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An Evangelical Perspective on Judaism

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AN EVANGELICAL PERSPECTIVE ON JUDAISM

Marvin R. Wilson*

Modern religious history painfully indicates that evangelical Protestants and American Jews have largely remained aloof from one another. Especially since the twenties, American religious life has been characterized by a noticeable lack of communication and dialogue between evangelicals and non-evangelical groups. To be sure, until most recently if one were to suggest that meaningful interreligious discussion could be pursued between American Jews and evangelical Christians, it would have been "rejected out of hand."¹

But today we hopefully stand at the threshold of a new era. It is my conviction that we must heed the words of evangelical writer Paul Carlson, who states in his book *O Christian! O Jew!* that both communities must now enter into a "deeper understanding of their *Aheida*—or binding—to one another. For the survival of the one is eternally linked to the survival of the other."²

Over the years I have learned much from my varied contacts within the Jewish community. I have especially grown to appreciate the significant contribution they have made to my understanding of the background of the Christian faith.³ For me, therefore, to try and concisely present an evangelical perspective on Judaism within the confines of this paper is indeed a difficult task. In so doing, however, it must be emphasized that I do not speak for all evangelicals, for we—like Jews—are in certain ways a diverse people. Rather, I speak as only one evangelical within a vast and growing movement. Nonetheless, in this paper I trust that I speak as much—if not more—to my own evangelical community as I do the Jewish community.

The approach I have followed is not that of a definitive discussion of one single issue. Rather, I have deemed it to be more appropriate to present an overview of several important preliminary matters of concern relating to the broad areas of Scripture, faith and history. It is my belief

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¹G. S. Strober, *American Jews: Community in Crisis* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1974), pp. 86 f.

²P. R. Carlson, *O Christian! O Jew!* (Elgin, Illinois: David C. Cook, 1974), p. 232.

³My perspective on Judaism has been largely shaped by three factors: (1) evangelical roots and training; (2) study of ancient and modern Judaism through formal education under Jewish scholars; and (3) a strong appreciation of what has been learned, with my students, through personal contact with various segments of the Jewish community of greater Boston, Rhode Island, and for a short time in Israel.

that this approach will be especially useful in pointing to the need for further clarification of self-definition⁴ within each community. Accordingly it is my personal hope that, through a candid look at the past, both evangelical and Jew may look forward to the opening up of future opportunities for interfaith discussion along some of the major areas broached below.

I. WHAT IS EVANGELICALISM?

Evangelicalism today is perceived in a variety of ways. Harold Lindsell, editor of *Christianity Today*, has stated that "Christian history at its best is the lengthened shadow of evangelical Christianity."⁵ Yale professor Paul Holmer, however, says of evangelicals that "they look marginal if you are very churchly; they appear intolerant if you are ecumenical; they seem anti-intellectual just when everything looks systematic and about to be settled."⁶ Rabbi Balfour Brickner, director of the commission of interfaith activities of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, provides yet another perspective:

"Key '73" died for many reasons. I think it died because Americans came to understand that the great social problems facing the nation were not going to be resolved by the simplistic slogan, "Believe and be saved!" Neither were these problems—racism, ethnic enmity, the urban blight, poor public education, corruption in high places—going to be solved by an evangelical Christianity that spoke of salvation in terms of the "other world" and asked people to rely on some Messiah-like "Big Daddy."

The Billy Grahams and Oral Roberts types of evangelizers will always "pack 'em in" because they are wonderful entertainers and tell people what they *wish* was true.⁷

With such a representative spectrum of viewpoints, it is of first priority that we begin to clarify our question by placing the distinctive tenets of evangelicalism in historical perspective.

Evangelicalism has been called one of the "unanticipated trends of the modern age" which may soon be—if it is not already—"the dominant religious orientation in Protestant America."⁸ It is estimated that there are about forty million evangelical Protestants (including

⁴Attention has been called to this through an article by M. H. Tanenbaum, "What is a Jew?", in *The Star and the Cross*, ed. K. T. Hargrove (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1966), p. 18, which states: "The most complex challenge the Jew has been faced with since the Emancipation is that of his own self-definition."

⁵H. Lindsell, "Who Are the Evangelicals?", in *The Theologian at Work*, ed. A. R. Eckardt (New York: Harper, 1968), p. 107.

⁶P. L. Holmer, "Contemporary Evangelical Faith: An Assessment and Critique," in *The Evangelicals*, ed. D. F. Wells and J. D. Woodbridge (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), p. 68.

⁷B. Brickner, "What of the Future?", in *Keeping Posted* 19 (December, 1973), p. 22.

⁸Such is the recent assessment of Marquette sociologist D. O. Moberg, "Fundamentalists and Evangelicals in Society," in D. F. Wells and J. D. Woodbridge, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 156, 160.

self-termed "conservatives" and "fundamentalists") in this country.⁹ As a result, Church historian Sydney Ahlstrom has called evangelicalism the "third force" in American Christianity.¹⁰

The term "evangelical" comes from the New Testament word *euangelion*¹¹ meaning "good news," "gospel," or "evangel." Its theological definition is rooted in such kerygmatic texts as 1 Corinthians 15:3 f. which stress the joyous announcement of the death and resurrection of Jesus in the sinner's behalf. Thus "to be evangelical," states theologian Donald Bloesch, "means to believe that we are justified only by grace through faith in Him who suffered and died for our sins."¹² As a consequence of this life-changing belief, an evangelical is one who is interested in bearing witness of the gospel message to all men. In short, an evangelical is a Christian who believes, lives, and desires to share the gospel.

The emphasis in evangelicalism on the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ alone has been tied for centuries to the priority of preaching, rather than ritual, as a means of saving grace.¹³ Hence "evangelical" is sometimes used to indicate the spirit of zeal and earnestness in which such preaching is carried on.¹⁴

In historical perspective, evangelicalism sees itself as a movement of rediscovery. At the time of the Reformation, the element of gospel which had been so clearly a part of apostolic Christianity remained submerged and largely forgotten. The Reformers were termed "evangelicals" to set them apart from "Catholics"¹⁵ because they redirected their followers to a rediscovery of the Biblical concept of gospel, rooted in the authority of Scripture alone.

The century following the Reformation saw the "evangel" once again become obscure—if not lost—in the institutionalized lifelessness of the Church. The eighteenth century, however, saw its recovery through

⁹See the *New York Times*, June 24, 1974, p. 18. Also note R. J. Coleman, *Issues of Theological Warfare: Evangelicals and Liberals* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), p. 13, who divides the forty million as follows: (1) thirteen million within the National Council of Churches; (2) nineteen million from major denominations outside the NCC such as the Southern Baptist Convention; and (3) eight million "outside the conciliar framework."

¹⁰S. E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University, 1972), p. 958.

¹¹Various forms of this root occur over 130 times in the Greek New Testament. It is apparent that the New Testament writers drew heavily on the Old Testament prophetic tradition in developing their own understanding of the "evangel." Cf. G. W. Barker, W. L. Lane, and J. R. Michaels, *The New Testament Speaks* (New York: Harper, 1969), pp. 248 f.

¹²D. G. Bloesch, *The Evangelical Renaissance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), p. 48.

¹³B. L. Shelley, *Evangelicalism in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), p. 14.

¹⁴D. G. Bloesch, *loc. cit.*

¹⁵As a consequence of the Reformation, in Europe today the term "evangelical" is largely used to indicate "Protestant."

what is now called the "evangelical awakening." This renewal involved a series of movements which included Methodism in England, Pietism in Germany, and the Great Awakening in America.¹⁶ The emphasis this time, however, was less doctrinally orientated and more experiential; it stressed the life of holiness and made the Christian life more practically centered by its accent on the "doing" of theology.¹⁷ In sum, the evangelical heritage is rooted in a vital Christian experience which has sought for balance¹⁸ vertically through a growing personal relationship of love and commitment to God through Jesus Christ and horizontally through practical outreach to one's fellow men.

The rise of modern evangelicalism must be understood against the background of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the first half of this century. At that time evangelicals became known as "fundamentalists," holding to the so-called five "fundamentals of the faith":¹⁹ (1) the infallibility of Scripture, (2) the virgin birth of Jesus, (3) his substitutionary atonement, (4) his bodily resurrection, and (5) his personal second coming.²⁰ It was not so much the theology of fundamentalism, however, but the negativism emerging from the subsequent battle against liberalism that began to shape the movement. Fundamentalists began to separate themselves from mainline denominations and also began to pull back from relating the "evangel" to societal needs. A gradual preoccupation with questionable attitudes in the peripheral areas of theology and culture created a shift that resulted in a more anti-intellectual and cultic stance. Hence, fundamentalists²¹ have often been pejoratively labeled "obscurantist, heretical, sectarian, schismatic, and atavistic."²²

¹⁶Note the excellent discussion in S. E. Ahlstrom, *op. cit.*, pp. 230-329.

¹⁷See D. G. Bloesch, *op. cit.*, pp. 101-157, for what he calls "the legacy of Pietism" in the history of evangelicalism. Other recent works, however, such as B. L. Ramm, *The Evangelical Heritage* (Waco, Texas: Word, 1973), tend to minimize the pietistic heritage of evangelicalism with greater emphasis given to its relation to "Reformation theology" (pp. 23-40) and "scholastic orthodoxy" (pp. 49-63).

¹⁸The evangelical's search for balance between theology and experience, and the question of which is prior to the other, is often highlighted by the place of pentecostalism and the current charismatic renewal within evangelicalism. See D. Dayton, "Where Now, Young Evangelicals?," in *The Other Side* 11/2 (March-April, 1975), p. 32.

¹⁹These were first published in 1910 in twelve pamphlets entitled *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth*.

²⁰It should be observed that these five "fundamentals" formed the basis of the statement of faith officially adopted at the founding convention of the National Association of Evangelicals. See B. L. Shelley, *op. cit.*, pp. 71 f.

²¹R. Quebedeaux, *The Young Evangelicals* (New York: Harper, 1974), p. 19, helps to clarify the problem of terminology by stating, "For too long it has been the fault of mainstream Ecumenical Liberalism to lump together with pejorative intent *all* theological conservatives into the worn Fundamentalist category. In general, Evangelicals resent being called Fundamentalists, and Fundamentalists likewise do not usually appreciate the Evangelical designation."

²²H. Lindsell, *art. cit.*, p. 109.

A growing sensitivity to misplaced emphases began to prick the conscience of the leadership of fundamentalism during the forties.²³ With the founding of such organizations as the National Association of Evangelicals under the presidency of Harold Ockenga (1942),²⁴ Fuller Theological Seminary (1947), and the Evangelical Theological Society (1949), a "new evangelicalism"²⁵ began slowly to emerge. This began to bring a needed corrective to some of the lopsided peripheral emphases of earlier fundamentalism. A resurgence of interest in mainline denominationalism, social and political concerns, and a renewed focus on the central themes of the faith²⁶ were to become gradually apparent during the fifties and sixties.

Evangelicalism, like Judaism, is still experiencing growing pains. Today on the cutting edge of the movement there is increased concern for such matters as a more concentrated social witness, the indigenization of theology, and ecumenical dialogue.²⁷ Accordingly, Martin Marty speaks of an "increasing cultural openness" among evangelicals.²⁸ Contemporary evangelicalism,²⁹ however, is by no means united on where one should draw the line on these and other issues.

Despite such diversity of opinion, most evangelicals would likely agree that there is one doctrinal issue which may be called the "formal principle" for separating evangelicalism from other Protestant movements. That singular issue is Biblical authority.³⁰ In general, evangelicals would seem to concur with apologist Francis Schaeffer, who

²³For a case in point see C. F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1947).

²⁴Concerning a history of the NAE see B. L. Shelley, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-109.

²⁵For the origin of this term and a discussion of the new emphases in evangelicalism at this time see M. Erickson, *The New Evangelical Theology* (Westwood, New Jersey: Revell, 1968).

²⁶D. G. Bloesch, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-79, sets forth what he considers to be ten "hallmarks of evangelicalism" which have been given special emphasis throughout the history of this movement. They are these: (1) the sovereignty of God, (2) the divine authority of Scripture, (3) total depravity, (4) substitutionary atonement, (5) salvation by grace, (6) faith alone, (7) the primacy of proclamation, (8) Scriptural holiness, (9) the Church's spiritual mission, and (10) the personal return of Christ.

²⁷See D. Dayton, *art. cit.*, pp. 35-37, 55 f.

²⁸M. E. Marty, "Tensions Within Contemporary Evangelicalism: A Critical Appraisal," in D. F. Wells and J. D. Woodbridge, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 177.

²⁹R. Quebedeaux, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-41, divides the various contemporary expressions of historic Biblical orthodoxy in America into four ideological subgroups: (1) separatistic fundamentalism, (2) open fundamentalism, (3) establishment evangelicalism, and (4) the new evangelicalism. Quebedeaux states (p. 37) that the new evangelicalism is a movement "wider and deeper" than the original new evangelicalism which began to surface out of post-war fundamentalism. The original new evangelicalism he now calls "establishment evangelicalism." One of the features of today's new evangelicalism, says Quebedeaux (p. 39), is the reopening of dialogue with mainstream ecumenical liberalism.

³⁰K. S. Kantzer, "Unity and Diversity in Evangelical Faith," in D. F. Wells and J. D. Woodbridge, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 39.

argues that "holding to a strong view of Scripture or not holding to it is the watershed of the Evangelical world."³¹ For many evangelicals this implies the concept of Biblical infallibility—that is, whatever the Bible intends to teach is true. No evangelical scholars, however—despite widespread rumors to the contrary—hold to a mechanical "dictation" view of Scripture; rather, they have generally held to the concept of "verbal" inspiration.

At present many theologians, evangelicals included, are struggling to redefine more precisely the concepts of inspiration and Biblical authority.³² It would seem, however, that despite periodic rumblings, within contemporary evangelicalism there remains an over-all consensus of belief in the complete reliability and trustworthiness of Scripture and a corresponding conviction that Scripture stands as the final authority in matters of faith and practice.³³ The understanding and implications of this point are of utmost significance for the Jewish community when involved in theological dialogue, because any attempt to grasp correctly the evangelical attitude toward the Bible and its use in the formulating of theological statements begins here.

II. THE DILEMMA OF DIALOGUE

Is genuine dialogue between evangelicals and Jews really possible? What about the barriers to dialogue, and the spirit in which we face it? And what can we hope to accomplish? In this regard Marc Tanenbaum has stated, "It is inherent in the Christian situation that the Jew will never be entirely understood to the satisfaction of Christians."³⁴ If this is so for the Jew, then the reverse is also true for the Christian. Accordingly, Martin Buber was correct in noting that "we are not capable of judging ... [the] meaning [of the faith which someone else confesses] because we do not know it from within as we know ourselves from within."³⁵ An understanding of another's faith that is based solely on external knowledge is always deficient; it has never been fleshed out and tested in the crucible of the experience of daily life. Acknowledging this lack of total existential commitment to the life and principles of each other's communities, it seems clear that we must begin dialogue on a different level. We must realize that we come to understand a faith better, as Eugene Borowitz reminds us, by "knowing its believers, than

³¹F. A. Schaeffer, *No Final Conflict* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1975), p. 13.

³²For a general discussion of this problem, see "The Bible: The Believers Gain," in *Time* (December 30, 1974), pp. 34-41.

³³Cf. J. H. Gerstner, "The Theological Boundaries of Evangelical Faith," in D. F. Wells and J. D. Woodbridge, eds., *op. cit.*, p. 32; also R. Quebedeaux, *op. cit.*, pp. 3 f.

³⁴M. Tanenbaum, *op. cit.*, pp. 18 f.

³⁵M. Buber quoted in W. Jacob, *Christianity Through Jewish Eyes* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1974), p. 173.

by reading its theoreticians!"³⁶

There is the potential—if not the reality—that any dialogue between Jews and evangelicals begins with both communities being worlds apart—not speaking *with* each other, but *past* each other. Such may be symbolized by the difference between the terms *Anno Mundi* and *Anno Domini*.³⁷ That each community bases its beliefs on a different set of presuppositions is to be candidly understood. Effective dialogue does not require that either of us underplay or dilute our differences. Indeed, as Israel Mowshowitz has correctly observed: "One of the most welcome by-products of the dialogue may very well be the development of a spirit of acceptance of differences as a desirable good."³⁸ We must, however, be honest with one another. Judaism and evangelical Christianity have some sensitive areas of tension where theological antitheses of centuries past have resulted in a seemingly perpetual impasse—a sort of ideological cul-de-sac—that may never be fully resolved until the end of this age. But we must conclude together that it would be wrong to insist that if the one facing us in dialogue does not accede to our viewpoint, it was hardly worth talking. Indeed, as evangelical philosopher Arthur Holmes points out, "If all truth is God's truth wherever it be found, why should we not learn though fragmentarily from those of different persuasion?"³⁹

In every attempt at interfaith discussion, there is always a risk. There are those in both of our communities who feel dialogue can not help; rather, it has the ultimate effect of undermining one's own religious commitment. But as Emil Fackenheim has clearly stated, "The heart of dialogue [is to] risk self-exposure. If Jew and Christian are both witnesses, they must speak from where they are."⁴⁰ Often, however, this has not been without the feeling of deep emotion,⁴¹ with past experiences at dialogue being carried on in anything but an irenic and dispassionate spirit. Notwithstanding, as a prelude to dialogue both Christian and Jew would do well to hold in highest regard an old Jewish proverb: "He who puts his neighbor to shame (lit., makes his face white)

³⁶E. B. Borowitz, *How Can a Jew Speak of Faith Today?* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), pp. 219 f.

³⁷For a further development of this point see J. M. Oesterreicher, *The Rediscovery of Judaism* (South Orange, N.J.: Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies, Seton Hall University, 1971), p. 9.

³⁸I. Mowshowitz, "Why Dialogue," in *Face to Face*, ed. L. Edelman (New York: Crown, 1967), p. 10.

³⁹A. F. Holmes, "Evangelical Tensions," in *Wheaton Alumni* (September, 1968), p. 5.

⁴⁰E. Fackenheim quoted in W. Jacob, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

⁴¹A classic example of emotionally charged rhetoric is found in a letter which Franz Rosenzweig (agonizing over Judaism and the thought of converting to Christianity) writes to his Christian friend, Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy: "You won't get rid of us, we are the louse in your fur." See E. Rosenstock-Huessy, *Judaism Despite Christianity* (University of Alabama Press, 1969), p. 130.

in public will have no share in the World to Come" (*Baba Metzia* 59a; cf. DSS, IQS, 6:23-7:5).

Perhaps the greatest potential barrier to effective dialogue between evangelicals and Jews is the attitude in which we choose to view the misunderstandings and scars of the past. It would be presumptuous—downright foolish—to assume that no problems exist. When approaching Jews in the past, Christians have not always been fully sensitive to the admonition that "good theology cannot be built on bad history."⁴²

One of the historical barriers affecting evangelicalism has been its lack of aggressive desire to understand accurately the structure and life, religious and otherwise, of contemporary Judaism. The subtitle of Franklin Littell's recent volume, *The Crucifixion of the Jews*,⁴³ conspicuously calls attention to this barrier: "The Failure of Christians to Understand the Jewish Experience." Unfortunately, too many evangelicals continue to equate modern Judaism with Biblical Judaism. They have failed to realize that Judaism is not the religion of the Old Testament but one that developed from it. The essence of Judaism today will never be correctly grasped by evangelicals until these wise words of Joseph Soloveitchik are taken to heart: "They [Christians] have never tried to penetrate the soul of the Jews. They have read the Bible but neglected the oral tradition by which we interpret it. This makes a different Bible altogether."⁴⁴ Confessedly, there remains a great need for evangelicalism in general to become not only introduced to Talmudic materials⁴⁵ but to other post-Biblical rabbinic sources as well. It has been keenly noted that Jews sadly lament that while Christians search for Christ in the Old Testament they hear next to nothing from their pulpits about Hillel in the New.⁴⁶ Being removed from the world of post-Biblical Judaism,⁴⁷ Christians unfortunately have misunderstandings of Judaism that are not only legion but also sometimes both ignorant and painfully naive. Rabbis, for instance, have been asked how Jews baked matzos from blood, and about whether a Sunday-school class could visit a synagogue at the time while the animal

⁴²This point has been made by J. Parkes. See A. R. Eckardt, *Elder and Younger Brothers* (New York: Schocken, 1973), p. 89.

⁴³F. H. Littell, *The Crucifixion of the Jews* (New York: Harper, 1975).

⁴⁴Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik quoted in P. R. Carlson, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

⁴⁵For brief non-technical articles which show the influence of Talmudic thought on aspects of the New Testament see L. Amber, "Talmud in the New Testament," in *Christian Life* (September, 1975), pp. 18 f., 36 f.; M. R. Wilson, "A Question for Rabbis, Pastors, and Teachers," in *Christianity Today* 13/10 (February 14, 1969), pp. 5-7.

⁴⁶P. R. Carlson, *op. cit.*, pp. 149 f.

⁴⁷It has been bluntly stated by B. J. Bamberger in *The Story of Judaism* (New York: Schocken, 1970), p. 2, that "few Christians have even a vague notion about Jewish experience and Jewish spiritual creativeness in the last two thousand years."

sacrifices were going on.⁴⁸ There is but one solution to this problem: education and more education.

The deepest historical wound, however—one that has cut world Jewry to its very bone—is that of anti-Semitism. Though seldom a factor to motivate the Christian to seek dialogue with the Jew, this painful sore of the Jew remains unhealed, and he seems willing—even desirous at times—to talk about it. Though Arthur Hertzberg's view may not be shared by every Jew, he admits that the discussion of anti-Semitism is carried on for "purely theoretical purposes." Yet he insists that "we must keep retesting the temperature of the waters in which we must swim and the indices of our own strength to survive, because these are every-day matters of the most profound personal concern."⁴⁹ We need not wonder why Hertzberg writes this way, for past relationships between the Church and Synagogue have been gnarled and twisted because of coercive and devious efforts employed to convert Jews. When this has been the case, the "evangel" hardly came across as "good news." To the contrary, it was "bad news." It is clear that most evangelicals would disavow any direct connection of anti-Semitic persecutions with those who are "true-to-their-faith" Christians,⁵⁰ as opposed to those who are of a "different kind." Nevertheless the pain remains, and accordingly it is needful that the evangelical community not pass over lightly Franklin Littell's sobering comment: "It is not the Jewish people that has become incredible; it is Christianity and those who call themselves 'Christians.'"⁵¹ Irrespective of the exact sources responsible for all the horrors of anti-Semitism perpetrated throughout the centuries, we as evangelicals must become more painfully aware of how difficult it must be for today's Jew to rise above the burden of historical memories and to admit to the importance of giving serious ear to the Christian "evangel."⁵²

The dilemmas of dialogue are many, and we have mentioned only a few. Yet one major consideration remains: Interfaith discussion can achieve very little unless each participant is willing to accept with a spirit of true repentance the misdeeds in his group. To our disadvantage we, as humans, are all proud people. Humility of spirit has never come easily to anyone—especially to that one who may feel that not only his own hands but also those of his ancestors are totally clean of innocent blood.

⁴⁸J. Yaffe, *The American Jews* (New York: Random House, 1968), p. 55.

⁴⁹A. Hertzberg, *Anti-Semitism and Jewish Uniqueness: Ancient and Contemporary* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University, 1975), p. 17.

⁵⁰With view to the positive Christian attitude that the Minneapolis-based Billy Graham Evangelistic Association has reflected toward Jews and Israel through such films as *His Land* and *The Hiding Place*, it should not go unnoticed that Minneapolis was once known as the "capitol of anti-Semitism" (see J. Yaffe, *op. cit.*, p. 52).

⁵¹F. H. Littell, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁵²Note the discussion of the burden of the Jews' past history by R. Gordis in *The Root and the Branch* (University of Chicago Press, 1962), pp. 62-65.

Nevertheless, we who are of the American evangelical community would do well to appropriate for ourselves as a prelude to dialogue the repentant attitude of the noted British evangelical scholar, H. L. Ellison, who said: "When I come to know a Jew, I must be prepared to say to him as occasion serves, My people has sinned, My Church has sinned, and, it may well be, I have sinned, where the Jew is concerned."⁵³ Anything short of this may only serve to further fortify that barrier which has divided us for nearly two thousand years.

II. OUR COMMON HERITAGE

One of the greatest threats now facing both Synagogue and Church is the increasing trend toward the secularization of modern man. The drift to conformity is an ever-present evil in American culture. There always exists the temptation for man to turn his back on his sacred heritage and to forget what he represents. A recent, year-ending cover story in *Time* magazine has clearly pinpointed the challenge we now face: "How do you preserve faith in the Bible in a world that seems increasingly faithless?"⁵⁴ The moral and ethical values on which our nation was founded now find themselves in a continuous state of flux. Could this bicentennial year be the time for evangelical and Jew to seek a level of rapprochement by affirming together the eternal validity of those broadly-based Biblical ideals needed to bring renewed stability to the societal foundations we see crumbling around us? Appropriately, the Talmud mentions that not one of us lives in total isolation from the other, in that "we're *all* in the same boat."⁵⁵

As a mother gives birth and nourishment to her child, so the New Testament teaches that the destinies of Judaism and Christianity are inextricably bound together. With this in mind the apostle Paul, in Romans 11, had to caution the Gentile believers of his day not to "boast" (v. 18) or become "proud" (v. 20), in that they were but wild branches grafted in (v. 24), allowed by God's grace to "share the richness of the olive tree [Israel]" (v. 17). Paul instructed these early Christians: "It is not you that support the root [Israel], but the root that supports you" (v. 18).⁵⁶ In a number of areas, spiritual and otherwise, Christianity is debtor to Biblical Judaism for the sharing of her heritage. Though

⁵³H. L. Ellison, *The Christian Approach to the Jew* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1958), p. 52.

⁵⁴"The Bible: The Believers Gain," in *Time* (December 30, 1974), p. 38. Also cf. S. Sandmel, *We Jews and You Christians* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1967), p. 84.

⁵⁵This moral was drawn by the ancient rabbis from the Talmudic story of three men in a boat. One man began to drill a hole beneath his seat. At that, when his friends aboard pleaded with him to stop, he asked, "What are you worrying about? I'm only drilling under my seat." See M. N. Kertzer, *What is a Jew?* (New York: Collier, 1961), p. 58.

⁵⁶Similarly, the statement on the Jews from Vatican II reads, "Nor can she [the Church] forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles." Quoted from A. Cardinal Bea, *The Church and the Jewish People* (New York: Harper, 1966), p. 151.

Judaism as a whole has never sensed its need of the Christian gospel from the time of the "parting of the ways" until now, Jewish scholar Eugene Borowitz says that today Judaism does need Christianity. But it needs Christianity, Borowitz specifies, "as its ally against the paganization of our civilization."⁵⁷ Despite the fact that conservative Biblical Christianity has never confessed that the above role is the best or, for that matter, all it can offer Judaism, it would seem that this is one significant area where both evangelical and Jew can in some way stand together in calling America back to the values of its ancient Biblical heritage that are vital to the strengthening and ongoing of today's society.

The impact of Jewish thought and life on American society has been great.⁵⁸ Lecky's famous saying, "Hebraic mortar cemented the foundations of American democracy," has become a truism. Typical of this are the words inscribed on the Liberty Bell, taken from Leviticus 25:10, "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof." Often characterized as a "religion of optimism,"⁵⁹ Judaism has passed down to evangelicalism from the Old Testament the concept that history is not going in circles but is moving forward toward a definite goal with a glorious climax. Evangelicalism, standing on the shoulders of Judaism, holds that whether one confesses Jesus as the Christ or not, all men and all nations are accountable for social righteousness. And though evangelical Christianity would insist that the historical record of the past indicates man's own inability to eliminate societal evil, it does emphasize that God is now working redemptively in history and that he achieves—at least in part—his redemptive purpose within the concrete historical situation of this world.⁶⁰ For this reason, evangelicalism continues to cherish those Biblically rooted ideals which have historically contributed to the stability and meaning of family and society. These have included such timeless values as the dignity of manual labor,⁶¹ reverence for wisdom,⁶² love of justice, desire for peace, and the sacredness of the family.⁶³

⁵⁷E. B. Borowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

⁵⁸For an excellent bicentennial summary of the contribution of the Jew to America see M. Konick, "Jewish Influence on American Life and Culture," in *The Principal* 20/10 (June, 1975), pp. 25-32.

⁵⁹C. Roth, "Our Changing Jewish World," in *Jewish Heritage Reader*, ed. L. Edelman (New York: Taplinger, 1965), p. 376.

⁶⁰C. F. H. Henry, *A Plea for Evangelical Demonstration* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1971), pp. 53, 67.

⁶¹It is of more than passing interest to note that in modern Hebrew the term 'abōdā means both "work" and "worship."

⁶²M. R. Wilson, "The Jewish Concept of Learning: A Christian Appreciation," in *Christian Scholar's Review* 5/4 (1976), pp. 350-363.

⁶³For a discussion of these and other ideals see A. H. Silver, *Where Judaism Differed* (New York: Macmillan, 1956).

But in dealing with our common heritage we must be more specific about how the Old Testament has had such a far-reaching impact on the life of the Church. It is abundantly clear, as acknowledged by one Jewish scholar, that innately Judaism and Christianity have a "large measure of overlap."⁶⁴ Indeed, evangelicals cannot fully understand the nature of their lives as Christians until they first understand the nature of Israel.⁶⁵ If Jews have been called "the People of the Book,"⁶⁶ then it is equally true that evangelicals have been called—albeit pejoratively, by those outside their wing of the Church—"bibliolaters" or venerator of a "paper pope." The centrality of the Bible in Protestant Christian experience is reflected in the great Reformation emphasis on *sola scriptura*. The Reformers, however, were but building on the concept of revelation found originally in Judaism that affirmed the "divine character of the Torah as the absolute word ... [being] a common authoritative basis to which all further thinking could refer."⁶⁷

It is unfortunate that today's Church—evangelicals included—has not always practically recognized the importance of the Old Testament for normal healthy maintenance of its spiritual life. Though outwardly confessing the full authority of both Old and New Testaments,⁶⁸ evangelicals have not always been conscientious in living up to their Reformation heritage, especially that part derived from Biblical Judaism.⁶⁹ This has resulted in the ever-present potential of yielding to the temptation to embrace a subtle kind of neo-Marcionism, that of relegating the first thirty-nine books of inspired Writ to a type of "second-class" canonical status.⁷⁰ The heresy of neo-Marcionism thrives today in those churches where Christians fail to form in themselves a truly Biblical way of viewing man and the world. A Christian only

⁶⁴S. Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 150.

⁶⁵See the pertinent discussion of this point in P. and E. Achtemeier, *The Old Testament Roots of Our Faith* (New York: Abingdon, 1962), pp. 11-16.

⁶⁶Mohammed, founder of Islam, was the first to call Jews by this title; cf. M. N. Kertzer, *op. cit.*, pp. 129 f.

⁶⁷G. Scholem, "Jewish Theology Today," in *The Center Magazine* 7/2 (March/April, 1974), p. 61.

⁶⁸Evangelical Christianity has never drawn a formal distinction between the sacred Writings produced before Jesus and those after. All sixty-six Books have been equally acclaimed to be the Word of God. Such teaching, for example, is clearly set forth in the 1646 Westminster confession of faith (article II), which states: "Under the name of holy Scripture ... are now contained all the Books of the Old and New Testament.... All which are given by inspiration of God, to be the rule of faith and life." See *Creeeds of the Churches*, J. H. Leith, ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1963), pp. 193-195.

⁶⁹G. A. F. Knight points out in "Building Theological Bridges," in *Jews and Christians*, ed. G. A. F. Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), p. 109, that the Reformation was called the "rejudaissance" of the Christian faith, the term reflecting in part a rediscovery of the Hebraic Biblical categories.

⁷⁰M. R. Wilson, "The Old Testament: Who Needs It?," in *Christian Life* (November, 1976), pp. 20 ff.

becomes aware of what it means to be a "spiritual Semite" by recognizing that the Bible mainly reflects not a cultural continuum from the west but from the ancient near east.⁷¹ Accordingly, if today's Christian is serious about understanding the Semitic background of the Old Testament and the Jewish life of Jesus and his early followers, he must take but one road: He must become a "Hebrewophile,"⁷² one who has developed "Hebrew eyes" and "Hebrew attitudes" toward life.⁷³ As Karl Barth has perceptively stated, "the Bible ... is a Jewish book. It cannot be read and understood and expounded unless we are prepared to become Jews with the Jews."⁷⁴

A key question is raised by Abraham Heschel in regard to the above. He asks, "What is the pedigree of the Christian gospel?"⁷⁵ Is the origin of the Christian message to be derived from Hellenic soil or Semitic soil? Due to the process of de-Judaization in the Church and the eventual negation of Judaism, much confusion has resulted. Appropriately, Heschel points to the fact that too often Christians have forgotten how the New Testament opens: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Mt. 1:1).⁷⁶ Despite the fact that it is not the Greek view of reality but the Hebrew view which is essentially that of the New Testament,⁷⁷ the Church has too often minimized or neglected this Hebraic background. The Christianity of the early New Testament Church was predominantly Jewish. Accordingly, Heschel leaves the Church this all-important question to answer: "The Church must decide whether to look for roots in Judaism and consider itself an extension of Judaism or to look for roots in pagan Hellenism and consider itself as an antithesis to Judaism."⁷⁸ A common Hebraic heritage can scarcely be uncovered by the Church until it first settles the direction in which it intends to look.

⁷¹For a more detailed discussion see C. H. Gordon, *The Ancient Near East* (New York: Norton, 1965).

⁷²The term "Hebrewophile" is used by J. S. Spong in *This Hebrew Lord* (New York: Seabury, 1974), p. 31.

⁷³The potential role of the Hebrew Bible in this process should not be underestimated. In 1777, right after the founding of our nation, Ezra Stiles, president of Yale, declared that study of the Hebrew language was "essential to a gentleman's education." Stiles reasoned to himself: "Isn't it the language I am sure to hear first in heaven?" See M. Konick, *art. cit.*, p. 25.

⁷⁴K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I, 2 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1956), p. 511.

⁷⁵A. J. Heschel, "Protestant Renewal: A Jewish View," in *The Insecurity of Freedom* (New York: Schocken, 1972), p. 170.

⁷⁶*Ibid.* Here Heschel makes the pertinent observation: "How odd of God not to have placed the cradle of Jesus in Delphi or at least in Athens!"

⁷⁷See G. E. Ladd, *The Pattern of New Testament Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), pp. 9-40.

⁷⁸A. J. Heschel, *op. cit.*, pp. 169 f.

Today's Church can provide a strong corrective to the inroads of neo-Marcionism if it recognizes the important place that the Old Testament held in the life of Jesus, the apostles, and the early Church. Only one document was normative; they lived their lives "according to the Scriptures." They knew no Bible but the Hebrew Scriptures, for the New Testament writings did not begin to appear until several decades after the death of Jesus. The Old Testament was the primary source used for teaching and the settling of arguments with opponents. The Book of Psalms was the hymnbook of the early Church (cf. 1 Cor. 14:26) and later became the basis for many songs found in Christian hymnals today.

The theology of the early Church, eventually reflected in today's evangelicalism, was founded on the Old Testament Scriptures. It is here that we first learn of the creation, the fall of man, and the divine grace that brings salvation through a faith-love relationship between God and man. Throughout the Old Testament man's sinfulness is set in contrast with the holiness and righteousness of God. Here also we begin to trace such great overarching theological themes as election love, covenant, and the kingdom of God. It is to the Old Testament that we look for the moral law of the ten commandments and the social and ethical teachings of the prophets. It is here that we also turn for our Biblical background for understanding the claims of Jesus concerning his messiahship, priesthood and atonement. Furthermore the last book of the New Testament, the Apocalypse of John, is incomprehensible to the Christian without an understanding of its hundreds of Old Testament allusions. In sum, the Church can hardly afford to minimize its appreciation of the Old Testament, for as one writer has aptly concluded: "The New [Testament] is incomplete without the Old. To use it alone is like taking the roofs and towers of a great cathedral in isolation and suggesting that the walls exist only that they may bear the roof."⁷⁹

A rediscovery of Judaism by evangelicals is also bound to result in a fresh appreciation of the life and teachings of Jesus. Martin Buber's point is well taken when he claims that there are certain things about Jesus that Jews could better understand than Gentiles. He says, "We Jews know Jesus internally in his Jewish motivations and moods; this path remains closed to the nations which believe in him."⁸⁰ The history of Jewish-Christian relations indicates that there are many Christians who are quick to acknowledge that the Synagogue must learn from Jesus their Messiah, but unfortunately there seem to be few Christians who are willing to learn from the Synagogue. Certainly the Christian is dependent on Judaism for an understanding of Jesus' comment that the Pharisees "make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long" (Mt. 23:5).⁸¹ The "Lord's prayer" (Mt. 6:9-13) is thoroughly Jewish, reflected in such ancient Jewish prayers as the *Kaddish* and the "eighteen

⁷⁹H. L. Ellison, *The Message of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 11.

⁸⁰M. Buber quoted in W. Jacob, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

⁸¹The phylacteries are mentioned in Deuteronomy 6:8 and the fringes in Numbers 15:38.

benedictions" (*Shmoneh Esrai*). In addition, Jesus observed such Jewish holidays as Sukkoth (Jn. 7:1-39), Hanukkah (Jn. 10:22), and Passover (Mk. 14:12-25).

The lives of Hillel, the great rabbi of classical Judaism, and Jesus overlapped.⁸² When Hillel was once asked by a Gentile to teach him the whole of Judaism while standing on one foot, he replied, "What is hateful to yourself do not do to your fellow-man. That is the whole Torah. All the rest is commentary. Now go and study" (*Shabbat*, 31a). Lest one think that Rabbi Hillel and Rabbi Jesus⁸³ are poles apart, it should be observed that such a definition of Judaism is at the heart of Jesus' definition of what it means to have eternal life. Both Hillel and Jesus appeal to Leviticus 19:18, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Jesus taught several significant things about this commandment, and another like it, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Dt. 6:5). Jesus said that "on these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets" (Mt. 22:40) and that "there is no other commandment greater than these" (Mk. 12:31). Furthermore Jesus, pointing to the evidence of true and living faith, told a lawyer, "Do this, and you will live" (Lk. 10:28).

The debt of Christianity to the Synagogue and its teachings is clearer now than ever before. Methods of Biblical interpretation, the idea of a canon, the form and order of church worship, the church altar, the titles of church offices ("elder," "teacher," etc.), the public reading and expounding of Scripture,⁸⁴ the "family altar"⁸⁵ around the table in one's home—all have been taken over and adapted from Judaism. In Romans, one of the earliest doctrinal Church letters, Paul, with his background in Pharisaism, describes his struggle between the old man (sinful nature) and the new man (spiritual nature). Such may well reflect the teaching of Judaism concerning man's drive or inclination toward evil (*Yetzer Ha-Ra*) and his drive or inclination toward good (*Yetzer Ha-Tov*).

⁸²Though Hillel still taught after the birth of Jesus, most of his teaching was apparently carried on in the century preceding the Christian era.

⁸³In the gospels Jesus is addressed sixteen times by the title "rabbi" and forty-one times by the title "teacher" (*didaskalos*). In *TDNT* 6, ed. G. Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 964, Lohse points out that whenever Jesus is addressed as "rabbi" by his disciples and others, "this shows that he conducted Himself like the Jewish scribes." Like them, he teaches in synagogues (Mk. 1:21), sits to teach (Mt. 5:1), comments on Scripture (Mt. 5:17-48; Lk. 4:16-21), and has disciples.

⁸⁴See F. C. Grant, *Ancient Judaism and the New Testament* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1960), pp. 153-171. Note also that the terms "hallelujah" and "amen" were borrowed from Jewish worship.

⁸⁵Judaism has long taught that the table is to be considered an "altar" to sanctify the common daily act of eating and to provide a place for mealtime prayer and significant spiritual conversation. See S. E. Rosenberg, *Judaism* (Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist, 1966), pp. 124 ff.

The Old Testament, contrary to the teaching of Greek dualism, states that the material world is not evil but that as God's creation it is good in itself. Though evil is present in the world due to sin, not because of the presence of material things, the Hebrews rejected the Greek notion that an antithesis must be drawn between one's physical and spiritual life. The Hebrew viewed life in its wholeness. Living meant simply to experience the full enjoyment of all of God's gifts (Ps. 103:1-5) in fellowship with him, the Giver.⁸⁶ Unfortunately, however, within conservative Christianity a segment remains which has taken a rather sour or ascetic view toward God's world and the legitimate pleasures he has provided for man's enjoyment. Conscious of the unbiblical foundation of this position, Paul reflects his Old Testament and rabbinical training by cautioning Timothy about those "who forbid marriage and enjoy abstinence from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth." Paul continues: "For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving; for then it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. 4:3-5).

Since Jewish thinking historically has been orientated mainly to this life and this world, Jews have long known that enjoying God's good gifts in this life⁸⁷ and sanctifying time⁸⁸ are not incompatible. Indeed, Koheleth admonished, "There is nothing better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and find enjoyment in his toil. This also, I saw, is from the hand of God" (Eccl. 2:24; cf. 3:12 f.; 5:19). Building on this Biblical perspective the Talmud states, "At judgment day every man will have to give an account for every good thing which he might have enjoyed and did not" (*Jerusalem Kiddushin* 66d). Could this be a factor why statistics suggest that Jews live longer than most other Americans?⁸⁹ In any case, though a Jew fulfills a *mitzvah* when he takes pleasure in material things, he, like the Christian, is warned not to become too attached and forget where his chief duty lies.

There is Biblically rooted wisdom here for all evangelicals truly desirous of recovering their full ancient heritage. From Biblical times to this present moment we are again reminded of the timelessness of Scriptural wisdom. Accordingly evangelical and Jew can but stand in awe, realizing anew the truth of that modern Jewish sage who wrote: "[The Bible] is a book that cannot die. Oblivion shuns its pages. Its power is not subsiding.... To this very day [its words] are hyphens

⁸⁶G. E. Ladd, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-33.

⁸⁷See A. H. Silver, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-262, Chapter XI, "That Men Should Not Enjoy Life."

⁸⁸"Judaism is a religion of time aiming at the sanctification of time." See A. J. Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man* (New York: Harper, 1966), p. 8.

⁸⁹So argues J. Yaffe, *op. cit.*, p. 21. W. Maslow, *The Structure and Functioning of the American Jewish Community* (New York: American Jewish Congress, 1974), p. 7, calls the American Jewish community an "aging one," based on the fact that one out of nine is 65 or older, compared to one out of ten Gentiles.

between heaven and earth.... If God is alive, then the Bible is His voice."⁹⁰

IV. FACING OUR DIFFERENCES

Within the scope of this paper it is impossible to discuss the implications of all the areas in which evangelicals and Jews appear to have questions and unresolved differences. Nevertheless, any evangelical perspective on Judaism would be incomplete without at least identifying those areas of confusion and tension where profitable discussion in the future may yet lie.

First, it must be made clear to the Jewish community that "Christian" and "Gentile" are not interchangeable and synonymous terms. There are many Gentiles who make no Christian profession. As for Jews, *halacha* states that a person may (1) be born a Jew or (2) formally adopt the Jewish faith through prescribed ritual (conversion). Evangelical Christianity, however, teaches that one is never born a Christian, but rather that one may *become* a Christian. Such an experience may be described as a personal faith-love relationship brought about in the believer's heart by the Holy Spirit, whereby that one freely decides to commit his life to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior from sin. If a person claims to love Jesus and hates Jews, that is an outright contradiction of one's profession.

A second area in need of clarification concerns the Jewish concept of "chosenness" in relation to claims by both Christians and Jews that their faith is the "true" faith. Many evangelicals would agree that the main emphasis of Scripture is not so much upon the fact that Israel discovered God but that God, making efficacious his election love, discovered them. And though there are Jews who approach the issue of chosenness from a different perspective,⁹¹ Abraham Heschel has affirmed, "There is no concept of a chosen God but there is the idea of a chosen people."⁹² But evangelicals have sometimes mistaken Jewish chosenness for superiority, rather than responsibility or summons to action. In commenting on the eminence of Jews, Samuel Sandmel sheds further light on the question by stating, "We Jews have no exclusive possession or monopoly of innate gifts."⁹³ Granting Sandmel's point, one must still face the problem of whether there is *more* truth in Judaism than in other religious faiths.⁹⁴ What of Milton Steinberg's claim that

⁹⁰A. J. Heschel, *God in Search of Man* (New York: Harper, 1955), pp. 242, 244 f.

⁹¹Some stress the idea of Judaism looking upon itself as a *choosing* rather than a *chosen* people. Hence, the Jews chose God; God did not choose the Jews. Accordingly, Golda Meir (*Time*, November 24, 1975, p. 102) once called the Jews "the first people in history to have done something truly revolutionary." See also M. N. Kertzer, *op. cit.*, pp. 31 f.

⁹²A. J. Heschel, *God in Search of Man*, p. 425.

⁹³S. Sandmel, *After the Ghetto: Jews in Western Culture, Art, and Intellect* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University, 1974), p. 20.

⁹⁴This position is argued for by L. Jacobs in *A Jewish Theology* (New York: Behrman House, 1973), pp. 289-291.

some day Judaism, "so long mocked at and scoffed; will be universally recognized as the true faith"?⁹⁵ Our problem then is this: If Jews claim "Judaism is the main road and Christianity the turnoff,"⁹⁶ and evangelicals claim that their New Testament faith has brought Judaism to its spiritual fulfillment⁹⁷ through the coming of the Messiah, then to what degree is true dialogue subverted when one community has antecedently ruled out the claims of the other?⁹⁸

A third area of tension centers around the question of Scripture. Whereas the evangelical claims that both Testaments are God's Word and fully authoritative, the Jew recognizes but one covenant to be eternally valid—the so-called "Old Testament." Since the question of what Scripture is differs for both communities, evangelicals must be sensitive as to how Jews view the New Testament. Jews do not consider the gospels to be sacred. Accordingly Sandmel has observed, "When we read them (if we do), we read them as literature, not as Scripture."⁹⁹ At the same time, evangelicals would strongly question Sandmel's use of the following analogy: "To the scholar, early Christianity seems like a jigsaw puzzle; more than half of the pieces are missing, and it is possible that pieces from other puzzles have gotten into the box."¹⁰⁰ Though evangelicals have never viewed Christianity as being less than "half there"—not to mention the possibility of its being a kind of "mixed bag"—nonetheless such an analysis is understandable when made by one standing outside the Christian position, operating with a different set of presuppositions.

One aspect of the gospels that has been burdensome to Jews centers around the fact of Jesus' teaching the law on his own authority and largely bypassing other rabbinic authorities. Another distasteful aspect concerns the purported anti-Semitic slant to the gospels. The implications of this are too extensive to discuss at this point. Nevertheless most evangelicals would strongly disagree with the viewpoint of one writer who avows, "You cannot teach the present version of the Gospel story, with all its anti-Jewish tendencies, without putting the seed of Jew

⁹⁵M. Steinberg, *Basic Judaism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1947), p. 93. Steinberg also states (p. 102), "To the Jewish traditionalist Judaism is religion *par excellence*, the true faith."

⁹⁶B. J. Bamberger, *loc. cit.*

⁹⁷Cf. S. Siegel, "Election and the People of God," in *Speaking of God Today*, ed. P. D. Opsahl and M. H. Tanenbaum (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), p. 47: "The solution to the tension between the two faiths can be found, it seems to me, only through a recognition by Christianity that whatever are the truths of that faith it cannot claim to supersede Judaism."

⁹⁸This question is raised by A. R. Eckardt, *Elder and Younger Brothers*, p. 66.

⁹⁹S. Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus*, p. 119.

¹⁰⁰S. Sandmel, "The Jewish Scholar and Early Christianity," in *Two Living Traditions* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1972), p. 16.

hatred into the hearts of the readers or listeners, and that is certain."¹⁰¹ In addition to the problem of anti-Semitism there are other differences arising from the New Testament, such as the faith-works controversy, law and grace, heaven and hell, original sin, and whether or not the title "Jewish Christian" is of necessity a contradiction in terms. For centuries it has been clear that the New Testament has remained a major obstacle to interreligious discussion. Nevertheless, if it is important that evangelicals become familiar with post-Biblical rabbinic/Jewish literature, it is also needful that Jews become conversant with the last quarter of the Bible—as difficult as that may be.

A fourth and final area of difference concerns the Jewish perception of Jesus. As A. Roy Eckardt has observed, "Jesus of Nazareth, called the Christ, embodies the paradox of uniting Jews with Christians and of separating Jews from Christians."¹⁰² Rosenstock-Huessy put the issue into clear focus when he wrote, "The Word became Flesh"—on that proposition *everything* indeed depends."¹⁰³ It is to be recognized that Jews are monotheists but evangelicals are trinitarian monotheists. The resulting question of God's taking upon himself human flesh is no issue to be quickly brushed aside. For if, as many Jews claim, Jesus is not divine but a gifted man,¹⁰⁴ then such Biblically based evangelical doctrines as that of his mediatorial work (salvation through him), his vicarious atonement (taking the sinner's place), and his second coming (the final establishment of his kingdom) lie in jeopardy.

For nearly two thousand years the question of Jesus has been controversial, for Jesus himself was a controversialist.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, after all the theological dust settles we are faced with the fact that either he in some way "fulfilled" Judaism or did not; either his claims to messiahship are true with the spiritual presence of his kingdom now here or he, like Sabbatai Zevi and others, was deluded or fraudulent.

In any case, let us be honest. Despite all we share in common, we have our differences. But they mainly center around one person. Jesus remains the key theological barrier that divides us. Yet this is not surprising, as it is nothing new. For whenever Jews and Christians have gathered together from Bible days to the present, the same haunting question about Jesus, arising from the pages of the New Testament, seems to lurk in the mind: "Can this be the Son of David" (Mt. 12:23) or is he but "the carpenter's son" (Mt. 13:55)?

¹⁰¹D. D. Runes, *The Jew and the Cross* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1965), p. 89.

¹⁰²A. R. Eckardt, *Elder and Younger Brothers*, p. 142.

¹⁰³E. Rosenstock-Huessy, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

¹⁰⁴See for example S. Sandmel, "Christianity and Judaism: Two Articles," II. "A Jewish Reply," in L. Edelman, ed., *Jewish Heritage Reader*, p. 193.

¹⁰⁵Note the volume by J. R. W. Stott, *Christ the Controversialist* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 1970).

V. TOMORROW AND BEYOND

Is the Jew, as the late historian Arnold Toynbee once said, merely a dried-up fossil, the vestige of a dead culture? Or on the other hand is the very survival of the Jew from Biblical times a theological indication of God's faithfulness, a sign that "the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29)? Indeed, *'am yisrā'el hay*, "The people of Israel lives." And though there is no Christian consensus—evangelicals included—regarding the relation of the "people" and *'ereṣ yisrā'el*, Franklin Littell has pointed out that American evangelicals are "generally more dependable friends of Israel than liberal Protestants."¹⁰⁶ Littell's observation is likely correct in that many evangelicals see Israel's return to the land as in some way connected with Biblical prophecy. In a similar vein—though his case seems overstated—Meir Kahane of the Jewish Defense League has argued that because of the kind of faith in the Bible evangelical Christians have they are "the most potent weapon that Israel has within the United States ... [to] convince others that the United States' true interest is total and unconditional backing for the Jewish State."¹⁰⁷ But in spite of the above positive comments regarding evangelicals and Israel, A. Roy Eckardt looks at the question somewhat differently. He states in a seemingly satirical manner, "What will happen to the evangelicals and their claims as the years pass, and Jesus fails to 'show,' is a portentous question with respect to Christian attitudes toward the State of Israel."¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, such provocative comments by and large but beg the question and contribute little to opening up the already clogged channels of meaningful dialogue.

That Judaism itself anticipates a brighter tomorrow few would disagree. In prophetic-like style, Abraham Heschel once stated: "Just as Israel is certain of the reality of the Promised Land, so is she certain of the coming of 'the promised day.'"¹⁰⁹ Along similar lines Arthur Hertzberg concluded a public lecture by saying, "The journey is not yet ended, for the Messiah has not yet come—but, like all of my ancestors, I hear his footsteps."¹¹⁰ Whether understanding "Messiah" to be one gifted human leader of men or mankind collectively, Jewish teaching beginning with the prophets has pointed to the eventual ushering in of a new society, one founded on universal peace, justice and love.

¹⁰⁶F. H. Littell, *op. cit.*, p. 33. It is likewise appropriate that Littell has recognized (p. 97) a strong evangelical effort "to recover and reaffirm the essential Jewishness of Christianity as evidenced by the broad student participation in the excellent program of the American Institute of Holy Land Studies conducted by Dr. G. Douglas Young in Jerusalem."

¹⁰⁷M. Kahane, "Christians for Zion," in *Jewish Press* (January 24, 1975), p. 34.

¹⁰⁸A. R. Eckardt, *Your People, My People* (New York: Quadrangle, 1974), p. 115.

¹⁰⁹A. J. Heschel, "Confusion of Good and Evil," in *The Insecurity of Freedom*, p. 146.

¹¹⁰A. Hertzberg, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

The idea held by some within Jewry that the human drama will find fulfillment on earth through God's direct intervention¹¹¹ is not antithetical to New Testament thought. To be sure, Paul sounds an eschatological note by stating that "all Israel will be saved;¹¹² as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion'" (Rom. 11:26). And though Paul's understanding of this deliverance is tied clearly to Jesus, the one he called the Messiah, the main thrust of Paul's argument in Romans 9-11 is that the destiny of Jew and Gentile is so interlaced that the latter does not come to find God except through the former. Indeed, through Israel salvation and riches have come to the Gentiles (11:11 f.). Paul's metaphorical use of the olive tree suggests a unity between Israel (the tree) and the Gentiles (the branches from the wild olive tree grafted in) (vv. 17, 24). If I understand Paul correctly, there has been no permanent displacement of God's people. They are still included in the mystery of God's election love (vv. 1 f.); Israel is yet "beloved for the sake of their forefathers" (v. 28). And despite unbelief, "Israel in some real sense remains the people of God."¹¹³ Paul's argument is that the Jews still belong to God, and are yet a "holy" people (v. 16). Unlike Anglican James Parkes, who clearly states that he makes no attempt to reconcile his views with those found in Romans,¹¹⁴ the great sensitivity on the part of evangelicals to the issue of Biblical authority does not permit Paul's teaching concerning the Jews to go unheeded or to be passed over lightly.

But where do we go from here? Religious conviction is a deeply personal matter for both evangelical and Jew. The company of the committed, those whose dedication is sincere, will hardly discard their faith with ease. Accordingly, as one who took his belief seriously the apostle Paul wrote from Roman imprisonment, in the face of imminent death, "I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:6 f.). Equally persuaded in his commitment was Abraham Heschel who said that "my being Jewish is so sacred to me that I am ready to die for it.... I'd rather go to Auschwitz

¹¹¹See L. Jacobs, *op. cit.*, p. 300. It is also pointed out by A. J. Heschel in *Israel: An Echo of Eternity* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969), p. 158, that the prophetic or apocalyptic view concerning the coming of the Messianic era maintains that "the redemption of Israel and the Messiah will appear suddenly from heaven, and that amid miracles and wonders he will gather the Israelites of the Diaspora to their ancient inheritance."

¹¹²In this connection G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 539, states that "Paul does not speculate when or how the salvation of the Jews will take place, but it is probably an eschatological event to occur at the end of the age."

¹¹³*Ibid.*, p. 538.

¹¹⁴Accordingly, J. Parkes, *Prelude to Dialogue* (New York: Schocken, 1969), p. 188, states, "I long ago discovered that the question is irrelevant. In St. Paul's day, neither developed rabbinic Judaism, nor Nicene Christianity existed."

than to give up my religion."¹¹⁵ Both of these moving testimonies, filled with unshakeable conviction, remind us that Judaism and Christianity are different religions.

But even though evangelicals and Jews continue to stand at variance on certain substantive theological issues, these need not be insuperable barriers for all time to come. God is still Lord of history and the ultimate Judge of all men. He controls the affairs of his people; he sees as no man can see. As an evangelical, I am deeply indebted to Jews and I have yet much to learn from them. For as God's divinely established people, the Jews have brought—and will yet bring—riches to me and the rest of the Gentile world (cf. Rom. 11:12). But until each community comes to understand more clearly from Scripture and the events of history its respective relation to the other in the days ahead, evangelicals and Jews—unless God intervenes in a direct way—likely will continue to live in a creative, yet hopefully informed, theological tension.

But is there hope that this tension can be eased? Evangelicals recognize that the validity of their claim to ultimate truth rests heavily upon documents of history and faith. Here is a problem, therefore, that should motivate each community to go back and re-examine its historical foundations through the "parting of the ways." For, as one British scholar reminds us, "we are in grave danger of forgetting that the first question about any religion is not whether or not it is useful, but whether or not it is *true*."¹¹⁶ The evangelical's authority in matters of faith and practice remains the Bible. This position, however, should not seem foreign to Judaism in that Leo Baeck, a heroic leader of German Jewry, has pointed out, "It is a principle in Judaism that truth has to be discovered in, and through, the Bible."¹¹⁷

Without debating *which* Bible—Hebrew, or otherwise—there is a mutual need to give high priority to a thorough re-examination of the ancient source materials that reveal the historical roots of both Jewish and Christian faiths. Accordingly, it is my concluding observation that—at least as it concerns evangelicals—any serious adjustment of focus on issues must always be examined and re-examined in light of the one inspired historical source to which we can confidently appeal and on which both the knowledge of truth and the hope of our ultimate destiny must depend.

¹¹⁵"Eternal Light," NBC telecast, February 4, 1973: "A Conversation with Doctor Abraham Joshua Heschel," prepared under the auspices of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, p. 13.

¹¹⁶D. H. C. Read, *I Am Persuaded* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1961), p. 58.

¹¹⁷L. Baeck, *Judaism and Christianity* (New York: Atheneum, 1958), p. 166.