

Handout: *Konfrontationen*. Pluralität als Wert? Jüdische Perspektiven auf Herausforderungen und Chancen von Pluralität

(LmZ-Jahrestagung 2023 in Velbert, 25.08.2023)

1.) “There are indeed moral universals – the Hebrew Bible calls them ‘the covenant with Noah’ and they form the basis of modern codes of human rights. But they exist to create space for cultural and religious difference [...] The proposition at the heart of monotheism is not what has traditionally been taken to be: one G-d, therefore one faith, one truth, one way. To the contrary, it is that *unity creates diversity*. The glory of the created world is its astonishing multiplicity: the thousands of different languages spoken by mankind, the hundreds of faiths, the proliferation of cultures, the sheer variety of the imaginative expressions of the human spirit, in most of which, if we listen carefully, we will hear the voice of G-d telling us something we need to know. That is what I mean by the *dignity of difference*.”

(Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference – How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations*, S. 19-20)

2.) “Just as the natural environment depends on biodiversity, so the human environment depends on cultural diversity, **because no one creed has a monopoly of spiritual truth**, no one civilization encompasses all the spiritual, ethical and artistic expressions of mankind.”

(Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference*, S. 62)

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(Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference* (rev. Edition), S. 62)

4.) “[T]he language of faith of a particular community is totally incomprehensible to the man of a different faith community. Hence the confrontation should occur not at a theological, but at a mundane human level [...] the great encounter between man and G-d is a holy, personal and private affair, incomprehensible to the outsider...”

(Joseph D. Soloveitchik, “Confrontation”, in: *Tradition* 6:2 (Spring-Summer 1964), S. 5-29, S. 23-24)

5.) Die wichtigsten Thesen der liberal-jüdischen Erklärung „Dabru Emet – Speak Truth“

1. Jews and Christians worship the same G-d.
2. Jews and Christians seek authority from the same book.
3. Christians can respect the claim of the Jews on the land of Israel.
4. Jews and Christians together accept the moral principles of the Torah (Pentateuch).
5. Nazism is not a Christian phenomenon.
6. The controversy between Jews and Christians will not be settled until G-d redeems the entire world as promised in scripture and no-one should be pressed into believing another's belief.
7. A new relationship between Jews and Christians will not weaken Jewish practice.
8. Jews and Christians must work together for justice and peace.

(Michael Signer, David Novak et al., „Dabru Emet“ (2000))

6.) Auszug aus orthodox-jüdischen Erklärung „To Do The Will Of Our Father In Heaven“

1. Now that the Catholic Church has acknowledged the eternal Covenant between G-d and Israel, we Jews can acknowledge the ongoing constructive validity of Christianity as our partner in world redemption, without any fear that this will be exploited for missionary purposes.
3. As did Maimonides and Yehudah Halevi, we acknowledge that the emergence of Christianity in human history is neither an accident nor an error, but the willed divine outcome and gift to the nations. In separating Judaism and Christianity, G-d willed a separation between partners with significant theological differences, not a separation between enemies.
5. We Jews and Christians have more in common than what divides us: the ethical monotheism of Abraham; the relationship with the One Creator of Heaven and Earth, Who loves and cares for all of us; Jewish Sacred Scriptures; a belief in a binding tradition; and the values of life, family, compassionate righteousness, justice, inalienable freedom, universal love and ultimate world peace. Rabbi Moses Rivkis (Be'er Hagoleh) confirms this and wrote that “the Sages made reference only to the idolator of their day who did not believe in the creation of the world, the Exodus, G-d's miraculous deeds and the divinely given law. In contrast, the people among whom we are scattered believe in all these essentials of religion.”
6. Our partnership in no way minimizes the ongoing differences between the two communities and two religions. We believe that G-d employs many messengers to reveal His truth, while we affirm the fundamental ethical obligations that all people have before G-d that Judaism has always taught through the universal Noahide covenant.

7. In imitating G-d, Jews and Christians must offer models of service, unconditional love and holiness. We are all created in G-d's Holy Image, and Jews and Christians will remain dedicated to the Covenant by playing an active role together in redeeming the world.

(Joshua Ahrens, Shlomo Riskin et al., „To Do The Will Of Our Father in Heaven“ (2015))

7.) “However, I did not agree to sign it for several reasons. First, for all its exquisitely skillful formulation, it implies that Jews should reassess their view of Christianity in light of Christian reassessment of Judaism. This inclination toward theological reciprocity is fraught with danger. Second, although it is proper to emphasize that Christian “worship the G-d of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, creator of heaven and earth”, it is essential to add that worship of Jesus of Nazareth as a manifestation or component of G-d constitutes what Jewish law and theology call *avodah zara*, or foreign worship – at least if done by a Jew.”

(Statement by Dr. David Berger issued by the Institute for Public Affairs of the Orthodox Union regarding the New York Times ad by Dabru Emet, September 14th 2000)

8.) “Finally, the assertion that “differences between ... the religions” remain is a rather anemic way of recognizing that Jewish law requires martyrdom rather than conversion to Christianity. Given the critical importance of those differences to the core of the Jewish religion, this paean of praise to Christianity, much of which is deserved, needs to be leavened by a clearer affirmation of the transcendent significance of the theological chasm that remains. The declaration, despite its many merits, demonstrates the prescience exhibited in Rabbi Soloveitchik's concerns.”

(“Vatican II at 50”, in: *Tabletmag* online)

9.) “Religious pluralism is thus a positive expression of a distinct religious sensibility, a sensibility that celebrates the infinite plenitude of divine reality on one hand, while affirming human finitude, limitation and vulnerability, on the other hand.”

(David Hartman, The Religious Significance of Religious Pluralism, in: Moshe Halbertal & Donniel Hartman (Hg.), *Judaism and the Challenges of Modern Life*, S. 95-104, S. 97)

10.) “The dialectic between the Jew’s particular and universal identities, between the G-d of Israel and the G-d of Creation, makes Jewish identity a dynamic, challenging experience. The particularity and intimacy of our relationship to the G-d of Israel must never overpower or diminish our awareness of the G-d of Creation who commands us to build a shared world of values for all human beings.”

(David Hartman, Religious Pluralism, S. 99)

11.) “The crucial question of religious pluralism is: can we live with uncertainty? Must we long for the absolute, ironclad truth of G-d telling us, ‘This is my way; follow it and you are saved, deviate from it and you are lost’? Do we need absolute assurance that our way is G-d’s way in order to build our spiritual lives and infuse passion into our religious behaviour? Must I believe that the ‘other’ is mistaken or, as Maimonides claims, an instrument instrument for my redemption (Mishneh Torah, Melakhim, xi, 4 (uncensored version))?”

(David Hartman, Religious Pluralism, S. 102)