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into uncertainty, confident only of the end if we do not work on into the night. The word from Zechariah 4 contains not only censure but hope, as we labor to give birth to a more peaceful world: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts" (Zec. 4:6b).

Let us be encouraged: we do not work alone, though we

may often feel we do. Through the Spirit of God all things, even peace, become possible, if we are willing to give them a chance. We know we will lose if we do not. We are ready to risk winning a world back from death and destruction. Let us not be afraid to do so—"by my Spirit," says the Lord of Hosts.

Paul and Galatians 3:28

by Daniel P. Fuller

According to Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

In what sense should we understand these negations? Except in the case of "neither slave nor free," they cannot mean erasing distinctions between groups of people.

Help comes in realizing that Paul borrowed these three statements from the wording of a baptismal ceremony. There are two other places in the Pauline corpus (I Cor. 12:13, Col. 3:11) where there are such formulaic statements declaring an end to the differences between groups that have been opposed to each other. Baptism is explicitly mentioned in the immediate context of two of these statements (I Cor. 12:13, Gal. 3:28) and implicitly in the third.

Concerning Colossians 3:11, Michel Bouttier notes that in its context, there is emphasis upon having died, with Christ, to the elemental spirits (2:20-23), and having been raised up to heaven, with Christ, where one is to foster a set of new affections (3:1-4). Then, because of union with Christ in his death and resurrection, there are exhortations to "put to death" or "put off" the evil practices and affections of the former life (3:5-10), and to "put on" a new set of affections (3:12f.). In between there is an argument with language resembling that of Galatians 3:28: "Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all" (3:11). Since the writer, both before and after 3:11, is echoing Paul's baptismal language of Romans 6:1-13, Bouttier therefore concludes that "the baptismal formula [of Col. 3:11] is enshrined in the development of chapter iii" (Bouttier, 1977).

In each of the three places where this baptismal formula appears, it is emphasized that the great benefits that come from being united with Christ are enjoyed equally by every believer, whatever his or her race, class, or gender. So, in the passage just considered (Col. 3:11), believers from races opposite from the Greek in two directions, the Jew on the one hand, and the Scythian, who is "a particularly uncivilized barbarian" (Windisch, 1964, p. 552) on the other, enjoy the same blessings of being freed from the elemental spirits. I Corinthians 12:13 argues the point of the preceding verse 11, that God apportions all his various spiritual gifts "to each one individually as he wills," by affirming that "by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit." The third statement, Galatians 3:28, comes between two climactic affirmations of the blessings enjoyed by faith in Christ. "In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (vv. 26-27). Afterwards comes the affirmation, "If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise" (v. 29). Therefore the negations of v. 28—neither

Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female—want to deny that the blessings of being united with Christ depend in any way upon race, class, or gender.

So the history of the interpretation of Galatians 3:28 from Chrysostom to the present shows a general agreement that each believer, despite his or her distinctives, should rejoice in the all-sufficiency of God's blessings attained by faith in Christ. However, divergent opinions emerge in understanding how the "neither-nor's" should affect the attitude and behavior of one believer toward an opposite in the pairs of Galatians 3:28. Can a slaveholder own a slave who, like him, is a member of Christ's body? If God dispenses his spiritual gifts "to each one individually as he wills," then should a church be on the lookout, among the women as well as the men, for those having the gifts requisite for official ministry? In this century there is disagreement in many American churches over this question, as in the last century there was disagreement over the application of "neither bond nor free."

Since the affirmation of this baptismal formula was so important for Paul that he (or his school) used a form of it three times, we believe that we should go to his writings to learn what we can of how he wanted the negations of Galatians 3:28 to be applied between believers in the matters of race, class, and gender. Like Michel Bouttier (but with different results), "we would like to review quickly how Paul himself received and lived out those few and various passages, pertinent to Galatians 3:28, by which we catch a glimpse of his thinking" (1977, p. 16).

"Neither Jew nor Greek"

Galatians 2 provides specific information on how Paul applied oneness in Christ to relations between Christian Jews and Gentiles. During his visit to Jerusalem, a certain group of Christian Jews (termed "false brethren"—2:4) sought to have Titus, a baptized Gentile, circumcised. In addition to baptism, they wanted circumcision to comprise the sign of the covenant. Making each Gentile believer submit to circumcision as well as baptism would have greatly impeded Paul's Gentile mission and very possibly stopped it altogether. So Paul resisted all efforts to have Titus circumcised, "that the truth of the Gospel might be preserved for you [Gentiles]" (2:5).

Paul's efforts succeeded, and Christians Jews had to accept the uncircumcised Titus as being fully an heir of the promises to Abraham's seed as any Jew. Paul also required a similarly profound change in a Jew's attitude and behavior toward a Gentile, when the situation arose where a Christian Jew, residing in the Diaspora, belonged to a church comprised of many baptized Gentiles, like that at Antioch (cf. Gal. 2:11-14). Because early Christians ate meals together in their household churches, Paul, Peter, and other Christian Jews joined with Christian Gentiles at these meals and ate whatever was served. However, Christian Jews at Jerusalem were troubled to hear this, so they sent a group to Antioch, apparently to inquire about this matter. As a result, Peter stopped eating

with the Gentiles, perhaps to avoid the possibility of splitting the Jerusalem church. But Paul understood that Peter, in so acting, was telling the Gentiles that in order to become bona fide Christians, faith in Christ was not enough; they must also submit to Jewish cultural distinctives. For Paul this was not being "straightforward about the truth of the Gospel" (Gal. 2:14). It denied the cardinal affirmation that justification was by faith alone, and it would place such impediments in the way of a Gentile's becoming a Christian that the Great Commission could not be carried out.

Thus Galatians 2 makes it evident that Paul insisted upon a full compliance with the meaning of the affirmation that "in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek." A refusal to submit to this meaning denied the gospel and destroyed the Gentile mission. So Bouttier, it seems, makes only a start in applying Galatians 3:28 when he says, "The presence, in the congregation, of those by whom one finds himself offended or accused, provides the opportunity for each to express his new freedom [in Christ]; the Jew can do a favor to the Greek and the Greek, to the Jew [and so on for slaves/masters and men/women]" (1977, p. 17). But he seems to stop short of Paul when he says, "Being made one in Christ does not destroy the ties of a Jew with Israel, of a slave with the oppressed, or of a barbarian with the ostracised" (p. 18).

"Neither Bond nor Free"

In his ninety-nine page treatise on Galatians 3:28 (1978), Hartwig Thyen has no difficulty in finding a coherent Pauline teaching regarding the implications of baptism for slaves and masters. For one thing, since he regards the prison epistles (excluding Philemon) and the pastorals as having an author whose outlook sometimes differed from Paul's, he can ignore the instructions for slaves and masters found in Ephesians, Colossians, and I Timothy. He also rejects interpreting I Corinthians 7:21b as saying, "But if you [slaves] can gain your freedom, make use of [your present condition of slavery] rather [than take an opportunity for freedom]" (so Leitzmann, 1910; Hering, 1948; Barrett, 1968; Conzelmann 1969). Indeed, chapter 7 has a dozen commands for people to remain in the state they were in when converted. But Thyen understands Paul to be giving a parenthetical exception to this rule in v. 21b, because he introduces it with a "but" (*alla*) followed by a conditional "if" clause. Furthermore, there are six other places in chapter 7 where Paul enjoins people to change their status under certain circumstances. So Thyen would follow the RSV's translation of v. 21b: "But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity."

Philemon provides Thyen with a confirmation of this translation. To Philemon, the slaveowner of the runaway Onesimus who had become a Christian, Paul said, "You . . . might have him back forever [if you do not insist on his severe punishment], no longer as a slave but . . . as a beloved brother . . . both in the flesh and in the Lord" (15 f.). Paul also said that he had confidence that Philemon would do "even more than I say" (21). So Thyen concludes that "a necessary inference from Gal. 3:28 in the context of Pauline theology appears to

be that at least among Christians there ought to be no more slavery" (p. 166).

This abolitionist stance would then be the necessary implication of "neither bond nor free" in Paul's thinking. Indeed, Hans Dieter Betz argues that this negation "when heard by Christian slaves at the ceremony of their baptism . . . could hardly be misunderstood" (1979, p. 195). There is no evidence, however, that abolitionism ever got a general hearing in the early churches. Instead, Ephesians, Colossians, I Timothy, and I Peter have passages which allow the continuation of slavery, though they seek to mitigate its miseries with injunctions based on the future judgment, Christ's example of suffering wrongfully, and the need for a blameless Christian testimony before the world.

Furthermore, Paul Jewett (1975) would disagree with Thyen that the evidence in Philemon and I Corinthians is sufficient to show that Paul openly and explicitly advocated abolitionism. Jewett remarks that Paul's "polite reserve" in obliquely suggesting that Philemon manumit Onesimus "contrasts with the direct encounter Paul had with Peter over Jewish/Gentile relationships at Antioch (Gal. 2:11f.)" (p. 139). As for I Corinthians 7:21b, Jewett believes that the apostle may well have meant that a slave should take advantage of any opportunity for freedom, but since he does not expand on this at all, "obviously Paul is more interested in one's spiritual status of freedom in Christ than in the social implications of this freedom" (*ibid.*, note).

The evidence, therefore, seems clear that Paul was not concerned with carrying out the baptismal implications of "neither bond nor free." This conclusion would be reinforced to whatever extent the teachings of Ephesians, Colossians, and I Timothy regarding slaves and masters echo the apostle's own teachings. But when we consider the third negation in Galatians 3:28, "neither male nor female," we find from I Corinthians, an uncontested epistle, that Paul was as disinclined to enforce the implications of this negation, as the contested epistles are to enforce "neither bond nor free."

"Neither Male nor Female"

In I Corinthians 11:2-16 Paul teaches that a woman is subordinate to a man, and that in showing this submission she reflects a man's glory, as the man, submitting to Christ, reflects the glory of God. In keeping with this patriarchal submission, 14:33b-35 teaches that women are to keep silence in a church's stated meetings, and are to receive help in understanding Christian teachings from their husbands at home.

Hartwig Thyen, who is concerned to apply the baptismal implications of Galatians 3:28 fully to the churches, is distressed to find Paul teaching patriarchalism and backing it up with theological arguments in these two passages in I Corinthians. He laments how Paul has thus caused his followers "down through the centuries and up to the present to discriminate against women" (1978, p. 180). In these passages Paul argues that since the woman was created *from* the man in Genesis 2, therefore she is subordinate to the man in the very order of creation itself (I Cor. 11:8). Thyen notes that this

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is generally in keeping with the rabbinic idea that women are subordinate to men. For him this means that "[Paul] has given his opinion here 'according to the flesh' . . . and not according to the Spirit," because "his exegesis, in which only the man is made after the image of God, and is the one to represent the divine glory, is unequivocally opposed by Genesis 1:27, which sets the pattern for construing Genesis 2 by explicitly saying that Man [*Mensch*] as man and woman was created in the image of God" (pp. 184f.).

Such a conclusion, which Thyen himself regards as an "unhappy, last resort [*ultima ratio*]" (p. 113), comes as a shock to the reader. In establishing his hermeneutical ground rules at

ments Paul used to support patriarchalism, Jewett says, "All of these considerations are viewed by Paul as indicative of the relationship which *God intended* to prevail between men and women" (p. 51, emphasis added). But from God's point of view such patriarchalism was only temporary; someday the churches would come to understand the full implication that "in Christ there is neither male nor female." So Jewett concludes his book by saying, "While Paul went all the way in living out the truth that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, he by no means denied in his life style [of treating individual women as peers] the implications of the further truth that in Christ there is no male and female. . . . But [now]

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the outset of his essay, he had said that before taking this *ultima ratio* of regarding Paul as being influenced by the pressures of conventional thinking and his own Jewish heritage, "the repeated attempt must be made to grasp Paul as a consistent thinker and doer" (p. 113, emphasis added). But Thyen makes not even one attempt to show how Paul could have been consistent in supporting patriarchalism in I Corinthians.

Why did he not explore the possibility that Paul was accommodating his teaching, for the time being, to patriarchalism, so as to channel all the church's energies toward the crucial task of bringing the attitude and behavior of Christian Jews and Gentiles into harmony with "neither Jew nor Greek"? Accommodation was a foundation of Paul's ethical theory (I Cor. 9:19-23; 10:32-11:1), and Galatians and Acts provide examples of how Paul used this principle to maintain the integrity of the gospel, the unity of the church, and the ongoing movement of the Gentile mission. Consequently, before concluding that Paul was teaching "according to the flesh" in enforcing patriarchalism, Thyen should have considered whether or not I Corinthians 11:2-16 and 14:33b-35 are not an instance of temporary accommodation to what is less than consistent with the baptismal implication of "neither male nor female."

Like Thyen, Jewett affirms that Paul's teaching about women in I Corinthians finds its roots in rabbinism. Concerning the apostle Paul, Jewett says, "So far as he thought in terms of his Jewish background, he thought of the woman as subordinate to the man for whose sake she was created . . ." (p. 112). But unlike Thyen, he sets forth the outline of a theodicy for why it was necessary for God to accommodate himself, temporarily, to the evil of patriarchalism. To begin with, God was incarnated as a man, says Jewett, not because a man is more like God than a woman, but because God had to come into "a history marked by sin and alienation [involving patriarchalism]" (p. 168). Then in regard to the all-male apostolate, Jewett argues that indeed "our Lord's intent, through the preaching of the apostles, was to redeem mankind and so create a new humanity in which the traditional antagonism of the sexes would be reconciled." But since this redemption could not be accomplished by a "simple confrontation" with patriarchalism, "one can understand, then, why [Jesus] chose only men to herald the truth of the Gospel in the Greco-Roman world of the first century" (p. 169). The third part of this theodicy is the affirmation that "it is from this perspective [of God's temporary accommodation to secondary problems in the sinful world] that we must understand the pronouncements of Peter and Paul, leading apostles, to the intent that women should keep silent in the church and not aspire to the teaching office" (p. 166). After analyzing the various argu-

ments Paul used to support patriarchalism, Jewett says, "All of these considerations are viewed by Paul as indicative of the relationship which *God intended* to prevail between men and women" (p. 51, emphasis added). But from God's point of view such patriarchalism was only temporary; someday the churches would come to understand the full implication that "in Christ there is neither male nor female." So Jewett concludes his book by saying, "While Paul went all the way in living out the truth that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, he by no means denied in his life style [of treating individual women as peers] the implications of the further truth that in Christ there is no male and female. . . . But [now]

Accommodation Ethics

Accommodation is the word best suited in the English language to represent Jewett's understanding of God's strategy in incarnating his only Son as a male, and in appointing an exclusively male apostolate. For Jewett the term *accommodation* would also apply to God's decision to permit Paul and Peter to teach a Christianized version of patriarchalism that was to be valid for a temporary time only. The term represents what people do who have identified themselves with one belief and behavior structure, and "yet . . . employ the language of [another structure], or conform to its patterns of thought and behavior at certain points" (Peter Richardson and Paul Gooch, 1978, p. 100).

The philosopher Gooch notes that "in so far as [these two structures] are themselves inconsistent structures, then whoever accommodates [from one to the other] will be considered inconsistent" (ibid.). For example, the God who created men and women as equal components of humankind could easily appear inconsistent to have ordained an all-male apostolate. Then too, since accommodation stops short of being a conversion in which one leaves behind one belief and behavior structure and espouses the other, then whoever "accommodates without wholeheartedly changing his beliefs about what he ought to do . . . may well be accused of hypocrisy" (p. 111).

So people might well charge God with hypocrisy for creating males and females equally in his image (Gen. 1:27), and then ordaining Paul to command "in all the churches" for women to remain silent in stated meetings because "they are subordinate [to men], even as the law says" (I Cor. 14:33f.). The way Paul's thinking worked in supporting female subordination from the high religious sanction of the law is seen in I Corinthians 11:8f. Since, according to Genesis 2:20f., the woman was made *from* the man and thus *after* him, therefore the "woman [was created] *for* the man."

Gooch observes, however, that "on occasions someone's [accommodatory] actions may appear inconsistent [and hypocritical] only because some reconciling principle is not known to the observer" (p. 112). But we know the loving principle on which God acted in accommodating himself temporarily to patriarchalism. There is ample evidence to show why God, in supporting a Christianized version of patriarchalism, enforced by apparently scriptural sanctions, was not being at all hypocritical but was acting out of concern to do the most benevolent thing for the human race in the long run. What needed most to be done in launching the Great Commission

was to show that Gentile believers enjoyed the same status in Christ as Jewish believers simply on the basis of faith alone. Had this point not been made explicitly and emphatically, Christianity might well have remained an obscure Jewish sect for a few decades, and then disappeared. Then the nations of earth would have been deprived of the blessings of Christ. Surely everyone rejoices that God risked the charge of being hypocritical by temporarily accommodating to patriarchalism and supporting it with plausible, but not persuasive, scriptural arguments. Had he not done this the outworking of redemptive history would have stopped.

So, from the outset, there had to be a direct and protracted confrontation against the Jew/Gentile rift. We have already noted the changes in attitude and behavior that a Jew underwent in order to belong to a church where there were believing Gentiles. Since all this energy had to be expended for a number of decades in order to forge out the full implications that "in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek," it was essential, then, for God to temporarily enforce upon the fledgling churches a Christianized form of patriarchalism (and slavery). That women had prayed and prophesied during public worship at Corinth (I Cor. 11:5f.) hints at how strongly Christian women felt the urgency also to forge out the full implications of "in Christ there is neither male nor female." But God, in his love, could not let this pressure burst forth just yet and divert energy away from the most vital task of maintaining the unity of the Church composed of Jews and Gentiles.

might save some" (I Cor. 9:22; I Cor. 10:33-11:1). When one understands Paul's application of Galatians 3:28 from this standpoint, then two other clues appear which should have signalled to the church down through the centuries that patriarchalism clashes with the freedom of the gospel.

One such clue is seen in Paul's failure to enforce the rule of I Corinthians 14:34 by rebuking the women who had prayed and prophesied in public. In I Corinthians 11:2-16 he reproved them only for not wearing headgear signifying submission to men. A good explanation for this is that Paul knew perfectly well that God gives his spiritual gifts (including ministry gifts) "to each one, individually, as he wills" (I Cor. 12:11). Consequently, he could not rebuke them for what was done in all probability as a work of the Spirit. So he simply rebuked their unpatriarchal attire, and later on in the book forbids women in general to speak in a meeting. The most loving thing to do at that time was to keep Galatians 3:28 from applying to patriarchalism, so that all the church's energy might be spent in making "neither Jew nor Greek" a reality.

Then there is the clue of Paul's own behavior toward women. Paul greets several women by their own names at the conclusion of Romans (ch. 16), whereas the rabbis spoke of a woman only as the wife of a certain man. Unlike a rabbi, Paul addressed a group of women with no men present (Acts 16:13), and he accepted Lydia's invitation to be a guest in her house (Acts 16:15). He regarded both Priscilla (Rom. 16:3) and Timothy (Rom. 16:21) as "my fellow worker." Since both are

A much simpler way to solve the disparity between Paul's behavior and teaching is to understand his teaching as an example of his explicit practice of accommodation.

So he imposed the highest possible sanctions to enforce accommodation to patriarchalism. But since these sanctions were only to enforce for a time something less than the ideal, they have only the apparent force of a plausible argument, but not the real force of a persuasive one. That women are subordinate to men, because the woman was created *from* the man and *after* the man, has a certain plausibility, but it lacks persuasive force. Although the man was created *from* the ground (Gen. 2:7), no one argues that he is subordinate to it. Then too, what comes *after* is not necessarily inferior. In I Corinthians 15:46, for example, the spiritual which comes after the physical is superior.

Paul Gooch remarks that since biblical accommodation (I Cor. 9:19-23; 10:32-11:1) must be undertaken only temporarily in order finally to move people into the full implications of freedom in Christ, it "has to be accompanied by *additional procedures . . .*" (p. 115, emphasis added). Otherwise accommodation will only confirm people in their substandard way of living. In other words, accommodatory teaching must be accompanied by "additional procedures" in the form of clues indicating that this teaching is being tolerated only temporarily until the true teaching can be established. One such clue could well be the shakiness of Paul's exegetical argument from Genesis 2 in support of patriarchalism.

Another clue comes from understanding why (as stated above) Paul went all the way in enforcing "neither Jew nor Greek" but was accommodatory in handling slavery and patriarchalism. Put this way, this clue implies that Paul himself was consciously practicing accommodation in teaching patriarchalism. This is not difficult to suppose, for Paul forthrightly told how he became "as a Jew" to the Jews (I Cor. 9:20). He also urged his readers to imitate him as he imitated Christ in becoming "all things to all men, in order that he

known as teachers of the Word (Acts 18:26; Phil. 2:20), it is natural to understand that Priscilla labored with Paul in the teaching ministry of the Word.

At this point it seems that a difficulty in Jewett's thinking appears. On the one hand, he believes that the apostle's insight that female subordination was done away with in Christ (Gal. 3:28) led Paul to behave toward women in the very unrabbinic, Christ-like ways enumerated in the preceding paragraph. On the other hand, Jewett declares, as we have seen (p. 112), that "so far as he thought in terms of his Jewish background, he thought of the woman as subordinate to the man for whose sake she was created . . ." Consequently, in those passages where Paul speaks of female subordination to men (I Cor. 11:2-16; 14:33b-35; Col. 3:18; cf. Eph. 5:22-33; and I Tim. 2:11-15) he was unwittingly giving forth an unchristianized teaching, a teaching not yet affected by the marvelous insight of Galatians 3:28 that "in Christ there is neither male nor female." But it is very difficult to understand how this insight could make him so unrabbinic in his behavior toward women without also making him unrabbinic in his teaching about them. A much simpler way to solve the disparity between Paul's behavior and teaching is to understand his teaching as an example of his explicit practice of accommodation, and his behavior toward women as part of the "additional procedures" or clues he was leaving behind to signal to the church that his patriarchal teaching was not timeless, but only a temporary accommodation until the "neither Jew nor Greek" problem had been finally laid to rest.

How, then, did Paul apply Galatians 3:28? We answer that he fully enforced "neither Jew nor Greek." With regard to "neither bond nor free" and "neither male nor female," he supported, by way of accommodation, a Christianized slavery and patriarchalism, but with regard to both he left sufficient

clues for the church to have understood that these teachings no longer applied after the "neither Jew nor Greek" issue had been settled.

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Points of Dialogue Between Evangelicals and Jews

by Marc Saperstein

Our task in solidifying communications between the evangelical and the Jewish communities is a challenging one. Traditional negative stereotypes of Jews and Judaism, which many liberal Protestants and even the Catholic Church have formally repudiated, still linger in some evangelical preaching and education; I have heard them in popular radio broadcasts. On the other side, there is something about evangelical Christians, especially those in the vanguard of the recently revived political activism, that makes many Jews uneasy. Partly it is the lingering suspicion, whether justified or not, that evangelicals view all Jews as highly desirable potential converts. But more important, I would guess, is the widely prevalent assumption among Jews that evangelicals treasure and work for a vision of America fundamentally different from that which most Jews share.

When Jews hear calls to make our country a "Christian nation" once again, we see a host of disturbing images. Our perception is that the evangelical goal is to remold this country into an America that would make Christianity normative and reduce Jews and others who are not "born again Christians" to the position of tolerated dissidents; an America that would see denominational religion intruding into public life to a greater extent than at any time in the past hundred years; an America where freedom of dissent would be radically stifled and restrictive standards would be imposed on literature and the arts; an America where millenarian speculation about an apocalyptic battle could inform our foreign policy; an America in which radical feminists, conscientious supporters of a nuclear weapons freeze, socialists, advocates of free choice on abortion, homosexuals, and even old-fashioned liberals would be branded as anti-God and denied legitimacy. For Jews, the vision of many evangelicals is a frightening apparition, and this often makes a calm discussion of the issues rather difficult. This is further complicated by some misperceptions of what we have in common. Let me touch on two of these.

One frequently hears the assertion made by evangelicals that one thing they share with Jews is a profound commitment to the Bible as the Word of God. Here I would sound a cautionary note. We must not forget that the Hebrew Bible is not the same as the Christian Old Testament, even though it may contain precisely the same books. The old stereotyped Christian reading of Scripture still lingers, contrasting the vengeful, zealous God of the Old Testament with the merciful, loving,

gracious God of the New. This is certainly not an image Jews would recognize in the God of our ancestors.

Furthermore, the essential story of the Hebrew Bible as read by Jews is quite different from that of the New Testament as read by most Christians. For Jews, it is the story of the emergence and early history of people in a covenant with God, a people that won its land, built its Temple, lost both because of its failure to live according to the standards God expected, and, having experienced the traumatic catharsis of defeat and exile, was poised to return and rebuild. For Christians, this entire story is a preparation for things to come, essentially important not as history in its own right but as prefiguration and prophecy of a New Dispensation which would to a large extent make the old obsolete. We can be reading the same words, but what we read is not really the same.

And all too frequently, we do not even read the same words. For the Jew, the Bible is always the Hebrew text. While Judaism has never forbidden translation, as did Islam and for some time and for very different reasons the Catholic Church, no serious study of the Bible has ever been separated from the original Hebrew. By contrast, I frequently hear evangelicals quoting "God's Word" as if the text was originally uttered or revealed in King James English. Let us never forget that when we quote an English verse, we are not quoting the Bible; we are quoting one translation of the Bible.

This point is not mere academic pedantry. Translation always entails difficult and sometimes arbitrary decisions. A phrase in one language may have two possible meanings; the translator must usually render one at the expense of the other. What begins as multivalent and suggestive ambiguity emerges in translation as straightforward simplicity. This transformation is especially pronounced in translation from biblical Hebrew, which, as many of you know, has no punctuation, no indications where a quotation ends, hundreds of verbs with unclear subjects and pronouns with unclear referents, an imperfect tense that can mean you must, you may, or you will, and that omnipresent *vav conservive*, which can have at least half a dozen different meanings.

For the Jew, therefore, the Bible read and studied in Hebrew is a very different kind of text from that quoted in English by many evangelicals; it is fraught with ambiguities and obscurities, always open to new and legitimate interpretations, an open-ended text, the meaning of which may be ultimately elusive, which we are left to wrestle with and probe. We are not sure how to translate properly even the first sentence of the book of Genesis. This may be why in theological matters,

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