THEOLOGY NO ISSUE: AN EVANGELICAL APPRAISAL OF ROSMARIN'S JEWISH-CHRISTIAN THEOLOGICAL BARRIERS

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This essay from a Christian perspective is directed toward dialogue between Christians and Jews. In a world where traditional cultures have crumbled and religions, new and old, are asserting themselves, the need for basic understanding between all religions is of the essence. But Jewish-Christian understanding is particularly crucial in light of the coming Kingdom of God which will involve a Jewish relationship to Jesus Christ.

The points at issue are the theological barriers which Trude Weiss-Rosmarin portrays in *Judaism and Christianity: The Differences.* Her book is chosen as a rubric for interaction, not only because of its pertinence, but also because it is so precise and enthusiastic in avowing the absolute contradictoriness of the major points of antagonism between these two religions. It is clear, definite, and thus, very useful.

The minimal purpose will be to show that the issues presented are at two levels of difficulty, with neither class being insurmountably difficult. The conclusion will be that only three issues are really crucial—the law, the person of Jesus Christ, and the atonement—and even these are not so difficult as to prevent discussion, and further discussion is the goal of this presentation.

The basic assumptions are, first, that the breaking point even in the first century was not theological, but rather, following James Parks, a series of unfortunate and to some extent "accidental" events which pushed the early Jewish-Christian community away from both the Synagogue and the emerging Gentile Church. A second assumption is that the basic "hang-up" is not between the Jewish people or Israel and Christians—that is, believers in Christ—but largely between the clergy of both religions who are, let us assume, men of good faith, but who are dogmatically conditioned in terms of historical influences which have played upon the two faiths and increasingly separated them. This leads to the third concept, that as theological ideas developed and changed in the two traditions and were influenced by external philosophies, theological differences developed which were not inherent earlier. It is the same changing climate of opinion, however, which can be used to show that there is

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enough divergency in each camp to make discussion possible. The subject is interesting and most vital, but more crucially it seems that apocalyptic times are upon us, and the beginnings of a measure of rapprochement are necessary. The health of the Christian community is absolutely dependent upon some sort of working relationship with Jewish people, and certainly the Jews, in this hour of trial, need the help and understanding which can come from Christians who have such understanding.

Peter Schneider has correctly portrayed us as mere explorers and beginners in this area, who must press toward the goal, accepting mistakes and setbacks while at the same time realizing that dialogue must be "intimate and costly."

I. The Jewish and Christian Idea of God

The first unsurmountable obstacle that Dr. Rosmarin sees between the two faiths has to do with the difference between Judaisms' pure and uncompromising monotheism and Christianity's belief in the trinitarian nature of the Divine Being. Trinitarianism, the belief in the worship of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are contrary to all and everything Judaism holds sacred—the one, unique, indefinable and indivisible God. The indivisible oneness of God has been common to the different Jewish concepts of God which have evolved in different ages and must be stressed if Christian trinitarianism is to be avoided. There is no basis for dividing or adding to God's Being. On the contrary, H. E. Fosdick had Christianity as "the religion of incarnation," and John Mackay asserted that "the Christian faith is that God was in Christ." This is shocking to the Jew who believes that God is one and unique.[1]

Dr. Rosmarin sets Moses Maimonides' formulation of the idea of God against the Christian essential formulation of God as established at Nicea and Chalcedon. It should be remembered that ecumenical councils are not necessarily totally Scriptural and that Maimonides and his philosophy were considered heretical in his own time. To Maimonides, God's unity was "one single homogenous uncompounded essence"—an idea which sounds almost identical to the philosophy of the pre-Socratic Parmenides, and his view that time is an accident of creation because creation cannot have taken place in time, sounds as if it could have come from Augustine.[2] Very few Christian New Testament theologians will grant a philosophical God in the New Testament; Jewish historical scholars present the history of Judaism as largely free of philosophical influence before the time of Maimonides.

Christians are certainly free at this juncture in history, both in terms of current criticism of the concept of God and also in terms of their own

1. All material from Dr. Rosmarin's writings are taken from *Judaism and Christianity: the Differences* (Jonathan David: New York, 1943).
2. Moses Ben Maimon, *The Guide of the Perplexed,* abridged edition, Introduction and Commentary by Julius Guttman, translated from the Arabic by Chaim Rabin (East and West Library: London, 1952), pp. 67-68, 94.

basic Biblical presuppositions, to seek for new imagery by which to express their concept of God. There seems to be a defensive lack of curiosity among evangelicals which prohibits them from doing this. However, Chalcedon itself incorporates another basic concept of God than that of essence—that of light and glory—and Abraham Heschel has appealed to this very kind of imagery in describing his *God in Search of Man.*[3]

Another basic direction which rapprochement could take at this point, is in the direction of a more careful and better use of Biblical terminology. Both Jews and Christians have been negligent in appealing to the riches of terminology in both the Old and New Testaments. God, as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has been palatable to Jewish thinkers as well as Pascal. God as Father is palatable to Jewish readers of Isaiah, even if it is felt that they must fall short of using "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." God as Ancient of Days; God as the Coming One; God as the One Who sits upon His throne, are all Biblical alternatives. Then, appellations which show the "communicable attributes" of God are certainly useful. God is loving, angry, sorrowful, and even pained. But it is difficult to improve upon the God of glory, the God of light. There are many alternatives from both the Jewish and Christian standpoints in terms of identifying and describing God, and were it *desired* to come closer on this particular doctrine, there are many ways in which discussion could be implemented. There is no necessary polarization at this point, but only an unfortunate misunderstanding which stems from the middle ages. The issue lies not in the nature of God described in the Bible, but in the selecting of issues which are considered important by scholars.

II. Miracles

The Christian emphasis on miracles is also seen as a most difficult juncture between the two religions. In early Rabbinic literature, as in Spinoza and the deist philosophers, Divine interference with the laws of nature seemed illogical and irreconcilable. Rather, God provided for the miracles at creation. The miracles were only of minor importance as preliminary to the giving of the law on Sinai. The best Jewish minds supported the rational interpretation of Judaism. Miracles are rejected as proof of the truth, and especially as attestations of the correctness of the Torah.

In contradistinction, miracles play an inordinately important role in Christianity. The Gospels are one long record of the miracles performed

3. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man* (Meridian Books and the Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia, 1955), p. 105, identifies the ineffable with glory (see also pp. 108, 112 and footnote 10, p. 113). See also Heschel, *Israel* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux: New York, 1969), pp. 24-26 and Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Light of the World: A Basic Image in Early Christian Thought* (Harper & Brothers, Publications: New York, 1962), pp. 36, 85, 89.

by Jesus. The miracles were cogent proofs, not only of His Divine authorization, but of His Divinity. According to Dr. Rosmarin, Christianity was predicated on numerous doctrines based on miraculous events, such as the incarnation, the Divine character and perfection of Jesus, and the Virgin Birth. Catholic Christianity is virtually a slave to miracles. The saints are chosen on this basis—performance of miracles is the acid test of the truth of religious mission and the *sine qua non* of canonization. Christian worship revolves around the mysteries of the sacraments, Catholicism's seven and Protestantism's two. The Lord's Supper and the partaking of the Eucharist and sacramental wine establishes direct physical bond between the believer and Jesus. There are no sacraments in Judaism and no vestiges of mythological concepts—nothing like transubstantiation, prayer, sacraments, or symbols through which salvation may be magically obtained.

Just as the concept of God should not be made dependent upon medieval philosophy, so the ancient concept of balance of nature should not be transformed into a deistic concept of violation of laws of nature. The New Testament picture is that of the same Kingdom power working in both creation and Christ's ministry. The mighty acts of the Messiah were powers of the age to come which were implemented prior to the full arrival of the Kingdom; not violations of nature, but implications of what was already inherent in the created world and foretastes of what the future could expect to hold. Adjustment of Rosmarin's Rabinic citations to conform to this would not require the violence to their ideas that violations of laws of nature would demand.

Another aspect of New Testament miracles is that they really were signs—this coming directly from the major thesis of the fourth Gospel. The works that Christ did were glorious showings, reflections, manifestations of the glory of God, and this not in any sense which would not be thoroughly compatible with the Jewish thoughts of the rays of God's glory. Just as God's glory, and not his essence, was a chief Biblical emphasis in both the Old and New Testament, so the manifestation of his glory in the Old and New Testaments is a major theme and should not have ever been recast and filtered through the questions raised by deistic philosophers.[4] The signs that Christ did from Canaan of Galilee to Bethany were always to manifest the glory of Messiah. It is interesting that Hebrew Christians attempt spontaneously and studiously to combine the two faiths in terms of *this idiom.* David Baron's *Rays of Messiah's Glory* may be cited as typical of the Hebrew-Christian mind at this point.

4. In Deuteronomy 4:8 ff, the first and latter signs have "voices" which the people should "hear." There is a *logos* of the signs, a far cry from any deistic concept of miracles. Sandmel puts Paul in this tradition when in contrast to Philo's static, unhistorical, timeless *logos*: "The answer for Paul seems to have been rooted in event, that is, the event of Jesus. Accordingly, for Paul the encounter with the Christian tradition as it was unfolding in his time, coupled with the view that Jesus was in some sense divine, led him to identify the *logos* he so desperately desired with this Jesus." Samuel Sandmel, *The First Christian Century in Judaism and Christianity* (Oxford University Press; New York, 1969), p. 132.

It is adequate for further dialog to recognize that there is sufficient historical flexibility to allow appeal to other rubrics than "laws of nature" in an apologetic for the validity of the powerful acts of God and the amazing phenomena which have been forthcoming. Even Maimonides left his emphases on "essence" and "causation" long enough to quote from Isaiah 9:2: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined."[5] It is true that to Maimonides, miracles were planned with the creation and so were determined; but to him, God did also retain his privilege of interfering with the course of nature. While he seems to have taken this straight from the Scriptures, he rejected many of the Scriptural miracles, as, for example, the talkative ass of Balaam. The main concern behind his particular viewpoint is to correct Aristotle's concept of the eternity of the world. Again, it would seem that the nature of his interests, coupled with his use of the Scripture, would be sufficient basis to indicate that discussion is possible at this point also.

It is not suggested that to Jews alone belong the theological tasks of revision, but that evangelicals, too, might well look to their own conceptural foundations with regard to miracles, and be careful that they are not defending deist categories instead of the Biblical ones which they hopefully espouse.

III. Free Will vs. Original Sin

Rosmarin alleges that there is a great discontinuity between the Jewish emphasis on freedom and the ethical predestination of Christianity. To authoritative Jewish sources, all human beings are endowed with freedom in the ethical sphere and are not constrained. Man is "in the hands of his decision" (*Berachoth,* 33b) at conception. In *Sayings of the Fathers* III, 15, "all things are foreseen yet free will is granted." "He who wants to defile himself will find all the gates open. And he who desires to purify himself will be able to do so" (*Shabboth,* 104a). Free will is the foundation of ethics. Without the temptation and the possibility to sin, piety would not be meritorious.

It is held, on the other hand, that Christianity is predicated on the doctrine of original sin, which implies ethical predestination. Adam's fall transmitted to all generations a burden of guilt which descends on every human being the moment he leaves his mother's womb. Judaism has nothing resembling original sin, which is a negation of religion and a denial of the possibility of ethics. Jews do not deny that sin exists, but they refuse to admit that it must exist. Jewish piety does not have a power of evil independent from and opposed to God as the Christian devil; it does have an evil impulse and sages who subdued their sinful desires with the strong weapon of the good impulse. The Jew is taught to regard himself as stronger than sin and the power that draws him to it, and he glories in that strength. The Christian, on the other hand,

5. Ben Maimon, *op. cit.,* p. 202.

places grace above conduct and ethical effort. Christianity does not appreciate the exhilarating ethical stimulation of the challenge of the evil impulse or the Jewish victory over it.

It is clear that within the Christian community, as in the broader philosophical world, there is extensive disagreement regarding the kind and degree of freedom taught in the Bible and evident in human experience. While newer studies in both Biblical theology and physiological psychology may promote further clarity, it is evident that the New Testament exhorts man to activity and appeals to freedom. Christ's death, too, is surrounded by a rich framework of connections and is scarcely chained solely to an Augustinian or Reformed doctrine of original sin. His death is tied to Israel on the one hand (Acts 2:39) and to heavenly powers on the other (Colossians 1:20).

The nub of the problem here seems to center in the precise *meaning* of the doctrine of original sin. The term originated as far back as Tertullian, and has borne several meanings. To Augustine, it meant participation in a mass of perdition. To John Owen, the puritan divine, it meant conformity to the image of Satan. Later reformed thought emphasizes the implication of the total man in sin so that he is unable to rescue himself. Popular evangelical Calvinistic preaching emphasizes the "sin nature," which may possibly have a historical connection with Telesio. Saint Paul was content to speak of a "law of sin" in our members, an idea which is seldom used by evangelicals publicly.

Man is so complex in nature and function, and subject to so many kinds of evaluation and analysis that it would seem that some fresh thinking would be possible on both sides. Improvement in the conceptualization of man's problem could be facilitated by continued detailed induction from the Bible and the utilization of fuller and more varied terminology. One doubts that the Jewish publican of whom Jesus spoke as beating his breast and acknowledging his sin was thinking in terms of either the *Yetzer ha ra* or of *reatus culpae.*

IV. Attitudes toward Asceticism

To Dr. Rosmarin, the world and all that fills it is very good. The soul which is created by God and the flesh with its desires are of equal importance and in total harmony. Since the flesh is not depreciated nor considered to be the seat of the baser instincts or the source of evil, there can be no pessimistic asceticism in Judaism. The flesh is the handiwork of God and sacred; matter and spirit compliment one another. It would be sheer folly to despise and degrade the body through which the spirit must manifest itself; it would be rebellion against God Who created man as an inseparable union of the physical and spiritual, of body and soul. Judaism accepts the body, its needs and its desires with glad affirmation. In the age to come, man would have to account for every legitimate enjoyment which he denied to himself.

Christianity, on the other hand, is said to consider poverty sacred, to condemn riches and to discourage marriage; this not only by the medieval ascetics, but also by Jesus and Paul. Dr. Rosmarin cites Galatians 5:24 to the effect that "they that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." This New Testament contrast between spirit and flesh negates Jewish optimism. Further, the New Testament considers marriage to be a necessary evil for the propagation of the race, while to the Jew, celibacy is not only unnatural, but contrary to the will of God who commanded men and women to be fruitful and multiply.

While Dr. Rosmarin may have overpainted the contrasts, there is a difficulty and it must be seen as a product of the garbled history of Christianity. Christianity did absorb both oriental and Egyptian asceticism in its earliest days, directly through cultic practices, but also indirectly through the influence of philosophy. The neo-Platonic structure influenced Christianity extensively. This barrier could be largely dissolved by cleaning the Christian house of illegitimate foreign ascetic attitudes which still persist in degree.

Within the pages of the New Testament, there is every indication that the crucial matter, in this regard, was the coming of the Kingdom of God. The seemingly strange behavior of John the Baptist was not because of another worldly orientation, but because he was in the Jewish prophetic tradition and was preparing for the Kingdom of God. Jesus was worldly to the extent that he was called a glutton and a wine-bibber. He enjoyed the simple pleasures at the home of Lazarus in Bethany. His life thus seemed to have an undergirding of basic Jewish tradition and orientation. But built upon this basic structure were the ethical implications of association with the Kingdom of God and with the coming of the new age. What seems to be an ascetic tendency was a modification of attitude toward this world in light of the fact that many of its customs and manners were to be supplanted in the present and coming Kingdom of God. The point here may be summarized by a two-fold emphasis: Christ's life, ministry and thoughts were based upon the Jewish life-affirming ethic, but it was to be modified in terms of the invasion of the Kingdom of God, which he presented. Since the days of Albert Schwitzer, it is honorable to maintain both that Jesus was eschatologically oriented and to hold that Paul did not inject quantities of Hellenistic or other pagan thought into his viewpoint. It seems rather to be an increasingly acceptable thesis that Paul was eschatological in his viewpoint and that the elements of his theology, including his ethics, can be subordinated to his eschatological thinking. In light of the Kingdom of God, one should ponder the validity of marriage; because the new era has come, one can neglect and possibly avoid some of the hindrances of the new life caused by valid elements of the old era. Thus, the issue it not really asceticism; the issue is that of eschatological kingdom thinking and preparation for the Kingdom of God.

Neither contemporary Christians nor Jewish thinkers are very adept

at this kind of orientation with reference to personal ethics. The present suggestion for a direction of rapprochement would be, simply, for Christians to think much more eschatologically than they now do—something which is not too difficult in light of the events of the times—and for Jews to do the same. Asceticism as such is pagan, superstitious, and erroneous, even though it may be found in St. Francis and Spinoza. But the Kingdom of God is integral to both the Old Testament and New Testament faiths and there is every reason to believe both Jews and Christians to be accountable at the bar of this basic criterion. It is suggested then that this is not a barrier to Jewish-Christian relations, at least not between Protestants and Jews, and Catholics are doing extensive re-thinking along these lines; it is to suggest, rather, that both need improvement in their consideration of this area.

V. The Interpretation of Judaism

It is alleged that Christianity cannot afford to admit that the old covenant is still in force, for this would be tantamount to signing its death warrant, just as it would spell the doom and end of Judaism if the Jews were to acknowledge the new dispensation. In this way, Rosmarin sets up a gulf that cannot possibly be bridged except by the kind of tolerance Jewish teachers manifest when they acknowledge Christianity as a youthful, rebellious and immature daughter of Judaism. Dr Rosmarin holds that, to Paul, Christianity became the true Israel of God, and the promises given to the Jews would henceforth apply to Christians only. The Jews have been "broken off" (Romans 10:20), and the rights and privileges of the Jew have been transferred to the Gentile Christian. Thus, Judaism has been rejected and Christianity supercedes it. All Jews are responsible for Jesus' death, and they are being punished for their rejection of the Messiah.

Again, there is certain justification for this way of understanding the problem. Christians have, by and large, been at fault for implementing events which made this kind of understanding somewhat plausible. There are, however, some seriously qualifying factors which may help to correct this way of thinking. In the first place, in the New Testament itself, the old covenant is not totally set aside, but it is "becoming obsolete and growing old" and ready to disappear (Hebrews 8:13). Secondly, it is widely recognized by writers in the area of Jewish-Christian relations that it was an error related to a peculiar kind of hermeneutic which the church Fathers employed which enabled them to aver that the Jewish promises have been totally absorbed into Christianity. Thirdly, along this same line, there are a great number of Evangelicals who would insist that national Israel has a place in God's plan which extends far beyond its being a mere prelude to the establishment of Christianity.

Actually, the problem is not that of a warfare between those who hold to the old covenant and those who hold to the new, but that of a

total attitude toward Biblical faith which is a challenge to both the Synagogue and the Church. Was not the Judaism of the first century instructed by more than that of the old covenant *per se*? Could not the old covenant have been supplanted in degree and many elements of Judaism still be considered very vital and very important by both the Church and the Synagogue? The Church has had as one of its perennial theological puzzles the place it will give to the Jews nationally and religiously in its understanding of the Church and its eschatology, while being quite firm about the significance of the new covenant. In this area, too, then, we are dealing with a very complex picture which will probably never be settled to everyone's satisfaction, and perhaps not to the complete satisfaction of any—which is all that really needs to be established to indicate that this is not an impassable barrier for discussion between the two faiths. Any blame must be shared by the grand old men of both traditions—the Church Fathers and the Rabbis of the Talmudic period. The difficulty is one of the second century, in which there were unwise decisions and teachings on the part of the leaders and teachers of both the Church and the Synagogue in a series of tragic blunders which harmed the Jewish-Christians most keenly of all. Both the Church and the Synagogue lost some of their finest people at that time, and sowed the seed of later Jewish persecution and extreme loss to the people of God of both faiths.

VI. Faith vs. Law

Rosmarin presents an "incompatible juxtaposition" between Christianity and Judaism in the area of the laws of the Torah which are "the quintessence of permanent goodness." While Jesus affirmed the eternal validity of the law, He himself laid the foundation for its abrogation in Matthew 12:1-8. He alone was master of the Sabbath. Dr. Rosmarin says that Paul, who was the "wizard of propaganda and organization who built the church," declared the end of the law and the arrival of the aeon of faith. There could be no compromise between law and faith. The law was accursed.

To Judaism, the Torah is both the symbol and medium of divine love and the example and spur to perfection. The Torah is the light and the glory of the sons of men (*Megillah* 16v, *Derekh Eretz Zuta* 75). The law is beautiful, refreshing, life-restoring, sweetness, joy, healing and protection against evil. It is not a burden to the Jew. Law and faith are compatible and the law is a blessing and a medium of mercy, kindness and peace. It is synonymous with eternity and can never be abrogated or superceded. To Maimonides, "This Torah will never be changed." There is no proper solution to the conflict between this point of view and the Christian viewpoint that "Christ died for nothing" if man could be saved or perfected by the law (Galatians 2:21, 5:1-2). Judaism would sign its death warrant if it conceded the legitimacy of Christian charges.

It is tempting to let this issue stand as an absolute barrier beyond

which no progress can be made—this especially after James Park's splendid analysis of the significance of law in the early breakdown of relations between Jews and Christians. But it is quite easy to demonstrate that there is room for multiple opinions and possible modification of doctrine at this juncture. From the Jewish standpoint, in spite of all the meticulous effort to observe aspects of the law in ancient and modern Judaism, the element of serious sacrifice has been strangely, perennially and hopelessly lacking since the destruction of the second temple. Too, it is very clear that law-keeping, even among orthodox Israelites, is a burden. Extensive effort is made to circumvent the letter of the law to facilitate modern life in Israel, and the same was evidently true to an extent in ancient times. From the Christian standpoint, too, there are surface difficulties in over-simplifying the Christian's relationship to the law of Moses, including the Ten Commandments. Traditional orthodox Protestant theology has insisted for the most part that there was a distinction between the Ten Commandments and the ceremonial aspects of the law, a position taken by most Christians who have not been theologically sophisticated. On the contrary, a large number of contemporary evangelicals reject the whole of the law, including the Ten Commandments. On this basis alone, it would seem that both Jews and Christians have much rearrangement to do in their own houses—thus indicating that the law, if not a stumbling block, is at least a difficult item with which to deal for both faiths.

Writing from the Christian standpoint, W. D. Davies, whose scholarly forte is the pursual of the relationship of the New Testament to the Jewish Rabbinic sources, has held that there is Law in the New Testament. He makes reference to the *Pirke Aboth,* to the *Drekh Eretz Zuta* (which, curiously, Rosmarin has cited) and other Rabbinic sources, as basic for an understanding of Paul's self concept as a teacher. Davies insists that Paul thought of himself not only as a preacher of the Gospel, but also as one who filled a role comparable to that of a Jewish teacher who would teach the kind of thing contained in these ethically oriented documents. He believed that the importance of Jesus as teacher was not merely the survival of a kind of primitive legalism, but that within the Church there was a growing emphasis upon the historical Jesus as Teacher. Thus, Davies can say that,

> "the cumulative result of what we have written above is that Paul must have regarded Jesus in the light of a new Moses, and that he recognized in the word of Christ a *nomos tou kristou,* which formed for him the basis for a kind of Christian Halakah. When he used the phrase *nomos tou kristou,* he meant the actual words of Jesus were for him a New Torah.[6]
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> The upshot of all this is that it is possible to make too much of the contrast between Pauline Christianity as a religion of liberty

6. W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (Harper and Row: New York, 1948), p. 144.

and Judaism as a religion of obedience. Indeed, it is not improbable that Paul would not find it strange to regard himself as a Christian Rabbi, charged to be a steward not only of a *Kerygma,* but of a *didaxe,* a New Torah to be applied, expounded and transmitted.[7]

> . . . to be a Christian is to re-live, as it were, in one's own experience the life of Jesus, to die and to rise with Him, and also at the same time, to stand under the moral imperative of His words; and it is possible to infer from this the important consequences that not only did the words of Jesus form a Torah for Paul, but so also did the person of Jesus. In a real sense, conformity to Christ, His teaching and His life, has taken the place for Paul of conformity to the Jewish Torah. Jesus Himself—in word and deed or fact is a New Torah.[8]

Christians can labor this emphasis as Jewish scholars watch with mere interest, but Jews, too, have problems of deep significance to ponder. Both Glazer and Rubenstein watch American Judaism with apprehension. In his *After Auschwitz,* Richard Rubenstein, who is radical to be sure, sets the relationship of the Torah to contemporary Judaism in a qualified position:

> "If the Torah was the perfect revelation of God's will, when properly interpreted, then none of its injunctions, no matter how opaque to the lucidites of common sense, could be ignored. To have ignored them would have been to rebel against the will of the Creator. The modern Jew lacks the security of knowing that his religious acts are meaningfully related to God's will. Whether he fulfills all of the Torah's commandments or none of them, he enters a spiritual wager not unlike that made by the unbelieving Christian when he makes a decision concerning the centrality of Christ in his personal life. As Kierkegaard has suggested, religious life hovers over a sea of doubt seventy thousand fathoms deep.[9]

In this most important and delicate area, also, there are qualifications to be made in both the Jewish and Christian viewpoints; it presents no absolute theological barrier in the way of dialogue.

VII. Jesus, Repentance and the Atonement

It is probable that the problem of the law is a greater psychological hurdle than any of the other areas thus far proposed by Dr. Rosmarin. A top level of difficulty is also presented by two of her other categories: Jesus, and sin and atonement. But just as the law has been shown to be less than an impossible technical hurdle for preliminary dialogue, these other areas will be presented in a way which, in spite of the heightened difficulty and emotional overtone, will moderate them to the realm of concern and consideration.

7. *Ibid.,* p. 145.
8. *Ibid.,* p. 148.
9. Richard L. Rubenstein, *After Auschwitz* (The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1966), pp. 113-114.

The acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah or Saviour has, of course, been the great watershed between the two faiths. Rosmarin holds it to be erroneous for Rabbis to assume that their endorsement of Jesus as teacher, prophet or Rabbi will be instrumental in bringing about a better relation between Christians and Jews. Christians resent making Jesus a mere mortal teacher; He is God in the flesh. Judaism rejects the idea that Jesus could be the Son of God and an incarnation of the divine being; Jesus can scarcely qualify as a prophet from the Jewish point of view because he did not, as other Jewish prophets, seek to root his teaching in the Torah. He even claimed the right to abrogate or change ritual law and practices, an attempt which is contrary to the Jewish democratic conviction that all men are equal before God. Jesus constantly drew analogies between himself and God. Even His teachings were not in harmony with Judaism; He admonished poverty, played down the relationship toward marriage and the family, and exhorted revenge, which was against the Jewish law. He disregarded communal prayer and recommended secret prayer instead. He cannot be referred to as Rabbi because he opposed and attacked everything which the contemporary Rabbis stood for, and in all important aspects, he stood in opposition to the faith into which he was born. Room cannot be made for him in the Judaism which he himself rejected in both theory and practice, though he insisted on being considered faithful to the religion of his fathers.

It is interesting that many Jews have violated these canons. In the late nineteenth century, both Joseph Salvador and Abraham Geiger held that Jesus' teaching was in harmony with that of the Judaism of the times. Joseph Jacobs, too, an English Jew, hailed Jesus as thoroughly Jewish. Claude Montefiore went further and considered Jesus to be the most important Jew who ever lived and who exercised a great influence upon mankind and civilization. His teaching could not be paralleled in Rabbinic literature and was a unique synthesis which was greater than the sum of the elements which entered into it. Although Ahad ha-Am ("one of the people") charged him with being half assimilated to Christianity and held that Jews could have nothing to do with this idea without denying the fundamental characteristics of Judaism, the attitude of Jews as far back as the nineteenth century indicated that there is room for discussion about Jesus within the framework of Judaism.

There are also areas for discussion about Jesus within Christianity. "Jesus talk" has largely replaced reference to Christ among young Christians. Then, too, the Death of God movement has created at least some interest in discussing the terminology used to describe God, and this has necessarily had an influence on thinking about Jesus. Also, it must be recognized that Christology is a very complex area within the Church. While evangelicals will not wish to give up their New Testament informed doctrine of the deity of Christ, there are undoubtedly many who will not regard the Chalcedonian Council as officially ending all creative considerations. Some very basic and important terminology and con-

ceptual structuring has been ruled out of Church language since earliest days. The concept of Jesus as the Servant of the Lord and the Son of Man is much more closely related to at least the Old Testament Hebrew mind than is the essential deity of modern Christianity. Jesus as Lamb of God is rich in meaning and crucial to Johannine thinking, as well as to aspects of the Old Testament.[10]

There is, says Dr. Rosmarin, no bridge from the dynamic Jewish interpretation of sin and atonement to the essentially basic Christian doctrine of vicarious atonement. In Judaism, all human beings will eventually attain to the knowledge of God through their own efforts. Man's own teshuvah and ethical effort are demanded. Repentance has no bounds; no power on earth or in heaven can frustrate it. It is among the seven things whose creation preceded that of the universe. This is totally irreconcilable with the idea of trusting in Jesus' vicarious atonement for forgiveness. The difficulty might be partly alleviated by the recognition that Jesus also demanded repentance which is "the total attitude of man involving all his powers," not merely a turning away from sin and the recognition of the atonement, but also "a new orientation for the future."[11] Paul, too, who spoke of belief implied that it was a total turning of the soul which is akin to the Jewish repentance.

But then, the matter of vicarious sacrifice looms large on the horizon. One man cannot die for the sins of another; an innocent Saviour dying for sinners is meaningless, for Judaism rejects any mediation by priests or innocent substitutes. This may be a higher ranking problem than any of the others. The Christian doctrine of the atonement is subject to improvement as Biblical theology advances; better selection from existing theological formulations may be made in light of purposes and times. But the idea of *substitution* is Biblical, Christian and Jewish (as will be shown) and in its totality, needs no re-evaluation. The Torah is permeated with the concept of the blood of animals shed as an approach to the manifestation of the divine glory. Romans, in acceptable Jewish idiom, portrays blood at God's meetingplace with man as a requisite for the manifestation of the divine righteousness (Romans 3:25). The consciousness of the early Jewish Church was not offended by the doctrine of Christ's atonement, and the Talmud devotes long sections to animal sacrifice. Brands of Christianity which neglect any such concept are usually sterile in many areas, including that of meaningful Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Two tacks may be tried. The function of the Messiah may be subordinated to a discussion of his identity. If the "Servant of the Lord" concept could be accepted, he would have to do something meaningful.

10. Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* (SCM Press LTD: Bloomsbury Street London, 1963), p. 70, claims it replaced and incorporated the earlier emphasis upon the servant of the Lord.
11. Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament* (Herder and Herder: New York, 1969), p. 26.

Standard Jewish Messianic concepts have included meaningful functioning. Messiah would be a prophet (Deuteronomy 18:18); Messiah Ben David was to be the "instructor of the golden age of the future;"[12] Messiah Ben David was to die.[13] Discussion could center upon possible *kinds* of Messianic function—a procedure which would not initially rule out a vicarious atonement.

The other path would be more direct. Certain Jewish leaders have accepted the concept of substitution. Caiaphas said, "One man should die for the people" (John 12:30). Stewart's research led to the conclusion that "the combined merits of the Fathers of the faithful are declared over and over again (by Rabbinic writers) to be effective, and even endless,"[14] and "the more popular view is that she (Israel) stands by virtue of the Torah."[15] It was variously held that the heathen nations of Rabbinic times or earlier would be cast into Gehinnom to make atonement for the sins of Israel; that Job was selected for temporary suffering so that Israel might be saved in the time of the Exodus; and that children should die young, thereby saving the older generation from eternal punishment. Further, there is evidence that the righteousness of Abraham or of any of his descendants may operate vicariously on behalf of those of the same generation, the death of the righteous man being a necessary condition. The innocent are of course regarded as making a more effective vicarious atonement than the guilty.[16]

Bruce cites the Talmud as follows:

> "The Messiah...what is his name?...Our rabbis say "the Leper (Aram. *lūwerā*) of the house of Rabbi (house of learning) is his name," as it is said: "Surely he has borne our sicknesses and carried our pains, yet we esteemed him a leper (Heb. *nāgūa*, 'stricken'), smitten by God, and afflicted." (TB Sanhedrin 98b).[17]

He also cites these words as found in the additional prayers for the Day of Atonement:

> "Our righteous Messiah has departed from us:
> we are horror-stricken, and there is none to justify us.
>
> Our iniquities and the yoke of our transgressions
> he carries, and is wounded for our transgressions
>
> He bears on his shoulder our sins
> to find pardon for our iniquities
> may we be healed by his stripes![18]

12. George F. Moore, *Judaism*, Vol. II, p. 326.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 370-371.
14. Roy Stewart, *Rabbinic Theology* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1961), p. 130.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
16. Stewart, p. 133.
17. F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing Co., 1968), p. 94.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

Certain Talmudic references sound very Biblical, very Jewish and even Christian: "There is no atonement but by blood,"[19] "The blood whereby life escapes causes atonement, the blood whereby life does not escape does not cause atonement."[20]

In this theological area, as in the others, then, there is no absolute theological barrier which would prohibit further steps toward interface between Christians and Jews, between both and God, and between either and a more accurate and beneficial knowledge of Jesus.

19. *Yoma* 5A, *Zeb.* 6A.
20. R. Eleazar, Gemara on *Kerithoth V,* in Soncino edition, *The Babylonian Talmud III,* p. 166.