpreted his career as an eschatological event. He had overcome the world (olam), relativized history - or even abolished it Except for some sectarian movements, (Judaism thought more historically than eschatologically; it awaited the transformation and redemption of the world. So the Jews said that the Messiah had not come) But the Gentiles believed And the Christians wrote a commentary on the Hebrew Bible and called it the New Testament Its accent is overwhelmingly eschatological Therefore it has now become the primary occasion for the dilemmas of Christology 15

As Rylaarsdam sees it, the Christians who authored the New Testament were a Jewish sect They were sectarian because they took such a one-sided view of the relation of the two covenants, <sup>Abrahamic/Mosaic vs. Davidic</sup> to one another For a moment they forgot about the paradoxical character of the relationship, and they thought that the full meaning of the historical

could be fitted into the perspective of the eschatological But Rylaarsdam believes that

they quickly began to discover that they were wrong And the story of nineteen centuries of Christian history can be told as the story of the progressive discovery, exploration and rectification of that initial mistake. Their retention of the Hebrew Bible has served the Christians well in this matter. They have thought and said that they retained it as the sign of a praeparatio; but, in fact, it served as the source of their recovery of the knowledge of foundations that are enduring because they are paradoxical."16

There are then for Rylaarsdam two covenants in the Christian Bible. They are not the two covenants called Testaments, placed seriatim. They are the two covenants that run through both the Old and New Testaments, the same throughout the entire Bible. In view of this the relationship between the two faiths emerges as something radically other than the traditional Christian statement of it. (If both Judaism and Christianity always continue to revolve around the same two covenants that are paradoxically related to one another,) then their relationship, whatever its tension, is forever mutually interdependent.

For Peter Chirico a new Christian understanding of the continuing validity of Judaism can come only if we move away from a "fixist" view of revelation to a more modern "dynmaic" outlook. He rejects two commonly held positions associated with the church's proclamation of itself as the "fulfillment" of Israel: (1) the assumption that fulfillment is an accomplishment rather than a mission; (2) the assumption that Christ's fulfillment is found exclusively in those explicitly Christian. Chirico holds that aspects of the revelational pattern are manifested in Judaism in ways different from the Christian community's role which has been and will continue to be that of manifesting the Christological meaning of revelation in its life and mission. Because Christians have confused and still confuse the acceptance of God's revelation with the acceptance of the explicitly Christian articulation of the ultimate meaning of that revelation, they have concluded that Jews are rejecting the revelation of God in Christ The only sure corrective for this, says Chirico, will be

the explicit Christian recognition of the enduring value of the Judaic faith coupled with a ceaseless effort to under-



understand, integrate, and proclaim the Christological meaning of that fact. (Christians will never believe that it is ideal that Jews do not recognize Christ any more than they should ever believe that their own living out of Christianity is ideal) But they must come to see intellectually and to incarnate attitudinally the view that the concrete Jewish community manifests aspects of the very revelation of God that they themselves do not manifest 17

So much for the so-called double-covenant school. While minimizing their difference from the double-covenant position, it would be useful to look briefly at a couple representatives of the single-covenant school. The first is Monika Hellwig. She believes that the simultaneous and complimentary participation of Christianity and Judaism in the same covenant requires a restatement of some central concepts by the church. The most crucial of these is the traditional Christian assertion that the Messiah came in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and that those who recognized him were welcomed into his kingdom while among his own people many refused to believe in him with the consequent punishment of being left in outer darkness. This, she strongly maintains, constitutes an oversimplification of the original stand of the apostolic community. A more accurate formulation in her mind would be

that the cry of the early Christian community, 'Jesus is Lord and Christ' was and remains a prophetic assertion by which Christians have pledged themselves to a task of salvation yet to be accomplished. Even to the Christian there is a most important sense in which Jesus is not yet Messiah. The eschatological tension has not been resolved. What may be expected in the Messianic fulfillment has not yet become manifest in the world - that there shall be peace among men; that the weak shall have no cause to fear the strong; that a spirit of healing and joy shall be all pervasive. Logically the Messianic Event should be seen as lengthy, complex, unfinished and mysterious. 18

Dr. Hellwig then proceeds to pose the central question:

It may well be objected that this line of reasoning evades the real issue at stake; Jesus is recognized by the Christians as divine and the inner reality of God is understood as triune, while the Jew rejects both claims as blasphemous. 19

She believes that a new perspective is possible on this seemingly



insuperable obstacle in light of the present Christian discussions of the nature of religious language. Recognizing that calling God a person is necessarily an analogy and that the 5th century Christological definitions of one person and two natures were no more than

[a mystery]  
a cautious naming of the unknowns in Christian experience of divine intervention, then we no longer have a simple equation in saying that Jesus is the son of God or that Jesus is divine, but an interpretive statement that is quite elusive as to its exact meaning - a poetic statement almost as logically elusive as the saying, 'happiness is a sunny day in Spring'. 20

More positively put, she feels that we must now speak of Jesus in phenomenological terms: Jesus is the place of encounter of man with the transcendent God, which Christians have experienced as central in all human existence. Such an interpretation becomes even more meaningful in her eyes in the context of the Jewish prohibition against idols which ~~proscribes~~ <sup>PROSCRIBES AGAINST</sup> the making of divine images out of the deep conviction that there exists only one image of God that really reveals anything, namely man himself.

For A Roy Eckardt who has written widely on the Jewish-Christian encounter the Old and New Testaments comprise one covenant. The church has not taken Israel's place and Israel's divine vocation remains intact into our time. God's faithfulness to Israel means that the covenant continues unbroken, and it is this very covenant that requires Israel to reject Jesus as the Messiah. He holds that God's purpose was that a majority of Israel should not accept Jesus. Eckardt concludes that Israel and the Church stand in dialectical tension to each other within the one covenant. Each has a different function and a corresponding temptation. Israel's main function is to face inward to the Jewish people and Christianity's function to face outward to the Gentiles. The corresponding temptations are that the Jew may let his election lead to self-exaltation and the Christian's reliance on grace may lead to absolving himself from all duties under the law. Or, in opposing a false dichotomizing between the sacred and the profane, Israel may secularize the Kingdom of God; on the other hand, in going forth into the secular world Christianity may be tempted to overspiritualize the Kingdom of God and negate the goodness of creation. As Eckardt sees it,

Jesus of Nazareth, called the Christ, embodies the paradox of uniting Jews with Christians and of separating Jews from Christians. There is simply no way around or beyond this stern fact. Any discussion of the Jewish-Christian relationship must presuppose both elements in this ultimate tension. The mystery of Israel's election has found a continuation and fulfillment 'in the mystery of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ' 21

But Eckardt continues that "if there is a true sense in which God has manifested himself uniquely in Jesus of Nazareth, it must be said that the mystery of this divine act is in principle no greater than the sacred acts through which Israel was originally elected." 22

A Christian theology of the Jewish-Christian relationship is called to proclaim, according to Eckardt, "what Franz Rosenzweig has expressed from the Jewish side: Judaism is the 'Star of Redemption,' Christianity the rays of that star. The church is 'successor' of Israel in only one respect and no other: by virtue of the Christian gospel, the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles is destroyed once and for all. The abiding Covenant with Israel is decisively and definitely opened to the world in a way that Jewish faith does not provide." 23

Recently Eckardt has begun to hedge somewhat about his single covenant orientation. He feels that the Christian community must enable Israel "to be whatever she will be, even without us." 24

I think that my earlier and repeated insistence upon the membership of Christians in the Jewish family has been determined in considerable measure by the necessary warfare against Christian supersessionism, the fantasy that the 'new Israel' has replaced original Israel. Suppose that this fantasy is at last overcome! Must the family stay together? I am uncertain how to answer. I do know that loved ones part from one another and go their different ways - though they need not thereby cease their loving or their caring. Indeed, it may be that the parting must take place by the very decree of love and for the very sake of love. 24

The theological positions we have just examined offer a good cross-section of the new thinking about the significance of Christ emerging within Christianity as a result of its contemporary dialogue with Judaism. While the views of the above Christian scholars must certainly be understood as provisional, they are beginning a process that will profoundly alter Christianity's self-definition and make possible a more realistic relationship to Judaism and to all other non-Christian

religions. The recent document of the French Bishops, while not as radical as the views just quoted, would also serve as an excellent introduction to the new thinking about the Jewish-Christian relationship slowly emerging in Christian circles. The same holds true for the statement released in June 1973 by the Israel Study Group sponsored by the National Council of Churches' Faith & Order Commission and the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. This latter document goes well beyond Vatican II in coming to grips with the issue of the basic relationship between Judaism and Christianity and it bears the signatures of some eighteen Christian scholars representing Protestantism, Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy.<sup>2</sup>

Certainly the task of theologically re-interpreting the fundamental Jewish-Christian relationship still requires much work and research. But what the scholars we have just examined are saying, despite their many differences, is that Christianity must re-examine its contention that the Messianic age, the time of fulfillment, far more crucial to Judaism than the notion of a personal Messiah, took place with the coming of Christ. However we may eventually come to explicate the uniqueness and mystery of the Christ Event, and we can never lose sight of this uniqueness without emasculating Christianity, it has become obvious to them and to me that we can no longer simply claim that the Jewish notion of the Messianic age was realized in the Death-Resurrection of Christ.

The question remains, however, what does such a recognition of non-fulfillment do to our understanding of Christology? Must it be totally discarded? By no means. But this Christology needs restatement and clarification. Permit me to briefly outline the direction in which I feel this renewed Christology must move. Before doing this, however, a word or two of critique relative to the theological views looked at above.

All of the scholars mentioned above offer some important insights, especially in their unifying thesis that Christianity must abandon its simplistic interpretation of Jesus the Christ as the fulfillment of Israel's Messianic expectations, must acknowledge the continuing validity of Judaism and must even recognize the positive side of Judaism's rejection of the church's Christological traditions. When it



comes to constructing a new Christology in the light of the Jewish-Christian encounter, I feel that some of the examined theological stances contribute much more than others. In particular I would cite James Parkes' model of Judaism as addressing the social dimension of the human person while Christianity speaks to the person as individual, Peter Chirico's insistence on the on-going nature of revelation and on the presence in Judaism of revelatory elements that are missing in Christianity, A. Roy Eckardt's stress that in principle the revelation in Christ is no more crucial than the principal revelatory events in Judaism, and Gregory Baum's and Monika Hellwig's understanding of the Christ Event as uncovering the divinity within humanity and human history. J. Coert Rylaarsdam's description of the eschatological/historical tension within both the Old and New Testaments also contains some important nuances. But in the final analysis I must reject it as an appropriate starting point for Christological construction because it does not adequately deal with the development of human consciousness regarding the God-man relationship that took place in Second Temple Judaism and in Christianity. A. Roy Eckardt's model is too deeply imbedded in Niebuhr's paradox that insufficiently expresses the positive meaning of Christ and in a Rosenzweig hypothesis that ultimately reverses the tables in making Christianity inferior to Judaism and deprives Judaism of perhaps its most prized possession -- its uncompromising rootedness in the processes of history.

In an essay entitled "Anti-Judaism is the Left Hand of Christology" Dr. Rosemary Reuther hits upon a point that in my opinion must serve as the beginning of any new Christology:

Originally Christians also linked Jesus' messianic role intimately to this final salvation of the world. But as this event failed to materialize, Christian theology pushed it off into a vague future-- i.e., the "Second Coming" -- and reinterpreted Jesus' messianic role in inward and personal ways that bore little relation to what the Jewish tradition had meant by the "coming of the Messiah." 26

Dr. Reuther is generally correct in her description of the gradual change from an historical, very Jewish based, interpretation of the life and mission of Jesus to a much more inward and "mystical" explanation. But I would place a much higher valuation on this process than

Dr. Reuther seems to do. But her negativism is correct in this sense. The later Pauline writings and the Johannine literature which were principally responsible for this change never made clear the fundamental re-interpretation they had introduced into the church's Christological understanding. This would lead as a result to confusion for centuries as Christians utilized the older fulfillment language (which perdured into our own time, especially in the liturgy) side-by-side with the more inward language. It is incumbent upon Christian theologians to work for the removal of this confusion by forthrightly acknowledging the basic change in viewpoint introduced by Paul and John and ceasing to pretend that the earlier Messianic Christology and the later Christology can be simply and easily dovetailed. Such admission would go a long way in stripping Christology of its anti-Judaic bias.

The actual Christological transformation process, as I see it, went something like this. After the early strata of the gospels and the initial Pauline writings had proclaimed Jesus to be the expected Jewish messiah, problems arose for the apostolic church. The signs and realities that were to accompany the coming of the Messiah were nowhere to be seen. Hence the mature Paul and especially John were forced to re-examine the earlier Christologies. Eventually they came to appreciate a totally new and potentially more important aspect of Jesus the Christ. Through contact with his person and his ministry man had come to glimpse more profoundly than ever before the intimate link that exists, that has always existed, between God and man. Humanity and divinity were more closely linked than man had ever imagined. And their linkage had deep implications for the understanding of people's relationship to one another and to God as well as for the dignity enjoyed by each human person. This realization, I would argue, was in part a development of the heightened sense of the dignity of the individual person that had emerged as one of the hallmarks of the Pharisaic revolution within Judaism during the Second Temple period.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, and I know many of my Jewish colleagues would be taken back by this statement, I do not believe that the notion of the Incarnation, the presence of God's divinity in human form, is as foreign to the soul of Judaism as is usually maintained. But nonetheless the Christologies of John and Paul do represent a quantum leap when compared to the understanding of Second Temple Judaism.

To fully comprehend the lines of this Christological development one must begin by examining the changes in human consciousness that arose as a result of the Pharisaic revolution within Judaism. At the heart of this revolution lay a new conception of the God-man relationship. Perhaps under Hellenistic influence, Pharisaism came to conceive of the God-man relationship as far more personal and direct than any previous form of Judaism had envisioned it. This was a change so fundamental that the Pharisees felt obliged to find new names for God and to employ the old ones only when quoting from the Hebrew Scriptures. One of the principal names they applied to God was "Father". Now, to us, this may not sound very revolutionary. But as developed by the Pharisees the Father-Son imagery bespeaks a new intimacy between God and the individual person -- an intimacy which ultimately undercut the intermediary/hereditary elite system that formed the core of the Sadducean/Temple understanding of the God-man relationship. Every person, no matter who he or she might be, had such standing before God that they could approach him directly; no intermediary was necessary.

This basic perceptual change in the God-man relationship on the part of the Pharisees led to a total transformation of the practices and structures of Judaism. Included were such new institutions as the rabbinate and the synagogue. The former enhanced the dignity of each individual person by making performance and concern rather than heredity the basis for leadership in Jewish society; the latter, viewed as <sup>synagogue as</sup> the house of the people of God (unlike the Temple which was conceived as the house of God), laid stress on the new closeness between humanity and divinity, to put it theologically -- God could not be God without his people.<sup>28</sup> In their interpretation of Torah, the Pharisaic rabbis handed down many decisions, such as the right of a laborer to go out on strike, which enhanced the status of the human person. Finally, one of the central doctrines of Pharisaism, the resurrection of the dead, introduced a new dimension of human dignity and worth. Each person would continue to live on forever in his or her uniqueness after death. In no way were individuals after death simply to be absorbed into a God-head or universal being. What greater statement could be made about man?



As a conglomerate, the Pharisaic structures and ideas point to a new closeness between God and man. The Pharisees as such were probably not ready to grant the direct link between humanity and divinity that eventually emerged in Christianity. But I would suggest that they were definitely heading in that direction. The gulf between Judaism and Christianity still remains wide on this point. But an understanding of the Pharisaic basis of Christology may make passage of the gulf at some future date at least thinkable.

It was out of this Pharisaic context that Rabbi Jesus emerged and developed his ministry. My contention would be that a prime, if not the prime, focus of the ministry of Jesus was emphasizing the utter dignity of each individual person. No man or woman could really be cast out as useless and unnecessary because as part of humanity they are thereby also part of God. To reject them would be to reject a part of God. A Jewish scholar of the New Testament David Flusser has clearly recognized this unique quality of Jesus' message:

...it is clear that Jesus' moral approach to God and man...is unique and incomparable. According to the teaching of Jesus you have to love the sinners, while according to Judaism you have not to hate the wicked. It is important to note that the positive love even toward the enemies is Jesus' personal message. We do not find this doctrine in the New Testament outside of the words of Jesus himself... In Judaism hatred is practically forbidden. But love to the enemy is not prescribed. 29

Following out this notion of the basic dignity of the individual person Jesus ate with the tax collectors and harlots (the dregs of the society of his day), constantly preached reconciliation, and in times of conflict tended to take the side of the individual. This last theme in Jesus' ministry is underscored by James Parkes in his interpretation of the conflict between Jesus and "the Pharisees" in the pages of the New Testament. In the gospel of Mark which refrains from the wholesale condemnation of the Pharisees found in Matthew, their confrontation occurs as a result of Jesus' healing on the Sabbath and his disciples plucking corn on the day of rest. The Pharisees, Parkes says, were concerned with the survival of the Jewish community in the midst of secularist and assimilationist tendencies among some Jews.

The Sabbath was a key element in maintaining the community consciousness they felt to be a sine qua non of Jewish survival. Jesus also shared their concern about Jewish communal survival when he said he had not come to destroy Torah but bring it to perfection (a clear rejection of the assimilationist position). But while in this conflict both sides agreed with the principle that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath", Jesus chose to carry the Pharisaic principle of the utter and unqualified dignity of each person to its ultimate conclusion. His healing of a diseased hand on the Sabbath was in itself not a crucial issue, according to Parkes, but it was done deliberately by Jesus "as an assertion of the primacy of each man as person."<sup>30</sup>

Yet Parkes ~~never~~ insists that Jesus never attempted as far as we know to discuss with the Pharisees how to achieve a reconciliation between the need of an individual person and the need of the community. Such reconciliation, says Parkes, cannot be achieved by any neat formula. Jesus never tried to bridge this gap between his own vision and the legitimate Pharisaic concern for the preservation of the community:

Within the divinely chosen community he proclaimed the divine concern with each man as person. It is for men to hold the two in a continuously destroyed and continuously recreated balance. Jesus did not attempt to resolve the tension for us. He challenged us only to recognize that it existed. 31

// So Parkes in effect is saying that both Jesus and the Pharisees were right. It is essential to realize in his view that the Pharisees could no more have simply accepted Jesus' teaching than he could have given in to theirs. This is a crucial point, for it opens the door for constructing a model of the Jewish-Christian relationship that first of all gives some credence to the Jewish rejection of Christianity other than unbelief and <sup>also</sup> opens the way for recognizing that each has emphasized // complimentary but distinct aspects of the God-man relationship.

Another example of Jesus' stress on the dignity of man, (and another instance of a clash with the Jewish leadership,) is to be found in the issue of the forgiveness of sins. For even the "liberal" Pharisees, it was unthinkable that anyone but the Father could forgive sins. But Jesus says no, goes ahead and forgives sins, and even transfers this power to his followers. Viewed within the theological context of the

time, this action by Jesus constitutes a significant assertion of the dignity of man and the divine power that rests within him.

Finally, Jesus carries on the Pharisaic tradition of the resurrection of the dead spoken of above. There is not a great deal that Jesus added to this most important Pharisaic view. The only noticeable difference would be that the Pharisees insisted, in keeping with their community orientation, that no individual would rise until the Messianic age since no one could enjoy full salvation until the community reached its total development.

As the apostolic community began to reflect upon the meaning of Jesus' person and ministry, the initial impulse was the easy one in a Jewish context in particular -- He was the expected Messiah who had brought into being the long-awaited Messianic kingdom. But as time wore on and the continued absence of the Messianic kingdom's principal characteristics became a problem that had to be confronted theologically, the apostolic church began to explore a different approach to the meaning of the Christ Event. This new approach is the "inward," more "mystical" one that Rosemary Reuther has correctly delineated in her writings. But, as indicated above, I would view this development much more positively than ~~she~~ <sup>her</sup>. In fact I would assert that it was this development which gave Christianity its most unique religious insight, one that still remains its greatest potential contribution to world humanity. Part of the reason for the delay in developing this new Christological consciousness may have been due to something Raymond E. Brown has pointed out, namely that "If Jesus presented himself as one in whose life God was active, he did so not primarily by the use of titles or by clear statements about what he was, but rather by the impact of his ~~his~~ person and his life on those who followed him."<sup>32</sup> It took the members of the apostolic church some time to assess the full dimensions of this impact.

It may be legitimately asked at this point, what biblical evidence is there for postulating this developmental theory of Christology? The great Johannine scholar Raymond Brown provides substantial backing for such a thesis in his essay, "Does the New Testament Call Jesus God?"<sup>33</sup> He insists that we have clear evidence that the use of the term "God" for Jesus belongs to the second half of the New Testament period and became frequent only in the latter part of that period. We have no



no evidence that Jesus was called God in the Jerusalem or Palestinian communities of the first two decades of Christianity. This judgment he believes confirmed by the evidence of the earliest extrabiblical Christian works.

In addition to the silence about Jesus as God in the earlier strata of the New Testament materials, there are also passages that seem to explicitly deny such an association. It seems that in the earlier stages of Christianity the Old Testament heritage dominated the use of the title "God." In this perspective "God" was a title too narrow to be applied to Jesus. It referred strictly to the Father of Jesus, to the God to whom Jesus prayed. Slowly in the growth of Christian theology "God" took on an expanded meaning:

It was seen that God had revealed so much of himself in Jesus that "God" had to be able to include both Father and Son. The Pauline works seem to fall precisely in this stage of development... By the time of the Pastorals, however, Jesus was well known as God-and-Saviour. The Johannine works come from the final years of the century, when the usage is common. 34

Brown believes that the practice of calling Jesus God originated in a liturgical setting. This theory carries with it some very important implications concerning the meaning of this title as applied to Jesus. In the New Testament the title "God" is not directly given to the Jesus of ministry. In the Johannine writings it is the pre-existent Word or the Son in the Father's presence or the resurrected Jesus who is hailed as God. The doxologies confess as God only the triumphant Jesus. In Hebrews the stress is on the Jesus whose throne is forever. 35

At this point it would be well to state in a more positive fashion the meaning of the church's Christological tradition as the development theory just outlined would have us understand it. Through the ministry and person of Jesus man came to see clearly for the first time that humanity is an integral part of God. This means that each human person is divine, that he or she somehow shares in the constitutive nature of God. Christ is the theological symbol the church has chosen to express this reality. As we learn from the latter strata of the New Testament materials, this humanity has existed in the God-head from the very beginning. So in a very real sense God did not become man in

Jesus. That is the ultimate meaning of the infancy narratives'  
notion of the Virgin Birth - God always was man The Christ Event was  
merely the occasion through which this reality became clearly manifest  
to the world

The Christ Event was in a sense the culmination of another process. In  
the act of creation part of the humanity that was the God-head was cast  
/ out into a separate, though not fully separated, existence. In the  
period from creation to the Christ Event man was searching for an au-  
thentic self-understanding that would recognize both his individuality  
\\ and his divinity. Frequently man assumed he was greater than the  
Father, seeking to make himself into God. The Christ Event revealed  
both the incomparable greatness of man as well as his limits. The  
growing sense of his uniqueness and dignity which first surfaced in the  
Genesis sense of man as Co-Creator and was further developed in the  
Pharisaic emphasis on the worth and status of each individual person  
reached its zenith at this point. Man now saw that he shared in the  
very life and existence of God. He was still creature; there remained  
a gulf between his humanity and the humanity that was the possession  
of the God-head. (Perhaps, incidentally, this is the ultimate explana-  
tion of why Jesus had to die on the Cross -- to reiterate this gulf.)  
But there was also a direct link; the two humanities could touch. Man's  
struggle for self-identity had come to an end -- almost. In (this) sense  
we can truly say that Christ brought and continues to bring man salva-  
tion in its root sense -- wholeness. For in properly understanding the  
meaning of the Christ Event man can heal himself, can become whole, can  
finally bring to a close the struggle between humanity and divinity  
within himself. He can put an end to his struggle with God, his tempta-  
tion to try to become God, man will live forever in his uniqueness and  
individuality. God will not try to absorb him; in fact, God must  
allow man his eternal distinctiveness to become fully and finally God.

The implications of this understanding of Christology are many. First  
of all, it gives a basic dignity to each individual person, one that  
can never be erased, which has many consequences in the realm of  
ethical behavior. Secondly, following this, it means that no person  
\* can perpetually reject another, cannot cast him or her out of their  
presence forever. For people now must recognize that since each

\* individual shares in the very humanity of God there is no way that one  
\* can personally achieve harmony with God in a full and complete fashion  
unless he has attained communion with his brothers and sisters as well  
This is why Jesus continually underlined the centrality of reconcilia-  
tion during his public ministry and preached the love of enemies which,  
as we saw above, the Jewish scholar David Flusser acknowledged as one of  
the most distinctive features of Jesus' teaching ( Because we are indeed  
\* far from a realization of such communion we must say that the Christ  
Event is far from its full actuation )

This exposition of the meaning of Christology leads inevitably to the  
question, what meaning remains for the Jewish covenant Let me try to  
offer a brief attempt at an explanation. While in one sense I see the  
final version of the church's Christology as the culmination of the  
Jewish tradition (not the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies, but  
the fulfillment of the growing sense of the dignity and uniqueness of  
the human person), Judaism retains a unique and distinctive role in the  
[ process of human salvation In the (first) place, it has maintained the  
sense of peoplehood, of community, the belief that no individual person  
[ can achieve salvation until the whole human family has attained salva-  
tion. Ideally if the new Christological outlook had really remained in  
real contact with the Jewish spirit, there may have been no further  
need for a separate Judaism But this did not happen; perhaps the  
break was inevitable once Christianity experienced its Hellenistic in-  
flux whose influence was in part responsible for the development of  
the Christology of the mature Paul and of John In the process of  
separation Christianity lost the sense of community, becoming more and  
more individualistic in the bad sense of the term, turning in-  
creasingly to an I-God relationship that misguidedly believed man could  
reach full communion with God without achieving communion with the  
rest of humanity This is the false type of mystical inwardness that  
Rosemary Reuther has rightly condemned One prime example of this ten-  
dency has been the privatization of the Eucharist that is only being  
reversed since the II Vatican Council. The Eucharist stands as the  
ultimate symbol in the church that man can only be saved communally It  
is a recognition that in common people become in a very real way the  
body of Christ This is an integral part of the mature Paul's Chris-  
tology It is one of his most important statements about the unity of  
man, the dignity of humanity and the ultimate link between humanity and  
divinity Yet this symbol was allowed to deteriorate into a private



me-God action

Christian contact with Judaism is necessary for Christians to overcome this deep-seated and long-standing tendency towards false privatization of religion. Secondly, the church's Christological tradition lost sight of the sense of man as Co-creator, as responsible for history and for the world God created. Part of this irresponsibility was due to a continuation of the older Christology which said that Christ had brought about the Messianic kingdom. But it was likewise due to the fact that most Christians had lost sight of the fact that salvation is ultimately communal, that one cannot by-pass other people in trying to achieve unity with God. There was no perception that a part of that God resided in the family of man. The Jewish sense of man as Co-creator, as concerned about history as a way of helping to build the final kingdom, is not a materialistic concern. It is rather a recognition that in the creation of social and political structures which is the business of history man is advancing or restraining the ultimate communion of people. Social and political structures are a reflection of human consciousness. But they also advance or retard the development of consciousness. Judaism has recognized that what man is doing in and through the historical process is trying to find political and social structures that will bring about the ultimate communion of people while preserving their individuality and uniqueness. The Christ Event is still not complete; the Messianic kingdom is not yet here. We have a clearer vision of its final dimensions as a result of the coming of Christ. But man will be unable to bring about its completion unless the Jewish sense of man as Co-creator, (as responsible for the world during historical time,) becomes deeply ingrained in his soul. Likewise it cannot come to pass until man recognizes that communion with God of necessity involves communion with the rest of the human family. Any attempt to find a shortcut by going "directly to God" in the final analysis amounts to cutting oneself off from part of God's life.

This understanding of the relationship between the Jewish and Christian covenants overcomes the type of concern about my approach expressed by some of my colleagues in the Jewish-Christian dialogue. When I first presented some of the above ideas to the Israel Study Group in New York last Spring, Franklin Littell raised the very important question as to

whether I was too "creational" in my position, standing in danger of losing that Jewish sense of rootedness in history that he feels to be so crucial for human survival. If this were so, I would in fact be falling into the type of approach that has merited the just reproach of theologians such as Rosemary Reuther. But in emphasizing the sine qua non nature of the Jewish spirit for any authentic understanding of religion and grasping the interconnection between human consciousness and history, I believe that I have successfully avoided the pitfall that Professor Littell has rightly cautioned against.

In closing, let me indicate some additional tentative conclusions that are forthcoming at this point for Christian theologians as a result of the Christological thesis I have outlined above. First of all, it is imperative to recognize that Christianity in and by itself does not contain in their fullness all the ideas necessary for a complete understanding of man's religious dimension and that only through inter-faith sharing can a person even begin to approach such an understanding. (Such recognition is demanded now even though we cannot as yet articulate in any complete fashion a new definition of Christianity's role vis-a-vis Judaism and the other world religions. Humble acknowledgment that our previous viewpoint was shortsighted is the call of the hour for Christians.)

Secondly, such a Christology as that I have sketched above, in no way invalidates Judaism, its covenant and its distinctiveness. Despite their shared biblical heritages and other similarities, Judaism and Christianity are essentially distinct religions, each emphasizing different but, ~~but~~ as I have tried to show, complimentary aspects of human religiosity. This would support the contention of such Jewish scholars as Arthur Cohen and Hans Jonas that reference to a single Judaeo-Christian tradition represents a basic distortion of reality.<sup>36</sup>

This new Christology will also force Christian theologians to probe non-Christian religions to see whether it might be possible that the fundamental reality to which our religion has applied the term "Christ" may not in fact be present under some other name or symbol.

Finally, this new Christology will force us to re-think the idea of trying to "convert" Jews (or any other non-Christian peoples).<sup>37</sup> Some

of my Christian colleagues have said that the church should explicitly exclude the Jewish people from its missionary efforts. In so far as they are speaking of the old style proselytizing attempts to convert Jews I would applaud their view. But the question is too complex to leave it at that. First of all, I would be unwilling to simply exclude the Jewish people from the missionary enterprise if similar exclusions were not urged for the other great world religions. Secondly I still believe Christians have a responsibility to present the meaning of the Christ Event to the world, including the Jewish people. But this must be done through dialogue in which we first of all respect the faith of the non-Christian and secondly realize that in this process we too will have to be converted. I would hope that in such a dialogue Jews would try to "convert" Christians and other non-Jews to their sense of history and the role of man as Co-creator (Christians, the world at large, desperately need such conversion.) Christians cannot continue in an haughty fashion to pretend that they have the full understanding of salvation, that knowledge of Christ is the only requirement to be saved -- that was the thrust of the old style of proselytizing. But in their Christological tradition Christians do have some unique and central insights into the ultimate shape of human salvation which they have a gospel mandate to first understand for themselves and then to present to others in love and respect, through dialogue, and, in imitation of Jesus, through works of healing and mercy.

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