

SING A NEW SONG!

HOW SHALL WE SING A NEW SONG IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TODAY?

By recognizing the need
for a total cessation of Christian teachings of supersession
in the relationship to Judaism

CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

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Tomorrow is Here!

Tuesday, 9:15am

Interpretations of the Bible can lead to self-righteousness, murder of others and to self-destruction. We will explore the need for a total re-thinking of the Christian relationship to Jews and Judaism and the absolute necessity (after 1945) for a total cessation of Christian teachings of supersession in the relationship to Judaism and the end of any kind of Christian teaching of contempt for Jews and Judaism which prepared the climate in which horrendous mistreatment of Jews by Christians, expulsions, murder and, finally, the Nazi state-sponsored attempted extermination of Jews, the Shoah/Holocaust, became possible. Without the Christian teachings there would have been no Holocaust.

Many of the following thoughts were first presented during the conference *Power in the Spirit. A New Song for a New Day*. July 13-15, 1995. Roanoke College, Salem, Virginia. Thursday, July 13, 1995. 4:15 p.m. Olin Theater. This lecture is presented in a slightly revised form. I have also voiced these thoughts throughout my teaching career at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (1972-2001).

Yesterday I set myself the task to illustrate the relationship of Christians to the Tanakh, the Hebrew Bible, which Christians call the "Old" Testament, often quite unconsciously in a derogatory way, i.e., *only* the "New" Testament really counts. The "Old" is exactly that, "old" and "obsolete and only necessary for the new to appear.

Yesterday I tried to make the message of Psalm 96 come alive as an illustration of the Word from G-d and G-d's Spirit, which determined the life of Jesus and is available to anyone and also to Jewish and Gentile Christians believers at any time and in any place.

What does the poet of Ps 96 want us to hear and to do? A quick summary:

He tells us,

- . Sing to the LORD (YHWH)!
- . Announce the LORD'S marvelous wonders every day and everywhere!
- . Give to the LORD (YHWH) the glory due to G-d through prayer and deeds!
- . Say to everyone, in words and deeds:
 - the LORD (YHWH) governs this world and all of her peoples,
(and how does the LORD (YHWH) govern?)
 - the LORD (YHWH) governs with equity, justice, rightness, righteousness, with faithfulness
and with certitude and confidence.

Who is invited to sing a new, a re-newed song? Only the religious people? The psalmist encourages all humans, including Jews and Christians, to be ever more imaginative in their *different* ways to praise G-d, the one G-d, through equity, righteousness,

justice and faithfulness and truth, and to live out their human lives always transparent of G-d's vision for all humans and for the whole world because G-d is the creator of us all and we are all siblings.

See, e.g., Perelmuter, Hayim Goren, *Siblings: Rabbinic Judaism and Early Christianity at Their Beginnings*. New York and Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1989.

Today, I set myself the difficult task to share with you a few suggestions on how we Christians, and especially we Lutherans, can sing a new song in our relationship with the Jewish people, the relatives of Jesus?

I am convinced, that there is really only *one* important task, which we Christians *must* face, after Auschwitz, if we Christians want to stay alive and provide a viable message for all humans today. All other tasks are important, but pale into insignificance and resemble the effort of rearranging the deck chairs on board of the Titanic.

Because of the Holocaust we Christians

- 1) must rethink and express in a different and in a new way *everything* which we have said about Jesus - from the very beginning, because what we have *said* contained many untruths, and what we have *done*, in the name of Jesus, has hurt and killed millions of people, especially Jews ...
- 2) We also must rethink and express, in a different and in a new way, our relationship to the people of Jesus, the Jews. We, Gentile Christians, have taught and believed many untruths about Jews from the very beginning.

There is a long list of such untruths. The most important one is that we have believed (and most Christians still believe) that we have *superceded* Jews and Judaism, and, therefore, that Jews really have no longer any legitimate right or reason to their faith and to their existence.

Therefore, some claim that the State of Israel is illegitimate. Some are prone to believe that Zionism is racism instead of a Jewish liberation moment after almost 2,000 years of exile. Some Christians even claim that they would not cry a tear if Israel would disappear from the map tomorrow.

- 3) Since the Inquisition (15th century) we Christians have even added a racial distinction, namely, the "purity of blood," *limpieza de sangre*, therefore Christians must have nothing to do with Jews. I always thought that, at least, the *racial* distinction between Jews and other humans, originated in the nineteenth century and then was exaggerated by the Nazis. How wrong I was.

Please, read, e.g., the books by B. Netanyahu and Raul Hilberg. I added an excerpt from Hilberg in the Appendix to this presentation.

See, e.g., the section "The Rise of Racism" in B. Netanyahu, *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain*. (New York: Random House, 1995) 975-1004. Please, read the whole book - all 1,384 pages!

I, of course, had also read the book by Raul Hilberg and was totally shocked to be informed that the anti-Jewish measures by the Church, since the fourth century, paralleled those by the Nazis, i.e., that the Nazis learned from the Church and from M. Luther.

See the appendix. An excerpt from Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*. Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961, to Table 1, Canonical and Nazi Anti-Jewish Measures, p. 5 and to Table 2, Pre-Nazi and Nazi Anti-Jewish Measures, p.7f.

And then I read the book edited by Eva Fleischner,

Fleischner Eva, *Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era? Reflections on the Holocaust*. Papers given at the International Symposium on the Holocaust held at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, New York City, June 3 to 6, 1974. New York: KTAV Publishing House / The Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine and Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith: 1974.

I read the book soon after its publication in 1974. I have been unable to find any kind of peace of mind, as a Christian, after reading the article by Irving **Greenberg** in this book, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity, and Modernity after the Holocaust," 7-55.

On p. 11f. Greenberg writes:

"In 1942, the **Nietra Rebbe** went to **Archbishop Kametko of Nietra** to plead for Catholic intervention against the deportation of the Slovakian Jews. ... Since the rebbe did not yet know of the gas chambers, he stressed the dangers of hunger and disease ... The archbishop replied:

'It is not just a matter of deportation. You will not die there of hunger and disease. They will slaughter all of you there, old and young alike, women and children, at once--it is the punishment that you deserve for the death

of our Lord and Redeemer, Jesus Christ--you have only one solution. Come over to our religion and I will work to annul this decree.” (n. 7 on p.441f.)

Even Dietrich Bonhoeffer thought that Jews, in the end, must convert to Christianity.

In Note 7 on p. 441f. Greenberg quotes **Michael Dov Weissmandl** (*Min Hamatzar* [1960; reprint ed. Jerusalem, n.d.]) and his report of his conversation with the papal nuncio in **1944**. He quotes the nuncio as saying:

“There is no innocent blood of Jewish Children in the world. All Jewish blood is guilty. You have to die. This is the punishment that has been awaiting you because of that sin [decide].”)

And that in 1944! And even after 1945 - when the horrors of the Nazi time became clear to all of us - and even today we Christians have not renounced anti-Jewish teachings in our liturgy and in our preaching. We continue to say *extra ecclesia non salus est*, outside of the Church there is no salvation.

FOR THE SAKE OF THE LIFE AND INTEGRITY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, I CALL FOR THE TOTAL CESSATION OF CHRISTIAN TEACHINGS OF SUPERSESSION IN THE RELATIONSHIP TO JUDAISM.

But what will be the shape and content of Christianity if this call is taken seriously?

I do not know and, therefore, I extend the call to you and to all thinking and honest Christians to use all of our powers of intellect, all of our senses, to shape Christianity into a new song, a song which will be pleasing to all: space, earth, trees, animals and all humans, including Jews.

These next minutes will be a very, very difficult for me, because I will tell you of my personal involvement in this subject and it will help you to understand why this is the most important subject for me. I think, though, that it is the most important subject for all Christians, because, I think, that the very life of Christianity, after 1945, is at stake.

The horror of the attempted extermination of Jews during the Nazi regime has been given a number of names:

- *Holocaust*, which is a translation of the Hebrew word עלה, *ōlāh*, which means “whole burnt offering” ... did the Nazis offer a whole burnt offering to G-d?
- *Auschwitz*, as a one word geographical summary for all the death camps.
- The Nazis used the term “*End-Lösung*,” which means “the *Final Solution*, i.e., the final solution of the so-called Jewish problem. For Christians and for the Nazis the very existence of Jews was and is a problem, actually, something evil which has to be rectified. The Nazis saw themselves actually as saviors of the world ridding the world of Jews. Christians want to rid the world of Jews by conversion. Surely there is a difference between extermination and conversion, but the end result is: no Jews.
- Another Hebrew term is *Shoah*, שואה, *šō āh*, which means “trouble,” “mistreatment”),
- The most appropriate Hebrew term (according to some thinkers) is *Hurban*, חרבן, *hūrbān*, which means “*Destruction*.”

On Saturday, April 2, 1995, at 8:15 p.m., I heard **Elie Wiesel** speak at Moriah Congregation (200 Taub Drive) in Deerfield, Illinois, on the topic, “Longing for Home, Today: Fifty Years After Liberation.” Among the many important comments he also said something to the effect, “I no longer like the expression ‘Holocaust,’ today I prefer *Hurban*.”

Words fail us to speak about the horrendous horror which the German National Socialists *unleashed* upon Europe during World War II. Their *racial* ideology demanded the extermination of Jews and Judaism from the face of the whole world.

In the introduction to a **1971** edition of Adolf Hitler’s book *Mein Kampf* (“My Struggle”) **Konrad Heiden** summarizes the Nazi program as follows:

When Hitler came to power, in 1933,

“Everyone was forced to buy it. It was presented as a gift to newly-wed couples, but the (marriage) license fee was doubled. *Mein Kampf* made Hitler rich. It became a best-seller second only to the Bible.

The book may well be called a kind of satanic Bible. To the author--although he was shrewd enough not to state it explicitly himself, but to have it said by his spiritual adviser, Alfred Rosenberg--the belief in human equality is a kind of hypnotic spell exercised by world-conquering Judaism with the help of the Christian Churches. Later the Jews invented the mass-seduction of liberal democracy; in the last stage marxism was their

tool. By preaching the principle of human equality, Judaism has attempted to extirpate the feeling of pride from the soul of the Aryan race, to rob them of their leadership. To give back to these noble races their former consciousness of superiority by inculcating the principle that men (humans) are *not* equal is the theoretical purpose of *Mein Kampf*."

I want to show you now a copy of one of the most vicious, if not the most vicious, document humans have ever devised.

I am holding up a copy of my **Ahnenpass**. Everyone had to have such a passport of ancestry during the Nazi-time. Of course people like to know their roots and, of course, the Churches and pastors participated in this search for clearly documented ancestry. The only trouble was that this document was used to prove that you either did or did not have Jewish blood. If it was detected that you did have Jewish blood, then you were doomed. There are two types of people, two races, the Aryans and the Non-aryans.

My Ahnenpass, certified by Nazi authorities, proves, beyond any doubt, that I do not have Jewish blood. So this passport of ancestry was a passport to life for me.

The Christian teaching of contempt for Jews and Judaism, since New Testament times, was NOT *racially* motivated until the fifteenth century.

Mainly gentile Christians, claimed (from the very beginning) that *THEY* had *religiously* superseded Jews and Judaism; that *they* had the *ONLY* right way to express the relationship between G-d and humans ... what nonsense!

And then when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire (in the fourth century after Jesus) Christians were convinced that *their* faith had ultimately superseded Judaism ... what hybris!

Unbearable suffering was *unleashed* upon Jews IN THE NAME OF JESUS, and IN THE NAME OF G-D, wherever Christians had political and military power.

Christians claimed that the Jews had killed their Lord, their Messiah, their anointed King of the Endtime. And because it is possible in the gentile world for a human to become a god, Christians even claimed that the Jews had murdered Jesus of Nazareth, who was the flesh become LORD (YHWH), G-d. Jews had killed G-d, the LORD and creator of the universe -- a totally impossible thought and idea for Biblical or Jewish thinkers. G-d had morphed into the human person Jesus, a thought which was condemned as a Christian heresy in the third century A.D./C.E.

If you want to review the Christological battles in a somewhat different manner, quite suitable for Adult Forums, then you may want to turn to Richard Rubenstein, *When Jesus became God: The Epic Fight over Christ's Divinity in the Last Days of Rome*. New York, San Diego, London: Harcourt Brace, 1999.

There simply is no doubt, that these, and other *false* and *deadly* teachings, prepared the climate in which horrendous deeds, including pogroms and murders of Jews, became possible ... throughout the "Christian" era ... and then, finally, Hitler was able to begin the execution of the "Final Solution."

Auschwitz is *not* only a horror for Jews and Judaism, and for all of humanity, but, it is, in particular, the sign of the *end of Christianity* ... *unless* Christians *repent* and *prove* the sincerity of their repentance by *totally abrogating their claim of supersession* and by stating their Christian faith in terms which are not anti-Jewish.

We Christians simply have no choice, we must sing a new song, we must express our way of speaking about Jesus in a way which is not anti-Jewish.

This is, actually, not only true for Christianity, it is also true for any other religion or ideology, which claims that it supersedes, replaces and invalidates another. Such a belief, condemns itself, by that very belief, as invalid for consideration by even one human being.

In the Appendix to this presentation I add a copy of Paul Galloway, "In closing a final word about the Word," *Chicago Tribune*, Friday, February 9, 1996, Section 2, p. 11, where Galloway quotes me from a lecture I presented April 23, 1995, "A Christian in Crisis and the Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the Jewish Community." Copy enclosed.

After Auschwitz Christians *must* express their Christian faith always in the light which is cast from the fires at Auschwitz. Among the six million were more than one million innocent Jewish children. We Christians must express our faith with the burning children watching. I live with the conviction that every time an anti-Jewish phrase is uttered another innocent Jewish child is thrown into the flames ... alive.

I am a Christian -- a Christian suffering a deep spiritual crisis. This crisis began in **1941**, when I was 9 years old.

I grew up in a very pious, Christian, Lutheran family. My father, an Austrian from Vienna, was a pastor for German congregations in Yugoslavia during the 1930ies.

In **1938** my country, Austria, became part of the German Third Reich. In **1941** Yugoslavia was occupied by the German Army. I was told that from now on I had to greet everyone with “Heil Hitler,” and not with “Grüss Gott” or “Guten Tag.” I was a pious little boy and I knew that my Lord was Jesus Christ and not Adolf Hitler. Every time I said “Heil Hitler” I was horrified that Jesus would do something dreadful to me and punish me for my high treason.

At the end of December **1942** we were forced to leave Yugoslavia because of the deadly danger from Tito and his people. We lived in that very area where the terrible troubles began a few years ago in Yugoslavia. We spent January to March in Austria.

Then my father accepted a desperate call from several German congregations in occupied Poland. At the end of March **1943** my father began his duties in Slupza/Grenzhausen near Konin. (In hindsight: what a crazy decision!)

Of course, I had to participate in the “German Youth” (which included boys from 9-13 years of age. I was too young for the real “Hitler Youth,” which was reserved for boys from 14 years of age until old enough for military service.

Once a meeting was scheduled for a Sunday morning. My father went to the authorities and told them: “I have little power to prevent you from having my son during the week, but on Sunday he belongs to the church. You can not have him on Sundays.” Similar incidents occurred and in the Fall of 1943 my father was sent to the Russian front.

During the Summer of **1944** (I was 12 years old) I was sent to a “Führer-ertüchtigungs-lager,” a leader-toughening-up-camp, in Łódź/Lidzmannsstadt in the middle of German occupied Poland. Among the terrible experiences one stands out:

One day our immediate leader (a boy about 16 years of age) pointed to some of us and said:

“You, you, and you, follow me.” Of course, without raising any objections we followed him. He marched us to a street-car station. We boarded the tram. After some time the doors to the tram were locked and a deadly silence fell upon all in the tram. I was horribly afraid, because I could not understand what was happening. But, of course, I also did not say a thing or even asked any questions. Then I saw. What I saw was terrible. Half starved, dirty people with yellow stars on their clothing. I was shocked. No one had prepared me for this moment. No one. Not my parents and not my leaders in the camp. No one had ever talked to me about what I was now witnessing. Soon the horror was over for me, but the effect on me stayed with me all of my life. The doors to the tram were unlocked and normal chatter filled the tram. None of us said anything about what we had just witnessed. No one asked questions and neither did I.

In the Summer of **1990** I was browsing in Powell’s Book Store (1501 E. 57th Street, Chicago, Illinois), and I came across the book *The Chronicle of the Łódź Ghetto 1941-1944* (Edited by **Lucjan Dobroszycki**. Translated by Richard Lourie, Joachim Neugroschel, and others. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984).

For the next couple of days time stood still for me as I read and cried through the book.

Only on January 20, **1945** did my mother, my brother and I flee from Poland. For a few days we were in Dresden, just a week before the horrible firebombing of Dresden, and then, somehow, we arrived in Vienna, Austria, where we suffered the bombing of the city (by the Americans) and then the occupation of the city by the Soviet Army. We lived in the Soviet occupation zone in Vienna until Austria regained her freedom, in **1955**, and all occupation forces left Austria.

Of course, I have been scarred for life. I survived the war. I grew up. I became an adult and I became obsessed with my studies of Judaism, Christianity, the Bible (in Hebrew and in Greek), Philosophy, Theology, and also Holocaust literature. I also became a student of ancient Hebrew and other Semitic languages.

I needed to know the truth. I needed understanding. I needed freedom from any religious and ideological stupidity, hypocrisy and oppression.

I am an Austrian. I am very much aware of the fact that many individuals of my parent’s generation participated in or tolerated the murder of Jewish people.

My religion is Christian and I am very much aware of the fact that many Christians throughout the centuries participated in or tolerated the murder of Jewish people because of *their* way of reading and interpreting the Jewish Scriptures, the TaNaKh, as an “Old Testament” and their own Christian writings as the “New Testament.” Many Christians assumed that the “New Israel” had now *substituted* the “Old Israel” and that there was really no more use for the “Old Israel.” Gentile Christians falsely claimed that Jews and not the Romans, had killed their own Messiah, their “Christ.” Actually they had killed G-d the LORD.

My particular community in the Christian Church is the Protestant community (which formed in the 16th century as a protest movement inside of the Roman Catholic Church) and, furthermore, my community is the Evangelical

Lutheran Church. I am very much aware of the fact that many Lutherans participated in and tolerated the murder of Jewish people.

My profession, in the sixties, has been parish pastor and university pastor in the Lutheran Church.

From September **1972** to August **2001** my profession was Professor of Old Testament and I am very much aware of the fact that a certain type of Christian teaching and preaching and a certain type of Christian reading of the Jewish Scriptures (for almost 2,000 years) has contributed to the misery and death of millions of Jewish people and, finally, it has contributed to the intellectual and spiritual climate in which the Holocaust, i.e., the extermination of about 6 million Jewish people (including more than one million children) became a reality.

I am tormented by a number of questions, e.g., (1) How is it possible to continue to be a serious Christian, a Roman Catholic, a Protestant, a Lutheran, ... after becoming aware of the horrors of the Shoah? (2) How is it possible to confess to be a Christian after becoming aware of the role which Christian teachings have had in establishing a climate in which pogroms (throughout the so-called "Christian" centuries) and, finally, the Holocaust became possible? ...

My own answer is that there is only one way. There *must* be a total, a *final* repentance. (In Hebrew repentance is *teshuvah*, תשובה, *těšúbāh*)

There must be a *turning away from* anything and everything which even vaguely smells of anti-Semitism and anti-Jewish feelings, attitudes, teachings and beliefs.

But this *must* be done not for the sake of the Jewish people, *but for the sake of the survival of the Christian faith* ... if that is even possible after the Holocaust.

I am tormented by the fact that it may not even be possible to cleanse Christianity of anti-Judaism and that Christianity (i.e., *Gentile* Christianity), at its root, is totally anti-Jewish. If this is really so then how can anyone be a Christian after the Shoah? Help! Please teach me, show me!

Surely the Holocaust was a deep and profound tragedy for the Jewish people ... if words are even possible to express this tragedy.

But, at the same time, the Holocaust was also a terrifying disaster for the Christian faith and proved the wrong-headed (and even demonic) way in which Christians have read the Tanakh, the Jewish Scriptures as the "Old" and therefore "Obsolete" Testament.

The Holocaust signals *the end of the Constantinian Christian faith*, as we have known it since the fourth century. The Holocaust signals *the end of the so-called "Christian Era."* It shows that the Christian faith, if it needs to be anti-Jewish, is bankrupt and even demonic.

If the Christian faith could allow and encourage the murder of Jewish and other peoples not only during the Holocaust, but during much of the history of Constantinian Christianity, then it should, finally, be clear to everyone that Christianity, as we have known it, is bankrupt and not worthy of allegiance from even one human being.

Another question torments me: is repentance (*teshuvah*, תשובה, *těšúbāh*), forgiveness and newness of life, even possible for Christians and the Christian Church?

If this is possible then it *must* begin with a re-reading of the Scriptures in the light which is cast from the fires of the Holocaust/Shoah.

Such a duty is especially serious for us Lutherans. We *must* re-read, re-hear, re-interpret our Christian Scriptures and also our dogmas, our confessions, our festivals, our liturgies, our hymns, our prayers, our beautiful music ... in the light which is cast from the fires of the Holocaust. How happy are the burning Jewish children with our songs?

We Lutherans have a special problem because of **Martin Luther** and his particular way of expressing the Christian faith which, on the one hand, is very beautiful, but on the other hand, led him to a terrifying attitude toward the Jewish people. Martin Luther made a horrifying mistake towards the end of his life. (He lived from 1483 to 1546)

In **1523**, as a 40 year old priest, he wrote a wonderful treatise entitled "That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew." The first paragraph reads:

"I will ... show by means of the Bible the causes which induce me to believe that Christ was a Jew ... Perhaps I will attract some of the Jews to the Christian Faith. For our fools--the popes, bishops, sophist, and monks--the coarse blockheads! have until this time so treated the Jews that to be a good Christian one would have to become a Jew. And if I had been a Jew and had seen such idiots and blockheads ruling and teaching the Christian religion, I would rather have been a sow than a Christian."

And then, in **1543**, as a 59 year old, after even *his* way of stating the Christian faith, was, of course, also not acceptable to Jewish people, he wrote a devastating treatise entitled, "Concerning the Jews and Their Lies."

He begins by writing:

“What then shall we Christians do with this damned, rejected race of Jews? [The Jews were rejected by God since they refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah.] Since they live among us and we know about their lying and blasphemy and cursing, we can not tolerate them if we do not wish to share in their lies, curses, and blasphemy. In this way we cannot quench the inextinguishable fire of divine rage (as the prophets say) nor convert the Jews. We must prayerfully and reverentially practice a merciful severity. Perhaps we may save a few from the fire and the flames [of hell]. We must not seek vengeance. They are surely being punished a thousand times more than we might wish them. Let me give you my honest advice.

First, their synagogues or churches should be set on fire, and whatever does not burn up should be covered over with dirt so that no one may ever be able to see a cinder or stone of it. And this ought to be done for the honor of God and of Christianity ...”

Quoted from Talmage, F. E., ed., *Disputation and Dialogue: Reading in the Jewish-Christian Encounter* (New York: KTAV and Anti-Defamation League of B'nei B'rith, 1975) p. 33f.

See also “To the Councilmen of all Cities in Germany that they establish and maintain Christian Schools” in 1524 (translated by Albert T. W. Steinhäuser and revised by Walther I. Brandt in *Luther's Works*. Volume 45. The Christian in Society. II [Edited by Walther I. Brandt. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1962]), 347-378.

Luther then goes on with six more points in this diatribe and it is extremely unpleasant to read.

How can I be a believing Christian, and a Lutheran at that, after becoming aware of the poisonous, demonic streak in Christianity and in Luther, which paved the road to Auschwitz?

There is only one way to handle these statements by Luther. They MUST be repudiated. Each one of them. And loudly and clearly.

And we are very fortunate that Prof. Dr. Franklin Sherman (for many years my colleague at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago) has written an excellent article entitled, “Martin Was Wrong,” published in *The Lutheran*, October 20, 1982, 11-13. Please, read the article.

I am not so sure, though, that saying and writing that Luther was wrong is enough. There must be evidence in our teaching and preaching. I am pained to say, that I have not seen much evidence.

The anti-Jewish way of reading the Scriptures and of stating the Christian faith *MUST* stop *not for the sake of the Jewish people*, but for the sake of the survival of Christianity.

We need to repent, we must repent. But is repentance, forgiveness and newness of life, i.e., a total, a *final* turning away from the sin of anti-Jewish statements and deeds even possible for Christians and, especially, for Lutherans?

And, even if repentance is possible, will G-d then be allowed to accept our repentance? Is the biblical G-d bound to accept our repentance?

What do OUR (Jewish and Christian) Scriptures say? In **Amos 5:15** we hear Amos address the people (and, I think, also us):

שְׂנֹאֲרֵעַ וְאֶהְבֵּוּ טוֹב	<i>śin ū-rā' wə'ehēbū tōb</i>	15 Hate - evil/Evil - and love - good/Good
וְהִצַּגְוּ בַשַּׁעַר מִשְׁפָּט	<i>wə'haššîgū bašša'ar mišpāt</i>	and establish - in the gate (court) - justice
אוּלַי יִחַנֵּן יְהוָה	<i>ūlay yeḥenan yhw/ādōnāy</i>	<i>it may be</i> that-HE will be gracious-YHWH/the
אֱלֹהֵי צְבָאוֹת שְׂאֲרִית יוֹסֵף: ס	<i>- ʔlōhē šēbā'ōt - šē ʔrīt</i>	LORD
	<i>yōsep</i>	- the God of Armies - to the remnant of Joseph.

The Hebrew word אוּלַי, *ūlay*, means “perhaps.” Even repentance does not guarantee, does not force G-d to accept us back into community with G-d and into the fold of the “People of G-d.”

And, the Jew, Jesus of Nazareth (or, at least, Matthew, who speaks about Jesus), is even harsher than Amos.

By the way, if you really read the New Testament attentively you will find that its message is much harsher than anything in the so-called “Old” Testament.

In **Matthew 25:1-13** we read:

- 1 Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this.
Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.
- 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise.
- 3 When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them;
- 4 but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps.
- 5 As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept.
- 6 But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'
- 7 Then all those bridesmaids got up and trimmed their lamps.
- 8 The foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.'
- 9 But the wise replied, 'No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves.'
- 10 And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; **and the door was shut.**
- 11 Later the other bridesmaids came also, saying, 'Lord, lord, open to us.'
- 12 But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, **I do not know you.**'
- 13 Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

The Shoah came upon us and we Christians, especially, we Lutherans, had no oil, no light. Does G-d say to us: "The Door is closed. I do not know you."

I am a Christian. Why? During my teens and twenties I rejected everything the Bible and the Church said to me. Then I studied. Knowledge is not faith. But, knowledge made it possible for me to remove the stumbling blocks to even being able to hear the invitation to faith. I have accepted that invitation. Faith without knowledge is stupid, dangerous and deadly.

I am now a Christian by choice and by conviction. I believe that I, as a gentile, have access to the G-d of the Tanakh, the Jewish Scriptures through the life, death and resurrection of the Jew, Jesus of Nazareth. Through Jesus I, like a *wild* olive branch, am grafted on the superbly *cultivated* olive tree (i.e., the people of G-d, the Jewish people), whom G-d tends and keeps and prunes (yes! ... and sometimes harshly), and waters with the spiritual power and revelation through the Torah, the Teaching, the Revelation from G-d. (**Romans 11:17f.**) I too, now drink of the sap, the blood, the spiritual life of the olive tree pulsing through my body, brain and heart. Jesus functions for me like a grafting point, like a valve, like a door (cf. **John 10:7**). And "door" in Semitic languages is a designation for a teacher, an instructor. For me, a Christian, Jesus functions like the Torah does for the Jewish people. And the word Torah refers to the teaching, the instruction, the word, in Hebrew *dābār* and in Greek *λογος*, i.e., the Word, the Divine Communication from G-d.

And like a biblical prophets (cf. Amos, Jeremiah, etc.), the Jew Jesus, does not only challenge me, but also all wayward Christians, including all wayward Jews and, I believe, all wayward humans.

Was Jesus the Messiah? Well, there were many different views of a "Messiah" burning during the first century, and some Jews did not even think of any kind of "Messiah." So, ... no, Jesus was not any kind of "Messiah" during his life-time. But, I do agree with the poetic, mythic language, which all Christians use, namely, that Jesus, is the *resurrected*, the *coming* Messiah, the "Anointed King" of the End-time. And the End-time is, of course, always now. Every time I, or anyone else (even an atheist) actually *does* the will of G-d, then the "Kingdom of G-d" breaks into our life, ... the door opens and I enter into the "heavenly banquet." When we want the Messiah to come then all we have to do is act like one and the Messiah, the Kingdom of G-d becomes a present reality. The Kingdom of G-d is in you and G-d is worshiped in Spirit in Truth ... now. Of course, this is poetic language. How else can one express these things?

The disciples of Jesus were told that they had no right to call Jesus "the Messiah."

Don't you people know your own Bible?

- (1) In **Isaiah 11:12** it says: he will gather all the dispersed, all the refugees, all the exiles of Israel and Judah from the four corners of the earth.
- (2) In **Ezekiel, chapter 40**, and **Zechariah 6:12**, and other places, it says that the Messiah will rebuild the temple, but look, the temple was just destroyed (i.e., in 70 CE)
- (3) In **Isaiah 9:6** it says that the Messiah will institute an eternal peace. Where is this peace?
- (4) In **Psalms 72, 8:11** and other places it says that the Messiah will have dominion over all the kings and governments of this earth. Well?
- (5) And then, of course, you all know that in **Isaiah 2:4**, **Joel 3:10**, **Micah 4:3** it says that when the Messiah comes the whole world will beat their swords into ploughshares and no nation will lift up swords against another nation, nor will they train and prepare for war any longer. Well?

The followers of Jesus listened to this. Sure they knew those Bible passages by heart. Sure they knew that Jesus had *not* accomplished *any* of those things during his life-time. But a glimmer of joy flickered in their eyes: "Well, so what. But he

will come back again. And then watch out! He will prove to be the Messiah after all ... in all those mighty and even greater acts, by the grace and power of G-d.”

(Have you ever tried to tell a person in love to be realistic. The trouble is: one can not argue with someone in love. All facts, all the realities take on a different glow. The trouble is that the same is also true for those who have fallen victim to some ideology.)

Actually, according to my limited understanding, I believe, that we Jewish and Christian peoples are *not* far apart at all. We are both messianic peoples living in the glow of G-d’s revelation and G-d’s constant invitation to live our lives according to G-d’s vision for our human lives. Jewish people hear this invitation through the Torah and are invited to also listen to Jesus. Christian people, though, hear this invitation, mainly, through Jesus, whom we accept as the Door to the Heart of G-d.

THIS is the kind of Christianity which I have taught and preached for more than forty years. Nothing in this teaching reflects any anti-Jewish attitudes.

Am I wrong to express and live my Christian faith in this manner? Some Christians would certainly not accept my brief interpretation of what it means to be a Christian.

But, for centuries, Christian teachers and preachers *have* portrayed the Christian faith as anti-Jewish at its root--and *this* I do not believe and I will not teach it and preach it.

But, *if* it turns out that Christianity *is*, at its root, anti-Jewish *then* I can no longer be a Christian. And, if I would then remain in the Christian fold, then I would be as guilty as all of those who were responsible for the Holocaust ... and the light, the fire, which is cast upon me (from Auschwitz) will surely destroy me.

The Holocaust came upon us and we Christians, and especially we Lutherans, had no oil, no light. Does G-d say to us: “The Door is closed. I do not know you.”

We Christians had the opportunity for hundreds of years to repent. Yes, some Christians did many good things, but are not all of those good deeds *negated* by the attitude of superiority and the intellectual and spiritual responsibility in the preparation of a climate in which pogroms and then the Holocaust could take place?

What must be done? What *must* be the evidence that we Christians, and especially we Lutherans, have begun a serious and total repentance?

As you know, probably, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has, finally, made a little baby step in the direction of repentance and has begun to accept the enormous guilt of the teaching of contempt for Judaism throughout the last 2,000 years.

The Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on **April 18, 1994** (why not 1945? Why not 1933?), adopted the following document as a statement on Lutheran-Jewish relations.

I do not think that I have to read the statement, but, I am quoting it here for your convenience and as a reminder.

“In the long history of Christianity there exists no more tragic development than the treatment accorded the Jewish people on the part of Christian believers. Very few Christian communities of faith were able to escape the contagion of anti-Judaism and its modern successor, anti-Semitism. Lutherans belonging to the Lutheran World Federation and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America feel a special burden in this regard because of certain elements in the legacy of the reformer Martin Luther and the catastrophes, including the Holocaust of the twentieth century, suffered by Jews in places where the Lutheran churches were strongly represented.

The Lutheran communion of faith is linked by name and heritage to the memory of Martin Luther, teacher and reformer. Honoring his name in our own, we recall his bold stand for truth, his earthy and sublime words of wisdom, and above all his witness to God’s saving Word. Luther proclaimed a gospel for people as we really are, bidding us to trust a grace sufficient to reach our deepest shames and address the most tragic truths.

In the spirit of that truth-telling, we who bear his name and heritage must with pain acknowledge also Luther’s anti-Judaic diatribes and violent recommendations of his later writing against the Jews. As did many of Luther’s own companions in the sixteenth century, we reject this violent invective, and yet more do we express our deep and abiding sorrow over its tragic effects on subsequent generations. In concert with the Lutheran World Federation, we particularly deplore the appropriation of Luther’s words by modern anti-Semites for the teaching of hatred toward Judaism or toward the Jewish people in our own day.

Grieving the complicity of our own tradition within this history of hatred, moreover, we express our urgent desire to live out our faith in Jesus Christ with love and respect for the Jewish people. We recognize in anti-Semitism a contradiction and an affront to the Gospel, a violation of our hope and calling, and we pledge this church to oppose the deadly working of such *bigotry* (emphasis mine), both within our own circles and in the society around us. Finally, we pray for the continued blessing of the Blessed One upon the increasing cooperation and understanding between Lutheran Christians and the Jewish community.”

(I attended a very moving service of “confession and repentance” which was held on Sunday, **November 13, 1994**, at Grace Lutheran Church in River Forest and then the whole assembly silently walked to West Suburban Temple Har Zion for a joint ceremony commemorating the ELCA’s declaration of repudiation.)

I am very grateful that my church has made this statement. But, I am also *very* sad and, actually, I am *outraged* that our Christian teaching of contempt for Jews and Judaism is compared merely to *bigotry* ... even now, many years after Auschwitz ... and that this statement does not include a paragraph expressing full and sincere repentance, and a concrete plan to exclude all anti-Jewish statements from all Lutheran teaching, preaching, singing, and worship services.

By the way, have you noticed that all kinds of people and organisations are now saying that they are sorry.

Look on p. 65 in the recent *Newsweek* (July 17, 1995). There is an article by Kenneth L. Woodward entitled: "Who's Sorry Now? Religion: From the pope on down, it's mea culpa time."

- The pope is sorry for the way women were treated.
- The Southern Baptists are sorry for defending slavery and racism.
- A group of German Christians apologized to the Dutch for the Nazi invasion of their country.
- On a trip to the Czech Republic in May the pope begged forgiveness for the church's part in religious wars that followed the 16th century Protestant Reformation.
- The Jesuits apologized for abetting centuries of "male domination" and pledged their "solidarity with women."
- And "Next Easter, Protestants will Join Catholics in a series of ceremonies repenting the Crusades against Muslims and Jews 900 years ago."

And then Kenneth L. Woodward ends his little article by saying, "Being Christian, it appears, is always having to say you're sorry." Ouch, that hurts, but it seems to be true.

One of the most impressive examples of repentance is the lecture which was given by **Joseph Cardinal Bernardin** (of Chicago) at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, **March 23, 1995**.

I have a copy of the lecture and it is truly remarkable what a prince of the Roman Catholic Church has dared to say. It is also truly remarkable how far Catholics have gone in eradicating anti-Jewish statements from their literature and teaching, but, the basic teaching of *extra ecclesia non salus est*, "outside of the church there is no salvation," has not changed and was just reaffirmed recently and, therefore, I am not encouraged by recent events.

By the way, among the relevant books which I have read recently are the following and I urge you to read them. I would love to have the opportunity to discuss each one of these books with you.

One of the sadest recent events is the attempt at Christianizing the Holocaust. Note the cross and the convent at Auschwitz and the events surrounding the beatification of Edith Stein.

What *must* be the evidence that we Christians, and especially we Lutherans, have begun a serious and total repentance? The list is very long.

How then shall we sing a new song in the relationship of Christians to Jews? Here are some of my suggestions:

- A thorough acquaintance with the Holocaust/Shoah and the causes which led to it;
- A visit to a Holocaust Museum;
- Christians should insist that their clergy know, at least, Elementary Hebrew and Greek in order to be able to read the Jewish Scriptures and also the Christian Scriptures in the original languages;
- Travel to Israel;
- Study of the the whole Bible together with Jewish people. Christians should know that Jews call the "Old Testament" the TaNaKh, which is a acronym for **T**(orah = Teaching), **N**(evi'im = Prophets), **K**(etubim = Writings). And Jews should know that the "New Testament" was, at first, Jewish literature;
- A change of terminology for the Christian Scriptures might be necessary (a new terminology *must* be found which is not offensive to either Jews or Christians);
- The selection of the weekly Sunday readings from the Jewish Scriptures/Old Testament *must* be rethought by Christians in order to reflect a much broader understanding of Jesus. They **must** be read and interpreted not as being superseded by the "New" Testament;
- The weekly readings should be studied together with Jewish people;
- The Jewish weekly readings should become known to Christians;
- Christians *must* be made aware of the fact that there are quite a number of different ways to interpret the Biblical texts and that there are distinct Jewish ways of interpreting the Jewish Scriptures. We *must* listen for the Word of G-d, for the Revelation of G-d in all of Scripture;

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- The role of Torah as instruction, teaching, guide, revelation (and not as “Law”) in the Bible and in Judaism *must* be understood by Christians and, especially, by Lutherans, who have a special problem here, because they make a distinction between “Law and Gospel;”
 - Christian priests and pastors should be studying together with rabbis when it comes to preaching from the Jewish Scriptures;
 - The Christian feasts throughout the Christian year *must* not reflect any anti-Jewish sentiments. *Especially the worship services during the week before Easter, and the Easter services, MUST not reflect any anti-Jewish sentiments* (... but, horror or horrors, most of such services, continue to reflect the teaching of contempt for Jews and Judaism);
 - Christians *must* develop new festivals and commemorations, e.g.,
 - (1) a Holocaust Remembrance Sunday (during this commemoration Christian responsibility for the pogroms and the Shoah should be remembered);
 - (2) a Thanksgiving service for the Jewish and Christian Scriptures;
 - (3) a Celebration of the Glory of the Creation (during which G-d’s gift of minerals, plants, planets, galaxies, ... animals and humans could be celebrated);
 - Christian Worship, the Liturgy, the Prayers, the Hymns, the Confessions, etc., *must* no longer reflect any anti-Jewish sentiments;
 - Christians *must* rethink what they mean by “The Good News,” “The Gospel;”
 - The division of time into B.C (Before Christ) And A.D. (Anno Domini, i.e., the year of the Lord) *must* be rethought.
 - Etc.

Please, let us study, let us think, let us discuss, talk, and the Holy Spirit will guide us in this new, difficult, but very exciting time of trying to find a new tune, a new song, a new way of expressing the Christian faith.

A final thought.

Is it important for Jewish people what Christians will decide on how they will read the Bible, celebrate their feasts and how they will express their Christian faith after the Holocaust?

In my opinion, the Jewish people no longer need to fear what Christians think or do in their relationship to the Jewish people. The Jewish people not only suffered the Holocaust, but they also experienced the re-birth of the State of Israel. The Jewish people now have the joy and the burden of the state and of the Israeli Defense Forces. There are no more “Christian” armies. Praise G-d! (I pray for the day when there will be no need for a “Jewish army,” when there will be no “Arab armies,” no USA armies, etc.)

In my opinion it is no longer important for the Jewish people *how* we Christians read the Bible or *what* Christians think of the Jewish faith, the Jewish people or of the State of Israel. Such thinking, though, is of the utmost importance for Christian survival.

Recently a number of important Jewish persons published a statement in *The New York Times*, Sunday, September 10, 2000, “DABRU EMET: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity.”

I wrote a review of this statement and sent it off to quite a number of persons who signed the statement. I received only four replies. I have not published my review, as yet. If you want a copy you can have one. I think that these Jewish persons misread the climate among Christians. What they say is more prescriptive than descriptive of the real situation. They seem to never have attended Christian services during Passion Week.

And one more, and even more sobering thought (at least for me). Does the world care how we Jews and Christians read our Scriptures and express our Jewish or Christian faith -- from the most orthodox to the most liberal (whatever these terms mean)?

Is it G-d’s will that we should mistreat or destroy even *one* other human being, an animal, or any thing in this world because of our particular religious or ideological convictions?

Are we (Jews and Christians) “the light to the world,” as OUR Scriptures claim (e.g., **Isaiah 42:6**; **Matthew 5:14**)? If not then, both, Jewish and Christian believers have much work to do and they would do well to do this work together.

How to sing a new song?

The agenda is long and difficult. I suggest that we start, or continue, the difficult work. The reward can only be a much more beautiful life as Christians, who know themselves as part of the choir, the symphony, of many

different religious voices ... including all of vegetation, the trees, the sea, all the sea creatures, the earth and all the animals, sky and space ... may be we could learn something from nature? What a song worthy of our G-d who created us all!

Shall we turn again to Psalm 96?

A NOTE ON ROSH HASHANA AND YOM KIPPUR

For our Jewish brothers and sisters, today, September 18, is ראש השנה, Rosh HaShana (“the head of the change, year”) which began last night. See, e.g., “Rosh Ha-Shana,” *EncJud* 14 (1972) 305-311.

Next Wednesday Eve Yom Kippur begins. See, e.g., “Atonement,” *EncJud* 3 (1972) 830-832; “Forgiveness,” *EncJud* 6 (1972) 1433-1437

Day of Atonement,” *EncJud* 5 (1972) 1376-1387.

WHAT IS THE ETYMOLOGY OF KIPPUR?

Yom Kippur is usually translated as “a day of, a time of at-one-ment,” i.e., an opportunity of reconciliation with one another and with G-d, which, of course, is not limited to Yom Kippur.

In Leviticus 23:27 (and other places) the expression *yōm kippūrīm* (piel, plural) occurs.

In the standard dictionaries the etymology of *k-p-r* is given as (1) *kpr*, usually in the piel, *kipper*, “cover,” i.e., to cover one’s face, make amends, atonement; (2) others think that *kpr* might mean “wash away, obliterate.”

(3) There is a third possibility.

M. Dahood has written about this third etymology in several places. See, e.g., “Love and Death at Ebla and Their Biblical Reflections,” in Marks, J. H. and R. M. Good, eds., *Love and Death in the Ancient Near East*. Guilford, Connecticut: Four Quarters Publishing, 1987, 93-99.

On p. 95 he writes:

“The bilingual vocabulary which renders Sumerian URUDU, ‘copper,’ by Eblaite *kà-pá-lu*

(n.23: See G. Pettinato, *Ebla* [N 1]: 206, 248, n.31, and 262. The tablet number is TM.75.G. 1678 obv. III 6. Since Sumerian-Akkadian bilinguals equate URUDU, ‘bronze’, with *erû*, it becomes obvious from URUDU = *kà-pá-lu* at Ebla that Eblaite is not early Akkadian but rather a Canaanite tongue.)

sheds light on *kōper*, ‘payment, gift,’

(n.24: For a recent study of *kōper*, see H. C. Brichto, *HUCA* 47 [1976]: 19-55, esp. 26-27, 35. Brichto correctly points out that etymological derivations of *kipper*, ‘to compose a difference,’ from putative cognates in Arabic with the meaning ‘to covers’ or in Akkadian with the sense ‘to rub, wipe’ are without support in biblical Hebrew; derivation from Eblaite *kà-pá-ru*, ‘copper,’ now offers a Canaanite commercial explanation for an important theological term, as well as upsetting the Egyptian etymology of biblical *koppōret*, ‘cover, lid,’ recently proposed by M. Görg, *Biblische Notizen* 5 [Bamburg 8, 1978]: 12.).

Since the scribes at Ebla sometimes write *lu* for *ru*,

(n.25: Consult G. Pettinato, *Ebla* [N 1]: 68.)

the equivalence of *kà-pá-lu* and *kōper* is quickly established, and the etymology of Cyprus, a chief source of copper in antiquity, discovered. This definition also elucidates *kōper*, ‘henna’ a reddish-orange (hence the color of copper) dye made from the leaves of henna, and *kēpîr* frequently rendered ‘young lion,’ but now preferably to be understood as ‘tawny lion.’ Ezek 38:13, *šōḥrê taršîš wēkol-kēpîrêhā*, may now be translated ‘the traders of Tarshish and all her copper goods.

(n.26: Contrast the most recent English translation of the Bible, the *New International Version of the Holy Bible* [Abbr. NIV; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978] which renders, ‘the merchants of Tarshish and all her villages,’ with the alternate version of ‘her strong lions.’ If the latter is correct *kēpîrêhā*, ‘her tawny lions,’ may have a metaphorical sense of ‘tycoons,’ the metaphor suggesting the color common to the copper currency and to the lions. Consult my comments on Ps 34:11, *kēpîrîm*, in *Psalms* I [AB 16; Garden City: Doubleday, 1966]: 206.).

See also Michel, *Job* I (1987), p. 84f (n.18) on Job 4:10-11.

So, *kpr* then has to do with disposing of a debt, or some other difference, with copper, i.e., with money. *Kpr* then is a financial term and has nothing to do with “cover”, or “wipe, wash away.” If this, truly, is the etymology of *kpr* then *kipper* means “to compose a difference (with copper = money).”

On Yom Kippur we compose our differences with one another and with G-d and ask G-d to inscribe us into the Book of Life. How then dare we speak about the Arguing with G-d Tradition on Yom Kippur? I may be mistaken, but, I think, there is no better time. If we understand our relationship with G-d as a ברית, *b'rit*, “covenant, promise,” then, not only we, but also G-d is held to G-d's promise.

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