

# A New Christian Attitude to Judaism

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## The Reason: The Growth of Christians into Christ

Today many Christians consider it necessary to determine anew their attitude toward Judaism. In the past several decades, many pronouncements, articles and books have appeared concerning this subject. What is the reason for this change in the Christian way of thinking? In Germany, it is natural to assume that the shock of the holocaust set people thinking, and many people readily admit it.<sup>1</sup> But then, the question arises why people were shocked and provoked by that crime. The answer is not self-evident. For example, after the pogroms of the Middle Ages people were not shocked and repentant and ready to reflect upon their attitudes toward Judaism. It is good that this is different today, but the reason for it cannot be found in a crime. Evil cannot be done that good may come (Rom 3:8). A crime can give an impetus to reconsider one's views, but only if people are predisposed to it already. Apparently, irrespective of external events, a profound change of mind has taken place inside the Christians.

From the very beginning, Gentile Christians recognized themselves under the authority of Christ in order to grow up into him: "We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ"(Eph 4:15). Because of this growth, repentance and new insights are possible. If one grows one does not persist in one's former thoughts and behaviors. To turn back from an errant path is possible, as is gaining new insights based on old right insights. The ideas of former times must neither be established as eternal truth, nor rejected as complete falsehoods. Therefore, presently when Christians reassess their relationship to Judaism, they do not want to deny the belief of their forefathers, but they do want to draw conclusion from it.

This growth into Christ, the son of God, has led Christians into a direct and unmediated relationship to God. In the history of Christianity, Martin Luther was the first outside of Jewry who, by God's grace, was given the foundation for his life no longer in the world under God, but in God. "God makes us to be what He is Himself, to be in Him, so that His essence should be our essence."<sup>2</sup> However, Luther knew that his actual thoughts and deeds did not yet correspond to this foundation of his life in God. He recognized himself as justified in faith and sinful in his deeds as well. But, he was given the certitude that by God's grace Christians would grow up to sanctity. "This life does not mean being pious, but becoming pious; it is not health, but becoming healthy; it is not being, but becoming. We are not yet it, but we are becoming it. It is not yet done and finished, but it is set going and it is on the move. It is not the end, but it is the way."<sup>3</sup>

Consequently, the Protestant revival movements of the centuries after Luther proclaimed a greater conformity of Christians with Christ in their everyday lives. The first famous representative of pietism in Germany, Philipp Jacob Spener (1635-1705), proclaimed that one

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<sup>1</sup> Auschwitz, Krise der christlichen Theologie: e. Vortragsreihe hrsg. von Rolf Rendtorff u. Ekkehard Stegemann, München 1980; Friedrich-Wilhelm Marquardt, Von Elend und Heimsuchung der Theologie, München 1988, 74; Erich Zenger, Das Erste Testament, 5.edition, Düsseldorf 1995, 12-16

<sup>2</sup> Martin Luther, Werke, Weimar edition 5, 144, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther, loc. cit. 7, 336.

would be a Christian "much more by pious trusting in God, by holy living and loving one's neighbour than by sharp and subtle disputing",<sup>4</sup> and in Sören Kierkegaard's (1813-1855) writings, the individual became aware that his value exceeds the value of the whole world: "The paradox of faith is this, that the individual is superior to the universal."<sup>5</sup>

Finally, the German "Liberal Theology" at the beginning of the 20th century proclaimed the boundless value of each single human soul: "In the structure: God the father, the providence, the sonship, the boundless value of the human soul, the whole gospel is expressed."<sup>6</sup> This interpretation means that Christ no longer is superior to Christians: "Not the son, but only the father has a place in the gospel that Christ has preached."<sup>7</sup> Whereas in the former centuries Jesus Christ was adored as the only-begotten son of God, he now is honored as the first of many daughters and sons of God who are born of God as well. One believed not in Christ, but like Christ. Therefore, Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-45) contradicted preachers who presented marginal characters of the New Testament, like Mary sitting at Jesus' feet, poor Lazarus or the repentant thief at the cross, as an ideal of Christian piety. Bonhoeffer stated, "The Christian message does not want us to become one of those biblical characters. It wants us to be - like Christ himself."<sup>8</sup> Bonhoeffer regarded the growth up into Christ as a transition stage between the old life that was founded in the world and the new life that is founded in the creator of the world, and he was convinced that this transition stage is coming to its end. Now.<sup>9</sup>

Since then, Christians aspiring to realize their new relationship to God have increasingly become interested in the Jewish faith. They have become aware that there are people beside them who apparently for a long time already have been living in that relationship to God that they are entering now.<sup>10</sup> It was in the time before Jesus already when "the Pharisees undermined the concept of priestly intermediation by positing the possibility of a direct one-to-one relationship between the individual and God."<sup>11</sup> The Pharisees already were conscious of the boundless value of each single human soul: "Anyone who destroys a single human soul is reckoned by Scripture as having destroyed the entire world. And anyone who preserves a single soul it is as though he kept the entire world alive... For this reason everyone is obligated [bound by law] to say 'It was on my account that the world was created.'<sup>12</sup> They "ordained that the Shema - `Hear o Israel the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul and all thy might. And these commandments which I command thee this day shall be upon your hearts ...' - be said by every Jew twice daily, morning and evening. Since the Shema was the only

<sup>4</sup> Philipp Jacob Spener, *Pia Desideria*, edited by Kurt Aland, Berlin 1940, 76.

<sup>5</sup> Sören Kierkegaard, *Furcht und Zittern*, Werke III, rowohlt's klassiker 89, Reinbek 1961, 64.

<sup>6</sup> Adolf von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, Siebenstern-Taschenbuch 27, München and Hamburg 1964, 52.

<sup>7</sup> Loc. cit. p.92.

<sup>8</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethik*, Werke 6, München 1992, 141.

<sup>9</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, Werke 8, Gütersloh 1998, 529-535.

<sup>10</sup> Christoph Hinz, *Entdeckung der Juden als Brüder und Zeugen*, in: *Zeichen der Zeit*, Berlin 1984, 12-30; 42-47.

<sup>11</sup> Ellis Rivkin, *The Shaping of Jewish History*, New York 1971, 52 f.

<sup>12</sup> Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4:5; quoted from: Ellis Rivkin, loc. cit. 81.

Pentateuchal text elevated so high a status, its teaching must have been viewed as summing up the essence of God's revelation: that God was one; that Israel was committed to proclaiming this unity; that He demanded love and obedience."<sup>13</sup> Therefore, for a Jew neither a church nor a sound doctrine are fixed as an intermediary between God and the individual. "Christians still persist in their conviction that Jews could be saved only if they would testify their faith in Jesus Christ, and believing Jews hold fast their basic conviction that God requires of man moral acts and not creeds."<sup>14</sup>

The innovations that the Pharisees brought about are characteristic of Judaism to the present. "The Pharisaic revolution thus proved to be the decisive mutation of Judaism. It created the one and only form of Judaism which proved viable. As such, Pharisaism became a fundamental force in its own right, for every subsequent form of Judaism was either a variation or a mutation of the Pharisaic form."<sup>15</sup> There is a fundamental continuity from Pharisaism to Rabbinism.<sup>16</sup> It is this Judaism which many Christians are interested in today. The slogan of Shalom Ben-Chorin "the faith of Jesus unites us, the faith in Jesus divides us"<sup>17</sup> awakens in many Christians the awareness of a deeply founded solidarity with Jewry today. Now they understand that Jews, not because of blindness and stubbornness, refuse to receive Jesus Christ as Mediator, Saviour and God, but because of their loyalty to God and to their own life that is founded in God.

### **The "Blindness of the Jews" as Blindness of the Christians**

However, this statement about the "blindness and stubbornness the Jews" is found, it seems, in the New Testament already: "Their minds were blinded; for until this day, when they read the old testament, that same veil remains unlifted, because only in Christ it is taken away"(2 Cor 3:14). But, note carefully, Paul wrote "in Christ" and not "under Christ". "In Christ" is, according to Paul, everyone who just like Jesus himself is no longer under the law, since he is able to determine independently by the Holy Spirit what the will of God is (Gal 2:18-20). "Under Christ" is everyone who is called to grow up into this life that is founded in God, but has not yet entered it (1 Cor 3:1-3; Col 2:19; Eph 4:12b-16). That means the veil is not taken away if one adores Christ as a superior being, but only if one's life is founded in God like Jesus' life was.

At his time, Paul was sure that this new life would be given soon to all Jews: "Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved" (Rom 11:25-26a). Krister Stendahl wrote with respect to this verse: "It must be emphasized that Paul doesn't say: When the time of the Kingdom of God, of the perfection, will come, then Israel will receive Jesus as Messiah. He simply says: The time will come when 'all

<sup>13</sup> Ellis Rivkin, loc. cit. 66.

<sup>14</sup> Arthur Hertzberg, *Wer ist Jude?*, München/Wien 2000, 112.

<sup>15</sup> Ellis Rivkin, loc. cit. 83.

<sup>16</sup> *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol.26, Berlin/New York 1996, article "Pharisäer" by Hans-Friedrich Weiß, 481.

<sup>17</sup> Shalom Ben-Chorin, *Bruder Jesus*, München 1967, 11 f.

Israel will be saved' (11,26). It is remarkable that Paul writes this whole part of the letter to the Romans without mentioning the name of Jesus Christ (10:17-11:26). This includes the final doxology (11,33-36), the only doxology in his letters without any christological element."<sup>18</sup> Here, Paul didn't mean the salvation in the last judgment, but the incorporation into the new life that is no longer founded in the world, but in God. This incorporation is the presupposition for the resurrection of the dead and the last judgment (Rom 11:15) where everybody will be judged according to what he has done in the body (2 Cor 5:10).

Paul wrote this in a well-defined situation, that is, at the time of the "Pharisaic revolution"<sup>19</sup> when Judaism was about to separate from the cult and its priestly intermediaries in the temple and place the oral law above the written law, so that henceforward each one could in a self-reliant way determine God's will. "The role of the Pharisees contrasted sharply with that of the Aaronides. Whereas the essential power of the Aaronides had been concentrated in their expiatory role - no one could gain atonement if he bypassed the altar or resorted to non-aaronide priests - the Pharisees laid no claim to altar rights, nor did they offer themselves as intermediaries between the individual and God."<sup>20</sup> Instead, "the notion of a direct relationship, unmediated by priesthood, between the Father God and his sons had been nurtured by Pharisaism."<sup>21</sup> In this situation Paul had to learn that non-Jewish people who had been impressed by the spiritualization, the universalism and the individualism of the Hellenistic philosophy more quickly than the Jews were willing to turn toward the new life in connection with God. However, they saw this life as the goal they sought, but not yet as a reality to live in. Paul urged them to live and to walk in the freedom and self-reliance of the children of God (Gal 5:25; Gal 4:1-7; Gal 2:20; 1 Cor 3:1-3; 2 Cor 3:17; 2 Cor 5:17; Rom 6:4), and he was disappointed repeatedly when he learned how slow they were to follow (Gal 5:1-15; Phil 3:15-17; 2 Cor 11:1-15). Paul's helpers, who later wrote in Paul's name the letters to the Colossians and to the Ephesians, and who wrote the so-called first letter of Peter, too,<sup>22</sup> by authority of God conceded them more time for their growth up into Christ (Col 1:11; Eph 4:6-16; 1 Pet 2:2).

Jewry, on the other side, defined itself in the decades after the destruction of the temple as the community of those who know that their life is founded in the Lord and should be holy as He Himself is holy.<sup>23</sup> Hereby, the blindness to which Paul had attested some Jews at his time and from which he himself had suffered (Gal 1:13-18; Acts 9:1-19) was overcome.

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<sup>18</sup> Krister Stendahl, *Der Jude Paulus und wir Heiden*, München 1978, 14.

<sup>19</sup> Ellis Rivkin, loc. cit. 42-83. cp. Rosemary Ruether, *Nächstenliebe und Brudermord*, München 1978, 55-65.

<sup>20</sup> Ellis Rivkin, loc. cit. 52. cf. Rosemary Ruether, loc. cit. 56.

<sup>21</sup> Ellis Rivkin, loc. cit. 77.

<sup>22</sup> That these letters were written later by helpers of Paul is proved, for instance, in: Hans-Martin Schenke / Karl Martin Fischer, *Einleitung in die Schriften des Neuen Testaments I*, Berlin 1978, §§ 11, 12 and 14.

<sup>23</sup> Leo Baeck, *Das Wesen des Judentums*, Berlin 1905, 91 f.: "Only someone who has the support and purpose of his existence in the only one God is a Jew."

The Gentile Christians, however, understood themselves as the community of those who are to grow up into the Lord. As they were not yet able to join the Jew's relationship to God they only could take the Jew's refusal to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour as the result of an inexplicable blindness and stubbornness. In a new situation they perceived Paul's statement differently from its original meaning. This was a "mystification of the non-conversation"<sup>24</sup> that one can see hewn in stone still today at the portals of the medieval cathedrals where the crowned ecclesia rigidly and triumphantly looks over to the blindfolded synagogue with bowed head and a broken rod in her hand. In truth it was not the synagogue that was under a blindfold, but the ecclesia.

### **The New View of the Relation between Promise and Fulfillment**

Nevertheless, the conviction that the Christian church rules in triumph rested on a true and good certainty, namely, that Jesus Christ has entered upon his reign over the whole world in order to lead all the people to the Father. The Christians saw the promise of the Old Testament fulfilled in the reign of Jesus Christ. What follows, namely, the resurrection of the dead, the last judgment and the eternal life, was considered by Christians through many centuries no more than an appendix to that fact that was most important for them. This appendix "lead a peculiarly sterile existence at the end of Christian dogmatics."<sup>25</sup> But now that people recognize themselves as having been set in responsibility over the whole world so that they cannot have in it their homeland any more the last events have become of immediate interest. Christians have grown up into equality with Jesus Christ and recognize their lives founded in the Lord and Creator of the world. Their own lives now strive for self-realization outwards. Since their lives are founded in God, they long for the new world of God. That's why since 1964 the "Theology of Hope" has emerged. "The resurrected Christ reveals himself as living in so far as he is on the move, as he is walking on the way to his aim." His work "is not yet finished, is not yet completed."<sup>26</sup>

Therefore, the idea that the Old Testament offered the promise which would be fulfilled in the New Testament is replaced in today's Christian theology by another pattern of thought: The Old Testament bears witness to the growth of the Hebrews into the sonship of God, but the growth of the Christians into that aim is to be found in the history of Christianity. The fulfilment, however, still lies ahead.

At the end of the growth of the Hebrews they abandoned the cult in the temple with its priestly intermediaries, they advanced to a self-reliant recognition of God's will that was superior to the written law<sup>27</sup> and they threw Judaism open to all people.<sup>28</sup> From that time the Jews were waiting

<sup>24</sup> Rosemary Ruether, loc. cit. 59.

<sup>25</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Theologie der Hoffnung*, München 1965, 11.

<sup>26</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, loc. cit. 77.

<sup>27</sup> Rosemary Ruether, loc. cit. 56.

<sup>28</sup> Rosemary Ruether, loc. cit. 58.

for God's new world beyond sin and death while the Christians were growing up into their Lord. In Jewry, an important document of the transition from being enthusiastic and glad that God's Kingdom beyond sin and death has come near to an attitude of quiet waiting and urgent longing for it is the book IV.Ezra which was written a short time after the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Here, the writer asked the Lord: "How long shall we have to wait? When will that happen? Our life is so short and miserable." But the Lord gave him the answer: "Do you really want to hasten more than the Most High? For you want to hasten for your own sake, but the Most High hastens for the sake of many" (IV.Ezra 4:33 f.). Here, the word "many" means people from the Gentiles (IV.Ezra 5:28). For their sake the Jew has to wait. Since there is this difference between Jews and Christians, the Old Testament finds its continuation in the Talmud and in the New Testament as well.

Corresponding to the essence of the oral Torah, the Talmud is not a fixed law which has to be observed in slavish subservience, but it is a stimulus for self-reliant thinking and a basis for discussions. "The oral laws had the status of divine revelation, yet they were thrown open to scholarly debate. What was immutable was not the laws themselves, but the authority of the Pharisees over the laws."<sup>29</sup> It is possible to oppose the Talmud and even the written Torah in the Old Testament. For a faithful Jew, there is no problem in criticizing the Torah and contradicting it.<sup>30</sup> By himself he determines what the will of God is. For a Christian, however, the New Testament and the Old Testament are the word of God that stands above him and comes to him from outside and calls him into the fellowship with God. By diligent reading of the Bible, a Christian grows up more and more into the freedom of the children of God.

The Talmud has a peculiarity which a Christian should never yield to, and the New Testament has a peculiarity which a faithful Jew never can yield to: This peculiarity of the Talmud is its ceremonial law. "To the tasks having been set by the faith in God and by the faith in man must be added the duties that are grounded on the membership of the community and that are to be fulfilled by deeds as well... These are the manifold commandments, rules and institutions, ... which are usually summarized under the name ceremonial statutes."<sup>31</sup> They "should not be

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<sup>29</sup> Ellis Rivkin, loc. cit. 60.

<sup>30</sup> The prophets had no problem with contradicting the Torah (e.g. Hes 18:20 versus Ex 20:5), and a Jew of our days has no problem with it either. "Jewry views even in the so called 'enemy' the image of God and rejects what was sanctioned in Old-Israel: His extermination" (Walter Homolka / Albert Friedländer, Von der Sintflut ins Paradies. Der Friede als Schlüsselbegriff jüdischer Theologie. Darmstadt 1993. 2). The authors evidently turned against Ex 17:14-16, Deut 25:17-19, 1 Sam 15:2 f. More forthrightly still Arthur Hertzberg wrote: "The Nazis murdered six million Jews in order to cleanse the world from a so called inferior race... But we should not forget that on the conquest of the land of Canaan Jews also claimed the right for themselves to exterminate another people. In the Old Testament repeatedly there is to be found the command to exterminate the peoples of the idolaters who lived in this land, so that no traces of their idols or their immoral customs would remain. The conscience of the Jews was tormented by this history." They "know that the Talmud expresses itself on this point unmistakably: The merciless conquest of the promised land dates long, long back. It is forbidden to repeat anything similar at any time" (Arthur Hertzberg, Wer ist Jude? München, Wien 2000, 39-41).

<sup>31</sup> Leo Baeck, Das Wesen des Judentums, Berlin 1905, 150 f.

confused with the Torah, they were not appraised as 'good deeds', and they should be unnecessary in the future messianic times," but they are useful for the preservation of the Jewish community in the present time.<sup>32</sup> They gained in importance again in the time after the destruction of the temple, because the Jewry had to set boundaries against the still existing Hellenistic paganism and the already existing and rapidly expanding Gentile Christianity. These statutes should remind the Jews again and again that they are Jews and not heathens or Christians. Originally, from the time of the Pharisees it was clear that someone who is his own High Priest and offers sacrifices that please God by prayer, repentance and charity<sup>33</sup> stands beyond the ceremonial statutes and ties to a certain people. But, as long as the people from the Gentiles were still on the way to this level of consciousness, Jewry had to preserve itself in its peculiarity by such means that actually didn't correspond to its essence.

When Christians realize this they learn that it is never suitable for them to accept the ceremonial statutes of the Jews. To celebrate a "Christian Passover", as it has become customary in some Christian parishes today, is an error. Though being free to take over elements from other liturgies, a Christian should ultimately form a Christian liturgy and not a Jewish one. When Christians emphasize today that Jesus was a Jew,<sup>34</sup> this does not mean that Christians should ultimately become Jews, and even more it does not intend to make the Jews out to be good Christians. But, it indicates that they enter into the same relationship to God in which Jews live already. "It is not the best among the peoples, but the fewest (Deut 7:7), however, it is most adult."<sup>35</sup> Christians are not ultimately to receive Judaism, but to become adult in their own belief.

Hence, it would be an error and a wrong path, too, if Christians were to plead for the rebuilding of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. Certainly, such a temple could be a symbol of the recovered sovereignty, but to wish to exercise anew the cult of sacrifices in it would mean to wish to go back into a previous stage in the history of salvation where there was not yet a direct one-to-one relationship of the individual to God.

Regardless, the Christian support of the Jewish claim to sovereignty over Israel and Jerusalem is right. When Jewry eventually loses its exceptional position because of the growth of the other peoples into that relationship to God in which the Jews have been living for a long time already, the return to normalcy requires the return of its land and traditional capital. "Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled", is foretold in the New Testament (Luke 21:24; cf. Rev 11,2 b). Being aware that the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled now, Christians should support the claim of the Jews to sovereignty over Israel and Jerusalem as

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<sup>32</sup> "Baeck acknowledged their utility for the preservation of the community - whereas the orthodoxy was offended of course by this liberal attitude to the ritual" (Albert Friedländer, Leo Baeck: Leben und Lehre, 2.edition Gütersloh 1996, 102.

<sup>33</sup> Roesemary Ruether, loc. cit. 60.

<sup>34</sup> Umkehr und neue Einsicht - Kirchliche Versuche einer Verhältnisbestimmung von Juden und Christen. Eine Materialsammlung des Evangelischen Arbeitskreises Kirche und Israel in Hessen und Nassau, 1990. 23-27.

<sup>35</sup> Schalom Ben-Chorin, Die Antwort des Jona, Hamburg 1956, 97.

well as their readiness to grant the same civil rights to Jewish and non-Jewish citizens who live there.

The peculiarity of the New Testament lies in this: There takes place inside the New Testament a retrogression concerning the relationship to God from the main witnesses Jesus, Paul and John to the later writings. The good news of the opening of the sonship declines in favor of the message that Christians are to grow up into this sonship. This is understandable if one considers that the Christians from the Gentiles who had not been exposed to the Old Testament history were not able to live immediately in the sonship of God. Instead, the Messiah interceded for them as mediator between God and man in order to grant them time for growth. This was a retrogression from the direct relationship to God that had been reached already in the Pharisaic movement: "Pharisaism released the Jew ... from the dependence on a priestly intermediary or a historical justification, whereas the latter remained binding on the church by its messianic heritage and the former was developed anew by the church in a revived priesthood and a vicarious system of sacrifice."<sup>36</sup> So it is impossible for a Jew, if he wants to remain true to God and to himself, to accept the faith of the Christians from the Gentiles in a Messiah as mediator.

### **Should there be a Christian Mission to the Jews?**

Realizing this, a Christian arrives at an important conclusion: To wish to place the Jews under the mediator Jesus Christ would mean to wish to make them more remote from the Father than they are. This is not the will of the Father. Mission shall lead people to the Father and not remove them from Him. The idea that the Christians would be given the commission to do mission work among Jews would presuppose that the Christians have something concerning their relationship to God that the Jews do not yet have. This cannot be a life under a mediator who grants us time for growth to the Father. Franz Rosenzweig wrote: "We agree in estimating the relevance of Christ and his church for the world: No one comes to the Father, but by him. No one comes to the Father - it is another thing, however, if someone needs not come to the Father, since he is with Him already. And this is the case of the people of Israel (not of the single Jew)."<sup>37</sup> Not only Jesus, but also the Pharisees in the time before him, addressed God as Father: "God, so the Pharisees taught, was preeminently a Father, not only the Father of a people, but the Eternal Father of the individual."<sup>38</sup> In this regard, Jesus was not saying anything new. And just like the Pharisees he wanted to honour only the Father: "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone" (Mark 10:18). Jesus' conformity with the Pharisees seems to have been much more extensive than it may appear to a Christian from a superficial reading of the New Testament.<sup>39</sup> In

<sup>36</sup> Rosemary Ruether, loc. cit. 59 f.

<sup>37</sup> Franz Rosenzweig, Briefe, edited by E. Rosenzweig, 73 f.

<sup>38</sup> Ellis Rivkin, loc. cit. 57.

<sup>39</sup> Harvey Falk, Jesus the Pharisee. A New Look at the Jewishness of Jesus, New York 1985; Klaus Berger, Jesus als Pharisäer und frühe Christen als Pharisäer. In: Novum Testamentum. An international quarterly for New Testament and related studies, vol.30, Leiden 1988, 231-262.



fact, the question arises whether Jesus stood for anything new at all that fundamentally differed from the teaching of the Pharisees. If the answer would be that he did so, the Christian mission to the Jews would be justified. This mission, however, would not offer the faith of the Gentile Christians to the Jews, but the faith that Jesus himself had in the Father.

### **The New Thing that Jesus Brought Did Not Separate Him from the Pharisees**

What Jesus brought was indeed radically new, but it emerged from the "Pharisaic revolution". The increasing in quantity led to a jump into a new quality. "The Pharisees elevated the individual above the cultic system, even as they preserved the cult. They did not make a direct frontal assault against the Temple, but confirmed the legitimacy of its function at the same time as they were depriving the cultic system of its central importance. They made the cultus less relevant, and dimmed its luster, by focusing attention on the individual and his salvation."<sup>40</sup> For a good deed they awaited the reward and for an evil one the punishment from the Lord in the world to come;<sup>41</sup> but this conviction soon turned into the other conviction that he who fulfills God's commandments out of love is the best Pharisee.<sup>42</sup> Not in Jesus' sermon on the mount only, but also in the Talmud there is to be found the message of boundless love: "Those who are insulted but do not insult, hear their shame but do not reply, act out of love and rejoice in suffering, of them it was written: 'And those who love Him will be as the sun in its splendor.'"<sup>43</sup> Likewise, "in Judaism the idea of the consequences of good and evil deeds has developed from naive hope for reward and fear of punishment up to the highest moral consciousness: 'The reward of the good deed is the good deed and the punishment of the sin is the sin.'"<sup>44</sup> In their conviction that they could speed up the coming of the Kingdom of God by doing the will of God as a farmer exercises an auspicious influence on the coming harvest by good cooperation with the soil they advocated a naive synergism;<sup>45</sup> but soon it turned into the certainty that they are fellow workers of the almighty Lord: "All things are foreseen; but freedom is given."<sup>46</sup>; In IV Ezra 6:6, that is in late Pharisaism, the Lord says: "Then I have forethought all things, and through me and no one else they were created; just so the end will come through me and no one else."

The apostle Paul's words "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure"(Phil 2:12b-13) and "we are God's fellow workers"(1 Cor 3:9) originate from this Pharisaic way of thinking. Man's existence is no

<sup>40</sup> Ellis Rivkin, loc. cit. 53.

<sup>41</sup> Ellis Rivkin, loc. cit. 53; 82.

<sup>42</sup> Der Jerusalemer Talmud in deutscher Übersetzung I, 1975, 242 f.

<sup>43</sup> Adin Steinsaltz, The Essential Talmud, Bantam books edition New York 1976, 205.

<sup>44</sup> Die Lehren des Judentums nach den Quellen vol.1, new edited by Walter Homolka, München 1999, 83; the quotation "the reward of the good deed is the good deed and the punishment of the sin is the sin" is written in Sayings of the Fathers IV,2.

<sup>45</sup> Gerd Theissen / Annette Merz, Der historische Jesus, 2.edition Göttingen 1997, 211.

<sup>46</sup> Sayings of the Fathers, chapter 3.

longer founded in this world face to face with its Creator, but it is founded now in God Himself. As the Stoics proclaimed at that time that man is a child of the universe who has to take part in the will of the universe,<sup>47</sup> so proclaimed the Pharisees that man is a child of the Creator and Saviour of the universe who has to take part in His will.

When Jesus proclaimed that we have become children of God who are able to recognize His will and to do it in this world,<sup>48</sup> this lay in the trend of the Pharisaic development. He did not separate himself from the Jews in this. He surpassed the Pharisees in the divine authority by which he proclaimed the beginning of the sonship of God and the nearness of the Kingdom of God beyond sin and death (Mark 1:22; 1:27; 2:12; 5:42; 9:15; Matt 7:28 f.; 12:23; 13:54; 22:33; Luke 5:26; 9:43), by which he forgave sins and healed sick people (Mark 2:1-12 par.). But, this did not divide him fundamentally from the Pharisees. The Pharisees also saw themselves charged with calling the sinners, because they did not separate themselves from them as the Essenes did; they also proclaimed the beginning of the sonship of God and the nearness of the Kingdom of God, and they even cast out demons (Matt 12:27; Luke 11:19).<sup>49</sup> If they were a scandal for the Aaronides, the nobility of the temple, Jesus was all the more so. And, the Romans viewed him as the ringleader of a politically criminal movement.

The notion that the Jews would be under the law whereas the Christians are given freedom in the sonship of God does not stand up to examination. When Jews today deliberately place themselves under the Torah, they no longer do so as faithful partners in the covenant with God, but as free and self-reliant children of God, giving an argumentation that may convince even non-Jews: "Thoughtlessness is the true ungodliness, is the homelessness of the soul. From it, from this absence of mystery and commandment, the law wants to protect us; it wants to give every surface its symbol, every prose its metaphor. Everyone shall be made priest of his own life. This is the reason for the abundance of customs, statutes and ordinances... A form of life is prepared here, although the danger that lies in every style of life remained present, that this form ceases to be something personal and living of someone and becomes something merely external, merely traditional. Even the 'law' had these downsides. What should be sanctification sometimes turned out to be mere routine and exercise of tradition. But even then it was better than the absence of any style of life at all. And it contains the power to awake again and again and to recover its soul."<sup>50</sup> Here in freedom one contemplates the meaning and relevance of the law, and

<sup>47</sup> Marc Aurel, *Self-Observations*, Second Book, Nr.9: "You should always realize what the nature of the universe and what your own nature is, which relationship this has to that and which part of which whole you are, and then you should take care that nobody may hinder you to do or to say what harmonizes with the nature you yourself are a part of it."

<sup>48</sup> Jürgen Becker, *Jesus von Nazaret*, Berlin / New York 1996, 349-358.

<sup>49</sup> Here appears a defect in Rivkin's presentation of the Pharisees: "The Pharisees ... claimed no expiatory powers, as Jesus was subsequently to be reminded (Mark 2:6-12). Their function was to teach the demands of the twofold Law, and to urge the individual to abide by them (Ellis Rivkin, loc. cit. 52).

<sup>50</sup> Leo Baeck, *Geheimnis und Gebot*, in: *Jüdischer Glaube. Eine Auswahl aus zwei Jahrtausenden*. Edited by Kurt Wilhelm, pp. 487-500; quotation p.498.

by one's own decision places oneself under it. The primal fact is here the freedom in the sonship of God, and the decision for a certain form of life is only the consequence of it.

It was just this freedom that enabled Paul to decide to make known to the Greeks not the entire Torah, but only its moral parts which were summarized in the commandment of love (Rom 13:8-10), and moreover, the catalogues of vices and virtues of the Greek moralizers (Phil 4:8; Phil 2:1-4; Gal 5:19-22; 1 Cor 6: 9-10; 1 Cor 13) in order to make God's will clear to them. Out of this freedom he did not prescribe to them a fixed form of worship, but he admonished them only that all things should be done with understanding, decently and in order (1 Cor 14).

Evidently, Jesus was not the only one to live and advocate freedom in the sonship of God that he proclaimed. Since then, it has become the public property of the Jews. In his book "The Essence of Judaism", it is not the covenant that Leo Baeck designates as the basic idea for the self-understanding of the Jews, but the image of God. There is nothing that mission to the Jews could add. Concerning the relationship to God, the Christian belief has nothing to offer that Judaism does not already have. So it has become obvious once again: Christian mission to the Jews does not make sense and is not in accordance with the will of God. Even a dialogue, in the strict sense of this word, is not possible, for in a dialogue both partners recognize something new and then change, but in a conversation of the Christians with the Jews concerning the relationship to God only the Christians can change. Therefore, the Christians should keep open the possibility for the Jews of being a light to the nations (Is 42:6-8; Is 49:6; Is 60:1-3).

In the Evangelical Church in Germany this realization has found its expression in the new liturgy book for the divine service. In the old liturgy book of 1959 it was still written: "Let us also pray for the Jews who do not believe in Jesus Christ: O God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. You do not forget the promise that you gave the patriarchs. Remember your people of Israel and grant that the Jews too may recognize the light of your truth, our Lord Jesus Christ, and praise him with the whole Christendom. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."<sup>51</sup> In the new liturgy book that was issued in 1999, however, is written: "Let us pray for the people of the Jews that God has called at first and elected to be witnesses of His love: Eternal God, you have promised Abraham, Sarah and their descendants your blessing. Through Moses you have made known to Israel your will. You let Jesus Christ become man amid this people. Preserve your affection and faithfulness to Israel and let us have a part in your promise through Christ, our Lord. Amen."<sup>52</sup> The first text obviously is still based on the idea that Christians have something that Jews do not yet have, but the second text is based on the idea that Jews have something that Christians are to participate in subsequently.

<sup>51</sup> Agende für die Evangelische Kirche der Union, 1.Band: Die Gemeindegottesdienste. 2.Aufl. Witten 1969, 222.

<sup>52</sup> Evangelisches Gottesdienstbuch. Agende für die Evangelische Kirche der Union und für die Vereinigte Evangelisch-Lutherische Kirche Deutschlands, Berlin/Bielefeld/Hannover 1999, 589.

This understanding, however, that Christians should not convert the Jews, but should keep open for them the opportunity of living according to their own relationship to God, should not lead to the conclusion that on the contrary Christians are charged to hinder Jews from turning toward Christian belief. The right to one's own decision is to be conceded to them as it is to everybody.<sup>53</sup>

### **The Dogma of Trinity is Valid for Christians Only, and it has Accomplished its Purpose**

Yet, this text of the new liturgy book of 1999 gives rise to further inquiry. How can a Christian share in the promise to Israel when he believes what the Jew denies, namely, that God the Father let God the Son become man? How does the belief in the triune God harmonize with the prayer that God may preserve his faithfulness to those who renounce this belief? Does his affection and faithfulness consist in his will to finally grant even the Jews the belief in the triune God or to give them the power of his spirit that they may keep faith in the way they did until now? If the first were to be the case the Christian, after all, would have something that the Jew does not yet have, and the prayer to share in the promise to Israel would hardly harmonize with it. If the second were to be the case the dogma of the Trinity would only be valid for those who are on the way to the Father through Jesus Christ, but not for those who are living in the Father's fellowship already. This text seems to tend to this consequence, but does not articulate it. In its logical inconsistency this text proves to be a witness of the transition from the one way of thinking to the other.

When, finally, the Christian has grown up completely to be on a level of equality with the Son of God the Trinitarian dogma has accomplished its purpose. This dogma was assigned to make people know that God not only has love, but also is love (1 Jn 4:16b).<sup>54</sup> It corresponds to his essence when he turns toward people in order to set them free for new life in fellowship with him. Since he sets free the people from the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ belongs to his essence. In Jesus Christ God has revealed himself to the Gentiles in his intrinsic essence, that is, as the boundless loving God.

When Christ says in the fourth gospel "no one comes to the Father, but by me" (Jn 14:6), he does not mean to characterize all the principalities and powers of this world as in thrall to Satan, but he wants to testify to the true and eternal life that was made manifest in him (Jn 1:4) and towards which the whole world is oriented (Jn 3:17). To follow him is God's will for all those who have

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<sup>53</sup> When today people of Jewish origin who had lived in atheistic surroundings and way of thinking are in quest of a belief Christians should draw their attention first to the various tendencies of Judaism, and only after this, if these people desire to get to know the Christian belief too, should Christians offer their own faith. When in this situation someone decides to become a Christian or a "messianic Jew" his or her decision should be accepted, unless it was taken under the influence of financial or social inducement, relying on Christ being the way to the Father even for them. It is not permissible to prevent them from becoming a member of a Christian church.

<sup>54</sup> Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik II,1*, Zollikon 1958, 367-394.

not yet arrived at the Father. Even when a Christian has come to the life in the fellowship with the Father he knows that he has come there through Jesus Christ, and that's why even in his new situation he recognizes God as the triune. But now he can understand that the Jews entered into the freedom of the children of God through God's covenant with Israel and the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, and that therefore Jews and Christians recognize God differently. So the question whether Jews and Christians believe in the same God is to be answered by "yes" and "no" as well. He is believed in as the same since the freedom of the children of God is the same, but he is manifested differently since the way to this freedom of the children of God is different.

### **The Meaning of Christ's Resurrection that has Already Come to Pass**

A Christian in the past centuries was certain of God's coming kingdom beyond sin and death and of the accompanying future resurrection of the dead in the already accomplished resurrection of his Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>55</sup> A faithful Jew had this certainty in himself.<sup>56</sup> However, the Christian conception of Christ's resurrection was not always the same, but even in this conception a development is recognizable that finally led to a sudden change into a new quality. Whereas in the early Christianity, Christ's resurrection was comprehended as his enthronement to reign over angels, human beings and devils (Phil 2:6-11)<sup>57</sup> and as dethronement of death (2 Tim 1:10), so that by Jesus Christ the resurrection may come to all the people (1 Cor 15:21), in the following centuries the consciousness of belonging to this resurrected Christ grew: "You made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you", prayed Augustine,<sup>58</sup> and he admonished the reader: "Follow the Lord ..., that the lights in the firmament of heaven may shine even for you: this cannot be achieved if your heart is not there."<sup>59</sup> Luther testified "that the Son of God has suffered and is risen, and all this for me, for my sins."<sup>60</sup> By faith "you are so welded together with him that from you and him emerges, as it were, one person which cannot be

<sup>55</sup> For instance, in the sixth verse of Paul Gerhardt's Easter song "Auf auf, mein Herz, mit Freuden" ("rise up, my heart, rejoice"): "Ich hang und bleib auch hangen an Christo als ein Glied; wo mein Haupt durch ist ganges, da nimmt er mich auch mit. Er reißet durch den Tod, durch Welt, durch Sünd, durch Not, er reißet durch die Höll; ich bin stets sein Gesell." ("I cling and remain clinging to Christ as a member; where my head has passed through he takes me along. He presses forward through death, through world, through sin, through distress, he presses forward through hell. I am always his follower.")

<sup>56</sup> Moses Maimonides wrote in the last two of his 13 articles of faith: "I believe with complete conviction in the appearing of the Messiah, and even though he tarries I wait for his coming every day. I believe with complete conviction that a resurrection of the dead will take place at the time that pleases the Creator."

<sup>57</sup> Paul strove to correct the understanding of this early Christian hymn in Phil 2:6-11 by making clear in Phil 2:5 that we ourselves are called to live "in Christ" and that it is not sufficient to adore him as Lord only (cf. Ernst Käsemann, *Kritische Analyse von Phil. 2,5-11*, in: E.Käsemann, *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen*, vol.1, Göttingen 1960, 51-95; 90-92).

<sup>58</sup> Des heiligen Augustinus Bekenntnisse, lateinisch-deutsch, übertragen und eingeleitet von Hubert Schiel, Freiburg 1959, 1: "Fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te."

<sup>59</sup> loc. cit. 377: "Sequere dominum ..., ut fiant et tibi luminaria in firmamento caeli: quod non fiet, nisi fuerit illic cor tuum."

<sup>60</sup> Martin Luther, *Werke*, Weimarer Ausgabe 39,1 45,9: "Credo quidem filium Dei passum et resuscitatum, sed hoc totum pro me, pro peccatis meis."

separated, but you always hold fast to him, saying: I am like Christ, and conversely Christ would say: I am like that sinner, for he holds fast to me and I hold fast to him."<sup>61</sup>

In consequence to this statement, Rudolf Bultmann focused the essence of the gospel of Christ's resurrection into the message that the believer himself who adheres to Christ has been given the foundation of his life in the Lord and Creator of the world: "Cross and resurrection form a unity, being together the one 'cosmic' event, by which the world has been judged and the possibility of true life has been procured."<sup>62</sup> Now the certainty of eternal life in God's coming kingdom cannot lie any longer in lifting up one's eyes to the resurrected Christ while being based in this world and at home in it and relying on it, but in having died with Christ and having been brought to newness of life with him.

Here a fundamental revolution has taken place. Whereas in the past time the new life of a Christian was hid with Christ in God in order to appear with him in the future time (Col 3:3 f.) now it has come about that: "We not only shall in the future walk with him in newness of life and be one with him in the likeness of his resurrection (Rom 6:4 f.), but we already are: 'So you must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.' (Rom 6:11)."<sup>63</sup> What Bonhoeffer characterized as the transition from religious into nonreligious Christianity<sup>64</sup> has taken place here. Now a Christian has the cause of his hope in himself. The vehement debate that was aroused by Bultmann's program of demythologization of biblical texts by existentialist interpretation testifies to the awareness of the Christians at that time of having arrived at a very important turning-point in the growth of Christian belief.

Whereas in former times Christians accepted the apocalyptic message of the Bible as truth because it is written in the Holy Scripture originating directly or indirectly from Jesus Christ, they now are asked whether and how much they themselves can agree to it, whether and how much they can approve it by their own existence. This change began already in the last years before Bultmann in the "Liberal Theology" where Johannes Weiß raised the question whether he like Jesus could hope and long for God's kingdom as "simply an ultramundane fact that absolutely contrasts to this world."<sup>65</sup> He gave himself and his readers the answer: "We don't pray any more: May grace come and the world pass away, but we live in the joyful confidence that

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<sup>61</sup> Martin Luther, Werke, Weimarer Ausgabe 40,1 285,24: "Verum recte docenda est fides, quod per eam sic conglutineris Christo, ut ex te et ipso fiat quasi una persona quae non possit segregari sed perpetuo adhaerescat ei et dicat: Ego sum ut Christus, et vicissim Christus dicat: Ego sum ut ille peccator, quia adhaeret mihi, et ego illi."

<sup>62</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, Neues Testament und Mythologie, in: Kerygma und Mythos 1, 4.edition, Hamburg-Bergstedt 1960, 15-48; 44. This article was published for the first time in 1941.

<sup>63</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, loc. cit. 45.

<sup>64</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Widerstand und Ergebung, letters to a friend of April 30, May 5, June 8, July 8, July 16, July 18, July 21, 1944.

<sup>65</sup> Johannes Weiß, Die Predigt Jesu vom Reiche Gottes, 1892, 49 f.

this world will more and more become the scene of a 'mankind of God'.<sup>66</sup> Albert Schweitzer on the one hand agreed to this by declaring that Jesus was wrong when he expected the end of the world, but on the other hand he emphasized that Jesus' "mighty individual ethics make us know that whoever wants to lend a hand in building God's kingdom can succeed only if he routinely cleanses himself spiritually and makes himself independent from the world."<sup>67</sup> This second idea appeared a short time later in radical form in Bultmann's theology: Faith is "the renunciation of reliance on oneself and the decision to rely on God only who raises the dead (2 Cor 1:9), who calls in existence the things that do not exist (Rom 4:17), the radical devotion to God that expects all things from God and nothing from oneself, the consequent disengagement from all worldly disposable things, that is the attitude of dewardification, of freedom."<sup>68</sup> Herewith the foundation of the hope for God's new world beyond sin and death was laid.

Bultmann himself however had not yet a sense for the apocalyptic message of the Bible. For him it was enough to know that the world has been crucified to him, and he to the world (Gal 6:14). He was satisfied in proclaiming the "dewardification". According to his conviction, world history goes on incessantly,<sup>69</sup> and "the openness of the Christian existence never comes to an end."<sup>70</sup> It was to be expected that after him other Christians could no longer be content with the present established world, but increasingly would long for a new world that is definitely changed for the good. "The openness of the Christian existence will come to an end, for it is not an openness to a future that remains empty, but it has Christ's future as presupposition, and finds its realization in it", wrote Moltmann in opposition to Bultmann.<sup>71</sup> But in comparison with the biblical message, Moltmann's hope was still deficient. "Reconciliation to God", "remission of sins and removal of ungodliness", as well as "realization of eschatological hope for justice (at the second coming), humanization of man, socialization of mankind, and peace of the whole creation"<sup>72</sup> he waited for and he longed for, but he made no comment on overcoming of transitoriness of life and death.

Dorothee Sölle went a little further with her expectation of setting right all things.<sup>73</sup> By degrees, the consciousness of the Christians is approaching the standard that the Jews had reached already

<sup>66</sup> Johannes Weiß, loc. cit. 67.

<sup>67</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben Jesu Forschung*, 4. edition 1926, 639-642.

<sup>68</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, loc. cit. 29.

<sup>69</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, loc. cit. 18.

<sup>70</sup> These are the last words in Bultmann's book "Das Urchristentum im Rahmen der antiken Religionen" ("Early Christianity within the Framework of Ancient Religions").

<sup>71</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *Theologie der Hoffnung*, München 1965, 177.

<sup>72</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, loc. cit. 303.

<sup>73</sup> dorothee sölle, *meditationen & gebrauchstexte (meditations and texts for use)*, 4. edition, Berlin 1982, 7:

"'does evil befall a city, unless the lord has done it';

can an aborted child struggle again;

can a soldier who is frozen to death sing again 'all the birds are here already';

can a man sentenced to life imprisonment be granted a pardon;

can even a doll be made whole again;

at the time of the Pharisees: "The Pharisees preserved the essential doctrinal propositions of the apocalyptic: the resurrection of the dead and the eternal world beyond history."<sup>74</sup>

The negative side of this evolution was the increasingly manifested inability of many people to be certain of the resurrection. The more they became free and self-reliant, the more they lost their life. What was still a nightmare at the beginning of the 19th century in Jean Paul's writings<sup>75</sup> became a reality at the end of the 19th century in Nietzsche's writings: God is dead and everything is futile.<sup>76</sup> In consequence, there arose the will to power or at least the conviction that one had to defend oneself. Among the "enemies" who were to be beaten were, first of all, the Jews. From the Christian-ecclesiastical anti-Semitism that was in existence in prior centuries arose modern anti-Semitism.<sup>77</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in his book "Ethics" at the time of World War II: "Today there are evil-doers and saints again, and in public too."<sup>78</sup> Just as at that time one has to realize today as well: To let evil-doers have their way would not bring about peace. It is necessary to be proof against them and to offer them the opportunity as well to turn from their wickedness and to begin a new life.

The Evolution of the Understanding of the Relevance of Christ's Death on the Cross to Salvation Since Christians were in transition from a life under the rules of this world to the freedom of the children of God, Jesus' death on the cross was of central importance for them. But even in the understanding of the relevance of this event to salvation, there we can recognize an evolution that finally led to a sudden change into a new quality. Not from the beginning Christians could be "in Christ" entirely and affirm that they have died to sin and have come to life with him (Rom 6). To bridge the gap (that for the present is still enormous) between themselves and the holy God, they were inclined to comprehend Christ the crucified as expiatory lamb.<sup>79</sup> They made clear

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can a smile come back into a face that has become blank;  
 can tears dry;  
 will it cease to stink between krakow and kattowice;  
 will a stone fall upwards again,  
 a lightning and a contaminated rain;  
 can the sold thing belong to no one again;  
 can an exhausted man be unused again;  
 AGAIN a word of the new language we will need it,  
 when our golden trumpets will blow down the walls;  
 all the walls.

<sup>74</sup> Rosemary Ruether, loc. cit. 62.

<sup>75</sup> Jean Paul, Werke II, Darmstadt 1959, Siebenkäs (pp.7-565), erstes Blumenstück, Rede des toten Christus vom Himmelsgebäude herab, dass kein Gott sei ("oration of the dead Christ from the firmament that there is no God") (pp.266-271).

<sup>76</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, Der tolle Mensch, in: Die fröhliche Wissenschaft, drittes Buch, Nr.125.

<sup>77</sup> Martin Krapf, Kein Stein bleibt auf dem anderen: Die christliche Schuld am Antisemitismus, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1999, 67-85.

<sup>78</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Werke 6, München 1992, 62.

<sup>79</sup> The phrase "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world"(John 1:29), was already in existence before the fourth evangelist used it (Rudolf Bultmann, Das Evangelium des Johannes, Berlin 1963, 66 f.). He quoted it, but



to themselves their vocation to grow up to the Lord by the metaphor of redemption: "You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot"(1 Pet 1:18 f.).

In Irenaeus (140-202) there is to be found the first form of the recapitulation theory: "In the flesh of our Lord was made manifest the Father's light, and from his flesh a splendour comes into us, and thus man attains to eternal life, surrounded with the light of the Father."<sup>80</sup> "What we in Adam spoiled with regard to our life in the image of God we got back in Jesus Christ."<sup>81</sup> Here it is not the death of the Son of God that is under discussion and not the death of the old self, separated from God, so that it may begin a new life in the fellowship with God, but the splendour of the eternal God that comes to men through Jesus Christ, re-establishing their original image of God. Jesus brings recovery of the deformed present human existence, but not its radical renewal.

More thoroughgoing is the second form of the recapitulation theory that originates from Athanasius (295-373): "In order to die he takes a body, so that he may take over the sentence passed upon all mortals. For the sake of all the people he satisfies death and yet remains immortal by his inherent divinity, and as a result there comes to an end, by the grace of resurrection, the mortality to which all people are condemned."<sup>82</sup> "He came in flesh, so that we would be deified."<sup>83</sup> The radical otherness of eternal life compared with transitory life is what is spoken of here. God wants to save us not by improving and ennobling our transitory life on earth, but by granting us a radically different life, that is, eternal life. "The almighty Creator himself carries into effect the redemption which lies in conveying the creature that has fallen into sin to its original purpose again."<sup>84</sup> Here, the participation in the divine eternal life is more emphasized than the forgiveness of sins. The good works ensue from the divine redemption as a sign of gratitude. They are desired, but they are not necessary to salvation.

In Augustine (354-430) as well as in Occidental theology as a whole, the problem of the relation between sin and grace becomes the center of interest. Is it possible to work one's way into fellowship with God? Are good deeds necessary for attaining eternal salvation? These questions indicate that the individual has become more active and self-reliant. Augustine answered these questions in the affirmative at first, but then he changed his mind after a thorough reading of the

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he did not explain it in his own theology. Whoever as friend and not as servant of the divine revealer (Jn 15:14 f.) also does the works that he does (Jn 14:12) is not in need of a mediating expiatory lamb. Likewise Paul in Rom 3:25 used an already existing interpretation of Jesus' death on the cross (Ernst Käsemann, *An die Römer*, Tübingen 1973, 89-94) with the intention of emphasizing that now after having been justified by faith (Rom 3:28) and freed from sin (Rom 6:7) we no longer need an expiatory lamb.

<sup>80</sup> Irenaeus, *Opera*, ed. by W.W.Harvey, Cambridge 1857, 4,20,2.

<sup>81</sup> Irenaeus, *loc. cit.* 3,18,1.

<sup>82</sup> Athanasius, *Werke*, ed. H.G.Opitz, Berlin 1934, c.9.

<sup>83</sup> Athanasius, *loc. cit.* c.54.

<sup>84</sup> Bengt Hägglund, *Geschichte der Theologie*, Berlin 1983, 61.

Bible, whereby he was given to view himself a little more from the standpoint of God. We all are under the dominion of sin, he taught, and we cannot free ourselves from it by our own power. God the Father redeemed us by giving up his Son to death as a ransom. Now we are no longer forced to sin, but still we can commit sin. God enabled us to fight against the sin in us by our own power with aid of God.<sup>85</sup>

The way of thinking became more radical in Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109). In his theology, the theory of satisfaction was developed to its classical form: Since God's honour is offended boundlessly,<sup>86</sup> a boundless expiation is necessary. A man cannot make it, even by his own death, for his value is limited, and even the value of all the people in total is limited. God himself must intercede for man. God the Father must deliver to death his only-begotten Son in order to restore the honour of the injured person as well as of the evil-doer. And God the Son can make a vicarious atonement in favor of man, because he is not only very God, but also very man.<sup>87</sup> Here human thinking has advanced to the conception of the infinity of God's honour as well as of human sin. Hence man goes on living as a finite being, yet has become conscious that true life is actually infinite.

From there the revolution of thinking in Martin Luther's (1483-1546) theology occurred: Christ on the cross takes over to himself not only our punishment, but also our sin itself, and in the countermove he transfers to us his righteousness. This Luther called "the joyful interchange and contrast".<sup>88</sup> Whereas in Anselm's theology man remained a finite existence of this world, in Luther's theology he is radically changed. He himself has become a sinless child of God, even though his deeds do not yet correspond to this state. Thence he increases in sanctity. God himself enables him to grow up to sanctity, because the inner righteousness insists on realizing itself in deeds of sanctity.

In this idea of growth to sanctity on the base of the already granted new life in fellowship with God Luther looked forward to the further development. Consistent with Luther, Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834) taught that by the suffering of God's Son on the cross not only is his righteousness transferred completely to us, but in addition also a part of his ethical perfection.<sup>89</sup>

In the 20th Century the goal of this growth was reached. Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930) proclaimed the boundless value of each single human soul.<sup>90</sup> In Karl Barth's (1886-1968)

<sup>85</sup> Friedrich Loofs, *Leitfaden zum Studium der Dogmengeschichte*, 7. edition Tübingen 1968, 285-287.

<sup>86</sup> Anselm von Canterbury, *Cur Deus Homo - Warum Gott Mensch geworden*, München 1956, 1. book, c.21: *Nondum considerasti quanti ponderis sit peccatum* ("you have not yet considered of which weight the sin is.").

<sup>87</sup> Anselm of Canterbury, loc. cit. 2. book, c.19.

<sup>88</sup> Martin Luther, loc. cit. vol. 7, p.55, l.11-14; vol.10,III, p.358, l.10; letters vol.1, p.35; cf. Theobald Beer, *Der fröhliche Wechsel und Streit*, Leipzig 1974.

<sup>89</sup> Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, *Glaubenslehre*, § 110.

<sup>90</sup> Adolf von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums*, Siebenstern-Taschenbuch 27, München and Hamburg 1964, 52.

theology, God in Christ's death and resurrection has rejected me myself as an individual trusting in this world and chosen me to be his servant.<sup>91</sup> According to Bultmann (1884-1976), faith in the cross of Christ means taking up Christ's cross as one's own cross.<sup>92</sup> And, Bonhoeffer stated: "Whoever starts following Christ resigns himself to his death,"<sup>93</sup> in order to live henceforth wholeheartedly out of the Spirit of God. "In this the disciple's righteousness is real righteousness, that they themselves now do the will of God, fulfil the law."<sup>94</sup> These last four affirmations suggest that the Christian has now entered an unmediated relationship with God.

Looking back, he can now criticize the traditional doctrines of Christ's mediating function: "God gave his Son for the forgiveness of sins, as sacrifice. How the good news was suddenly all over! The guilt offering, and this in its most loathsome, barbarian form, the offering of the innocent for the sins of the guilty people! What horrible paganism! Surely Jesus had abolished the conception of 'guilt', he had denied any chasm between God and man, he lived this unity of God and man as his 'good news' - and not as a privilege."<sup>95</sup>

For the sake of the good news, for the sake of the more pure and perfect imitation of Christ his followers are no longer either able or willing to advocate the doctrine of the vicarious suffering of God the Son. Bultmann wrote: "He is the offering, whose blood expiates our sin; he vicariously bears the sin of the world, and by taking over the death as the punishment for the sin, he sets us free from death. This mythological interpretation, in which notions of sacrifice are mixed with a legal theory of satisfaction, is unacceptable today."<sup>96</sup>

In one of her lectures, Dorothee Sölle raised the question whether God needs a whipping-boy to vent his anger on. The supposition that God the Creator and Saviour would be under the rules of the present evil age as a slave to the elemental spirits of the universe is obviously self-contradictory. Such a theory could only be devised by people who themselves were still under the rules of this world, although they were called to set their minds on things that are above and to overcome those rules. In H. Ott we read: "The doctrine of the vicarious satisfaction that the God-man offers up to God instead of all the sinful people is still alive today in the common theology of the parishes. We also find its traces in many hymns of our hymn-book... God is conceived to be anthropomorphic: As someone who stands in legal relationship with Satan, or as someone whose wrath has to be appeased... Today the doctrine of satisfaction is as much out of date as the doctrine of duping Satan."<sup>97</sup>

<sup>91</sup> Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik II,2*, Zürich 1959, 101.

<sup>92</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Neues Testament und Mythologie*, in: *Kerygma und Mythos I*, Hamburg 1960, pp.15-18; p.42.

<sup>93</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Nachfolge*, Werke vol. 4, München 1989, 81.

<sup>94</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, loc. cit. 121.

<sup>95</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *der Antichrist*, Nr.41.

<sup>96</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *Neues Testament und Mythologie*, in: *Kerygma und Mythos I*, Hamburg 1960, pp.15-18; p.42.

<sup>97</sup> Fritz Buri / Jan Milic Lochman / Heinrich Ott, *Dogmatik im Dialog*, vol.3, Gütersloh 1976, 187.

But what is relevant instead? Ellen Flessemann - van Leer said in one of her lectures, Christ's death on the cross was not God's will. If God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek 33:11), How much more does he have no pleasure in the death of the righteous! According to the New Testament Satan caused Jesus' death on the cross (Lk 22:3), but God has already delimited Satan's time. He will not exist in the coming kingdom of God (Rev 20:10-14). He has no future. The evil is, as Karl Barth taught, an empty and negating power.<sup>98</sup> It is a real power at the present time, but as it has no future it also makes no sense.

It is no accident that in the period after Karl Barth scholars of the New Testament exegesis were ready to acknowledge that Jesus himself gave no interpretation of his impending death: "Although early Christian belief unlike a myth refers to a singular historic event (there is no reason to be in doubt about Jesus' death on the cross as a historic event), this event in its relevance to salvation was neither proclaimed nor predicted or even hinted at by Jesus himself."<sup>99</sup> Jesus himself proclaimed and lived the beginning of the liberty of the children of God in the fellowship with God, and subsequently only he was mediator of the fellowship. His message for us that the liberty of the daughters and sons of God has begun, is relevant today.

Now after having shifted over from the mediated to the unmediated relationship with God, a Christian can endorse and adopt the words of the Jew, Moses Mendelssohn (1729-1786), by which he gave reasons for his rejection of the Christian belief in his time: "According to the doctrine of the New Testament (at least as this is explained in public textbooks) I have to believe 1) a trinity in the divine being, 2) the incarnation of one deity, 3) the suffering of one deity who divested himself of his majesty, 4) the satisfaction and appeasement of the first person of the divine being by the suffering and the death of the humiliated second person... The divine justice does not require a satisfaction, but a punishment, a correction, that works for good in the sinner himself. If in the economy of God the punishment is no longer indispensable for the eternal welfare of the sinner, it is remitted... That an innocent should bear the guilt of another one, even if he were to take it over by his own free will, can, in my understanding, not be admitted as a conception of the most righteous being in the state of God."<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Karl Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik III/3*, Zürich 1961, 327-425.

<sup>99</sup> Wolfgang Schrage, *Das Verständnis des Todes Jesu im Neuen Testament*, in: Ernst Bizer / J.F.Gerhard Goeters / Wolfgang Schrage / Walter Kreck / Walther Fürst, *Das Kreuz Jesu Christi als Grund des Heils*, Berlin 1969, 45-86. 47.

<sup>100</sup> Moses Mendelssohn an den Erbprinzen von Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel. In: M.Mendelssohns gesammelte Schriften, vol.3, Leipzig 1843, 129-134.

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