

## Antisemitism and Christian Doctrine

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Is anti-Judaism inevitably linked to basic Christian doctrine? That is the question to which I have been asked to address myself in this paper. Much depends on how we understand "basic Christian doctrine." To the secondary question put to me, whether triumphalism can be avoided while still preserving the core of what and who we are as a religious community, I have no difficulty in giving an affirmative answer. But before explaining why, I must make two comments. First, I understand that others will be addressing the question of anti-Judaism in the Apostolic Writings. I cannot deal with the question of Christian doctrine without considering the Apostolic Writings, so I shall have to consider matters to which others will also be referring. Second, I gather from the minutes of the last meeting as well as from Dr. Fisher's invitation, that Roy Eckardt's paper, "The Resurrection and the Holocaust", raised a question to which this paper is expected to respond. Let me then say a few words to Roy's paper before beginning.

In order to respond to Roy, I should first understand him. That is not easy, for in so far as I understand his paper, I find myself confronted by a puzzling paradox not easily resolved. According to his paper, Roy thinks that the earliest and best historical testimony of the church is to a somatic resurrection of Jesus, taken as a historical fact in what appears to be a more or less straightforwardly positivist understanding of 'fact.' Further, to be Jewish, he thinks, is to be attentive to and respectful of historical facts. On the other hand, to be Jewish is to deny the resurrection of Jesus as a fact. Consequently, we are asked to ignore the best historical evidence that he claims we have and, for the sake of loyalty to facts (Jewishness), deny the fact!

The same puzzle is expressed in another way. Fundamentalism, we are told, being hostile to all things abstract, is an ally of Jewishness by being respectful of historical facts. However, fundamentalists affirm the fact of the resurrection. Consequently, we are asked to reject Fundamentalism, the ally of

Jewishness, precisely for the sake of Jewishness.

This second form of the paradox provides a clue to what I believe is the root difficulty. Fundamentalism derives its basic philosophical underpinnings, ultimately, from the divines of 17th and 18th century Reformed Orthodoxy. That orthodoxy was itself an expression of the Rationalism of its time, which owed much to Descartes. If one wants to know how a person can think that there is only one way in which something can be said to have happened, and so only one way in which to use the word 'fact', then one has only to reread Descartes' Rules for the Direction of the Mind. Without arguing the point, I simply suggest that Descartes' Rules are a hopeless guide in thinking through matters either Jewish or Christian. I can only say that what is a fact or what is Jewish is nowhere near as simple or straightforward as Cartesian thinking would lead us to suppose. Judges and lawyers spend much time puzzling over the former, and being Jewish is what Jews do or have done, which covers a pretty wide spectrum. Finally, as to the claim that Pannenberg supplies us with the major element of the Christian predicament, my response is provided by James Parkes: good theology cannot be built on bad history. Pannenberg's imaginary calcified legalism of first century Judaism is a fitting base for his calcified theology. This brings me to my subject, the relationship between theology (and faith) and history, for our understanding of "basic Christian doctrine" will depend on our view of that relationship.

If by "basic Christian doctrine" we mean the scheme already evident in Justin Martyr's Dialogue with Trypho and maintained by the church from the second until the middle of the twentieth century, then I think it fairly obvious that anti-Judaism is its inevitable consequence. That is to take doctrine as a body of texts, which, once established, remains fixed, disconnected from the historical flow in which those texts are received, interpreted and reinterpreted. Such a view of "basic Christian doctrine" must inevitably be embarrassed by what has taken place in the church over the past ten years. Since 1968, official

church statements, Catholic and Protestant, have in point of fact repudiated an important part of the tradition, namely, a negative evaluation of Judaism and the Jewish people. A collection of such documents runs to over 150 pages. Those documents explicitly name recent events in the history of the Jews, namely the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, as the grounds for a reinterpretation of received "basic Christian doctrine."

This change that is beginning in our time suggests a rather different view of "basic Christian doctrine." It suggests a historical view, a view of a living church moving through history under a living Lord, a history which it lives together with a living God. The story is not finished, as though all we could do would be to retell it, celebrate it, remember it. On the contrary, the story is still unfolding and we are in the midst of it. As we move ahead in history, walking toward the age of Shalom, we have important things to discuss among ourselves. That serious conversation of a people moving with God through history is what I propose as a better model of "basic Christian doctrine." We shall of course take seriously what others have said before us, but we can never ignore our responsibility for carrying on that conversation for ourselves, a conversation always undertaken in the light of the further development of that history, of the new events of our own day which need to be taken into account as the latest chapter of the unfolding story of our history with God which began with Abraham.

By way of inviting your agreement in this way of seeing "basic Christian doctrine," I want to draw out the fact that this is just how it has been from the beginning, that the Scriptures which we hold sacred came to us through just such a process, and that it is indeed from them that we learn to be attentive to events in the history of the Jewish people such as those which are presently reorienting the mind of the church. My point is that precisely by being loyal to our best historical understanding of our past, we shall be engaged in

deciding about "basic Christian doctrine," and whether it is inevitably anti-Judaic is up to us. It will depend on whether we are faithful to one who recommended to his disciples that they be scribes trained for the kingdom of heaven, who know how to bring out of their treasure what is new as well as what is old. (Mt. 13:52).

The idea of a fixed revelation and authority (implied by a static conception of "basic Christian doctrine") is shattered by a historical understanding of that to which such a view appeals: the Scriptures themselves. Modern 'Canon criticism', as presented for example in James Sanders Torah and Canon, argues that our present canon of Scripture came into being through a process of repeated reinterpretations of received traditions in the light of new and unexpected historical events. So the story of Abraham, the father of the people, came to include proleptically an exile in Egypt and possession of the Land. So the books of the Chronicler reshaped the story of the monarchy from the death of Saul to the end of the Babylonian exile. Perhaps most clearly of all is the fact that the canon of Torah was fixed so as to end with Israel still in its wanderings, not yet in the Land, expressing the condition in Babylon in which that canon (Ezra's Torah) was established. From the earliest traditions, through the prophets and the fixing of the Torah canon, the Scriptures took shape through a process of so understanding the tradition as to be open to new events as further chapters in the story which the tradition told. The story was then retold so as to lead up to and include these latest events. The motto over the whole process could well be, "You have heard it said of old..., but I say to you..." The closing of the Canon is not, by the mere fact of its closing, a problem; the problem arises from our closed minds about the closing of the Canon. The Apostolic Authors and the Tannaim had no such problem: they all knew that the story was not finished.

The beginnings of the Jesus movement within Judaism that was to develop into the Christian church followed this same pattern. The tradition that was held sacred was challenged by new and unexpected events, which, being taken as the most recent chapter in the continuing story of God's history with his people, forced a reinterpretation of that tradition that made room for and led up to this last step in the story. Tradition, in this view, was therefore never a finished piece of the past: it was always the past leading up into the present, a tradition of which one was a part, not just a recipient. Tradition (paradosis) was, literally, "handed over" into the present.

The Jesus movement started, of course, with the life and preaching of Jesus of Nazareth, but as the movement that was to become the Christian church, its beginnings can be fixed by the utterly unexpected and profoundly shaking event of the crucifixion of Jesus by the occupying power. That God then "raised up" and "exalted" him, as the early speeches attributed to Peter in Acts put it, confirmed for the first disciples that Jesus was, precisely as crucified, the Messiah. As beneficiaries of Ezra's reform, the disciples then searched their tradition with new eyes, looking for a way to interpret it so as to be able to read it with these unexpected events as the latest chapter of the story.

The life, death and <sup>believed</sup> raising up of Jesus were the first events which led to that new interpretation of the tradition which was to turn the Jesus movement into Christianity, but they were not the last. Two further developments had a related reorienting effect. The first and most important was the deluge of Gentiles who responded to the preaching of the apostles, a development evidently as unexpected, as shocking and as reorienting as any in its young history. <sup>second development,</sup> The less reorienting than confirming the reinterpretation of the tradition already well underway, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, is the last historical event, coming before the bulk of our present Apostolic Writings were written, to shape the mind of the church. We have, then, in the



formation of the Apostolic Writings the same historical process at work which gave shape to the corpus of the Scriptures. Since this shaping was in both cases the work of Jews, the similarity should not surprise us. For we need to recall, as James Parkes has argued, that until around the year 85 C.E., the Jews of the Jesus movement were not excluded from the Synagogue (Conflict, pp. 77 ff. and 91 f.). In short, for some 50 to 60 years after Easter, the Jewish community did not feel it had to exclude those Jews who believed that Jesus was the Messiah, raised up and exalted by God. The split between church and synagogue, when it did come, resulted less from these issues than from something else. If Jesus has become that which separates Jews and Christians, he was not that for the first two generations after Easter.

If Justin's writings reflect a pattern already at work in this earliest period (and the Fourth Gospel lends some support for the contention), then the split was rooted in the development of the Christian reinterpretation of the Scriptural tradition. One might almost say that it was not how they did that but that they did it which made the difference. Perhaps as a necessary defence against the attractions of Hellenistic cults, the church of the first century held tightly to the Scriptures, <sup>BUT</sup> seeing them all as pointing to Christ. They understood their reinterpretation to be in fact the true interpretation, the only possible interpretation. The consequence of this was that they had to deny to the rest of the Jews, the Judaism developing under Tannaitic leadership, their own reading of Scripture.

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~~It~~ need hardly be said that further events in the history of the Jews ceased to have a reorienting effect upon the church, until the events of our own day. (Within Judaism, on the other hand, several major catastrophes led to new interpretations of their tradition, as Irving Greenberg has argued. Lurianic Kabbalism was a response to the expulsion from Spain,

Hassidism a response to the pogroms of Eastern Europe, and Zionism was a response to the new round of persecutions in the East beginning in the 1880s.)

If in the past ten years we are seeing the first signs of a reorientation of the mind of the church in response to events in the history of the Jews, then this is nothing other than a re-emergence of the hermeneutical pattern that first gave birth to the Apostolic Writings of the church.

I want to stress the fact that it is from the Bible itself, from both the Scriptures and the Apostolic Writings, that we learn this requirement to attend to the events of Jewish history in order to rightly read that Bible. From the reading of the Bible we learn to expect new understandings of the Bible itself in the light of a continuing history of God and His people which is not yet finished. In the light of this Scriptural lesson, then, I want to turn to the heart of what I take to be basic Christian doctrine.

The Apostolic Writings present themselves as news, the proclamation of something radically new in God's dealing with His creation. That which is new is the coming of Jesus, his death and his resurrection. Apart from the resurrection of Jesus, his being raised up or exalted by God, those writings are inconceivable, for what we call the resurrection was the divine confirmation of Jesus, God's revelation that something radically new had been begun with this man. It is however, not so simple a matter to say what this new thing was.

Informed as we now believe we are by a better understanding of the history of Judaism in the first century, the teachings of Jesus do not seem to us as new as they have seemed to the church for most of its life. The calcified, decadent legalism that was presumed to characterize Palestinian Judaism in the first century has evaporated under historical scrutiny. Jesus now appears to stand somewhere within the strands of the Pharisaic movement, clearly within the spectrum of Torah-reading and synagogue-worshipping Judaism which the Scribes had built up on the basis of Ezra's reform. That he had enemies was certain,



and that these as well as his disciples and followers were Jews is also certain. That Jesus stood outside of and in opposition to the best that Ezra's reform had produced in first century Judaism seems now to be impossible.

That which was new about Jesus first becomes clearly identifiable after Easter. If Nils Dahl is right, then Pilate's title on the cross was the first public proclamation of Jesus as messiah. Be that as it may, it seems to be evident that at least beginning from the first day of the week after his death, Jesus was proclaimed by his Jewish disciples to be the messiah of Israel, raised up and exalted by God, to return soon to the land of the living to inaugurate the messianic age or the reign of God. The new thing that then stands out in the remembered teaching of Jesus was his announcement that the reign of God was about to begin, that he himself was the sign in their midst of its imminence. The "news" of the Good News, then, was first understood by Jesus' Jewish disciples in a thoroughly inner-Jewish way: Jesus as the expected Messiah, about to inaugurate the reign of God.

By the time a generation had passed, the idea of what was new had begun a subtle shift. Although Paul never moved out of this basic Jewish eschatological evaluation of Jesus, yet by the time he came to write the eleventh chapter of Romans, the new thing that had happened was seen to be the entry into the community of Gentile converts. God had begun a new stage of His history with Israel, holding off a part of His people in order to make room for Gentiles to receive the good news. The author of Ephesians went further and saw the unity of Jew and Gentile in the church as itself one of the fundamentally new things that Jesus had accomplished. What was new was the church, Jews and Gentiles together on a new basis: receivers of the Spirit and set in the way of God's rightness on the basis of faith.

When we ask after 'the new' that came with Jesus, however, we cannot stop with the last of the Apostolic Writings. We have to take note of what happened

shortly afterwards, of which, obviously, no Apostolic Writer could possibly be a witness. For neither of these first two views of what was new can be adequate alone. The proclaimed reign of God did not begin. After 19 centuries, we must admit that the apocalypse of Mark 13 has not been fulfilled. On the other hand, the church made up of Jew and Gentile was soon to develop into another church, one made up for all intents and purposes of Gentiles only. By the end of the second century at the latest, the new thing which can be derived from the coming of Jesus is the Christian church, a fellowship of Gentiles, distinguished from all other Gentile associations by the fact that its members worshipped the God of the Jews. From that time on, God's people, the Jews, and God's Gentile church developed and matured as two ways, two rather different ways, of serving Him and working and waiting for the coming of the messianic age.

"Basic Christian doctrine is and has always been the way in which the church formulates its understanding of what it was that God was doing in the history of His creation and especially what He was doing in the history of Jesus Christ. If we are to build our theology on good history, then certain modifications are called for, a certain reinterpretation is required, but not a break with a tradition as we have received it; like good scribes we need to develop the art of bringing out of our treasure what is old as well as what is new.

The crucial matter, which better history teaches must come in (as something new, <sup>in the modern sense of the word</sup>) is an acknowledgement of the continuing history of the Jewish people to our day, and so a corrected sense of our own identity. If <sup>the</sup> Jews continue, still rejoicing in the gift of the way of Torah, still the one people of God's election, then we can only conclude that we are a new society, an additional gathering, indeed the church, gathered from many nations. A careful, critical examination of the actual historical lives of Judaism and the church reveals that if we were to take to ourselves the term "people", then we would be using the word in a quite different sense when applied to the church. It seems more

realistic to leave that term for the Jews as the people of God, referring to ourselves by our own proper term as the church of God. As God's Gentile church, then, we seek to give our account of what it was that God was doing in Jesus Christ that brought into existence this fact which we live day by day: Gentiles falling on our knees to adore the God of Israel. The specificity of Judaism's history and identity, recalls us to the specificity of our own history and identity, and that in turn can help us to acknowledge the specificity of that which God was doing in the history of Jesus Christ.

No ecclesiastical body has come closer to seeing this than the Synod of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands, in a Statement adopted in 1970, (although the Study Paper of the Pastoral Council of the Catholic Church of the same year in country runs a close second): "Jesus Christ has a fundamentally different function for the nations and for Israel. The Jews are called back by him to the God who bound himself to them from their beginnings. But the Gentiles are not called back to their origin by Jesus Christ; rather, they are called to something which is radically new in their history." (Published in Stepping Stones to Further Jewish - Christian Relations (London/NY, Stimulus Books, 1977), p. 98.) If that can be accepted, then the way is clear for a presentation of basic Christian doctrine that entails neither anti-Judaism nor triumphalism.

Both historically and theologically, Christian faith and so Christian doctrine have their starting point in Easter. What happened on Easter? The answer to that question depends on how we ask the question. If we ask it as historians, in the contemporary sense of that term, then I see no way to go beyond Bultmann and say more than that Easter marks the beginning of Easter faith. The conviction of the apostles that God had acted so as to affirm Jesus as His living word of demand and forgiveness to them is the last historical fact which we can establish with any degree of historical integrity. If on the other hand, we ask the question as believers, that is, as those who are convinced

that God has a hand in the history of His Creation, then our answer can be that which the apostles gave themselves. Then our answer to what really happened will begin, as theirs did, with God as the subject of every verb. To say that God raised Jesus from the dead is to say that God has confirmed that He was fully involved in the life of Jesus, and that what He began in him continues. The commitment to history in the historians' sense, which characterizes Judaism and I believe should also characterize the church, is dependent on a commitment to history in this other sense, the history of God and His Creation together, the history in which it is possible to speak of God's call of Abraham, God's election of Israel, God's gift of Torah from Sinai. For the church, the starting point of that commitment is the confession that God raised Jesus from the dead as our way to Him. He lives with the Father as the one Jew to the hem of whose cloak we Gentiles may cling to draw near in faith and say with him what every Jew may say by right of election, "Our Father."

In what manner did God raise Jesus from the dead? The Apostolic Writings do not give a clear answer. If one imagines it as a resuscitation of the dead Jesus, such that he began again to live and breathe in a manner biologically on all fours with the way he lived and breathed before his death, then we find that the witness of the apostles, in the forms in which we have it, lends little support to this picture. No one claims to have seen this event happen: they report only the post eventu appearances. And the appearances are such that recognition is not instantaneous; the risen one appears and disappears: there is not a single appearance to anyone who does not thereupon become a believer, and many apostolic texts provide grounds for saying that the presence of the risen Jesus is not other than the gift of the Spirit. So if we are asked to say just precisely what it is we believe happened on Easter, we can give no other answer than the theological one, that we believe God acted. In giving this answer, we are of course caught at once in all the problems of creatures

presuming to speak of their Creator, having only their own creaturely language with which to do this. But if we believe that we really are God's creatures, and that this creation is the result of God's own free act of love, then we can dare to try to speak of Him in our creaturely way, convinced that God would not have us do otherwise. There is nothing wrong and everything right with being a creature who dares to adore and respond to his or her Creator.

Because we take God's history seriously, we may and must take the historian's history seriously. What, then, was God doing in Jesus Christ that was affirmed and revealed in raising him from the dead? It is by now more than obvious that God was not ushering in the messianic age. Nations are hardly lining up to beat their swords into plowshares. Lambs are hardly comfortable in the proximity of lions, which is to say, according to a rabbinic interpretation, small nations still have good reason to be fearful of powerful nations. The Jewish apocalyptic or messianic answer that was first given to our question seems inadequate. Nor can we rest content with the second answer, that God was bridging the gap between Jew and Gentile. If by eschatological we mean those matters that belong to the completion of Creation, then the event of Jesus Christ ought not properly <sup>to</sup> be called an eschatological event. But history tells us plainly enough what God was doing: He was bringing into historical existence a new entity, His Gentile church. Alongside of His people, to whom He gave Instruction from Sinai as to how they were to be His witnesses through history, He evidently willed to have His church, to whom He gave instruction through Jesus Christ and his Apostles as to how they were to be His witnesses through history. <sup>But did I witness to anything new? He says no.</sup> Jesus was not the fulfillment of Israel's role and history, (so as to displace it.) He was, rather, the fullness of that role and history in such a fashion to make a way for Gentiles to come to the knowledge and service of the God of Israel. The fulfillment of Israel's role and history, and at once also the fulfillment of what God began in Jesus Christ, will come only with the



fulfillment or completion of Creation, for which Jews and Christians hope and wait - and also work! For if the recent history of God's people - and also God's church - tell us anything, it is surely that that Day will not come without the responsible participation of His creatures (in preparing the way for the coming of Messiah). It is evidently not God's way to do for us what He expects us to <sup>do</sup> <sub>^</sub> for ourselves and for Him.

We are now in a position to review what by any count must be considered the most basic of Christian doctrines, Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity, to see what if anything must be abandoned in order to avoid the triumphalism that has been so largely responsible for the anti-Judaism of the past. I think we shall see that the essentials remain and that only certain implications need reinterpretation. Let us begin with Christology, for therein lie the roots of the doctrine of the Trinity.

If we keep in mind who we are, our identity as the Gentile church that has formulated Christ<sup>s</sup>ological doctrine, then I believe that we can see that the intent of that doctrine which is essential to our own reality as a community) by no means excludes our recognition of the reality and theological legitimacy of the Jewish people. What we find ourselves compelled to affirm is that in Jesus Christ, in his life, teaching, actions, in his death and in his resurrection, we are confronted, we the Gentile church are confronted, by no less than God Himself, the living God of Israel. No Arian compromise will do: all our experience tells us that in hearing this man, we have heard his Father, that in seeing this Jew, we have seen all that we Gentiles can and need to see of the Father. If God allowed and indeed hallowed a Gentile's intrusion into the life of this man, in the person of the tyrant Pilate, then we may learn from this that God was willing to absorb all our Gentile godlessness into Himself, including our Gentile anti-Judaism, and still to forgive us and call us to His service. For us Gentile men and women, Jesus suffered and was buried.



That we might come to what was for us a radically new service of righteousness, he was <sup>2</sup>ris<sub>1</sub>ed from the dead. This took place on the plain of fully creaturely history (vere homo) and it was the purpose, plan and will of none other than the God of Israel, Creator of heaven and earth (vere Deus).

We need to be careful, however, when we move from the appropriate language of doxology, in which we never seem to be able to do justice to our sense of gratitude and so use the most extravagant language we can, to the language of doctrine. What we can and must confess is what God has done for us. Christ died for our sins and was raised for our justification. Confronted with this event in the only way in which we can be confronted, namely as creatures and on the creaturely level, we can and must confess, looking precisely at the Jew Jesus, My Lord and my God. It is another matter, however, if we try to turn these doxological utterances into dogmatic statements. All the more should we be careful of universalizing what is originally specific. Did he die for the sins of Israel and was he raised for the justification of the Jewish people, for example? Our originating confession, that he has done this for us, is rooted in our own experience and history. How can we confess what could only be rooted in the experience and history of the Jews? Here the statement cited of the Dutch Reformed Synod seems to be on the better track. If God was in Christ and was there for His own people, then surely it was to recall them to Himself (as He had done again and again through prophets and teachers and as He evidently continued to do again through the rabbis who led the Jewish people into that great renaissance of vitality and spirituality of the first several centuries of our era to which we owe the Mishnah and the Talmud. Let us than not generalize as our forefathers did, but let us with them hold to that which has taken place in our own history. That is the proper limit of being responsible witnesses, after all. Suffice it that through Jesus we have access to the Father. Suffice it that he is for us the way, the truth and the life. That is the radically new thing which God has

begun in Jesus Christ, and that is the real news, which is surely good.

I believe, then, that the fundamental intent of the Chalcedonian and other Christological formulations are not at issue in this matter of the church's turn towards a positive evaluation of Judaism. Befitting the concern to build on sound history, it might be that we would prefer to use historical, social and personal categories, rather than those of hypostasis and physis which the Greek Fathers used. Such a translation can be carried through, however, without parting company with our past. It is only when doxological extravagance, so fitting for worship, is carried over into dogmatic universalization and generalization that we run into trouble. Perhaps all we need is a bit more of a sense of humor about our own language.

Our Christological confession leads inevitably into our confession of the Triune God. Indeed, properly understood, our Christology is all about God in the first place. For of whom are we speaking when we say what God has done for us Gentiles in Christ? We are surely speaking of none other than the one God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Issac and Jacob. We are speaking, in short, of the God of the Jews. Without presuming to speak for other peoples' experiences of God, we can and must say from our experience that the God we know is the identical one God confessed by the Jews in the Shema. With the rejection of Marcionism, we made that point clear to ourselves, at least on an official level.

We Gentiles confess the one God of the Jews. We do so because we believe that this One God Himself has reached out and drawn us to His service. This is what we acknowledge when we confess God as the Holy Spirit. God is not only the God of the Jews: He has also revealed Himself to be the God of His Gentile church. The very fact that we Gentiles worship God is testimony to God as the One who has gathered us to Himself. *But how do we act testify to Him*

By the Spirit, we are drawn to worship the God of the Jews; however, not as Jews, but as the church of Jesus Christ. Through him and only through God's

act in him do we dare to call on God as also our Father. The Spirit, as it were, binds us to Jesus, so that with him we may worship the Father. In each of these ways, then, we are speaking always and only of the self-revealing work of the one God of the Jews, but we speak of Him in these three ways because that is just how we know Him to be from our own Gentile experience. The doctrine of the Trinity, therefore, expresses our peculiarly Gentile apprehension of the One God of Israel.

I would add a concluding psychological postscript. It is a necessary and psychologically healthy business to ask and answer who I am. A good answer will express my acceptance of my particularity. It is neither necessary nor psychologically healthy to ask who I am uniquely, i.e. who I am that no one else is. This is an attempt to say who I am by saying who other people are not. The one is the question of my identity; the other is a question of my uniqueness, necessarily involving making comparisons and judgments of value liable to fall in my favor. "What is Christian?" is a good question. "What is uniquely Christian?" is a question whose history has proved disastrous to others. It is more than sufficient if we can answer our good creaturely question as to our own identity and what God has done for us. We pass beyond our creaturely powers when we try to answer what only God can know, as to just how unique we are. Suffice it that we confess Jesus Christ as our Lord, risen for our justification, for that is to the glory of God. If we try to claim that our confession is the only valid confession that any and every man may make, then that is to our own glory.

Finally, a tactical point. Following the pioneering work of historians and scholars of Christian origins and early Judaism, councils of bishops and church synods have over the past 10 years begun to set the church in a new direction with respect to Judaism and the Jewish people. Those of us who are theologians and who wish to nurture and support this change are aware that

theologians as a whole have lagged far behind. All of us are also aware that this change has scarcely begun to filter down to the grass roots of the church. It is therefore tactically important that we do our work with a high sense of responsibility to those who have blazed the trail ahead of us and even more to those whom we hope to help persuade to follow. We shall hardly help in this larger pastoral task if we give others the impression that the baby must be thrown out with bath-water which we know to be pretty dirty. Let it be noised abroad that those who speak well of the Jews do so because they have lost their integrity as Christians, or that affirmation of Judaism requires the denial of the resurrection, and we shall undo much good work that has already been done. More than that, we shall be denying the reality of what God has worked in our history. We have certainly mixed in a good deal of our own corruption into that history, of which the Jews will be able to remind us if we are ever tempted to forget it. Nevertheless, as Christians we must believe that the rise of the Christian church was not a mistake, that God willed that we Gentiles join His people in longing and working for the completion of His creation and do so precisely as His Gentile church. We have more than enough theological work to do to reinterpret our tradition in the light of the most recent events in Jewish history. Let us not make the task impossible by that most un-Jewish of all attitudes, that to reinterpret is to deny the past. No, it is rather a matter of recalling that as a living church, we live in and through history together with a living God, that the story is not ended, that it is still going on, and we are in its midst. We must be scribes trained for the kingdom of heaven, who know how to bring out of our treasure what is old as well as what is new.