Three Voices at Basel

Herbert Haag

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The tabernacle. This cartoon for a mural picture all the motions of happiness in crucified and risen. Christ's garment, breastplate is the "Shield of David," unded hands shoot forth rays of glory.
THREE VOICES AT BASEL

IN THE middle 40s, when Hitler’s reign of terror came to an end, the whole of Europe breathed freely again. Though from 1933 to 1945 the power of evil had been unleashed as never before, for a long time the extent of the crime against the Jewish people had not been known, least of all by Germans. Were the evidence not unmistakable, one would find it hard to believe even today that in those dark years six million Jews suffered the most inhuman death.¹

Whatever God does He does, not to harm but to heal, not to doom but to save, so Scripture proclaims. Though His doings are part of the unfathomable mystery of His wisdom and love, and though the “Why these wholesale slaughters?” is more bewildering than many another “Why,” believing Jews and believing Christians can never doubt for a moment that these events, disastrous and unspeakable as they were, are included in God’s plan of salvation, and that blessing will grow from them. Melius...judicavit de malis bene facere, quam mala nulla esse permittere, “God thought it better to turn evil into good than not to permit evil at all,” wrote St. Augustine.² And the psalmist sings:

Those that sow in tears
shall reap rejoicing.
(125:5)

The fruits of these tears are varied: Some are of the temporal order, others of the realm of the spirit; some obvious, others hidden. It is certainly neither rash nor contrary to the biblical message to see in the establishment of a sovereign Jewish state an earthly reparation granted to Jews because of the great suffering they endured. Among

the spiritual fruits of those years of pain—fruits that ripen slowly—is, no doubt, the *rapprochement* between Christians and Jews. In several European countries, groups and movements have sprung up that have made it their purpose to combat anti-Semitism and turn the strained relationship of the past into one of mutual understanding, indeed, of friendship. In all these efforts, the creation of an amicable social and civic relationship has been the main desire. What has impelled Christians has been the wish to make amends; even though the slaughterers neither were nor wanted to be Christians (a fact that is unfortunately often forgotten by Jews, particularly by those in Israel), the crime was committed in Christian Europe. All over the continent, a few valiant men and women assisted Jews at the risk of their own lives; still, the majority of Christians were passive onlookers of the tragedy.

To generate a climate of good will between Christians and Jews is obviously easier than to engage them in theological conversation. On the other hand, neither Christians nor Jews can be quite content to meet on purely humanitarian grounds; they have to break through to a higher level. Both believe that God loves man, yet differ on the manifestation of this love—a disagreement they cannot ignore for long. Thus many Christian-Jewish groups have suffered from their inability to face and discuss theological differences; there have been those whose members hardly dared pronounce the name of Jesus, with the result that some have felt their efforts at a dead end.

It was courageous, therefore, when a Protestant, a Catholic, and a Jewish scholar arranged a theological meeting during Pentecost week of 1958. Invitations were extended only to those who, because of their previous publications and activities, seemed suited to this delicate undertaking. Thus about thirty participants, Catholics, Protestants, and Jews from Austria, Belgium, Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, gathered at Basel for a private exchange of ideas. The meeting, sponsored by the *Christlich-jüdische Arbeitsgemeinschaft* 3.

When I say "few," I mean few in relation to the rest of the population. But the brave were more than a handful. According to a news dispatch of June 24, 1960, the city parliament of West Berlin had then under consideration a bill that would offer grants to Berliners who had helped Jews escape the Nazi plan of extermination. When introducing the bill, Senator Joachim Lipschitz declared that there were 1,400 known cases of Berlin Jews who had been saved from certain death by non-Jews, friends and strangers. (See *The New York Times*, June 25, 1960.)

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Three Voices at Basel der Schweiz, was opened by its president, Professor Hendrik van Oyen of the Protestant theological faculty at Basel University. All sessions took place in the parish house of the Catholic Community, and on the three consecutive days of the conference the participants were luncheon guests of the Evangelical Church Council, the Catholic Community, and the Hebrew Congregation.

For the theme of the meeting, its initiators chose "Salvation present and salvation expected, according to both the Christian and the Jewish traditions." The invitation expressed the two topics more completely:

(1) Salvation present. To what extent, according to the Christian faith, is the salvation God promised to His people and to all peoples historically present in Jesus and in the Church? And to what extent has, even according to the Jewish view, salvation been present since the time of Moses, indeed, since the time of Abraham?

(2) Salvation expected. Is it possible to state specifically the kind of fulfillment of God's promise the believing Jew expects, and how is this expectation related to the salvation the Christian still hopes for?

This selection was a happy one, for salvation divinely promised and realized is not only the primary concern of the Jewish as well as of the Christian faith but also the central theme of Scripture. Thus Scripture could be made the basis of conversation. Moreover, the question of the Messiah was included in the theme, while the question of Jesus was not explicitly asked. To have done so would have been premature and most likely would have caused the conference to fail.

SALVATION: HISTORIC REALITY

As the program of the meeting announced, the first day was devoted to salvation as a reality. There was agreement that, for Jews and Christians alike, the historic character of revealed religion is one of its immovable pillars. In fact, Christianity and Judaism are the world's only historic religions; they alone are rooted in history, they alone tied to sacred events. That salvation rests on deeds of God that have left their mark on yesterday and on tomorrow was emphasized by the Catholic speaker of the day, Father Paul Démann of the Con-

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gregation of Notre Dame de Sion, editor of the Parisian *Cahiers Sioniens*; by its Jewish speaker, Isidor Werczberger, instructor in religion at Basel's Hebrew Congregation; and, particularly, by the Protestant speaker of the following day, Professor Oscar Cullmann of the University of Basel.

Even though the New Testament speaks of future salvation in a perspective different from that of the Old, both, Professor Cullmann emphasized, have this in common: They see salvation-to-come tied to redemptive history. What distinguishes Christianity as well as Judaism from other religions is the fact that, for them, salvation and revelation are historical. Salvific history—the great deeds of God and the divinely established link between them—is not a garment to be put on and off at will but the very heart of the two biblical religions. Therein is their solidarity. The moment one or the other abandons its historic character by dissolving it into metaphysics or existentialism, Professor Cullmann continued, solidarity between them ceases; their common bond is then no deeper than their bond with other religions, their solidarity no longer a solidarity *sui generis*.5

Judaism and Christianity are also at one in this: The salvific deeds of God—the revelation at Sinai, the redemptive work of Christ—happened once and for all time but, till the end of ages, they must become an ever-new reality in the life of every man. It is for this reason that the Protestant speaker on the presence of salvation, Dr. Edward Bues of Basel, called the Pauline formula "with Christ" the mark of the New Testament.

To be with Christ means to have died with Christ (see Rom 6:8). God wills the life of man, yet in the sight of the all-holy God the sinner must die: This is the contradiction with which the Old Testament ends. The New Testament resolves this contradiction by its witness that the Christ died in our stead, drawn into His death we die in order that we may rise to a new life with God. How does Judaism resolve man's conflict between the fate of death and the promise of life?

To be with Christ means to live in the strength of the divine life given us in Him. The true life is His gift, but the very fact that it is given us makes it a never-ending task. Through love we take hold of this life: through the love, that is, with which we thank Him for the love with which He loved us first (see 1 Jn 4:19).6

5. See *ibid.*, p. 53.

8. See *ibid.*, pp. 40-41.
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Father Démann, no less than Dr. Bueß, stressed that Jesus' death
and resurrection must become effective in the life of the believer but
he also insisted that salvation is not merely redemption of the in-
dividual or of God's people but something that extends to the cosmos.

The tradition common to Christians and Jews knows of divine inter-
ventions in history, of deeds that strengthen God's reign and foster His
plan for men. In the Christian perspective, the Incarnation of God in the
fullness of time is the intervention that surpasses all others. . . . As the
person of Jesus comprises and completes Israel's mission, so His life
includes and anticipates the Church's history. Since her entire work is
realized only in the course of centuries and step by step, Jesus is in a way
contemporaneous with every man, from the days of Abraham till the end
of time. . . . Thus history signifies and prepares salvation—this in
particular was the work of the Ancient Covenant—but it also contains,
though not yet visibly, salvation's fulfillment. Because God-made-man is
present in the created world, history has become, as it were, a sacrament.7

Though he applied the principle in a different way, Mr. Wercz-
berger, too, spoke of the continuing presence of God's salvific deeds.
In his daily life, he said, the devout Jew experiences God's covenant
with Abraham and that with Israel at Sinai as the surety of his
salvation. As often as he recites the Shema', he accepts the burden of
these words, joins his forebears who stood at Sinai, and renews that
covenant for himself. The same may be said of Torah. Before the
observant Jew sits down to study it, he thanks God that He chose
Israel out of all the peoples of the earth and entrusted to her
His teaching; in doing so, he renews revelation in the everyday. Another
renewal of the covenant is the Sabbath. When, on Friday evening, a
Jew receives the Sabbath from God, he professes that he is summoned
not only to receive but also to realize the covenant. There is finally,
Mr. Werczberger went on, the perpetual renewal of the Abramatic
covenant through circumcision, a renewal that differs from all others
in that it happens only once in the life of every Jew. Moreover, while
the recitation of the Shema', the study of Torah, and the observation
of the Sabbath renew the covenant for the individual Jew, circumcision
does it for the whole people.8

I wish Mr. Werczberger had also mentioned the Jewish feasts,
for according to biblical and non-biblical traditions they are not merely remembrances of the past but salutary re-presentations of the historically unrepeatable saving deeds of God. Thus Israel was commanded to keep the Passover as a feast of the Lord and as zikkaron, a redemptive memorial (see Ex 12:14). Again, the Mishnah writes: "In every generation a man is bound to regard himself as though he personally had gone forth from Egypt." The statements of the Christian speakers, too, left things unsaid. Their reflections on the sacramental character of history would have gained much had they been complemented by a treatment of the sacramental structure of the New Testament economy of grace.

As the conference progressed, it became increasingly clear that, though the Christian and Jewish views of history are in many ways alike, they disagree on the direction history takes. According to the Christian view, history moves toward a goal: In the age we call the age of the Old Covenant, history pointed to the coming of the Messiah who is Jesus of Nazareth; in the age we call the age of the New Covenant, it points to the return of the same Jesus at the end of ages. Christian theology sees in these two advents of the Messiah, God's decisive interventions in history. According to the Jewish view, however, there is only one decisive intervention, God's covenant with Israel at Sinai. Since then, there have been and there will be other interventions, but neither those of the past nor those of the future, not even the coming of the Messiah, will essentially change the course of history.

Astonished and troubled by the thought the Jewish speakers had offered, some of their Christian partners remarked that it threatened to empty biblical thought of its characteristic features, that it was Greek rather than prophetic. The Jewish participants countered that not even the messianic days will bring history to its conclusion. Its end will come only when all future salvation has become superfluous because mankind will have reached it by the integral observance of Torah. Thus the concepts of "salvation present" and "salvation expected" seem much more intertwined in Jewish thought than in Christian theology.


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SALVATION:

In order to avoid reflections that filled Christian speakers with a brief summary of a fuller treatment in Time.

RE-CREATION OF

Professor Cullman and New Testament redemptive history is more than for the second redemptive history it has taken place presented by its results expect that great Testament, even not a turning of consistent history of salvation. These two events Christian faith that this faith. Hence the "completed," between his thesis, Professor battle has been for celebrated; victory.

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10. See Oscar Cullman (Westminster, 1950).
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in order to avoid repetitions, I think I had better turn to the re­­­­fections that filled the second day of the conference. Its principal Christian speaker was Professor Cullmann. I should like to proceed with a brief summary of his thoughts as well as I remember them; a fuller treatment of his theme may be found in his book, Christ and Time.10

RE-CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE

Professor Cullmann spoke of the perspective that distinguishes Old and New Testaments. For the first, the relationship between past re­­­­emptive history and salvation-to-come is much more pronounced than for the second. For ancient Israel, the great turning point of redemptive history was to be in the future, whereas for Christianity, it has taken place. (To what extent Judaism, at least in the form presented by its major spokesmen at the conference, continues to expect that great turning point seems open to question.) The New Testament, even more radically than biblical Judaism, still hopes for a turning of cons but it also knows of a decisive mid-point in the history of salvation, the death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. These two events are much more central and normative for the Christian faith than are the calls of Abraham and Moses for the Jewish faith. Hence the tension between "already fulfilled" and "not yet completed," between the death of Jesus and His return. To illustrate his thesis, Professor Cullmann used this image: Though the decisive battle has been fought, we still await the day when victory will be celebrated; victory is assured but the war continues till the final peace.

Thus the New Testament speaks of the "end," the "end of ages," the "end of all things" (see 1 Cor 15:24; Heb 9:26; 1 Pet 4:7), and this is part of its newness. In what way will this "end" make manifest the redemption accomplished? To what extent will it add something new? Though the things to come are called apocalypse, disclosure, Professor Cullmann did not think the word should be understood merely in its etymological sense, as if the apocalypse we

expect were only to uncover what is already present. Here he turned against Karl Barth, who seeks to explain the end of ages by the image of a table fully set: Though the table has been prepared, the dishes remain hidden because a cloth has been spread over them; in the end, however, the cloth will be withdrawn, and the things prepared will be visible. But Barth’s thought is not the doctrine of the New Testament. True, judgment has taken place (see Jn 3:18–19; 12:31), yet its unveiling and the pronouncing of sentence will be special acts of God. Again, with the ascension of Jesus the kingly reign of the Christ has begun but is not yet manifest; its manifestation for which we hope will be the work of God who will make Christ’s kingship not only visible but fully effective. Thus the apostles proclaim that the hostile powers have been vanquished and, at one and the same time, that they will be vanquished in the end (see 1 Pet 3:22; Phil 2:10; 1 Cor 15:25; Heb 10:13).

In the end, God will bring about a new eon, hence the dead who died in Christ do not yet possess fully what we hope for. They remain part of this eon, Professor Cullmann continued, and therefore participate in its tension. No doubt, they are close to Him for theirs is the pneuma, theirs the power to rise. Yet they are still waiting, waiting for an event that concerns the whole world and thus also themselves: God’s intervention, which will make world and flesh new.

What is it, Professor Cullmann asked, that characterizes the final event we look for, the event that will make effective what has already come to pass: judgment, Christ’s reign, His victory over sin and death? The event-to-come will affect the cosmos of which we are a part: Redemptive history is to be completed, not outside the compass of this world but within it. The whole cosmos must be transformed in order to conclude in glory what was determined in weakness. Thus the first Christians expected the Christ to return to earth: He who had first come as the Man of pain, as the suffering Servant of Yahweh, would come again in majesty, as the King of glory. Since the final salvific event is not disconnected from the biblical events that preceded it, we hope that Israel will eventually turn to Him; with the first Christians we await a new Jerusalem, for Jerusalem can never lose its central meaning for redemptive history.

This was the answer Professor Cullmann gave to his own question: The nature of the final salvific event is a re-creation of the universe. Heaven and earth will not be no more, but will be transfigured and newness the return not only of the cosmos but of us, not excluding our body. Despite the perfection because of creation of the universe, since he is to be the triumph of Easter.
Heaven and earth will be made new. God will intervene, and sin and death will be no more. Through the might of resurrection, the cosmos will be transfigured so that the hostile powers of sin and death will not only be vanquished but vanish, not only be bound but destroyed. The newness the returning Christ will bring, however, will envelop not only the cosmos but every man. For it is biblical doctrine that all of us, not excluding those long departed, will in the end receive a new body. Despite their nearness to the Christ, the blessed still lack this perfection because the transfigured body is part of the wondrous recreation of the universe. This body of glory will be granted man since he is to be redeemed, not from the body but from the might of death. Though already begun, our redemption from the scourge of death cannot be complete until the entire universe is drawn into the triumph of Easter morning.\textsuperscript{11}

GOD’S REIGN

As the Catholic speaker of the second day, I could but complement Professor Cullmann’s reflections. For the Israel of old, the establishment of God’s reign was of eschatological dimension, something God would bring about without man’s assistance. When Jesus first stepped forward to summon His kinsmen, He proclaimed that the reign of God was at hand. He did not say that it was present, rather that it had drawn near. Hearing His call, we are reminded of the “last days” the prophets foretell: With Jesus' coming, the final period of redemptive history has begun, the one preceding the end of ages when God’s rule will embrace the whole earth. “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say: ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’ ” (Mt 4:17). And again: “After John had been delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying: ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel!’ ” (Mk 1:14-15). This saying recorded by St. Mark corresponds to the one cited from St. Matthew and is noteworthy for two reasons. First, “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God” mean the same thing; respecting the feelings of His hearers, Jesus avoided pronouncing the name of God. Second, the passage bespeaks the tension between the present and future states.

\textsuperscript{11} See Freiburger Rundbrief, loc. cit., pp. 53-54.
of God's reign, the very essence of salvation. The time is said to be "fulfilled," the time of hoping and waiting ended. Still, God's reign has not yet come, it is only "at hand." It is here and not here. It is like a seed; one might almost say that it is like a child in the womb of its mother, present and not yet present. This seminal existence of God's reign, its still being en route, Jesus explained in the parables of the leaven and of the mustard seed. The presence of God's reign, on the other hand, is manifest in Jesus' casting out of demons. Thus He proved that God rules, not Satan: "If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Mt 12:28).

Though come upon the world, the reign of God is, Jesus leaves no doubt, an eschatological reality. He bids His disciples pray to the Father without ceasing that His kingdom come (see Mt 6:10). When at the Last Supper He offered the cup to His disciples, He declared: "Amen I say to you, that I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mk 14:25). Only when the Son of Man will have come in majesty, and all the angels with Him; only when He will have gathered the nations around the throne of His glory, will He, the King, bid those who loved their brethren in need take possession of the kingdom (see Mt 25:31-46). This day may be far off; in any case, its advent is known to none but the Father (see Mt 24:36).

Jesus' discourse on the test of love makes two things clear. First, in order to come truly under God's reign a man's whole life must be ordered toward the Christ. Second, to enter God's kingdom means to enter into everlasting life (see Mt 25:46). What Jesus offers is union with God, blissful and unending. "Life" in the New Testament is practically identical with "God's reign"; both concepts share in the tension between reality and expectation. Whereas St. John's Gospel proclaims that the believer in the Christ possesses, enjoys, everlasting life (see 3:36; 5:24), the synoptic Gospels see life as something to be hoped for. St. Paul formulates well the tension between what is present and what is to come when he says that we are stamped with the seal of the Christ and that we carry the Spirit as a pledge in our hearts: We have not yet obtained the fullness of salvation, only its earnest—a down payment as it were (see 2 Cor 1:22). Thus there is room for hope and expectation even in the life of him who is convinced that in the beyond the present.

MAN'S FREEDOM

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MAN’S FREEDOM

Christians generally assume that in the life of Jews expectation plays a much greater role than in their own. As the common formula has it: In the eyes of Christians the Messiah is come, in the eyes of Jews he is still to come. It was, therefore, a surprise to many a Christian participant when statements by Jewish members of the conference gave a different impression.

Professor André Neher of the University of Strasbourg, the Jewish speaker of the second day, stressed that by studying and doing the Torah and its mitzvot, its commandments, the pious Jew is assured of his salvation. Obviously, he cannot fulfill them with equal perfection at all times, but he can always seek the mercy of God who forgives every sinner turning to Him. There is no fault or failure that man cannot repair by his own repentance. Through ma’asim and tebhah, through good works and repentance, man enters the world-to-come. There is no great difference between the salvation a Jew expects and the salvation that is already his. The coming world, ‘olam habba, is simply a complement to this world, ‘olam haZe’er. The dividing line between the two is death, and death is conquered by faith. Yet it must be made clear that man is destined to enter the future world simply because he is man, for God has put access to it entirely into the hands of His creature. He has made man free and thus cannot assist him in choosing what is good; this man must do himself in absolute autonomy. True, there are other currents in Judaism claiming divine assistance for man. True, God revealed to him good and evil, showed him the way, and always goes before him. But once He has marked man’s path, His words are the same today as in the days of Moses: Behold, today I have set before you the ways of life and of death, of good and of evil. Now choose! (see Deut 30:15-19).

On hearing Professor Neher explain man’s freedom as independence, a Christian could not help but be disturbed and ask what role the Messiah could possibly play in a salvific order of this kind. Was he still necessary? Was messianic expectation no longer one of the pillars

12. See ibid., p. 56.
of the Jewish faith? Professor Neher answered that his statement concerned persons: It is the individual Jew who, through the fulfillment of a commandment, instantly enters the world-to-come, and the individual non-Jew who, through the fulfillment of a good work, gains a part in it. But there is another realm, that of the people. With regard to it, Jewish tradition speaks of yemot ba-Mashiah, the days of the Messiah. Their coming does not depend on tesubah, man’s repentance, but on ge’ulah, the people’s ransom by God. According to the Eighteen Benedictions, which the pious Jew recites thrice a day, messianic salvation contains these events: first, the ingathering of the dispersed of Israel; second, the restoration of God’s kingship on earth through the mediation of just judges and true interpreters of what is right and good; third, the establishment of a community of saints consisting of the just, the pious, the elders, the scribes, and, from among the nations, the proselytes who wish to be part of the people of Israel; fourth, the return of God to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple; finally, the coming of the messianic king, the offspring of David. All this is of the future, for the people is still dispersed, God’s kingship unrestored, the community of saints not yet established, the Temple still in ruin, and the Messiah not yet come.

Whereas entrance into the world-to-come is entirely within the power of the man who fulfills the commandments or repents his transgressions, the birth of the messianic age rests entirely with God. He alone can bring about ge’ulah, no effort of Israel can win her deliverance. She can do nothing, or rather she may do nothing, to hasten the messianic event. Since the work of deliverance is an act of sheer grace, and thus entirely God’s province, all that she is allowed to do is to pray.

In Jewish perspective, the state of Israel cannot be considered, as is often done, a step toward messianic salvation, Professor Neher continued. The state has indeed a high religious value for Jews, for it makes possible the fulfillment of those commandments that are linked to the land and cannot be fulfilled elsewhere. True, in divine perspective, the foundation of the state may be a preparation for the coming of the Messiah but its founders did nothing to hasten his advent. All they did was to increase the moral opportunities shown to the Jews by the Torah. Had a Jewish state been established in Argentina or the United States, the religious, significant effect of the Jewish presence there would not necessarily be the last from Egypt, the exodus, all have the same epoch. Thus the final one. After a period of earth exile from the land of the Jewish people, the state failed to become a step toward messianic salvation, but as the word of a prophet that would permit the establishment of the state of Israel, true to the work of the Messiah remains the same.

D I S A G R E E M E N T

THERE is a deep disagreement between the Christian doctrine of the Messiah propounded by Professor Neher and the beliefs of the rabbis. Only the people of Israel have a clear mission in mind: to bring about a radically new history, one that divides history in the eyes of the Jews, a final era. After the event at Sinai, all people who resist the task will still come.

It is disconcerting to find myself in such a situation, but I believe that there was a great honor given to the people of Israel. The rabbis, true to the event at Sinai, are the only ones who see the significance of the promise of the Messiah. They are the only ones who have understood the message of the Torah and the people’s mission. The state of Israel is not a step toward messianic salvation but a fulfillment of the promise of the Torah. Had a Jewish state been established in

Argentina or the United States, the religious, significant effect of the Jewish presence there would not necessarily be the last from Egypt, the exodus, all have the same epoch. Thus the final one. After a period of earth exile from the land of the Jewish people, the state failed to become a step toward messianic salvation, but as the word of a prophet that would permit the establishment of the state of Israel, true to the work of the Messiah remains the same.

Ilag answered that his statement of Jew who, through the fulfillment of a good work, enters the world-to-come, and the fulfillment of a good work, spirit of God's kingship on earth and true interpreters of what is essential of a community of saints elders, the scribes, and, from wish to be part of the people Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the messianic king, the off-shoot, for the people is still the community of saints not yet and the Messiah not yet come. a-come is entirely within the commandments or repents his age rests entirely with God. e effort of Israel can win her father she may do nothing, to work of deliverance is an act of province, all that she is allowed

Israel cannot be considered, as is salvation, Professor Neher con-digious value for Jews, for it is commandments that are led elsewhere. True, in divine may be a preparation for the rs did nothing to hasten his moral opportunities shown to sh state been established in

Argentina or Uganda, it would have had great political, but no religious, significance.

One must not forget that the expected geulah will not necessarily be the last, as it certainly will not be the first. The deliverance from Egypt, the deliverance from Babylon, and the deliverance-to-come, all have the same import: Each one is simply the end of a salvific epoch. Thus the present exile of the Jewish people will hardly be the final one. After all, territorial exile may mean home in God, and home on earth exile from Him. If this is so, then there is no essential difference between exile and messianic event, no leap over a frontier that would permit us to leave history. If this is so, then the coming of the Messiah really solves nothing, Professor Neher declared; man's task will still consist of works that express his pilgrimage.

DISAGREEMENTS

There is a deep cleavage, then, between this conception and the Christian doctrine of salvation. Messianic deliverance, as presented by Professor Neher, does not embrace all the peoples of the earth but only the people of Israel (though he stressed that it would restore her priestly mission in the service of the whole world); it does not bring about a radically new and lasting eon nor is it the mid-point that divides history into a time before and a time after redemption. In the eyes of the Jews, history's center is not the coming of the Messiah but the event at Sinai.

It is disconcerting that, though Jews and Christians both acknowledge the Hebrew Scriptures, they draw from them markedly different conclusions. Jews reproach us that we read the Old Testament in the light of the New. On the other hand, we may well contend that Jews read it in the light of the Talmud. One is tempted to envy the Apostle that there was no Talmud in his day: When he argued with his kinsmen, he kept within the bounds of Scripture and sought to prove to them that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah promised by the Torah and the prophets. Conversely, the Jewish participants in the Basel conference maintained that the Talmud, as the codification of oral tradition, holds equal rank with sacred Scripture. It is true that

13. See ibid., pp. 47-49.
this concept cannot be alien to Catholics since in their belief, as contrasted with that of Protestants, tradition possesses normative character.

This brings me to the third day, chaired by Professor Karl Thieme of the University of Mainz. During one of the discussions, when I appealed to our Jewish partners to let themselves be guided by the prophetic message rather than by talmudic teaching, one Catholic member felt it was strange for a Catholic to suggest to Jews that they become Protestants. But his objection seems to ignore vital distinctions. The Church, after all, distinguishes between the tradition of faith and traditions that are mere customs. Moreover, is the authority on which talmudic commandments rest really legitimate? Whenever biblical injunctions are developed and adapted to a new age, ought we not expect that their essence be retained? The rabbinical prohibition, for instance, of eating milk and meat dishes together has very little to do with the original commandment of not boiling "a kid in its mother's milk" (Ex 23: 19). 14

Yet, whatever the authority of the Talmud may be, there can be no doubt that the utterances of the prophets are, or ought to be, equally dear to Christians and Jews. Neither of us can be attentive enough to their words; spokesmen of the Lord, they represent the faith of ancient Israel at its loftiest. There can be no question that the Talmud is a development of Pharisaism, which in Jesus' day was the dominant but certainly not the only school of thought. From the Middle Ages to this day, however, there have been trends moving in a direction quite different from that of Pharisaism. Thus all endeavors, particularly those alive in the state of Israel, to create an image of the religious Jew other than the one fashioned by the rabbis of old are worthy of our notice. It may well be that it is the Jews of Israel who are meant to give this new image reality.

COMMON PRAYER

THOUGH the participants in the Basel conference prayed together, common prayer could have held a more prominent place. The Jewish chairman of the second day, Dr. Ernst L. Ehrlich of Basel and Berlin, opened its deliberations with the 'Alenu which, he declared, was a little summary of all that the Jewish faith holds concerning salvation:

14. To boil a kid in its mother's milk was a Canaanite ritual, a revolting pagan ceremony; its imitation was thus forbidden to the Israelite.

We hope therefore when the abominable gods exterminated; of the Almighty, an wicked of the earth: world realize and kn must vow allegiance before thee, Lord of thou wilt reign in glory be King forever and be King over all the name One" (Zach 14

There are many Jews is what it ought to be; the "Our Father"? purest religious aspiration.

I have no doubt that the Jews the "Our Father"? colloquy to that of the event in the history fill us with joy and responsible for it.

EDITOR'S NOTE

PROFESSOR HAAG together more often; not such prayer is the Church. Are Catholics and non-Catholics? the Church does participation of our body. Though often as an attempt to "

We hope therefore, Lord our God, soon to behold thy majestic glory, when the abominations shall be removed from the earth, and the false gods exterminated; when the world shall be perfected under the reign of the Almighty, and all mankind will call upon thy name, and all the wicked of the earth will be turned to thee. May all the inhabitants of the world realize and know that to thee every knee must bend, every tongue must vow allegiance. May they bend the knee and prostrate themselves before thee, Lord our God, and give honor to thy glorious name; may they all accept the yoke of thy kingdom, and do thou reign over them speedily forever and ever. For the kingdom is thine, and to all eternity thou wilt reign in glory, as it is written in thy Torah: "The Lord shall be King forever and ever" (Ex 15:18). And it is said: "The Lord shall be King over all the earth; on that day the Lord shall be One, and His name One" (Zach 14:9).

There are many Jewish prayers a Christian may say without reservation. On the other hand, what should prevent a Jew from saying the "Our Father"? In its petitions, there are reflected the best and purest religious aspirations of the Jewish people at the turn of ages. I have no doubt that a spiritual encounter between Christians and Jews is what it ought to be when it is lifted from the realm of human colloquy to that of divine praise. That this was possible at Basel, indeed, that the conversation took place, is, it seems to me, a unique event in the history of Jewish-Christian relations. It should therefore fill us with joy and confidence but, no less, with gratitude toward those responsible for it.

EDITOR’S NOTE

PROFESSOR HAAG’S final suggestion is that Jews and Christians pray together more often. Some of our readers may wonder whether or not such prayer is compatible with the doctrine and discipline of the Church. Are Catholics not explicitly forbidden to join in prayer with non-Catholics? they may ask. To this the answer is simply No. What the Church does prohibit is communicatio in sacris, that is, the active participation of one of her children in the worship of another religious body. Though often misinterpreted as a petty exercise in authority, as an attempt to "confine" her members, this prohibition is but a safe-
guard for the free growth of their faith. In fact, even if the Church had never spoken out, the very nature of things forbids a Catholic to take part in a liturgical act that tends to make his worship ambiguous and implies a denial of his own belief. If he wishes to remain honest, let alone faithful, he cannot serve two masters (see Mt 6:24).

To be more specific: For a Catholic it should be a delight to hear the father of a Jewish household say grace: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who bringest forth bread from the earth." Not only will the utter simplicity of these words inspire him, they may well transport him into the presence of the One whom His disciples recognized by the way He broke and blessed the bread (see Lk 24:35). An entirely different matter is this passage from the Passover service:

"And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt" (Deut 26:8): not by the hands of an angel, and not by the hands of a seraph, and not by the hands of a messenger, but the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself, in His own glory and in His own person. As it is said: "For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord" (Ex 12:12).

"For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night": I, and not an angel. "I will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt": I, and not a seraph. "And against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments": I, and not a messenger. "I am the Lord": I am He, and no other.16

In all likelihood, this comment on two biblical verses is meant to gainsay the Christian belief in Jesus as the well-beloved Son, the One sent by the Father, the Word-made-flesh. Hence a Christian cannot recite this passage, nor even listen to it approvingly and still remain true to his faith.

But there seems to be no reason why Jews and Christians cannot pray with one another at a nonliturgical and thus private meeting such as the one held in Basel. There seems to be no reason why they cannot recite together one of the psalms, why both—believers in the living God, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—cannot join their voices in a plea for mercy: "Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord; Lord hear my voice!" (Ps 120:1) or in an expression of trust:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Ps 22:1). There is no reason against common prayer of this kind, but every reason for it: it suggests no deviation from the truth, no denial of faith, rather is it an affirmation of love and a pledge that one day the prophet's prediction will be fulfilled:

For then I will change and purify the lips of the peoples, That they all may call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one accord;
From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia and as far as the recesses of the North they shall bring me offerings. (Soph 3:9–10)

Loving One Another

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. And everyone who loves is born of God, and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. (1 Jn 4:7–8)