
Jesus Between Jews and Christians^{*}

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Truth is Accessible to Us Only in Dialogue

I believe that truth is accessible to us only in dialogue with others. We humans do not possess the truth, we can only participate in it, and we participate in truth together. Living in dialogue means seeking and recognizing the benefit which, for us, lies in the being of others, as well as in their experiences and expectations, and also in their contradictions. In others we recognize the limits of our absolutes, on which we depend and which we also do not want to abandon.

Only in dialogue do we recognize ourselves. We always need our eyes on others in order to understand ourselves and in order to be liberated from positive or negative illusions under which we live. If others look at us and listen to us as well as take us seriously, we begin to see ourselves in their eyes. Without this outward perspective of others, we would remain trapped in our prejudices about ourselves. Nobody loses her true identity in dialogue with others. Rather, each gains a new image in turning to others.

To enter into dialogue between Jews and Christians in Germany is a painful experience for Jews because they do it in the presence of the dead from Auschwitz. For Christians, it is a humiliating experience because seeing themselves through the eyes of the dead and the survivors of the *shoah* is depressing. May coming generations treat each other without bias! But the dialogue which the Jews in Germany initiated after World War II with Christians is for us a costly gift. It has given many in my gen-

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eration, who in the shadow of Auschwitz lost faith in themselves, new courage for a life in Germany. When a friend of our family, Fritz Valentin, returned to Hamburg in 1945 from exile in London, he gave my father, in a French prison camp, and me, in an English prison camp, hope for a new life in Germany. He was a Jewish-Christian Chief Justice of the Hamburg district court and founder of the Protestant Academy [*Evangelische Akademie*] in Hamburg.

Today, the meeting of Christians with Jews prompts us Christians to think about our confession, "Jesus is the Christ," in the presence of Jews, and to formulate it so that it is not spoken against Jews, but for them. It is not anti-Jewish to find in Jesus one's human brother and one's divine redeemer. It is not anti-Christian to be unable to recognize Jesus of Nazareth as Israel's Messiah. No one makes her position stronger if she belittles the other, or, under the well-known 'anti-' of suspicion [*Anti-Verdacht*], identifies the other as anti-Jewish or anti-Christian. The so-called "hermeneutic of suspicion" is the hermeneutic of the Inquisition and the Stasi [*Staatssicherheitsdienst*: the former East Germany's "security police"], and other creators of suspicion. The Christian-Jewish dialogue does not compel us to give up our Christian identity. We could then no longer be a partner for the Jews. It also does not compel us to reduce faith in Jesus, the Incarnate Son of God, or to drop from a 'high Christology' to a 'low Christology' in order to conform to the Jewish belief in God. We would then have nothing more to say, and for our partner, we would become uninteresting. If two people say the same thing, it is superfluous—so goes a Russian proverb. Conformity of Jews to Christians—or as it happens more often today, Christians to Jews—would mean the end of dialogue. Recognition of the other and self-awareness belong to fruitful dialogue, but in no case do accusations or resolutions made unilaterally. In the future it will become a dialogue between minorities because Christians are coming closer to becoming a minority in a post-Christian society.

Those were the formal instructions of the dialogue. We come now to remarks regarding content: The relationship between Christians and Jews also contains typical inequalities which should be recognized. The Jew is a Jew through birth—a Christian becomes a Christian through baptism; Jews are not only a religious community, but also a people [*Volk*]*—*Christians are a religious community consisting of many peoples [*Völker*]; since 1948 Jews have had the country and state of Israel as their center—the Christian church recognizes no particular holy places; Jews have a long history of suffering because of Christianity—conversely, Christians do not have such a history; and last but not least, Christians have their own holy scriptures as well as "the Law and the Prophets"—Jews have no

"New Testament" in their holy scriptures; Christians rely on "The Law and the Prophets" and the presence of synagogues for their self-identity—Jews do not need Christians for their Jewish identity, although the fact that through Christianity the Torah is spread and the Holy Name of God is kept holy raises the question of the will of God in Christianity. The real themes in the Christian-Jewish dialogue are not "data exchanged in mutual conversations" [*Informationsgespräche*], as Karl Barth skeptically thought; rather, they are problems affecting humanity. The Christian-Jewish dialogue is not only about the past, but it must also direct itself to the general problems humanity will face in the future.

If the coming anarchy, which we now note with fear in parts of Africa, will rule the 'Third World's' 21st century, the 'fortresses' of the 'First World' will not be able to defend themselves, either in North America, in Europe, or in Japan—and the first victim could become Israel.

If ecological catastrophes seize the entire globe, there will no longer be the 'Promised Land of Israel'.

If nuclear destruction occurs, there will be neither Jerusalem nor Rome, neither Jews nor Christians.

If the human race, in one way or another, commits suicide, why was Israel chosen and why has Israel suffered? Why did God become a human, and did Christ then die for nothing?

Christology in Messianic Hope

There is no presuppositionless Christology. The historical presupposition of Christology is the promise of the Messiah in the Old Testament and the Jewish hope which is founded on the Hebrew Bible. Only if one recognizes Jesus and His history in light of the promise of the Old Testament and the history of hope in present-day Judaism does one understand Jesus. What does 'Christology' mean other than 'Messianology'? 'The Christ' is Israel's Messiah and the 'Son of Man'. The Messiah is JHWH's Anointed; to remember Him means to place hope in Him and His universal, redeeming Lordship.

Christian Messianology is, to be sure, shaped by a unique form of Jesus, its message and its particular history of God, crucifixion and resurrection. Nevertheless, one must be reminded again and again of the Old Testament and Israel's history in which Jesus lived and from which His theological meaning as 'Christ' emerged. Therefore, we will not see 'Christ' as a proper name, as it was seen in the early Hellenistic community, but rather as a title for His function as the redeemer of humankind and as the future of God. For this reason, we must constantly retranslate the name of Christ in terms of the Messianic title in order to lift up its original meaning: Jesus is the Messiah; the church is the Messianic com-

munity; being a Christian means being human in a Messianic sense. The name 'Christian' is not a political party's name, but a promise. It is Messianic, a life in hope and an existence in expectation.

Christian Christology has divided Christians and Jews. This much is true. It must not be corrupted by Christians into an anti-Jewish ideology because the Messianic hope connects Christians with Jews, and this connection is stronger than the distinctions. Community in conflict is often stronger than community in agreement. For this reason, no Christian Christology may attempt to eliminate the Jewish Messianic hope: Jesus is not "the end of Messiah" (Paul Althaus). Consequently, no Christian Christology may desire to inherit the Jewish Messianic hope and thereby, consciously or not, declare the heir dead: Jesus is not the 'fulfillment' of Israel's Messianic hope. Finally, no Christian Christology may abandon the Messianic hope. Without it, Christianity becomes paganized.

"Messianism is the most profound original idea of Judaism," Martin Buber rightly argued. "Messianism is the idea which Israel gave as a gift to the world," conceded Gershom Scholem. It is not only an idea in the Old Testament; rather, it is the entire Old Testament, which as the "book of ever increasing anticipation" (von Rad 1965, 319) points beyond itself and beyond every historical fulfillment. According to a prophetic interpretation of Israel's history, an 'explosive' is being stockpiled in her history, and when the 'detonation' comes, it will not be revolutionary, but Messianic. The Christian mission sees itself as the way through which Israel pervades the Gentile world with the Messianic hope of the coming God. Christianity loses nothing if it recognizes this lasting Jewish root of hope. Judaism loses nothing if it recognizes this "secret," as Martin Buber experienced it, spreading the name, commandments, and kingdom of its God through Christianity. We will attempt to develop, on the basis of a collective Messianic hope, a Christology in the presence of Israel.

The Messianic question stands irrefutably at the center of all Christian-Jewish dialogue: "Are you the one who is supposed to come, or should we wait on another?" And this is the question of God: "Has God raised Jesus from the dead?" The Messianic hope leads us to Jesus, but it also hinders Jews from seeing Jesus as the expected Messiah who has already come. Jesus answered the baptized Christian's Messianic question through His preaching and His signs and wonders.

The Gospels see Jesus' entire appearance in the horizons of Israel's hope. Yet, it is this same Messianic hope which makes it appear impossible for "all of Israel" to consider Jesus already as the Messiah. Because early Christian Christology originated in this area of conflict, every Christian Christology must come back to this conflict and take seriously this Jewish No. It is the fundamental question at the center of Christian

Christology: Is the Jewish No anti-Christian? Is the Christian Yes anti-Jewish? Are No and Yes in these questions definitive or temporary? Are they exclusive or can they gain a dialectically positive meaning for those who have to say Yes or No?

The Jewish No. Martin Buber, in his conversation on January 14, 1933 with the New Testament scholar, Karl-Ludwig Schmidt, at the Jewish *Lehrhaus* in Stuttgart, so classically formulated the Jewish objection to the Messiahship of Jesus that Jews since then have continually repeated it: "The church rests on its faith that the Christ has come, and this is the redemption God granted to humanity. We, Israel, are unable to believe this." It is not a matter of unwillingness or a stubborn act of defiance, but an "inability to accept." With a profound respect, which Buber had for Jesus and also for Christianity, a still deeper experience determined this admission of inability:

We know more deeply, more truly, that world history has not been turned upside down to its very foundations—that the world is not yet redeemed. We *sense* its unredeemedness. The church can, or indeed must, understand this sense of ours as the awareness that *we* are not redeemed. But we know that that is not it. The redemption of the world is for us indivisibly one with the perfecting of creation, with the establishment of the unity which nothing more prevents, the unity which is no longer controverted, and which is realized in all the diversity of the world. Redemption is one with the kingdom of God in its fulfillment. An anticipation of any single part of the completed redemption of the world—for example, the redemption beforehand of the soul—is something we cannot grasp, although even for us in our mortal hours redeeming and redemption are heralded. But we can perceive no caesura in history. We are aware of no center in history—only its goal of the way taken by God who does not linger on His way. (Buber 1963, 562)

Early on, Schalom Ben-Chorim adopted this argument: "The Jew knows deeply about the unredeemed character of the world and recognizes and acknowledges no enclave of redemption in the middle of this unredeemption. The concept of the redeemed soul in the midst of an unredeemed world is foreign to him, completely alien, inaccessible from the very basis of his existence. Herein lies the reason for the rejection of Jesus by Israel, not in a merely external, national-only concept of Messiahship. For Jews, redemption means deliverance from all evil—evil of the body and soul, evil in creation and civilization. Thus, when we say redemption, we mean everything is redeemed. Between creation and redemption we only know one caesura; that is, the revelation of God's will" (Ben-Chorim 1966, 99; cf. Scholem 1963, 7–8). According to Ben-Chorim, there is still a Jewish caesura in the history of the unredeemed world: the Sinai reve-

lation of the Torah to Moses for the people of Israel.

Can there be anticipation of or assurances of redemption in part before the final, total, and universal redemption of the world? Can the redeemer really come into the world before the actual event of the world's redemption?

This is the Christian question of existence: In this unredeemed world, can one really be a Christian and thus exist as a Messianic human being?

Before we attempt to answer this critical challenge, calling Christian existence into question, we have to ask the counter-question; for the argument of the unredeemed world also falls back onto the question of Jewish existence. As a 'Gentile-Christian', one must also ask Israel about this 'Gentile question': In the immediate and universal reign of God, can there really be a chosen people before the redemption of the world, that is, for the sake of this redemption? Does the election of Israel not destroy Israel's solidarity with unredeemed humanity, even if election is meant representatively?

And if this world is completely unredeemed, is then not the Jewish caesura, the revelation of the will of God at Sinai, in the midst of all this evil, an impossible possibility; and to respond to it, an excessive demand from Israel? More simply and existentially put, can there really be a people of God, 'Israel', in a Godless world?

In the context of the hoped-for Messianic redemption of the world, Christians will become grateful for the miracle of Israel's prophetic existence. For if there is no appearance of and also no anticipation of redemption in this world, why should one consider the world unredeemed? The hard fact of the 'unredeemed world' speaks not only against Christians, but also against Jews. And it does so in both cases just because, and in so far as, both Christians and Jews, each in their own mode of existence, contradict the unredeemed world and resist its evils.

The Christian Yes. Jesus of Nazareth is for us the Messiah who has come; in fact, as the suffering servant of God, He heals through His wounds, and prevails through His suffering. He is not yet the Christ of the Parousia, who comes in the Glory of God and redeems the world so that it becomes the Kingdom of God. He is the 'Lamb of God', not yet the 'Lion of Judah'. What has already come to the world through the Christ, who has come and who is present, is the glorification of the poor, the justification of the godless, and the reconciliation of enemies; but not yet the 'redemption of the world', the overcoming of all hostility, the resurrection of the dead, or the new creation. Through Christ, the love of God has already become evident. But the glory of God has not yet broken out of its seclusion. That is why the Christian's life in the here-and-now

is still hidden with Christ in God and strong in the hope that "when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:4). But just because men and women 'now already' have freedom through Christ, they are 'no longer' prepared to come to terms with this world without peace. Because they are reconciled with God, they suffer from this "unredeemed world" and "groan" together with all of creation for the coming redemption and glory (Rom. 8).

The resurrected Christ is also not yet the *Pantocrator*. But He is on the way to redeem the world. Therefore, the Christian Yes to the Messiahship of Jesus, on the basis of believed and experienced reconciliation, will accept the Jewish No, on the basis of experienced and suffered unredeemption of the world, as well as adopt the Jewish No in that it speaks of that total and universal world redemption only in the dimension of hope in the future and the present contradiction of powers and demons of this unredeemed world. The Christian Yes to Jesus the Christ, then, is not itself complete and finished; rather, it is open for the future of Jesus. It is a Yes which in hope is anticipated and temporary: "Surely I am coming soon". Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20). Consequently, there can be no excluding or excommunicating Yes—not even if it is pronounced with confessional certainty. The person who confesses Jesus as the 'Christ of God' recognizes the 'Christ-in-becoming', the 'Christ on the way', the 'Christ in the movement of the eschatological history of God', and that person enters the discipleship of Christ upon this way of Christ [*Christusweg*]. The earthly Jesus was on the way to revealing his Messiahship. We call this the 'Messianic secret'. In order to present the perfected glory of God in the end, the resurrected Lord is on the way to His glory, which merely begins here, but is in no case universal. He then becomes the "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28) and will arrive at His "direct theocracy" (Buber). Every confession of Christ leads down this way, but it is not yet the goal.

Jesus, "the Lord," as the early community of Christians confessed Him, is on the way to His rule, not only in the 'times to come', but also in present "spheres": He goes, in the Gospel and in the Spirit, on the way from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), from Israel to the Gentiles, and from the Gentiles back to Israel (Rom. 11:26). He takes the way from the church to the poor and from the poor to the rich. Entering the 'way of Christ' means having faith in Him. Having faith in Him means going with Him on His present path. "I am the way" is, as the old Johannine text reports, a self-confession of Jesus (John 14:6).

God's Yes in the Jewish No: "Out of the no you hear the yes" (*Talmud Tractate Nedarim 11a*). If the Jewish No to the Messiahship of Jesus is not based on unwillingness or ill will, but on an "inability," as Buber stated, then there is no reason for Christians to deplore this No or to find

reproach in this No. Israel's No is not identical with the No of the unbelievers, which is to be found everywhere. It is a special No and must be treated as such. Paul, in his Israel chapters, Romans 9–11, saw in Israel's No the will of God. It is not because all of Israel says No that Israel is rejected; rather, it is because Israel was 'left aside' by God, the Jews' hearts were hardened by God, they can say nothing other than No. 'Left aside' is not the same as rejection and has absolutely nothing to do with a moral judgment. 'Left aside', earlier I also used "stubbornness" or "hardening," is not God's final judgment, but a historical-provisional act of God. It is an act with a specific purpose, as the Moses-Pharaoh story shows. Therefore, one must ask: For what purpose does God impose on all of Israel the 'inability' to say Yes to a belief in Jesus? The answer is so that the *Gospel of Israel* goes to the people and so that "the last" become "the first." "Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in" (Rom. 11:25). Without all of Israel's No, the Christian church would have remained an inner-Jewish, Messianic revival movement. But, together with the Jewish No, the Christian community had a surprising experience; namely, that the Spirit of God comes to Gentiles so that Gentiles are immediately touched by the Christian faith, without first becoming a Jew. The mission to the Gentiles [*Völkermission*] which Stephen and, then programmatically, Paul had started, is an indirect fruit of Israel's No. Paul also makes this clear to the congregation in Rome, which consisted of Jews and Gentiles: "As regards the gospel they are enemies of God, for your sake; but as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers" (Rom. 11:28). One can therefore rightly say: "We will have the Christian anti-Judaism behind us only if we are theologically successful in starting with something positive in regard to the Jewish No to Jesus Christ" (Marquardt 1981, 311). This positive lies in the mission to the Gentiles, out of which the church emerged. It is not merely a positive which one makes out of something negative, as one should always make the best out of the worst; rather, it is, according to Paul, the will of God which becomes evident in the Jewish inability to accept the Gospel of Christ. Consequently, Paul, the Jewish-Christian, can deplore the Jewish No and mourn for his own people (Rom. 9:2–5), but at the same time he can also praise God's Yes which becomes evident out of all this. "Their trespasses are the riches of the world" (Rom. 11:12) and "their rejection is the world's redemption" (Rom. 11:15).

There can be no talk of God having definitively rejected 'His' chosen people—'He' would have to reject 'His' own election and contradict 'Himself'—and, with the church, having searched for another people.

Israel's promises remain Israel's promises and are not surrendered to the church. The church also does not supplant Israel from its place in divine history. In the perspective of the Gospel, Israel in no way became 'like all nations'. And finally, Israel, with its No, is also not a historical 'testimony to the judgment of God', but only a warning to the Christian community not to fall away from the faith. Precisely because the Gospel, made possible through the Jewish No, has come to the Gentiles, it will—yes, it must—return to Israel. "The first will be the last." It all depends on them. For Paul, this is an 'apocalyptic mystery'. "Lest you be wise in your own conceits, I want you to understand this mystery, brethren: a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of Gentiles come in, and so all Israel will be saved; as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob'" (Rom. 11:25–26).

For Paul, Israel's Deliverer is the Christ of the Parousia, the coming Lord in the Glory of God, whose name is Jesus. The 'Jewish No', which Paul, as Saul, represented with extraordinary zeal as a persecutor of the early Christian church, was overcome by his calling and vision of the glorified, crucified Lord (Gal. 1). This is why Paul directs his hope for his people toward the redeemer who will come out of Zion in glory. From this Deliverer, Paul does not expect the conversion of the Jews nor that they will come to the Christian faith, but rather he expects redemption and resurrection from the dead: "For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?" (Rom. 11:15). Israel's redemption, which comes by seeing the glory of God, happens not only to the last surviving generation, but also at the same time to all the dead, "in an instant," cutting right through the times of history. Therefore, the Apostle's hope of redemption encompasses *all* of Israel, in all times. His practical answer to the Jewish No is not anti-Judaism, but the evangelization of the world. The Gospel brings the day of the redeemer closer to him and indirectly to Israel.

This same Jesus Christ is not the same for everyone because people are different. Jesus has a profile for the poor and another profile for the rich, a profile for the sick and another for the healthy. Correspondingly, the same Jesus Christ has a specific profile for Jews and another for the Gentiles: "For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy" (Rom. 15:8–9a). Jesus is accordingly Israel's Messiah, the one who finally confirms Israel's promises, who sits in power, who is at the same time the Compassionate One and the Healer of people, and the one who brings them God's glorious praise. As Israel's Messiah, He becomes the 'reconciler of nations'. In Jesus, Israel herself and the entire history

of Israel meet the Gentiles *in nuce* and in Messianic form.

Consequently, Matthew recounts the story of Jesus, the "Son of God," not as an individual history, but as a collective biography of Israel, from the flight into Egypt, the call out of Egypt, the days of temptation in the desert, to the passion story. Israel's Messiah also represents Israel. In Jesus Christ, Israel herself and the God of Israel in Messianic form meet believers from all nations. Through Christ's opening of Israel to all people, this history of promise and faithfulness has been divinely granted to the Gentiles for their part.

On the other hand, Israel meets Christ as the 'reconciler of nations', believed and honored by millions from all nations. In the resurrected Christ of the church of the nations, the peoples look toward Israel and remind Israel of the promises to Abraham and of Abraham's faith. The only justified 'Jewish mission' for Gentile Christians is to remind the Jews of their own gracious election, and its promise for humanity. This is surely what Paul means by making Israel jealous for the faith that saves (Rom. 11:14). The faith that is meant is the faith whose "father" is Abraham (Rom. 4:16), and which Paul proclaims as the justifying, saving faith in Christ. In the name of Abraham's faith, Christians and Jews can already become one here and now; for, like Jewish faith, so too does Christian faith desire to be nothing other than the faith of Abraham.

If, then, the Christian Yes has to be sought in this direction—if it is the Yes which discovers in the Jewish No what is positive, and God's will—then this must also be the approach of a 'Christian theology of Judaism' in a Christology which is not anti-Judaistic, but pro-Judaistic.

This is possible for Christian theology only if Jewish theology attempts to understand, on the basis of the Jewish No, "the mystery" (Buber) of Christian theology. After Auschwitz, that is an unreasonable demand, but believing Jews, too, might nevertheless perhaps also ask the theological question: What divine will is really expressed in the mission and spread of Christianity? Since the name of the Lord is made known to the ends of the earth through the mission of the Gospel, Christians throughout the world pray daily with Israel for the sanctification of God's name, the doing of His will, and the coming of His kingdom. Cannot Israel, in spite of her own observance of the Jewish No, view Christianity as the *praeparatio messianic* of the nations, and thus recognize in it the way which its own hope for the Messiah is taken to the nations? (Ben-Chorin 1988, 61–70).¹

Christians and Jews in Exile: The Blessing of Diaspora

In the third part of my essay, I would like to examine the new situation, which with the founding of the state of Israel has come into being for

Christians and Jews, without attempting to speak for Jews. The acclaimed synod resolution of the Rhineland Lutheran church in 1980 established a new "relationship" between Christians and Jews in the sense "that the continuing existence of the Jewish people, their return home to the Promised Land, and also the setting up of the state of Israel are signs of God's faithfulness to God's people." This clause contains not only an addition, but instead a prioritizing of the "existence" over "homecoming" to the "establishment of the state" of Israel. At that time I supported this declaration and above all regarded the continuing existence of the Jewish people as a sign of God's faithfulness to God's people. After a 10-day visit to Israel and the Occupied Land, and after many conversations with liberal and radical Jews as well as with Christian and Muslim Palestinians, I believe that the clause is only partially right and in light of the homecoming of the Jewish people and the state of Israel, it needs amending so that it is not misunderstood.

1. For whom are the named historical facts "signs of God's faithfulness to God's people?" For Christians in Germany, yes, but not for Christians in countries where there was no persecution of Jews. For Christians in Palestine, the clause is incomprehensible because the founding of the state of Israel is a catastrophe and is not a sign of God's faithfulness.

2. The Rhineland synod resolution must be understood historically. It has its own German context, its particular time—1970–80, after the wars for Jewish existence—and its own subjects—observant Christians in Germany. But its presumed objectivity and its claimed universality can be grounds for false conclusions. It presupposes as self-evident what is in no way self-evident to Palestinian Christians such as Reverend Naim Stifan Ateek in Jerusalem and Pastor Mitri Raheb in Bethlehem. It presupposes as self-evident what is in no way self-evident to Jews who wish to stay in Diaspora and who wish not to return home to the 'Promised Land'. Finally, this clause is timeless, while it is, nevertheless, about the present 'homecoming' of the Jewish people and the establishment of the state of Israel in the 20th century. In view of the scattering and the redemption out of exile, i.e., the return home to the Promised Land, the question of the right point in time had been crucial. Is it now about time for the 'return home' to the Promised Land? Has the moment of Israel's and Jewish redemption already come? Or, does the expected Messiah alone lead His people out of exile and back to the Promised Land? Is the return home to the Promised Land the presupposition for God's return home to Zion, or is it the other way around?

3. Our fabulous host in Jerusalem, André Chouraqui, once the Mayor of Jerusalem, asks in his book, *Letter to an Arab Friend* (1972): With the founding of the state of Israel and the taking of all Jerusalem, are all the

homecoming prayers of 'Jews in Exile' fulfilled? The state of Israel has invited all Jews 'to return home', having offered Jews all conceivable help to make a return possible. Nevertheless, twelve times as many western Jews have stayed in their countries as have come to Israel: "It is a rather tragic answer given by the Jews to their own faith."

If the 2,500 year old homecoming prayers are actually fulfilled, then does 'Judaism in Exile' still have a right to exist next to 'Judaism in Israel'? Has not the hope of a return home to the Holy Land kept the Jewish people alive during exile and scattering: "Next year in Jerusalem"? Chouraqui sees here the internal contradiction of current Judaism in the Diaspora (Chouraqui 1972, 159).

But Judaism in Israel also protects, in every respect, the religion of Judaism in Exile and prays for their return home, although Judaism in Exile has already returned home: "In Israel, in the Holy Land, in the light of the rebuilt Jerusalem we continue to pray to God to bring us there" (161).

4. As a (Gentile-)Christian, I am not going to meddle in the internal Jewish discussion about Diaspora and homecoming, but I am asking myself: Is only the homecoming a sign of the faithful God to 'His' people? Christian conservatism, a type of Christian Zionism, which is at least as old as Jewish Zionism, and in its modern form comes out of seventeenth-century England, sees *only* in the returning home of the Jewish people to the Promised Land 'signs of the faithful God' and because of this, supports with large financial investments the disbanding of Jews in Exile. In the end, what emerges?—nothing less than that every country is made free of Jews [*judenfrei*]. Is it not paradoxical if Christian conservatism ultimately leads to the same results as Christian anti-Semitism?

5. So is the 'return home' of the Jewish people out of the Diaspora desirable for us? From a human perspective, that would be catastrophic for the people of western democracies because we owe Judaism in Exile a large part of our humanism, freedom of religion, and fundamental democratic rights. From a theological perspective, the presence of a living Judaism in Diaspora has, for Christianity worldwide, and thus the church of the peoples [*Völkerkirche*], a larger meaning than national Judaism in Israel because after the fall of 'Christian' kingdoms and 'Christian' nations, Christianity finds itself more in the situation of a Diaspora. What theological meaning does the existence of the Diaspora have for Jews and Christians?

The Jewish 'Theology of Exile' often portrayed the existence of Diaspora as God's punishment for the sins of Israel. But Israel's suffering could have been attributed to a mystical meaning for the speeding up of the Messiah's arrival and redemption of the world. But then Israel's exile

is at the same time also God's exile in this godless world. Only the Shekinah's return home to Zion can truly bring Israel's exile to an end.

6. Is there not also a positive meaning of Judaism in Exile for people who live in exile? In 1650, Chief Rabbi of Amsterdam, Manasseh ben Israel, applied to Lord Protector Oliver Cromwell for the readmission of Jews to England on the following grounds: The Messiah, who is also expected by Christians, can only appear if Israel has scattered among all nations (Deut. 28:64; Dan. 12:7). As a result, Jews were readmitted to England (Philipp 1963, 43–6). I do not know in what sense Jews today are able to recognize their scattering among all people. As one of these people, I see the positive meaning in that Jews in Exile have shared with other people the 'Messianic pathos' of their own hope of redemption. The basic ideas of the European '*Neuzeit*', as can be demonstrated, followed from the ideas of Judaism, which scattered throughout Europe. According to my friend Ernst Bloch, Judaism has a human mission, precisely in the Diaspora. With the scattering of Jews among the nations, the Messianic hopes of freedom and the Messianic expectations of justice were spread universally (Bloch 1986, 598–611).

7. The persecution of the Jews is a sign of a unified religious state: a king, a faith, and a kingdom. But Christianity in Diaspora needs Judaism in Diaspora as a corrective and as an ally. In Germany, we would be even poorer than we already are after Auschwitz if all Jews would 'return home' to the Promised Land and we became "free of Jews" [*judenfrei*], as Hitler had wished. As Christians, we have to ask the Jews to stay and offer them our protection. This protection is not mercy; rather, it is nothing more than the constitutional state with civil rights which ground human rights and religious freedom. We look upon it as a "sign of God's faithfulness" to us that Jews live with us and not that they 'return home' to the Promised Land. For us Germans, "the great time of the Jewish-German symbioses" is over (Hans Mayer). It lasted from 1750 to 1933.

What remains behind is grief:

There is a weeping in the world
As if the Good Lord now lay dead,
And, heavy as the grave, the weight
Of the shadow falls like lead. (Lasker-Schüler 1982, 130–1)

But this is why the time of living together and a common culture must not finally be at an end. There are common, historical obligations. But what are they?

8. Judaism in Exile and Christian alienation in this world reveal to the world something universal. This entire world is in exile, alienated

from God and God's way, destroyed by itself, and consequently, a world that waits. To a Jewish and a Christian existence, the world as "unredeemed world" (Th. W. Adorno) becomes apparent. To Jewish and Christian hope, the world is made certain of its future in God. After centuries of human presumption and impudence, now comes the century of resignation and cynicism. We need the resistance of living hope.

9. Homecoming *or* Israel? The founding of the state of Israel has been, in my (Gentile-)Christian eyes, *a historical necessity, not Messianic*. Judaism in Israel does not have to be a reproach on Judaism in Exile. The Jewish dual existence appears to be especially suitable to pass on the Jewish testimony of hope of the world's redemption. For most, the question is *not* either homecoming *or* exile, rather Israel as the religious and political center of worldwide Judaism—thus, homecoming *and* Diaspora.

This is why an Israeli-Palestinian "condominium" (Chouraqi) and a common administration of Jerusalem (Marc Ellis) must not be a Messianic insult to Israel, but simply a historical necessity. Messianism belongs in eschatology, not in history. With true Messianism, transitory time must end and an eternal present begin. "Life in the future world" must follow the "day of the Messiah"; otherwise, Messianism leads to violence and disappointment. For this, there are enough frightening examples in Jewish as well as Christian history.

10. What is now at stake? For Christians, the *time of history* is the time of sowing, not reaping; the time of the Gospel, not the Parousia of Christ; thus, the time of hope, not yet fulfillment. Christianity is God's way of evangelizing people, as Paul stated, and the *praeparatio messianica* of the people, as Maimonides declared. The universalism of human rights and the universalism of peace and the blessings of the world, according to my understanding, also belong to the universalism of the Gospel. The "*Return to Israel*" (H. J. Kraus) is theologically appropriate to encourage the "coming out of the church to the Gentiles" and the participation of Christians in the problems and solutions of a humanity that destroys itself and this earth. In theological terms, we expect the Parousia of Christ at the end of the world: "And this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the entire world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14).

11. What common human responsibilities challenge Jews and Christians to work together in a type of indirect economy?

a. The Work toward Peace: Should a world war with nuclear weapons come and result in a nuclear catastrophe, then there will be no state of Israel and the ruins of Jerusalem will be as uninhabitable as the ruins of Tübingen or Erfurt. Today, every single destiny hangs on the destiny of humankind. Thus, universal responsibilities have priority over

particular interests.

b. The Rescue of the Earth: Ecological catastrophes lead to social and political crises. Without a common "*Erdpolitik*" (E. von Weisäcker), humankind will not survive. This limited earth cannot withstand a divided and destitute humanity. Without the rescue of the earth, there is also no longer a Promised Land and also no longer a Christian church.

c. The Liberation of Humankind: "All human beings are free and created equal" (first line of the German constitution). Israel's symbol of the Exodus rightly became the symbol of liberation of oppressed and humiliated human beings: liberation from sexism, from racism, from classism, from nationalism. Without the redemption of humankind from these evils and demons, Jews and Christians also will not be redeemed.

Endnotes

1. I have handled this theme in more detail in the first chapter of my book, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, London: SCM Press, 1990. [Although Moltmann borrows much of this section from the first chapter of *The Way of Jesus Christ*, this translation is new, though not significantly different. *Trans.*]

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