

SUMMARY OF THE ARTICLE:

THE CHRISTIAN-JEWISH DIALOGUE:  
A GENUINE RELIGIOUS CONFRONTATION

by

Canon Peter Schneider\*

The Christian-Jewish dialogue shares some well-defined ground-rules of interfaith dialogue such as accepting the reality of the would-be dialogue partner just as we expect that our identity as Christians is accepted; recognizing that dialogue is not, and cannot be used as, a modern missionary technique, for it is not a guise for something else but a genuine religious confrontation in its own right and of its own nature.

Besides this, there are some specific conditions and potentials of the Christian-Jewish dialogue, but first we have to make some remarks concerning a Christian self-preparation for dialogue (or inner dialogue).

When we, for instance, as Christians approach the central question for Jewry of 'God's relationship to Israel' we cannot begin by saying that 'the Jewish people are still God's chosen people', or even worse that it is 'inadmissible to speak of the continued election of the Jewish People alongside the Church'. This kind of unilateral judgment on the centrality of the other's faith is wrong, not primarily because our assessment is false (it may or may not be), but because if it is possible to know this without the instructive process of our having listened to the other, why bother with the dialogue? Would it not be reasonable and right to begin to seek in discussion with Jews what is the meaning and nature of the rabbinic claim of God's special relationship to the Jewish people? This does not prejudge our own conclusions on this matter, but it takes the humble questioning stance of true dialogue.

There is a disturbing current of Christian animosity towards Judaism which has developed out of three ancient anti-Jewish accusations: a) the Jews are guilty of Deicide; b) the Jewish People as a people have been displaced by God and are therefore to be counted as decadent; c) Judaism is at best only a shadow and preparation for Christianity, and at worst always burdensome and legalistic. This last accusation has resulted in so much Christian caricaturing on Judaism, out of a position of superiority and of conceit, and

\* in: *Tfutsot Israel*, Vol. VII, 2, March - April 1969, pp. 48 - 52, original hebrew title: **הדר-שיח הנוצרי-יהודי — עימות דתי אמיתי**

a high-handed manner, which should be rectified if a deep religious dialogue is to proceed.

Dialogue with Jews on the Christian side begins at the point where we take the Jewish reality seriously. But this is not achieved when we have made a realistic appraisal of Jews and Judaism, for this very attempt will show that there is yet another distinctive aspect of the Jewish reality, viz. the historic Jewish tie-up not only between People and Religion but also of this ethnico-religious People with a particular Land. This is a highly explosive concept! It is this tie-up with the Land which is the source and background for the inner dynamic relationship of World Jewry with Israel today. We cannot avoid attempting to understand and then to evaluate.

A few negative and positive assertions can now be made by way of a tentative approach. The tie-up between Jewry, Judaism and Israel is not simply and purely a matter of so many O. T. promises and their fulfilment; it is impossible to set aside the rights of the Palestinian Arabs including their right to some form of sovereignty in the Holy Land; it is not necessary at all to take up an anti-Arab stance; it is impossible to make any statement on boundaries or to think in exclusive terms in relation to any part of the Holy Land. Positively, from the Christian side we have to come to terms with the whole Jewish reality, and to understand the nature of the Jewish association with its Holy Land. The renewal of Jewry in their Holy Land was both inevitable and part of their very right to exist. We have to take a stance upon the rightness of the renewal of the Jewish People and Religion in a Land that has always been the source and the secret of continuing Jewish survival.

What we all supposed at first to be an essentially religious undertaking, i. e. the renovation of the Jewish-Christian relationship, has become in the post-1967 Jerusalem situation of a significant Arab-Christian and Arab-Muslim minority, a challenge to engagement in the Arab-Israel conflict, involving an attempt to reach out towards the beginning of the possibilities of mutual understanding that could stimulate the approach towards a Middle East peace. Logically a Christian-Muslim dialogue would seem to provide some of the missing clues. The difficulty here is to find a willing Muslim partner and the necessary growth in confidence to initiate such a dialogue.

Christianity and Judaism have common roots in the Holy Land. For Christians the dialogue is not merely a decent and proper means of communication with Jewry, for the very questioning that the dialogue with the Jews involves throws us back to examine our common roots and origins in the Holy Land and is at the same time a preparation for dialogue with Islam, at once the other great monotheistic faith and part of the great Abrahamic tradition.

Summary by Coos Schoneveld