

CHRISTIAN RELATIONS WITH JUDAISM AND JEWISH PEOPLE Theory and Practice*

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INTRODUCTION

I begin by stating what my paper is not. It is not a summary of statements from the gospels and Paul. I see no reason to repeat well known facts. There are reasons to revise; a review of Christian and Jewish history points to the necessity of revising if not the opinions of New Testament authors, then the conclusions drawn by the church during centuries. However, the best way to come to a revision of conclusions and attitudes as to the relation with Judaism is to get to know Judaism on its own terms. I shall stipulate some of these terms.

Next, the paper is not a political contribution and does not aim at political discussion. To keep religion and policy apart is difficult and not at all events desirable. But regarding Judaism the affair is tricky. First because of the complex character of this -ism, and, in particular, because of the existence of the state of Israel.

The stipulation of the terms, that are topics of vital importance to Judaism, is gathered around 4 subjects: 1) Scripture and tradition, 2) The idea of God, 3) The idea of man, and 4) The conception of salvation. Following each subject I shall point out a possible ground for a dialogue between Jewish and Christian theologians. To my mind the relations with Judaism and the Jewish people have to be a dialogue. What I call attention to may seem rather naive. It is a try to move from theory to practice.

In my discussion of each subject I shall sketch the rabbinic teaching, or rather: Some rabbinic teachings, the -s being of importance. The formative period of Jewish interpretation of the scripture was the centuries following the destruction of the 2nd Temple, that is between the year 70 and the Arab conquest of Jerusalem in 638. This theologically fruitful period was prepared by the Pharisees and their interpretation of Torah as the basis of Jewish life, whatever the circumstances might be.

In Judaism of today the interpretations and teachings of the talmudic rabbis and sages are still valid. Not as dogmas, of which Judaism has very few, in reality there is only one, that of the one true God. This state of affairs is related to the character of Jewish tradition: It is everlasting debate. It is true that Judaism can be characterized as a practice rather than as a faith. But to this should be added that Judaism is this everlasting debate. The rabbis after year 70 tried to exercise a certain censorship. But it is characteristic that also those rabbis who were censored and even periodically excommunicated, among them Eliezer ben Hyrkanos, had their teachings handed down inside the accepted tradition; and it is a fact that Eliezer was admired by both his contemporaries and his followers, and that later generations redebated and thus actualized his points of view.

To every rabbinic teaching, be it from Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, from the later compilation Shulchan Aruch, the vast Responsa literature, or from the local rabbi, the Jewish student will put the question: What does this mean today, here, for us? From this question new teachings will inevitably arise, both being in accordance with and different from those handed down.

The rabbinic tradition, the oral Torah, is alive today as it was yesterday. Nevertheless, from the 19th century Judaism became a member of modern world. It began with the Reform Movement, which started as a reform of the service of the synagogue. But it became a spiritual inspiration which spread first in Europe, then in America. The leading theorist of the Movement, Abraham Geiger (1810-1874), was convinced that Torah is the historical and religious experience of the Jewish people, and that this experience is a continuous process. The nature of Judaism is to be courageous towards the new; Judaism is progressive.

Geiger saw Judaism as an -ism by the side of other -isms, as a religion by the side of other religions, the everlasting treasure of Judaism being monotheism and the Moral Law.

As a reaction to the Reform Movement the Orthodox Movement developed, that is orthodox as a modern phenomenon. Orthodox in this sense is not identical with everything observant and traditional, and it is not Hasidism. The modern Orthodox Movement defines itself as part of the modern world.

It maintains that Torah is the truth of life but agrees with Reform in accepting modern culture and scientific attitudes, shortly: Enlightenment.

In between the two of them a third modern group arose, that of Conservative Judaism. Conservative Judaism can be close to Reform. As it developed, Reform itself came closer to the Conservatives.

In the following we should bear in mind that rabbis from these three modern schools will be our counterparts in an interreligious dialogue.

SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

The basis of Jewish tradition and of Jewish identity is *Torah*. Torah means *instruction*. This meaning is crucial to understand the comprehensive character of Torah.

Torah is the revelation of God's nature and will given to Moses at Mount Sinai. The revelation given to Moses has found its written form in the Jewish Bible, *Tanak*, but moreover it has an oral form, the talmudic tradition or rabbinic literature. Tanak and talmudic tradition is Torah, but only Tanak is holy. So, no inconsistencies could ultimately be admitted there. To make up for it you have all the inconsistencies you can ever dream of in the exegesis of the rabbis.

During the last decennium it has been much debated by scholars how old the Jewish Bible is both as tradition, as text and as canon; a younger date than earlier is proclaimed. In this paper we shall just notice that although Jews and Christians have a common source, we have not necessarily the same text.

Moreover, we have certainly not the same interpretation of the common source. The Jewish tradition of exegesis is found in the oral Torah.

Tanak is aptly described by two metaphors. One is found in Mishnah: *Turn the word of God over and turn it over again for everything is in it* (Pir. Av. 5,25). The other is from the Talmud: *As the hammer splits the rock into many splinters, so will a scriptural verse yield many meanings* (Sanh. 34a). Interpretation grows from God's word. As to the relation between God's word and man's word, one of the stories about rabbi Eliezer and rabbi Joshua is illustrative:

It has been taught: On that day rabbi Eliezer brought forward all the arguments in the world, but the sages did not accept them. Said he to them, "If the Halakah agrees with me, let the carob-tree prove it!" Thereupon the carob-tree was torn a hundred cubits out of its place – others affirm: four hundred cubits. "No proof can be brought from a carob-tree", they retorted. Again, he said to them, "If the Halakah agrees with me, let the stream of water prove it!" Whereupon the stream of water

flowed backwards. "No proof can be brought from a stream of water", they rejoined. Again he urged, "If the Halakah agrees with me, let the walls of the schoolhouse prove it!" Whereupon the walls inclined to fall. But rabbi Joshua rebuked them, saying, "When scholars are engaged in a Halakic dispute, what have ye to interfere?" Hence they did not fall, in honour of rabbi Joshua, nor did they resume the upright, in honour of rabbi Eliezer; and they are still standing thus inclined. Again he said to them, "If the Halakah agrees with me, let it be proved from heaven!" Whereupon a heavenly voice cried out, "Why do you dispute with rabbi Eliezer, seeing that in all matters the Halakah agrees with him?" But rabbi Joshua arose and exclaimed, *It is not in heaven* (Deut. 30,12). – What did he mean by this? Said rabbi Jeremiah: That the Torah had already been given at Mount Sinai; and we pay no attention to a heavenly voice, because Thou hast long since written in the Torah at Mount Sinai, After the majority must one incline (Ex. 23,2) (BTalm. Bab. Mets. 59b).

Dialogue

Torah in its comprehensive character and with all its midrashic storytelling was the air breathed in by the Jewish people generation after generation. The midrashic tradition is bound up on the biblical wording, it is not the least haphazard. When the Jew, who grew up in the congregation, hears the biblical account, he hears the midrashim in it. In a dialogue it will break down barriers to know this character of the tradition.

Moreover, the Jewish tradition, the oral Torah, might be compared to the Christian tradition as formed in the NT and in the creeds. It is from the ground of NT and the creeds that Christians understand the OT. From the ground of the oral Law Jews understand Tanak. To get into a fruitful talk, both parts should know the character of the tradition of the other side.

THE IDEA OF GOD

God is not a philosophical idea in Judaism, though, naturally, the idea of God has been elaborated by philosophers and mystics. The talmudic rabbis, however, can hardly be said to touch upon the more metaphysical character of God's nature. Due to their midrashic way of thinking they elaborate the biblical narratives, so that God's reality becomes almost palpable – knowing, of course, God's incorpo-reality; as it says: *We borrow terms from His creatures to apply to Him in order to assist the understanding* (Mek. to Ex. XIX,18; 65a).

What the rabbis are concerned to say is that God is one, and that this one true God is ever the same, from creation to salvation. Man can perceive this aspect or that, but God Himself is the same. "God's seal is truth" runs a rabbinic maxim; as the consonants in the word for "truth" (*emet*) are the first, the middle and the final letter of the Hebrew alphabet, so God is the first, middle and last (cf. Gen. Rab. 80,2). He is eternal. Or as the sages emphasize: God is faithful.

The closest we come to a creed in Judaism is the *Shema*, second to which is only the *Shmoneh Esreh* prayer. *Hear, o Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one*, these words from Deuteronomy, followed by the teaching of man's duty from passages in Deuteronomy (6,4-9; 11,13-21) and Numbers (15,37-41) are recited by the observant Jew twice a day, are recited on death beds, and were the last words of the martyrs through the ages.

A consequence of the emphatic confession to the one God is the denial of idolatry. We know series of episodes, in which the rabbis turn down the *minim* – that is heretics, sectarians, sometimes we may conclude: Christians – who believe in something else than the one God.

When the rabbis were involved in discussions with heretics, they often discussed singular/pluralis forms in the narration of creation. Besides, it appears that heretics used the various names of God, especially *El*, *Elohim*, and *Adonai* (*y-h-v-h*) for their own purposes. As to this, rabbi Simlai said to his disciples:

The three words are different names for one and the same God, even as you may call one and the same monarch, Basileus, Caesar, or Augustus (Gen. Rab. 8,9).

God is one, He is eternal, and He is always the same. Still, He is in activity. He is active as creator and judge. He is the Lord of history. He gives and takes, He chooses and rejects. Which also means that although He is transcendent and far removed from His creatures, He is immanent and near to them. The rabbis developed the idea of God's presence, His *Shekinah*, who dwells in the midst of Israel, so in the desert, in the Temple, in the synagogues and in the dispersion of the people. They stressed that the *Shekinah* is in the midst of the congregation, when they are only ten (*minyan*); but also if three, if two, and if an individual occupy themselves with Torah, in every place where God's name is remembered, He is present (B. Talm. Ber. 6a). Rabbi Simeon bar Johai sums up: "Wherever the righteous go, the *Shekinah* goes with them" (Gen. Rab. 86,6). Moreover the sages add the rebellious:

God said to Moses: Why do the nations of the world say that I will not return to the Israelites because they worshipped idols, as it is said, *Thy*

people has corrupted themselves; they have quickly become rebellious (Deut. 9,12)? Even if they have become rebellious, I do not abandon them; but with them I dwell, as it is said, *Yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them* (Ps. 68,19) (Ex. Rab. 33,2).

God demands His creatures to account for the manner of their living. As judge He is just, as said in the Mishnah: *With Him there is no unrighteousness, nor forgetfulness, nor respect of persons, nor taking of bribes* (Pir. Av. 4,29). But there is in the rabbinic literature scarcely a passage referring to His *justice* without alluding to His *compassion*, too. A midrash to Ex. 3:

Rabbi Abba ben Mammel said: God said to Moses, "You desirest to know my name. I am called according to my deeds. When I judge my creatures, I am called *Elohim*; when I wage war against the wicked, I am called *Sabaoth*; when I suspend judgment for a man's sins, I am called *El Shaddai* (Almighty); but when I have compassion upon my world, I am called *Adonai* (*y-h-v-h*), for *Adonai* means the attribute of mercy, as it is said, *Adonai, Adonai, merciful and gracious* (Ex. 34,6). This is the meaning of the words, *I am that I am*, namely I am called according to my deeds" (Ex. Rab. 3,6).

The midrash is true to Ex. 3, where God is explained as He who sees the affliction of the people, who knows their sufferings, and therefore will rescue them (Ex. 3,7). And it is illuminating as to rabbinic sayings of revenge. The rabbis can dwell upon divine vengeance against Israel's enemies and upon divine punishment of unrepentant sinners. Nevertheless we are told that the name of God *y-h-v-h*, which is the most sacred and also the most intimate name to them, reveals that the heart of God, so to speak, is mercy and compassion.

Justice and compassion can appear as two attributes among other attributes. Nevertheless these two are the attributes of God. *Middat ha-din* and *middat ha-rahamim* are the essence of God:

This may be compared to a king who had some empty glasses. Said the king, "If I pour hot water into them, they will burst; if cold, they will contract (and snap)." What did the king do? He mixed hot and cold water and poured it into them, and so they remained. Even so, said the Holy One, blessed be He, "If I create the world on the basis of mercy alone, its sins will be great; on the basis of judgment alone, the world cannot exist. Hence I will create it on the basis of judgment and of mercy, and it will stand" (Gen. Rab. 12,15).¹

Dialogue

A dialogue between Jews and Christians about God has chances to come out with a mutual understanding and inspiration. To my best conviction we not only believe in the same God, but we interpret Him in the same way. He is the one, universal God, lofty and yet near. His very essence is justice and mercy, justice and love. Many traditions in Judaism talk about the relation between God and Israel as a father-son relation. The relation is as close as in Christianity.

There is a tendency in Christianity to emphasize love at the expense of justice. This tendency we should fight. If justice is minimized, God's judgment becomes accidental, and it all becomes nonsense. If love is minimized, God's justice will be cruel. Justice must be tempered with mercy. How is God's decision and mystery.

We should note that the revelation to Moses in the thorn-bush reveals a God who knows affliction. There is a direct line from Ex. 3 to God's presence in suffering Christ.

We should note, too, that God in Judaism is a God who stays near to the rebellious, to sinners. But of course, longing for them to repent:

God says, "I testify by heaven and earth that I sit and hope for Israel more than a father for his son and than a mother for her daughter, if only they would repent, so that my words could be fulfilled" (Tanna de be Eliezer, p. 163).

Finally, we should be aware of the representation of the *minim* as believing in many gods. No doubt, the Christian dogma of the *trinity* meant to the sages tritheism. Today, Jewish theologians know that this is not so. Nevertheless, in a dialogue Christians must take care strictly to define the unity of God.

THE IDEA OF MAN

Man is man. Midrashim to Gen. 1,26, *Let us make man*, tell that God had to use mercy alone to create man, being aware of all the wickedness that would spring from him. The rabbis do know man's sins. They also know an original sin: Adam ate of the apple, and as all men were present in Adam, they all sinned. Besides, man is born with both a good and an evil inclination. Nevertheless, man has a free will and is able to stride. Full of mercy God gave him Torah as a support and a guide in his efforts.

About the giving of the Torah much can be said and is said. In some of the midrashim we get a kind of key to the idea of the chosen people. The central

biblical statement is Ex. 24,7: *And Moses took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people; and they said, All that the Lord has said will we do, and be obedient.*

When the Omnipresent revealed Himself to give the Torah, He revealed Himself for all the nations. He came to the children of Esau and said to them, "Will you receive the Torah?" They said, "What is written therein?" He said: *You shall not murder.* They said, "That is the inheritance which our father left to us, as it is said, *By thy sword shall you live*" (Gen. 27, 40). Then He revealed Himself to the children of Ammon and of Moab, and said to them, "Will you receive the Torah?" They said, "What is written in it? He said, *You shall not commit adultery.* They said, "We all spring from one adulterer, as it is said *And the daughters of Lot became with child by their father* (Gen. 19,36), how can we receive the Torah?" Then He revealed Himself to the children of Ishmael, and said, "Will you receive the Torah?" They said, "What is written in it?" He said, *You shall not steal.* They said, "Our father was given this blessing, *He will be a wild ass among men, his hand will be against every man* (Gen 16,12), how can we receive the Torah?" But when He came to Israel, they all said with one accord, *All that the Lord has said we will do, and we will be obedient* (Ex. 24,7) (Mek., Jithro, par. 5).

But was it that spontaneous? – a midrash to Ex. 19,17, which says, *And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood under the mount:*

Rabbi Abdimi said, "This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, turned the mountain upon them like a cask upside down, and said to them, "If you accept the Torah, it is well; if not, there shall be your grave" (BTalm. Shab. 88a).

Moreover it is emphasized that:

The Torah was given publicly and openly, in a place to which no one had any claim. For if it had been given in the land of Israel, the nations of the world could have said, "We have no portion in it." But now, everyone who desires to accept it, let him come and accept it (Mek. Jithro., par. 1).

All things considered, the Torah is meant to be universal.

The second story tell that Israel is no better than anyone else as to readiness. As to sins, he is no better, either. A midrash to Isaiah 63,16, *Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not:*

In the future to come the Holy One, blessed be He, will say to Abraham, "Your children have sinned against me." He shall answer Him, "Sove-

reign of the Universe! Let them be wiped out for the sanctification of Thy name.” Then shall He say, “I will say this to Jacob, who experienced the pain of bringing up children, and he will supplicate mercy for them.” So He will say to Jacob, “Your children have sinned.” He shall answer Him, “Sovereign of the Universe! Let them be wiped out for the sanctification of Thy name.” He shall retort, “There is no reason in old men, and no counsel in young!” Then shall He say to Isaac, “Thy children have sinned against me.” And he shall answer Him, “Sovereign of the Universe! Are they my children and not Thy children? When they gave precedence to *we will do over we will hearken* before Thee, Thou calledst them, *Israel, my son, my firstborn* (Ex. 4,22). Now they are my sons, not Thy sons! Moreover, how much have they sinned? How many are the years of man? Seventy. Subtract twenty, for which Thou dost not punish, there remain fifty.² Subtract twenty-five, which comprise the nights, there remain twenty-five. Subtract twelve and a half of prayer, eating, and nature’s calls, there remain twelve and a half. If Thou wilt bear them all, it is well; if not, half be upon me and half upon Thee. And shouldst Thou say, they must all be upon me, lo! I offered myself up before Thee!” (BTalm. Shab. 89b).

Chosen or forced, the abilities are scanty. A talmudic parable:

A king had a son, who had gone astray from his father. They said to the son, “Go back to your father.” He said, “I cannot.” But his father sent a messenger saying, “Come back as far as you can. And I will come to you the rest of the way” (Told in the end of the screen version of Haim Potok, *The Chosen*)³.

The idea of Israel as chosen, though, is basic in Tanak and Talmud, founded as it is on the covenant as a mutual agreement, the main elements of which on God’s side is justice and mercy, on man’s side love and fear of God.

Dialogue

Jews and Christians have the same conception of creation; man is trusted responsibility for the world. Both of us believe God as God the Almighty, and at the same time we know man as free. Certainly, in Christianity after the fall of man his freedom is bound to Christ. For Jews the crucial point is Torah. Though the problem of original sin is weighted differently, it is not so that according to Judaism man can save himself. The giving of the Torah is an act of God’s mercy. And still, in the future Israel has to hope for mercy. Man can do much and is obliged to do much. In the end, though, God shall bring redemption.

The conception of the chosen people is a scandal to outsiders. It will stay

so, although the idea was taken over by NT authors. Both Jews and Christians might do an effort, however, to join progressive theologians of Judaism today in expanding the ideas of salvation in accordance with God as all the world's God – to which I shall return; in the long run such an effort will affect the understanding of chosenness on both sides.

CONCEPTIONS OF SALVATION

I shall here limit myself to a few comments about reward and punishment and Messiah.

The Jewish prayerbooks, that is the service of the synagogue, are characterized by the looking forward to God's salvation including the ingathering of the dispersed people, the rebuilding of Zion, the coming of the Messiah, the resurrection and final judgement. The viewpoints as to these topics in the rabbinic literature are different, not even the succession of the topics is the same all over. In the three modern schools of Judaism the teachings about salvation are considerably moderated with a reference to God's sovereignty. But also in the tradition the saying from Isaiah holds true: *No eye has seen what God has prepared for those that wait for Him* (Is. 64,4).

This can be illustrated by a story about a man who came to Paradise: He found it inhabited by old men who sat bending over the study of Torah. Surprised he asked his heavenly guide about the reason. He answered, "You think that these men are in heaven. They are not. Heaven is in them."

Reward and punishment

Moderated or even deadened – the discussion of reward and punishment was important to the talmudic rabbis, as it was always part of popular tales and thoughts. In the statements of the rabbis it is rather simple: The fulfilling of commandments is rewarded either on earth or in heaven. The rabbis did believe in reward, because they believed in justice. The constant pressure under which Jews lived, convinced them that the reward of the righteous must be after death. But at the same time they praised the joy of the commandment; when they talk about this joy it is obvious that the fulfillment is its own reward; which was later stressed by Maimonides.

As to the question who gets what, it is also quite simple: The happiness of this world is for the nations; the happiness of the world to come is for Israel. Still, the sages can emphasize that there are representatives of the nations who shall partake in the world to come, as there are Israelites who shall not.

Whoever and whatever, Antigonus of Soko used to say:

Be not like servants who minister to their master for the sake of receiving a reward, but be like servants who minister to their master not for the sake of a reward, and let the fear of Heaven be upon you (Pir. Av. 1,3).

The Messiah

Through centuries the dispersed people longed for the coming of the Messiah. The talmudic rabbis tried to subdue the speculations, inevitably they came to the surface when times were hard. Apart from Hasidic and ultra-orthodox groups this expectation to day has changed decisively, if not so much as to the inward as to the outward. For most Jews to day Messiah is rather a symbol than a person. As a symbol the messianic can manifest itself in a collective, for example in the Jewish people – or as some optimists thought after WW II: in the United Nations – or in a situation, a new state of things, the main point being that ethics prevail in the world. In the modern interpretation ethics and messianism constitute a unity. The German rabbi, Leo Baeck (1873-1956), has said: “There is no ethics without the messianic element, and no messianism without the ethical element. There is no goal and no salvation without the fulfillment of the commandment”⁴. Baeck expressively interprets Judaism as an ethical monotheism, which has the goal to change this world – as opposite to what he calls the romantic religion of Christianity.

Dialogue

Salvation – if it is naive to propose a ground for mutual understanding and inspiration as to the previous subjects, it is not easier here. I shall mention just one problem: What to do with the classification of periods in the history of salvation, claimed by NT authors, first of all by Paul: After the coming of Messiah the period of the Torah has ended. It was easy for the church to follow up and conclude that with the birth of the church the epoch of Judaism had come to an end. Not until after Holocaust this conclusion was seriously shaken. But the problem remains. The question is: Is the church able to respect Jews as men and women living their lives following Torah; respect them as equally worthy in their efforts to know God and to come to redemption and salvation?

In Judaism Torah is everlasting. Indeed, Torah as we know it is garbed in garments of this world. It is the soul of Torah, which in the end will be revealed to the righteous; as it is to the soul of Torah that the righteous already now can penetrate. Be it transformed in one way or another when Messiah comes, still, it will remain (cf. Jer. 31,33).

Respect, equal worth. The Roman-Catholic Church has begun. It talks about Brother Jacob and has in the documents from the second Vatican Council (1962-65) stipulated terms to go into a dialogue. The dialogue officially became reality, when the Holy Sea opened an embassy in Jerusalem in 1994. But here, then, we meet the problem of politics.

From the so-called Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, we should dissociate ourselves. They are Christian fundamentalists; for the time being they support Jewish extremists in their claim on Jewish soil, while they expect the second coming of Christ, hailed by both Jews and Christians. We might call them eschatological missionaries in contradistinction to the Israel Missions which are ingathering Messianic Jews in this world. As to the ecumenical societies in Israel, I must admit that I deeply suspect their attitude as a disguise for mission.

CONCLUSIONS

In the generation after Holocaust the necessity of survival was strongly stressed in Jewish circles. It was even formulated as a commandment to add to the 613 commandments in the Torah, the number according to talmudic tradition. The attention given to this point has tended to overshadow a decision as to a Jewish identity in the world of today. Fortunately, efforts are made by progressive rabbis and communities to move further on.

What does revelation and Israel's chosenness mean to day? Most Jews will agree that it is a matter with consequences for all humanity. Progressive theologians, thinkers and authors, among them the Canadian rabbi Dow Marmor in his book *On being a Jew. A Reform Perspective* (1995), maintain that the belief in God as the whole world's God means that the Jewish people has an obligation not only towards themselves. Holocaust has stressed that obligation. Those who have lived through the sufferings - not only the witnesses who were there, but also those who took over their testimony - must develop a sensitivity as to the sufferings of others. In the wake of the catastrophe a talent for solidarity must come to the light. Which does not mean that Jews will become better human beings than others. But they will learn to follow an ideal of true humanity, the perspective of which includes the neighbour and the stranger alike, as already demanded by Moses (cf. Lev. 19,18.34).

This view also affects the interpretation of salvation. Progressive Judaism today realizes that the final salvation, the redemption at the end of time, belongs to all nations no matter which religion they confess. The conclusive point will be faithfulness, faithfulness to the religion of the fathers and faith-

fulness to the commandment of love. Love to fellowman is the universal commandment.

We should note that this progressive Judaism emphasizes the religion of the fathers. Love to man goes together with love to God. To Judaism of old and of today there is only one God, He who cares for man. He may be called and interpreted differently, in any case the decisive thing is that He and humanity are the horizon of life. The modern Jewish statement that there are many ways to God is the logical consequence of this understanding.

It is in accordance with this that Judaism has no missionary work outside itself. History tells that this virtue was made by necessity, but never mind! What matters is that Judaism thus interpreted is a challenge to the world.

Christianity as well is such a challenge. Maybe together we could reach a place, where we in unison call the world to choose life (cf. Deut. 30,15-20). But, of course, this is a romantic hope. There are not only many ways to God, no, they are long, too.

NOTES

* Paper given at the Anglo Nordic Baltic Conference, Cambridge, 30th July - 4th August, 1997. Theme: Salvation

1. Midrash to Gen. 2,4 (*Adonai Elohim*).
2. Rashi refers to Num. 14,29: God did not punish those up to twenty years of age.
3. I have not been able to identify the source.
4. The Pharisees and other essays, Schocken 1966, p. 153.

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Tefilat Israel.

SAMMENFATNING

Artiklen er et foredrag holdt på Nordic Baltic Conference i Cambridge i 1997 med temaet *Salvation*. Synspunktet, som forfægtes, er, at kirken bør møde synagogen som en ligeværdig samtalepartner, og at forudsætningen for samtale er, at kirken lærer jødedommen at kende på dens egne betingelser. Artiklen introducer fire emner, som kan danne grundlag for en frugtbar dialog.

I et afsnit om *skrift og tradition* karakteriseres den rabbiniske fortolkning, og den sammenlignes med den kristne tradition i Ny Testamente og kirkens bekendelser. Den jødiske opfattelse af *Guds væsen* som retfærdighed og barmhjertighed opfattes som en parallel til kristen gudstanke, endskønt der i kirken er en tendens til at betone barmhjertigheden på retfærdighedens bekostning. I et rids af *menneskesynet* påpeges forskelle, som dog anses for mindre betydningsfulde i forhold til, at den jødiske opfattelse af Torah som Guds nådeshandling kan sidestilles med den kristne doktrin om friheden i Kristus; det betones, at menneskets frelse i begge religioner er et spørgsmål om Guds nåde. Hvad udvælgelsestanken i begge religioner angår, henvises til moderne teologers opfattelse af Guds universalitet. I det sidste emne om *frelse* fremhæves progressive jødiske teologers modificeringer og perspektiver, hvor etikken indtager en nøgleposition. I en dialog må kirken erkende, at Torah i jødedommen indtager en ligeså uomgænglig plads som Kristus i kristendommen.

I et afsluttende afsnit omtales progressiv jødisk teologisk sammenkobling af kærlighedsbudet og en universel opfattelse af frelsen: At der er mange veje til Gud.