

# SCRIPTURE AND HERMENEUTICS

## DISCUSSION

**Chairman: Dr. Gerhart M. Riegner**

**Prof. Vlassios Phidas:** Since I am no specialist on the Old Testament, but a church historian, I would like to facilitate the understanding of today's papers with three questions. 1) The first is that in our understanding Scripture is tradition. Scripture is tradition itself and there does not exist any dialectical opposition nor a complementary relationship between the two. 2) The second point that bothers me is whether Scripture, which is a tradition with authority for the religious community, has a binding character according to the letter. The letter of the Scripture is an absolute point in the Scripture. The hermeneutical approach of the letter is what is being discussed: How to interpret the letter? And there are different methods for interpreting, but no interpretation is capable of replacing the letter. So we have the stable element of the letter of the Scripture and the hermeneutical traditions that apply the meaning of the letter to the life of the religious community. However, it is impossible that there should be an opposition because the letter is the criterion of authenticity of the interpretation and always stays the stable and unchanging criterion of the authenticity of the interpretation. 3) The third point is whether the letter, the word is understood as an element in itself or as an organic part of the whole: the Scripture is a unity, it is not an articulation of words that anyone can split off and interpret. That is the enormous topic of Christian hermeneutics. Every word only has absolute value when incorporated in the organic whole of Scripture. The Scripture has a value of its own even when being interpreted. So there are three concepts which have to be clarified concerning this topic.

**Mr. Israel Singer:** Rabbi Wurzburger raised a very serious point with regard to the methodology of the Jewish hermeneutical tradition. The point he raised, that was in no way dealt with, and has great difficulty in being dealt with, is the concept of translation. We all know that even in Jewish tradition, the translator (*metargeman*) had a role so that the public would understand the reading. There are different times when *metargemanim* were translators who at different points in the official reading made the translations public to the Jewish and other listeners. But with regard to the understanding and interpretation of the texts, the translators had almost no role except as one of those who interpreted them and particularly only in the Jewish tradition with regard to Aramaic. These questions should be looked upon as a very orthodox, if you excuse the expression, Jewish interpretation of our hermeneutical approach and would create a serious lack of parallelism with respect to the two papers that were given. Nevertheless, that only applies to our oral understanding of Jewish tradition and its perspective. It doesn't apply to the basic philosophical approaches presented in the Bible which can be understood by translations.

**Rev. Prof. Theodore Stylianopoulos:** I have two questions for Rabbi Wurzburger. The first pertains to his remarks about the Septuagint and specifically the terminology he used that translation was a calamity and tragedy and he gave us the example of the narrowing translation of *torah* as *nomoi* in the plural and *nomos* in the singular. I wonder if he would reconsider his words in view of the fact that the Greek translation of the Pentateuch and later, other books served the Jewish community as Prof. Oikonomou remarked and also had the opportunity to convey the spiritual inheritance of Judaism to a wider Hellenistic world, in spite of the limitations. Incidentally, the legalistics that are called interpretation of the Old Testament pertain more to Western scholarship than to Eastern scholarship, because in the patristic tradition *nomos* is still custom in the way of life rather than a legalistic principle. So my first question pertains to the translation. Would Rabbi Wurzburger have a disinclination to translate the Bible also into English or other languages which still would be imperfect translations?

And my second question pertains to the seeming richness of diversity in the traditional interpretations with the key being that the best translation is the one which is according to the spirit of the ways of pleasantness and peace. Now in the Bucharest meeting in 1979 (I was not there, but I have read the articles), in one case the article by Michael Wyschogrod entitled "Tradition and Society in Judaism" presented a holistic understanding of the Written Torah, the Oral Torah and the talmudic tradition, in a way parallel to the presentation by Rabbi Wurzburger, to the point of saying that it is even futile to distin-

guish between Scripture and tradition. On the other hand, in the same meeting an article by Israel Singer, entitled "The Individual and the Community in the Jewish Tradition," presented a great diversity among the Jewish community, the Reformed, the Conservative, the Reconstructionist, the Neo-Orthodox, even differentiations between the Orthodox Jews in a way that presented a problem — perhaps even a painful problem of coherence and unity for the Jewish community. I know that we are here partly for informational reasons, but we are also here for discussion of particular points of debate and discovering problems in each of our traditions. It would seem to me that the recent centuries of the modern world that necessitated such movements within Judaism as the Reform, Conservative and Reconstructionist and so on were not helped simply by the vague hermeneutical principle that the best interpretation is according to the spirit of the ways of pleasantness and peace, that there is something else going on here hermeneutically that is very important that needs discussion.

**Rabbi Leon Klenicki:** In the last eight years, much research has been done in the area of the relationship of the New Testament texts with rabbinical Judaism. That is mainly Midrash. I wonder, and my question goes to Prof. Oikonomou: if we could start a study of the New Testament as a source of information on rabbinical literature and what was going on in the rabbinical schools in the first century.

**Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Peristerion:** I would like to ask three questions of Rabbi Wurzburger. 1) The speaker said that within the Judaism of the past and of today, we have to look at the Old Testament with the method that leads man toward peace, love and reconciliation and to reject the interpretation of the Old Testament according to the letter. In spite of all this, if we interpret the Old Testament unilaterally on the basis of the spiritual interpretation which we accept, then we have difficulty in placing the Old Testament in a specific historical framework and to explain certain historical events to which it refers. Moreover, if we reject, in principle, the interpretation according to the letter, we have difficulty to follow the spiritual and religious development that was lived by the whole world from creation to the end of divine economy; we then cannot follow the different religious stages which man went through to reach the perfect revelation of Christ. 2) We should not underestimate the translation of the Septuagint and give absolute priority to the Hebrew text. We have to examine whether and to what extent we are disposed to interpret the Old Testament as an inseparable part of the liturgical life of the people of the Old Testament, then we will equate the Hebrew text with the translation of the Septuagint for it was made from the Hebrew prototype and with the liturgical practice in the Jewish synagogue as a basis. The Seventy who made the transla-

tion did not do anything against the liturgical practice of their age. The Orthodox, subsequently, give absolute priority to their Fathers, who knew the Jewish tradition from close by and who base their interpretation of the Old Testament as well as of the New Testament on personal experience. 3) As for the criterion of interpretation, Rabbi Wurzburger said that there is no criterion. For us there exists an absolute criterion, that is to say, the practice of the Church. Although there are different interpretations which are part of the tradition of the Church, they do not express ecclesiastical tradition in its entirety. Consequently, liturgical and ecclesiastical consensus within the Church is the absolute criterion on which the interpretation of the Old Testament should be based.

**Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor:** I would like to ask both speakers if they would respond to the relationship of hermeneutics to praxis. To what extent do we see the interpretation driving the actual practice, and in certain cases one might, with a critical eye, look and see that praxis and facts push the hermeneutic. We can look at various points in history and see where the praxis itself, where what the people were doing, was then reflected in the interpretation of the texts. You may also want to comment about how we of the Jewish community saw the inextricable relationship of written and oral tradition, for the oral tradition was never meant to be frozen. The oral tradition constantly served as a rereading, as Rabbi Wurzburger correctly points out that the word *midrash* means to demand of the text. If we are to translate the word *midrash*, it means that we must as individuals demand of the text where we stand, and one would be misled if one were to read the written text without the hermeneutic, without the oral interpretation. I would like to know how in the Orthodox Church this reading or this demanding of a text, if it does exist at all, how is it played out?

**Prof. John Karavidopoulos:** For me, at this moment, the discussion of common points in Jewish and Christian tradition is of fundamental importance, because of the circumstances of today's world. Contrasting is a luxury which our responsibility over against the world does not allow us at a time of little peace and calm, filled with fanaticism and intolerance. With this general clarification, I would like to put a question to Rabbi Wurzburger and a second to the two speakers whose speeches were stunning. I for one enjoyed them and was enriched by them. 1) What is the unifying principle within the miscellany and variety of Jewish interpretations of Scripture, beyond that which you brought forward about peace, love and justice, and which we all accept, of course? 2) My second question concerns both Jewish and Christian tradition: naturally, our traditions stem from the source of life, who is God. Many times, however, Jews and Christians reduce God, the leader and the source of life, to the role of caretaker and keeper of the material side of this jour-

ney within life. How then, can tradition often become self-contained, independent and escape from the limits of the living relationship of the community with God?

**Dr. Geoffrey Wigoder:** It has been a tradition, as we heard today from the outset, that while there was the acceptance of the Scripture as the Word of God, there was also seen simultaneously an oral tradition which mitigated against any dangers of petrification or ossification. And the rabbis throughout the ages have always worked to interpret the hermeneutics. They were always directed toward bringing the contemporary situation into consideration, in other words to interpret Scripture so that it can be applicable to situations that change, while keeping the basic fundamentals.

Now I would like to ask Prof. Oikonomou about the dynamism of the hermeneutics in the Orthodox tradition — to what extent is this an ongoing dynamic to avoid a static situation? In particular, there is one aspect that interests us and we get on to other aspects of this later — the attitude toward the Jews. It was the hermeneutics of the early Church Fathers that set the tone for the attitude from which Jews have suffered for so many centuries — a pejorative and negative attitude toward the Jew. To what extent has this changed down the ages and especially in the present century when we have had such terrible events facing the Jews? Has this led to any changes in hermeneutics and attitude toward the Jews in the Orthodox Church?

**Prof. Nicholas Bratsiotis:** First of all, I would like to warmly thank the organizers of this conference from which we can gain so much as scholars as well as faithful, as individuals and as groups. I equally thank the two speakers for all they taught me. The speakers will allow me — especially my colleague Prof. Oikonomou should not see this as a complement or as a correction — to contribute to the discussion with certain clarifications. I would like to remind you that the Orthodox Church accepts the wider canon of the Old Testament which does not have the meaning that Rabbi Wurzburger, maybe out of unfamiliarity, wanted to attribute to it, for in the Orthodox Church the Old Testament has the same authority as the New Testament. The former simply precedes the latter and is therefore called “Old.” Jesus Christ, however, speaking about the Old Testament, clarified that He had “not come to dissolve” but to fulfill. In this sense, the Old Testament has its place in the Orthodox Church which I referred to. Saint John Chrysostom, a Father of the Church, expresses this in a wonderful way which I consider the charter:

It is certainly possible for someone to find these safeguarded in a mystical way in the Prophets, because nothing has remained unwritten neither in the New nor in the Old, but the Old pre-announced the New and the New interpreted the Old. And I said many times that the two

Testaments and two maidservants and two sisters glorify the one Lord. By the Prophets it is announced as Lord, in the New it is preached as Christ. The New is not new because they were pre-announced in the Old. The Old were not eliminated because they were interpreted in the New. (*In illud: Exiit edictum [Sp.]*, Migne, *Patrologia Graeca* 50, 796CD.)

That is a famous statement that shows the exalted place the Old Testament holds in the sense of "Old" as the Orthodox Church sees it. For Orthodox theologians it is a commonplace that theology, cosmology, anthropology do not exist in the New Testament, exactly because we take them from the Old Testament.

Allow me equally to refer to the topic of the translation of the Septuagint with the reminder that it is not a Christian product, but a product par excellence of the Jewish community of Alexandria. It is not simply a translation but an attempt at interpreting, often exceptionally successful. I remind you here of the attempts to evade the anthropomorphisms, for example the Seventy use instead of "the hands of God" the word "power"; instead of "God swore on his soul" they say "as someone swears by his own self." Let us not forget as well that translation stemmed from a) the need of contact with the text by a people which belonged to Judaism and did not speak the language of its fathers, but only Greek; b) the missionary character par excellence of the translation, for it addresses the Gentiles as well. So the Church accepted as its authentic text a text of the essentially Jewish community. For the Orthodox Church, then, but for the ancient Church as well, the Septuagint is the authentic text of the Old Testament. That does not inhibit the research of the Hebrew text, which happens in every theological faculty of the Orthodox Church parallel to the interpretation of the text of the Septuagint. Finally, concerning the interpretation, I remind you that for the Orthodox the authority of the interpretation is not in the hands of persons nor of the Fathers in isolation, but only of the Church.

**Rabbi Dr. Jordan Pearson:** Two brief illustrative stories that occurred to me in response to what has been said. The first is something for which I am grateful to a Russian Orthodox priest from Alaska, named Father Alexos, who once explained to me at the World Council of Churches General Assembly in Vancouver, that when in the middle of its own controversies, Christianity of the West came to the East and one group said the Mass is real, well isn't it? And the East said yes. And the other side came and said the Mass is symbolic, isn't it? And the Eastern world said yes. Now the West could not understand, and I will ask my friend Father Stylianopoulos to help me with my Greek, real was not in Greek, the opposite of symbolic. That the opposite of *symbolon*, that which brings together, was not real, but was that which separates, that which makes different. So that what was going on is what I sense a bit in

some of the discussions here and that is that language not only walks with man on the time line through history, but language also goes left and right. Language moves geographically as different mindsets are trapped within the structures of their own vocabulary.

The best illustration of that in the United States is the preacher in the country church who preached, and here you must use the English word, on Simon the Leaper, the one who jumps. And he preached that he would leap in the air, leap in the tree, leap into a cloud and leap into the arms of God. And after the service a young man came to him and said, "I am a student at the Episcopal Theological Seminary near Boston and I am afraid I must tell you it is not Simon the Leaper, it is Simon the Leper." The two words are very close in English, but leaper is leaper and leper is leper. It is a sickness. And the preacher thought a while, said: "Yes, but I will not throw away my finest sermon because of a lad from Boston." In many ways, we are trapped, when tradition occasionally seems to go off in a direction that embarrasses us in different generations and different localities and we are trapped by language over time and we talk from perspectives in which we are just beginning to understand each other because of the depth of this encounter. So that when some speak of the authoritative tradition being available only through the Church, we are not using the same language of interpretation when we speak in Jewish life where a new insight (*biddush*) which enriches the tradition can come from any one within the community and not from the specific structure.

**Rabbi Mordecai Waxman:** I would like to point out that hermeneutics is not simply an intellectual game or a play upon the meaning of words whether it be in the Jewish or the Orthodox tradition. There must be an interplay and certainly you can validate it within the Jewish tradition with people and with the nature of peoplehood. Thus for example, the medieval sages said, "God, Torah and Israel are one!" And that has been picked up very much in one of the modern forms of Judaism and has been very much concerned with the question of what is the behavior pattern of the Jewish people. I suggest at least in the Jewish tradition, very often in effect the interpretation of the text was determined by what people undertook to do. And therefore the Talmud would say: go out and see what the people are doing. That was a way a text was translated into action and to the life of the people and became the valid text. Now, I wonder whether the same thing applies in some measure to the Orthodox tradition. I know that much of nineteenth-century Jewish scholarship (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*) and much of twentieth-century Jewish scholarship has been predicated upon this investigation, the interrelationship between people's practice and the historical developments, in other words, Judaism as defined by the history of people's

actual behavior. And I suggest that this has to be incorporated as a fundamental method of understanding the development of hermeneutics of the traditional texts.

**Rev. Prof. Vitaly Borovoy:** When we speak of Holy Scripture, about our relations with it, when we refer to tradition, to the ways of interpreting and understanding Scripture, we all agree that we encounter many and different difficulties. Someone who interprets Scripture from the Jewish point of view, encounters difficulties, but so do those who approach it from the traditional Orthodox side. I believe that for both sides it is important that the way of approaching interpretation and of understanding the inner meaning of Holy Scripture be grounded on the principles of hermeneutics. This has special meaning for us Orthodox. We, to be sure, are absolutely convinced that we understand and interpret Scripture in the light of the understanding and interpretation approved by the Church, which are contained in the teaching of the Fathers. However, there is nothing more easy than to declare such a thing. But as soon as we declare it, difficulties arise. When the authority of the Fathers plays such a decisive role in the understanding and interpretation of Scripture, in other words the authority of the Church, then we have to define the principles of interpretation and understanding of the Fathers as principles which have to be grounded on the unity of the inner meaning of the interpretation and understanding of Scripture by the Fathers. It often happens that we choose isolated points from Scripture, that accuse the Jews to a certain degree. The hymnology, our liturgical-theological work, is based on piety toward the Old Testament. At the same time, however, it contains elements that accuse the Jews and that are integrated in the concept of the universal responsibility of the Jews for the killing of Jesus, etc.

The people love the Divine Liturgy and if we endured persecutions without any theological or academic support, it is due to the fact that our people know the Divine Liturgy by heart. Today, we are confronted with a huge problem: the slightest change of the liturgical texts that criticize the Jews, that is when a priest tries to evade that word or to replace it with a milder expression, people treat it as being no less than a corruption of the text of the Divine Liturgy.

Now concerning the authority of the Holy Fathers: today's situation is tragic. Certain expressions of Saint John Chrysostom from the polemic against the Jews of Antioch are being used as dogmatic positions of the Orthodox faith. The sentences are taken out of the context of the whole teaching of the Holy Fathers. This practice can be used as the most important argument against us. Lately, the Russian Church has proclaimed new saints. Some of them are counted among the greatest forerunners of piety, service, ascetic life, etc. However, they were exponents of the polit-



ical ideas of their days as well — the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries — they were monarchists, antisemites, because many Jews participated in the revolution.

Now then, people pick out some of their opinions and call us traitors to the Orthodox faith. I call upon all Orthodox, most of all the Eastern Patriarchates, whose authority is held very high in our Church, to help us to rightly explain to our people the real meaning of the spirit of the teaching of the Holy Fathers, and not to base ourselves upon certain of their views that have a purely historical character. That is really important, for we all live in a climate of spiritual terrorism that those categories create, according to which we are, as it were, prisoners of Jewish influence. Especially after the Patriarch's speech in America they began to say that the Russian Church before the revolution was synodal while now it is synagoga. This is why I am addressing my Orthodox brothers with this cry of despair asking for help so that our people can understand the real meaning of the Holy Fathers. The previous speaker was right in saying that the Holy Fathers must be understood within the framework of the universal authority of the Church.

**Prof. Vlassios Phidas:** I consider it necessary for this meeting to say a) that there is no anti-Judaic element in the Divine Liturgy. (In the Orthodox Church this term refers strictly to what Western Christianity calls the Mass or Eucharist, as distinct from Matins, etc.) In other services and hymns there are elements which make reference to the historical Judaic people, but not in the Divine Liturgy; so that which the Church lives as mystery does not have elements which are problematic. b) The word of the Divine Liturgy is extremely binding to Orthodox tradition and it does not include such elements as those on which Prof. Borovoy commented.

In addition, I wish to clarify that when we, the Orthodox, say *Church*, we do not consider Church a technical administrative body. For us Church is her body, her people, not some individuals who decide on their account. Those who decide are judged by the people if they decided rightly. In other words, we have the ecclesiastical conscience which renders noteworthiness to what has been said by the hierarchs. The body is a whole and not one hierarchical order which only declares itself on this topic. These two elements are necessary in order that we understand that our distances are not so great in the way we interpret our texts.

**Dr. Gerhart M. Riegner:** Thank you. I think we should give the two speakers some time to reply.

**Rabbi Prof. Walter S. Wurzburger:** Since I spoke from here before, I would like to atone for my sins from the same place. I feel a little bit guilty because I didn't make some of my points clearly enough. First of

all, I would like to indicate, when I spoke about the problem of translation, and I mentioned a rabbinical statement about the Septuagint, I didn't in any way suggest the Septuagint was an inferior translation. I mentioned, but perhaps not sufficient attention was paid to my qualification, that according to the Talmud the tragedy of the translation was not that particular translation but rather that no translation can ever do full justice to any text, and especially not to the way the rabbinical tradition interprets the text, where every letter of the Hebrew Bible is not merely interpreted according to its literal meaning or its natural meaning but also is utilized for the purpose of the exposition of the Oral Torah. Therefore whatever I said about the Septuagint was in no way a reflection on the quality of the Septuagint. As a matter of fact, the rabbis tell us that the translators' Septuagint was guided by the Holy Spirit because, in spite of the fact that all the scholars worked independently and individually, they all arrived at the same Greek wording. This is taken as an indication that there was real divine guidance for the translation. Yet, it was regarded as a calamity because it was felt that it is impossible to express all meanings in any one translation because, after all, a translation is always a hermeneutic, it is always an interpretation and no single interpretation of the divine Word is adequate to cover the full meaning of God's word to man.

Secondly, I'm afraid I didn't quite sufficiently stress the fact that as a traditional Jew, I do believe in the sanctity of every word of Scripture. As a matter of fact, according to my religious tradition, if someone reads from the Torah and one word is not properly rendered, the reading of the Torah has to be repeated because we regard each word of the sacred text as of tremendous importance. When I indicated that the text has to be interpreted, I did not mean that we simply do violence to the text or approach the text in the light of our own personal value systems, but I followed a rabbinical principle of the Oral Torah. We believe that Scriptures have to be interpreted in the light of the rabbinic tradition. This being the case, when I suggested that we should interpret our texts in accordance with the "ways of pleasantness" and "the ways of peace," I did not mean that this was the only principle. I said it was also a principle that has to be taken into account whenever we are dealing with texts, but I alluded to the fact that according to one rabbinical tradition there are thirteen hermeneutical principles, and according to another one there are thirty-two hermeneutical principles, in addition to that particular principle which says "its ways are the ways of pleasantness." Perhaps in my emphasis to try to stress the importance of this principle, I neglected to pay sufficient attention, although I mentioned them briefly, to the other hermeneutical principles.

Finally, I would also like to emphasize that from my perspective,

“authoritative” in the Jewish tradition is the realm of praxis. The realm of praxis can be legislated. There we have responsible agencies. I must confess that large groups within the Jewish community don’t see it in my way, and they will not acknowledge the binding authority of Halakhah, but I only speak for myself or for the people who share my religious convictions. In terms of my religious convictions, the Bible has to be interpreted in accordance with the rabbinical tradition and that interpretation is an ongoing process, but it doesn’t mean that there are no guidelines. It doesn’t mean that there are no specificities. According to rabbinical interpretation, when the Torah says “eye for eye,” the Torah never meant anything but that there would be no actual revenge. But in so far as the rabbinical tradition is concerned, with respect to difference of opinion, we argue this way. No one really knows what is the ultimate meaning.

However, I mentioned previously the famous incident when the heavenly voice was disregarded because we say that the Torah is binding and there is a method of exposition of the Torah which has to be applied. This does not necessarily mean this is the only true explanation. It means, for the purposes of practice, in so far as normative Judaism is concerned, that whatever is the interpretation in accordance with the scholars of any particular period, the ones that are qualified to expound the meaning of the Torah of a particular generation, is normative on account of the rabbinical interpretation that we should follow the majority. So, this is simply a methodological device to enable us to resolve questions. Because perhaps from a hermeneutical view, another opinion may be ultimately accepted that is different. As a matter of fact there is a kabbalistic doctrine to the effect that while we rule in accordance with the position of the House of Hillel, in the heavenly court they operate in accordance with the laws of the House of Shammai. In other words, the Talmud is full of dissenting opinions and we study even dissenting opinions that are offered in the Talmud because we argue that they all have a place. Yes, we don’t accept the point of view, but it is considered a study of the Torah even if we study an opinion which has been rejected. However, in practice, we are guided by a certain standard, and that is the standard as the Oral Torah has been interpreted.

The reason why we feel there are so many different possibilities of interpreting the text is that we are aware of the limitations of the human mind. The Talmud uses the expression “just as the hammer splits the rock,” and when the hammer strikes the rock, there are so many different sparks coming from the rock, but by the same token, the Torah contains so many interpretations. And the same biblical text which is used for all kinds of interpretations we also use for esoteric meanings, mysterious meanings. We say the Torah has many, many meanings. But when

I say this, I do not mean to suggest there is not a particular mode of interpretation which is binding upon Jews for normative practices, even though with respect to dogmatic dispositions, Judaism is very flexible. Judaism emphasizes conduct (Halakhah) and on matters of conduct we do feel the majority opinion prevails. Whereas on other matters, on matters of dogma, here it is a question which is not solvable by any means of any legitimate authority. There is no authority for us on matters of religious doctrine. There is authority on the matter of regulation of human conduct. And there we cannot simply exercise our freedom of interpretation.

When it was stated that the Bible could only have one meaning, this is a possible interpretation but, in so far as I am concerned, the Bible may have many, many meanings and many perspectives. In practice, I have to adopt one interpretation, but when it comes to faith, when it comes to interpretation, there is a possibility in my opinion to realize that the divine word contains many meanings and we have to respond to the word of God in the light of our individual understanding and consciousness. And that is why according to Jewish tradition, there is a great deal of authority vested in the halakhic process, even though there is disagreement because we don't have any overall authority like the Sanhedrin ever since many centuries ago. And that's why you find even within the realm of practice among Jews — I'm speaking about people who are committed to traditional Judaism — divergent traditions, divergent interpretations, but in the final analysis, we do believe in the sanctity of the biblical text. In spite of the fact that I quoted Spinoza before, I merely meant that I share a totally different perspective. For Spinoza, what counts is what was the original meaning of the Bible as he understands it from a Bible critical point of view. I interpret the Bible not in terms of critical methods of scholarship, but in accordance with the oral tradition, and I do believe that the Bible is not an ancient antiquated obsolete document, but I would rather say the Bible is the living word of God and has to be interpreted in accordance, from my perspective, with a rabbinic tradition which we call the Oral Torah.

**Prof. Elias Oikonomou:** I don't have a lot to say for two reasons. The questions which were directly addressed to my presentation were not many; on the other hand, the panorama of views which was expressed has created a difficulty of classification, and of memory. For this reason, I apologize if I do not answer certain questions, not because of efforts of avoidance. I did not understand if Mr. Singer, who referred to the absence of parallelism between the two papers, addressed his question to me, and I would kindly ask that he repeat if it is in reference to me.

Rabbi Bretton-Granatoor said that the interpretation of texts in a cer-

tain manner follows the practical life, the necessities of life and that the oral tradition is continuously written. I suppose that when he says oral tradition he means the hermeneutical tradition. We have another conception of the contents of tradition. Tradition is not something that is constantly created: if I transfer this form of Judaism — and Moses has the first tradition — there are not many little Moseses who continuously produce, illuminated by God, tradition. We do not have such a conception of the things of tradition. However, we could say that the hermeneutical tradition is reformulated, but not as a continuous programmed activity on a daily basis, as it would be a daily duty for those dedicated in the work of hermeneutics and continuous understanding to find new formulations and to restore the old. In one sense this is done, but in the following manner: When the preacher interprets the Gospel, he comes to some practical conclusion, to the necessary — what the faithful must do. This in one sense is close to what Rabbi Bretton-Granatoor said, although I usually consider that a new understanding is not needed according to the hermeneutical tradition. What is needed is simply a new place of target of the practical application of the already subjected hermeneutical principles.

With regard to the stance of the Orthodox, the comments have not been addressed to me and I don't find that I can disagree with some of these. I have another clear stance and question: To what degree do the Orthodox have the possibility of the dynamism of hermeneutics which Judaic hermeneutic presents? To what degree do the Orthodox have the possibility to avoid making the interpretation static? It's a good question and I can say frankly that there are areas and years in which there is staticism, but areas and years in which staticism breaks and opens up new horizons. I would like to use an example from the Old Testament, the beautiful tents of the dispersion, during the journey from Egypt to Palestine. At every stop they set up the tabernacle, the people of Israel stayed one year, they worshipped God, and when they decided to move to the next place, the Levites took the different parts of the tabernacle and transferred them in a procession. I think that with such an analogy I could answer that a passing of the Orthodox Church from one period to another does happen (whatever is local in the example, to which I made reference, I transferred it here to this chronological framework) and during the present moment the Orthodox Church is found exactly in such a splendid phase of displacement and hermeneutics from one period to another. This means that in the last analysis the entire collective inter-Orthodox activities are currently being done with the aim of convening the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church — exactly the displacement of the Orthodox hermeneutics, with direct reference to the praxis in the new period, for here and now.

The similar question which Dr. Wigoder asked is that if tradition is not static how is one to face old stances that refer disparagingly to Jews? He wanted to say that this deprecation in reference to the Jews was something that belonged to tradition. Then the Orthodox must ask, as Prof. Borovoy did, how much of this can we avoid from tradition? Concerning the way in which the Jews are referred to, there have been no studies which bring together and systematize all the anti-Judaic references within Christianity and the Fathers of the Church. It would be very interesting to have such a study which would allow us to have a correct understanding and appreciation of these references and clarify what belongs to where. I have the impression that this question has been examined with a great generality. When they still use characteristics of personalities or the collective people of the biblical Israel which come from the Old Testament, the responsibility is given to Christians. This is the one aspect. The other aspect is when there are non-praising characterizations — for example in the speeches of Chrysostom *Against Jews* — they are directly considered as fanaticism and antisemitism without any effort to examine the pastoral and social background which provoked them. Thus the author who has made such characterizations is considered to have spoken against the Jews due to a superficial reading of the texts by the reader. The cohabitation of peoples often provoked frictions among them. We also have the contrary case in Judaism where we find anti-Greek references. For example, it is forbidden by some rabbis (B. T. Sotah 49b) to teach one's child the wisdom of the Greek language.

The third point, to add to what has already been said by my colleague Prof. Phidas, is that the biblical Israel (i.e., speaking of the Israel during the time of Christ) is praised not only in the New Testament and the patristic works but also in the Divine Liturgy and in all religious celebrations. I have the feeling, without having gathered any statistics, that these are much more important in quantity and quality than the negative references to the people of Israel. Another element which I wish to stress as a Greek is that there are not only homilies against Jews but also against Greeks in the patristic works. We don't feel as bad patriots and bad descendants of those Greeks when we do not accuse Christianity for being anti-Greek.

My conviction is that two of the most stable elements of Christianity are Judaism as traditional Old Testament and Hellenism as a language and as a tool for writing and development. For instance, I personally do not accept (perhaps it is wrong though I have drawn this from my own study) the characterization of Christian ethics as Judæo-Christian because I consider Christianity as a third magnitude beyond Judaism and Hellenism. In the same way I cannot say Græco-Christian in the sense

that Hellenism is something that fits exclusively to Christianity. Christianity takes its distance from each of them. If there is any effort made to be drawn to either Hellenism or Judaism, we then have hellenizing or judaizing heresies. Historical aggressions are then created here, which does not mean that we can allow this to continue to create further aggressions. In interpretation and action of the religious life, Judaism and Christianity must take distance and interpret things correctly. My Christian conviction of this is the Christian stance as expressed by the apostle Paul: "For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race" (Rom. 9:3). I think that this stance of Paul is also the one of the Orthodox Church: would I not accept to be a curse for the sake of my brother — my immense love for the people who God has loved? And who has the right not to love him? I would like to stop here.

I apologize for not answering all the questions. Forgive me for not having the possibility to take a stance on everything. I answered only those things which concerned us. These were indeed very interesting points and very provocative in the positive sense for further discussion. I think this proves how useful and how necessary these meetings are. Another point which I must state is, as one can see from the stance of the Judaic side, there is continuous becoming which belongs to the nature of things. This means that Judaism has always seen the world as a series of events, while in Hellenism it is seen as something already completed. And this conflict of conceptions about the world between the completed whole and series of events comes also from the patristic effort not to reject either the one or the other, but to save both of them. This is a large and absorbing subject, yet it nurtures the differences between us.

**Dr. Gerhart M. Riegner:** Let me thank you very much for your last intervention which I believe has made a positive contribution to this dialogue. Anyhow, for the Jewish participants, these were very important statements which we have heard. Not only that there is no staticism and that there is development, which means that certain social attitudes can be changed by spiritual effort and reinterpretation or corrections of misunderstandings. I must say that it is worthwhile to come to such a meeting to hear these kinds of opinions which we do not see too often or which we do not read. And it is a great encouragement that speaking to each other, these opinions come out and we are corrected in certain ways. We have questioned a lot of our own concepts and of our mutual concepts and I hope that the other sessions will be as fruitful as this one. Thank you very much.

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